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ABSTRACT

Written feedback can make English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) prose more fluent while weakening the evidence or altering the people and practices represented in a sentence. This article examines the linguistic conditions under which a writer has good reason not to implement a particular recommendation. It combines findings from investigations of feedback engagement with a close comparison of six fully specified writing tasks: a survey summary, an interview report, an application notice, an account of informal study gatherings, a subject–verb agreement correction, and an orientation notice for new students. For each task, the analysis compares the information available to the writer with the draft, the recommended change, and a defensible response. The comparisons identify four consequential editing risks: upgrading association to causation, converting an attributed perception into an unattributed assertion, assigning an unidentified actor, and replacing a locally meaningful label with an inaccurate institutional category. A grammatical correction supplies an important counterexample: learner agency can be exercised through acceptance. The orientation task shows that preserving a label is not sufficient when a reader also needs a clear explanation. On this evidence, warranted non-adoption depends on recognition of the requested change, a task-specific reason for declining it, and a resulting sentence that remains accurate and accessible. The article specifies a classroom exchange and assessment distinctions that allow teachers to value source fidelity without treating either agreement or disagreement as proof of learning. Its claims concern linguistic analysis and instructional judgement, not measured effects on learners.

KEYWORDS: EFL academic writing; written corrective feedback; learner agency; source attribution; evidential commitment; feedback literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Feedback on a student's sentence can raise an interpretive question that grammar alone cannot settle. A teacher may advise removing a qualification because it appears hesitant, even when the available evidence supports only an association. A request for concision may remove the phrase that identifies whose opinion is being reported. An instruction to replace passive voice may introduce a decision-maker who is absent from the document being summarised. The revised sentence may therefore be grammatically unexceptionable while still communicating information for which the writer has no adequate warrant. The central issue is consequently not whether teachers should correct language, but how writers and teachers determine whether a particular correction preserves what the available evidence actually permits the writer to claim.

In many EFL writing classes, the practical record of feedback consists of a draft, a written comment, and a subsequent version of the text. That sequence is valuable, but it remains evidentially incomplete. An implemented correction establishes that the wording changed; it does not establish why the learner changed it, whether the learner understood the semantic implications of the change, or whether the resulting account became more faithful to the underlying evidence. Likewise, unchanged wording cannot establish whether the writer made a considered decision, misunderstood the comment, or simply lacked the time, confidence, or linguistic resources required to respond. This distinction is borne out by studies that examined the process of response rather than only the visible revisions. Han and Hyland [1], for example, followed four Chinese university EFL writers through written texts, interviews, verbal reports, and writing conferences. They found differences between the effectiveness of revisions and the depth with which feedback was processed in some cases, alongside pronounced variation across learners.

The problem becomes especially visible when students are asked to summarise material whose evidential boundaries matter. A survey association, an interviewee's perception, and the wording of an official notice authorise different kinds of statements and different degrees of commitment. Greater fluency cannot substitute for recognising those distinctions, because a more polished sentence can still misrepresent the status of the evidence. The inaccurate sentence "Quiet study space improves concentration" cannot be justified solely by its directness when the underlying material records a cross-sectional association. Nor can a request for active voice justify naming a committee if the source reports only that an application was rejected. Such changes carry factual consequences, not merely stylistic ones.

Previous scholarship already recognises that students actively evaluate, question, reinterpret, and sometimes decline feedback rather than functioning as passive recipients of correction. The capacities identified in student feedback literacy by Carless and Boud [2] include understanding comments, making judgements, managing reactions, and acting on information. Research on peer review by Chang [3] and Yu and Lee [4] has addressed text ownership and writers' reasons for accepting or refusing suggestions. Work on rebuttal writing by Man et al. [5] has likewise examined how students explain their responses. There is no need to portray disagreement as a previously unrecognised form of participation. What requires closer inspection is the particular linguistic cost of a recommended operation and the evidence by which an alternative wording can be defended.

That closer inspection is especially important when a teacher has correctly diagnosed a genuine problem in the text but has supplied a replacement whose wording creates a new problem of meaning, evidence, or attribution. Consider an imprecise claim that reads "The survey suggests that quiet study space may support concentration." The teacher correctly notices that the sentence does not specify what the survey measured. Deleting *suggests* and *may*, however, converts limited evidence into an unqualified causal statement. A more accurate response changes the sentence to report the association directly. The student has acted on the feedback while declining the particular deletion. A simple accepted-versus-rejected record would conceal this difference between accepting a concern and implementing its suggested solution.

The discussion is organised around three closely connected questions. First, what can a reader reasonably infer from a sentence before and after a recommended alteration? Second, when does the task evidence justify preserving, adapting, or replacing the disputed wording? Third, what can a teacher infer about student understanding from the response and its explanation? These questions require sustained attention to grammatical choice, evidential authority, audience needs, and the conditions under which the writer's decision is made and later evaluated. They also require restraint: the linguistic quality of the final text and the learner's reasoning about it are connected matters, but neither can automatically stand as evidence for the other.

The focus is on EFL academic and instructional writing, where source interpretation and English-language expression frequently have to be managed simultaneously and where a linguistically polished revision may still distort the underlying source. This focus does not imply that first-language writers are immune to the same problems. It recognises, rather, that language proficiency, access to a source, and the way a comment is explained may constrain which options a learner can evaluate. Zheng and Yu [6] documented this difficulty in a study of 12 Chinese lower-proficiency students, whose relatively positive attitudes toward feedback were not matched by equally extensive behavioural and cognitive engagement. Decisions about meaning must therefore be taught in ways that make the relevant evidence available and that do not mistake polished English explanations for the only possible evidence of understanding.

2. WHAT FEEDBACK STUDIES ESTABLISH

2.1. ENGAGEMENT CANNOT BE READ FROM THE CORRECTED SENTENCE ALONE

Research on written corrective feedback distinguishes immediate textual correction from the longer and more complex process of additional-language development. Bitchener and Storch [7] examine cognitive and sociocultural conditions affecting whether feedback contributes to additional-language development. In a 16-week investigation of ten L2 writers in a United States developmental writing class, Ferris et al. [8] collected four in-class texts per writer (40 texts, with their associated rewritten versions) and 30 retrospective interviews during the first three writing rounds. The researchers observed substantial individual variation and found that explicit knowledge of grammar rules could be of limited value, or even counterproductive, in learners' self-editing. These findings caution against treating an accurate correction as a complete record of development.

