Writing, Responding, and Relationships: Factors Influencing German University Students' Perceptions of the Educational Alliance and the Resulting Impact on Feedback Effectiveness in English Language Writing

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to my students

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Chapter One: Introduction

When it comes to writing instruction, "Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement" (Hattie and Timperley 81). The research that has been conducted in the fields of both Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Rhetoric and Composition has consistently argued that instructor feedback on written assignments is one of the most important elements in the writing process. However, what the research tends to struggle with is how to make that feedback truly effective. For example, should the feedback consist of direct or indirect comments? Should the feedback include praise for things the student does well, or should the focus be entirely on weakness and error? And just how important is the medium through which we provide the feedback?

For decades, scholars have grappled with these questions. As a result, countless studies have been dedicated to exploring feedback characteristics in an effort to characterize effective feedback. They have tried to determine the most effective types of comments (Jamalinesari et al.; McGrath et al.; Sigott et al.), the most helpful areas of focus (Duijnhouwer et al.; Hattie and Timperley), the best delivery method, (Alvira; Elola and Oskoz; Marshall et al.) and whether or not feedback is more effective when student preferences are taken into account (Horbacauskiene and Kasperaviciene; Keane et al.; Seker and Dincer). They have also sought to identify specific characteristics of feedback that might prompt negative emotional reactions (Dowden et al.; Eva et al.; Rowe et al.), harm students' feelings of self-efficacy (Mitchell et al.), or decrease their motivation to revise (Fong et al.). However, the underlying assumption in all of these studies is that instructor feedback can be made effective, or more effective, if done "right." However, as Valerie J. Shute observes, "Within this large body of feedback research, there are many conflicting findings and no consistent pattern of results" (153).

More recently, a number of scholars have pushed back on the idea that simply ensuring feedback has certain qualities will make it effective (Telio et al., "Feedback"; Watling et al.). Instead, they argue that studies should be looking at the context in which students receive feedback (Ajjawi et al.; Evans et al.; Henderson et al., "Conditions"; Watling et al., Winstone et al., "Supporting"). One specific contextual factor that has begun receiving more attention is the student-teacher relationship (Carless, "Longitudinal"; Carless, "Trust"; Crossman; Pokorny and Pickford; Sincoff). Studies in this area work from the premise that students' responses to instructor feedback are mediated by the student-teacher relationship, or what can be thought of as the "educational alliance" (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'"). In other words, feedback, regardless of how many characteristics of "effective feedback" it might embody, may be received negatively by students who perceive a weak student-teacher relationship.

Little is known, however, about the educational alliance and feedback effectiveness within the context of writing development generally, and writing in English as a foreign language specifically.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Of all foreign languages taught in Germany, English is the most prevalent (Reichelt). A growing number of Master's and Doctoral programs at German universities have even begun conducting their courses in English (Breuer and Schindler), and it is generally assumed that students will have better career opportunities if they publish to international audiences (Breuer and Schindler). Therefore, the need for German students to acquire mastery of the skills necessary to write academic texts in English is more important than ever. However, research that specifically explores how to help German students develop their writing abilities in English is limited (Scott).

What is known is that German students are often unprepared for university level writing (Breuer and Schindler; Kruse; Mah and Ifenthalher), and this includes writing in English (Göpferich and Neumann). Many universities neither offer First Year Composition style courses (Macgilchrist and Girgensohn) nor do they integrate writing instruction into their curriculums (Mueller-Lyaskovets and Horner). This general lack of writing instruction at the university level is usually attributed to the belief that high schools should bear the responsibility for teaching students how to write (Breuer and Schindler; Kruse et al.; Scherer and Sennewald). However, because the school systems are regulated at the state level, students in Germany may not all start with the same amount of background experience in and knowledge of writing (Breuer and Schindler). Even then, students are most likely to have only gained experience with reflective writing (Breuer and Schindler) or descriptive writing (Everke Buchanan and Meyer). For example, one study found that prior to enrolling at a university, German students studying English had only learned how to write personal narratives, text summaries, and a type of analysis based on a three step approach consisting of text summary, application of ideas learned in class, and personal opinion (Reichelt). At the university level, however, German students are expected to engage in "the systematic study of established knowledge about a topic, and the incorporation and synthesis of diverse sources of this knowledge into an authoritative viewpoint" (Foster 216). This gap between what students are expected to do and the reality of what they have actually been taught prior to their university studies means that many students begin with a disadvantage in terms of their ability to write at the university level.

Likely as a result of this gap, incoming students to German universities expect to receive explicit writing instruction (Mah and Ifenthalher), but this expectation is rarely met (Ballweg et al.; Kruse et al.; Schneider-Ludorff and Vode). When writing courses are provided through the university, they sometimes only focus on theoretical concepts, such as citing or identifying steps in the writing process (Schneider-Ludorff and Vode), forgoing any type of writing intensive experience (Breuer and Schindler; Schneider-Ludorff and Vode).

Students are thus faced with the expectation of being able to produce highly complex texts with very little instruction or support. Many students are not developing their writing skills as is necessary for university level studies, with some continuing to struggle with basic principles even after several semesters of study (Scherer and Sennewald). This is especially concerning given the fact that passing an entire module is sometimes dependent on one single research paper (Macgilchrist and Girgensohn). Because many departments now opt for oral exams instead of written assignments (Breuer and Schindler), some students might even progress through their entire degree program without receiving any writing instruction or having to write formal papers until they reach the Bachelor's thesis (Breuer and Schindler). It is perhaps not surprising then that many students report having low levels of self-confidence (Breuer and Schindler; Dreo and Huber; Kruse et al.; Mah and Ifenthaler) and sometimes even having to drop out of their programs or delay their studies as a result of giving up on their major research papers (Dittmann et al.; Macgilchrist and Girgensohn). When students receive feedback on their written assignments, they are often critical of both the amount (Kruse et al.; Schneider-Ludorff and Vode) and quality (Ballweg et al.). Some of the critiques leveled by students against their instructors are that instructor feedback practices convey a lack of time, interest, and competence (Ballweg et al.). This is an important consideration as studies have shown that negative perceptions of instructor feedback can have direct effects on both students' motivation and learning (Rowe et al.).

Further complicating the situation is the fact that several studies hint at tension within the student-teacher relationship at German universities (Pritchard; Rotthoff et al.). This may be exacerbating the issues surrounding students' writing development. For example, some students distrust their instructors' grading criteria. These students believe that lower order concerns (such as grammar and formatting) are more important to instructors than the instructors are willing to admit (Schneider-Ludorff and Vode). The implication is that students either feel instructors are not forthcoming about their expectations or perhaps are unclear themselves. Studies have also found that students see themselves as more competent in academic writing than their instructors assess them as (Kruse et al.; Schneider-Ludorff and

Vode). This discrepancy might help to explain why some students also express disappointment in the grades they receive on their written assignments (Dittmann et al.). It is quite understandable, given that students and faculty seem to either not understand each other or have a communication problem, that students would place a high value on receiving feedback (Ballweg et al.; Kruse et al.; Mueller-Lyaskovets and Horner). Of course, this may also explain why students tend to be so critical of the feedback they receive.

Although many faculty members surveyed in different studies believe that providing more writing support to their students would be beneficial, they also express concerns about the feasibility of being able to provide such services themselves (Kruse et al.; Scherer and Sennewald; Schneider-Ludorff and Vode). Their main concerns are that incorporating explicit writing instruction into a discipline-specific course may take away too much time from the discipline itself (Scherer and Sennewald) and that providing individualized writing support may be too time-consuming in general (Schneider-Ludorff and Vode). Therefore, suggestions in the research tend to focus on outsourcing writing instruction to Writing Centers (Macgilchrist and Girgensohn) and offsetting instructor feedback with peer review activities (Schneider-Ludorff and Vode).

However, each of these suggestions are problematic. For example, very few German universities actually have Writing Centers (Dittmann et al.), meaning there is not always a resource available for students to use outside of the classroom. However, even when students have access to Writing Centers, there is still a need for writing support from the instructor as Writing Center tutors may not be familiar with the expectations of individual discourse communities (Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen). Students writing in English face the added complication that tutors may have been trained in the Anglo-American style of writing whereas the instructor may expect their students to write in the Continental style (Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen). Similarly, peer feedback, especially with students writing in English as a foreign language, is not an acceptable replacement for instructor feedback (Tsui and Ng) but is most effective in conjunction with it (Gao et al.). This is because students tend to comment on different issues than instructors (Caulk), and students are limited in that they can only provide their peers with feedback within their own zones of proximal development (Gao et al.).

The issue scholars and faculty members alike are left with is how best to support students' writing development in English within a context where explicit writing instruction may be inadequate, and research specific to supporting German students writing in English at the university level is limited. Although there seems to be an implied consensus in the literature

on German universities that the general solution is to provide students with more feedback, the problem is that the presence of feedback alone is not enough, it must also be effective.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how university instructors teaching English at German universities can strengthen the student-teacher relationship in order to maximize the effectiveness of their feedback on written assignments. More specifically, the goal is to use the concept of educational alliances to investigate factors that influence students' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship and how those perceptions affect factors known to impact the effectiveness of feedback. This study is aimed at contributing to the scholarship on Teaching English as a Foreign Language in general and English language writing support at German universities specifically. However, this study also has implications for the fields of Rhetoric and Composition, Educational Psychology, and the growing body of work on educational applications of the Working Alliance. Faculty members teaching university courses in English at German universities that culminate in a graded written assignment or a module exam in the form of a term paper can use these results to inform both their teaching and feedback practices in order to foster positive student-teacher relationships that promote writing development.

1.3 Research Questions

The focus of this study is the connection between students' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship and feedback on written assignments, and what implications this may have on writing development. The research questions were informed by calls for further research in relation to the two core areas of the study's focus: student-teacher relationships and feedback. Specifically, those calls are for investigations into conditions that strengthen educational alliances (Ajjawi et al.) and social and cultural factors within learning environments that influence how students respond to feedback (Watling et al.).

RQ1. How do the individual aspects of the educational alliance (goal, task, and bond) interact with each other in the context of discipline-specific courses assessed by writing ability in English as a foreign language?

RQ2. How does the interplay between goal, task, and bond influence students' perceptions of instructor feedback on written assignments?

RQ3. How do the revision behaviors of students who perceive strong educational alliances differ from those of students who perceive weak educational alliances?

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

The following is a list of key terms that are especially relevant to the study. As this study draws heavily from two distinct fields, writing studies and psychotherapy, readers may be divided in their backgrounds and thus not familiar with all of the same terminology. Therefore, this list is intended as a point of reference to which readers can return as needed.

Composition course. A course where the main focus is on teaching writing, sometimes also referred to simply as a writing course.

Critical engagement. According to Emily Wilson and Justine Post, "a student's disposition—in terms of feeling accepting of or resisting toward feedback—is not a reliable indicator of writing development" (32). Instead, they argue that a more accurate measure of student learning is critical engagement. This takes place when students use feedback in one or more of the following ways: "to develop awareness of purposes beyond the assignment," "to develop awareness of broader audiences than the instructor," "as a springboard for reflecting on one's own writing," or when students "[analyze] or [evaluate] the feedback itself, rather than accepting it without question" (Wilson and Post 32).

Discipline-specific course. Any university level course in which the main focus is on the academic discipline itself and not writing instruction specifically. This term is intended to differentiate between a course in which writing is involved, such as a Literature or Linguistics course, and a course in which writing is the sole focus, such as a composition course.

Educational alliance. The collaborative relationship between a student and instructor. It is characterized by an agreement on goals, the incorporation of relevant tasks that assist the student in reaching those goals, and a mutual feeling of liking, trusting, and respect (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'"). It is an adaptation of the Working Alliance.

Effective feedback. Feedback that is both educational and rhetorically effective. This definition works from the premise that students have to notice, accept, and understand feedback (Underwood and Tregidgo) and draws on the ideas of critical engagement (Wilson and Post) and Aristotle's concept of the artistic proofs: logos, ethos, and pathos. This definition allows the student's perception of the feedback, their perception of the instructor, and the emotions involved to be taken into account alongside the quality of the feedback itself.

EFL. This is an acronym for English as a Foreign Language.

Formative feedback. Formative feedback is "information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning" (Shute 154). In other words, it is meant to provide direction for how students can improve. In terms of student writing, it can be provided on a rough draft as a means to help the student revise, or it can be provided on a final draft as a means to help the student on future written assignments. This is not the same as assessment feedback, which is generally understood to be feedback that justifies the grade.

Higher order concerns. Aspects of writing that address global concerns, such as focus, purpose, audience, organization, and development.

Lower order concerns. Aspects of writing that address local concerns, such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and formatting.

Reciprocal relationship. A situation in which, "two variables can mutually influence one another; that is, each can be both a cause and an effect" ("Reciprocal Relationship").

Working alliance. This refers to "the collaborative and affective bond between [a] therapist and patient" and "is an essential element of the therapeutic process" (Martin et al. 438). It is characterized by an agreement between both parties on the goal of the therapy, the relevance of the tasks undertaken to reach the goal, and a bond, or personal relationship, in terms of a mutual liking and trusting of each other (Bordin, "Generalizability").

Written assignment. This refers to a formal text written for a course or module, such as a term paper.

1.5 Assumptions

As this study is concerned with improving the effectiveness of instructor feedback on student writing, it is assumed that German university instructors, especially those teaching courses in English, are regularly providing students with feedback on written assignments. It is also assumed that these instructors are open to new ideas for how to improve the quality of written assignments they receive. There is evidence for this in the fact that many instructors at German universities recognize students are in need of additional writing support (Kruse et al.; Scherer and Sennewald; Schneider-Ludorff and Vode). Being able to identify how to improve the effectiveness of existing efforts could be beneficial to instructors who would like to better support their students but worry they cannot add to their current workload.

Because the other core element of this study relates to improving the student-teacher relationship, it is also assumed that German university instructors may not fully understand the

various elements that can impact students' perceptions of that relationship. There is evidence to support the idea that German university instructors specifically may overestimate the quality of the student-teacher relationship (Pritchard; Rotthoff et al.), further implying that there may be a lack of awareness on the part of the instructor. Being able to identify patterns within students' perceptions of positive and negative student-teacher relationships could make it possible for instructors to be more effective in their attempts to build better relationships with their students.

1.6 Summary

This study investigates the educational alliance between students and instructors in English discipline-specific courses assessed by writing ability in order to explore how the strength of that alliance impacts the effectiveness of instructor provided feedback. This study will benefit both instructors and students in fostering positive student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, it will benefit instructors in creating a learning context in which students are more willing to engage with feedback in meaningful ways, and it will benefit students in receiving a more effective form of writing support through their instructor's feedback that contributes to positive writing development in English.

The following chapter outlines the current state of research on the role of instructor feedback, the difficulties of providing effective feedback, student factors that influence feedback effectiveness, and emerging trends in feedback research that highlight the importance of the student-teacher relationship.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study seeks to explore the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship and the impact it has on feedback effectiveness so that it might be possible to improve students' writing development in English as a foreign language in positive ways. As a result, the literature discussed here highlights the current state of research on feedback studies, including the need for instructor provided feedback, inconsistencies in research on feedback effectiveness, student factors that directly impact how feedback is perceived, and new directions in feedback studies which call attention to the role of context, including the student-teacher relationship. In addition, this chapter also outlines the theoretical framework that will be used in the study.

In order to better understand the importance of instructor provided feedback on student writing, an initial search was performed for research literature that would help to clarify how this type of feedback compares to feedback from alternative sources. Parallel searches across a range of databases were performed using the search terms "peer feedback," "peer review," and "writing center." The search term "student perceptions" was used in conjunction with the others in order to maintain a focus on students and their experiences. Limiting the search to peer reviewed texts published between 2010 and 2020 yielded a combined total of 231 results. These were filtered further to include only those studies which were conducted in university settings, incorporated students writing in English as a foreign language, and included direct comparisons to instructor provided feedback as part of the study. This resulted in forty-five papers.

However, as this study is also concerned with feedback effectiveness, a second search was performed using the terms "effective feedback," "student perceptions," and "writing." The literature was filtered even further to limit search results to articles or chapters that had been peer reviewed and published after 2010. This allowed the search to focus only on publications between 2010 and 2020, limiting the results to those of the previous ten years. At the time this search was performed, it resulted in fifty-seven results. After reading through all of the abstracts, any papers which did not focus specifically on feedback on writing, university settings, or formative feedback were discarded. A final search was conducted with the addition of "EFL" and "L2" to ensure that studies on students writing in English as a foreign language would be included. This resulted in fifty papers.

In total, more than one hundred papers were collected and read before paring down those which were the most relevant to the intended topic and focus of this study.

2.1 The Need for Instructor Feedback

To explore the potential problems of current suggestions in the research on student writing at German universities, the following section outlines the major benefits and limitations of alternative feedback sources in comparison to instructor feedback.

Peer Feedback. Peer feedback on written assignments is a well established practice in composition courses. Often referred to as peer reviews or peer review workshops, these activities can reinforce the idea that writing is a process (Baker), promote critical thinking skills (Nicol et al.), and result in higher grades (Yalch et al.). Specifically for EFL students, participating in peer review activities provides them with opportunities to increase their language skills (Lee), helps them to develop a sense of ownership (Tsui and Ng), teaches them how to identify weaknesses in their own writing (Miao et al.), allows them to exercise critical judgment (Mendonça and Johnson), and raises their awareness of the audience (Mendonça and Johnson; Mangelsdorf; Tsui and Ng). However, there are some unique challenges to conducting peer review workshops.

One challenge is considering students' proficiency levels when grouping. For example, David Allen and Amy Mills found that when lower proficiency writers worked with higher proficiency reviewers, the lower proficiency writers were able to receive a high number of feedback suggestions. However, when the roles reversed and the lower proficiency student became the reviewer, they were unable to provide as many feedback suggestions to the higher proficiency student. Such a finding is concerning as the effectiveness of peer reviews comes not from receiving feedback comments from peers but from the critical review of others' texts (Yalch et al.). Although Allen and Mills concede that these lower proficiency students can still benefit from reading texts written by their higher proficiency peers, they argue that in such situations, the lower proficiency students are at a disadvantage in the process of providing feedback, thus limiting their potential for learning. Therefore, students working in mixed proficiency groupings may not be able to make as many learning gains as students working in similar proficiency groupings. This means that instructors who conduct peer review workshops in class need to be strategic in how they group students. Failing to group students effectively could undermine the peer review process for lower proficiency students.

Another challenge is understanding student motivation. For example, in their study, Shulin Yu and Icy Lee found that differing motives impacted the stances that students adopted as both reviewer and writer. Students whose motives focused on product over process did not fully participate, especially in terms of providing feedback suggestions to their peers. These students were not willing to discuss problems in their writing with the group, only focused on

lower level concerns in their revision, and did not see much value in peer feedback. In contrast, students whose motives focused on process over product were more engaged as both a reviewer and a writer. These students made more meaningful revisions, addressing both higher level and lower level concerns, and saw peer feedback as an opportunity for learning. Yu and Lee discovered that students' motives were influenced by a number of factors, including their beliefs about the value of peer feedback and their past experiences with group work in language learning contexts. Wei Zhu and Deborah A. Mitchell also found that students' motives affected their participation in peer review workshops. Some of the students in their study saw the purpose of the peer review workshop as improving their text by receiving feedback suggestions, whereas other students saw the purpose as developing their learning process by providing feedback suggestions. These varying motives could lead to varying learning outcomes of peer review activities.

Several scholars have argued that providing students with training on peer feedback can minimize some of these challenges (Gao et al.; Kim; Min). For example, Hui-Tzu Min conducted a study on peer review workshop outcomes involving students who had received training from their instructor beforehand. She found that after receiving training, students used friendlier tones in their feedback comments and responded more as readers instead of attempting to adopt authoritative stances. In addition, the trained students provided more detailed feedback comments and offered suggestions of ways to revise the issues they found. The findings of their study lend credence to Soo Hyon Kim's argument that adequate training and guidance are important for students who are providing peer feedback. She states that students need to understand the goal of the peer review, and they need to be provided with common language to use in their discussions. Furthermore, as the act of commenting itself can be difficult for students, especially EFL students, she advocates for the need to instruct them on how to give useful feedback to their peers, as well as how to respond to peer feedback. Finally, she addresses the need to continue guiding students afterward in learning how to critically review the feedback suggestions they received. This means that instructors who choose to incorporate peer review workshops also need to spend time preparing and training students in providing feedback in order for the activities to be successful.

However, there are still some concerns among scholars regarding how useful peer review workshops really are for EFL students. One of the main criticisms is that these students often provide low quality feedback suggestions (Hyland and Hyland). For example, in their study, Ying Gao et al. found that the majority of feedback comments students provided to each other focused on basic concerns. While this could be a lack of training (Min), Gao et al. believe

it indicates that the students were not able to recognize the more advanced issues. In another study, Amy Tsui and Maria Ng discovered that even when students were able to recognize more advanced issues in their peers' work, the students were not always able to identify what the problem was or provide suggestions for revision. Complicating this matter is the fact that some EFL students, aware of their peers' limitations as non-native writers, may even be hesitant to incorporate the feedback they receive (Leki). This may explain why other studies have found that EFL students sometimes choose to ignore or reject the feedback suggestions from their peers (Connor and Asenavage; Mendonça and Johnson). Such behaviors indicate that EFL students may not trust that their peers are able to be good critics (Mangelsdorf).

Yet, despite the concerns surrounding peer review workshops and EFL students, peer feedback can be an effective learning tool when used in conjunction with instructor feedback (Caulk; Gao et al.; Hyland and Hyland; Miao et al.; Tsui and Ng). For example, Nat Caulk carried out a study in which he compared peer feedback comments to instructor comments on a set of papers. He found that although the students made valid feedback suggestions, they commented on different issues than the instructor had. While the instructor provided feedback on the paper as a whole, the students tended to only provide feedback comments on specific aspects. When there was an overlap between peer and instructor comments, the students tended to phrase their comments in more specific and direct language, whereas the instructor's comments were more general. In another study, Yang Miao et al. found that the impact of peer and instructor feedback was not the same. Although instructor feedback was incorporated more often and ultimately led to overall greater improvement, students who received feedback from their peers made more revisions to meaning related issues than the students who received instructor feedback. These studies support the argument that peer feedback and instructor feedback fulfill different roles for students, and one cannot replace the other (Tsui and Ng). As students can only help each other within their respective zones of proximal development, peer feedback cannot substitute instructor feedback (Gao et al.).

Writing Center Support. Writing Centers provide students with an additional resource for feedback and assistance on written assignments. Although the tutors are usually students themselves, tutoring sessions in a Writing Center are quite different from peer review workshops (Harris, "Collaboration"). Some of the main differences are that the tutors receive explicit training in writing pedagogy, the focus is on improving the writer and not the specific assignment, the student has the ability to schedule multiple sessions, the goals for each meeting are negotiated between the tutor and the student, and students generally work with tutors at various stages of the writing process (Harris, "Collaboration"). There are a number of benefits

associated with Writing Centers, such as providing a space where students can ask questions that they might not feel comfortable asking their instructors (Harris, "The Writing Center"), increasing students' confidence in their writing abilities (Winstead Fry et al.), and improving their writing abilities (Hoon); however, there are also challenges both for students writing in English as a foreign language and other challenges unique to German university students.

One of the main concerns addressed by Writing Center scholars is EFL writers' desire for proofreading assistance from the tutors (Nakatake; Okuda and Anderson; Powers; Thonus; Voigt and Girgensohn). This is a point of contention as one of the core tenets of Writing Center Theory is that the goal of the sessions should always be to improve the writer and not the assignment (North). However, this approach can be difficult to implement when working with EFL writers as they often come to Writing Centers with finished papers (Voigt and Girgensohn) as opposed to papers that are still in progress. One study even found that students writing in English as a foreign language were the least likely to believe that Writing Center tutors should discuss revision ideas during tutoring sessions (Eckstein). Muriel Harris and Tony Silva posit that tutors might need to help these writers develop their own writing processes. As a result, EFL students looking for proofreading assistance from Writing Centers are routinely turned down, leaving many of them feeling frustrated and disappointed (Nakatake; Okuda and Anderson).

Another concern is the dilemma that arises between the needs of EFL writers and the theoretical approaches behind Writing Center guidelines (Harris and Silva; Powers; Thonus; Voigt and Girgensohn). For example, Terese Thonus analyzed conversations between tutors and EFL writers and found that the tutors had difficulty following their Writing Center training. They were not able to address the EFL writers' concerns because these students only wanted to work on grammar. In addition, the tutors often repeated the students' words back to them and did things to confirm both their and the student's comprehension. As a result, the tutors dominated much of the conversations, which also contradicted their training that the writer should take the lead.

Another study found that EFL writers expected the tutors to be directive during the session (Eckstein); however, Writing Center tutors are trained to use the Socratic method (Powers). This presents another issue as this has also proven ineffective with students writing in English as a foreign language (Powers). Judith K. Powers argues that the reason the non-directive approach fails to work with these students is that they do not have the same background knowledge or experience to draw from that students writing in English as their native language have. The other issue she points out is that EFL students have already learned

how to write in their native language, which may have different priorities, structures, conventions, etc. Therefore, standard tutoring techniques are not effective in these situations. Similarly, she describes how specific strategies can fail. For example, reading a text aloud to catch errors does not work with a lot of students writing in English as a foreign language because they usually have difficulty hearing the problems. Powers also mentions that when these students want more direct help from the tutors, it is often assumed by the tutors that the EFL students are either insecure or lazy. However, she argues that EFL writers have different needs and are not only asking because the writing is unfamiliar, but because the rhetoric is also unfamiliar.

Some scholars have attempted to find ways to bring Writing Center Theory more in line with these writers' needs (Cogie; Harris and Silva; Myers; Nakatake; Okuda and Anderson; Powers). For example, some have argued for more grammar inclusion (Myers; Nakatake; Okuda and Anderson). Sharon A. Myers believes that tutors should not be discouraged from focusing on language level concerns with EFL writers as they are still developing their knowledge of the language. She also argues in favor of tutors being directive with EFL writers. While EFL writers may need more direct assistance than students writing in English as their native language (Powers), not all scholars agree with such direct approaches to grammar concerns. For example, Maiko Nakatake also believes that grammar should be discussed in the tutoring sessions, but she advocates for finding ways to teach the EFL writer about grammar issues instead of proofreading. Harris and Silva admit that tutors may have to deviate from Writing Center Theory as the situation needs when working with EFL students. They argue that instead of focusing on higher order concerns first, tutors should begin with the error type that causes the most interference for the reader and attempt to stretch the tutoring sessions out over multiple sessions. Finally, Powers believes that when working with EFL writers, tutors should conduct themselves more as cultural informants than collaborators.

The majority of studies, however, focus on tutors who are native speakers of English working with writers of various linguistic backgrounds. Writing Centers located at universities in countries where English is not the official language, such as in Germany, where both the tutor and the writer are EFL students, face an additional set of challenges. One such challenge is that, depending on what culture the tutor and writer belong to, it may be difficult, especially for the writer, to adapt to tutoring strategies rooted in collaborative learning (Nakatake). Additionally, because the tutors are themselves learners of English, they may provide the writer with incorrect information (Nakatake). Another challenge is that some students might have reservations about bringing their written assignments to other students who are themselves

English language learners (Zhao). In her study, Yelin Zhao found that many EFL writers believe a productive tutoring session depends more on whether or not the language is the tutor's native language than the tutor's actual knowledge of writing.

In terms of the German context specifically, Gerd Bräuer outlines three major reasons why students might struggle with the concept of Writing Centers. First, he claims that the way writing is taught at German universities does not place emphasis on the writing process. Because some students may receive little feedback from their instructors during the writing process itself, and because some students may not even be required to take a writing course, seeking out writing assistance from the university is not a behavior they are accustomed to. Secondly, Bräuer argues that German students may be hesitant to work with Writing Center tutors who have a different disciplinary background than that of the written assignment the students are working on. He claims that because many of the instructors at German universities have neither received training in writing instruction themselves nor see it as their responsibility to teach, students who receive low grades on their written assignments often assume it is related to discipline-specific knowledge. Finally, German students accustomed to the Continental style of writing may have difficulties working with Writing Center tutors trained in the Anglo-American style of writing (Bräuer) as is typically the case since Writing Centers and the accompanying theory originated in the United States (Barnett and Blumner).

The discordant nature of the two writing styles (see table 1) can create conflict between the instructors and the Writing Centers, with the students at the center. According to Lotte Rienecker and Peter Stray Jörgensen, the Continental style, which has historically dominated European universities, especially in German-speaking countries, privileges content over form, whereas the Anglo-American style privileges form over content. They provide the example that:

> Anglo-American teachers will comment on and punish the *inclusion* of material which is subject-relevant, but which clutters the overall structure and argumentative purpose of the text. Continental teachers will be more likely to comment on *omissions* of content, which could be seen as subject-relevant, thus promoting breadth of information even at the cost of focus and a clear structure. (Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen 104-105)

Furthermore, Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen describe the Continental style as being specific not only to individual discourse communities but often to individual instructors. Therefore, they argue that Writing Centers are unable to effectively assist students with papers written in the Continental style or to even provide students with helpful resources.

Table 1. Continental Style and Anglo-American Style Scientific Writing

← A continuum →	
Continental (German-Romanic) tradition	*Anglo-American (British-American) tradition*
• 'Think'-texts (see below)	• Problem solving texts
• Sources in the foreground	• Problems in the foreground
• Philosophy, the history of ideas, epistemology, culture, spirit and mind, arts and aesthetics	• Facts, realities, observable matters, empiricism
• Emphasis on concepts and theories (methods)	• Emphasis on methods (concepts, theories)
• Interpretation (preservation) of traditional culture	• New understandings, evaluations and actions
• Contingent epistemology	• Controlled, purposeful epistemology
• Numerous points, claims, conclusions, around the subject	• One point, one claim, one conclusion
• Often a non-linear, discursive structure	• Linear structure, digressions discouraged
• ('Exkurse'), digressions allowed	
• Academic writing as art and inborn abilities	• Academic writing as learned craftsmanship

Source: Rienecker, Lotte, and Peter Stray Jörgensen. "The (Im)Possibilities in Teaching University Writing in the Anglo-American Tradition When Dealing with Continental Student Writers." *Teaching Academic Writing in European Higher Education*, edited by Lennart Björk, Gerd Bräuer, Lotte Rienecker, and Peter Stray Jörgensen, Kluwer, 2003, pp. 101-112.

On the other hand, they see the Anglo-American style as a better fit for Writing Centers as it has an established pedagogy that can be taught to and enacted by tutors. However, this can result in students complaining that they receive conflicting information from the Writing Center and their instructors. Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen point out that this problem extends even further as there is also a divide among university instructors, with some preferring students to write in the Continental style and others preferring the Anglo-American style. They concede that this situation creates a limitation for Writing Centers at German universities and recommend that students, especially the ones being asked to write in the Continental style, be able to work closely with their instructor.

Of course, this all assumes that students attend a university that has a Writing Center. Although no comprehensive list of Writing Centers in Germany could be located at the time of

writing, the University of Bielefeld lists thirty-eight university Writing Centers across the country offering support for students writing in German ("Schreiben Anderswo"), but there is no such list for Writing Centers offering services to students working on papers in English. Considering a study on English language Writing Centers at German universities in 2016 was only able to identify nine (Bonazza), and the fact that there are more than 110 universities in Germany ("Allgemeine Informationen"), these numbers help to show that Writing Centers are not universally accessible for students studying in Germany, especially if those students are studying and writing in English.

In summary, Writing Centers and peer feedback can provide students with an additional form of writing support. Their limitations, however, show that students still need writing support directly from their instructors, which is why instructor provided feedback cannot be overlooked.

2.2 The Difficulty of Providing "Effective Feedback"

Despite concerted efforts to improve feedback processes, not only are students expressing more dissatisfaction than ever, but it also remains one of the main areas that students complain about in their courses (Boud and Molloy). Although in some countries, large scale survey results show a slight improvement, feedback is still one of the lowest areas for student satisfaction (Pitt and Norton). For example, one study showed that only 67% of students were satisfied with the quality of the feedback they received (Mulliner and Tucker). Given that feedback is an integral part of learning (Iraj et al.) and one of the most important elements in aiding students' development as writers (Wilson and Post), this is a distressing trend. The fact is too many students are dissatisfied with the feedback they receive and openly criticize both their instructors and their universities for it (Boud and Molloy). The resulting question that scholars and educators alike are left with is why, even with so much research on what makes feedback effective, it continues to fail.

One explanation is the fact that the research findings are not consistent. For example, Shute conducted a research review of over 100 texts in order to determine which characteristics lent themselves to student learning. One feature she found in the literature was that of feedback specificity. She found several studies that supported the idea that feedback which explains how to correct a problem is more effective than feedback which only identifies the fact that a problem exists. However, she also found that nowhere in the literature did anyone define the extent to which feedback should be specific. Complicating this is the fact that she also identified the complexity and length of the feedback comments as being a quality of its effectiveness.

Although her studies supported specific feedback, others warned of the dangers of too much feedback or feedback that is too complex. Looking closer at those studies, though, she found that their findings did not all agree as some studies found no effect related to the complexity of the feedback while others found negative effects. In terms of goal directed feedback, she identified several studies that highlighted the importance of goals in the feedback process and their connection to motivation. However, the research also showed that students were differentially affected based on whether they had a learning orientation towards tasks or a performance orientation towards tasks. She found similar issues with scaffolding and timing. In terms of scaffolding, the studies came to differing conclusions based on what level the student was at. Shute observed that directive feedback, which "tells the student what needs to be fixed or revised" (157), seemed to be more helpful in earlier learning stages, and facilitative feedback, which "provides comments and suggestions to help guide students in their own revision and conceptualization" (157), seemed to be more helpful in later stages, but there was no answer as to when in these stages the two types of feedback should be given. In terms of timing, the research was also inconsistent in that some studies found benefits for delaying feedback while others found benefits for providing it immediately, and still others found negative effects on learning for both options.

This problem of inconsistency is not limited to feedback in general but also exists in the research that looks specifically at feedback on writing. Jody S. Underwood and Alyson P. Tregidgo performed a similar research study as Shute but limited their scope to qualities of effective feedback related to improvements in writing performance. They started from the premise that students need to notice, accept, and understand what to do with feedback in order to profit from it. They used this as a guide for their analysis. Regarding the most effective focus of feedback, they found inconsistencies in three separate areas: what instructors do, what students prefer, and what leads to learning. For example, some studies found that instructors provided more feedback on lower order concerns and others found that the instructors provided more feedback on higher order concerns. Some studies found that students preferred feedback on lower order concerns and others found the opposite. Lastly, the studies did not agree on which type led to more learning, or if there was any difference at all. Complicating these inconsistencies were other studies related to the timing of such feedback. The studies they reviewed did not agree on the timing of feedback related to lower order concerns. They found one explanation for this inconsistency could be related to whether the students were writing in their native language or a foreign language. Similar inconsistencies were found in the research on feedback being more effective when it is directive or facilitative. Underwood and Tregidgo

wondered if perhaps this could be explained by the level of control students feel they have over their writing and how the directive or facilitative feedback impacts that feeling. However, they also found studies that argued simply looking at the feedback does not consider the larger context, including students' beliefs about the instructor's credibility and the overall feedback process itself, which could also contribute to students' feelings of control regardless of the feedback type. Regarding positive feedback versus negative feedback, their review found that this is also tricky as students may not define these the same way as researchers. For example, they pointed out how a comment meant to show a student how to improve would normally be considered negative by researchers, but how studies showed students classifying these types of comments as positive because they found them helpful. Finally, much like Shute, Underwood and Tregidgo ran into the same issues with feedback needing to be specific but at the same time not being too long or complex.

To explore the problem of effective feedback in greater depth, the following section will look closer at three specific qualities that are often referenced in the literature on feedback in general, as well as feedback specifically on written assignments: timeliness, constructiveness, and dialogue.

Timeliness. One of the main qualities of effective feedback that is routinely discussed in the research is timeliness. This is important because when feedback is not received in a timely manner by students, there are very serious consequences. Some of the detrimental effects on students of feedback turnaround times being too long are heightened levels of insecurity (Evans and Waring), feelings of frustration (Pokorny and Pickford), increased anxiety (Shields), and a perceived lack of relevance (McConlogue). When feedback is provided in a timely manner, this can have the opposite effect, calming students and reducing anxiety (Rowe et al.). However, even when feedback is timely, it may not be enough to reduce fears of failure, especially among first-year students (Shields).

