Transfer from ESL academic writing to first year composition and other disciplinary courses: An assessment perspective

Jooyoung Lee
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, and the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Lee, Jooyoung, "Transfer from ESL academic writing to first year composition and other disciplinary courses: An assessment perspective" (2016). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. 16521.
https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16521

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Transfer from ESL academic writing to first year composition and other disciplinary courses: An assessment perspective

by

Jooyoung Lee

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Applied Linguistics and Technology
Program of Study Committee:
Carol Chapelle, Major Professor
Volker Hegelheimer
Gary Ockey
Barbara Blakely
Amy Froelich

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2016

Copyright © Jooyoung Lee, 2016. All rights reserved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Statement of Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Dissertation Goals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Outline of the Dissertation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Three University Writing Contexts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. ESL Academic Writing Course</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. First-Year Composition Course</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3. Other Disciplinary Courses</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Learning Transfer from Writing to Other Disciplinary Courses</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. Theories of Learning Transfer</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Learning Transfer Research on Academic Writing Courses</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Writing Tasks and their Assessment</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. Writing Tasks in Academic Context</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. Rubric and Evaluation Criteria in Writing Assessment</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3. Rater Variability</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. From Interpretive Argument to Research Questions</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1. Overview of Interpretations, Uses, and Consequences</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2. Approach to Validation: An Argument-Based Approach</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3. Interpretive Argument for English 101C Writing Assessment</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4. Research Questions</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Approach: Mixed Methods</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Participants</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Data Collection Materials</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4. Data Collection Procedures .................................................................................. 62
3.5. Data ....................................................................................................................... 66
  3.5.1. Course Documents: Course Catalogs, Syllabi, Assignment Sheets, Scoring Rubrics .................................................................................................................. 66
  3.5.2. Students’ Writing Assignments ......................................................................... 68
  3.5.3. Evaluation Materials: Grades, Feedback, Rating Results ................................ 70
  3.5.4. Interview (Students and Instructors) .............................................................. 73
  3.5.5. Survey ................................................................................................................ 73
3.6. Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 73
3.7. Chapter Summary .................................................................................................. 79

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ..................................................................... 81
  4.1. Relationship among Grades in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses .......................................................................................................................... 81
  4.2. Comparison of Writing Tasks in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses .......................................................................................................................... 88
    4.2.1. Writing Assignments in English 101C and 150 ............................................. 89
    4.2.2. Writing Assignments in English 101C and Disciplinary Courses .......... 101
  4.3. Evaluation Criteria and Procedures in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses .......................................................................................................................... 118
    4.3.1. Comparison of Evaluation Rubrics ............................................................ 119
      4.3.1.1. Comparison of evaluation rubrics in English 101C and 150 ... 119
      4.3.1.2. Comparison of evaluation rubrics in English 101C and disciplinary courses .................................................................................................................. 123
    4.3.2. Comparison of Instructor Interviews ....................................................... 128
      4.3.2.1. Perceptions of good writing ............................................................... 129
      4.3.2.2. Grammar errors ............................................................................... 158
      4.3.2.3. Evaluation processes and standards ................................................ 166
    4.3.3. Comparison of Instructor Feedback .......................................................... 179
    4.3.4. Comparison of Instructor Severity ............................................................ 214
      4.3.4.1. Course difficulty difference ............................................................... 215
      4.3.4.2. Individual instructor severity difference ........................................... 215
  4.4. Interpretation of Grades and Feedback on English 101C Assessment .................. 219
    4.4.1. Students’ Interpretation of Instructor Feedback ........................................ 219
    4.4.2. Students’ Interpretation of Grades .............................................................. 236
    4.4.3. Instructors’ Confusions about Evaluation Criteria and Scales ............... 245
  4.5. English 101C Assessment Results as an Indicator of Readiness for Written Communication in University ................................................................. 249
    4.5.1. Comparison of English 150 Grades across Three Groups of Students .. 250
    4.5.2. Students’ Perceived Readiness ................................................................. 252
    4.5.3. Instructors’ Perceptions of International Students’ Writing ................... 257
  4.6. Learning Transfer from English 101C to English 150 and Disciplinary Courses .......................................................................................................................... 262
    4.6.1. Transfer between English 101C and English 150 .................................... 263
APPENDIX K: FACETS COMMAND FILE: ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH 101C INSTRUCTORS’ RATINGS .......................................................... 330