Empirical research on writing feedback provides several concrete reasons not to equate a visible textual change

with learning, understanding, or durable control of the revised language. In their four-learner classroom study, Han and Hyland [1] distinguished cognitive, behavioural, and affective engagement and traced how these dimensions varied with writers' beliefs, aims, and interactions with a teacher. Their account did not support treating successful revision as a transparent measure of depth of processing. The distinctions matter when the same learner may copy one correction accurately, query another, and leave a third unchanged. Without a record of how a recommendation was interpreted, the teacher observes an outcome without necessarily observing the thought that produced it.

Evidence from lower-proficiency students is particularly consequential because apparent compliance with a comment may coexist with limited understanding of the feedback itself. Zheng and Yu [6] examined 12 Chinese EFL students using essay drafts, teacher comments, immediate oral accounts, and interviews. Their study reported relatively positive affective engagement but limited behavioural and cognitive engagement, especially in response to indirect feedback. Corrective action did not consistently produce greater linguistic accuracy. Those findings do not establish that any particular student should decline a comment; they establish the more basic difficulty of inferring understanding from whether a correction appears in the next draft. A retained phrase should be examined against the source and, when possible, the writer's account of its function before it is labelled either principled resistance or neglect.

Feedback from different providers does not remove this inferential problem, because the source of a recommendation does not guarantee that its implications have been understood or evaluated. Zhang and Hyland [9] investigated two Chinese writers over a 16-week semester, examining their responses to teacher comments and automated writing evaluation alongside drafts and interviews. The contrast in their engagement illustrates why a comment's delivery medium alone cannot establish how carefully it will be evaluated. The pertinent question is whether the writer checked what the suggested language would communicate. A recommendation delivered by a teacher, peer, or automated service may be useful, incomplete, or wrong in relation to the writer's actual source.

2.2. EXPLANATION, COMPARISON, AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The need for reasons does not justify requiring a lengthy written defence of every editorial decision; the evidential burden should remain proportionate to the consequence of the change under discussion. In a study involving 118 undergraduates, Man et al. [5] investigated rebuttal writing using questionnaires, drafts, rewritten essays, and retrospective interviews. Students generally came to recognise the value of the activity, even though composing rebuttals demanded additional time and effort. Its significance for the present question is that discussion of the writer's response can be part of learning from feedback. The strength of any particular explanation, however, still depends on whether it represents the source and resulting sentence accurately. A persuasive account of a mistaken fact is not made correct by the writer's engagement.

A related consideration concerns what learners are actually asked to compare when they evaluate feedback. As Tai et al. [10] explain, evaluative judgement involves making defensible decisions about the quality of work. Nicol [11] argues that comparison can generate internal feedback, drawing attention to what a learner notices when two pieces of work or two formulations are considered against a shared reference. For the tasks examined here, comparison has three fixed objects: the evidence provided in the task, the sentence after following the recommendation, and the sentence the writer elects to submit. Each object performs a different function. The task evidence limits factual claims; the suggested edit reveals the teacher's preferred operation; and the submitted sentence must satisfy the task while remaining interpretable to its reader.

Such judgement is also conditioned by the social, linguistic, and instructional resources available to the learner at the moment of response. Storch [12] examines the role of mediation and interaction in corrective-feedback activity, while Mao and Lee [13] consider student engagement through sociocultural theory. Han and Xu [14] investigated three Chinese master's students and the role of teacher follow-up to peer feedback in developing feedback literacy. These accounts place teacher explanation and subsequent dialogue inside the learning process rather than outside it. A teacher who supplies a sentence but withholds the source or a reason for the recommendation makes a source-sensitive judgement harder to perform.

2.3. ACCESS TO EXPLANATORY LANGUAGE AND EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Students should not be required to demonstrate understanding exclusively through elaborate academic English when the instructional objective is to establish whether they recognise the meaning consequences of a proposed revision. In their study of 22 Chinese EFL students' written peer feedback, Yu and Lee [15] examined 444 feedback points. Their analysis found that 99 were written in the first language alone and 56 combined the first and second languages; first-

language comments were more strongly associated with content and organisation, while second-language comments were more often used for matters of form. These are findings from one investigation, not universal proportions for EFL feedback. They do, however, give a concrete reason to allow speech, annotation, or a shared language when the instructional objective is to determine whether the writer can recognise an implication carried by English wording.

Explicit instruction and guided interaction can also change how learners interpret, evaluate, and respond to corrections rather than merely whether they copy them. Related work on college English teacher discourse has treated explanation, correction, questioning, and feedback as distinct classroom discourse functions whose organization can influence learner participation and comprehension [27]. That study concerns classroom discourse rather than source-sensitive non-adoption, so it is used here as contextual evidence for the pedagogical importance of how feedback is communicated. In a study of 38 intermediate EFL students in Vietnam, Nguyen [16] compared a guided three-step writing conference involving 14 learners with teacher–student and student–student conferences involving 12 learners each. The guided format produced better performance on the reported error-correction and language-uptake outcomes. Its activity concerned attention to language errors, examination of examples, and planning for future use. It did not test the non-adoption decisions analysed in this article. Its narrower relevance is clear: understanding a comment and applying what it teaches should not be left entirely to an unsupported learner response.

Writing-specific accounts of feedback literacy connect these concerns directly to the quality of teacher and peer support available during evaluation and revision. Yu and Liu [17] distinguish technical, social-interactive, and individual dimensions of feedback learning. Winstone et al. [18] review the ways learners take initiative when receiving feedback. These contributions suggest that a decision record can be useful only when it is paired with access to the material on which the decision depends and a teacher who is prepared to explain the grounds of the comment. A student should be expected to answer for a textual claim, not to agree automatically with the particular wording preferred by an authority figure.

2.4. MEANING, REFERENCE, AND THE AUTHORITY OF CORRECTION

Meaning can change substantially even when a revised sentence retains most of the original vocabulary and remains grammatically well formed. Reporting verbs can signal whether a statement is attributed to participants or asserted by the author. Modal expressions can limit the degree of certainty claimed. The subject of a clause can name a person or institution for whose participation the source contains no evidence. Replacing a locally used name with a familiar institutional term can recategorise the event being described. Halliday and Matthiessen [19] provide functional descriptions of language that make these differences available for analysis because they attend to how clauses construe participants, processes, and relationships rather than only to whether a grammatical pattern is well formed. Hyland [20] likewise considers how stance and interactional expressions position authors in relation to their readers.