The question of what actually constitutes timely feedback raises a number of complex issues. First, regarding turnaround times, faculty and students often have different perceptions of how much time can pass between submitting something and receiving feedback and it still be considered timely. For example, in a recent survey carried out in the United Kingdom, 83% of the 194 students surveyed limited an acceptable time frame for a mid-module paper to fifteen days, whereas almost half of the faculty considered a twenty day turnaround time to still be within the bounds of acceptability (Mulliner and Tucker). This is expounded by the belief of some scholars that delayed feedback can be beneficial in certain cases (Hattie and Timperley). Secondly, timely feedback may not always refer to the turnaround time but to the point in the

semester when it is given. For example, many students lack the motivation to act on feedback that comes at the end of the semester because they do not find it useful (Carless, "Longitudinal"). This is why some scholars suggest that such feedback be relevant to the courses which follow (McConlogue). However, even then, if feedback is offered too close to holidays or breaks, students may be less receptive to it (Handley et al.). Complicating this even further is the fact that students do not all respond to their feedback at the same time (Price et al.)

For students, timely feedback seems to be more about immediate application. This generally refers to either the assignment itself or subsequent assignments within the same course or module. For example, in Helen Pokorny and Pamela Pickford's study, they found that students only considered formative feedback to be helpful. This may be because submitting assignments without the opportunity to receive feedback and revise before receiving a grade can leave students with more anxiety and less confidence (Shields). In another study, students reported that timely feedback to them meant that there was still another graded assignment to which they could apply it (Carless, "Longitudinal"). This supports calls in the literature to provide feedback when students are best able to use it, which is usually in conjunction with subsequent tasks (Henderson et al., "Conditions")

In summary, the timeliness of feedback is critical to its effectiveness; however, timing is not easy to determine. The literature suggests that there are three aspects to timely feedback: when it's provided in relation to assignments, when it's provided in relation to the course, and how long the turnaround time is. Given that students and faculty may hold different opinions regarding what qualifies as timely feedback and the fact many students experience a range of negative emotions as a result of feedback that is not considered timely, finding a way to provide feedback that is perceived as timely to the student becomes of great importance.

Constructiveness. Another quality of effective feedback that appears in the literature is constructiveness. In other words, feedback needs to go beyond simply pointing out errors and offer advice for how to improve (Henderson et al., "Challenges"). In their study, Felicity Small and Kath Attree found that feedback that was not constructive was not considered useful by first and second-year students, and Emma Mulliner and Matthew Tucker's survey results showed that nearly all students and faculty were in agreement that feedback needed to provide direction for improvement. Yet despite the shared consensus that feedback needs to be constructive, studies of student perceptions often find that students are routinely disappointed in this area. Some common findings as to why students feel the feedback they receive is not constructive are that the information itself is not enough (Vincelette and Bostic), it is not as

detailed as they want it to be (Henderson et al., "Challenges"), or it does not provide explicit instructions (Price et al.).

However, it may not actually be that there is a lack of constructive feedback in these studies but that students in different fields may not define it the same way. Christopher Watling et al. carried out a study of students from three different disciplines (music, medicine, and education). They discovered that although all students expressed a desire for constructive feedback, they each varied as to what that entailed. For example, music students defined constructive feedback as that which pointed out what they were doing wrong, and they did not consider praise to be helpful at all. Medical students defined constructive feedback as that which built confidence or highlighted their weaknesses, and education students defined constructive feedback as that which reinforced things they did well alongside suggestions for improvement. Therefore, student dissatisfaction with a lack of constructive feedback may be connected to discipline, or even course, specific expectations.

One other factor that emerges in the literature is a difference in how students define constructive feedback based on their level of study. For example, students towards the beginning of their studies, including the first and second year, show a preference for feedback that tells them how to improve (Small and Attree). However, for many students early in their university career, critical feedback can compound existing feelings of insecurity about their ability to succeed (Shields). This supports related findings that first-year students often need encouraging feedback that builds their confidence first before receiving critical feedback (Carless, "Longitudinal"). On the other hand, students who have progressed further through their programs also desire feedback that tells them how to improve, but their preferred focus might be more on future assignments as opposed to the assignment they received the feedback on (Killingback et al.). This means that depending on a student's level of study, their needs of constructive feedback may not be the same. Unfortunately, even when students perceive their feedback as constructive, they may still have difficulties knowing how to implement it (Winstone et al., "It'd be Useful")

In summary, in order for feedback to be effective, it needs to be constructive. Two issues arise in the literature that may influence student perceptions of what constitutes constructive feedback: the level of study and the area of study. A misalignment between context-specific expectations and the feedback provided may account for student dissatisfaction with the level of constructive feedback they feel they receive. However, even when students believe they have received constructive feedback, sometimes they still are unsure how to implement it.

Dialogue. In order to provide students with personalized feedback, the literature has shifted over the years to focus increasingly on dialogue as a primary characteristic of effective feedback. Dialogic feedback can be defined as "interactive exchanges in which interpretations are shared, meanings negotiated and expectations clarified" (Carless, "Trust" 90). This concept of dialogic feedback stands in contrast to the traditional way of providing feedback, especially on written assignments, which until fairly recently consisted of mostly written comments, either in the margin, at the end, or both. Not only do students express a desire for dialogic feedback (Carless, "Trust"), but studies have found that many students find written comments alone to be lacking (Henderson et al., "Conditions"). For example, one study found that students who only received written comments without any accompanying dialogue experience feelings of frustration and disengagement (Price et al.), while another found that students who are able to see or hear the feedback provider feel there is less room for misinterpretation (Killingback et al.). Although dialogic feedback can take many forms (including in the classroom, as part of peer review workshops, or in written comments), when it comes to personalized dialogic feedback, the literature tends to focus on student conferences and screencasting.

Student conferences refer to students meeting privately with their instructors to discuss their feedback, and many students find these conferences invaluable. For example, Clare Killingback et al. found that students' desires for dialogue typically have to do with understanding grading criteria, the grading process itself, and feedback post-assessment. This correlates with another study that found that students value verbal feedback because it allows them to clarify things and avoid misinterpretation (Pitt and Norton). Regarding written assignments specifically, sometimes students need those face-to-face conversations in order to understand the feedback (Evans and Waring), and some students believe that interpreting feedback can only be accomplished through dialogue (Price et al.). This is why student conferences are especially helpful for students who find the written comments they receive either confusing or frustrating (Best et al.). Some studies have even found that providing negative feedback in person can be less threatening than when it is delivered through another mode (Fong et al.)

However, despite the benefits of student conferences, many students either do not like them or do not make use of them, and the reasons are wide-ranging. For example, first-year students may lack confidence and be hesitant to talk with their instructor for fear of seeming unintelligent (Handley et al.). One study even found a correlation between the course discipline and the student's major (Wilson and Post). They discovered that students minoring in English

were less likely to seek out student conferences with their instructors than students who were not minoring in English, possibly indicating that non-minors value the instructor feedback more (Wilson and Post). Other students simply dislike student conferences because they worry about forgetting things that were discussed (Pitt and Norton). They may feel guilty for falling behind or embarrassed about wanting feedback in general (Pokorny and Pickford). Some may have had poor experiences with student conferences in the past (Price et al.) and others may simply find the location of the conference threatening (Handley et al.). Additionally, they will also avoid student conferences if they do not feel comfortable with the instructor (Pokorny and Pickford).

The second form of dialogic feedback is often referred to as screencasting. This multimodal feedback is delivered to the student as a video made with a program like Screencast-o-Matic, Jing, or QuickTime. Within these videos, students are able to watch a screen recording of their instructor pointing to specific places in their paper while talking through their feedback. This form of video feedback has been characterized as "the next best thing to face-to-face conferences without the time commitment" (Vincelette and Bostic 259) and has shown promise in fostering writing development more effectively than written comments alone (Ali; Grigoryan).

Studies have shown several positive reactions from students to screencasting. For example, students who receive screencast feedback not only appreciate its conversational nature (Cranny) but also tend to see feedback as a dialogical process (Ali). This feeling of conversation can result in students feeling less judgment and more guidance (Anson et al.). In addition, screencast feedback tends to improve students' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship (Marshall et al.). It builds better rapport (Vincelette and Bostic) and helps to establish a sense of connection (Anson et al.) between the student and the instructor. Students also report feeling more emotionally supported. For example, one study found that students find screencast feedback to be less threatening because they can see their instructor's face and hear their tone of voice, which makes the students more open to the feedback (Marshall et al.). Screencasting can also make students feel like their instructor is more invested. Because students recognize the amount of time required to make the video, they feel like their instructors put in a lot of effort (Anson et al.). This makes them feel like their instructors actually want to help them (Anson et al.), which results in students feeling that they are taken care of and respected (Anson et al.). Finally, students enjoy the practicality of screencasting. Not only do they consider video feedback to be clear in terms of what needs to be improved (Cranny) but they also enjoy being able to rewatch their feedback videos (Ali; Cranny; Bush).

However, depending on the student's background, screencasting may actually work as a barrier to feedback. For example, one study showed that EFL students can sometimes be at a disadvantage with this type of feedback (Soden). Students in that study reported difficulties processing what they were hearing and seeing at the same time. They reported having to concentrate harder and sometimes having to rewatch sections where the instructor spoke too quickly. In another study, students openly identified their listening skills in English as a hurdle to being able to fully understand the feedback (Ali). Finally, EFL students may not find screencasting a useful tool for grammar related feedback (Ali).

In summary, for feedback to be effective, it needs to be dialogic. However, being dialogic does not make it effective. In order for feedback to truly be dialogic, the student must also participate; however, this does not always happen. The literature points to four reasons why students may not engage in the dialogic process: a lack of language abilities, low confidence levels, negative feelings about the student-teacher relationship, and not valuing a particular instructor's feedback.

2.3 Student Factors that Influence Feedback Effectiveness

The preceding section highlighted the complex nature of feedback and some of the difficulties instructors face in providing students with effective feedback. As it is evident that there is no simple answer to the question of what makes feedback effective, it is necessary to better understand what might undermine or enhance students' relationships to the feedback they receive. Therefore, this section will explore three specific factors that have been shown to mitigate students' responsiveness to, acceptance of, and engagement with feedback.

Perceptions of the Feedback. Studies have shown that students' perceptions of the feedback comments they receive on their work can impact its effectiveness. For example, if students perceive feedback to be confusing or unclear, they may choose to ignore it (Best et al.). They may also become frustrated if they consider the feedback to be somehow hypocritical. For example, it might be especially frustrating for students to receive feedback that comments on the clarity of their writing but is itself written in complicated language (Winstone et al., "It'd be Useful"). Additionally, the perception of feedback being helpful can impact students' beliefs about their own learning. For example, a student in one study reported feeling "a total lack of achievement" because she felt that the feedback comments she received focused on areas that were not actually helpful to her (Carless, "Longitudinal" 9). Students' writing abilities can be further harmed by the perception of feedback comments as conveying subjective requirements. As a result, students may develop the belief that good writing is

arbitrary, thus diminishing their confidence (Wilson and Post). On the other hand, certain perceptions can have a positive effect on the effectiveness of feedback. For example, Fong et al. found that feedback which is perceived as either constructive, supportive, or helpful can actually mitigate some of the detrimental impacts of negative assessments. In other words, when students receive feedback that indicates their work needs to be improved, their intrinsic motivation to revise or complete the task may not be impacted in a negative manner if they believe the feedback to exhibit these characteristics. Similarly, findings have also shown that feedback which includes commentary on strengths can increase students' motivation and make them more receptive to critical commentary (Henderson et al., "Challenges").

The difficulty is that students may not perceive feedback comments the same way. For example, studies have shown that students are more likely to consider feedback useful when it provides suggestions that the student can use to achieve tangible results (Bailey). However, this might backfire for other students as a different study showed that feedback which includes improvement strategies can actually lower students' self-efficacy beliefs (Duijnhouwer et al.). According to that study, students may interpret the inclusion of strategies as the instructor's lack of confidence in their writing abilities (Duijnhouwer et al.).

In summary, certain qualities of feedback comments can impact how students respond to them. The deciding factor, though, of whether that impact is positive or negative, depends on the student. How they perceive the feedback comments as either helpful, supportive, relevant, or understandable, or what messages they read into the comments, is what makes feedback effective or not.

Experienced Emotions. In connection with students' perceptions of feedback are the emotions they experience as part of that process. These emotions, especially when they are negative, can impede students' learning potential (Henderson et al., "Conditions"). One study found that feelings of confusion can impact students' engagement levels with feedback. According to Anna D. Rowe et al., when students experience feelings of confusion in response to feedback, it can prevent them from being able to understand the feedback and can contribute to feelings of frustration (Rowe et al.). Rowe et al. also found that sometimes confusion even leads to anxiety when students believe their attempts to clarify the feedback are unsuccessful. Similarly, feedback that negatively impacts a student's feelings of confidence can influence their engagement with feedback. Students whose feedback hurts their confidence levels describe the feedback as making them feel demoralized, hurt, and devastated, which makes them more reluctant to engage with the feedback (Rowe et al.). On the other hand, Sam Shields

observed that students whose feedback raises their confidence levels find it much easier emotionally to engage with the feedback.

Two emotions that can play an especially large role in students' perceptions of feedback are feeling disrespected and anger. For example, how a student perceives feedback as showing respect or disrespect can influence their perception of its quality (Rowe et al.). Feedback that is given in an "accusing tone" or that is perceived to be "derogatory," "condescending," or "offensive" can make students feel disrespected (Taggart and Laughlin 6). Additionally, students might also feel disrespected if the feedback makes them "feel stupid" (Taggart and Laughlin 6). In contrast, feedback that demonstrates an appreciation of both the student's efforts and abilities can be interpreted by students as a sign of respect (Rowe et al.). Similarly, feelings of anger may undermine the effectiveness of feedback. Rowe et al. identified two main instances when students experience anger in response to feedback. The first is when students believe the feedback is of poor quality, the grade is not reflective of their effort, or the grading process itself seems unfair. However, when students feel there is a level of transparency regarding the grading criteria and see this reflected in the feedback, they experience the opposite of anger: happiness (Rowe et al.). The second instance in which students feel angry about feedback is when it fails to meet their expectations. One explanation for this is that students see the value in feedback and view a lack of adequate feedback as a barrier to learning. However, Rowe et al. argue that anger can potentially be mitigated by gratitude. Therefore, feelings of anger may be preventable if the student feels thankful for the feedback.

Closely related to feelings of gratitude are feelings of love. In their study, Rowe et al. define love as that which is "associated with the caregiving aspects of feedback" (290). They found that students tend to feel love most often being communicated through the content of the feedback. Specifically, they reported experiencing feelings of love when they perceived the feedback to be of high quality. The students defined high quality feedback as that which was "detailed, constructive and considerate, and which included suggestions for improvement and an explanation for the grade awarded" (Rowe et al. 292).

However, emotional impacts on feedback effectiveness go beyond immediate reactions. When it concerns writing, students' emotional connections to their work can also influence how they perceive feedback comments. For example, first year students who may already feel insecure about their abilities may have trouble separating themselves from their work (Shields). This means that even if feedback is directed at their writing, the student may still view it as a personal criticism. Such personal readings of feedback can occur with experienced students as well (Ballenger and Myers). In other words, writing and feedback can both be extremely

personal, especially in students who may already feel insecure about their writing abilities (Taggart and Laughlin). Suggestions in the literature to avoid commenting on students' personal characteristics and instead focus on their work (Hattie and Timperley; Rowe et al.) may be moot when the work is a written text. For example, students might interpret feedback on writing to be a critique of their personal values (Taggert and Laughlin). In such situations, the student may see the feedback as being directed at them instead of their writing (Taggert and Laughlin). Because writing is for many students a personal act, they may feel a heightened sensitivity to their instructor's feedback.

In summary, the emotions a student experiences during the feedback process can influence their perceptions of the feedback and impact their responses to it. Feelings of love and gratitude have shown to result in positive effects, while feelings of anger, disrespect, and confusion have shown to result in negative effects. However, the personal nature of writing may result in students experiencing critical feedback on their work as a direct critique of themselves.

Beliefs about the Feedback Provider. Students' perceptions of feedback and the emotions they experience can be influenced by their feelings towards the person providing the feedback. There is evidence in the literature that there are consequences to students' feedback and help seeking behaviors when they do not feel comfortable with their instructor. For example, they may not be willing to accept offers of student conferences to discuss their feedback with the instructor. Pokorny and Pickford found that students who felt embarrassed or lacked confidence with their progress would not accept one-on-one offers from their instructors. As for what contributes to students feeling uncomfortable with their instructors, it seems to be related to feelings of insecurity. For example, one study found that students may be hesitant to discuss their writing with their instructors because they fear the instructor will judge them (Carless, "Differing"). Other student responses imply that students may be afraid to ask their instructors questions for fear of appearing unintelligent or even disrespectful (Handley et al.). They might also feel uncomfortable with an instructor who has an intimidating academic identity (Sutton and Gill). Finally, some students report feeling uncomfortable talking to their instructors because of earlier instances in which the student reached out to the instructor to discuss their feedback but was either rebuffed or seemingly dismissed (Price et al.).

Findings clearly show that when students do not feel comfortable with the person providing the feedback, they are less likely to discuss the feedback. This is a problem for two reasons. First, many students believe that being able to have a conversation with the instructor

about their feedback is necessary to fully understand the feedback (Price et al.), and second, negative feedback may be received better by students when delivered in a face-to-face setting (Fong et al.). Students who avoid discussions with their instructors lose the opportunity to clarify confusing feedback and may interpret negative feedback in a harsher manner than it might have been intended.

Various findings also seem to suggest that feeling that the instructor cares, either about teaching or about the student themself, influences how responsive students are to feedback. For example, when students believe that the instructor cares about teaching, they see the feedback as a reflection of that (Holmes and Papageorgiou). In other words, there is a tendency to equate the quality of the feedback with the instructor's investment in teaching (Holmes and Papageorgiou). Additionally, when students believe that the instructor cares about teaching, they are often more willing to engage with the feedback (Sutton and Gill). However, when instructors are perceived not to care, feedback can be viewed as a reflection of that (Sutton and Gill). Students might also choose not to use feedback if they feel their instructor's intentions are not genuine (Eva et al.). This might also have implications for learning. For example, one study found that when students perceive the feedback as generic, this can lead them to view writing as a means of assessing their knowledge instead of a tool for learning (K. Hyland). As for how students determine whether or not their instructors care, this might be related to the feedback practices. Depending on an instructor's feedback choices, students may interpret the instructor as either invested or uninterested in their learning (F. Hyland).

These findings highlight the fact that students not only assess the quality of the feedback but also make decisions about its usefulness based on the level of care they perceive their instructors demonstrate towards teaching and their students. This raises the question as to whether students who report dissatisfaction with the feedback they receive on their written assignments have legitimate complaints about the quality or if they are simply assessing it in light of negative perceptions of their instructors. Furthermore, it is not overly clear from these studies what students actually mean by "caring" (Sutton and Gill) or on what criteria they are basing such judgments.

Studies in the field of writing instruction have found that students do sometimes assess the competence level of the person providing the feedback, such as peers and Writing Center tutors, and that these assessments can affect students' decisions about what to do with that feedback (Bräuer; Connor and Asenavage; Leki; Mangelsdorf; Mendonça and Johnson). Whether or not students make competence judgments about their instructors in their interactions with feedback on written assignments, though, is unclear. Perhaps there is an

assumption among researchers that students will always consider the instructor competent simply because they are the instructor. However, studies in other fields have shown that students do in fact make competence judgments about instructors. For example, Bing-You et al. found that residents in medical programs admitted they would dismiss feedback from someone they believed to lack either knowledge or experience as a physician.

Students clearly make competence judgments about the person providing them feedback; however, little is known about such judgments when it concerns instructors and written assignments. Consider the comments from a student in one study who explained why they prioritized the instructor's feedback over their peer's feedback. They described the instructor as "professional, experienced, and trustworthy" (Miao et al. 188). Is it conceivable that a student might not find their instructor to be professional, experienced, or trustworthy? And if so, what would the consequences be for the feedback? These questions, along with how a student makes such determinations, have yet to be answered in the literature.

In addition to certain judgments students make about the instructor, there is also evidence that their perceptions of the student-teacher relationship with their instructors can impact their feedback behaviors and even their learning potential. For example, negative feelings about the student-teacher relationship can impact students' help-seeking behaviors (Wilson and Post). Students might also ignore or reject feedback if they feel the instructor does not have enough direct knowledge of their work (Eva et al.). They might also dismiss feedback from authority figures who do not seem to be invested in their learning (Bing-You et al.). While these examples mostly refer to students in residency programs receiving feedback on their performance, it does raise a question regarding feedback on written assignments and what instructor behaviors or characteristics might lead to similar responses.

What is known about writing related feedback and the student-teacher relationship is that students who feel they have a poor relationship with their instructors may feel restricted in their writing (Wilson and Post). In essence, they may feel compelled to please the instructor, which can result in students addressing feedback without critically engaging with it (Wilson and Post). While this might not seem like a problem at first glance, researchers point out that just because a student implements their instructor's feedback does not mean that they have learned anything from it (Wilson and Post). This can be seen in another study which found that some students were unhappy with their papers, even though they received good grades, because they felt they had no choice but to implement their instructor's feedback as the instructor was the ultimate authority (Yagelski). Without a positive student-teacher relationship, students may not critically engage with their instructor's feedback, which can limit their potential for

learning (Wilson and Post). Finally, students who feel they have a good relationship with their instructor may feel more confident about working with their feedback. This is because it is easier to understand the thinking behind the feedback when students feel that they really know their instructor (Holmes and Papageorgiou). In other words, how students perceive feedback is directly influenced by the student-teacher relationship (Holmes and Papageorgiou).

In summary, what students think and believe about the person providing feedback directly impacts both their emotions and their perceptions of feedback. Their relationship with their instructor can influence how effective students assess the feedback to be, what they do with the feedback, what they learn from the feedback, and whether or not they are willing to engage in conversations about the feedback. Therefore, it would seem that effective feedback is that which is both educational and rhetorically effective.

2.4 New Directions in Feedback Studies

In light of the complex and individualized nature of students' responses to and interactions with feedback, there have been a number of calls in the literature for new approaches (Ajjawi et al.; Evans et al.; Goldstein, "Feedback"; Goldstein, "Questions"; Henderson et al., "Conditions"; Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'"; Winstone et al., "Supporting"). The common consensus among each of these scholars is that our thinking about feedback needs to be completely reconceptualized. They argue that feedback is "a complex intervention that is dependent on the characteristics of the learning context, the source of the feedback, the individual recipient, and the message that is generated" (Boud and Molloy 8). As such, any feedback interventions that fail to account for the larger context will likely prove less effective (Ajjawi et al.).

Scholars advocating for alternative approaches to feedback have argued for the need to consider contextual factors. Although there are a small number of studies that investigate the impact of context on students' interactions with feedback, the majority of the articles only attempt to provide frameworks for examining the relationship between the two.

For example, Rola Ajjawi et al. explored the contextual influences on feedback practices and the impacts they can have on students by using Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. In their application, the first system students move through is the microsystem, which consists of individual classes and, because they were specifically looking at medical programs, clinics and simulation learning environments. In each of these microsystems, students receive feedback from different sources, including teachers, peers, administrators, and patients, in relation to what they do in those individual settings. The mesosystem encompasses

the various microsystems, and this is where Ajjawi et al. argue that students learn that feedback practices and expectations are not always the same in each context. For example, the mesosystem at a German university would be the module to which the individual courses (microsystems) belong. Depending on the microsystem, students may interact with the feedback differently or exhibit different levels of help-seeking behaviors which, under some circumstances, can lead to a negative impact on their learning.

Behind the mesosystem is the exosystem, which consists of the individuals responsible for developing and setting the standards for the various microsystems. For example, with the classroom microsystem, this would be those individuals tasked with designing the curriculum or developing the exams. Students typically will not have any direct interaction with the exosystem, but it can and does directly impact the student and the feedback practices they encounter. One example is whether or not the curriculum is designed in a way to allow for students to apply feedback they receive on future tasks or in future situations. Similarly, the macrosystem also has a filter down effect. This level basically refers to the discipline that encompasses the exosystem and microsystem. For example, the macrosystem that encompasses a Literature course would be the discipline of English or Literary Studies. Ajjawi et al. argue that the discipline, or the macrosystem, can have a direct effect on feedback practices and students' beliefs about feedback as every discipline is imbued with its own set of beliefs. Finally, encompassing all of the other systems is the chronosystem, which refers to changes over time. They point out that students further into their studies will have different levels of feedback literacy than students who are at the beginning of their studies. On the other hand, students who may have experienced negative feedback interactions during the course of their studies might also hold cynical views about feedback later in their studies.

What Ajjawi et al. try to show is that each of these "systems" can impact the effectiveness of feedback and that in order to improve feedback practices, educators need to address the whole system. For example, they suggest perhaps instructors need to talk to students early on about the various systems and warn them about challenges they might encounter regarding feedback. They also argue that instructors should consider the different systems when they provide feedback to ensure that it supports all of them.

While Ajjawi et al. offer a large-scale approach to thinking about context and feedback, Norman W. Evans et al. looked specifically at contextual factors that influence feedback on writing. They categorized them into three types of variables: learner, situational, and methodological. According to them, the learner variables include all of the things the student brings to the learning situation with them. This could include things like their native language,

background, motivation, and goals (Evans et al.). In their discussion of learner variables, they also point out that others in the research have posited that it is these learner variables that are likely the reason why studies on feedback result in such inconsistent findings. The situational variables, such as "the teacher, the physical environment, the learning atmosphere, or even political and economic conditions" (Evans et al. 450), can also have an impact on feedback. These can be either positive or negative. For example, they argue that if the temperature in a classroom is uncomfortable, it can impede a student's learning, or if the instructor is not competent, it can have a negative impact. The final category, methodological, refers to instructional methodology and encompasses two things: what is taught and how it is taught. However, for their subsequent study, they chose to focus exclusively on methodological variables because they argue these are the only variables of the three which can be controlled.

Although their categories may be helpful in considering what the specific contextual factors are that can influence feedback, their exclusion of learner variables is problematic as these are the variables which typically have the largest impact on the learning context (Evans et al.). Instructors may not have any control over learner variables, but they can try to accommodate them.

Michael Henderson et al. carried out a large-scale study of over 4,000 Australian university students to determine the conditions that enable effective feedback ("Conditions"). Their goal was to "explain the experience of feedback as a dynamic of the varied influences at the level of the individual learner and educator, alongside the layered context of the classroom, faculty and university" (1402). They were able to identify twelve conditions that enable effective feedback, which they grouped into three categories. The first is the capacity for feedback. Henderson et al. describe the related conditions as consisting of a shared understanding and valuing of feedback, a student's willingness to participate in the feedback process, as well as an instructor's willingness to critically assess the effectiveness of their feedback practices, and access to collaborative spaces and technology. The second category they identified is the design for feedback. Because their focus was on conditions and not qualities, they deviated from the traditional approaches in that they did not look at the feedback itself. Instead, they describe design in terms of whether or not it provides information that the students are able to use, is individualized to the student's needs, uses a variety of sources and modes, and aligns learning outcomes across a series of related tasks. The third category they identified is a culture for feedback. The conditions they described for this group consist of feedback being valued at all levels of an institution, the use of quality assurance processes, the

commitment of administrators, and instructors having flexibility to alter feedback practices as they see fit for their individual classes.

However, Henderson et al. admit that even the idea of conditions that enable effective feedback is highly complex as they can be met in a variety of ways and can impact each other. Additionally, they note that the educators they surveyed reported that students being active in the feedback process and tailoring feedback to students' individual needs were the most difficult of the twelve to address, and "the most common reasons centered on staff and student attitudes" (Henderson et al., "Conditions" 1413). As a result, Henderson et al. argue that future studies should try to understand how conditions that enable effective feedback can be moderated by contextual variables.

Naomi E. Winstone et al. wanted to identify how that could be done. They began their research review from the premise that not all feedback interactions have the same impact on learning, so there is a need to understand how feedback effectiveness can be maximized ("Supporting"). They started, similar to Evans et al., by first categorizing contextual factors that have the potential to influence students' engagement with feedback; however, their next steps were to identify interventions that promote student engagement and to determine which recipience process each intervention supported.

In terms of the contextual factors, they were a bit more specific than Evans et al. They categorized the contextual factors into four groups: receiver, sender, message, and context. Similar to the learner variables, the receiver refers to the student. This category includes things like the student's motivation, whether or not they are capable of working with the feedback, the extent to which the student is willing, or able, to act on the feedback, their academic skills, and how satisfied they are with their grade. The sender refers to the instructor and includes whether or not they are credible and the extent to which any power imbalances between them and the student exist. Much like traditional approaches to feedback, the message refers to specific characteristics of the feedback such as the quality, focus, content, level of specificity, and wording. Finally, they include opportunities for dialogue, feedback training, timing, and assessment/curriculum design in the context category.

They then identified four feedback recipience processes and connected them to specific interventions that have been shown to support them. For example, the first recipience process they identified was self-appraisal. They observed that self-appraisal can help to support recipience by enabling students to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Interventions, or tasks, that can support self-appraisal are peer review activities, self-assessment activities, portfolios, feedback workshops, and feedback resources. The second recipience process was

assessment literacy. This could support proactive recipience by enabling the student to understand what is expected of them, to assess their work against grading criteria, and be able to provide feedback to others. Tasks that can support assessment literacy are peer review activities, feedback workshops, feedback resources, engagement with the grading criteria, and sample papers. The third recipience process, goal-setting and self-regulation, can be found in tasks such as discussions, portfolios, and action plans. These recipience processes can promote proactive recipience by enabling students to both verbalize their weaknesses and adjust where necessary. The final recipience process they identified was engagement and motivation. These support proactive recipience by motivating students to not only want to read their feedback but to also desire an understanding of their feedback. Tasks associated with increased engagement and motivation are discussions, actions plans, feedback resources, formative assessments, feedback without a grade, individualized feedback, and the use of technology.

Although Winstone et al. move the conversation forward in that they identify recipience processes and the various interventions which target them, they also point out that their review "highlights many variables that could influence proactive recipience, yet it also shows that relatively little is known about the higher-order interactions between those variables" ("Supporting" 34). This call for research into how variables interact with each other to influence the feedback process has been repeated by other scholars as well (Goldstein, "Feedback"; Goldstein, "Questions").

Lynn M. Goldstein argues that feedback on writing requires instructors to be aware of the fact that it is a highly complex process in which contextual factors, including those specific to the teacher and the student, routinely interact with and influence each other ("Feedback"; "Questions"). In her description of teacher factors, she describes such elements as their personality, their pedagogical beliefs about feedback, their attitudes towards the topic their students are writing about, and their attitudes towards the student ("Questions"). Her description of student factors includes aspects such as their age, past learning experiences, motivation, and proficiency level ("Questions"). However, she also includes the student's attitude towards "the teacher, the class, the content, the writing assignment, and the commentary itself" (Goldstein, "Questions" 67).

One of her arguments is that the interaction between teacher and student factors can influence both the instructor's feedback practices and the student's response to that feedback ("Feedback"). She describes a situation in which a student chose to ignore certain feedback comments from their instructor because the student felt she did not have the time to address all of the comments or seek out assistance from her instructor, and because this student preferred

to do the majority of her revisions on the final draft when she knew it would be graded. The instructor interpreted the student's lack of revision during the drafting process as laziness and simply repeated the same comments over and over again on the various drafts. Using this example, Goldstein points out how contextual factors, including the student's workload and the grading setup of the particular assignment, and teacher factors, including the instructor's attitude towards the student, interacted with each other to negatively impact the feedback interactions.

Goldstein describes how the student failed to ask the instructor any questions about the feedback comments she did not know how to address ("Feedback"). When pressed as to why she had not sought the help of her instructor, the student only cited time constraints. However, Goldstein notes that the instructor's actions may have contributed to the student's reluctance as the instructor never offered any help with the areas that were either not being revised or being revised incorrectly, nor did the instructor ever ask the student if she was having problems. Although the student did not know how to correct the areas being commented on in the feedback, because she never asked her instructor for help, the instructor assumed the student did not need help and attributed her behavior to a lack of effort. Goldstein observes that the student "constructed [the instructor] as (1) someone to whom she would not ask questions when she was having difficulty or did not understand her feedback, and (2) as someone who would not penalize her for failing to revise in response to feedback" ("Feedback" 201). On the other hand, the instructor constructed the student as "(1) competent, since she did not ask questions or indicate difficulty, and thus seemed capable of understanding and using what [the instructor] believed to be clear feedback, and (2) 'lazy' for not revising in response to [the] commentary" ("Feedback" 201).

Goldstein argues that only looking at the feedback itself "will miss the incredible complexity of factors that interact with each other as students write, teachers comment, and students revise" ("Feedback" 203).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The discussions of feedback and context demonstrate that there are several variables interacting with each other that can impact the effectiveness of that feedback in either a positive or negative way. They also show that every situation is unique in terms of the specific variables and the ways in which those variables interact. Therefore, the theoretical framework for this study integrates theories from both psychotherapy and writing studies that when combined

have the potential to improve the effectiveness of feedback in a way that moderates any negative contextual factors or interactions between variables.

Educational Alliance. The concept of the educational alliance evolved from two other types of alliances in the field of psychotherapy. The first is the therapeutic alliance, which refers to the relationship that is established between a therapist and patient. The second is the working alliance, which also refers to the patient-therapist relationship but places more emphasis on the role of collaboration.

The term "working alliance" was first used by Ralph Greeson in 1965 and was meant to "emphasize [a] patient's capacity to work jointly with [their] therapist towards change" (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'" 611). It refers to "the collaborative and affective bond between therapist and patient" and "is an essential element of the therapeutic process" (Martin et al. 438). In the 1970s, Edward S. Bordin expanded on this idea further by proposing that working alliances could be understood as consisting of three features. These included "an agreement on goals, an assignment of task or a series of tasks, and the development of bonds" (Bordin, "Generalizability" 253). Bordin argued that any therapeutic goal of change within the patient requires at least some amount of agreement between the two individuals involved. His idea of tasks referred to what was done during the course of the therapy in order to achieve the goal, and Bordin argued that there was a direct connection between goal and task. He claimed, "The strength of [the] working alliance will depend on how well the person seeking change understands the connection between the assigned tasks and the goal and on how well the demands of the task fit his or her ability to make a start on that task" ("A Working Alliance" 35). Finally, Bordin characterized the bond as a mutual feeling of "liking, caring, and trusting" ("A Working Alliance" 36).

In the following years, countless studies were carried out on these various alliances and a number of measurement tools were developed to better understand the variables at play in these relationships. Of the tools that have proven most useful for educational studies is the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI) developed by Adam Horvath and Leslie Greenberg. Based on the work of Bordin, Horvath and Greenberg developed a list of thirty-six statements of which twelve related to goal, twelve to task, and twelve to bond. Respondents were then asked to rate their belief about each statement on a five point Likert scale. Horvath and Greenberg developed two versions of the WAI in order to individually assess the perceptions of both the therapist and the patient. Since then, the WAI has been adapted into a number of different versions (see figure 1). Where the WAI has been adapted to educational settings in the medical field, researchers generally refer to the relationship as the educational alliance (Telio et al.,

"Feedback"). Where the WAI has been adapted to traditional educational settings, such as K-12 classes, researchers usually refer to the relationship as either the classroom working alliance (Toste et al.), and where it has been adapted to certain undergraduate settings, it is referred to as the learning alliance (Rogers). Although researchers seem to be carrying their studies out entirely independent of each other, using slightly different measurements, all three approaches have demonstrated the value of alliances in student learning.

What sets them apart, however, is their focus. Studies on the classroom working alliance and the learning alliance tend to focus on different issues than those on the educational alliance. While studies that reference the learning or classroom working alliance consider a range of topics, such as students with emotional disorders (Knowles et al.) or high school dropout rates (Noble et al.), contemporary studies on the educational alliance focus specifically on the connection between the student-teacher relationship and feedback. This iteration was originally conceptualized as a response to what some medical educators saw as a gap in the literature on feedback (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'").