APPENDIX L: FACETS COMMAND FILE: ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH 150 INSTRUCTORS’ RATINGS .......................................................... 331


**LIST OF FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>An illustration of the claims and inferences in the interpretive argument</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Flowchart of the Basic Procedures Implementing a Convergent Parallel Design</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1 Summary of the Warrant, Assumptions, and Backing</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated with Each Inference in the Interpretive Argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the English 101C Writing Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1 Participants and their Type of Participation</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2 Overview of Data Collection Procedure</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.3 Course Documents Data: Course Descriptions, Syllabi,</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Sheets, and Rubrics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.4 Students’ Writing Assignments Collected from English 101C</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.5 Students’ Writing Assignments Collected from Content Courses</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.6 Feedback and Grades Collected from English 101C, English</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150, and Content Courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.7 Measurement Results for the Criterion Facet: The Rating</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Produced by English 101C Instructors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.8 Measurement Results for the Criterion Facet: The Rating</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results Produced by English 150 Instructors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.9 Data and Analyses Required for Each Research Question</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for English 101C and 150 Scores</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for English 101C and Disciplinary</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3 Major Writing Assignments in English 101C and 150</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4 Rhetorical Functions in Each Assignment</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5 Assignments Collected from Content Courses</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6 Genre Families of Writing Assignments in Disciplinary</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7 Length of Essay, Explanation, and Exercise:</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted from Nesi and Gardner (2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.8</td>
<td>Requirements for the Use of Source Materials in Disciplinary Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.9</td>
<td>Purposes of Written Assignments in Disciplinary Courses (Based on 27 Assignment Sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.10</td>
<td>Purposes of Written Assignments in Disciplinary Courses (Based on Interviews with Three Content Course Instructors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.11</td>
<td>Rhetorical Functions in Writing Assignments in Disciplinary Courses (Based on 27 Assignment Sheets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.12</td>
<td>Length Requirements of the 27 Writing Assignments in 16 Disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.13</td>
<td>Evaluation Criteria in Eight Content Course Rubrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.14</td>
<td>Data Used for the Feedback Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.15</td>
<td>Number of Grammar and Non-Grammar Comments in Each Course (N=3144 comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.16</td>
<td>Ranked Issues on Grammar/Mechanics in Three Courses Pointed Out by Instructors (N=1815 errors that received comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.17</td>
<td>Feedback on Awkward Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.18</td>
<td>Feedback on Awkward Expression with Suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.19</td>
<td>Feedback on Redundant/Unnecessary Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.20</td>
<td>What Issues Received More Comments in English 101C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.21</td>
<td>What Issues Received More Comments in English 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.22</td>
<td>Feedback on Non-Grammar Issues in Three Courses (N=1329 issues that received comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.23</td>
<td>Feedback on Substance (N=544 substance-related issues that received comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.24</td>
<td>Feedback on Organization (N=178 organization-related issues that received comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.25</td>
<td>Feedback on Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.26</td>
<td>Feedback on Topic Sentence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.27 Feedback on Context  
(N=180 context-related issues that received comments) ......................... 204

Table 4.28 Feedback on Thesis Statement ......................................................... 204

Table 4.29 Feedback on Introduction in English 150 ........................................... 206

Table 4.30 Feedback on Title (Not) Demonstrating the Purpose of Essay .......... 208

Table 4.31 Feedback on Citations in English 150 ............................................... 209

Table 4.32 Instructor Measurement Report: English 101C instructors ............... 216

Table 4.33 Instructor Measurement Report: English 150 instructors ................. 217

Table 4.34 Examples of Feedback that did not Identify Problems ...................... 221

Table 4.35 Examples of Feedback that used Ambiguous Codes or Explanation to Identify Problems ........................................................ 223