The writer's private intention cannot resolve these questions by itself, because readers respond to the wording that reaches them rather than to an unexpressed intention behind it. If the writer intends to express a correlation but the published sentence declares a causal effect, readers can reasonably rely on what the sentence actually says. Conversely, the preferred correction is not authoritative simply because it comes from a teacher. Lee [21] argues for selectivity in teacher written corrective feedback, and Lee [22] questions assumptions about acceptable written language from a Global Englishes perspective. Flores and Rosa [23] further show why judgements of linguistic appropriateness can be entangled with unequal social authority. These perspectives do not make every correction optional. They require the teacher to distinguish factual constraints, public task conventions, and preferences that can be negotiated without misrepresenting the evidence.

The comparison therefore asks whose evidence supports a claim, which inference a particular edit invites a reasonable reader to make, and whether that inference is permitted by the source and by the task. It does not ask students to preserve their first wording as an expression of identity, nor does it reduce agency to an intention to resist. Accuracy, grammatical control, reader accessibility, and responsibility for representation can pull in different directions. What matters is the reason for choosing among the available formulations and the quality of the sentence that ultimately reaches the reader.

3. MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE FOR THE LANGUAGE COMPARISONS

The analysis uses six fully specified task records printed in full in Section 4, allowing every linguistic judgement to be checked against the same visible evidence. Each record contains a short information brief, a draft sentence, a teacher comment, and one or more responses. The briefs, notices, remarks, and dialogue are author-written teaching material

contained in this article; they are not quotations from an external investigation or transcripts of students. The survey and interview information, the notice of rejection, and the account of the tea-time meetings have deliberately limited factual content. These limits permit a reader to check exactly which interpretations a suggested edit would add or remove. No students were recruited, and no classroom treatment or learning outcome was measured for these records.

The six records deliberately cover distinct language operations so that warranted non-adoption is not inferred from a single recurring type of teacher error. The survey requires separation of association from causation; the interview report requires attribution of a perspective; the application notice requires control over claims about an actor; the tea-time gathering tests the reference of a locally named activity; subject–verb agreement tests the legitimate force of an explicit convention; and the orientation notice tests the tension between naming a practice and explaining it to an unfamiliar audience. The selection includes both clear reasons to decline a specific edit and clear reasons to accept or modify it. This prevents the analysis from building its conclusion on examples in which the teacher is always wrong.

Each comparison follows the same analytical sequence in order to keep the basis of judgement transparent across cases. The task brief first establishes which assertions are supportable. The feedback comment is then separated into the problem it identifies and the linguistic action it recommends. The draft and recommended sentence are compared word by word for changes in certainty, attribution, participant identity, social reference, and information provided to readers. A response is considered defensible only when it addresses a genuine task requirement without introducing a factual assertion absent from the brief. Finally, a contrasting condition is considered: an instance in which the same kind of edit would become appropriate or the writer’s preference would cease to be defensible.

A judgement about the *text* can be made from its relation to the information brief and the stated communicative task. A judgement about the *learner’s reasoning* requires further evidence: a source reference, marked comparison, short oral account, decision note, or equivalent demonstration that the comment was understood. For these author-written records, the model responses reveal how such evidence could be expressed; they do not establish that actual learners would give those reasons. The analysis yields supported interpretations for specified sentences, not frequencies, causal effects, or observations of student behaviour.

4. SIX FEEDBACK DECISIONS EXAMINED AGAINST TASK EVIDENCE

4.1. SURVEY SUMMARY: DISTINGUISHING REPORTED ASSOCIATION FROM CAUSAL IMPROVEMENT

The first brief is for an academic source-summary paragraph. The material available to the writer states: “Respondents with access to quiet study space reported fewer concentration difficulties than respondents without such access. The survey measured both at one time and did not establish that access caused the difference.” The required output is a faithful statement of what the survey records. Neither an intervention nor a measured change over time is described.

Draft: The survey suggests that access to quiet study space may support students’ concentration.

Teacher comment: Remove “suggests” and “may”. State the finding confidently.

Suggested wording: Access to quiet study space improves concentration.

Source-faithful wording: In this survey, students with access to quiet study space reported fewer concentration difficulties.

The teacher has identified a genuine weakness in the draft, but the proposed remedy does not preserve the evidential status of the source. The draft uses both *suggests* and *may* around the imprecise verb *support*; as a result, it does not tell the reader exactly what the students reported. The advised deletion nevertheless changes more than the style. Without an evidential boundary, *improves concentration* states an effect of study space on a learner’s condition. The brief does not show that change occurred as a consequence of study-space access. Students were surveyed at one time, and the reported difference is compatible with causes or confounding circumstances not investigated by the given passage.

The source-faithful wording addresses both problems while making the underlying evidential relationship more explicit to the reader. *In this survey* confines the assertion to the specified observation. *Reported* makes clear that the evidence concerns respondents’ accounts of concentration difficulties. *Fewer concentration difficulties* replaces the unspecified notion of support with the relationship actually described. The sentence is more direct than the draft without claiming that access itself produced the difference. A writer can therefore accept the teacher’s concern about precision and still have a sound reason to reject the teacher’s chosen verb.

A short account attached to that decision could read: “The survey asked students about difficulty concentrating; it did not measure what happened when access to a quiet space changed. I therefore kept the sentence about their reports rather than saying study space improves concentration.” This account connects a language choice to a specific

evidential limitation. It is stronger than a general statement that hedging sounds more academic. The writer should also be willing to change the sentence if additional evidence establishes an effect. Agency consists in applying the appropriate boundary, not in retaining modal verbs irrespective of the source.

There are two important qualifications. First, a source that reports a randomised intervention or an adequately justified causal analysis can warrant stronger language than this particular brief. Second, deleting a redundant modal from a sentence that already preserves the necessary limitation may improve its precision. A teacher might reasonably correct *the survey suggests that respondents may have reported to respondents reported*. The present decision is not a defence of indiscriminate hesitation. It is a defence of matching the predicate and degree of commitment to what the source can actually support.

4.2. INTERVIEW REPORT: PRESERVING THE SPEAKER RESPONSIBLE FOR A CLAIM

The second task requires a writer to summarise interview material for an academic audience. The brief reads: “The interviewees described English-only discussions as favouring students who were already confident speakers. The interviews document this perception; the study did not independently test a causal effect.” No preceding sentence identifies the next claim as an interviewee perspective, and the task requires the writer to distinguish reported experience from independently verified explanation.