The term "educational alliance" was originally used by CS Fleckles to describe the relationship that develops between students and supervisors in psychiatry residency programs (Mottern). He and several others saw parallels between the patient-therapist relationship and that of therapists-in-training with their supervisors, and as a result began exploring the role of this relationship through the lens of the therapeutic alliance. Specifically, Summer Telio et al. were concerned that "best practice recommendations [in the research] focus on feedback *content* and *delivery* and give little attention to the recipient or to the context of the supervisory relationship in which feedback is being experienced" ("The 'Educational Alliance'" 610). As they, too, saw parallels between the trainee-supervisor relationship and the patient-therapist relationship, they turned to research on the working alliance as a possible avenue to improving feedback practices.

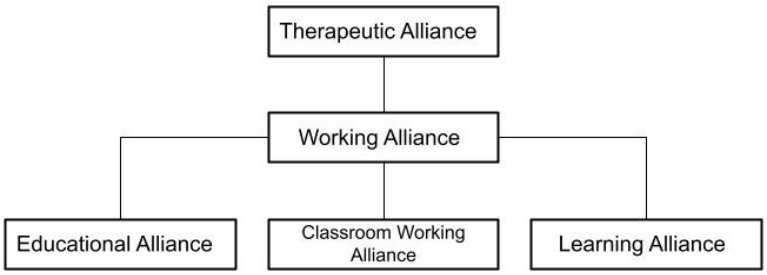

Figure 1. Visual representation of the alliance hierarchies

They proposed that just as patients formed therapeutic alliances with their therapists, so too might students with their instructors. Furthermore, as the therapeutic alliance is recognized as one of the most important factors in successful therapy outcomes, Telio et al. suggested that perhaps the same could be said with successful feedback interventions. They argued that "the unity of goals, agreement on how to reach those goals, and the bond between therapist and patient...may have conceptual translations to the educational alliance" (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'" 612). In fact, they proposed that the plethora of best practices for providing feedback discussed in the literature "should be considered as a set of tools that can be selected amongst and used strategically to achieve the goal of establishing and maintaining an effective educational alliance with the learner" (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'" 612). Furthermore, they argue that because research on the therapeutic alliance has shown that the patient's perspective has more influence on the outcome than the therapist's, educational alliances should also be assessed from the student's perspective.

They tested their theory by carrying out a study in a psychiatry residential program to determine how trainees made credibility judgments in relation to feedback they received from their supervisors (Telio et al., "Feedback"). Telio et al. found that the trainees "appeared to be evaluating [their] supervisor's perceived engagement with the educational alliance" ("Feedback" 937). Specifically, they identified three areas in which the trainees were basing their judgments. These were "the supervisor's perceived authenticity in his or her teaching role, the degree to which the trainee felt present in the teaching relationship and the supervisor's presumed feelings towards the trainee" ("Feedback" 937). Furthermore, they discovered that there were consequences to perceptions of a weak educational alliance. In such instances, trainees were not only less active in conversations with their supervisors but they were also unreceptive to feedback. Additionally, the trainees judged the feedback they received as not

being credible and actively avoided any other opportunities for feedback. They concluded that the findings of their study reinforced ideas on "the important role of trust in feedback interactions, as well as empathy, a genuine willingness to listen and valuing of other's ideas" (Telio et al., "Feedback" 939).

Since Telio et al.'s original study, a number of other medical educators have attempted to research this phenomenon further. Lucy Bowen et al. mapped feedback interactions across all five years of a medical program and analyzed them from the perspective of an educational alliance in order to determine how students' behaviors reflected their beliefs about feedback. They found that the students' perceptions of the educational alliance played a role in all three feedback behaviors: recognizing, using, and seeking. For example, "Positive relationships were perceived to lead to more 'accurate' feedback, resulting in recognition of feedback" (Bowen et al. 1306). Some of the elements that influenced their perceptions of the relationship were the amount of effort it seemed the instructor put in, the instructor's level of engagement, how focused the instructor was, and whether or not the student felt that the instructor had their best interest in mind. In addition, students tended to equate the quality of the relationship with the quality of the feedback and were less likely to seek feedback from instructors who made them feel devalued.

In another study, Laura Farrell et al. analyzed goal-oriented feedback to explore how this type of feedback approach might foster positive relationships. Contrary to other studies which looked at how the educational alliance affected the feedback, they found that there was evidence that the feedback approach itself could also affect the educational alliance. For example, their study revealed that feedback based on goals allowed for a more open dialogue between the student and the supervisor. This was important as they found the goals involved in these learning situations were highly complex, with some being specific, some being general, and some even being hidden. The goals also varied between the student and the supervisor. Farrell et al. posited that simply calling attention to the various goals would not be enough and that new goals would need to be co-constructed. They argued that this mutual negotiation of goals may be the foundation of a strong educational alliance, which they felt helped to explain why "it quickly became evident in the study that beginning the goal-oriented feedback only after a performance was so uncomfortable and inadequate" (Farrell et al. 101). Their conclusion that "relationship building was most effective when initiated upon first meeting" (Farrell et al. 101) corroborates Telio et al.'s assertion that "an educational alliance framework suggests that the learner is likely to be actively exploring and testing the supervisor's commitment to the

learning process from the first moment of their first meeting" ("The 'Educational Alliance'" 612).

Hannah T. McGinness et al. carried out a study to see if it was possible to mediate negative perceptions of the educational alliance. They led students in a feedback workshop based on the principles of both the educational alliance and agency in order to "equip students with tools to optimise their feedback and learning, even in the face of contextual challenges" (McGinness et al. 1290). The workshop "situated feedback as part of a cycle of learning over which students needed to take ownership, thus encouraging student agency and self-advocacy in obtaining feedback" (McGinness et al. 1291). The students were also provided with a number of tools to aid in feedback interactions, including "a letter to give to supervisors that clarified expectations of student involvement and encouraged teachers to discuss and follow up on learning goals" (McGinness et al. 1291). However, they found that "if students perceived a lack of investment in the educational alliance from teachers, they were reluctant to become engaged, even after the feedback workshop" (McGinness et al. 1294). Students' engagement was also influenced by perceptions that the teachers were "always busy" or "having competing demands" (McGinness et al. 1294). They also found that some students were still dissatisfied with the feedback they received and continued to have reservations about seeking feedback from supervisors who they felt were uninterested in their learning. McGinness et al. observed that "A lack of teacher engagement results in students receiving less feedback and engenders a reluctance in students to engage, feeding a vicious cycle" (1295).

It has also been argued that student dissatisfaction with feedback, specifically regarding the "feedback gap," may be related to negative perceptions of the educational alliance. The feedback gap refers to the gap between students' beliefs about how much feedback they receive and the amount their instructors report providing (Murdoch-Eaton and Bowen). Deborah Murdoch-Eaton and Lucy Bowen argue that in order to restore the educational alliance, and as a result rectify the feedback gap, instructors need to "not only facilitate opportunities for feedback, but ensure this provides appropriate evidence of the underpinning curricular purpose and demonstrate an alignment with the learner's beliefs and their stage of learning" (13).

As several of these studies have touched on, part of a successful feedback interaction is the participation of the student. Whether students work together with their instructors (or supervisors) to negotiate goals, instigate feedback discussions, or simply ask questions, there is a need for dialogue; however, students may not be willing or open to having conversations when the educational alliance is perceived as weak. Christina E. Johnson et al. argue that psychological safety may be the key to student involvement. They carried out a study in which

they observed feedback interactions to characterize how instructors created psychological safety in their feedback interactions. Johnson et al. define psychological safety as "an overarching construct that ties [three] concepts together (working as allies, the educator-learner relationship and trust)" (560). They observed four specific ways instructors created psychological safety for their students. The first was setting the scene for dialogue and candor. The second was positioning themselves as an educational ally by offering support and working to reduce the power gap. The third was using a "continuing improvement orientation" (Johnson et al. 564). This was achieved by treating mistakes as part of the learning process and focusing on learning strategies. The final way psychological safety was created for the students was through an encouragement of interactive dialogue. Johnson et al. also discovered that "Learners appeared to be making moment-by-moment assessments about psychological safety and the risk-to-benefit analysis of what to say" (567). That is to say, the students were continually reading cues from their instructors. This observation expands on Telio et al. and Farrell et al.'s findings that there are implications for the educational alliance early on - only Johnson et al.'s findings suggest that assessments of the educational alliance are ongoing.

In conclusion, it is clear that using the concept of an educational alliance "may help to reframe understandings of feedback from rules about content and delivery to a more nuanced appreciation of the role of relationships and feedback interactions" (Ajjawi et al. 135). However, despite calls for a broader understanding of how educational alliances affect feedback in different contexts, studies thus far have been limited to medical education, creating a gap in the research. This includes a lack of studies in contexts in which students writing in English as a foreign language receive instructor feedback on written assignments.

Rhetorical Theory. Rhetorical theory can complement explorations of the educational alliance within the context of feedback on written assignments as it provides a unique angle from which to understand how individuals respond to and interact with information that is provided by a source whose intention is to promote change. Feedback has been characterized as working towards two key outcomes - improvement of the current task and improvement of related tasks in the future (Boud and Molloy 3). The desired change in these instances could be anything from the revision of a faulty sentence to the adoption of the Anglo-American style. In other words, instructors provide students with feedback in the hope that they will change their thoughts and/or actions; however, it does not always work.

Rhetorical theory has already been established as a helpful tool in the field of writing studies referred to as Rhetoric and Composition. These scholars have used it to consider the ways in which rhetoric informs and affects writing, and instructors trained in this discipline use

the theories of rhetoric to teach students how to craft arguments in their essays, analyze their audiences, and promote critical thinking skills. Erika Lindemann defines writing as, "a process of communication that uses a conventional graphic system to convey a message to a reader" (10). For example, she invokes Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation as a model for student writing. Referring to it as the communication triangle (see figure 2), she posits that it "offers students a useful model for defining rhetorical problems such as those framed by most writing assignments" (Lindemann 11). Thinking through the questions, "What do I know about my subject? Who is my audience? What does my audience need to know to understand the subject?" students engage with the various relationships (writer-subject, writer-reader, and reader-subject) (Lindemann 11). In this new dynamic, the student becomes the rhetor, the imagined reader the audience, and the essay the message. In the process of providing feedback, however, the roles reverse, and the instructor becomes the rhetor.

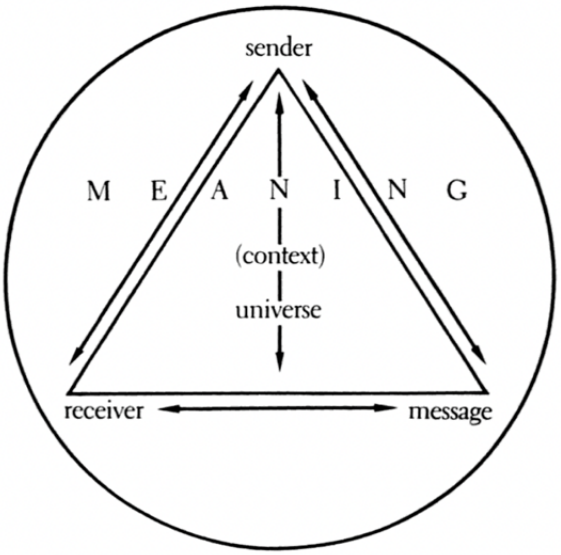

Figure 2. An example of the rhetorical triangle, also sometimes referred to as the communication triangle

Source: Lunsford, Andrea A, and Cheryl Glenn. "Rhetorical Theory and the Teaching of Writing." *On Literacy and its Teaching: Issues in English Education*, edited by Gail E. Hawisher and Anna O. Soter, SUNY Press, 1990, pp. 174-189.

In addition, students, especially in the USA, are routinely taught to use the basic fundamentals of rhetoric in their essays. Some instructors use Quintilian's theories to teach

structure and organization. Lindemann suggests that, "Quintilian's model offers an effective scheme for organizing some kinds of arguments. It requires students to develop the pros and cons of their position, the thesis and antithesis essential to dialectical thinking" (135). Students are also taught to consider Aristotle's artistic proofs. Instructors encourage them to consider "logical reasoning, emotional appeals intended to move an audience, and ethical appeals that present [them] as a knowledgeable person of good will" (Lindemann 135). Students must determine what type of appeal will be most effective for their intended audience, what types of logos will be most persuasive, what types of emotional appeals (if any) will move their audience, and how they can establish ethos based on the audience's values and priorities.

However, the field of rhetoric and its accompanying theories are extensive. Therefore, the following section outlines the specific lines of theory that informed the theoretical framework of this study.

Rhetoric has traditionally been aligned with the concept of persuasion and its connection to language. Aristotle was one of the first people to recognize that rhetoric was in and of itself not a tool of deception. He argued that "its function is not simply to succeed in persuading but rather to discover the means of coming as near such success as the circumstances of each particular case allow" (7). He reasoned that there were three modes associated with persuasive speech. These included, "the personal character of the speaker...putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; [and]...the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself" (8). These are what we know as ethos, pathos, and logos - or the artistic proofs. As discussed previously, this concept is often represented in the visual form of a triangle, referred to as either the rhetorical triangle or the communication triangle (see figure 2).

Building on the ideas of Aristotle, Lloyd Bitzer established the concept of the rhetorical situation. He believed that rhetoric was intrinsically situational but that scholars thus far had failed to really consider what this so-called rhetorical situation actually was. Therefore, he defined the rhetorical situation as, "a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (6). This discourse consists of three parts: the exigence, the audience, and the constraints (Bitzer 6). Not all exigences can be considered rhetorical, however, so Bitzer specified that "an exigence is rhetorical when it is capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse" (7). He also distinguished between listeners and audiences. Rhetorical audiences are

only those people who have the potential to be affected by the discourse or have the power to affect the desired change (Bitzer 8). Finally, the constraints are, "made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 8).

Moving into more contemporary elements of rhetorical theory, James A. Herrick argues that we should "expand the definition of rhetoric to include other goals such as achieving clarity through the structured use of symbols, awakening our sense of beauty through the aesthetic potential in symbols, or bringing about mutual understanding through the careful management of common meanings attached to symbols" (7). Thus, he defines rhetoric as, "the systematic study and intentional practice of effective symbolic expression" (Herrick 7). When rhetoric is freed from the limitations of persuasion for its own sake, it can be used as a tool to foster learning and motivation. The idea of "effective symbolic expression" relates to how well the speaker is able to achieve their desired goal with the text (Herrick 7). These goals could be anything from instruction to action to self-reflection.

As can be seen by the overview thus far, the study of rhetoric traditionally focuses on the speaker's point of view. Chaim Perelman and Madame L. Olbrechts-Tyteca were among the first to develop a theory specifically related to the audience. They argued that "the nature of the audience to which arguments can be successfully presented will determine to a great extent both the direction the arguments will take and the character, the significance that will be attributed to them" (qtd. in Herrick 206). However, it was not until William L. Benoit and Mary Jeanette Smythe that a theory existed to account for the audience's point of view. This theory was termed the rhetoric of message reception.

According to Benoit and Smythe, "Rhetoric, from an audience-centered perspective, can be defined as the process of *auditors attending to, interpreting, and responding to symbols in rhetorical/persuasive messages*" (105). They envision this as a process in which auditors, or the listener, produce thoughts about the message which then influence their beliefs, attitudes, values, and/or behaviors. Furthermore, they argue that rhetorical theory needs to take into consideration "factors that predispose listeners (a) to have the ability and motivation to think about message content and (b) to generate favorable or unfavorable thoughts about the message" (106). In order to do this, they outline the listener's process in four steps.

***Attention*.** In the first step, listeners must decide whether or not to pay attention to the rhetorical message and if they do, how deeply to scrutinize it. Benoit and Smythe argue that this decision can be influenced by three things. The first is what the listener is doing at the moment they encounter the message. If too many distractions are present, it may limit their

ability to pay attention or critically evaluate the message. The second is how closely the topic of the message aligns with the listener's needs, interests, and values, and the third is whether the listener finds the message to be encouraging or discouraging.

Interpretation. The second step in the process is the listener's interpretation of the message. How they interpret a message can be influenced by the listener's personal background and/or the context in which they encounter the message. They may perceive the message as clear, vague, or ambiguous.

Thought Production. Based on a listener's interpretation of the message, they then "produce thoughts" in response. These can be broken down into the amount of thoughts and the nature of thoughts produced by the listener. In terms of the amount of thoughts, Benoit and Smythe identify three influential factors. The first relates to the listener's motivation to think about the topic. A listener's motivation may be driven by their "involvement in [the] topic, interest in [the] message, [or] source credibility" (Benoit and Smythe 106). The second factor that influences the amount of thoughts they have is their ability to process the message, and the third is individual differences, such as background knowledge of the topic. Regarding the nature of the thoughts produced, this is influenced by the message's position in relation to the listener's own attitude, the quantity/quality of the arguments present in the message, and the nature of the source, including whether or not they seem knowledgeable or trustworthy.

Change. The final step in the process is a change in the listener's beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors that result from their thoughts. If the listener has favorable thoughts, it will "increase the likelihood of change in the direction the [listener] perceives the message advocates" (Benoit and Smythe 106). However, if the thoughts are unfavorable, it will have the opposite effect.

In conclusion, rhetorical theory is a relevant theoretical framework for studies on feedback for two reasons. First, because rhetoric is concerned with how messages can induce change in the listener, it can assist scholars in better understanding feedback recipience. Secondly, it can help to identify contextual factors that may undermine the effectiveness of feedback. Although many of the theoretical constructs of rhetoric influenced this study, Benoit and Smythe's theory of message reception (henceforth to be referred to as RMR) was especially useful in considering the student's point of view in the feedback process.

2.7 Summary

This literature review highlights the fact that instructor provided feedback is an essential component in students' writing development but that providing students with

effective feedback is extremely complicated. It reveals that how students perceive feedback, what emotions are elicited by the feedback, and how they view their instructor have direct implications for feedback effectiveness. Although it acknowledges the growing interest in how contextual factors such as the student-teacher relationship are connected to feedback effectiveness, it also reveals that little is known about the nature of students' assessments of those relationships. This is an important area to study as it can help to explain the inconsistencies in feedback research and provide the missing element to contextual approaches to feedback. The following chapter provides a detailed description of this study's design, rationale, and research process.

Chapter Three: Research Method

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to investigate the dynamics of the educational alliance between students and instructors at a German university in Rhineland-Palatinate and the role these alliances play in the effectiveness of feedback on student writing. This chapter outlines the specific design and method that guided the study, including justification for the various decisions that were made. It also describes the instrumentation, setting, and participants, as well as the procedures that were used to collect data. It also provides an overview of how the findings were analyzed using thematic analysis and how trustworthiness was established. Finally, it presents both the limitations and delimitations of the study.

3.1 Design and Method

This study used a mixed-methods approach. Mixed-method studies typically include "at least one quantitative method and one qualitative method to collect, analyze, and report findings in a single study" (Creswell, "Mixed-Method Research" 457). For this particular study, the mixed methods consisted of the Educational Alliance Inventory Questionnaire (henceforth to be referred to simply as the EAI) and follow-up interviews. This was necessary because the students who participated in the study needed to first be identified as having experienced either a weak or strong educational alliance before those experiences could be investigated and compared. John W. Creswell asserts that mixed-method studies are especially useful when one method alone would not yield the best results ("Mixed-Method Research"). Although the EAI provides numerical data, it could not have been used to investigate the individual experiences. On the other hand, interviews alone would not have been sufficient as they would not be able to provide a measurement of the educational alliance.

Additionally, this study used an explanatory sequential design. Before making this decision, though, the four major research designs for mixed-method studies as outlined by Creswell ("Choosing") were each considered in order to determine which one would be the most appropriate. The triangulation design could have helped to compare the findings from the EAI scores and interviews; however, this design attributes equal weight to the quantitative and qualitative findings (Creswell, "Choosing"). As the emphasis of this study was always intended to be on the qualitative findings from the interviews, the triangulation design would not have fit. Initially, the embedded design seemed like a viable option because it is based on the premise that "one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type" (Creswell, "Choosing" 67). However, there was a compatibility issue between this

design and the goal of this study, which was the fact that an embedded design uses the qualitative and quantitative findings to answer separate research questions (Creswell, "Choosing"). As this was not how the research questions for this study had been formulated, the embedded design was ultimately determined to be a poor fit. A similar conclusion was drawn regarding the exploratory design since these studies are based on the idea that "measures or instruments are not available, the variables are unknown, or there is no guiding framework or theory" (Creswell, "Choosing" 75). As none of this was true of this study, an exploratory design would not have made sense. However, because the explanatory design seeks to use qualitative results to build on quantitative results (Creswell, "Choosing"), it was determined to be the most appropriate design for the goals of this study.

Within explanatory designs, there are three main models that can be used in mixed-method studies: convergence, sequential, or instrument-building (Creswell, "Mixed-Method Research"). When using a convergence model, the goal is to converge the data in a way that would be "more powerful (and potentially less biased) than if only one method were used" (Creswell, "Mixed-Method Research" 464). However, the qualitative and quantitative findings are analyzed independently of each other and interpreted at a later stage in order to determine whether or not they support each other (Creswell, "Mixed-Methods Research). While this model could potentially have been used, the goal of this particular study was not to confirm EAI scores as being representative of certain experiences or vice versa. Instead, the EAI scores were needed as a means to identify groups of students with varying experiences. Therefore, the sequential model was a much better fit. In this model, "the data analysis proceeds sequentially with the data from the first method analyzed, and then this analysis is used to shape the direction of the second method" (Creswell, "Mixed-Method Research" 464). Because there was already a measurement instrument for educational alliances (the EAI), the instrument-building model was simply not applicable.

However, the model was narrowed down even further to a specific variant of the sequential design model, the participant selection model. According to Creswell, "The participant selection model is used when a researcher needs quantitative information to identify and purposefully select participants for a follow-up, in-depth, qualitative study" ("Choosing" 74). In the case of this study, the first phase was to analyze the numerical results of the EAI in order to identify students who had experienced either weak or strong alliances. The second phase used qualitative research methods to finalize the two groups for analysis and comparison (see figure 3). As a result, the emphasis remained on the qualitative portion of the study, which is also a key factor in the participant selection model (Creswell, "Choosing"). A more in-depth

discussion of how the two groups were determined and analyzed is presented in the Participants section of this chapter.

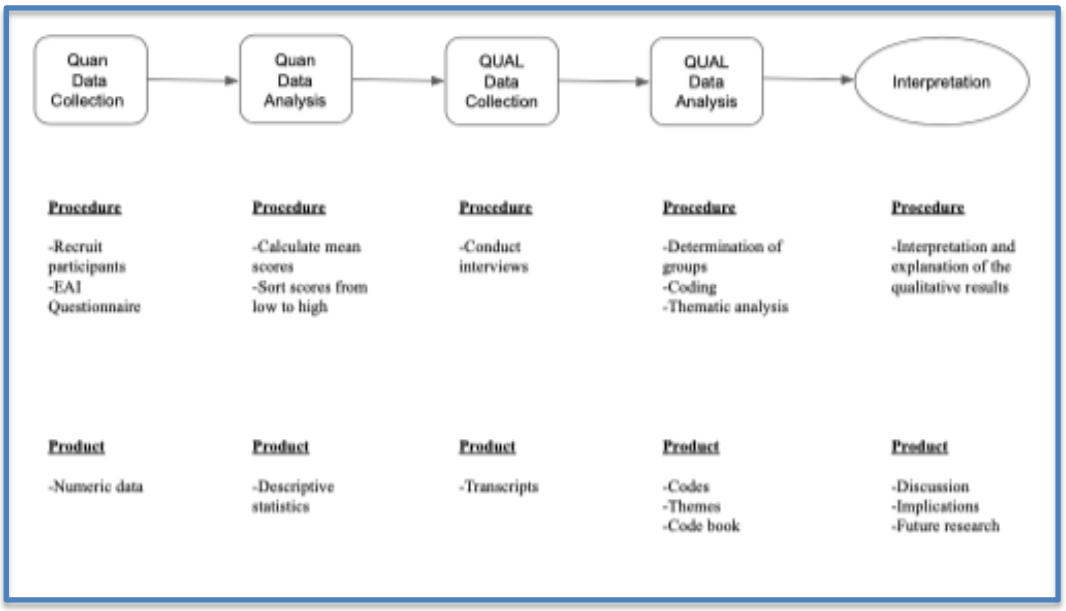

Figure 3. Visual model of the study's research design

Any study that uses a mixed-methods approach needs to consider the timing, weighting, and mixing of the data (Creswell, "Choosing"). According to Creswell, "timing relates more to when the data are analyzed and interpreted than to when the data are collected, although these times are often interrelated" ("Choosing" 81). In this study, the timing was sequential. This means that the methods occurred in different phases, where one type of data was collected and analyzed before the other (Creswell, "Choosing"). The quantitative data that resulted from the EAI was both collected and analyzed before the interviews were conducted. Weighting the data refers to "the relative importance or priority of the quantitative and qualitative methods to answering the study's questions" (Creswell, "Choosing" 81). They can be equal in their importance, or one can outweigh the other (Creswell, "Choosing"). For this study, the qualitative data was weighted more important than the quantitative data for two main reasons. The first was because the study was carried out in a naturalistic setting, and the second was because the study was a single case study. These elements are associated with a "qualitative priority" (Creswell, "Choosing" 82). The final determination, that of mixing the data, relates to how the data is brought together (Creswell, "Choosing"). Although data can be merged, embedded, or connected (Creswell, "Choosing"), in this study, it was connected. This was the

most fitting mixing technique as it is associated with the selection of participants (Creswell, "Choosing"), which complemented the participant selection model.

Of course, there are some challenges to using the explanatory sequential design. For example, explanatory designs in general can be extremely time consuming (Creswell, "Choosing"). As a result, researchers who choose this design need to be diligent in how they manage their time (Creswell, "Choosing"). Additionally, researchers have to make a series of complex decisions. For example, Creswell highlights that researchers using the explanatory sequential design have to decide whether they will use the same participants for both the quantitative and qualitative phases, or to use "individuals from the same sample…or to draw participants from the same population" ("Choosing" 74). Similarly, others have pointed out that this design can be difficult to implement (Ivankova et al.). Nataliya V. Ivankova et al. build on Creswell's initial observations by also drawing attention to the fact that there is not much guidance in the literature on how such complex decisions should be made. However, despite its challenges, there are benefits to using the explanatory sequential design in a mixed-methods study, the main one being its straightforwardness (Creswell, "Choosing"; Ivankova et al.). The nature of its two phase structure means that not only can it be carried out by a single researcher but that readers can also easily delineate the two sets of findings once transferred to a written report (Creswell, "Choosing").

3.2 Instrumentation

This study used the Educational Alliance Inventory (EAI) to measure students' perceptions of the educational alliance with their instructors (Appendix 1). The Working Alliance Inventory, from which the Educational Alliance Inventory (henceforth to be referred to as the WAI and EAI respectively) was adapted, is based on Bordin's concept of the working alliance (Horvath and Greenberg) and has been shown to have predictive values for therapy outcomes (Horvath and Greenberg). It maintains a high level of reliability and is one of the most widely used tools in psychotherapy for evaluating the working alliance between patients and therapists (Hanson et al.). Although the WAI has three versions which allow the alliance to be assessed from different perspectives (client, therapist, and observer) (Horvath et al.), the EAI has thus far only been used to assess the student's perspective (Telio et al., "Feedback"). As the focus of this study was exclusively on the student's perception of the quality of the alliance, the EAI was an appropriate measurement tool.

The EAI includes thirty-six items that cover the three areas of the Working Alliance, including goal, task, and bond (Telio et al., "Feedback"). Each area consists of twelve questions

rated on a seven point Likert scale. There is no difference between the EAI and the WAI except changes Telio et al. made to the wording of some items in order to focus on a supervisor in an educational setting instead of a therapist in a counseling setting. For this study, further minor changes were made to the language on the EAI in order to reflect a classroom setting. For example, the statement, "What I am learning with my supervisor gives me new ways of looking at clinical issues" was changed to, "What I learned with my instructor gave me new ways of looking at literature / linguistics."

Students were asked to complete the EAI before their interviews in order to ensure that varying degrees of alliance strength would be represented and to gain a general understanding of any patterns that might emerge. This information was used to improve the focus and scope of the interview questions. The interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences within the educational alliance and how they interacted with the feedback provided to them by their instructor. The interviews were semi-structured using an interview guide (see table 2).

Table 2. Student Interview Guide

Area of Focus	**Interview Questions**
Course Context	• What order did you take the module courses in? • What level do you plan to teach at? • Have you submitted your final draft for grading, or are you still revising? • How would you describe your overall experience in this course?
Goal	• What do you believe was the learning goal for this course? • Was your learning goal different? If so, what was your learning goal? • How clear do you believe your instructor's expectations were? • Do you see a future use for the things you learned in this course? If so, what? • Did it make sense to you that the course grade was based on a written assignment? Why or why not?

Task	• What kinds of activities did you do in class? • Were any of the activities focused on writing, and how satisfied were you with that? • Was there anything you especially enjoyed? If so, what was it? • Was there anything you found especially frustrating? If so, what was it? • How satisfied were you with the things you did in class? Why or why not?
Bond	• Did you know this instructor previously? If so, how? • What was your first impression of the instructor? • Did that impression change throughout the semester? If so, in what way? • Did you reach out to your instructor to discuss either your written assignment or your feedback? Why or why not?
Feedback	• How did you receive feedback from your instructor? • How would you describe the feedback you received? • How did you feel when you received the feedback? • Were you satisfied with the feedback? Why or why not? • Was there any feedback you chose to ignore? If so, why?

Questions for the interview guide were developed in order to address the two main components of the research questions: the educational alliance and feedback. As the educational alliance consists of goal, task, and bond, questions were formulated to address each one in a manner that would flesh out students' EAI scores. The questions regarding students' feedback experiences were meant to help establish whether there were any patterns concerning the alliance strength and aspects of the feedback, such as delivery method, emotional responses, and usage. In addition, biographical questions were also included in order to assist in identifying any potential patterns among students' experiences of weak or strong educational alliances.

3.3 Setting

The setting of this study was the Koblenz campus at the University of Koblenz-Landau, a medium-sized public university located in the far western region of Germany. The campus is located on the outskirts of a small city and has a student population of roughly 9,000 ("Zahlen und Fakten"). The Department of English and American Studies offers courses to students enrolled in the Bachelor and Master of Education programs, as well as students who have chosen English as part of their double major. These courses are built into a modular structure, with slight variations for students depending on which specific program they are enrolled in.

Writing plays a vital role for students who choose to study English. Some courses require the completion of written assignments, and several of the modules are graded solely on the basis of students' writing abilities in the form of either an essay portfolio or a term paper. Students also have the option of writing their Bachelor's and/or Master's thesis in English under the supervision of faculty members from within the department. As a result of the emphasis on writing, the Department of English and American Studies requires all students to complete an Introduction to Academic Writing course as part of their undergraduate studies, and in the fall of 2018, the department established an online Writing Center specifically for students writing papers in English.

Regarding feedback on student writing, there is no university or department policy. It is entirely up to the individual instructor whether or not to provide feedback. As a result, there are varying practices among the faculty members in terms of what type of feedback they provide - meaning formative, assessment, or a combination of both - what form their feedback takes, and which areas they choose to focus their comments on. Some of the instructors provide feedback to all of their students, and some only provide feedback to students who specifically request it.

However, for students who are studying English as part of their Bachelor of Education degree, there is one particular module where they all receive formative feedback on written assignments. This module (henceforth to be referred to as M4) consists of three courses: Varieties of English, Literatures in English, and Writing Skills. Students write two papers in the Varieties of English course, two papers in the Literatures in English course, and one paper in the Writing Skills course. All of the instructors involved in these courses provide students with formative feedback on their written assignments during the semester. Each paper is required to be 800 to 1,000 words and formatted according to the citation style used in the respective discipline. Three of these written assignments are then revised and submitted together in the form of a portfolio for the module grade.

The Department of English and American Studies at the University of Koblenz-Landau at Koblenz provides a unique setting for this study for several reasons. First, because this campus has historically been associated with teacher training, the vast majority of the students taking English courses are enrolled in the Bachelor and Master of Education programs. This means that the student body is strongly homogeneous in terms of their academic focus and future profession. Secondly, M4 combines a writing course with two discipline-specific courses (more specifically Linguistics and Literature) that both require written assignments but may be completed in any order. This means that the student experience is varied in that some students will take the discipline-specific courses before the writing course, some will take the writing course first, and others will take all three courses at the same time. Additionally, the inclusion of formative feedback in both discipline-specific courses means that all students will share the experience of receiving such feedback and making decisions about its use in their revisions, and because different faculty members teach in Linguistics and Literature, it provides an opportunity for students to consider their experiences with formative feedback in light of other experiences with different instructors on similar types of written assignments.

3.4 Participants

The participants in this study were German university students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program who were taking courses in the English and American Studies Department as part of their training to become English teachers. They had either recently registered for the M4 module exam or indicated that they planned to at the end of the current semester. In order to be eligible for the exam, students must successfully complete all three courses that belong to the module. Students taking courses from M4 are usually in their second year of study, and these courses typically represent their first experience with formal writing in English at the university level.

The selection process was as follows. The initial step was to create a list of potential participants who met the criteria. This was accomplished two ways. The first was by reviewing the list of registrants for the upcoming M4 module exam, and the second was by contacting all of the students enrolled in one of the three M4 courses to ascertain whether or not they would be registering for the M4 module exam at the end of the semester. In total, 181 students were identified as potential participants. An email was sent out to all 181 students with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, why they had been selected, and a link to the EAI (Appendix 2). Of these 181 students, twenty-nine expressed their interest in and consent to participating in the study.

3.5 Data Collection

The following are the sources of information that were collected and analyzed in their order of use:

1. application of the EAI and
2. in-depth interviews.

Questionnaire (Student). This study used the EAI to assess Bachelor of Education students' perceptions of the quality of the educational alliance in courses that require written assignments in English. The questionnaire served to generate an understanding of how students perceive the student-teacher relationship and provided a reference point against which students' feedback experiences could be compared. Of the twenty-nine students who initially agreed to participate in the study, twenty-six completed the EAI. Other than the questionnaire items, students were also asked in which format their courses had taken place due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent transition to online learning that had recently occurred. Three students indicated they had taken the courses online, while the remaining twenty-three had completed the courses in person. There was an initial concern that the unique dynamics of student-teacher relationships in online courses may present a problem when included with data on student experiences in face-to-face classes. Additionally, one other student notified the researcher that not only had they failed the M4 module exam two times previously, but more than a year had already passed since they took the courses. This student's situation also posed a concern as the failing grades could potentially influence their perception of the educational alliance retroactively. After discussions regarding these concerns with fellow colleagues, the decision was made to exclude these students' EAI responses from the study. Therefore, the final number of students who completed the EAI was twenty-two. Because each student filled out the EAI twice (once for the Linguistics course and once for the Literature course), the total number of questionnaires received was forty-four and the total number of instructors encompassed was six (two for Linguistics and four for Literature).

Interviews. Of the twenty-two students who submitted the EAI, one student indicated they were not willing to be interviewed and five did not respond to the interview request. In the end, sixteen students were interviewed for this study.

Once the final selection of participants had been made and their EAI responses received, the students were provided with a list of interview days and times that they could sign up for. Twelve interviews took place on campus. The exact location of each interview varied,

but they were all conducted in offices belonging to the Department of English and American Studies at the campus in Koblenz. The final four interviews had to be rescheduled due to COVID-19 restrictions that limited access to the campus. Three interviews were carried out with video conferencing platforms, including Skype and Google Meet, and one interview was conducted asynchronously through Kaizena as a result of scheduling conflicts. All of the interviews took place in February and March of 2020, with an average length of fifty-eight minutes. All of the interview conversations were recorded on a digital recorder. Two backup recordings were made of each file, with one being saved to a personal hard drive and the other to a flash drive.

Each interview began with a brief series of questions about the student's background, including which order they took the M4 courses in, what type of school they planned to teach at, and whether or not they had already submitted their written assignments for the M4 module exam. This information was helpful as it provided additional contextual information that could be used later in the analysis stage. The students were reminded of the main focus of the study and the interview structure was then explained to them. Additionally, each student was reassured that their identities would remain anonymous. Although the students had already been told that their identities would not be revealed, it seemed important to reiterate that no identifying information would be used as they would be discussing their instructors. It was paramount that the students felt uninhibited. Students were then given the opportunity to ask any questions or express any concerns before the interview formally began. This introduction generally lasted three to five minutes.