Table 4.36 Examples of Feedback that did not Explain why Suggested Changes were Needed ....................................................................................... 225

Table 4.37 Examples of Feedback that did not Accurately Locate the Source of Problems ......................................................................................... 226

Table 4.38 Examples of Feedback that was Misinterpreted by Students ............. 228

Table 4.39 Examples of Feedback that Provided Direct Correction without Explanation ............................................................................................... 229

Table 4.40 Examples of Feedback that Indicated the Problem but did not Tell how to Fix .............................................................................................. 230

Table 4.41 Examples of Feedback that Students Disagree with ......................... 232

Table 4.42 The Scoring Rubric for Assignment 3 in English 101C ........................ 237

Table 4.43 Students’ Reactions to Received Analytic Scores (Student Interviews) . 239

Table 4.44 Descriptive Statistics: English 150 Scores of Three Groups of Students 251

Table 4.45 Test Statistics: Krusal-Wallis Test ....................................................... 252

Table 4.46 Usefulness of What Was Learned in English 101C in Doing English 150
Assignment ........................................................................................................ 263

Table 4.47 English 101C and 150 Instructors’ Feedback on Thesis Statements
Included in Students’ Assignments ..................................................................... 271

Table 4.48 Aspects of Learning in English 101C that were Helpful in Doing Content
Course Assignments ............................................................................................ 277

Table 4.49 Summary of Results ............................................................................. 290
I was able to complete this dissertation with the help of many people. First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my major professor, Dr. Carol Chapelle, who always encouraged me to explore the topics that I was truly interested in and challenged me intellectually in a way that was motivating and inspiring. I also would like to extend my gratitude to my committee members. Thank you to Dr. Volker Hegelheimer, who established the atmosphere of productive research by creating the Criterion Research Group as well as made all my years in the PhD program a happy journey with his warm support. Thank you to Dr. Gary Ockey, who offered me the best statistics class and practical, substantial help for the statistical analyses included in this study by having multiple Skype meetings and corresponding by email. Thank you to Dr. Barbara Blakely, who was my mentor when I first started teaching English 150, a course which motivated me to conduct this research. Thank you to Dr. Amy Froelich, who spared me much time when I was designing a statistical part of this study and explained all the relevant statistical concepts in a clear, explicit manner.

My appreciation also goes out to the students and instructors who willingly participated in my study. Your valuable time and help made this dissertation possible.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family. Thank you to my parents for laying down an excellent foundation for this academic journey. Your loving support always reassures me. Thank you to my husband, James, for all the smiles, happiness, and positive energy you bring to my life. Without your support, this journey could not have been finished. Thank you to my adorable daughter, Anna, for being a happy baby. You are so precious.
Many American universities offer ESL academic writing courses to help international students prepare for written communication in other university courses. This study investigated the connections and/or disconnections across an ESL writing course, a first-year composition course, and content courses at Iowa State University from the perspective of writing assessment. As a longitudinal mixed-methods study, data were collected over one academic year from 108 international students, 14 instructors of an ESL writing course, 18 instructors of a first-year composition course, and four instructors of content courses. Quantitative data included grades on written assignments and survey responses, while qualitative data consisted of course documents such as assignment sheets and scoring rubrics, written assignments, instructors’ written feedback on students’ drafts, interview recordings, and survey responses.

The study found that the ESL writing course was not very well connected to the first-year composition or content courses in terms of writing assessment. There was a close correspondence across the three writing contexts in terms of evaluation criteria, but not in terms of writing tasks and the grades that students actually received on their writing assignments. Also, students’ performance on the written assessment in the ESL writing course was not a reliable indicator of their readiness for writing in other courses. In addition, although students were positive about the learning transfer from the ESL writing to other courses, the first-year composition and content course instructors were negative about it. These findings have implications for revising writing assignments, modifying evaluation practice, and determining ways to enhance learning transfer across the three writing contexts.
Although the study was conducted within the context of Iowa State University, the findings are expected to have relevance beyond this particular institution given that ESL academic writing courses in American universities are designed in a more or less similar way and share comparable goals as those offered at Iowa State University.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of Problem