Draft: According to the interviewees, English-only discussions favoured students who were already confident speakers.
Teacher comment: Delete the opening phrase. It is unnecessary and makes the sentence wordy.

Suggested wording: English-only discussions favoured students who were already confident speakers.

Source-faithful wording: Interviewees described English-only discussions as favouring students who were already confident speakers.

According to the interviewees marks the proposition as someone else’s reported understanding. When that phrase is removed in the stated context, the sentence no longer makes the speaker’s relationship to the claim explicit. Readers may interpret the statement as the author’s direct conclusion about the effect of English-only discussions. The interview material permits a report of perception, not a separate finding that a particular discussion policy caused differential participation. The teacher’s deletion therefore weakens the distinction that the assignment specifically requires.

There is, however, no need to preserve the heavy initial phrase exactly as written. Using *Interviewees* as the grammatical subject and *described* as the reporting verb addresses the teacher’s concern for directness. It also makes the status of the claim easier to recognise. This is an instance in which a different edit is more effective than either verbatim retention or compliance. The concern about readability was sound; the particular solution was not.

A persuasive explanation refers to the available interview evidence rather than merely appealing to personal voice or preference: “The evidence is what the interviewees said. I made the sentence shorter by using ‘described’, but I cannot state their view as an independently tested effect.” The teacher can verify this claim by comparing the alternative with the brief. The student has neither rejected advice categorically nor been compelled to represent interviewees’ perceptions as established results.

Attribution does not have to be repeated mechanically. Where a paragraph opens with an unmistakable reporting construction and sustains the same source perspective, another *according to* may be unnecessary. The teacher may also request an explicit transition when the paragraph shifts from interviewees’ views to the writer’s interpretation. The decision must be made at the level of the surrounding discourse: whether readers can identify whose account they are reading. In the isolated paragraph specified here, dropping the only attribution changes the status of the statement. In a well-signalled sequence of quotations and paraphrases, it might not.

4.3. APPLICATION NOTICE: RESISTING AN UNSUPPORTED GRAMMATICAL ACTOR

The third brief consists of a notice reading “Your application was rejected.” It does not name a committee, give a reason, or state whether another communication supplied an explanation. The writer is asked to describe what the notice itself establishes. The relevant distinction is between reporting the content of the notice and reporting events or institutional decisions not identified in that document.

Draft: The application was rejected, and the notice gave no reason.

Teacher comment: Use active voice. Name the committee as the subject.

Suggested wording: The committee rejected the application without explaining its decision.

Source-faithful wording: The application was rejected, but the notice identified neither the decision-maker nor the reason.

Changing the sentence to active voice would not necessarily make it inaccurate, because voice choice and evidential accuracy are separate issues. An active construction that explicitly leaves the actor unidentified could remain faithful to the evidence. The requested sentence is different: it assigns the rejection to *the committee*, although no committee appears in the notice. The alteration also changes the claim about explanation. *The notice gave no reason* is a statement about a particular piece of writing. *The committee rejected the application without explaining its decision* alleges that an identified institution failed to supply an explanation. The passage does not show whether the writer received other information or whether the explanation was provided through a different channel.

The source-faithful wording keeps the rejection as the topic while stating the two known limitations precisely and without inventing an institutional actor: neither the actor nor the reason is identified *in the notice*. It is not necessary to defend passive voice as inherently superior or to treat active voice as an unwelcome foreign style. The relevant issue is whether a new participant or act of communication is supplied without evidence. The teacher's instruction, if taken literally, creates a claim the writer cannot substantiate.

A suitable decision note could say: "The notice names no decision-maker. Changing the sentence to 'The committee rejected ...' would add a committee, and 'without explaining' would claim more than I know. I specified what the notice does not identify instead." This explanation turns a potentially abstract grammar discussion into a check against the actual document. The teacher can then explain how agency and information order work in English without demanding an invented actor.

The reverse condition deserves equal attention. If a reliable record names the committee and the writer is expected to discuss institutional responsibility, passive wording might obscure an important actor. A sentence that deliberately hides a named decision-maker would not become accurate simply because it uses a grammatical construction that permits omission. Likewise, the sentence *The applicant received a notice of rejection* offers an active alternative without inventing a committee, although it emphasises receipt rather than the rejection itself. The point is to select the grammatical subject in light of the information available, not to favour passives or actives in isolation.

4.4. PEER GATHERINGS: MAINTAINING AN EVENT'S IDENTITY WHILE EXPLAINING ITS NAME

The fourth brief describes a student practice: "The students meet informally over tea and call their meetings 'chai circles'. No tutor leads the meetings. The participants exchange study advice and also talk about their everyday lives." The name *chai circles* is defined for this task rather than taken from an ethnographic investigation. The instructional objective is to report the kind of meeting involved without suggesting a more formal teaching arrangement than the brief supports.

Draft: The students called these meetings "chai circles"—informal tea-time discussions in which they exchanged study advice.

Teacher comment: Replace "chai circles" with "tutorials". Avoid unfamiliar wording.

Suggested wording: The students attended tutorials in which they exchanged study advice.

Source-faithful wording: The students met informally over tea, exchanged study advice, and discussed everyday matters in gatherings they called "chai circles".

The suggested edit does more than make a culturally marked phrase easier to understand; it recategorises the social activity that the sentence describes. *Tutorials* ordinarily invites an expectation of a more organised instructional activity, possibly led or arranged by a tutor. The brief explicitly says that no tutor leads these meetings and that their content includes everyday conversation. The familiar English noun therefore changes the social practice being described. It substitutes a different event type for a name that the participants themselves use.

A reader who does not know the phrase *chai circles* requires a useful explanation, but explanatory accessibility does not require replacing the locally meaningful label with an inaccurate institutional category. The defensible response gives one: the students meet over tea, exchange advice, discuss everyday matters, and use this name for the gatherings. The locally used label is not treated as a decorative identity marker that must survive every edit. Its function is to identify the practice accurately while the descriptive wording supplies enough information for a reader to understand what happens there. This use of linguistic resources is consonant with the attention to codemeshing and negotiated meaning discussed by [24], and with broader concerns about feedback norms raised by [22].

A decision note can be brief: "These are informal student meetings, not tutorials. I explained what happens and kept the name participants use." The explanation is testable against the brief: there is no tutor, and the meetings encompass activities beyond formal study support. It is more rigorous than claiming that every locally familiar expression is automatically preferable to an English paraphrase. If the task only required a description of how students exchange advice, and the local name were unimportant, *informal student discussions over tea* could be sufficient

without a special label.