Using the interview guide, students were asked about their experiences in the Literature course. Afterward, students were asked the same set of questions again but this time they were instructed to think about their Linguistics course. Where contrasting experiences were noted, the students were asked follow-up questions in order to gain a deeper understanding.

3.6 Data Analysis

The EAI scores were analyzed using the EAI scoring guide (Appendix 3) in order to determine how strong or weak each student perceived the educational alliance with their instructor to be and for future comparison with the interviews to identify any patterns. Using the EAI scoring guide, each statement was assigned the point value based on the students' responses. Screenshots of these scores were added to each student's interview file. In addition, each student's scores were added to a spreadsheet where they could be sorted by overall score, sub-score, course, or instructor.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed first using an automated transcription program. Once the transcriptions were complete, they were manually checked one-by-one to ensure accuracy. Corrections were made wherever the software had transcribed something incorrectly or listed something as inaudible. Filler words such as, "yeah," "um," "uh," and "like" were removed. However, other than the removal of the filler words, the transcriptions were verbatim. In order to anonymize both the students' and instructors' identities, each person was assigned a pseudonym. At this point, all of the names were changed to the pseudonyms, including places in the transcriptions where students referenced their instructors by name. Throughout the interview process itself and the transcription review, any observations or connections that became apparent were recorded and added to the student's interview file.

The interview transcriptions were uploaded to NVIVO, a software package used for qualitative data analysis. As the goal of the study was to explore the effects of students who experienced weaker educational alliances on feedback effectiveness in comparison to students who experienced stronger educational alliances, there was a need to develop a method for determining the two groups. As there is not a definitive line at which the WAI, and by default the EAI, point scores separate a weak from a strong alliance (Horvath) and because that definition of weak or strong can even vary by the individual (Horvath), simply establishing a point cut-off would not have been appropriate. Therefore, a multi-step process was applied.

First, because all of the students had been interviewed regardless of their EAI scores, the interview transcriptions were coded using the in vivo method as a first cycle and magnitude coding as a second cycle in order to have a secondary measure to assist in developing grouping delineations. In vivo, which uses the participants' own words to code (Saldaña), is especially fitting for studies that prioritize the participants' voices, and magnitude coding, which indicates, "intensity, frequency, direction, presence, or evaluative content" (Saldaña 58), is helpful for assessing the dimensions of other codes (Saldaña). The transcriptions were specifically coded in relation to the three student factors that influence feedback effectiveness: perceptions of the feedback, perceptions of the source of the feedback, and emotional responses associated with the feedback (Appendix 4). The next step was to categorize each student's experience of the three factors as either entirely negative, mostly negative, entirely positive, mostly positive, or mixed (Appendix 5). This process was repeated twice over a period of thirty days. The results from this first phase of coding were then entered into a table with the students' overall EAI scores and sorted from lowest to highest (see table 3).

Table 3. Alliance Grouping Delineations

Pseudonym	Course	Overall EAI Score	Student Factor Experience
Lenore	Literature	82	Entirely Negative
Charlotte	Literature	101	Entirely Negative
Charlotte	Linguistics	104	Entirely Negative
Mark	Literature	109	Mostly Negative
Mark	Linguistics	111	Mostly Negative
Marianne	Literature	141	Mixed
Lorina	Literature	150	Mixed
Evelina	Literature	152	Entirely Negative
Chuck	Linguistics	155	Mostly Negative
Roxanne	Literature	155	Entirely Negative
Marianne	Linguistics	170	Mostly Positive
Lucy	Literature	172	Mostly Negative
Chuck	Literature	175	Entirely Negative
Roxanne	Linguistics	182	Mostly Positive
Anne	Linguistics	183	Mostly Positive
Anne	Literature	189	Mostly Positive
Shirley	Literature	191	Entirely Negative
Evelina	Linguistics	198	Entirely Positive
Victoria	Literature	198	Entirely Positive
Victoria	Linguistics	202	Mixed
Polly	Literature	203	Mixed
Lorina	Linguistics	203	Mostly Positive
Lenore	Linguistics	206	Mostly Positive
Shirley	Linguistics	206	Entirely Positive
Polly	Linguistics	211	Mostly Positive
Sibyl	Literature	232	Entirely Positive
Sibyl	Linguistics	232	Entirely Positive
Lucy	Linguistics	236	Entirely Positive
Susan	Literature	236	Entirely Positive
Susan	Linguistics	241	Entirely Positive
Jane	Literature	244	Entirely Positive
Jane	Linguistics	248	Entirely Positive

There was an overlap in the middle of the table where negative and positive labels were mixed together. However, both below and above this overlap, there was a clear division of negative and positive experiences. Therefore, the students below the overlap were designated to the Weak Alliance Group, and the students above the overlap were designated to the Strong Alliance Group. This resulted in an EAI point distribution of 82 to 155 for weak alliances and 198 to 248 for strong alliances. The final number was ten weak alliances, consisting of eight students, and fifteen strong alliances, consisting of ten students. However, three students (Lenore, Lorina, and Evelina) were assigned to both groups as they had each experienced a strong educational alliance with one instructor and a weak educational alliance with the second instructor. The students who appeared in the overlap area were excluded from the remainder of the study.

The second phase of coding was only carried out on those students who had been assigned to either the Weak Alliance Group or the Strong Alliance Group. According to Johnny Saldaña, there are two methods of coding. There are First Cycle methods, which "fracture or split the data into individually coded segments" (42) and Second Cycle methods, which "compare, reorganize, or 'focus' the codes into categories, prioritize them to develop 'axis' categories around which others revolve, and synthesize them to formulate a central or core category" (42). Depending on a study's goal, there may be a need to combine multiple coding methods together in order to adequately explore the data (Saldaña). In the case of this study, a combination seemed appropriate to adequately explore the data. The First Cycle methods used were attribute coding, descriptive coding, emotions coding, and process coding. Attribute coding is not applied to the data itself but to the participants. This type of coding involves notating "essential information about the data and demographic characteristics of the participants for future management and reference" (Saldaña 55). Descriptive coding, however, is applied directly to the data and involves "[assigning] basic labels to data to provide an inventory of their topics" (Saldaña 66). Emotion coding, "labels the feelings participants may have experienced" (Saldaña 86), and process coding describes actions in the data using gerund forms (Saldaña 77). Only one Second Cycle method was used, and that was pattern coding. This type of coding method "not only [organizes] the corpus but [attempts] to attribute meaning to that organization" (Saldaña 150).

After this was completed, the codes were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis and organized into two thematic maps (see figures 4 and 5).

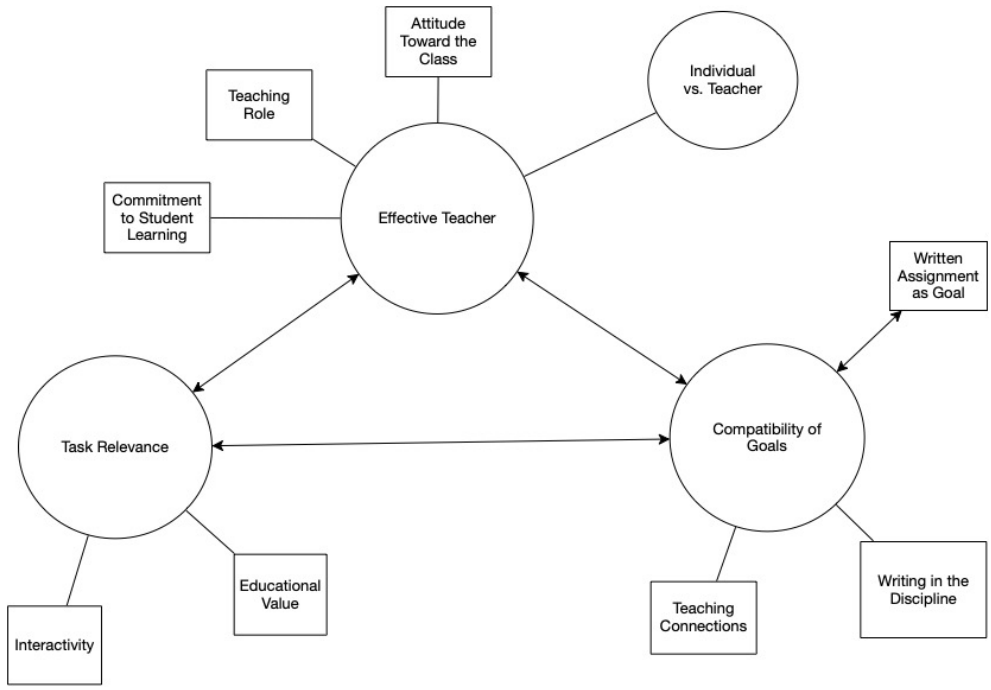

Figure 4. Thematic Map of the Educational Alliance

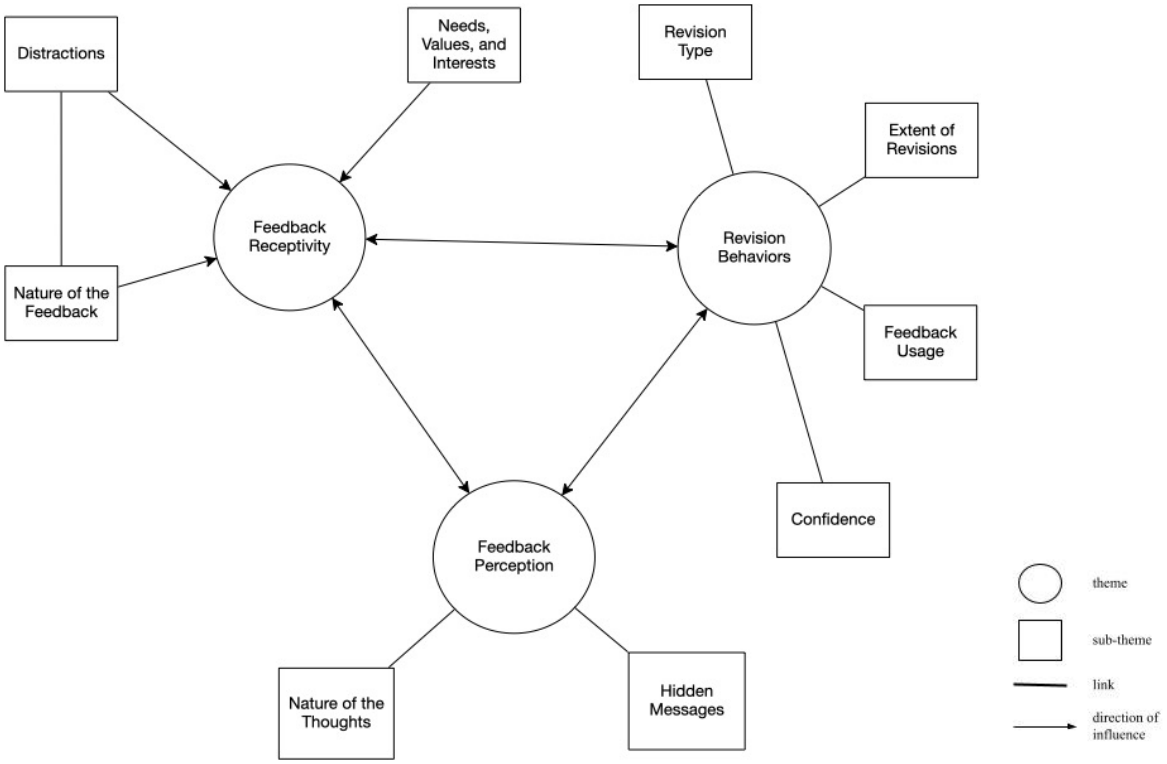

Figure 5. Thematic Map of the Rhetoric of Message Reception

Thematic analysis "is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set" (Braun and Clarke 57). The goal of these types of analyses is to generate themes which are relevant to the research questions (Braun and Clarke). However, it is a data analysis method that is often misunderstood. For example, its similarity to content analysis and use of shared language, such as "codes" and "themes," often leads researchers to misapply it in their studies (Braun et al.). Therefore, it is important to clarify what is meant by "theme" within thematic analyses. Essentially, themes are descriptions generated by the researcher that reflect patterns of shared meaning within the data (Braun et al.). They are not summaries of what participants say in relation to a question or concept (Braun et al.). Furthermore, there are three distinct approaches to thematic analysis: coding reliability thematic analysis, codebook thematic analysis, and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al.). Each of these approaches is unique in nature and should not be combined (Braun et al.), meaning researchers need to identify a specific approach for their study.

Of the three approaches, this study used the reflexive thematic analysis approach. Within reflexive thematic analysis, "themes are conceptualized as meaning-based patterns, evident in explicit (semantic) or conceptual (latent) ways, and as the *output* of coding" (Braun et al. 848). In other words, the researcher generates themes after extensive analysis of the codes, which are developed and revised as they interpret the data. The aim of this type of thematic analysis is to "provide a coherent and compelling *interpretation* of the data, grounded in the data" (Braun et al. 848). It is termed reflexive because of the active role the researcher plays in producing knowledge (Braun et al.). Although any of the three approaches could have been used in this study, there were several reasons for discounting the other two. First, studies that use coding reliability thematic analysis require multiple coders (Braun et al.), and this study was carried out by a single researcher. Coding reliability also closely resembles the scientific method, meaning researchers begin with themes that they seek to "prove" with the help of a codebook (Braun et al.), and that did not align with the study's intention of prioritizing the student voice. Similarly, codebook thematic analysis tends to begin with predetermined themes that are conceptualized as summaries of what participants say about a certain topic (Braun et al.).

In applying reflexive thematic analysis to the data, this study used the six phase approach developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. The following will outline how this study attempted to complete each phase.

Familiarization with the Data. In order to become intimately acquainted with the data, each interview recording was listened to at least twice. This occurred during the period in which

the transcriptions were checked for accuracy, and once again after the process was complete. Furthermore, the transcriptions were read multiple times, both before, during, and after the coding process. In each of these instances, notes were made regarding any words or ideas that were relevant to the research questions. To do this, the transcriptions were printed out and annotated manually, and additional observations or questions were recorded in a Word document.

Coding. Codes were determined using the First and Second Cycle methods previously outlined. This combination of code types resulted in an inductive approach to coding that tended to focus on latent (conceptual) meaning. However, the codes were reviewed and revised multiple times throughout the coding process, resulting in a mixture of latent and semantic (explicit) codes.

Constructing Themes. To generate themes, the codes were first read through multiple times in order to find instances of similarity or overlap. Then they were grouped into clusters based on shared connections and further subdivided where needed. Any codes that did not fit with a cluster (or theme) were added to a miscellaneous group to possibly be used at a later stage.

Reviewing Themes. All of the themes that had been generated were reviewed against the codes and the interview transcriptions in order to ensure their compatibility. Themes were also reviewed to check whether or not there was enough data to support them and whether or not the themes themselves were coherent. The themes were then adjusted where necessary.

Defining and Naming Themes. An initial definition of each theme was developed. These definitions sought to ensure that each theme had a singular focus, was not repetitive, and directly addressed the research questions. Extracts from the data that were representative of each theme were identified and selected to be used in the dissertation. Finally, the names of each theme were re-read and revised so that they clearly indicated the core element of the theme, were not too long, and would catch the reader's attention.

Producing the Report. The report in this instance was the dissertation. However, Braun and Clarke do not see this phase as writing only but as a final stage of analysis. Throughout the writing of this dissertation, revisions to the themes or structures were made as needed. The research questions, notes, and codes were re-read multiple times throughout the writing process, and connections to other scholars and their work were made wherever possible in order to situate the study and its findings into the existing research. Every attempt was made to go beyond description and to make arguments that answered the three research questions.

3.7 Establishing Trustworthiness

Because qualitative studies cannot be measured in terms of validity and reliability in the same way quantitative studies can, there is a need to establish trustworthiness as a means of verification (Simon and Goes). In order to achieve this, Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba outlined four criteria by which qualitative research could be verified in a comparable manner to quantitative research (Nowell et al.). Those criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following will outline how this study attempted to meet each of these criteria using the strategies outlined by Andrew K. Shenton.

Credibility. A study's credibility is essential to "promote confidence that [the researcher has] accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny" (Shenton 64). Some of the ways this can be achieved are through the researcher's "background, qualifications and experience" (Shenton 68), the inclusion of "tactics to help ensure honesty in informants" (Shenton 66), and "frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his or her superiors" (Shenton 67). At the time of the study, the researcher had already been employed as an instructor in the Department of English and American Studies for three years and had taught the Writing Skills course that belongs to M4. As a result, the researcher had a high degree of familiarity with aspects relating to the module and student experiences with writing at this stage in their studies. The researcher's background in Rhetoric and Composition, along with more than ten years of experience teaching writing courses in both the United States and Germany, also contributed to the study's credibility. In addition, multiple steps were taken to ensure the honesty of the students' responses. For example, participation in the study was entirely voluntary and students were assured at every step that their identities would remain anonymous. Students who had taken courses with the researcher in the past, including the writing course in M4, were offered the alternative of being interviewed by a different instructor in the department with whom they had not already taken a class. Additionally, feedback was elicited from both the first and second reader throughout the writing process.

Transferability. According to Shenton, no attempt at transference can be made without the prior knowledge of a study's boundaries. Therefore, detailed descriptions of the university, especially in regard to the modular system and course practices, were included in the study. There were also clear delineations of the study's boundaries, such as the method, length, and relevant time period of the data collection. These things were done so that other researchers may be able to fully understand the context in which this study took place and identify possible points of comparison.

Dependability. To achieve dependability, "the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (Shenton 71). As a result, a description of how this study was designed and carried out has been presented. A detailed overview of how the data was collected has also been presented through both descriptions and the inclusion of such items as the questionnaire and interview guide.

Confirmability. The confirmability of a study requires that intentional steps "be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton 72). In order to reduce any potential bias, an audit trail was maintained. This consisted of a reflexive journal wherein notations were made regarding the various decisions made along the way, rationales for those decisions, and personal reflections. Furthermore, all notes taken during meetings with the first reader or second reader, as well as dissertation writing support events with fellow doctoral students, were kept in order to be reflected upon throughout the duration of the study.

3.8 Assumptions

It was assumed that the participants were honest and forthcoming in their questionnaires and interviews. Not only were they assured on multiple occasions that their identities would remain anonymous, but they were also informed that the instructors' identities would also be hidden. Students would not have to be worried about any repercussions against themselves for things said during the interviews. It also seemed that some of the students might be concerned about saying things that would either be upsetting for their instructors to hear, or that might make that particular instructor look bad in front of others within the department. Considering all identities were anonymized and the students were aware of the fact that no names would be revealed, this should have removed any hesitancy to be open in their responses. Students participated in the study voluntarily and all offers of an alternative interviewer where a conflict might be perceived with the researcher were declined.

It was also assumed that participants' memories of their experiences were accurate. For some students, a full semester had passed between the time they took the course and when the interview was conducted. Students knew the focus of the study before they came in for their interviews, so they had time beforehand to think about their experiences and refresh their memories although they did not know what the actual questions would be. Several students openly admitted when they could not remember something or were not sure about a particular

recollection, so it seems as though this was a safe assumption to make. However, when it seemed necessary, students were reassured during the interview that any details or interactions they remembered would be helpful and that they did not need to feel as though they had to provide incredibly detailed accounts where they had forgotten things.

3.9 Limitations

Due to the modularized structure of the programs at the University of Koblenz-Landau, some of the students were discussing courses that had ended several months prior. Both their responses to the EAI and the content of their interviews could have been influenced by the passage of time, as well as any additional interactions they may have had afterward with the instructor whose educational alliance they assessed. In addition, due to the university's transition to online courses in early 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the involvement of additional students was not possible as mixing student experiences of online learning with in-person learning could potentially have resulted in inaccurate findings.

3.10 Delimitations

This study purposefully excluded students who were studying English as a stand-alone major. This decision was based on the arguments in the literature that students may assess instructor feedback differently depending on the discipline to which they belong (Watling et al.). Students majoring in English can potentially go into a variety of professions upon graduation that may not have any connection at all to teaching, and they are also required to take Writing Skills in an earlier module than the B.Ed. students. Therefore, the participant pool was limited to the Education students in order to achieve a higher level of homogeneity. However, the decision to focus exclusively on B.Ed. students was also motivated by the desire to potentially uncover findings that could have an impact on teacher training programs and the ways elementary and secondary teachers approach feedback meant to develop their students' writing skills in English. Participants could have been narrowed down even further by focusing on students who were preparing to teach at the same level, such as elementary school or high school; however, this did not seem necessary as the students already belonged to the same discipline through their common major in Education.

Additionally, participants were limited to only those students who had recently registered for the module exam or who would be registering at the end of the current semester as this would ensure that they had either recently finished revising their written assignments or were in the process of revising. This is because students who spread the courses out over

multiple semesters may not work with their formative feedback until they have finished all three courses, especially if they take the writing course last. As part of the focus of this study was on how students interact with instructor feedback during the revision process, it did not seem fitting to include students who may have completed one of the courses but may not have reached the revision stage yet.

Similarly, this study focused exclusively on students' perceptions and experiences. Instructors were not asked to participate as the literature review revealed that the only perception that matters in terms of feedback effectiveness is the student's. Furthermore, despite the fact that there are alliance measurement instruments for both patients and therapists, meaning instructors could have also assessed the quality of the educational alliance, it is generally the patient's assessment that ultimately matters the most. Also, considering the instructors typically have twenty students in each course, and some of the students involved in the study had taken the course in a previous semester, the instructors may not have been able to remember the individual students.

Finally, students' grades on the written assignments discussed in the study were not included as part of the data. The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between the educational alliance and feedback effectiveness. Grades are only representative of an instructor's assessment of the final draft. Just as a high grade does not automatically indicate feedback effectiveness or writing development, neither does a low grade automatically indicate feedback ineffectiveness or a lack of writing development. Therefore, including students' final grades would not have contributed to answering the research questions.

3.11 Summary

This chapter summarized the rationale for conducting an exploratory case study at the University of Koblenz-Landau's Koblenz campus. It provided a detailed description of the method and design that were used to answer the research questions, as well as the reasoning for those choices. It also summarized the tools that were used, the setting of the study, and both the participants and the selection process. Within this chapter, methods of data collection and analysis were discussed, steps taken to establish trustworthiness, and the researcher's assumptions. Finally, this chapter addressed the limitations and delimitations of the study. The following chapters present the findings and analyses.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Weak Alliances

Because sixteen students participated in this study, and each student discussed two courses, there were ultimately thirty-two alliances that were explored through the EAI and interviews. Of these thirty-two alliances, ten were classified as being weak. Seven of these alliances occurred in the Literature course (see table 4), and three of them occurred in the Linguistics course (see table 5).

Table 4. Weak Alliance Group Overall EAI Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Overall Score
Lenore	Ms. Watson	82
Charlotte	Ms. Watson	101
Mark	Ms. Watson	109
Marianne	Mr. Ellerby	141
Lorina	Mr. Ellerby	150
Evelina	Mr. Hundert	152
Roxanne	Ms. Abbey	155

The majority of the weak alliances experienced by students in this study were with their Literature instructors. Additionally, all four of the Literature instructors were assessed as having at least one weak alliance. In contrast, there were fewer students who experienced a weak alliance with their Linguistics instructor and only one of the two Linguistics instructors was assessed as having a weak alliance.

Table 5. Weak Alliance Group Overall EAI Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Overall Score
Charlotte	Mr. Woodbridge	104
Mark	Mr. Woodbridge	111
Chuck	Mr. Woodbridge	155

There were two students who experienced a weak alliance in both courses. Charlotte had a total score of 101 with her Literature instructor and 104 with her Linguistics instructor. Similarly, Mark had a total score of 109 with his Literature instructor and 111 with his Linguistics instructor. In both instances, the overall EAI score was similar in each course with a point difference of less than three. It is worth noting that not only did both students assess the alliance with their Linguistics instructor as slightly higher, but they also had the same combination of instructors.

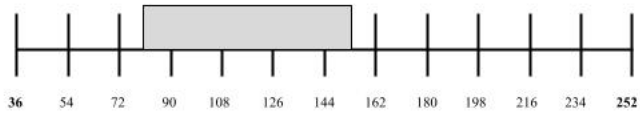

Figure 6. Distribution of overall EAI scores in the Weak Alliance Group

When looking at all ten weak alliances, the overall EAI scores range from 82 to 155. The lowest possible overall score on the EAI is 36 and the highest is 252. This means that all ten students' scores fall between the middle and lower end of the scale (see figure 6).

4.1 Goal: Beliefs Regarding the Course Learning Goals

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the goal aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all ten weak alliances, the EAI goal scores range from 27 to 45. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that all ten students' scores fall on the lower end of the scale (see figure 7).

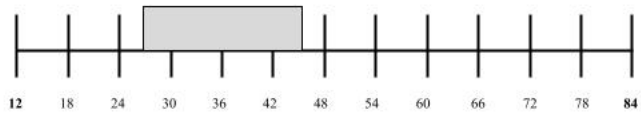

Figure 7. Distribution of EAI goal scores in the Weak Alliance Group

The EAI goal scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 29 to 45 (see table 6), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 27 to 38 (see table 7).

Table 6. Weak Alliance Group EAI Goal Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Goal Score
Lenore	Ms. Watson	31
Charlotte	Ms. Watson	29
Mark	Ms. Watson	31
Marianne	Mr. Ellerby	43
Lorina	Mr. Ellerby	40
Evelina	Mr. Hundert	44
Roxanne	Ms. Abbey	45

Table 7. Weak Alliance Group EAI Goal Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Goal Score
Charlotte	Mr. Woodbridge	27
Mark	Mr. Woodbridge	31
Chuck	Mr. Woodbridge	38

In order to further explore the goal aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to learning goals in each course. As it was not known whether students would view the written assignment as the goal toward which they were working with their instructor or as a task assigned by the instructor in order to help them reach a larger goal, students were asked open questions regarding what they believed the learning goals to be and how those learning goals had lined up with their own.

Disconnect Between Learning and Teaching Goals. What became clear with this group of students was that there was a stark divide between what the students felt the learning goals should have been and what they believed the instructor wanted them to learn. This was true for both courses.

Students' Learning Goals. There were three main learning goals that emerged. The most prevalent one was to learn how to write in the respective discipline. Some students even referenced the fact that successful completion of each course was predicated upon written assignments.

> I felt like we only got the knowledge, like the information about the writers and the poets and whatever, but not really tips how to write an essay about literature, which I thought was most interesting, most important, because I have to write an essay about the literature. (Charlotte)

> I mean, if they want me to write an essay about that, they should have just mentioned what they expect from the essays. So, how do I write linguistic essays? (Charlotte)

They felt that if writing in the discipline was the measure for completing the course, then this is what they needed, and wanted, to learn how to do.

Students also referenced the structure of this particular module as reasoning behind their learning goal for writing in the discipline.

> Obviously you need some information and you should be able to retain it, but if I look into what I saw in module four as a whole was about, I think it's just too small of a part to just solely focus on that. So, I would've liked to be given more information about how to write an essay specifically in literature and about literature. (Mark)

They were also very aware of the fact that the module exam consisted of an essay portfolio, including at least one written assignment from each course.

> I just think for it being part of an exam in a form of a portfolio, like you don't learn much about how to write an essay or anything. It's basically just like doing literature all semester and then you're expected to hand in two essays without any instruction on how to do that pretty much. (Marianne)

The second learning goal that emerged from the data was to learn how to think critically about texts and concepts within each discipline. Some students pointed out that they had already been required to take an introductory style course in both disciplines as part of an earlier module. As a result, they felt that they had already received a general overview of both fields and expected courses in higher modules to help them think more critically about topics.

> I really enjoy studying English, but I guess literature, so the M4 literature, was one of the courses I didn't like as much because it was a lot of theory and I would have liked to read more and to talk more about the stuff we read. (Lorina)

> He just gave us the texts and said - analyze them - and we didn't really know how. (Evelina)

The third learning goal identified was related to learning how to teach within each discipline. Perhaps because they had already taken the introductory style courses, many students commented on how they felt like the learning goals of these courses should have been connected to their roles as future teachers.

> I also would have liked kind of the didactic part of that. How is this important for me as a future teacher? How should I keep things like that in mind? How should I keep in mind that there are certain stereotypes connected to accents? (Charlotte)

> Just, how could you do literature in school? Because that's what I'm really interested in. (Roxanne)

Instructors' Teaching Goals. In addition to the students' own learning goals, they also made assumptions about what they felt their instructors' teaching goals were. Several of the students felt that their instructors' only teaching goal for them was the historical context of key texts in the discipline.

> The class was literature history, and then we wrote an essay which didn't have anything to do with the class itself except for the topic literature. (Evelina)

> I think the goal was that we become aware of how historical context influences literature. (Lorina)

Other students felt that their instructor's teaching goal was simply for them to gain a superficial understanding of the discipline itself.

> [The instructor's teaching goal was] to give us core and background knowledge on linguistics in general. (Mark)

> Maybe get to know some literature. We just read so many things, and, I don't know, it was sick. (Marianne)

Additionally, two students specifically felt that the main teaching goal of their instructor was for the students to adopt the instructor's opinions and views.

> For example, one thing that I found really odd was, we did this poem and you clearly could see that she had analyzed it before and she just wanted us to find out what she was thinking rather than us analyzing it on our own, or like what we thought. (Lenore)

> Although sometimes I felt like she had ideas, like she wanted exactly these three themes that are commonly discussed. And when people brought up other themes or ideas, even if they weren't that absurd, she didn't really, she said - okay, yeah. She acknowledged it, but she really tried to get us to these three core themes that she had made up before. (Mark)

One student claimed to have no idea what their instructor's teaching goal was.

> I mean, it should give an overview of varieties of English. I mean, that's just the title, but I didn't really know what they wanted us to know in the end because I learned interesting facts about different varieties, but I don't know how to use that in the future. (Charlotte)

Finally, it is also worth noting that none of these students ever claimed to have been provided with a set of teaching or learning goals. As a result, they deduced what the instructor's teaching goals were based on the title of the course, the assessment measure, the homework, and the content of the instructor's lectures. Although the department provides students with a module handbook that outlines learning objectives for each module, none of the students referenced this during their interviews.

Written Assignment as Goal. It also became apparent that the majority of the students in the Weak Alliance Group viewed the written assignment more as a goal than a task.

> Most of us just sat there in order to know what to do to write the essay and to write it good. (Charlotte)

They did not see the written assignment itself as a learning goal; however, as it was the prerequisite for completing the course and the only assignment to receive a grade, it was the only demonstration of learning they could provide their instructors. Therefore, writing a paper in that specific discipline became the ultimate goal.

In conclusion, students viewed the ability to write a paper in the discipline as the ultimate goal of the course. However, they saw their instructors' teaching goals for the class as being at odds with this. The students believed their instructors' teaching goals for them were to adopt the instructors' perspectives, gain a superficial overview, and become familiar with the historical context of key texts in the discipline. The students' own learning goals were related to teaching, thinking critically, and writing in the specific discipline. That the students did not view their instructors as working towards a mutual goal is apparent in their EAI scores. In both courses, the students' EAI goal scores were toward the lower end of the scale.

4.2 Task: Attitudes Toward the Course Activities

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the task aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all ten weak alliances, the EAI task scores

range from 27 to 53. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that all ten students' scores fall along the middle and lower end of the scale (see figure 8).

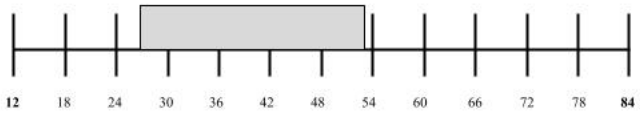

Figure 8. Distribution of EAI task scores in the Weak Alliance Group

The EAI task scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 27 to 53 (see table 8), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 30 to 46 (see table 9).

Table 8. Weak Alliance Group EAI Task Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	**Instructor Pseudonym**	**EAI Task Score**
Lenore	Ms. Watson	27
Charlotte	Ms. Watson	28
Mark	Ms. Watson	31
Marianne	Mr. Ellerby	52
Lorina	Mr. Ellerby	49
Evelina	Mr. Hundert	41
Roxanne	Ms. Abbey	53

Table 9. Weak Alliance Group EAI Task Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	**Instructor Pseudonym**	**EAI Task Score**
Charlotte	Mr. Woodbridge	31
Mark	Mr. Woodbridge	30
Chuck	Mr. Woodbridge	46

Because tasks are always closely related to goals, it is not surprising that the students' scores are relatively similar in the two areas (see figures 9 and 10). Sometimes the goal score was higher, and sometimes the task score was higher, but the students were evenly split in this regard. For half of them, the goal score was either higher or equal to the task score, and for the other half of the students, the task score was higher. In most instances, the scores were within four points of each other; however, in four cases (Marianne, Lorina, Roxanne, and Chuck), there was a difference of eight to nine points. All of these occurred with the Literature instructor except in Chuck's case.

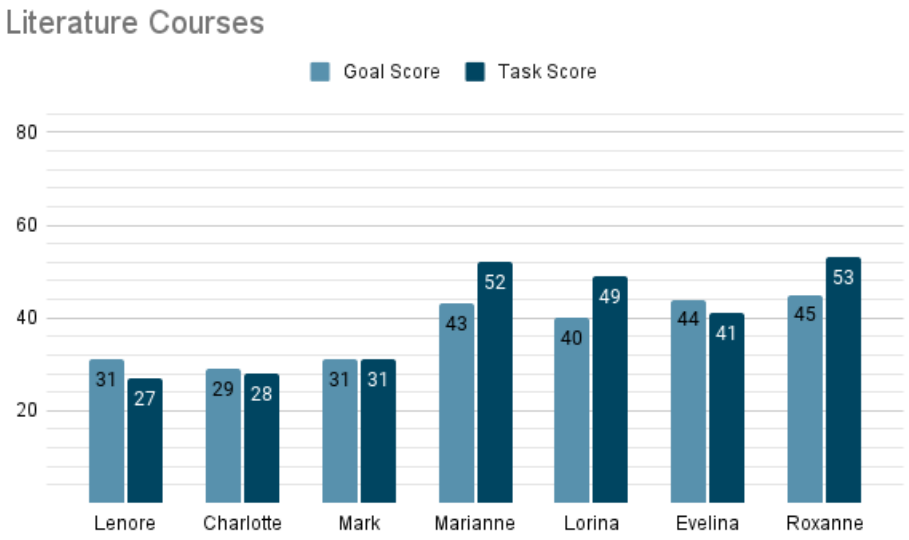

Figure 9. Side-by-side comparisons of goal and task scores for the Literature courses in the Weak Alliance Group

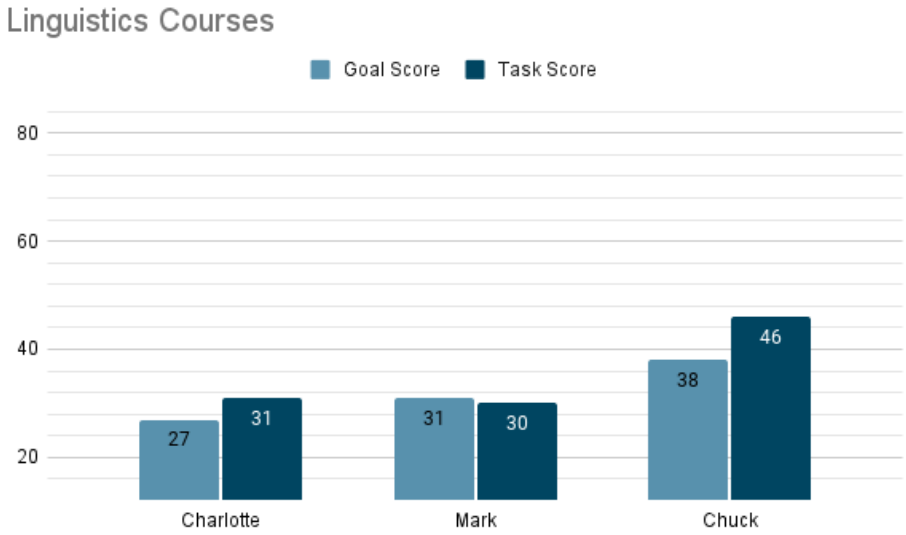

Figure 10. Side-by-side comparisons of goal and task scores for the Linguistics courses in the Weak Alliance Group

Although these scores are still relatively close, it is interesting to note that in each of these four instances where there is a larger gap between scores, it is the task score that is higher. This suggests that goal and task are closely tied to each other but that students may be able to determine a relevance for tasks that do not necessarily align with the learning goals.

In order to further explore the task aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to the course activities in each course. As it was not known whether students would view the written assignment as the goal toward which they were working with their instructor or as a task assigned by the instructor in order to help them reach a larger goal, students were asked open questions regarding what kinds of activities they had done in class, what types of things had been assigned as homework, and what their feelings were about these various tasks. Course activities in this context ultimately referred to any activity that the instructor assigned, either as homework or to be done in class, the content of the lectures, and the required reading.

Lack of Relevance. The students seemed to be assessing the relevancy of course activities by comparing them to their own learning goals, not the instructors' teaching goals for the class. For example, some of the students stated that they did not see any connection between the course content and the curriculum in the German school system. In Evelina's case, she found much of the required reading to be irrelevant to her role as a future elementary school teacher.

> I mean, I would have liked it if we maybe read a children's book, which we didn't. We only read Shakespeare and poems, which you just can't do in a primary school, especially not in Germany. That's just too difficult. (Evelina)

Lenore expressed a similar concern; although, her experience was quite different.

> I was expecting Shakespeare for sure. Maybe more books. We had a lot of excerpts or short stories. The poems we had, I don't know. I felt like it should be more like a basis that we could all work with as teachers. And these were more like, I've never heard of them before, or I tried to find them in curriculums, but they weren't there. (Lenore)

Evelina, a future elementary school teacher, found the texts irrelevant as none of them were appropriate for the elementary school curriculum, and Lenore, a future high school teacher, found the texts her instructor assigned irrelevant as they were not part of the current high school curriculum. In both cases, the students assigned relevancy based on their future careers as teachers.

Most of the students also considered the activities to be irrelevant because they were not connected to writing in the discipline or to the specific written assignment.

> I was kind of just sitting there reading stuff and then handing in the essay at the end, but it had really nothing to do with the course, but, not saying nothing, but not much with the course. Like, I feel like I could have written the whole thing even without attending the class. (Marianne)

> Sometimes it was homework that I really didn't think was necessary. So, we had to write a poem ourselves, a lot of "draw a picture about a poem," and I didn't really see how that helped me writing an essay about literature. (Charlotte)

A couple of students said they had been assigned homework related to writing in the discipline, but that the timing had made it irrelevant. For example, some students said they had received explicit writing instruction, but that it came too late to be of use.

> I think it was the session before we had to hand in the essay when Ms. Watson just said, "[here] are some basics," and it was too late for me because I take more than a week for writing an essay, and it would have been better for me to have learned those facts beforehand, like in the first or second session and not just the session before we had to hand in the first essay. (Charlotte)

Another student reported that his instructor had discussed some of the specifics of writing in the respective discipline, but had only provided this information at the end of the semester, after the papers had been written. Therefore, even when course activities were related to writing, the relevancy was problematic because of the timing.

Similarly, a number of students expressed disappointment with how the lecture topics were organized in relation to the written assignment.

> One problem that I saw is that our first essay had to be about Frankenstein, and we talked about Frankenstein in the session after our deadline for the essay. (Mark)

The organization of the course activities was a point of contention for other reasons as well, including the fact that the students often felt the instructors moved through the content too quickly.

> I think we had two sessions in which we talked about Dracula, and I think the book had much more to offer than that. And most of the people only read the first three chapters because they knew, "okay, we don't talk about it a lot." I tried to read everything. And then when Mr. Ellerby said, "Well, next lesson, we're going to talk about something else," I was like, "well, I don't have to read it anymore." I wanted to. I really tried afterwards, but I knew we're not going to talk about it. (Lorina)

> We sometimes had to prepare three or four texts, which was too much to discuss in one session. So, it would have been better to focus just on one text and then do it in detail and properly do it instead of having three or four texts, which we're just like superficially discussing. (Charlotte)

In this sense, tasks also became irrelevant because the instructor moved on before the students had enough time to engage with the reading material. This was the most common reason for students admitting to not finishing the homework. Students often did not understand why their instructors had organized the course activities the way they had.

Lack of Interactivity. Another common theme that came up in discussions of the course activities was a lack of interactive activities.

> [M]ostly I just sat there and waited for the class to be over because, while Mr. Hundert, he's great, I like him very much, but the way he taught, I didn't really like because he talked for about, I don't know, 50 to 70% of the time and we barely got any chance to talk. (Evelina)

Many of the students felt that there was too much reliance on lectures. They had wanted to be able to participate in discussions or work in small groups, and they were unhappy that they had not been given such opportunities. Some of the instructors did attempt to foster class discussions; however, they were generally described as being unsuccessful.

> It was more like he was doing a lecture kind of thing and then in between he would ask a few questions, but nobody answered. He just said the answer himself and kept going. (Marianne)

As in Marianne's case, although the instructors sometimes attempted to make the lecture itself interactive, the students often considered these attempts to be unproductive as class participation in these instances was extremely low.

This focus on interactive course activities seems closely related to students' desire to learn how to think critically about texts and concepts in the different disciplines.

Minimal Educational Value. Many of the course activities were seen as lacking in educational value. For example, several students commented on how they felt the lectures were informational but not particularly educational.

> Sometimes we had homework, most of the times it was some reading, for example a poem or short story, and to take notes. And then we talked about the short story and what we read and what's it about and stuff like this. Then he gave us the background information, the context, the historic bits. And then it was only a few minutes we had left to talk about this, and then for next week we had another assignment. (Lorina)

> We would sit there. She would talk about the history of literature, something that we could read up on Wikipedia or any other academic source in like 10 minutes and again, personal opinion, but I don't feel like it's very helpful to discuss those things in the time in class. (Mark)

The students found lectures on historical context to be especially lacking in educational value, and in Mark's case, an ineffective use of class time as well. However, this was not limited to lectures. Marianne described an in-class activity in which they were told to draw a picture related to one of the books they had been assigned to read as a form of busywork meant to "keep us occupied." Charlotte recalled a homework assignment in which they were supposed to develop possible thesis statements for a specific topic; however, they were not given feedback on these thesis statements, "which then kind of didn't make sense to me writing them at all."

Similarly, several of the students felt that the in-class activities were simply not challenging enough.

> I found [the activities] unnecessary. I would have rather, I mean, it was cool to write the poem or we did write our own happy ending stories. But, I would have liked more just to get into that academic analysis stuff. (Lenore)

> We were just a little underwhelmed by what we were doing because in prior modules, we were introduced to very complex theories, to [a] broad horizon of new ideas. And then we were back in this eighth grade, "can somebody please hold a PowerPoint presentation on this guy's life in 10 minutes?". And it just felt like a bad throwback to this time. So, I guess you could say that it didn't really feel like we were challenged enough. (Mark)

There was a sense among the students that the course activities assigned by their instructors were somehow not at the level they expected a university course to be.

In conclusion, students felt that the course activities lacked educational value and were not interactive enough; however, the main issue was one of relevance. Students generally assessed relevance based upon their own learning goals, not those of the instructor. The course activities did not promote critical thinking, were not explicitly connected to writing in the respective discipline, and were unrelated to the school curriculum of which the student would be teaching one day. That the students did not view the course activities, or tasks, as being relevant to their learning goals is also apparent in their EAI scores. In both courses, the students' EAI task scores were toward the middle and lower end of the scale, and they were in line with their EAI goal scores.

4.3 Bond: Feelings About the Instructor

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the bond aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all ten weak alliances, the EAI bond scores range from 27 to 71. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that the students' scores spanned nearly the full range of the scale (see figure 11).

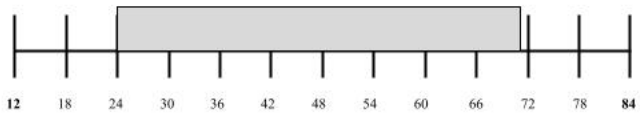

Figure 11. Distribution of EAI bond scores in the Weak Alliance Group

The EAI bond scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 24 to 67 (see table 10), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 46 to 71 (see table 11).

Table 10. Weak Alliance Group EAI Bond Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Bond Score
Lenore	Ms. Watson	24
Charlotte	Ms. Watson	44
Mark	Ms. Watson	47
Marianne	Mr. Ellerby	46
Lorina	Mr. Ellerby	61
Evelina	Mr. Hundert	67
Roxanne	Ms. Abbey	57

Table 11. Weak Alliance Group EAI Bond Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Bond Score
Charlotte	Mr. Woodbridge	46
Mark	Mr. Woodbridge	50
Chuck	Mr. Woodbridge	71

The highest bond score occurred in the Linguistics courses, and the lowest bond score occurred in the Literature courses. In comparison to the task and goal scores, the bond scores were more spread out (see figure 12).

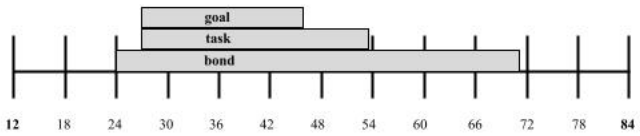

Figure 12. Distribution of EAI goal, task, and bond scores in the Weak Alliance Group

In most cases, the bond score was the highest of the three sub-scores for each student (see figures 13 and 14). In comparison to the task scores, the bond scores were thirteen points

higher on average in the Literature courses and twenty points higher on average in the Linguistics courses. In comparison to the goal scores, the bond scores were seventeen points higher on average in the Literature courses and twenty-four points higher on average in the Linguistics courses. There were only two instances in which the bond score was not the highest score, both of which occurred in the Literature courses (Lenore and Marianne).

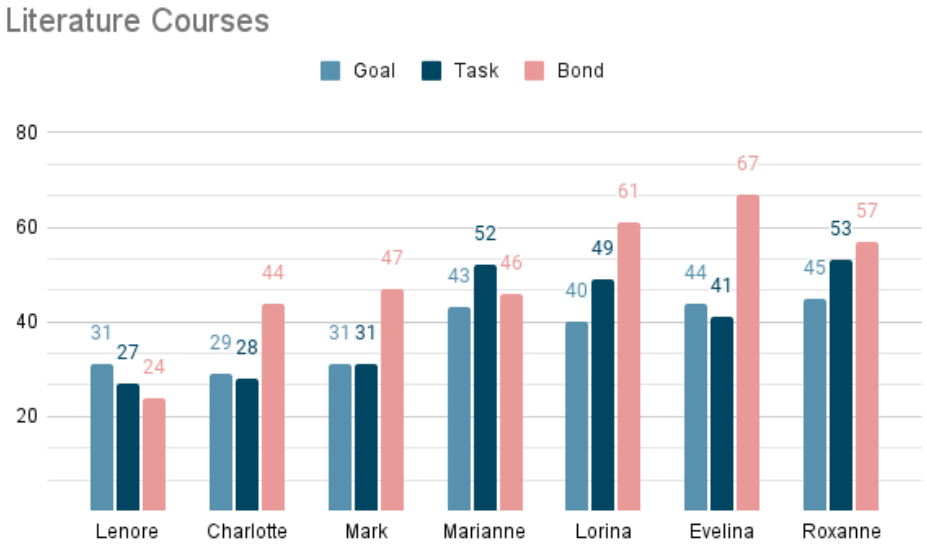

Figure 13. Side-by-side comparisons of goal, task, and bond scores for the Literature courses in the Weak Alliance Group

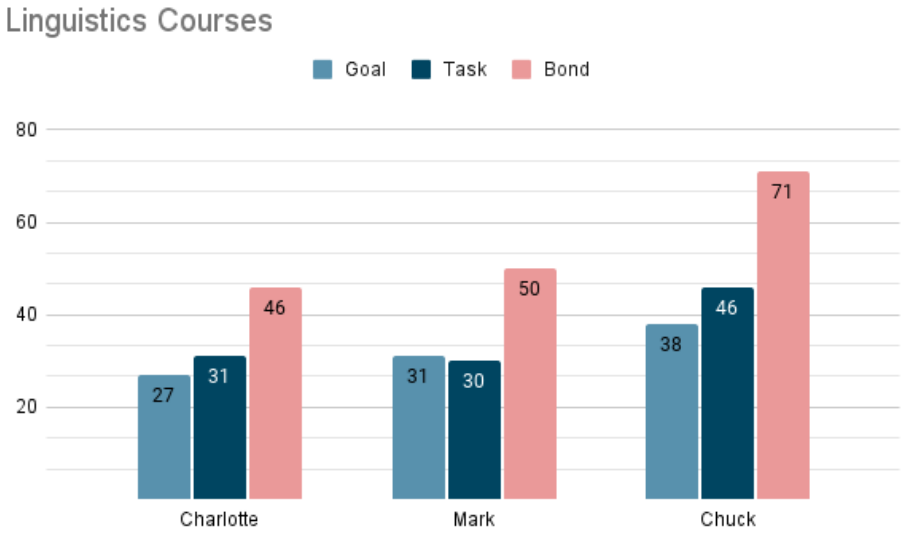

Figure 14. Side-by-side comparisons of goal, task, and bond scores for the Linguistics courses in the Weak Alliance Group

Students were more likely to have greater divergence between their bond and goal scores than their bond and task scores, and they were equally likely to experience a divergence in their scores in either course. The fact that the bond score is often not aligned with the goal and task scores suggests that it is not as closely related and that a sense of mutual liking, trusting, and respecting can still occur even when students assess problems in the goal and task areas.

In order to further explore the bond aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to the instructor of each course. Students were asked open questions regarding their first impressions of the instructor, how their impression changed throughout the course, and what traits or experiences had influenced the students' impressions of the instructor.

Students' feelings about the instructors were mixed and often contradictory. Upon analysis of the codes, it became clear that the students often separated their feelings about the instructor from that of the instructor as an individual and that of the instructor as a teacher. When describing their feelings about the instructor, the students often framed their statements with language such as, "as a person." However, these statements were almost always followed by a criticism of the instructor as a teacher.

> I like him as a person, the way he talks and kind of just, he seems like a very nice and calm person. I don't know, just the way of teaching - not that much. (Marianne)

> I think [Ms. Watson] was a nice person, what I think is important…I thought she was very polite. She wanted us to do something in this course. Maybe she didn't really know really how to get us to work, but she did try. (Mark)

In this sense, when referring to the instructor as an individual, the comments were generally positive; however, when referring to the instructor as a teacher, the comments were often negative.

The Individual. In describing their feelings about the instructors as individuals, nearly all of the students used the word "nice." Other adjectives used by the students were, "sweet," "polite," "entertaining," "calm," and "shy." Some students even described their instructors as friendly and approachable. There was also a general consensus that the instructors were all knowledgeable about their field.

> I think he knows a lot about his stuff, but I didn't feel like he knew how to…have us use this knowledge in the future. (Charlotte)

> He has so much knowledge about what he teaches, but he could do a bit more with methods. (Lorina)

In every instance, the students described the teacher as an individual with positive language. There were no situations in which the students characterized the instructor as an individual in a negative manner.

It is worth noting, however, that while each student expressed positive feelings towards the instructor as an individual, these comments were generally made as a preface to criticisms of the instructor as a teacher. The students also went on to speak at greater length about the instructor as a teacher than they had about the instructor as an individual. Thus, it is possible that the students were attempting to soften their comments by giving praise where they could and separating the person from the role.

The Teacher. When discussing their feelings towards the instructor as a teacher, the students' appeared to be considering how well the instructor fulfilled their role as a teacher, their attitude toward the class, and their commitment to student learning.

Teaching Role. Several of the students felt that their instructors simply did not know how to teach them in an effective manner. This was interesting because it did not immediately indicate that the students disliked their instructor's individual teaching style but rather that the students saw the instructors as lacking the knowledge of how to teach. For example, some students felt that the instructors did not know how to facilitate class discussions. Others felt the instructors lacked the skills to teach writing.

> I can't look inside her head, but maybe she didn't really know how to approach us. (Mark)

> I didn't feel like he knew how to help us write the essay. (Charlotte)

There was also a general agreement among most of the students that the instructors did not know how to select teaching methods appropriate for the class.

> It was more high school. I feel like she just tried to be a teacher at university, which didn't work at all. (Lenore)

However, it often came back to writing instruction.

> You could see that he was really making an effort, but maybe for future classes it would be better to incorporate more about actual essay writing and the differences in essay writing in linguistics or cultural studies or literature. (Mark)

Where there was a lack of writing instruction, many of the students attributed this either to the instructor's inability to teach writing, or to the instructor's poor judgment in selecting topics. Other assessments of teaching ability were related to the instructors' perceived lack of experience, an inability to teach in a structured way, and poor time management skills.

At times, the students also discussed their beliefs about the level of professionalism they felt their instructors did, or more often did not, display. For example, Charlotte found it unprofessional that her Literature instructor had drawn a smiley face on her written assignment next to the feedback, and Lorina referenced how her Literature instructor had clearly re-used old PowerPoint slides that had not been updated. In Mark's case, he believed his instructor to be openly biased.

> I noticed that she had a bias towards religion specifically. She wasn't a huge Christian. So, this was, we had this really sketchy looking website and we had to look up on [the idea] that Christianity basically boosted slavery and people, they try to keep people in the dark ages, so they wouldn't educate themselves. (Mark)

In each of these cases, the students expressed the belief that these instructors had not conducted themselves in a way the students felt was befitting a university instructor and that this was manifested in their interactions with the students.

Attitude Toward the Class. The students also discussed their feelings about how the instructors interacted with and treated the class. One pattern that appeared in multiple

interviews was that of the instructor treating the students like children; however, these comments were all limited to one instructor.

Charlotte, Lenore, and Mark all indicated that Ms. Watson had treated them more like children than university students. As to why they felt this way, all three students pointed to her choice of course activities and misalignment with the students' learning goals.

Similar to being treated like children, there was also a sense that the instructor talked down to the class.

> She was comparing us to her [vocational school] students and being like, "Oh, my students could be better at that" or, "I did that with my [eighth graders], let's do that and try that." (Lenore)

Another student believed her instructor did not enjoy teaching them.

> We knew that he didn't enjoy our classes, that he didn't like teaching us. So it was just kind of frustrating, like we had to go, but no one wanted to be there. (Marianne)

In addition to not wanting to teach them, Marianne also talked about how openly her instructor showed frustration with the class for not completing the assigned course activities.

> Well, at some point it got really, like it showed that his attitude towards us, just being so frustrated that we didn't do anything. He told us to our face we were the worst class he taught in [a long time]...it felt like he thought we were just terrible people. (Marianne)

However, Marianne was not the only student in the group to believe her instructor did not like the students.

> She didn't really know what we could and couldn't do. And then how this turned out probably confirmed her presupposition that we weren't really that great, but I don't know. So this was like this vicious cycle. (Mark)

> I didn't feel like she liked us, or me in particular. (Lenore)

When the students elaborated on what made them believe their instructors did not like them, most of them said it was because of how the instructor had reacted to the students' lack of participation in the course activities, and one student pointed to a specific email conversation.

> We got an email from her Tuesday night at 11. [Our class began on Wednesday.] And the last sentence was something like, "Well, I know it's late, but I know that students don't start working until like 30 minutes before class, so it's fine." And so we were all like - well, that's not very nice. (Lenore)

For some of the students, the belief their instructor disliked them, or the class as a whole, was directly related to their lack of interest in the course activities. However, disengaging from the course activities could be a result of the students not seeing the activity as relevant to their learning goal. Additionally, students who believe their instructors do not like them or do not want to teach them may not be inclined to put much effort into the course.

It should also be pointed out that it was only Literature instructors implicated in the discussions of negative attitudes being displayed toward students.

Commitment to Student Learning. Several students felt that their instructors were not fully committed to student learning. This was sometimes attributed to the instructors not being available to the students, either in person or by email.

> The problem with [Ms. Watson] was that she doesn't have office hours and the literature class we had was really late and I had to catch a train. So, it wasn't really, she didn't really have the time for us to reach out to her. (Charlotte)

> For the second essay, which was then submitted in the portfolio, I sent it to him and he didn't give me feedback for it. And I never got a reply…other friends of mine, they also emailed him and they didn't get a reply. So, I just thought, well, that's it. (Evelina)

In both instances, the students were clearly disappointed with their instructor's lack of availability.

However, there were other behaviors that led students to believe their instructors were not as committed to student learning as they had wanted them to be. For example, in both of her courses, Charlotte felt that the instructors purposely withheld their knowledge from the students and were openly unwilling to provide guidance.

> I often, in the feedback I got that the thesis statement is too broad, but when I went to them and talked about the topic, it would have been helpful just like, how do I, I dunno, concentrate the basics in my thesis statement and something like that would have been much more helpful on what to concentrate because I had some trouble finding literature for both my essays. And they know more about how to find better literature. So, that would have been nice, like, "look at that site" or "we have this webpage where there are lots of literature." (Charlotte)

On the other hand, Mark and Lenore felt that their Literature instructor, who was the same for both, did not want them to think critically about the texts but to adopt her analyses. Both students described instances in which the instructor had dismissed students' contributions to class discussions when they did not align with her own ideas.

In conclusion, students often felt that their instructors were not committed to student learning, harbored negative feelings toward the class, and were not effective teachers. Such beliefs were in contrast to how the students felt about the instructors as individuals. Although the students expressed negative beliefs about their instructors as teachers, they overwhelmingly described them as nice, friendly, and competent. The fact that students tended to separate the educator from the person may help to explain why their bond scores were higher in most cases. In comparison to the task and goal scores, not only did the bond scores tend to be higher but they also tended to be more spread out. Although many of the bond scores were fairly low, others were fairly high, meaning that the students' scores covered nearly the full range of the scale.

4.4 Feedback Receptivity

In order to explore feedback receptivity, students were asked questions in the interview about their initial encounters with the feedback their instructor provided them with. They were asked open questions relating to the nature of the feedback itself, their initial reactions upon receiving the feedback, and what actions they took immediately afterward. Because the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they were asked to discuss both sets of feedback.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and then organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, the initial stage, termed the Attention stage, is when an individual chooses whether or not to acknowledge the message and how deeply to scrutinize it. Although all of the students had acknowledged the feedback, close inspection of that feedback was rare in terms of scrutiny or engagement.

Immediate Context. What a person is doing at the exact moment they encounter a message can influence how receptive they are to it. In the students' situations, they all acknowledged that they had given the feedback attention by reading it if it was written or listening to it if it was spoken; however, there were a few factors that seemed to inhibit them from giving much consideration to the feedback beyond that.

For example, some students who had received written feedback said they had difficulty reading their instructor's handwriting.

> [It was] very hard to read the handwriting. (Chuck)

> I couldn't read his handwriting. (Marianne)

These types of "distractions," as RMR refers to them, can actually impede an individual's ability to apply critical thought (Benoit and Smythe). Because the students could not decipher the handwriting, they were unable to closely examine the comments. This type of distraction was also seen with feedback strategies that were not explained to the student. For example, Charlotte's Linguistics instructor provided feedback using a color system; however, Charlotte did not understand what the colors meant, and therefore could not fully process the feedback.

However, these distractions were not limited to students receiving written feedback. Some of the students had received verbal feedback in the form of a private student conference between themselves and the instructor. These were typically mandatory meetings where students had to sign up for a specific time slot and the instructor would talk through the feedback with the student. Their attendance alone constituted their giving attention to the feedback, but these students felt that the time constraint kept them from being able to question the feedback.

> We would sit down in his office and he talked to us for 15 minutes, and then we could ask questions or, well, the problem is that he maybe talked for 15 minutes, and then at the end, he said if you have any further questions, we had enough time for maybe one or two questions, but any more than that, we would have to book an additional office hour or talk to him via email. (Mark)

As in Mark's case, these students often wanted to probe the feedback and give it thoughtful consideration, but the lack of time to ask questions during the student conference kept them from being able to do so.

Some students also experienced strong emotional reactions to the feedback that hindered their ability to engage further with it. In many of these instances, the students described feeling a sense of dismay upon reading the feedback, which they saw as a sign of their failure. There was a sense of being overwhelmed by the implications of the feedback, which led some students to turn to alternative sources of feedback they deemed more helpful, such as the Writing Center, and other students to simply resign themselves to a subpar performance.

Another emotion experienced by students was disappointment; although, it was not always for the same reasons.

> I was a bit disappointed because I spent a lot of time on it. So, I started really early on, and I thought I would have done much better. So, yeah, I was disappointed. Also a bit angry at myself. (Charlotte)

> I was kinda lost. (Lenore)

Charlotte's initial reaction to the feedback was feeling disappointed in herself, whereas Lenore was disappointed in her instructor's efforts. These types of negative emotional reactions tended to result in the students disengaging from the feedback.

Needs, Values, and Interests. A person's needs, values, and interests can also impact their receptivity. All of the students took time to look at the feedback, which is likely connected to their learning goal to develop their writing skills in the discipline. For some students, this was further connected to their desire to earn a high grade on their written assignment. Because the students wanted to do well, and because they knew their instructor would be the one to assign a grade, they were more willing to acknowledge and scrutinize the feedback. However, a couple of the students admitted that they only thought critically about the feedback they received on the written assignment they planned to revise and submit for a grade. Feedback on the written assignment that was not graded was usually read and then discarded. When these students closely examined both sets of feedback, it was often to determine which one would likely result in the higher grade with the least amount of effort.

Nature of the Feedback. According to RMR, the message itself can either encourage or discourage someone from paying attention to it. For the students, this seemed to be the factor that impacted their level of attention to and engagement with the feedback the most. For example, several students described their feedback as consisting of only one or two sentences. This tended to discourage their attention. On the other hand, when they received feedback that included a paragraph of text at the end of the written assignment, they were more likely to pay close attention to the comments.

> So, we got our original copies back, and again, we noticed, okay, she's a teacher because what teachers do is when they correct your essays in school, they write a G and a T for the teachers' codewords for mistakes. Sometimes, if something was really unclear…she would write small comments or sentences, or just a question mark…The second essay was much better. She asked us if we wanted detailed feedback. (Mark)

When the amount of feedback was "more," the students were more likely to feel encouraged to interact with it.

Similarly, the length of the comments themselves seemed to impact how encouraged or discouraged the students were to scrutinize the feedback. For example, terse phrases such as, "think about this," "focus this more," or "this isn't good" were often cited as examples of

comments that received little more than a cursory glance. This was also true of checkmarks, plus signs, and question marks.

Finally, the content of the feedback comments themselves often proved pivotal. Students tended to receive feedback that focused almost exclusively on lower order concerns. This type of feedback did not invite thoughtful consideration; however, feedback on higher order concerns had the opposite effect. In Charlotte's case, she received feedback on the content of her analysis that she strongly disagreed with. This prompted her not only to pay more attention to the comment itself but also to scrutinize it for understanding.

In conclusion, students were often discouraged from thoughtful consideration of their instructor's feedback due to the heavy focus on lower order concerns, the use of terse comments, and the overall small amount of feedback they felt was provided. When students scrutinized the feedback, it was usually driven by their motivation to determine which written assignment would result in the higher grade with the least amount of revision or as a result of disagreement. Additionally, ungraded written assignments, negative emotional reactions, instructor dominated student conferences, and illegible handwriting often resulted in minimal attention being provided to the feedback. Nonetheless, students always acknowledged their instructors' feedback by either reading or listening to it.

4.5 Feedback Perception

In order to explore feedback perceptions, students were asked questions in the interview about the format, content, and usefulness of the feedback their instructor had provided them with. Not only were they asked to describe the feedback, but they were also asked to elaborate their thoughts on both the quantity and quality. Because the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they were asked to discuss both sets of feedback initially; however, they were only asked to elaborate on the feedback for the written assignment they chose to revise.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, in the Interpretation and Thoughts stages, individuals first interpret messages and then based on those interpretations, they produce thoughts in response.

Interpretation. In the Interpretation stage, individuals can both interpret messages and construe them. For the students, interpretation was not always possible, but when it was, it tended to relate to implied messages that students inferred from the feedback. Specifically,

they seemed to read a hidden message that the written assignment had no major problems that needed to be addressed.

> I [got feedback], but it was one sentence each. So, the first one, I wrote about the comparison between Prometheus and Frankenstein. And she said that I had good arguments, but she didn't see, I should take Prometheus out of my thesis argument and just put it into one argument. So, it would only be like Shelly's comment on it. That was the one feedback thing I got for the first essay. (Lenore)

> I don't know if it was only my essay, but there wasn't much that he said about it. It was just - it's a good essay, you could focus a bit more on this and that. And that was basically it. (Lorina)

For these students, the feedback seemed to imply that the written assignments were mostly fine the way they were, and it was construed as only suggesting minor improvements needed to be made to an otherwise strong written assignment. However, most of the time, the students were either unable to interpret or construe the feedback as anything because they found the comments themselves to be lacking in clarity or substance, or they simply took it at face value. This is not surprising since the vast majority of students also did not thoughtfully engage with the feedback in the Attention stage.

Thoughts. The thoughts an individual has in response to their interpretation of a message can vary in terms of the amount and nature of those thoughts (Benoit and Smythe). Although there was not much discussion in the interviews regarding the amount of thoughts the students had, there were detailed discussions of the nature of their thoughts. According to RMR, thoughts are either favorable, unfavorable, neutral, or irrelevant. Although the students experienced a mixture of thoughts, the majority were unfavorable.

Nearly all of the students described their thoughts about the feedback as being unfavorable, although the exact nature of their thoughts was always different. For example, Mark believed the feedback he received on his first Literature essay was unclear.

> I sometimes didn't know what I did wrong, and it seemed like she didn't know either. (Mark)

Lenore did not describe the feedback she received as being unclear, but she did describe it as inadequate.

> Well, when I first started M4, I was expecting, I was like, "how can people fail this, we get feedback, it should be fine." But after that, I was like, "oh boy, okay, now I know" - because I was expecting that she would say something about my style of writing, my language, my arguments, my structure, but I didn't get that. (Lenore)

In Charlotte's case, she believed the feedback from her Linguistics instructor was both confusing and rushed, and the feedback from her Literature instructor was not helpful. Evelina felt the same way, describing her feedback as, "nothing I could work with." Mark's feelings about his Linguistics feedback were not quite as negative, but unfavorable nonetheless.

> It feels more like following a checklist. So, it doesn't really feel like feedback - more like an assessment of some product. (Mark)

It is interesting to note that Charlotte and Lenore were two of the students who had also interpreted their feedback as implying their written assignments had little that could be improved upon.

In terms of favorable thoughts about the feedback, four students characterized the feedback as helpful. However, for two of those students, the feedback was only described as helpful in comparison to the feedback they had received on the first written assignment.

> She explained her comments [on the second essay]. The comments were more elaborate. They weren't just, obviously if there was a spelling mistake, she would still write an S, but also circled the mistake or things, and it felt like night and day, but it was so much better. It's so much more helpful. (Mark)

> [For the second essay] he had a sheet, which I thought was much more helpful because also a week or two after I picked up the essay, I could look over it and see where I did something wrong or where I didn't. And it was more comments, which I also thought was much more helpful. (Charlotte)

However, in Mark's case, although he had favorable thoughts about the feedback on this particular essay, he also stated that he did not fully trust his instructor's feedback. The other two students who described the feedback as helpful also described it as being small in amount. Interestingly, these were the other two students who had interpreted the feedback as implying their written assignments had little that needed to be improved.

Chuck was the only student who expressed neutral thoughts, which related to the feedback being "brief." None of the students experienced irrelevant thoughts.

In conclusion, the majority of students experienced unfavorable thoughts in response to the feedback. When they described having favorable thoughts about the feedback, the students always did so with a caveat. Additionally, most of the students did not interpret or construe any additional meaning to the feedback, but a few of them did interpret their feedback as implying the written assignment had no major problems. However, even with this interpretation, the students still experienced unfavorable thoughts.

4.6 Revision Behaviors

In order to explore revision behaviors, students were asked questions in the interview about their use of the feedback they received from their instructors. Not only were they asked to discuss what types of revisions they made, but they were also asked to elaborate on why they made such revisions and why they might have chosen to ignore any of the feedback. Although the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they only needed to revise one. Therefore, students were only able to elaborate on their revision process for the written assignment they chose to submit for the module exam.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, in the final stage, individuals either change their beliefs, values, attitudes, or behaviors in the direction they believe the message to be advocating, or they do not, perhaps even moving in the opposite direction. This decision is dependent upon the nature of the thoughts, especially those that are favorable or unfavorable.

All of the students tried to incorporate their instructors' feedback, regardless of the nature of their thoughts. None of the students in either class chose to completely ignore their instructors' feedback, and none of them submitted a written assignment that had not been revised. However, three of the five students who had experienced favorable thoughts about the feedback they received on the written assignment they chose for the module exam admitted to only making minor revisions to lower order concerns.

> I just changed little things. (Marianne)

Marianne, for example, only made small revisions. Lorina made the same admission regarding her Literature essay, as did Charlotte with her Linguistics essay. Mark and Roxanne were the only two students who revised higher order concerns. However, Mark chose to ignore one of his Literature instructor's comments.

> So my first paragraph, the essay about Edgar Allen Poe, I talked, it's a religious analysis of the Fall of the House of Usher and to make my case, I wanted to make my first paragraph about elaborating on Poe's religious backgrounds so that a reader wouldn't just say, "oh, that just sounds like nonsense, I bet he didn't even have religious education, like how can he have such in-depth knowledge about all these religious themes," like the fall of man and whatsoever. And she said it could be a little shorter than a paragraph…I cast aside her opinion on this one paragraph. (Mark)

Although Mark incorporated his instructor's other feedback comments regarding the development of his analysis, he explicitly ignored the feedback regarding Poe's religious background. It is interesting to note that Mark also discussed feeling like this particular

instructor had a bias against religion in a different part of the interview. Although it was related to a lower order concern, Lorina also chose to ignore certain feedback comments from her Literature instructor. In her case, though, she believed her instructor was wrong, so she did not make the revision.

Roxanne, on the other hand, did not ignore any of the feedback she received from her instructor, but she placed very little value on it. Instead, she worked closely with a Writing Center tutor, incorporating the tutor's feedback to revise higher order concerns, and only relying on her instructor's comments to increase her chances of getting a good grade.

> [My instructor's] critique is important for me because, I mean, I change my essay in the way she wants to, maybe my grade gets better…I wrote the first essay, the Frankenstein essay, completely new. No, the topic was the same, but I changed it a little bit…because [the Writing Center tutors] told me it would be better. (Roxanne)

Additionally, all of the students who experienced favorable thoughts also felt confident that they would receive high grades on their revised written assignment. For most of them, this was connected to their interpretation of the feedback as implying the first draft of the written assignment contained no major problems. In Mark's case, he felt extremely confident about his revised written assignment and its potential to receive a high grade; however, his confidence did not stem from his use of his instructor's feedback, but from his experience in the writing course he took alongside the Literature course.

Surprisingly, of the students who experienced unfavorable thoughts about the feedback, none of them chose to ignore any of the feedback comments. In fact, two students admitted to making revisions based on their instructors' feedback even though they believed the feedback to be inaccurate.

> Yeah, I used the wording…"likening." And she said that that didn't exist, but I looked it up and it does, but I still changed it because I thought maybe she just doesn't like it. So, there was something I disagreed with, but I still changed it…because I felt like if I didn't, then she would be like, "well, I told her to." So, that won't be good. (Lenore)

> I think my essay isn't superficial, but I feel like all of you guys know better what to expect of those texts, so I don't really feel like I'm in the position to disagree with your perception. (Charlotte)

Although Lenore was able to look the word up that her instructor told her did not exist, she still changed it because she was worried that not changing it would lower her grade. Here she had proof that the feedback comment was incorrect but incorporated it anyway out of fear. In Charlotte's case, she disagreed with her Literature instructor's assessment of her analysis as

superficial but chose to address this feedback comment as best she could because she felt that she was not in a position to challenge her instructor. It is interesting to note that in another part of the interview, Charlotte critiqued this same instructor's teaching as superficial.

A similar sentiment was echoed by Mark regarding his Linguistics feedback and the belief that feedback comments could not be ignored.

> I guess I have to use it. (Mark)

Another contrast to the students who had experienced favorable thoughts was the level of insecurity students felt about their revisions. In all but one case, the students who had experienced unfavorable thoughts about the feedback reported feeling very insecure about the quality of their revised written assignment and their ability, not just to receive a high grade, but to even receive a passing grade.