The teacher also has a legitimate concern about audience. A name unfamiliar to readers should not be left unexplained where its meaning matters. Nor should the writer attach cultural significance for which the brief provides no evidence. The correct response is to ask what the expression names, how the reader can identify it, and whether a replacement preserves the same referent. Treating the answer as a matter of correctness in standard English alone would miss the central issue of what social activity the sentence makes available to readers.

4.5. AGREEMENT CORRECTION: ACCEPTING A JUSTIFIED INSTRUCTION

The fifth task specifies a methods paragraph written in standard edited academic English. The sentence does not quote speech, report a variety of English, or analyse language variation. The required agreement pattern is stated by the teacher and can be judged against the explicit writing convention of the assignment.

Draft: Each participant were asked to submit a reflection.

Teacher comment: Use “was” because the subject is “each participant”.

Accurate correction: Each participant was asked to submit a reflection.

Insufficient defence of retention: I kept “were” because it sounds more like me.

Under the specified convention, *each participant* is a singular subject and takes *was* in the passive construction. Unlike the earlier cases, the teacher’s operation does not change the documented actor, transform an association into causation, remove a source perspective, or alter the identity of an activity. The advice identifies an agreement error and supplies a correction that fits both the sentence and the assignment. Retaining *were* on the sole ground that it sounds personal does not establish a task-related reason for rejecting the correction.

The decision also demonstrates why non-adoption cannot be equated automatically with agency in all circumstances, since informed acceptance may represent equally active judgement. A writer can participate actively by understanding and accepting a correction. The relevant evidence of judgement may be the writer’s ability to identify the grammatical head, recognise that *each* creates a singular noun phrase in this construction, and use the corrected pattern in another relevant sentence. Simply refusing the teacher’s wording would not improve the quality of the text.

This does not make language variation irrelevant to academic writing. The convention must be identified, supported, and applied with care; a student’s linguistic identity is not a measure of intelligence or competence. Flores and Rosa [23] caution against treating dominant-language judgements as socially neutral. That caution requires teachers to explain what a particular assignment demands and not to confuse a local grammar decision with a judgement about the legitimacy of a speaker. It does not establish that the task has no grammatical requirements. When those requirements are clear, a well-founded correction can be accepted without diminishing writer ownership.

The contrasting lesson is that reasons must be proportionate to the disputed operation. Where a recommendation adds an unsupported factual claim, the writer needs to identify that claim and its source limitation. Where a correction repairs a specified agreement error without altering the intended proposition, the writer needs to understand and implement the correction. Treating the two events as equivalent acts of teacher control would erase the distinction between linguistic accuracy and unwarranted substitution of meaning.

4.6. STUDENT ORIENTATION NOTICE: BALANCING A LOCAL LABEL WITH READERS’ INFORMATION NEEDS

The sixth task returns to the same brief about informal tea-time meetings but changes the audience and the communicative goal. A short orientation paragraph must tell new international students what happens at the gatherings and whether a tutor attends. The participants call them *chai circles*, but the assignment does not require the name itself to appear. This distinction makes the teacher’s concern about reader understanding more substantial than in the earlier case.

Draft: New students can join our “chai circles” after class.

Teacher comment: New students may not know this label. Replace it with “informal student meetings over tea”.

Suggested wording: New students can join our informal student meetings over tea after class.

Expanded wording: New students can join informal meetings over tea, locally called “chai circles”; students exchange advice and everyday conversation, without a tutor.

Here the teacher’s replacement is accurate as a description of the event, unlike the earlier suggestion to call it a tutorial, and the remaining issue concerns completeness and audience orientation rather than factual recategorisation. The draft is inadequate because it neither explains the activity nor answers the stated question about the tutor. Retaining the local label without adding the required information would be an indefensible use of writer preference.

The expanded wording supplies the information and keeps the name. The suggested wording, by contrast, supplies an understandable description but still needs to address the absence of a tutor and the content of the meetings to satisfy the complete assignment.

The choice between the local name and an accurate descriptive substitute depends on the function of the notice. If students will encounter invitations headed *Chai Circles*, naming the event helps them connect the paragraph to what they will see elsewhere. If no invitation uses that wording, and space is severely limited, a clear description may be more helpful. Both outcomes are defensible when they provide the required information and do not misclassify the gatherings. The available task information therefore supports more than one acceptable final sentence. It does not support the unexplained draft as a finished orientation notice.

A responsible writer should be able to state the relevant consideration: “I kept the name because newcomers will see it on the invitation, but I added the activity and tutor information.” If there is no evidence about invitations, the student can ask to inspect the other orientation materials before deciding whether the label belongs in the paragraph. That request is a postponement of the decision while information is checked, not a settled refusal to use feedback.

This case is a stronger test of meaning protection than a clearly mistaken recommendation because the teacher and the writer each have a genuine concern. The teacher is answerable for accessibility to readers; the writer is answerable for accurate naming of the practice. Neither concern automatically defeats the other. A short accurate paraphrase and a longer glossed label can both succeed, whereas a misleading institutional category and an unexplained label that omits assigned content cannot. The assessment should therefore identify which obligation the final wording satisfies or neglects, not award credit merely for keeping the writer’s preferred expression.

4.7. CROSS-CASE RESULTS OF THE TEXTUAL COMPARISON

Table 1 records the decision warranted by each fully specified task. These are determinations about the meaning of the written examples, not observations of how an actual student population responded to feedback. Four teacher-supplied rewrites introduce or invite an unsupported inference when followed literally: the survey statement asserts improvement, the interview statement loses attribution, the rejection sentence names a committee, and the gathering is recast as a tutorial. The agreement correction is appropriate. The orientation case admits either an accurate descriptive wording or an explained local label, provided that the required activity and tutor information is supplied.

TABLE 1. LANGUAGE CONSEQUENCE AND DEFENSIBLE RESPONSE IN THE SIX TASK RECORDS

Task	Effect of literal implementation	Response supported by the brief
Survey summary	Changes a cross-sectional association into a claimed improvement.	Report the observed difference; avoid causal wording.
Interview account	Omits the only marker that the claim belongs to interviewees.	Keep attribution through a reporting verb or equivalent framing.
Application notice	Identifies a committee and an explanatory omission absent from the notice.	Describe only the rejection and what the notice does not identify.
Peer gatherings	Recasts informal, untutored meetings as tutorials.	Explain the activity and retain its name when relevant.
Agreement correction	Repairs subject–verb agreement without changing the proposition.	Accept <i>was</i> under the task’s stated convention.
Orientation notice	Accurate paraphrase helps readers, but neither the draft nor the short replacement meets every content requirement.	Give the activities and tutor information; use a descriptive name or glossed label.