> I just thought - well, I'm just gonna submit it, the other two are good, and that's it. (Evelina)

Evelina felt especially insecure as her Literature instructor seemingly forgot to send her his feedback on the written assignment she wanted to revise, which left her relying solely on the comments she had received on her other written assignment and feedback from her peers.

Chuck was the only student who had experienced neutral thoughts about his feedback, and somewhat surprisingly, his revision behaviors were very similar to the students who had experienced favorable thoughts. For example, he, too, chose to ignore certain feedback comments; however, his reasoning for doing so was quite different.

> I didn't really like to change big things on the essay because that often meant to do further research and to write the whole essay again in a way. And I was so glad to have finished one, like a done essay, and I just didn't want to do it all over again. (Chuck)

As a result, he only made minor revisions that he felt would be the bare minimum to secure a passing grade.

In conclusion, students displayed different feedback behaviors based on the nature of their thoughts in response to their instructor's feedback. Students who experienced unfavorable thoughts tended to address all of the feedback even when they felt, or in some cases knew, it was wrong. They also felt very insecure about the grade they would receive on their revised written assignment. In contrast, students who experienced favorable thoughts tended to ignore

feedback they found problematic and felt very confident they would receive a high grade on their revised written assignment. This was also true of students who experienced neutral thoughts. However, every student, regardless of the nature of their thoughts, addressed at least some of their instructor's feedback, with no students choosing to ignore all of the feedback.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the EAI results for the students classified as belonging to the Weak Alliance Group were presented, and it was discovered that they showed similar trends in both the overall score and the three sub-scores. Students' scores were low in all areas, but the bond scores were usually the highest. However, despite this sub-score being higher, the interviews confirmed that the students perceived a rather poor student-teacher relationship with their respective instructors.

In exploring the dynamics of the educational alliance, it was revealed that nearly all of the students believed their learning goals were in conflict with their instructors' teaching goals, and the students were almost always dissatisfied with the course activities utilized by the instructor because these activities generally did not contribute to the students' learning goals. Further, the discrepancy in the bond score was revealed to be the students' dual view of the instructor as a person, who they viewed positively, and as a teacher, who they viewed negatively.

The students were receptive to the idea of receiving feedback from their instructors but had difficulty reconciling their desire to reach their learning goals with the poor student-teacher relationship they perceived with their instructor. As a result, the students ultimately abandoned their learning goals and shifted their motivation from being learning-driven (intrinsic) to being grade-driven (extrinsic).

Chapter Five: Analysis of Strong Alliances

Because sixteen students participated in this study, and each student discussed two courses, there were ultimately thirty-two alliances that were explored through the EAI and interviews. Of these thirty-two alliances, fifteen were classified as being strong. Five of these alliances occurred in the Literature course (see table 12), and ten of them occurred in the Linguistics course (see table 13).

Table 12. Strong Alliance Group Overall EAI Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Overall Score
Victoria	Mr. Hundert	198
Polly	Ms. Abbey	203
Sibyl	Mr. Hundert	232
Susan	Ms. Abbey	236
Jane	Mr. Hundert	244

The majority of the strong alliances experienced by students in this study were with their Linguistics instructors. Additionally, both of the Linguistics instructors were assessed as having multiple strong alliances, with Ms. Armstrong having six and Mr. Woodbridge having four. In contrast, there were fewer students who experienced a strong alliance with their Literature instructor and only two of the four Literature instructors were assessed as having a strong alliance. Ms. Watson and Mr. Ellerby, both Literature instructors, had the lowest overall EAI scores in the Weak Alliance Group and were not assessed as having any strong alliances at all.

Table 13. Strong Alliance Group Overall EAI Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Overall Score
Evelina	Ms. Armstrong	198
Victoria	Mr. Woodbridge	202
Lorina	Ms. Armstrong	203
Lenore	Mr. Woodbridge	206
Shirley	Ms. Armstrong	206
Polly	Mr. Woodbridge	211
Sibyl	Mr. Woodbridge	232
Lucy	Ms. Armstrong	236
Susan	Ms. Armstrong	241
Jane	Ms. Armstrong	248

All five of the students who experienced a strong alliance with their Literature instructor also experienced a strong alliance with their Linguistics instructor. Victoria had total scores of 198 and 202, Polly had total scores of 203 and 211, Sibyl had total scores of 232 and 232, Susan had total scores of 236 and 241, and Jane had total scores of 244 and 248 in the Literature and Linguistics courses respectively. In Sibyl's case, the overall EAI scores were the same in both courses, but for the other four students they were between four and eight points different. It is worth noting that not only did those four students assess the alliance with their Linguistics instructors as slightly higher, but the combination of instructors was also different in each instance, meaning the similarity in results is not due to identical experiences with the same instructors.

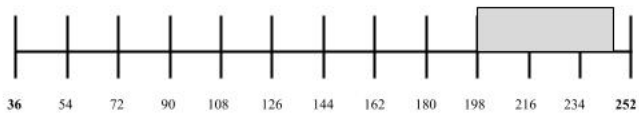

Figure 15. Distribution of overall EAI scores in the Strong Alliance Group

When looking at all fifteen strong alliances, the overall EAI scores range from 198 to 248. The lowest possible score on the EAI is 36 and the highest is 252. This means that all fifteen students' scores fell toward the upper end of the scale (see figure 15).

5.1 Goal: Beliefs Regarding the Course Learning Goals

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the goal aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all fifteen strong alliances, the EAI goal scores range from 59 to 82. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that all fifteen students' scores fell toward the upper end of the scale (see figure 16).

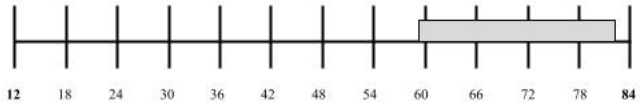

Figure 16. Distribution of EAI goal scores in the Strong Alliance Group

The EAI goal scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 64 to 81 (see table 14), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 59 to 82 (see table 15).

Table 14. Strong Alliance Group EAI Goal Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Goal Score
Victoria	Mr. Hundert	64
Polly	Ms. Abbey	64
Sibyl	Mr. Hundert	78
Susan	Ms. Abbey	77
Jane	Mr. Hundert	81

Table 15. Strong Alliance Group EAI Goal Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Goal Score
Evelina	Ms. Armstrong	61
Victoria	Mr. Woodbridge	68
Lorina	Ms. Armstrong	59
Lenore	Mr. Woodbridge	64
Shirley	Ms. Armstrong	61
Polly	Mr. Woodbridge	65
Sibyl	Mr. Woodbridge	76
Lucy	Ms. Armstrong	82
Susan	Ms. Armstrong	78
Jane	Ms. Armstrong	82

In order to further explore the goal aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to learning goals in each course. As it was not known whether students would view the written assignment as the goal toward which they were working with their instructor or as a task assigned by the instructor in order to help them reach a larger goal, students were asked open questions regarding what they believed the learning goals to be and how those learning goals had lined up with their own.

Agreement on Learning Goals. Nearly all of the students in both courses believed that they and their instructors were working together toward the same learning goals. As to what those learning goals were, the students routinely identified two: gaining a deeper understanding of the discipline and learning how to write in the discipline.

> I think it's quite similar to Literature because on the one hand, it was about different varieties of English. Also learning about…being tolerant and open to varieties. And, also the skills, of course, the writing skills, because in Varieties, the academic writing is somehow different to the other courses. (Sibyl)

> So, the general idea is to both get an understanding of literature…but also I think writing is really important. So, writing about literature because I think writing about literature is different than, for instance, writing about a poster or writing in Varieties. Each writing process is different and so I really also wanted to learn how to write in Literatures, and I think I also reached my learning goal because my takeaway is kind of that the writing is a bit different. (Polly)

These students all felt that their instructors' teaching goals were not just focused on the discipline itself, but also on writing in the discipline. This two-fold learning goal was also the students' learning goal.

There were only two students who said that they did not feel there was total agreement on the learning goals. Shirley said that she did not share in the teaching goals of her Linguistics instructor, but this was mostly due to the fact that Shirley was not interested in the discipline itself. Similarly, Lenore said that she did not share in her Linguistics instructor's teaching goals simply for the fact that Lenore had no learning goals for the course.

Practical Applications. The students also overwhelmingly believed that there were practical applications for the teaching goals in each course. For some of them, they saw an immediate application in their studies. Students felt that the knowledge they learned about the discipline itself would be beneficial in the more advanced courses they knew they would encounter in higher modules, and they felt that they had learned a good deal about writing in the disciplines, which would prepare them for the term papers those higher modules would require.

> Of course in M-6 for example, Literature will probably be relevant again and probably also in the Master of Education there will also be modules about literature. So, I'm excited to see how that will help me in the future. (Polly)

> Yeah, with the writing and specifically linguistics writing, and the formatting, I'd say that that'll help. (Lenore)

It is interesting to note that Lenore saw practical applications of the teaching goals although she did not share in them as learning goals.

Most of the students, however, discussed the practical applications they saw regarding the teaching goals of each course and their future roles as teachers.

> Yeah, especially as a teacher because the students won't have a perfect English accent. And it's, for a teacher it's important to know that there are different varieties. And for me as a British English teacher, I can't judge them for writing "colors" without a "u," so, yeah, I think it's, it's important to be aware of that. (Lorina)

> I think always when talking about literature, analyzing literature is also something that might help me for my future job because analyzing skills and writing skills in general are important for that job, I think, no matter which level you teach on. So, maybe not the topics exactly, so I wouldn't be reading Pamela or something like that, but the skills, I think, are more important. (Sibyl)

Although Sibyl did not see the course content as something useful in elementary schools, she saw practical applications of the skills involved. However, Shirley, also a future elementary school teacher, did not see any practical applications for her future studies or role as a teacher. While this may also be related to her admitted lack of interest in the discipline, it is surprising that her EAI goal score was not the lowest of the group.

In conclusion, the majority of the students saw practical applications of the learning and teaching goals in both their future studies and in their future roles as teachers. This was supported by the fact that these students felt there was agreement between themselves and their instructors on what those goals were. Specifically, students identified the learning goals as writing in the discipline and broadening their knowledge about the discipline itself. That the students viewed their instructors as working towards a mutual goal is apparent in their EAI scores. In both courses, the students' EAI goal scores were on the upper end of the scale.

5.2 Task: Attitudes Toward the Course Activities

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the task aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all fifteen strong alliances, the EAI task scores range from 58 to 83. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that all fifteen students' scores fell toward the upper end of the scale (see figure 17).

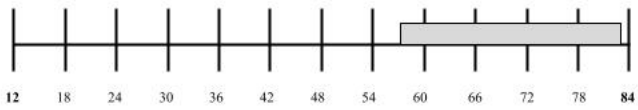

Figure 17. Distribution of EAI task scores in the Strong Alliance Group

The EAI task scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 58 to 83 (see table 16), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 64 to 82 (see table 17).

Table 16. Strong Alliance Group EAI Task Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Task Score
Victoria	Mr. Hundert	58
Polly	Ms. Abbey	58
Sibyl	Mr. Hundert	80
Susan	Ms. Abbey	83
Jane	Mr. Hundert	79

Table 17. Strong Alliance Group EAI Task Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	Instructor Pseudonym	EAI Task Score
Evelina	Ms. Armstrong	64
Victoria	Mr. Woodbridge	66
Lorina	Ms. Armstrong	68
Lenore	Mr. Woodbridge	70
Shirley	Ms. Armstrong	66
Polly	Mr. Woodbridge	67
Sibyl	Mr. Woodbridge	81
Lucy	Ms. Armstrong	82
Susan	Ms. Armstrong	81
Jane	Ms. Armstrong	82

Because tasks are always closely related to goals, it is not surprising that the students' scores are relatively similar in the two areas (see figures 18 and 19). For some students, the goal score was higher, but for the majority of the students, the task score was higher. In most instances, regardless of which score was higher, the scores were within two to six points of each other.

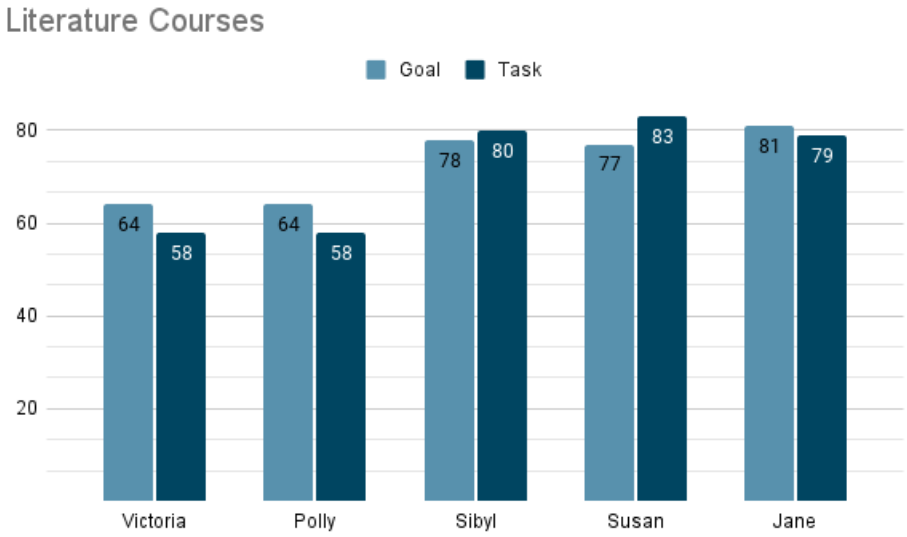

Figure 18. Side-by-side comparisons of goal and task scores for the Literature courses in the Strong Alliance Group

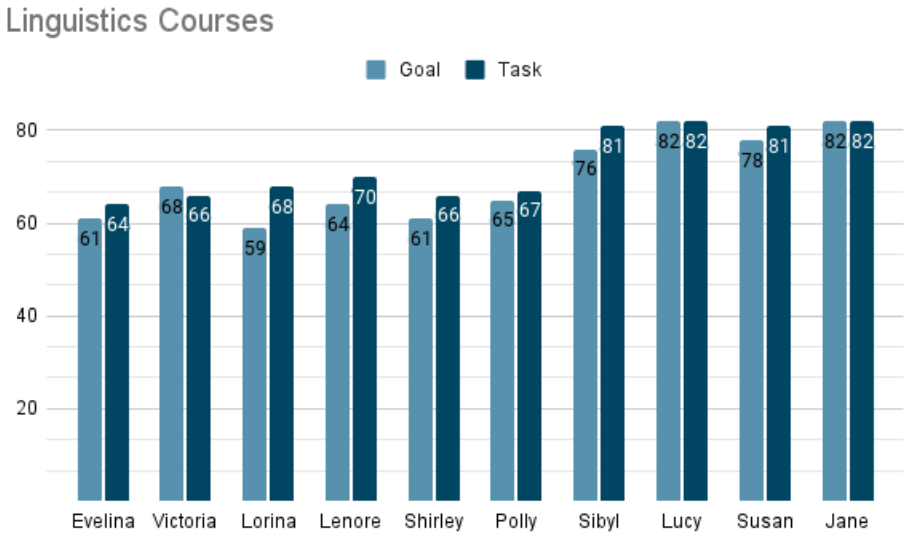

Figure 19. Side-by-side comparisons of goal and task scores for the Linguistics courses in the Strong Alliance Group

However, in Lorina's case, there was a nine point difference, and it was the task score that was higher. This suggests that goal and task are closely tied to each other but that students may be able to determine a relevance for tasks that do not necessarily align with the learning goals.

In order to further explore the task aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to the course activities in each course. As it was not known whether students would view the written assignment as the goal toward which they were working with their instructor or as a task assigned by the instructor in order to help them reach a larger goal, students were asked open questions regarding what kinds of activities they had done in class, what types of things had been assigned as homework, and what their feelings were about these various tasks. Course activities in this context ultimately referred to any activity that the instructor assigned, either as homework or to be done in class, the content of the lectures, and the required reading.

Relevance. The students saw direct connections between the course activities and the learning goals. For example, not only had every student received some form of writing instruction from their instructors, but they also generally felt that they had received an adequate amount.

> We also did "finding research questions." So, he brought a lot of journals and books and we did the citing. That was helpful because we could ask him. (Lenore)

> And we had, at the beginning, we had also tasks. That was very useful to train in-text citations and bibliographies, write bibliographies. That was very good. We did the tasks and handed it in to her and she corrected them and gave us back, gave it back to us. So, before the essays, we were training to write these things. That was useful. She gave us, for example, some names of books and authors, and then we had to find that in the library and write a bibliography with these sources. (Shirley)

> I also remember one lesson when we somehow postponed another topic because some or many of us were quite frustrated because we were afraid of how to write the essay in the right way. And so [Mr. Hundert] really took one lesson to help us, gave us tips how to write, and also showed us things we shouldn't do and things like that. (Sibyl)

For the most part, these course activities took the form of small exercises integrated into the course content rather than lectures or entire lessons. The exercises tended to focus on developing research questions in connection to the required reading, becoming familiar with seminal texts within the discipline, and learning how to cite according to the discipline specific formatting styles.

However, students also found certain tasks relevant for more personal reasons.

> I really liked the approach not to look at morphemes and bits of language, but to look at different varieties of English. That was really interesting, and I enjoyed it a lot, especially because I spent one year in Wales and we talked about different British accents, and it was, I could agree with all of them. That's what I experienced when I went abroad. Yeah, that was fun. (Lorina)

> Actually, I liked it a lot. On the one hand, because I liked the topics. I'm interested in literature and I think it was also quite interesting. (Sibyl)

As in Lorina's case, a number of students found the Linguistics course activities relevant to their own experiences, especially those who had spent time in the United Kingdom, and much like Sibyl, most of the students assessing their Literature instructor found the course activities relevant to their own personal interests.

Interestingly, none of the students made a point about the course activities specifically relating to their future roles as teachers.

Interactivity. Several of the students discussed the interactive nature of the course activities.

> We often watched short movies where we compared the accent and dialects. It was a lot of our input, so she gave basically 15 minutes, maybe, she talked about the specific accent, and then we had to work. And I really liked that because it involved us and we had something to do. (Evelina)

> The first two lessons, we had group activities and I really liked it because before we started discussing the different texts that we were assigned to read, we had to form groups and discuss them. I think it made it really easy to get a better understanding of the different texts. So, I really liked it. And also that I was able to kind of be an expert on one of the texts because each group only discussed one of the texts. (Polly)

Although the students still experienced traditional lectures from time to time, they were often punctuated with activities that required working in small groups or class discussions.

Educational Value. Students in both courses mentioned that the course activities had given them the opportunity to develop their knowledge and critical thinking skills.

> In Varieties, we had to do our own thing and actually do what she told us. And we had to think a lot by ourselves and give our own input. And that was really good. (Evelina)

For example, in the Linguistics class, several students discussed in-class activities in which they practiced recognizing features of different varieties of English and then watched movie clips where they had to identify the variety being spoken. This activity was especially educational for many of the students as they mentioned that it changed the way they watched, and listened to, movies afterward, especially because the movies they worked with in class were popular children's movies.

> I like that he features many theories and films, so he uses a lot of content that we enjoy in our daily life, so that made it more easier to grasp what he wanted to teach us, the theory. (Victoria)

In the Literature courses, students highlighted activities where they discussed and analyzed texts in small groups before presenting their analyses to the rest of the class. These were especially effective as each group analyzed a different text, so students felt like each group was able to become the authority on their text. Other students discussed interactive lectures where they practiced analyzing texts in order to identify unreliable narrators.

In each of these instances, students lauded the educational value of the course activities in that they allowed the students to practice their own analytical skills and gave them the tools to be able to look at texts, both in an academic context and in their daily lives, in a new way.

In conclusion, the majority of students felt that the course activities assigned by their instructors promoted critical thinking skills. This likely had to do with the fact that the instructors incorporated a variety of small group activities and engaging class discussions. Additionally, students found the course activities to be relatable, interesting, and relevant to their learning goals, especially in regard to writing in the discipline. That the students viewed the course activities, or tasks, as being relevant to their learning goals is also apparent in their EAI scores. In both courses, the students' EAI task scores are on the upper end of the scale and in line with their EAI goal scores.

5.3 Bond: Feelings About the Instructor

Students were asked to rate twelve statements related to the bond aspect of the educational alliance as part of the EAI. Using the EAI scoring guide, each student was assigned points based on their answers. When looking at all fifteen strong alliances, the EAI bond scores range from 68 to 84. The lowest possible sub-score is 12 and the highest is 84. This means that the students' scores fell toward the upper end of the scale (see figure 20).

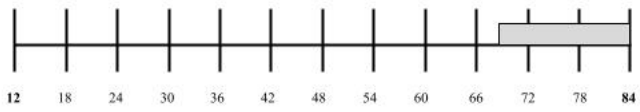

Figure 20. Distribution of EAI bond scores in the Strong Alliance Group

The EAI bond scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors ranged from 74 to 84 (see table 18), and the scores for the students assessing the educational alliance with their Linguistics instructors ranged from 68 to 84 (see table 19). Jane was the only student to have a perfect score, and this was true of both her Literature and Linguistics assessments.

Table 18. Strong Alliance Group EAI Bond Scores (Literature)

Student Pseudonym	**Instructor Pseudonym**	**EAI Bond Score**
Victoria	Mr. Hundert	76
Polly	Ms. Abbey	81
Sibyl	Mr. Hundert	74
Susan	Ms. Abbey	76
Jane	Mr. Hundert	84

Table 19. Strong Alliance Group EAI Bond Scores (Linguistics)

Student Pseudonym	**Instructor Pseudonym**	**EAI Bond Score**
Evelina	Ms. Armstrong	73
Victoria	Mr. Woodbridge	68
Lorina	Ms. Armstrong	76
Lenore	Mr. Woodbridge	72
Shirley	Ms. Armstrong	79
Polly	Mr. Woodbridge	79
Sibyl	Mr. Woodbridge	75
Lucy	Ms. Armstrong	72
Susan	Ms. Armstrong	82
Jane	Ms. Armstrong	84

In comparison to the task and goal scores, the bond scores were less spread out and tended to be higher (see figure 21).

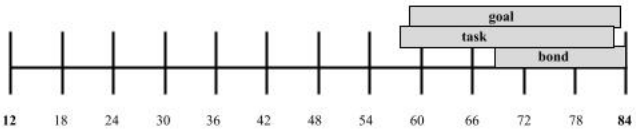

Figure 21. Distribution of EAI goal, task, and bond scores in the Strong Alliance Group

In the majority of cases, the bond score was the highest of the three sub-scores for each student (see figures 22 and 23). In comparison to the task scores, the bond scores were fifteen points higher on average in the Literature courses and seven points higher on average in the Linguistics courses. In comparison to the goal scores, the bond scores were eleven points higher on average in both courses. There were only four instances in which the bond score was not the highest score, two of which occurred in the Literature courses (Sibyl and Susan) and two of which occurred in the Linguistics courses (Sibyl and Lucy).

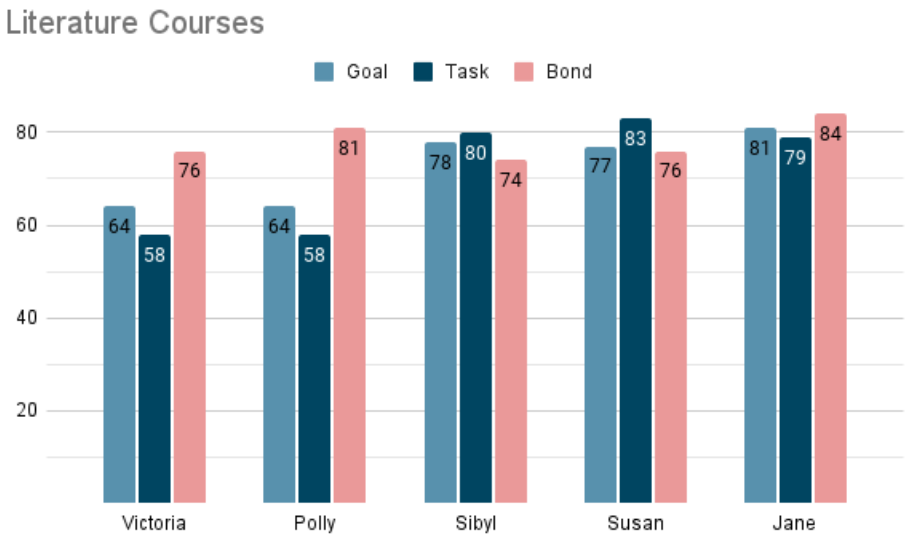

Figure 22. Side-by-side comparisons of goal, task, and bond scores for the Literature courses in the Strong Alliance Group

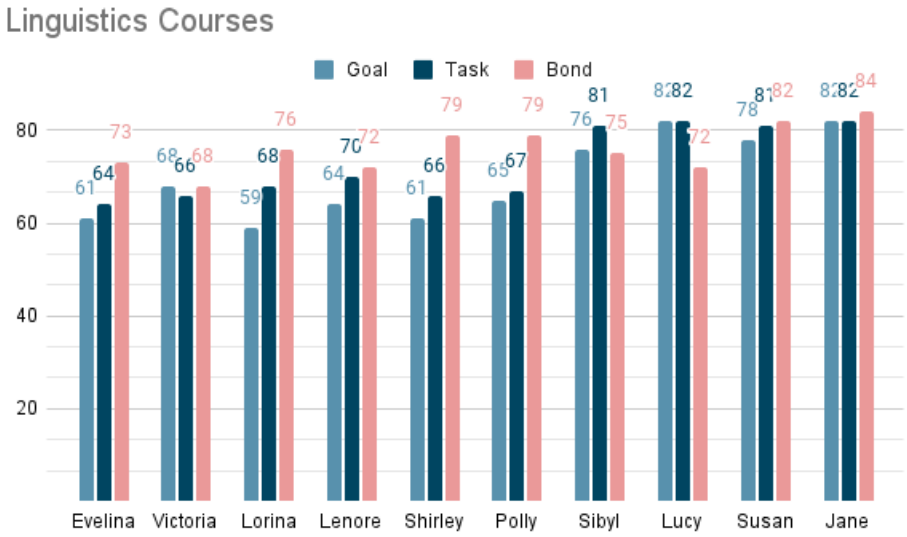

Figure 23. Side-by-side comparisons of goal, task, and bond scores for the Linguistics courses in the Strong Alliance Group

It should be noted that in all four instances where the bond score was not the highest of the three sub-scores, it was the lowest of the three sub-scores. For three of these students, the task score was the highest, and for one student (Lucy), the goal and task scores were tied as the highest. However, in each case, the bond score was only slightly lower than the other two sub-scores, meaning they were still fairly in line with each other.

Students in the Literature courses were more likely to have greater divergence between their bond and task scores than their bond and goal scores, while the reverse was true for students in the Linguistics courses. However, it may only appear that students were more likely to have greater divergence between their bond and task scores in the Literature courses because there were fewer students assessing the educational alliance with their Literature instructors.

In order to further explore the bond aspect of these educational alliances, students were asked questions in the interview related to the instructor of each course. Students were asked open questions regarding their first impressions of the instructor, how their impression changed throughout the course, and what traits or experiences had influenced the students' impressions of the instructor.

Teaching Role. Several of the students felt that their instructors were exceptionally good in their ability to teach. For example, some students commented on how intuitive their instructors were.

> I think he really understood that maybe students have problems even though they didn't say so. (Jane)

Other students pointed out how their instructors had rearranged the schedule when it was clear the students were struggling and not ready to move on yet. There was a general feeling in these instances that the instructors were both observant and mindful of their students' needs.

Similarly, many of the students described their instructors as being helpful in their roles as educators. For example, Lenore recalled how her instructor had given her tips on commanding a classroom, and Jane detailed how her Linguistics instructor had suggested specific models that could help her with her analysis. There was a sense that the students saw the instructors as providing guidance as opposed to information. Some students even commented on how structured their instructors were.

> So, first of all, the path on presentations had a clear structure…in the beginning we knew what we were going to talk about. And even though I missed the first session because I was in England still, she sent me an email beforehand and said that this is what we're going to do, here is the call-up password. And, so from, even before this course started, she sent me all the material and said that I could have a look at it. (Lucy)

Additionally, a number of the students believed their instructors were fully invested in their teaching. They felt the instructors had put a lot of thought into the selection of assigned reading texts, were fully transparent in their expectations, and worked diligently to follow the schedule laid out at the beginning of the semester.

> She explained that she tried to find interesting texts, not necessarily stereotypical texts for these times. I liked that, and she also gave us tips for other texts we could read. That was also very nice. (Susan)

> I think she knew what she wanted to do and what she wanted us to do. So, that was quite transparent. (Lucy)

This investment was also reflected in the amount of time and effort students believed their instructors had put into teaching the class.

Attitude Toward the Class. The students also discussed their beliefs about how the instructors had interacted with the class. One pattern that emerged from several of the students was the belief that the instructors had treated the class in a respectful manner.

> The way he talks to students, it's very, he talks with a lot of respect and you can really see he wants to help. (Victoria)

In terms of what the instructors did that made the interactions feel respectful, the students provided a range of examples. For instance, Shirley discussed an interaction she had with her instructor at the beginning of the semester.

> She was my LC-1 instructor also. And what surprised me, not surprises, but she said, "oh, of course I remember you from LC-1." And it was very, kind of, very, I was pleased. "Oh, thank you, that's nice." So, I really got the impression that she liked me and I think she liked everyone. (Shirley)

Like Shirley, several other students commented on how their instructors made conscious efforts to remember names and faces, and how this made the students feel like their instructors liked and cared about them.

> He was very nice and also had the feeling that he really cared for his students. (Sibyl)

Additionally, some of the students felt their instructors treated them like equals.

> I think we were on the same level. He wasn't talking down to us or intimidating us or he was never angry. (Jane)

This sentiment was echoed in other students' descriptions of how respectfully they felt the instructors had spoken to them both individually and to the class as a whole.

Several students also talked about how comfortable their instructors had made them feel, but what came up the most often was the belief that the instructors were genuinely interested in the students, both personally and academically.

> I think that she always showed compassion and interest in our learning process and questions. (Polly)

> She's one of the closest teachers I had. Cause I think, I feel like she remembers me and she knows me. (Jane)

There was also a sense among the students that the instructors were relatable.

> I will never forget this, she told us she's a very big Harry Potter fan. And she told us that she is a mix of Snape and McGonigal. And that all the, I don't know, but I can see it sometimes. She really is like Snape, but sometimes she's also like McGonigal, so I'm not sure. She's just really that mix. (Susan)

In this case, Susan found her instructor to be especially relatable as they were both fans of the *Harry Potter* series and the instructor had used that mutual interest to foster a deeper connection

with the students. Lucy recalled how her Linguistics instructor had brought in her own writing to share with the class, and Polly recounted an incident wherein her Literature instructor admitted to making a mistake in the previous week even though none of the students had caught it. For each of the students, these behaviors and actions made them feel like they could relate to their instructors.

Commitment to Student Learning. The students overwhelmingly believed that their instructors were committed to their learning. This commitment was demonstrated in three main ways.

The first related to how available the instructors made themselves to the students. Not only did the students feel like they could talk to their instructors during class, but they also felt that they had ample opportunity to speak to them outside of class.

> We could come to see him two times to talk about the essays, which I really liked. And also we could always ask him after class about our presentations. (Lenore)

> I also got the impression that he really takes time to talk to students. (Sibyl)

Several students mentioned that the instructors would often stay after class to answer questions, sometimes up to half an hour depending on how many students were waiting. The instructors were generally very good about responding to emails and actively encouraged students who were struggling with the assignments to visit them during their office hours. Although some of the students did not accept this offer, usually because of schedule conflicts, they felt good knowing that if they ever needed them, the instructors were within reach.

The second way instructors demonstrated their commitment to learning was in their level of engagement with the class. For example, some students noted how the instructors would offer assistance without the students having to ask, while others felt that their instructors challenged them by holding them to high standards.

> We also had to send him our homework. So, we couldn't just say on one day, “okay, I won't read that text.” So, he would notice that, so it was a bit more work. (Sibyl)

There was a consensus among the students that it was important to the instructors that they actually learn.

> [Mr. Hundert] wants us to understand. (Victoria)

> [Ms. Abbey] really cares if we learn something and she really cares that everything is clarified, that we know exactly what to do. (Susan)

Finally, students felt their instructors' commitment to learning was transmitted through their enthusiasm for their discipline.

> I think she's really in love with English. If she wasn't married to [her husband], I would have said she's married to English. (Lorina)

There was a common feeling among the students that the instructors were passionate about their discipline and that they wanted to stir that interest in their students as well.

> She did a really good job getting us invested in the material and also getting us to enjoy it. (Polly)

Making such efforts to generate interest in the course material and content made the students feel like it genuinely mattered to the instructor that they got something out of the course.

In conclusion, students believed that their instructors cared about student learning. Not only did the students feel like the instructors worked hard to get them interested in the material, but they also felt that it was a priority for the instructors that they learn something and that the instructors make themselves available. They saw this as being reflected in the instructors' attitudes toward the class, which the students often described as both relatable and respectful. Together, this gave the students the impression that the instructors were intentional in their teaching and responsive to their students' needs. In comparison to the EAI task and EAI goal scores, the bond scores tended to be higher. That the students perceived a mutually positive relationship between themselves and their instructors is evident in their EAI bond scores. In both courses, the students' bond scores were on the upper end of the scale.

5.4 Feedback Receptivity

In order to explore feedback receptivity, students were asked questions in the interview about their initial encounters with the feedback their instructor provided them with. They were asked open questions relating to the nature of the feedback itself, their initial reactions upon receiving the feedback, and what actions they took immediately afterward. Because the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they were asked to discuss both sets of feedback.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, the Attention stage is when an individual chooses

whether or not to acknowledge the message and how deeply to engage with it. Although all of the students had acknowledged the feedback, except for one student with extenuating circumstances, close inspection of feedback varied in terms of scrutiny and engagement.

Immediate Context. What a person is doing at the exact moment they encounter a message can influence how receptive they are to it. In the students' situations, they each acknowledged that they had given the feedback attention by reading it if it was written or listening to it if it was spoken. Additionally, the students did not seem to face any distractions that hindered their initial ability to acknowledge or engage with the feedback. For example, one student said that when the feedback was returned, they were given ten minutes of class time to read the feedback silently to themselves. This dedicated time actually removed the possibility for outside distractions.

In terms of possible distractions with the feedback itself, none of the students mentioned handwriting as a problem. In fact, nearly all of the students received written feedback in the form of typed feedback on a digital version of their written assignment. When the feedback was handwritten, it was legible and typically accompanied by an additional form of feedback that provided further elaboration, such as a rubric or checklist. When students received verbal feedback, which was very often, it was always in the form of a private student conference between the student and the instructor. None of the students mentioned any issues with the amount of time allotted or an inability to ask questions. Similarly, all of the emotions the students experienced were positive. When asked how they had felt in the moment they received the feedback, several students responded with, "good," "happy," and "relieved."

In each case, there were no distractions or cognitive demands at the moment of receiving feedback that impeded their ability to acknowledge or engage with it.

Needs, Values, and Interests. A person's needs, values, and interests can also impact their receptivity. In all but one instance, the students reviewed the feedback, which was likely due to their learning goal to develop their writing skills in the discipline. However, many of the students expressed feeling insecure about their ability to write well in these courses. As a result, they found feedback which contained praise for what they had done well to be a motivating factor for both acknowledgment and engagement.

> I remember at the end of the essay, [Mr. Hundert] wrote a little paragraph. That was really nice actually because he explained things I did very well and that was really nice to read. And, he also commented on things that weren't that good, but having this positive part in there really had a positive effect on me 'cause I mean, I'm happy about comments or feedback that shows my bad writing language. I don't know. But also reading a thing that you did something very well is very nice and quite motivating. (Jane)

> Well, for me it was helpful on the one hand the comments in the text, but also, and even more, the feedback [Mr. Hundert] gave in the end. So, the paragraph he wrote, because it somehow gave me security in a way because it really said - okay, the essay was good because - and that helped me and I thought - okay, if he writes the essay is well-written, then it might not fail if I correct some mistakes…And I also felt thankful somehow that he took so much time also to write such a paragraph and corrections and so on. (Sibyl)

Several students mentioned the fact that the feedback their instructors gave them included recognition of what they had done well and that this motivated them to engage with the feedback on their weaknesses as it made them feel they could be successful in their revisions. This confirms other studies that found students early in their writing development may need encouragement in their feedback (Carless, "Longitudinal"), and that students in Education programs tend to define constructive feedback as that which balances criticism and praise (Watling et al.).

However, a couple of the students admitted that they only thought critically about the feedback they received on the written assignment they planned to revise and submit for a grade. Feedback on the written assignment that was not graded was sometimes only read and then discarded. In Polly's case, she did not even read the feedback as she was ill when the instructor returned the written assignments with feedback. As she knew this particular written assignment would not be graded and retrieving the feedback would be difficult, she chose not to acknowledge it.

Nature of the Feedback. According to RMR, the message itself can either encourage or discourage someone from paying attention to it. For these students, the nature of the feedback did not have an impact on their level of attention, but it did play a role in their engagement with it. For example, the feedback could discourage thoughtful consideration when it focused on lower order concerns or contained too much praise.

> [Ms. Abbey] said that she enjoyed reading my essay and that it was good. She was very positive, so I think she's not the most critical person because I heard from the other students that she just gave really nice feedback…I think it was all positive feedback [she gave me] except for little mistakes with the commas and some words I wrote wrong or something like that. (Susan)

In Susan's case, she received a combination of large amounts of praise for things done well and a heavy focus on lower order concerns. As a result, she did not think critically about the feedback at all.

Jane, however, wanted to be able to engage thoughtfully with the feedback she received on her Literature essay but felt that written feedback by its very nature made that difficult. In

her case, she was unable to engage with the feedback to the extent that she would have liked to.

In terms of feedback that encouraged thoughtful consideration, nearly all of the students mentioned either student conferences characterized by two-way dialogue or multimodal feedback.

> He was very nice to me because like I said before, I wasn't formatting [correctly]. I thought I was, but I wasn't. And he was like, "well, what is that?" He thought about not reading it at all because it was so bad for a minute, but he still did. And then he showed me actually on the computer how to do it, so I knew how to do it. And then we talked about the content and the sources, so it was very helpful. (Lenore)

> First of all, she wrote on the paper, which then I took home and could re-read her feedback, but then she also talked it through with me, which really helped. (Evelina)

Being able to engage in a dialogue with the instructor encouraged students to thoughtfully interact with the feedback. Additionally, when students received multimodal feedback, such as written feedback plus a feedback dialogue, written feedback plus a rubric, or a combination of all three, they were more likely to interact with the feedback on a deeper level.

In conclusion, students were encouraged to thoughtfully engage with feedback as it was often presented in more than one form, consisted of a productive two-way conversation between the student and the instructor, and balanced the written assignment's strengths and weaknesses. Where some students did not think critically about feedback was when they knew the written assignment would not be graded, the feedback focused heavily on lower order concerns, or the comments were overly positive. Additionally, none of the students experienced distractions that hindered their ability to process the feedback, nor did they experience any negative emotional reactions. Aside from one isolated incident, the students always acknowledged the feedback.

5.5 Feedback Perception

In order to explore feedback perceptions, students were asked questions in the interview about the format, content, and usefulness of the feedback their instructor had provided them with. Not only were they asked to describe the feedback, but they were also asked to elaborate their thoughts on both the quantity and quality. Because the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they were asked to discuss both sets of feedback initially; however, they were only asked to elaborate on the feedback for the written assignment they chose to revise.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, in the Interpretation and Thoughts stages, individuals first interpret messages and then based on those interpretations, they produce thoughts in response.

Interpretation. In the Interpretation stage, individuals both interpret messages and construe them. While half of the students in this group seemed to accept the feedback at face value, the other half believed that certain messages were implied by the feedback. For example, Lucy and Sibyl both seemed to interpret their instructor's feedback as a reassurance that, with a little work, they could be successful in their writing endeavors. In both situations, this was a result of feedback that balanced the paper's strengths and weaknesses. Victoria's interpretation of her Literature instructor's feedback was a bit more specific.

> So, he told me in a nice way - okay, maybe the second essay isn't what you should hand in in the portfolio….[He didn't specifically say that]. I read it between the lines. (Victoria)

In Victoria's case, she interpreted the feedback as a hidden message that provided her with guidance on which written assignment would be the better choice to revise.

Susan was the only student who seemed to interpret her feedback as a reassurance that the written assignment was mostly fine as it was, with only minor revisions needed. This was mostly a result of the comments being paired with praise; however, Polly, who also received a combination of revision suggestions and praise, was unsure of how to interpret the feedback.

> Yes, [Ms. Abbey] gave me good feedback, but I am unsure whether or not that was just because she only took a short look at it or because she really thought it was good and looked at all of the criteria. (Polly)

Polly seemed to be far more skeptical of praise because she was unsure as to whether or not her written assignment was truly deserving of it.

> I mean, she did give me feedback and she told me that it was a good essay. So, I'm assuming that from her point of view, it was a fine essay and that maybe she didn't see any issues. (Polly)

In her case, she had very high standards for herself, which led her to construe positive feedback as questionable.

In all but Polly's situation, the students' interpretations were both positive and welcomed. For the remainder of the students, the feedback was not necessarily interpreted, but it was generally construed as the instructors' attempt to help the students.

Thoughts. The thoughts an individual has in response to how they interpret or construe a message can vary in terms of the amount and nature of those thoughts. Although there was not much discussion in the interviews regarding the amount of thoughts the students had, there were detailed discussions of the nature of their thoughts. According to RMR, thoughts are either favorable, unfavorable, neutral, or irrelevant. Although the students experienced a mixture of thoughts, the vast majority were favorable and none of them were irrelevant.

In fact, in all but one instance, students had favorable thoughts about the feedback they had received from their instructor. The most common description used by the students was "helpful."

> It was very detailed and I think this one was really helpful because I had notes on every area, so on content, on style, on grammatical issues. So, I knew where I had to correct things and I was very happy with it because I knew straight away, especially with the feedback sheet, where I could find things. (Lucy)

> I really liked the way that Mr. Hundert gave us feedback because it was very comprehensive and I thought a very nice way of doing it because, I don't know if you talk with him or anything, but he corrected our essay, like, grammar and everything like that, and he gave us individually a comment on a separate paper that made it very structured what we have to change about our essay. So, that helped me a lot. (Victoria)

When the students described the feedback as helpful, they almost always did so in connection with it being "detailed," "comprehensive," or even "kind."

In four instances, the students did not use the word "helpful," but they did use other positive descriptors. For example, Polly felt her Literature feedback was "good," Susan felt her Literature feedback was "positive," and Jane felt the feedback she received in both courses was "personal." She also described her Literature feedback as "encouraging."

The only student who did not have favorable thoughts about the feedback was Susan, and that was limited to her Linguistics instructor's feedback. Although her thoughts were not favorable, they were also not unfavorable. Instead, she expressed neutral thoughts regarding the feedback as being more critical in comparison to her Literature feedback.

> She's just more critical and so she didn't say that she enjoyed it or that it was very good like Ms. Abbey. She just gave a critical review and just told us what to improve, and she didn't tell us if she liked it or not. (Susan)

As she felt that it was more in her Linguistics instructor's nature to be critical than it was for her Literature instructor, she felt neither overly positive nor negative thoughts about it.

In some cases, though, the students did express unfavorable thoughts about the feedback. In these instances, the students experienced unfavorable thoughts in connection with

favorable thoughts. For example, Jane described the feedback from her Literature instructor as being both personal and encouraging, but she also criticized the lack of interactivity as she had only received written feedback. Similarly, Polly described her Literature feedback as being good, but she also criticized the scope of the feedback.

> I wish she would have given me a bit more of a detailed feedback because there were only a few things that she marked. It was like three or four things. And I think there were a few more mistakes that I could have improved but that I didn't see. (Polly)

This is not an entirely surprising response from Polly considering her initial skepticism of the feedback and its implication that it was already a strong written assignment.

In Victoria's case, she felt the feedback from her Linguistics instructor had been thorough; however, she experienced unfavorable thoughts regarding specific aspects of the feedback.

> He used question marks a lot. So, that sometimes didn't help me very much because I didn't know what was wrong with it…I basically said or argued that the show presents the stereotype, especially in a contradicted way…I understand that he argued, "I don't know if you could say it like that." So, we talked a lot about if I had to change my approach completely and he told me, "no, you don't have to, but you have to find more arguments for it, more sophisticated arguments that support this idea." And, yeah, when I got back my second copies, which I handed in, he still wrote, "I'm not too sure about your arguments." (Victoria)

Here, Victoria found the use of question marks to be unhelpful and comments about a specific aspect of her argument to be ambiguous.

In conclusion, the students overwhelmingly experienced favorable thoughts in response to the feedback. Not only did they find it to be helpful, but they also found it to be comprehensive, personal, and encouraging. In some instances they did also experience unfavorable thoughts; however, this was related to specific aspects of the feedback rather than as an overall thought response. These thoughts were generally a response to feedback being construed as the instructor's attempt to be helpful; however, some students also interpreted feedback as implied messages of guidance and reassurance. Although one student was skeptical of feedback that implied the writing assignment was already strong, she experienced favorable thoughts nonetheless.

5.6 Revision Behaviors

In order to explore revision behaviors, students were asked questions in the interview about their use of the feedback they received from their instructors. Not only were they asked

to discuss what types of revisions they made, but they were also asked to elaborate on why they made such revisions and why they might have chosen to ignore any of the feedback. Although the students were required to write two written assignments for each class, they only needed to revise one. Therefore, students were only able to elaborate on their revision process for the written assignment they chose to submit for the module exam.

The students' responses were coded in NVIVO and organized according to the stages established by RMR. According to RMR, in the final stage, individuals either change their beliefs, values, attitudes, or behaviors in the direction they believe the message to be advocating, or they do not, perhaps even moving in the opposite direction. This decision is dependent upon the nature of the thoughts, especially those that are favorable or unfavorable.

All of the students tried to incorporate their instructors' feedback, regardless of the nature of their thoughts. None of the students in either class chose to completely ignore their instructor's feedback, and none of them submitted a written assignment that had not been revised. In fact, all ten students revised at least one written assignment based on entirely favorable thoughts about the feedback, and they overwhelmingly reported not only working closely with the feedback but also making revisions to both lower order concerns and higher order concerns.

> I actually took into consideration what [Ms. Armstrong] told me what I had to improve. And honestly, I spent a lot of time revising [that essay]. (Evelina)

> I changed my [Linguistics] essay completely. So I structured it after scenes and then I structured it after these hypotheses or models, and I completely changed the model because I took the politeness model and I had to take the impoliteness model and I think I deleted a whole paragraph and then structured the other paragraph differently. (Jane)

The only student who had experienced entirely favorable thoughts about the feedback but only made minor revisions was Susan.

> [S]he didn't say that I had to change major things. (Susan)

However, in her case, she had only received feedback on lower order concerns. Although she did not make any major revisions, she did address all of the feedback her Literature instructor had given her. It is interesting to note that while Susan felt this particular written assignment would likely receive the highest grade, she did not feel that it was her strongest paper.

The majority of the students also reported addressing all of the feedback; however, three students had chosen to ignore some of their instructor's feedback comments. For example, Evelina chose to ignore a feedback comment related to the development of her argument.

> I think there was one where she said I should include a quote by, I don't know who it was, but include the quote and then write more about that, but I didn't do that…I just didn't think it was necessary in the context of my essay…Also, I felt that this feedback in particular wasn't her main issue with the essay. (Evelina)

Her reasoning was based on the fact that she did not think such additional supporting details would advance her argument. This demonstrates that she did not ignore the feedback comment for reasons of convenience or disinterest, but on the basis of critical engagement (Wilson and Post). This was the same for Victoria.

> I'm someone who writes a lot, so the number of words, the word count was hard for me because I wanted to write more. So, when he gave me this idea of what else I could write, I was almost at my limit concerning the words. And I thought about including what he told me, but that would have been way too much. So, therefore I decided to just leave it out. (Victoria)

In her case, Victoria reflected on the feedback in connection with areas of weakness she recognized in her own writing abilities, and based on her judgment that she would not be able to balance the feedback suggestion with her weakness, only then decided to ignore it. Of course, she also took into consideration the fact that her Literature instructor had explicitly told her that the first draft was already very good.

Sibyl was the only other student who ignored feedback comments, and she did so on both her Literature and Linguistics essays.

> The only things I somehow ignored [on the Literature essay] were the tips which I could do but don't have to do…[also] some of the things weren't that easy to implement…I thought it wouldn't really fit my essay then anymore. (Sibyl)

> [T]here was just one phrase. I didn't see that before, so I couldn't ask [Mr. Woodbridge] about it, but I just didn't know how to write it differently. So, I just decided to ignore this little thing. (Sibyl)

In her case, she did not fully know how to implement the feedback comments. She also felt that in both situations, the feedback comments were not important in the sense that the Literature comment seemed to be more of a suggestion than a directive and the Linguistics comment was rather insignificant as it was an isolated incident.

Despite the fact that these students had chosen to ignore some of their instructor's feedback comments, they still expressed confidence in the quality of their final drafts. This was a common theme among the students.

> I was very satisfied because [the feedback] helped me to improve my writing, especially for the second essay then as well, even though I didn't want to hand it in. (Lucy)

For some students, like Lucy, they not only felt confident in the revised written assignment itself, they also felt confident that they had grown as writers.

However, there was one student in this particular group who did not experience feelings of confidence.

> I think it is confusing that we can't use any of the Writing Skills things in Linguistics because there's this rumor or things students say that [Mr. Woodbridge] doesn't like, or Linguistics doesn't like that, and we should not work with that. So, that was kind of confusing just because it's one module and Writing Skills feels like the basics, like what we can work off of, but we can't really. (Lenore)

It should be pointed out that Lenore's feelings of insecurity about her revised written assignment did not stem from the feedback or the instructor, but from rumors whispered among the other students. When asked whether or not her instructor's feedback had supported the rumors, she said it had not, but she felt insecure nonetheless. Although the truth of the rumors cannot be confirmed through the results of this study, it does highlight the possibility of conflict between competing writing styles among faculty members (Rienecker and Stray Jörgensen).

For the three students who had experienced a mixture of favorable and unfavorable thoughts regarding their feedback, their revision behaviors were not totally consistent with each other. For example, Jane revised for higher order concerns on her Literature written assignment, she did not ignore any of her instructor's feedback comments, and she felt confident about her revisions. Polly also revised her Literature written assignment for higher order concerns and did not ignore any of her instructor's feedback comments. She even revised beyond her instructor's feedback where she felt there were additional weaknesses that had not been commented on, but she did not feel overly confident.

> I feel sort of unsure about [my paper], especially as I told you about the structure of the phrases that I've used. Maybe they are not academic enough. So, these are the kinds of things that I'm unsure about, even [though] she told me that it was a good structure and the academic writing was fine. (Polly)

This is not entirely surprising, though, as Polly was also torn in her interpretation of the feedback as being a genuine assessment of her writing abilities or being the result of a hurried response.

Victoria was the only other student to experience mixed thoughts in response to the feedback. Like Jane and Polly, she, too, revised for higher order concerns and incorporated all of the feedback. However, similar to Polly, Victoria did not feel overly confident about her final draft.

> I didn't really grasp what was important for [Mr. Woodbridge] or if what I revised was good enough. (Victoria)

The only student to revise their written assignment based on feedback they had experienced neutral thoughts about was Susan. Although she had experienced neutral thoughts regarding her Linguistics feedback, her revision behaviors were in line with the majority of the students who had experienced entirely favorable thoughts. Not only did she make revisions to higher order concerns and lower order concerns, but she also incorporated all of her instructor's feedback, and felt extremely confident about the quality of her final draft. Despite her feelings of confidence, she did not believe this written assignment would receive the highest grade although she believed it was the strongest paper. Considering her thought response to the feedback was that it was critical, it is not surprising that she expected her instructor to be a hard grader.

In conclusion, every student, regardless of the nature of their thoughts, addressed at least some of their instructor's feedback, with no students choosing to ignore all of the feedback. Although there was a range of revision behaviors, the students almost always revised for both lower order concerns and higher order concerns, and incorporated all of the feedback. The few students who chose to ignore certain feedback comments almost always did so as a result of critical engagement and were not limited to any thought response classification. In spite of their choices to reject certain feedback comments, they still maintained high levels of confidence in their revisions. Although students' confidence levels wavered overall, the vast majority felt secure in their revised written assignments. No students in this group revised their written assignments based on unfavorable thought responses to the feedback.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, the EAI results for the students classified as belonging to the Strong Alliance Group were presented, and it was discovered that they showed similar trends in both the overall score and the three subscores. Students' scores were high in all areas, with the bond scores typically being the highest. The interviews confirmed that the students perceived a rather harmonious student-teacher relationship with their respective instructors.

In exploring the dynamics of the educational alliance, it was revealed that nearly all of the students believed their learning goals were in line with their instructors' teaching goals, and the students believed the course activities utilized by the instructor contributed directly to those learning goals. Furthermore, the students felt that their instructors were not only invested in student learning but also enjoyed teaching them.

In addition to being receptive to their instructor's feedback, the students also thoughtfully and critically engaged with it. As a result, the feedback and revision process helped the students to feel that they had achieved their learning goals, which kept their motivation focused on learning (intrinsic) and not on the grade itself (extrinsic).

Chapter Six: Comparison of Weak and Strong Alliances

This chapter will compare students' responses from the interviews in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about the respective educational alliances, as well as feedback and revision processes. These comparisons will address the three research questions in terms of the similarities and differences between students who experience weak educational alliances and students who experience strong educational alliances. Further discussion of the analysis and comparisons are offered in Chapter Seven.

6.1 Comparison of Goal Beliefs

In order to answer RQ1 - How do the individual aspects of the educational alliance (goal, task, and bond) interact with each other in the context of discipline specific courses assessed by writing ability? - students were asked questions about their learning goals, their reasoning for such learning goals, and the compatibility of those learning goals with their instructor's teaching goals. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Compatibility of Learning Goals. In comparing the two groups, the main difference was how compatible students believed their learning goals to be with their instructors' teaching goals. Students in the Strong Alliance Group almost unanimously believed that their learning goals were in line with their instructor's teaching goals. Specifically, this related to gaining a deeper insight into the respective discipline and learning how to write in that discipline. Students in the Weak Alliance Group, however, did not believe that they and their instructors were working toward similar goals. In fact, they believed their goals to be at odds with each other. For example, nearly all of the students in the Weak Alliance Group described one of their learning goals as developing the skills to think critically about the texts and concepts within the discipline; however, many of these students also believed their instructors did not want them to think for themselves.

Writing in the Discipline. Learning how to write in the respective discipline was a learning goal shared by the vast majority of students in both groups. This was not surprising as these courses belong to a module that is graded solely on the basis of an essay portfolio. As students have access to the Module Handbook and often need to refer to it for various reasons, they would likely have known about the essay portfolio even before they reached that particular module. Additionally, all of the students who participated in this study had either taken their Literature or Linguistics course after the writing course or during the same semester. Because the writing course also requires students to complete a written assignment that can be revised and submitted for the essay portfolio, students would have been informed of the writing

requirements in this course as well. The presence of the writing course in the module was even mentioned by some of the students as contributing to their beliefs that writing would be a common theme across the courses. This was also likely bolstered by the fact that the Literature courses require students to format their written assignments using MLA, and the Linguistics courses require the use of the Unified Style Sheet, meaning students were made aware very early on that there were writing related differences between the two disciplines.

Teaching Connections. Students in both groups discussed connections between the learning goals and their future roles as teachers but in markedly different ways. In the Weak Alliance Group, several of the students discussed learning how to teach the discipline as one of their learning goals. They discussed wanting to learn about the pedagogy involved in teaching the respective discipline, as well as helpful information related to teaching that subject that they could potentially use in their future careers. In contrast, none of the students in the Strong Alliance Group discussed teaching in terms of a learning goal; however, they did discuss ways in which the shared learning goals (gaining a deeper understanding of the discipline and writing in the discipline) had direct implications for their future teaching careers. This divergence between the two groups is most likely due to the fact that the Strong Alliance Group believed they and their instructors were working toward the same learning goals. Because the students in the Weak Alliance Group believed their instructors' teaching goals were limited to facts, basic understandings, and acceptance of the instructor's views, they likely did not see any practical applications for what they were learning, which may have prompted them to discuss the larger purpose for their education in terms of their learning goals. This would also explain why the Weak Alliance Group did not discuss any practical applications for their future studies like the Strong Alliance Group did.

Written Assignment as Goal. The students in the Weak Alliance Group were the only ones who viewed the written assignment as the ultimate goal of the course. The students in the Strong Alliance Group, although considerate of the fact that the written assignment would be graded, did not discuss the written assignment as a goal itself. Students who believe their instructors value performance over mastery are more likely to adopt performance goals themselves (Wolters). When comparing the students' learning goals from the Weak Alliance Group (writing, critical thinking, and teaching) to their instructors' perceived teaching goals (facts, broad overview, and mimicry), it is clear that the students' goals are more aligned with mastery, while the instructors' goals are more aligned with performance. Regardless of what the instructors' actual teaching goals were, because the students viewed them as being both

incompatible with their own learning goals and being rather performance based, the students in this group shifted their goals from learning to passing.

In conclusion, students in both groups held similar learning goals for the courses but felt very differently about both the compatibility of their goals with their instructors' teaching goals and the role of the written assignment. Because the students in the Strong Alliance Group believed their learning goals and their instructors' teaching goals were in agreement, they were able to see practical applications for what they learned and remained learning-oriented. Because the students in the Weak Alliance Group did not believe there was agreement between their learning goals and their instructors' teaching goals, they did not see practical applications for what they learned and shifted from being learning-oriented at the beginning of the course to grade-oriented at the end of the course.

6.2 Comparison of Task Attitudes

In order to answer RQ1 - How do the individual aspects of the educational alliance (goal, task, and bond) interact with each other in the context of discipline-specific courses assessed by writing ability? - students were asked questions about the course activities they engaged in, what their feelings were about these activities, and their reasoning for such thoughts. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Relevance. Students in both groups assessed task on the relevance of the course activities to their learning goals. There was a very clear divide, though, between the two groups when it came to how relevant they found those course activities to be. The students in the Strong Alliance Group felt that the course activities were especially relevant to their goal of learning how to write in the discipline, but the students in the Weak Alliance Group did not believe the course activities were relevant to this learning goal at all. The students in the Strong Alliance Group discussed different types of writing related activities that were incorporated into the class, such as practicing how to cite in the appropriate style and developing research questions. Some of the students in the Weak Alliance Group said they had not received any writing instruction from their instructor at all, while others said there had been some writing related activities, however they felt these activities had not been provided in time to be useful for the written assignment. Additionally, the students in the Weak Alliance Group did not believe that the course activities were relevant to their future roles as teachers because they did not match the curriculum for the school level they planned to teach at. They also believed that the instructors' pacing of the material was too fast, which sometimes meant not having enough time to think critically about or even finish reading the assigned material. As a result, the

content itself became irrelevant. Although it was not related to a learning goal, the students in the Strong Alliance Group found many of the activities relevant to their personal interests and experiences.

Interactivity. In discussing the course activities, both groups brought up the topic of interactivity. The students in the Strong Alliance Group were quite pleased with how interactive the course was. They described lively class discussions, productive small group activities, and rewarding mini-presentations. It was clear that these interactive activities lent themselves to the students' learning goals. For example, small group activities where the students prepared mini-presentations to teach the other students about specific texts not only allowed the students to practice skills that would benefit them as future teachers, but they also gained a deeper understanding of key texts within the discipline. Other activities, such as those where students worked in small groups to practice writing and formatting citations gave them the opportunity to hone skills relevant to writing in that specific discipline. On the other hand, the students in the Weak Alliance Group felt that the activities had not been interactive enough. They described courses dominated by lectures with very little meaningful interaction. Considering lectures generally do not foster critical thinking (Duron et al.), this could help to explain why the students in this group felt their instructors' teaching goals did not align with their goals of learning how to think critically. However, some students did describe instructors' attempts at fostering class discussions, but these were characterized as instructor dominated and unproductive. Whether a lack of interactivity resulted in the students perceiving a conflict between the goals, or the conflict between goals resulted in the students perceiving the activities as not being interactive is unclear. What is clear, though, is that there is a reciprocal impact on the learning goals and course activities.

Educational Value. In terms of the educational value inherent in the course activities, the students in both groups saw this as an integral component but held very different views about how much value was in the activities assigned by their instructors. The students in the Weak Alliance Group found many of the course activities to be lacking in educational value. One reason for this was the instructor's reliance on lectures. The students described their role as being passive and only receiving information from the instructor. On the other hand, the students in the Strong Alliance Group felt the course activities were exceptionally educational, but they also described a more active type of learning wherein they were expected to think critically and contribute ideas. It was clear that the Weak Alliance Group was not able to see the value in the activities their instructor incorporated. They drew pictures, wrote poems, and even wrote alternate endings for texts they had read, but because they were unable to see the

value in these activities, or perhaps because the value had not been explained to them beforehand, they did not engage with them, they dismissed them, and some even characterized the activities as busywork. When considering these students' learning goals (writing, thinking, and teaching), it does indicate the perception of a disconnect. On the other hand, the students in the Strong Alliance Group had no trouble seeing the value in the course activities, but these students also described very different types of activities. They had practiced analyzing and applying the knowledge they gained in highly interactive activities that included small group work and class discussions. They were also given opportunities to see how what they had learned could be applied to everyday life. For these students, there was also an immediate application of what they had learned that extended beyond the classroom. Again, there is this reciprocal relationship being established between the activities and the learning goals.

In conclusion, the students held very different beliefs regarding the educational value, interactivity, and relevance of the course activities. Students in the Strong Alliance Group felt positively about all three areas, while students in the Weak Alliance Group felt negatively about all three areas. For both groups, there was a clear element of reciprocity between their task attitudes and goal beliefs. The belief that there was an agreement on learning goals was associated with positive perceptions of the course activities, and the belief that there was not an agreement on learning goals was associated with negative perceptions of the course activities.

6.3 Comparison of Bond Feelings

In order to answer RQ1 - How do the individual aspects of the educational alliance (goal, task, and bond) interact with each other in the context of discipline-specific courses assessed by writing ability? - students were asked questions about the student-teacher relationship. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Individual vs. Teacher. Although both groups assessed bond on similar themes, as described in the following section, there was one marked difference between the two groups in terms of how they viewed the instructor. The students in the Weak Alliance Group often separated the instructor as an individual from the instructor as a teacher. While they believed the instructors to be "nice," "polite," and "knowledgeable" people, they assessed them as teachers quite differently. The students in the Strong Alliance Group did not make such distinctions.

Teaching Role. Both groups assessed bond based on how well the instructor fulfilled their role as a teacher; however, the students described very different experiences. Those in the

Strong Alliance Group believed that their instructors were good teachers. For example, some of the students described their instructors as being intuitive about the types of difficulties students could face in the course and slowing the pacing of the course material when students were struggling. This was reinforced by other comments where students described the instructors as being invested in their teaching. This gave the students the impression that the instructors genuinely wanted the students to learn and worked hard to achieve that. The students also described their instructors as providing guidance, both in relation to the course and to their future careers as educators themselves. This picture was heavily contrasted with the one painted by the students in the Weak Alliance Group who believed their instructors did not know how to teach well. Their comments tended to focus on the instructor's inability to foster productive class discussions, teach writing, or choose appropriate course materials. In their discussions of what led them to form these beliefs, the students cited what they had perceived as a lack of experience, organization, and professionalism. They also felt the instructors had exhibited poor time management skills and biased attitudes toward personal topics that the students felt strongly about.

Attitude Toward the Class. Both groups assessed bond based on how the instructor behaved toward the class, but, again, they described very different experiences. The students in the Strong Alliance Group felt their instructors had shown positive attitudes toward them. They felt their instructors were respectful toward them and treated the students as equals. This description specifically was a stark contrast to the Weak Alliance Group who felt one of the instructors had talked down to them and treated them like children. The Strong Alliance Group also felt that the instructors had tried to make them feel comfortable and put effort into learning their names. On the other hand, the Weak Alliance Group said they often felt like their instructors did not enjoy teaching them. Several of them also got the impression that their instructor did not like them personally. This was quite different from the students in the Strong Alliance Group who found their instructors to be quite relatable.

Commitment to Student Learning. Both groups assessed bond based on how committed they believed the instructor was to their learning. Students in the Strong Alliance Group felt rather strongly that their instructors were fully committed to student learning. They believed this was communicated through the instructors actively making themselves available to the students, their high level of engagement in the students' learning processes, and their infectious enthusiasm for both the discipline itself and the specific course material. However, these beliefs were not shared by the students in the Weak Alliance Group. They felt quite strongly that their instructors had not been committed to student learning. The students based

this impression on the fact that their instructors did not make themselves available, seemed to withhold their knowledge from the students, and seemingly did not want the students to think for themselves but to adopt the instructors' beliefs without question.

In conclusion, both the Weak Alliance Group and the Strong Alliance Group assessed the student-teacher relationship on their instructors' commitment to student learning, attitudes toward the class, and teaching role. However, positive associations were only present in the Strong Alliance Group. These students believed their instructors genuinely wanted them to learn, liked them, and were good teachers. The students in the Weak Alliance Group believed the exact opposite. They believed their instructors did not care whether or not the students learned anything, did not like the students in the class, and did not know how to teach effectively.

6.4 Comparison of Feedback Receptivity

In order to answer RQ2 - How does the interplay between goal, task, and bond influence students' perceptions of instructor feedback on written assignments? - students were asked questions about the feedback they had received from their instructor, including what form it had been provided in, and what their initial reaction to it was. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Distractions. Although both groups were open to receiving feedback from their instructors, the students in the Weak Alliance Group experienced a number of distractions that affected the degree to which they were, or could be, receptive to the feedback. The majority of these distractions were related to the characteristics of the feedback itself. For example, several students had received handwritten feedback that was illegible. This was not an issue for the Strong Alliance Group as the majority of these students had received typed comments on digital versions of their written assignments. For the handful of students in the Strong Alliance Group who had received handwritten feedback, they did not report having any difficulties reading the handwriting. However, they did describe receiving supplemental feedback to the handwritten comments in the form of rubrics and checklists. Another distraction faced by some of the students in the Weak Alliance Group was the specific strategy the instructor used. For example, one instructor used a color system to label different types of errors, but some students had trouble understanding this. As a result, their receptivity was diminished. This, too, was not an issue with the students in the Strong Alliance Group. Several of them had also received color-coded feedback from their instructor, but did not find it distracting at all.

Another major distraction for the Weak Alliance Group was the structure of the student conferences in which they received verbal feedback from their instructors. Because these meetings were mandatory, they were scheduled ahead of time and had to be limited in how long they could be. This structure created a distraction for students in that the time limit was very short, and often only allowed for the instructor to talk through the comments. The students recalled having very little time, if any at all, to ask questions or respond to criticisms. This was another distraction not shared by the students in the Strong Alliance Group. Although many of them had also been required to attend student conferences in order to receive verbal feedback on their written assignments, the structure did not create a distraction for them as they recalled having productive two-way discussions with their instructors. Finally, the students in the Weak Alliance Group experienced a range of negative emotions upon receiving their feedback that negatively impacted their receptivity. The most common feelings expressed by these students were dismay and disappointment. This was again in stark contrast to the students in the Strong Alliance Group who had experienced almost entirely positive emotions upon receiving their feedback. The most common feelings expressed by students in this group were happiness and relief.

In fact, the students in the Strong Alliance Group did not seem to encounter any distractions at all.

Needs, Values, and Interests. The vast majority of students, regardless of the group they belonged to, shared the goal of learning how to write in the respective discipline. Therefore, all of the students were interested in developing their writing skills, which helps to explain why they all acknowledged the feedback. However, students in both groups also agreed that they generally placed less value on feedback for written assignments that would not be graded. Students overwhelmingly agreed that they placed more value on feedback that they felt was applicable. In this case, that meant feedback on the written assignment that would get revised and submitted for the module exam grade. One major difference did arise between the two groups in terms of needs. Students in the Strong Alliance Group discussed their insecurities about writing and how the feedback they received had given them encouragement that despite their weaknesses they still had the potential to do well. This seemed to fulfill a need they had for reassurance. This was not a need that was met for the Weak Alliance Group. In their case, several of the students admitted to scrutinizing the feedback only for the purposes of determining which written assignment would require the least amount of revision to receive a passing grade. Considering the students in this group were also afflicted with feelings of dismay and disappointment, this may have been a consequence of that.

Nature of the Feedback. Students in both groups were more encouraged to thoughtfully consider feedback that focused on higher order concerns and less encouraged to do so with feedback that focused on lower order concerns. However, this was the only overlap between their experiences in which they agreed. The students in the Strong Alliance Group were encouraged by the feedback itself because they had engaged in productive conversations with their instructors, and they had received multimodal feedback, both of which encouraged their receptivity and willingness to engage further. This was a very different experience from the students in the Weak Alliance Group who felt they had received minimal feedback, both in terms of the overall amount and the scope of the comments, which seemed to have discouraged their willingness to engage further with the feedback, and in some cases even diminished their receptivity on the second writing assignment. The distractions they encountered that were associated with the feedback, such as illegible handwriting, confusing feedback strategies, and instructor dominated student conferences, may also have been contributing factors to the discouraging nature of the feedback.

In conclusion, students in both groups were receptive to their instructors' feedback, but they differed in the degree to which they were willing to engage further with the feedback. Students in the Strong Alliance Group had received feedback which was encouraging by nature, had their needs for reassurance met, and did not encounter any distractions. As a result, they were not only receptive but also willing to engage thoughtfully with the feedback. The students in the Weak Alliance Group, however, had received feedback which was discouraging by nature and encountered several different types of distractions. As a result, they were not very willing to engage with the feedback.

6.5 Comparison of Feedback Perceptions

In order to answer RQ2 - How does the interplay between goal, task, and bond influence students' perceptions of instructor feedback on written assignments? - students were asked questions about the feedback they had received from their instructor, including how they would describe and characterize it. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Hidden Messages. Some of the students read veiled messages in the feedback they received from their instructors, but the nature of the message was not the same in both groups. When the students in the Strong Alliance Group inferred messages, they were usually related to encouragement and reassurance. For example, they interpreted the feedback as motivating messages along the lines of, "You've got this. You can do it." A couple of students also felt like the feedback subtly implied which written assignment was the stronger of the two and

should be revised for the essay portfolio. This was something brought up by students in both groups. Although they each had to write two written assignments, only one could be revised and submitted for that course's portion of the essay portfolio. The instructors, however, did not tell the students in any course, in either of the groups, which written assignment they would recommend the student revise. Therefore, the students' perceptions of subtle hints about which written assignment should be revised was an especially helpful message in the feedback process. In comparison to the Weak Alliance Group, the implied message was quite different. For these students, the only message they took from the feedback was that the expectations for revision were very low.

Positive Perceptions. There was a sharp contrast between the extent to which students in each group experienced positive perceptions of the feedback. Nearly all of the students in the Strong Alliance Group had favorable thoughts about the feedback they received from their instructor, and this was also true when they received instructor feedback on both of the written assignments in the course. This was not the case with the Weak Alliance Group. The students in this group rarely experienced favorable thoughts about the feedback, and on the few occasions that they did, it was always on the second written assignment. This was always a result of the instructor changing the feedback strategy for the second written assignment and the students perceiving this as better than the first. In terms of how students characterized the feedback, those in the Strong Alliance Group often used the words "helpful," "detailed," and "comprehensive," and these words were almost always used in conjunction with each other. The only word used in the Weak Alliance Group was "helpful," but it was always used as a comparative, never as a full characterization of the feedback.

Negative Perceptions. The extent to which students perceived the feedback negatively was also quite different between the two groups. As the majority of students in the Strong Alliance Group had experienced favorable thoughts, there were very few instances of unfavorable thoughts, and they were always limited to specific elements of the feedback as opposed to the feedback as a whole. For instance, some students described question marks, ambivalent revision suggestions, and unmarked errors as elements they perceived as being unhelpful or disappointing. On the other hand, the students in the Weak Alliance Group overwhelmingly experienced unfavorable thoughts about the feedback. Students characterized the feedback as being inadequate, confusing, rushed, untrustworthy, and unusable. As opposed to the students in the Strong Alliance Group who only experienced unfavorable thoughts about certain aspects of the feedback, the students in the Weak Alliance Group experienced such unfavorable thoughts about the feedback as a whole.