The comparisons also show why a defensible reason must identify precisely *which* component of meaning, attribution, evidential commitment, or reference is in dispute. An appeal to caution is insufficient unless it distinguishes correlation from causation. An appeal to voice is insufficient unless it identifies an attributable perspective or relevant term. An appeal to grammatical preference is insufficient when it requires inventing a committee. Conversely, a call for greater clarity can be entirely appropriate, as the agreement and orientation tasks demonstrate. The defensible response is a reasoned selection among accurate wordings, not a standing preference for the draft over the teacher’s advice.

5. WHEN DECLINING A RECOMMENDATION IS WARRANTED

The term *warranted non-adoption* applies to a decision about a particular editing instruction; it does not describe a general disposition toward teacher feedback or a preference for resisting correction. A writer may reasonably decline the operation requested by a comment when three conditions are satisfied: the writer recognises what the requested wording would change; a comparison with the source, audience, and assignment gives a substantial reason not to make that change; and the resulting passage meets the legitimate requirements of the writing task. The resulting passage may retain part of the draft, replace it with a different sentence, or seek clarification before the writer can settle on a version. These different actions should not be classified as though all departures from the teacher's preferred words had the same significance.

Recognition of the instruction is essential because outward non-compliance can arise from causes that have little to do with principled evaluation of the recommendation. A student who has not understood that *improves* asserts a beneficial effect cannot be credited with deliberately refusing an unjustified causal claim merely because that student leaves the phrase *may support* untouched. The sentence may be textually cautious, but the evidence about student understanding is absent. Equally, a writer can understand the instruction and make a poor choice. The imagined student who knows that *each participant* takes singular agreement but keeps *were* because the wording is familiar has not identified a communicative reason that meets the stated assignment.

A reason for non-adoption has to be located in evidence that is relevant to the disputed wording, rather than in a general preference for the original draft. The survey writer can point to the fact that responses were collected at one time. The interview writer can point to the reporting verb in the supplied passage. The writer describing the notice can show that no committee is named. The writer explaining the peer gathering can show that its defining features are informal conversation, tea, and the absence of a tutor. These are specific grounds on which a teacher can reconsider a suggestion. They are more accountable than a general claim that a correction does not fit a student's voice.

The quality of the final text supplies a separate and indispensable test, because a sound explanation cannot compensate for a sentence that remains inaccurate or inaccessible. A decision note may be coherent even when the submitted sentence remains ungrammatical, misattributes a claim, or fails to answer the assignment. The note then demonstrates one aspect of evaluation but cannot excuse an error that still affects the reader. Conversely, a sound final sentence may appear after a writer silently retains a useful expression. The teacher can recognise the adequacy of the sentence without claiming to know the reasoning that produced it. Evaluation becomes more precise when the textual outcome and the evidence of understanding are reported separately.

The teacher's comment must also be separated analytically into its diagnosis of the problem and the particular linguistic operation it recommends. "Your claim is not specific enough" identifies a concern about the text. "Remove the hedges" is one possible action that may or may not solve that concern. The survey record demonstrates a response that accepts the first and rejects the second. In the interview record, a concern about a heavy opening is satisfied through a reporting verb rather than deletion of attribution. Describing these decisions as rejection of feedback would obscure the productive work the comments did. Describing them as full adoption would conceal that the teacher's supplied wording was not implemented. The more accurate account states what problem was addressed and which operation was declined.

Table 2 provides response labels that refer only to actions visible in the writing record. They deliberately do not rank learners. A retained phrase may be justified, unjustified, or unexplained; a changed phrase may be accurate or inaccurate. Where evidence is insufficient, the label must preserve that uncertainty rather than convert it into a claim about motivation.

The conditions are not a scoring system in which one strength compensates for every other weakness. A fluent and accessible sentence cannot compensate for assigning a decision to an unsupported committee; a passionate explanation cannot compensate for changing the evidential status of interview testimony. Once factual accuracy and announced task requirements are satisfied, teachers and writers may compare legitimate alternatives according to concision, emphasis, reader familiarity, or disciplinary preference. In such cases, a single mandatory wording may not be justified. The orientation example shows how different sentences can meet the same requirement while giving different emphasis to the local label.

A decision must also remain open to reconsideration when new source information, audience information, or task requirements become available. If the writer gains a reliable source showing that a committee made the decision, the earlier justification for omitting the actor must be reassessed. If an orientation leaflet elsewhere uses the name *chai circles*, retaining that name becomes more useful. If a survey's methodological details permit a stronger conclusion, the predicate may properly change. These adjustments do not weaken responsibility; they demonstrate a willingness

to change a claim when the supporting information changes. The same expectation applies to a teacher who discovers that a suggested correction introduced a misleading statement.

TABLE 2. OBSERVABLE RESPONSES TO A WRITING-FEEDBACK RECOMMENDATION

Response	Evidence in the writing record	What cannot be inferred from the response alone
Direct adoption	Writer implements the specified language change.	That the operation was understood or improved the text.
Partial adoption	Writer implements identifiable parts of the instruction.	That the remaining parts were deliberately refused.
Different correction	Writer addresses the concern through another wording.	That the alternative is accurate without checking the task.
Retention	Target wording remains in the next draft.	That the decision represents a justified objection.
Deferral	Writer expressly requests information before making a decision.	That the final response will be retention or acceptance.
Indeterminate	Draft or comment history does not establish an operation.	Why the passage did or did not change.

6. USING SOURCE-SENSITIVE COMPARISON IN EFL WRITING INSTRUCTION

6.1. MAKE THE COMMENT'S PURPOSE VISIBLE

A useful teacher comment should make the problem it is intended to address visible enough for the learner to evaluate the proposed solution rather than merely obey it. “Readers cannot tell what the survey measured” gives the learner a more productive question than “Make this confident”. “Who made this decision, according to the notice?” is more useful than a blanket instruction to write in active voice. “What kind of meetings are these?” makes lexical accuracy visible before the teacher selects a familiar substitute. Such questions do not abandon correction. They clarify the evidence on which a good correction must be based.