In conclusion, perceptions of the feedback varied between the two groups, with students in the Weak Alliance Group perceiving the feedback negatively, and students in the Strong Alliance Group perceiving it positively. There were slight variations in each group where some favorable thoughts were experienced in the Weak Alliance Group and some unfavorable thoughts were experienced in the Strong Alliance Group; however, these were minimal. Additionally, students interpreted very different messages from the feedback, with the Strong Alliance Group generally reading messages of encouragement and the Weak Alliance Group generally reading messages of low expectation.

6.6 Comparison of Revision Behaviors

In order to answer RQ3 - How do the revision behaviors of students who perceive strong educational alliances differ from those of students who perceive weak educational alliances? - students were asked questions about their revisions, including which areas they had revised, how much of the feedback they had addressed, and the reasoning behind their various revision decisions. The similarities and differences are presented below.

Type of Revisions. All of the students reported making some amount of revision to their written assignments and none of them submitted a final version that had not been revised. In terms of the types of problems they addressed in their revisions, nearly all of the students in the Strong Alliance Group revised a combination of higher order concerns and lower order concerns. For example, they described revising the structure of the paper itself, as well as addressing concerns of focus, clarity, and development. There was only one student in this group who did not revise higher order concerns. Much like the Strong Alliance Group, the students in the Weak Alliance Group also revised a combination of higher order concerns and lower order concerns, but the number of students who only revised lower order concerns was larger in this group.

Extent of Revisions. The extent to which the students revised their written assignments based on the feedback was quite different in the two groups. Students in the Strong Alliance Group described making extensive revisions, especially regarding higher order concerns. Some of the students described their process as resulting in almost an entirely new paper. These students almost always made significant revisions to all aspects of their written assignments. There was only one student in this group who did not make extensive revisions. In her case, she only made minor corrections to lower order concerns. However, she had not received any other feedback, so she did not revise beyond her instructor's feedback comments. In contrast, the students in the Weak Alliance Group almost always described their revisions as being minor

in nature. Some students even reported that, aside from a few corrections to grammar and word choice, the final draft was nearly identical to the rough draft that had been submitted for feedback.

Feedback Usage. While both groups used their instructors' feedback to guide their revisions, there were two major differences in how students chose to use, or not use, it. The first difference is their reasoning for choosing to ignore certain feedback comments. When students in the Strong Alliance Group chose to ignore comments, it was always as a result of critical engagement. In each of these instances, the students had thoughtfully considered and evaluated the feedback before rejecting it. For example, one student ultimately decided against using a specific comment because it was not necessary to the development of her argument. Another student chose not to address a comment that they felt they were not a strong enough writer to tackle without creating additional problems. Students in the Weak Alliance Group were far less likely to ignore feedback comments from their instructors. In fact, there was only one student who rejected feedback suggestions from their instructor. Although he also demonstrated critical engagement in his assessment and evaluation of the feedback comment, he ultimately decided against addressing a feedback comment on a topic of which he believed his instructor to be prejudiced against.

Although the majority of students addressed all of the feedback comments, there was a major difference in their motivation for doing so. Students in the Strong Alliance Group believed the feedback comments addressed logical issues that they, too, could recognize and understand. For them, the feedback comments made sense, and the students could see both why the comment had been made and how fixing it could make the paper stronger. For the Weak Alliance Group, though, there were some students who strongly disagreed with the feedback's characterizations of problem areas in their writing, and in some cases, the student was even able to prove that the feedback was factually incorrect. Despite this, the students did not reject the feedback but attempted to revise in the way the feedback suggested. It was clear from their descriptions that the students had not felt good about this, but they believed that they had no choice but to do as the feedback had instructed them regardless of how wrong they thought, or knew, it to be.

Confidence. Although students in both groups experienced varying levels of confidence in their revised written assignment, students in the Strong Alliance Group tended to feel more confident than students in the Weak Alliance Group. When students discussed feelings of confidence in relation to their revised written assignment, students in both groups generally felt confident they would receive a good grade; however, students in the Strong

Alliance Group also often felt confident in the quality of their revisions. For these students, they were quite proud of their work and felt secure in their abilities to revise the weaknesses in their writing. They also felt confident that through the process of writing and revising, they had developed their writing skills. This element was missing from the Weak Alliance Group. These students did not express feelings of confidence about their abilities to revise, the quality of their final draft, or their learning. They only felt confident their instructor would give them a good grade. While feelings of confidence were common in the Strong Alliance Group, they were only experienced by a handful of students in the Weak Alliance Group. The opposite was true for students who experienced feelings of insecurity. This was extremely common for the Weak Alliance Group but rare for the Strong Alliance Group.

In conclusion, all of the students revised their written assignments based on their instructors' feedback, but the actual process varied by group. Students in the Strong Alliance Group tended to revise both higher order and lower order concerns, and make extensive revisions, while the students in the Weak Alliance Group tended to revise more lower order concerns and make minor revisions. Furthermore, the Weak Alliance Group tended to address all of the feedback comments, even when they were problematic, whereas the Strong Alliance Group was more likely to reject feedback comments after critical engagement. This difference may have been a result of the students in the Strong Alliance Group generally feeling confident about the quality of their revisions and the development of their writing skills, whereas the Weak Alliance Group experienced high levels of insecurity.

6.7 Summary

The study showed that there is a reciprocal relationship between the three aspects of the educational alliance that has a direct impact on how effective an instructor's feedback on written assignments can be. Students' beliefs about the compatibility of their learning goals and their instructors' teaching goals, their perceptions of the course activities, and their feelings about the instructor were constantly influencing and reinforcing each other. Where this was positive or negative depended on how closely aligned the student believed their learning goals and their instructor's teaching goals to be, how relevant the course activities were to the student's learning goals, and whether or not the student believed the instructor was a good teacher. Where students assessed strong alliances, they critically engaged with the feedback and were invested in the revision process, two key elements of learning and writing development. However, where students assessed weak alliances, they did not critically engage with the feedback and were not invested in the revision process. Although they addressed more

of their instructors' feedback, they did not exhibit revision behaviors that demonstrate learning or writing development. Further discussion of the implications of this comparison is addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence students' perceptions of the educational alliance and what impact those perceptions have on feedback effectiveness on student writing in English as a foreign language. To do so, a case study was conducted at the University of Koblenz-Landau's Koblenz campus in the Department of English and American Studies, a department which requires B.Ed. students to complete a module focused on writing in Literature and Linguistics, and in which students receive formative feedback from at least two different instructors. Students who participated in the study filled out the EAI, which measures the strength of the educational alliance, and participated in semi-structured interviews in which they were asked questions related to the three research questions. An analysis was presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, wherein the results of students who experienced weak educational alliances, students who experienced strong educational alliances, and a comparison of the two groups were presented. This chapter discusses the results of the study, draws conclusions, outlines the implications for practice, and provides suggestions for future avenues of research.

7.1 Discussion

The complex endeavor of providing EFL students with effective feedback on writing could benefit from approaches that include attention to strengthening the educational alliance. This study explored the nature of students' assessments of the educational alliance, and how their receptivity to, perceptions of, and decisions about using their instructors' feedback differed depending on how strong they believed the educational alliance to be. Below are the major findings that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Students' perceptions of instructor feedback are a reflection of how strong they believe the educational alliance to be. This study found that strong educational alliances tend to result in favorable thoughts about feedback, while weak educational alliances tend to result in unfavorable thoughts. The literature review showed that how students perceive their instructor's feedback impacts its ability to be effective (Best et al.; Carless, "Longitudinal"; Holmes and Papageorgiou; Sutton and Gill; Wilson and Post; Winstone et al., "It'd be Useful"). This means that feedback is more likely to be effective when students perceive a strong educational alliance. This finding is significant because it confirms what studies in medical education have found regarding the connections between feedback quality and alliance quality (Bowen et al.; McGinness et al.; Telio et al., "Feedback") and it provides insight into why students might perceive feedback on written assignments so differently (Bailey; Duijnhouwer).

This expanded understanding of student variables could enhance future studies on the relationship between context and feedback effectiveness, especially in terms of feedback on student writing.

An instructor's choice of how to provide feedback on student writing does not define students' beliefs about the educational alliance, although it can reinforce them. This study found that students received a mixture of feedback types, including handwritten, typed, and in-person, as well as rubrics and checklists, but that no feedback type was consistently associated with strong or weak educational alliances. This is likely because the students began assessing the strength of the educational alliance from the very first interaction they had with their instructor (Farrell et al.; Johnson et al.; Telio et al. "Feedback"), meaning that by the time they received feedback on their written assignments several weeks into the semester, the educational alliance had already been established. This explains why students who perceived strong educational alliances could still have favorable thoughts about handwritten feedback and students who perceived weak educational alliances could still have unfavorable thoughts about in-person feedback. This finding lends credence to the argument that studies in feedback which focus exclusively on content and/or delivery may be fundamentally flawed (Telio et al., "The 'Educational Alliance'").

In terms of how students use their instructors' feedback, an initially surprising finding was that the stronger the educational alliance, the more likely students are to reject certain feedback comments from their instructor. This was unexpected because studies on feedback and the educational alliance in medical education settings tend to agree that students are more likely to ignore feedback when they perceive a weak educational alliance (Bowen et al.; Telio et al. "Feedback"), and studies on feedback on writing have shown that when students ignore feedback, it is usually because they perceive the feedback negatively or lack trust in the person providing the feedback (Best et al.; Bräuer; Connor and Asenavage; Eva et al.; Leki; Mendonça and Johnson), none of which was true for these students.

There are two likely explanations for this. The first is that the combination of a strong educational alliance and favorable thoughts about the feedback create better conditions for critical engagement (Wilson and Post). The students' decisions to ignore the feedback only came after careful analysis and evaluation of the feedback comments in relation to how such revisions would impact the quality of their written argument. The second explanation is that the presence of a strong educational alliance diminishes feelings of a power imbalance and allows students to retain authority over their writing. The fact that students who experience weak educational alliances tend to address all of the feedback comments, even when they

disagree with them or know they are wrong, supports this idea and confirms that poor student-teacher relationships can result in students feeling pressured to address feedback comments even when they believe them to be problematic (Yagelski).

Critical engagement has been identified as an important element in writing development (Wilson and Post), as well as students' perceptions of feedback as being helpful (Carless "Longitudinal") and formative (K. Hyland). This study found that this combination of factors was only present in strong educational alliances. Additionally, hindrances to writing development have also been identified, including perceptions of the feedback as being subjective (Wilson and Post), the experience of negative emotions (Henderson "Challenges"), and a poor student-teacher relationship (Wilson and Post; Yagelski). This study found that this combination of factors was only present in weak educational alliances. This means that when students perceive a strong educational alliance with their instructor, there is a greater potential for positive writing development.

This study also showed that students who perceive weak educational alliances characterize their feedback as being less than students who perceive strong educational alliances. Part of the reason for this may have to do with the fact that these students also experience unfavorable thoughts about the feedback. As they were not asked to produce the feedback as part of this study, all of the characterizations of the feedback were from the student's perspective. Therefore, if students experience unfavorable thoughts about the feedback, such as it being unhelpful or unclear, that might lead them to also characterize it as being brief or short. For example, both Chuck and Polly had the same Linguistics instructor, but Chuck, who perceived a weak educational alliance, described receiving "brief" feedback, while Polly, who perceived a strong educational alliance, described receiving "detailed" feedback. This finding supports the argument that weak educational alliances may account for feedback gaps in which students believe they receive less feedback than their instructors report giving (Murdoch-Eaton and Bowen).

Weak educational alliances can have detrimental effects on students' intrinsic motivation. This study found that students who experience weak educational alliances begin the semester with a desire to learn and improve their writing abilities, but that this motivation shifts to only passing the course as the semester progresses. Students who are driven by extrinsic motivation, such as receiving a good grade, tend to put in the minimum amount of effort needed (Lei). This was confirmed by the fact that when weak educational alliances were present, students revised their written assignments using their instructors' feedback, but only to the extent that they believed would be necessary to receive a passing grade. Considering that

students who view writing in terms of the final product tend to disengage from peer review workshops (Yu and Lee), this particular finding has far-reaching implications as it suggests that weak educational alliances with the instructor may also impact other writing support initiatives in the classroom. As for what causes this shift in motivation, that answer seems to lie with a foundational element of the educational alliance itself.

Students who perceive a weak educational alliance believe that their learning goals are incompatible with their instructor's teaching goals. There is no single explanation as to where this perception comes from. Rather, it seems to be the result of a highly complex, highly reciprocal relationship between all three elements of the educational alliance. This study found that because these students do not believe their instructor will help them reach their learning goals, they abandon those goals and focus on successfully passing the course instead. This finding supports the argument that an agreement, or collaboration, on goals is likely the foundation of a strong educational alliance (Farrell et al.). This finding could also broaden ideas on contextual influences that impact feedback effectiveness as it highlights the role of the learning goals for the course itself, not just goals for the written assignment.

There were, however, some areas of the literature review that this study did not help to explain or expand upon. For instance, because it took place at the end of the semester, it did not add to any of the findings on mediating weak educational alliances (McGinness et al.). Additionally, several of the researchers who were cited discussed the importance of timeliness in terms of feedback effectiveness (Carless, "Longitudinal"; Evans and Waring; Handley et al.; McConlogue; Pokorny and Pickford; Shields). Although some students in the study mentioned aspects of feedback timing, it did not come up as a major factor for students in either group.

7.2 Conclusions

This study was meant to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. How do the individual aspects of the educational alliance (goal, task, and bond) interact with each other in the context of discipline-specific courses assessed by writing ability in English as a foreign language?

RQ2. How does the interplay between goal, task, and bond influence students' perceptions of instructor feedback on written assignments?

RQ3. How do the revision behaviors of students who perceive strong educational alliances differ from those of students who perceive weak educational alliances?

The conclusions presented below are based on the results of an exploratory case study which included both students who experienced strong educational alliances and students who experienced weak educational alliances.

To answer RQ1, this study found that there is a highly reciprocal relationship between the three aspects of the educational alliance. First, students' beliefs about the compatibility of their instructors' teaching goals with their own learning goals directly impact their task beliefs. For example, when the goals are believed to be compatible, students see the course activities, or tasks, as helping them to work toward achieving those learning goals. However, when the goals are believed to be incompatible, students see the course activities as being irrelevant to their learning goals and useless in terms of helping them reach those goals. What results is differing degrees of engagement with the course activities, meaning students may not complete the reading assignments or they may display attitudes of indifference during class. Of course, this can also go in the opposite direction, meaning that students may judge the relevance of the course activity first, which then leads them to make judgments about the compatibility of the learning and teaching goals.

Second, how relevant students believe the course activities to be to their learning goals directly impacts their views of the instructor. For example, students who believe the course activities are unrelated to their learning goals tend to view their instructors as ineffective teachers. However, when the course activities are believed to be useful in achieving students' learning goals, they tend to view the instructor as an effective teacher. Here again, though, it is possible that the disconnect between course activities and learning goals may not happen first, but that negative beliefs about the instructor's ability to teach initiate students' perceptions of course activities as being unrelated to their learning goals.

Finally, students' beliefs about how committed the instructor is to student learning directly impact their beliefs about goal compatibility. When students do not believe their instructors are committed to student learning, they tend to also believe that their instructor's teaching goals are not only problematic but also a barrier to the student's learning goals in some cases. However, when students believe their instructor is committed to student learning, they also tend to believe there is an agreement on goals. Of course, in this situation as well, the direction of influence can go either way, meaning the student's belief about the incompatibility

of learning goals can also influence how committed they believe the instructor to be to student learning.

Thematic analysis proved to be a helpful tool in identifying how the individual elements of the educational alliance interact with each other by providing an approach that would allow for theme generation within each area that made connections across all three more visible. This reciprocal relationship among the different parts of the educational alliance should contribute to the understanding of contextual factors that can impact feedback effectiveness. It also has implications for practice in that instructors may need to assess how well they communicate with their students.

To answer RQ2, the students in the study were separated into groups based on whether they had experienced a strong educational alliance or a weak educational alliance, and their perceptions of the feedback were then compared. This study found that students' perceptions of their instructors' feedback were reflective of how strong (or weak) they believed the educational alliance to be. Of the various characterizations of the feedback by the students who experienced weak educational alliances, the most dominant was that of not being helpful. This perception seems to be directly tied to students' beliefs about the three areas of the educational alliance. Formative feedback, by its very nature, is meant to improve learning (Shute); however, students who lack faith in their instructors tend to also lack faith in their feedback (Bowen et al.; Holmes and Papageorgiou). Therefore, it makes sense that students who perceive a weak educational alliance would also be critical of the feedback.

In studying students' perceptions of the feedback and the relationship to the educational alliance, it also became clear that there is a reciprocal relationship here as well. Not only does the strength of the educational alliance influence how students perceive the feedback, but their perception of the feedback also reinforces their beliefs about the educational alliance. Students in this study who perceived a weak educational alliance tended to experience unfavorable thoughts in response to their instructor's feedback. These unfavorable thoughts then reinforced their beliefs about the incompatibility of goals and their instructor's lack of commitment to student learning. In other words, negative perceptions of the feedback can weaken the educational alliance, and the more weakened that alliance becomes, the more negatively the students perceive the feedback. However, this cycle works both ways, meaning students who perceive strong educational alliances tend to produce favorable thoughts in response to the feedback, which then reinforces their beliefs about a mutual agreement on goals and their instructor's commitment to student learning. This reciprocal relationship between the

educational alliance and feedback perception should contribute to the understanding of why there are so many inconsistencies in research on effective feedback.

It should be noted that all instructor descriptions in this study are based entirely on students' perceptions. That is to say that just because an instructor is characterized as not being invested in the educational alliance or not being committed to student learning does not necessarily mean that this is an accurate representation. The instructors assessed in this study are all respected by their colleagues and students, and they each displayed a range of educational alliance strengths from the students who participated. Using RMR proved to be illuminating in terms of understanding how students process feedback from a rhetorical perspective, but it also shed light on how instructors' behaviors can impact the rhetorical effectiveness of their feedback. It is exactly for this reason that faculty members should be cognizant of the various ways their actions and words may be received by students and what implications that has on student learning.

To answer RQ3, students' revision behaviors differed in three key areas: initiative, motivation, and the potential for writing development. In terms of initiative, students who experience strong educational alliances show more initiative in their implementation of the feedback, and students who experience weak educational alliances show less. As a result, weak educational alliances result in revisions heavily focused on lower order concerns with only minimal revisions to higher order concerns. The explanation for this lies in the differing motivations for using the feedback. Students who experience weak educational alliances feel compelled to use the feedback for fear of repercussions to their grade if they do not do what they believe their instructor wants them to do. They often disagree with the feedback or do not see how the suggestion would improve their writing, but because they are driven by extrinsic motivation, they use it, begrudgingly in many cases. Therefore, the initiative is not very high. On the other hand, students who experience strong educational alliances are motivated to use the feedback because they see logical connections in how the suggestions will improve their writing. These students are driven by intrinsic motivation, and as a result, exhibit more initiative.

It is this combination of initiative and motivation that puts students in strong educational alliances in a much better position for positive writing development. Because they make large scale revisions, they are able to practice their critical thinking and revision skills, and because they critically engage with the feedback, they are able to learn about writing beyond the specific assignment. Of course, this does not guarantee that the students will develop their writing abilities, but the presence of these factors certainly increases the

likelihood that they will. It is also this absence of positive factors that puts students who experience weak educational alliances at a disadvantage in terms of writing development because they do not engage in revision for the purposes of learning or improving their writing.

This insight into how the educational alliance impacts students' revision behaviors should contribute to the understanding of conditions that help to foster positive writing development.

7.3 Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are based on principles for establishing strong working alliances (Tryon) and repairing alliance ruptures (Safran et al.) in therapeutic settings.

Instructors should consider providing students with a first day questionnaire in order to establish a good foundation for the educational alliance on the first day of classes (Appendix 6). This is something that can be given to students in the last ten minutes of class and accomplishes a number of things at once. First, by including a few questions about students' personal interests, it shows students that the instructor is interested in them on a personal level, which can help with the bond aspect. Knowing what kinds of things the class is interested in could also help instructors choose material or design activities that are more relatable, strengthening both the bond and task aspects simultaneously. Second, by including a section that asks students to describe what they hope to learn in the course, it can encourage students to think about what their learning goals are, and it will give instructors the opportunity to either incorporate some of those goals into the coursework or immediately address any potential conflicts, thus reinforcing the goal aspect. For example, if several students list teaching Literature as one of their learning goals, but that is not addressed until a higher module, this gives the instructor the opportunity to hold a brief conversation at the beginning of the second class to clarify what the course objectives of their course actually are and perhaps even why teaching Literature is not one of them. Taking the time to openly discuss any false expectations about the role of the course within the larger context of the module or the program is also another way instructors can reinforce the bond aspect. Finally, by asking students to reflect on their writing experiences, it expresses an interest in student learning, and their answers can be used to identify potential writing activities or mini-lessons that could be worked into the class. It can also help to provide the instructor with a realistic picture of where their students are in terms of writing development and experience, all of which can be used to strengthen each part of the educational alliance.

Instructors should also employ strategies that can aid in identifying potential problems within the alliance throughout the semester. This could be accomplished by periodically checking in with the students through an anonymous survey or questionnaire (Appendix 7). These can easily be tailored to the specific needs of the course. For instance, they could ask about students' progress on their research for a term paper, or they could ask how well students are keeping up with the pacing of the course. They could even ask about potential problems the students might be having or topics already discussed that they feel they still need help with. By checking in with the students, it can help the instructor make informed decisions about their teaching that keep the students at the forefront. Another way to identify potential problems within the alliance is to maintain open communication with the class, especially when students disengage from the course activities. In these cases, it may benefit the educational alliance to ask the class why they are not completing the homework or coming to class prepared in order to use the situation as an opportunity to address any issues that may have developed regarding a perception of a disconnect between the course activities and the learning goals.

7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The instructors involved in this study had no prior knowledge of the concept of an educational alliance, nor had they received any training in how to make feedback rhetorically effective. Therefore, future studies could investigate how being cognizant of the educational alliance and effective feedback as has been defined within this study prompts instructors to change their teaching and/or feedback practices. Additionally, future studies might look closer at students' written assignments to determine whether strong educational alliances are connected to developing specific skills in writing in English as a foreign language.

This study was also limited to student experiences in courses that were conducted on campus. In-person learning allows students to interact with their instructor in real-time, hear their tone of voice, and see their facial expressions. It also allows for spontaneous discussions and questions after class. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, many universities, including those in Germany, have moved courses online and started offering hybrid formats. In order to enhance our understanding of educational alliances and their impacts on feedback effectiveness in different contexts, future studies might explore how this occurs in online learning situations.

Although the study provides insight into how students make quality judgments about the student-teacher relationship, readers should take into consideration the fact that the students involved were Education majors, specifically enrolled in program tracks for teaching English, meaning the criteria by which they assess the educational alliance may be unique since the

instructor is both a teacher and a career role model. Future research is needed to determine whether students' assessments of strong educational alliances are based on similar aspects in programs outside of those connected to Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Finally, more research is needed on how the educational alliance fluctuates throughout the duration of the course in order to better understand the extent to which weak educational alliances can be strengthened.

7.5 Summary

This was an exploratory case study at the University of Koblenz-Landau exploring German students' assessments of the educational alliance in English discipline-specific courses and how those assessments impact the effectiveness of instructor feedback on written assignments. During this study, students were administered the EAI, which measured their perception of the strength of the educational alliance. Following the questionnaire, sixteen interviews were conducted, of which fifteen were analyzed in depth.

This study showed that the educational alliance plays a pivotal role in an instructor's ability to provide effective feedback on student writing in English as a foreign language. The multidirectional influence of goal, task, and bond mean that instructors who want to maximize their feedback efforts need to attend to all three. Consequences of weak educational alliances not only affect students' confidence levels and learning potential in regard to the immediate written assignment but can have far-reaching implications in terms of their writing development. When it comes to supporting student writers of English at German universities, perhaps the answer is not more feedback but stronger alliances.

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Appendix 1: Educational Alliance Inventory Questionnaire

This study used an online instrument using the same wording and format as below:

All information collected will be used for the purposes of my doctoral study. All personal information will be removed before publication, and your answers to this questionnaire will be kept completely anonymous.

Please tell me your name (first name and last name):

_____

Please tell me which course you are evaluating:

_Literatures in English

_Varieties of English

Please tell me the name of your instructor:

_____

	Never						Always
1. I felt uncomfortable with my instructor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My instructor and I agreed on the things I would need to do in order to improve my learning.							
3. I am worried about the outcome of this learning experience.							
4. What I learned from my instructor gave me new ways of looking at literature or linguistics.							
5. My instructor and I understood each other.							
6. My instructor perceived accurately what my learning goals were.							
7. I found what I learned in this class to be confusing.							
8. I believe my instructor liked me.							
9. I wish my instructor would have clarified the purpose of the course.							
10. I disagreed with my instructor about what I ought to get out of this course.							

11. I believe the time spent with my instructor in class was not used efficiently.							
12. My instructor did not understand what I was trying to accomplish in this course.							
13. I am clear about what I was supposed to learn in this class.							
14. The learning goals associated with this course were important to me.							
15. I found what my instructor taught was unrelated to my learning goals for this course.							
16. I felt that the things my instructor addressed in their feedback on my essay helped me to accomplish my learning goals for this course.							
17. I believe my instructor was genuinely concerned about my learning experience.							
18. It was clear to me what my instructor wanted me to do in this course.							
19. My instructor and I respected each other.							
20. I felt that my instructor was not totally honest about their feelings towards me.							
21. I was confident in my instructor's skills to teach me.							
22. My instructor and I worked towards mutually agreed upon learning goals for this course.							
23. I felt that my instructor valued me.							
24. We agreed on what was important for me to work on in order to improve my essay.							
25. As a result of this course, I have a better undersanding of how I might be able to reach my learning goals.							
26. My instructor and I trusted one another.							
27. My instructor and I had different ideas about areas in my writing that needed improvement.							
28. My relationship with my instructor was very important to me.							
29. I had the feeling that if I did or said the wrong things, my instructor would not want to help me.							
30. My instructor and I collaborated on setting goals for my learning.							
31. I was frustrated by the things we did in this class.							

32. We established a good understanding of the kind of learning that would be good for me to accomplish.							
33. The things that my instructor told me to do (in class and/or in their feedback on my essay) didn't make sense.							
34. I don’t know what to expect as the result of this learning experience.							
35. I believe the way we worked with my learning needs was correct.							
36. I felt that my instructor cared about me even when I didn't know the answers or made mistakes.							

Adapted from:

Telio, Summer, et al. “Feedback and the Educational Alliance: Examining Credibility Judgements and their Consequences.” *Medical Education*, vol. 50, no. 9, 2016, pp. 933-942.

Used with permission.

Appendix 2: Email to Participants

Hi, _____,

I'm one of the instructors in the English Department, and I'm looking for students to participate in my Ph.D. study this semester. I was curious if that is something you would be interested in. Basically, I'm trying to find out more about how student perceptions of the instructor/professor affect how they respond to feedback on written assignments and how that affects students' choices when it comes to revision.

I'm contacting you because you are either enrolled in one of the M4 courses this semester or have already registered for the M4 module exam. I'm specifically looking for students who plan on submitting the portfolio at the end of this semester. Is that still your current plan?

If so, and if you agree to join my study, there would just be two things I would need you to do.

The first would be an online questionniare. It's 36 questions (multiple choice), and I would need you to fill it out for each of the M.4 courses at the end of the semester.

The second would be a follow-up interview that could be done during the break and/or via Skype if needed.

Does this sound like something you would be interested in?

Thank you,
Stacy Weiss

Appendix 3: EAI Scoring Guide

For scoring purposes, the following items should be reversed in their numeric value (such that 1=7 and 7=1) prior to calculating the score:
1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 20, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34

The EA "task" subscore is calculated on items:
2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 24, 31, 33, 35

The EA "bond" subscore is calculated on items:
1, 5, 8, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, 29, 36

The EA "goal" subscore is calculated on items:
3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 22, 25, 27, 30, 32, 34

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Appendix 4. Transcription Analysis Codebook Phase One

Code	Description	Example
1. Perception of the Feedback	How students describe and/or characterize the feedback.	./.
Positive	Positive perceptions of the feedback.	“It was very detailed and I think this one was really helpful because I had notes on every area, so on content, on style, on grammatical issues. So, I knew where I had to correct things and I was very happy with it because I knew straight away, especially with the feedback sheet, where I could find things.”
Negative	Negative perceptions of the feedback.	“The feedback I got was nothing I could work with really.”
Mixed	Mixed perceptions of the feedback.	“So, he told me a lot of things that were wrong with the first essay, but he marked very, very few things. And on the second essay, he marked more and told me more. So, I felt like I knew what I had to correct with the second one, but I didn't really know what to correct with the first one even though I knew that he didn't want it the way I wrote it. So, yeah, his feedback helped me more with the second one.”
2. Perception of the Source of the Feedback	How students describe and/or characterize the instructor.	./.
Positive	Positive perceptions of the instructor.	“I think we were on the same level. He wasn't

		talking down to us or intimidating us or he was never angry. He was always smiling, always a bit late. Very enthusiastic about his topics.”
Negative	Negative perceptions of the instructor.	“I don't think she likes students that much, so that was the first impression and it continued.”
3.Emotions Associated with the Feedback	How the feedback made the students feel.	./.
Positive	Positive emotions.	“So, I handed, I asked her if she could have another look at my second essay. So, I sent it to her and she gave me again feedback. That was very kind. I am so grateful for that.”
Negative	Negative emotions.	“Well, and then I read it and I was just - well, what am I supposed to do now? It didn't really give me instructions on how to improve or tips for my writing...We didn't talk about writing essays in the class. I mean, it's part of the module, but it doesn't, it didn't really feel fair, maybe.”
Mixed	Mixed emotions.	“I was happy about [the feedback] because handing in my essay, I wasn't too sure, but her feedback encouraged me a bit...the feedback didn't say - your essay's going to get through - or something like that. So, yeah. I'm not too sure [about my revisions].”

Appendix 5. Student Factor Experience Categories

Category	Description	Example
Entirely Positive	Students were coded as having positive experiences of all three student factors that impact feedback effectiveness.	• Positive Perception of the Feedback • Positive Perception of the Source of the Feedback • Positive Emotions Associated with the Feedback
Mostly Positive	Students were coded as having positive experiences of at least two student factors that impact feedback effectiveness.	• Positive Perception of the Feedback • Positive Perception of the Source of the Feedback • Mixed Emotions Associated with the Feedback
Mixed	Students were coded as having an equal mixture of positive, negative, and mixed experiences of student factors that impact feedback effectiveness.	• Mixed Perception of the Feedback • Negative Perception of the Source of the Feedback • Positive Emotions Associated with the Feedback
Mostly Negative	Students were coded as having negative experiences of at least two student factors that impact feedback effectiveness.	• Negative Perception of the Feedback • Positive Perception of the Source of the Feedback • Negative Emotions Associated with the Feedback
Entirely Negative	Students were coded as having negative experiences of all three student factors	• Negative Perception of the Feedback

	that impact feedback effectiveness.	• Negative Perception of the Source of the Feedback • Negative Emotions Associated with the Feedback

Appendix 6. Sample First Day Questionnaire

Welcome to Literatures in English for the Winter semester of 2022! Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire so that I can better get to know each of you.

Your name:

_____

Do you enjoy reading outside of your university courses, and if so, what kinds of things do you like to read?

_____
_____
_____

Do you have any favorite books or authors?

_____
_____
_____

Do you enjoy watching movies or TV shows? If so, what are some of your favorites?

_____
_____
_____

Are there any books, poems, or authors you are hoping we cover this semester? If so, which ones?

_____
_____
_____

What kinds of things do you hope to learn in this class?

_____
_____
_____

Is there anything that worries you about taking this class?

In this course, you will be expected to write two literary analyses. Have you ever written a literary analysis before? If so, tell me a little bit about it. Which book, poem, etc. did you analyze, and how did you analyze it?

What kinds of papers have you written so far at the university?

Appendix 7. Sample Mid-Semester Check-in

Please take a few moments to fill out this short survey about Literatures in English. Your answers will help me to better understand how everyone is doing in the course.

How would you rate the pacing of the course so far?
_Too slow. We are spending too much time on each book, short story, etc.
_Too fast. We are not spending enough time on each book, short story, etc.
_Just right. We are moving through each book, short story, etc. at a good speed.

Optional additional comments.

_____
_____
_____

Are you struggling with anything in the class? If so, please explain what you are struggling with.

_____
_____
_____

Please rate how well you feel you are progressing toward each of the learning goals established for this course in the module handbook:

Work competently with various literary topics
_No progress
_Very little progress
_Some progress
_A lot of progress

Critically reflect on literary topics and their connection to your own personal knowledge
_No progress
_Very little progress
_Some progress
_A lot of progress

Gain a deeper understanding of basic literary theories and methods
_No progress
_Very little progress
_Some progress
_A lot of progress

Apply basic literary theories and methods in order to interpret books, short stories, etc.
_No progress
_Very little progress
_Some progress
_A lot of progress

Are you running into any problems with your written assignment? If so, please explain what problems you are having.

_____
_____
_____

Appendix 8. Curriculum Vitae

Personal Data

Surname, first name:	Weiss, Stacy Mae
Address:	Universitätsstrasse 1; 56070; Koblenz; Germany
Telephone:	+49 (0261) 287-2025
Date of Birth:	23 December 1980
Place of Birth:	Mountain Home, Idaho; USA
Marital Status:	Married
Citizenship:	USA / German Residency
Email:	stacyweiss@uni-koblenz.de

Education

07/2018 – Present	University of Koblenz-Landau, Koblenz (RLP, Germany) Ph.D. Candidate Dissertation: *Writing, Responding, and Relationships: Factors Influencing German University Students' Perceptions of the Educational Alliance and the Resulting Impact on Feedback Effectiveness in English Language Writing*
08/2010 – 05/2012	Abilene Christian University, Abilene (Texas, USA) Degree in English (Master of Arts) Major: Literature Seminar Texts: "Take Two: Redefining Filmic Autobiography" and "Increasing the Depth of Field: Charity and the Movies"
01/2009 – 12/2009	University of North Texas, Denton (Texas, USA) Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Specialization: English Language Arts 8-12
08/2005 – 05/2008	University of North Texas, Denton (Texas, USA) Degree in Radio, Television, and Film (Bachelor of Arts) Minor: English
08/2001 – 05/2005	Tarrant County College, Hurst (Texas, USA) Degree in General Studies (Associate of Arts)
05/1999	Northwest High School, Justin (Texas, USA) High School Diploma

Certifications

07/2016	B1 German (Integration Course), VHS Bitburg

Professional Presentations

02/2012	"Crossing the 180: Changing the Angle on Filmic Autobiography" Southwest/Texas Popular/American Culture Association Albuquerque (New Mexico, USA)

Work Experience

10/2018 – Present	Writing Center Coordinator; Department of English and American Studies University of Koblenz-Landau, Koblenz (RLP, Germany)
10/2016 – Present	Instructor; Department of English and American Studies University of Koblenz-Landau, Koblenz (RLP, Germany)
08/2010 – 07/2015	English Instructor; Department of Language and Literature Abilene Christian University, Abilene (Texas, USA)
10/2010 – 05/2014	Graduate Admissions Counselor; Graduate School Abilene Christian University, Abilene (Texas, USA)
08/2010 – 05/2012	Tutor; Writing Center Abilene Christian University, Abilene (Texas, USA)
02/2009 – 08/2010	Customer Service Representative; Honda Financial Services American Honda Finance Corporation, Irving (Texas, USA)
03/2005 – 07/2009	Promotions Assistant; Promotions Department (KTYS and KSCS) Citadel Broadcasting, Dallas (Texas, USA)

Recognitions

06/2015	Certificate of Appreciation; Office of Advancement Abilene Christian University, Abilene (Texas, USA)
Summer 2020	University Prize for Digitally Supported Teaching (Shortlist) University of Koblenz-Landau, Koblenz (RLP, Germany)

Research Interests

Rhetoric and Composition; Contrastive Rhetoric; Visual Rhetoric; Writing Center Theory; Instructional Design; Film Studies