Comments can also distinguish explicitly between a task requirement, a language convention, and a stylistic preference. In a methods paragraph subject to a stated agreement convention, *each participant was* can be corrected directly. When two grammatical sentences differ in emphasis, it is more accurate for the teacher to say why one might serve the reader better rather than present a preference as a rule. When an unclear sentence involves limited evidence, the teacher can ask for source comparison before supplying a final wording. This distinction respects the finite time available for feedback. It permits straightforward corrections to remain straightforward while reserving discussion for choices capable of changing what the writer claims to know.

Selective attention is particularly relevant in crowded writing classes. Lee [21] examines the value of focusing teacher correction rather than attempting to mark every error. A teacher can identify one consequential recommendation in a source-based assignment and still provide direct guidance for a small number of recurrent grammar difficulties. The selection criterion should be the likely effect on the reader’s understanding of the source, participants, or activity, not the apparent sophistication of the sentence. A brief source-checking exchange may prevent a substantial misstatement that several surface-level corrections would leave intact.

6.2. READ THREE TEXTS TOGETHER

Students can practise source-sensitive comparison with the task brief, draft sentence, and recommended wording visible at the same time, so that the evidential basis of the decision is not held in memory or inferred indirectly. In the survey task, they underline the brief’s description of a single measurement point, compare *reported* with *improves*, and state whether the second verb asserts more than the material supports. In the interview task, they draw a line from *the interviewees described* to the reporting construction of their own sentence. In the notice task, they search for evidence naming a committee and identify its absence. These are concrete language-reading actions rather than demands to recite theoretical terminology.

The exercise should also include a correction worth accepting. Asking learners to judge only teacher mistakes risks turning the activity into a rehearsal of opposition. The subject–verb agreement task demonstrates that the writer may be required to change the draft. The orientation task shows an even more demanding situation: the teacher’s complaint is legitimate, but the writer must still decide how to provide an accessible description and whether the local name

helps the reader. The range of decisions makes the instructional purpose visible: to connect a response to evidence, not to encourage a predictable proportion of refusals.

Comparison can be conducted in pairs, with teachers first modelling the reasoning. This emphasis on guided interaction is also compatible with communicative English-teaching work that places structured practice, reflection, and continuing teacher feedback within the development of intercultural communicative competence [28]. The relevance of that work is pedagogical rather than evidential: it supports the use of explicit interaction and feedback in language instruction, not the specific linguistic conclusions drawn from the six records here. In the first round, the teacher supplies two or three finished sentences and asks what each permits the reader to infer. In the next, students suggest their own wording and point to the phrase in the brief that supports it. In a later writing task, the writer makes the comparison without prewritten alternatives. Guided comparison is consistent with the importance of mediation identified by [12] and the teacher support examined by [14, 16]. The sequence offered here is a practical arrangement of the article's six task records, not a claim that this exact sequence has already been tested for effectiveness.

6.3. KEEP EXPLANATIONS BRIEF AND OPEN TO DIFFERENT FORMS

A decision record for one consequential correction can remain brief, for example a short note in the margin that identifies the concern, the chosen response, and the evidence supporting that response: the teacher's concern, the change made or declined, and the evidence supporting that response. For the interview record, a student might write: "I shortened the opening by using 'interviewees described'. The passage records what they thought; it does not independently prove their explanation." For the notice, the student might write: "The notice does not identify the committee, so I cannot name it." Both notes show a connection between the source and the finished wording. Neither requires the student to produce a polished miniature essay.

Teachers can accept spoken explanation, annotated drafts, pointing to a passage, or a shared language when these forms reveal the relevant distinction. A professional-training example outside the EFL research literature illustrates the practical legitimacy of multilingual instructional access: an SSPC report in the *Journal of Protective Coatings & Linings* documented delivery of its Protective Coating Inspector course in Chinese, explicitly noting that the course had been translated for local delivery [29]. This example is not evidence about EFL writing outcomes; it is cited only to show that specialized professional learning may legitimately use a shared language when accurate understanding is the instructional priority. A student who can mark *reported* in the source and explain orally why *improves* is too strong may display the necessary understanding even if the explanation is difficult to compose in English. The findings of [15] illustrate why different languages may support different aspects of peer-feedback work. For multilingual writers, access to a language in which a subtle distinction can be discussed may be a condition for making the decision responsibly.

An explanation should never become a compulsory defence of every unchanged word, since that would turn feedback literacy into an unnecessary additional writing burden. The teacher can select one comment, or at most a few, for source-sensitive comparison. When a sentence is accurate and the reason is already evident in an annotation, a further essay of justification serves little purpose. When a student cannot explain the difference, the response should be instructional: supply the relevant source, contrast two verbs, or ask the student what changes for the reader. The objective is to develop attention to language consequences rather than reward rhetorical confidence. Work on the damaging potential of poorly communicated feedback [25] reinforces the importance of respectful, proportionate follow-up.

6.4. A COMPLETE EXCHANGE FOR A SOURCE-SUMMARY LESSON

The following exchange uses the interview brief from Section 4 and can be read as a classroom teaching script illustrating how source-sensitive negotiation may occur. The class has been asked to distinguish a participant's perception from a finding the writer may claim independently. The criterion is known before the teacher comments on the paragraph. The learner is allowed to examine the source while deciding how to respond.

Sentence submitted: According to the interviewees, English-only discussions favoured students who were already confident speakers.

Teacher: The opening is heavy. Could you remove "According to the interviewees" and make the sentence more direct?

Learner: The passage says the interviewees *described* the discussions that way. If I delete their role, it reads like my own finding.

Learner's final sentence: Interviewees described English-only discussions as favouring students who were already

confident speakers.

Learner's note: I made the sentence shorter, but kept the speakers responsible for their view. The interviews did not independently test that effect.

Teacher: That distinction is supported by the passage. Your reporting verb makes the sentence more direct without presenting the interviewees' opinion as an independent conclusion. Keep the distinction clear in the next sentence too.

The exchange makes several otherwise hidden educational decisions observable and therefore separates principled non-adoption from simple failure to revise. The learner knows exactly which phrase the teacher asked to remove, identifies the relevant reporting verb in the supplied material, and submits a grammatically sound alternative. The teacher responds to the evidential reason, accepts the improvement in directness, and states why deleting the attribution would not meet the task. This is stronger evidence of warranted non-adoption than either a retained draft with no explanation or a statement that the learner dislikes the teacher's preferred wording.

The teacher's part matters as much as the learner's because a genuinely dialogic process requires the teacher's wording to remain open to evidential challenge as well. A task that formally permits disagreement but penalises every departure from the recommended wording would not offer a meaningful choice. Equally, a teacher should not praise a defence when the student has misread the source. If the learner's explanation claimed that the interviewees' perceptions were statistically established, the teacher would need to return to the passage and correct that misunderstanding. Reciprocity means that each participant can provide reasons and reconsider a wording; it does not mean that the teacher relinquishes responsibility for source accuracy or the announced expectations of the assignment.

The same exchange can be adapted to other tasks without requiring a new marking code. For the survey, the learner brings the single-time-point description into the conversation; for the application, the absence of a named actor; for the gathering, the activities and lack of a tutor. In ordinary teaching, the full dialogue may be shortened to a marginal question and a sentence-length answer. Its minimum elements are the change under discussion, the piece of evidence that limits it, and the final sentence judged against the task. If learners need extensive prompting, that support should be acknowledged when their independent evaluative ability is later assessed.

7. ASSESSING THE WRITTEN OUTCOME AND THE WRITER'S REASONING

The analysis supports two separate but complementary judgements that should not be collapsed into a single uptake score. The first concerns the final passage: is it accurate in relation to the provided material, grammatically appropriate for the assignment, and sufficiently clear for its reader? The second concerns the available evidence of how the learner reached that passage: was the requested operation recognised, and was the choice supported by a relevant comparison? Collapsing the two judgements obscures important cases. A student may reach an accurate sentence by copying a peer's correction and be unable to explain it. Another may understand why an active sentence introduces a committee but make an unrelated grammatical error in the alternative. Neither the strength of the prose nor the sophistication of the explanation alone gives a complete account.

Table 3 displays the combinations that can arise. The entries are descriptive distinctions for interpreting a writing record, not grades or numerical performance levels. When the brief lacks crucial information, the textual judgement should remain open rather than be treated as incorrect merely because it differs from the teacher's preference.

TABLE 3. INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENTS OF TEXT QUALITY AND EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING

Available reasoning evidence	Submitted text fits the task	Submitted text misrepresents the task
Understanding demonstrated	A defensible decision can be attributed when the selected response follows the stated reason.	The student recognises the feedback but the sentence still needs correction.
Understanding not established	The text can be accepted; the reason for reaching it is not known.	The defect can be identified without assigning a cause to the student.
Misunderstanding demonstrated	An adequate sentence may coexist with an incorrect explanation and requires teaching attention.	Both the misunderstanding and the textual error require attention.

For classroom use, accuracy should be judged before the teacher considers whether the student agreed with the comment, since agreement itself is not evidence that the resulting sentence is defensible. The evidence for the judgement ought to be identifiable. In the survey comparison, it is the incompatibility between an unqualified improvement claim and the one-time association described in the brief. In the notice comparison, it is the absence of a committee or explanation from the document. In the peer-gathering task, it is the mismatch between informal

discussions and the term *tutorials*. By stating the reason, the teacher can justify acceptance of different accurate formulations without appearing to reward disagreement for its own sake.

In research on naturally occurring feedback, the same distinction would require a substantially fuller record than the final draft alone. The writer's initial sentence, complete feedback comment, suggested wording where present, accessible task material, subsequent draft, and timing of any explanation would all be relevant. Comments containing two instructions should be separated when the instructions do different work. "Make this concise and delete the interviewee attribution" has at least two parts: improve economy and remove a source marker. A writer may act on one and decline the other. Counts that assign the whole comment a single uptake label would conceal this difference.

A text judgement can be made without looking first at the learner's explanation, thereby reducing the risk that a persuasive rationale influences an assessment of textual accuracy. The assessor identifies the claim licensed by the source and checks whether the submitted wording adds or omits consequential information. The learner's reason is then read independently. This order guards against treating a persuasive explanation as proof that the associated sentence is accurate. A second reader can inspect the same materials, and disagreements can be resolved by pointing to a specific expression and the evidence on which the disagreement turns. When the source is ambiguous or the audience requirement was not clearly communicated, maintaining an open judgement is preferable to imposing an unsupported rule.

The value of learner comments also depends on when and how they are produced. An immediate marginal note may show what the writer considered while working; a much later interview can include retrospective explanations that were not present when the text changed. Oral prompting, peer discussion, and teacher modelling can reveal understanding supported by interaction but not necessarily independent mastery. Both kinds of performance matter educationally, but they should not be confused. The caution is consistent with [26], who examine persistent interpretive problems in the study of students' engagement with written feedback.

Assessment must also acknowledge that some recommendations cannot be judged without broader context. Repeating source attribution in every sentence may be clumsy; removing it from the only sentence naming the interviewees may be misleading. The difference depends on the paragraph around the sentence. Likewise, the appropriate treatment of *chai circles* depends partly on what readers will see elsewhere. When an assessor lacks a surrounding paragraph, a source page, or a statement of genre expectations, the missing information is a limit on the judgement, not evidence of a student's deficient reasoning.

There is no empirical basis here for assigning a numerical score to the six records, estimating a classroom improvement percentage, or inferring a population-wide rate of inappropriate comments from these constructed examples. The cases have been composed to make particular changes visible. The participant describe separate published investigations with different questions and designs; they cannot serve as participant numbers for this analysis. A future classroom investigation could compare students' accuracy on unfamiliar source-summary tasks after different instructional activities, but such an inquiry would need its own student records, ethics procedures, independently assessed outcomes, and attention to support received. Those observations are not part of the present study.

8. CONCLUSION

Written feedback serves EFL writers most responsibly when it improves expression without requiring a claim that is stronger than, different from, or less attributable than the one the available evidence supports. The six comparisons show specific points at which this responsibility becomes visible: a causal verb that goes beyond a survey, an omitted reporting phrase that changes the owner of a claim, a grammatical subject that invents a decision-maker, a familiar noun that misnames a student practice, a correct agreement change, and an orientation paragraph that must satisfy reader needs as well as local naming.

A defensible response is therefore not identified by whether a student agrees with the teacher. It is identified by the relationship among the recommendation, the task material, the reason for the decision, and the final sentence. The teacher's diagnosis can be useful even when its wording is not adopted; an accepted correction can be as thoughtful as a declined one. Keeping these distinctions visible allows instruction to cultivate accurate source use, purposeful language choice, and responsibility to readers without rewarding either automatic compliance or disagreement as an end in itself.

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