The number of international students coming to the United States for college degrees continues to grow, rising to 975,000 in the 2014-2015 school year (Turner, 2015). Because proficient English language skills are essential to these students’ academic success, universities require students to take pre-arrival tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS, and their institutional ESL placement tests. If students do not show satisfactory performance on these tests, they are placed into ESL courses. Thus, the ESL courses aim to develop academic English proficiency needed in mainstream university classrooms. For instance, the syllabus of an ESL writing course at Penn State University states that *the goal of this course is to help you develop the reading and writing skills you need to participate successfully in academic reading and writing tasks at an American university*. Also, the course description of an ESL writing course at the University of Michigan asserts that *class activities include analysis of different text-types and how these are related to specific disciplines*. Despite universities’ efforts to meet the needs of this group of students, however, some professors are still frustrated with their low English proficiency, which inhibits their active participation in class or successful completion of the course (Redden, 2014).

The same is true at Iowa State University (ISU), where the present study was undertaken. Each year, about 400 international students at ISU take English 101C, an academic writing course specifically designed for those who fail the writing portion of the English Placement Test at the time of admission. International students spend an additional one or two semesters (depending on the results of the English placement test, they may be held for one or two writing
courses) to meet the university’s ESL requirements before taking English 150, a first year composition (FYC) course required for both American and international students. Given the extra time and money the international students spend on these ESL courses, program coordinators and instructors are responsible for offering useful and helpful classes. According to the English 101C course syllabus, its purpose is *to prepare undergraduate non-native speakers of English for success in all academic communication assignments with an emphasis on written work*. Students who satisfactorily engage in this course will be prepared to enter English 150. In other words, the English 101C class’s instructional goal is “transcendent” (Leki & Carson, 1997, p. 39); it helps students to succeed in other courses/contexts. This is why connections across three contexts (English 101C, 150, and other disciplinary courses) are highly important.

As I have been teaching both English 101C and 150 at Iowa State University (ISU), however, I have noticed some mismatches between the two writing courses that may hinder a smooth transition on the part of the students. First of all, the nature of the required writing assignments seems different. In English 101C, students write compare/contrast, analysis, and summary/response essays. They are asked to perform one or two rhetorical functions in each assignment and usually write about their cultures based on their own perspectives and experiences. On the other hand, in English 150, students write a letter and a profile, as well as create a brochure or a poster using visual elements mostly based on existing information on the ISU website. The assignment sheets do not foreground any particular rhetorical function. It is also worth noticing that the English 150 curriculum adopts a place-based pedagogy and, therefore, all the assignments pertain to buildings, artifacts, or organizations on the ISU campus. Second, the evaluation in the two courses appears to be different as well. The student guide for English 150 notes that “a C means satisfactory work” and reminds students that, although they
may have received As in high school, that same outcome for the same work/effort may not be reasonable now that they are in the university. By contrast, in English 101C, there is no such strict programmatic guideline about the meaning or assignment of grades. In addition, the focus of feedback also differs. English 150 instructors primarily comment on the content, organization, and context of the paper, whereas English 101C teachers pay a great deal of attention to organization and language issues.

After recognizing such discrepancies and talking to previous English 101C students who do not see any connection between the writing tasks completed in English 101C and their major courses, I began to question the connection across the three writing situations and whether we are achieving the goal of English 101C as stated in the syllabus. In addition, I found that my observations and experience are also supported by the literature. There are some studies pointing out the gaps between ESL writing and FYC (e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Costino & Hyon, 2011), between ESL and mainstream courses (e.g., Hyland, 2013; Leki & Carson, 1997), and between FYC and mainstream courses (e.g., Russell, 1997; Wardle, 2009).

First, because ESL and FYC courses are usually designed and developed by two different fields, one by Applied Linguistics and the other by Rhetoric and Communication, they use different terminology, have different views about language and what constitutes “good writing,” and show different pedagogical concerns and political orientations (Costino & Hyon, 2011). Also, ESL writing courses usually provide a sort of template for how students can organize their own essays, foreground structure and language issues in assignment sheets (Costino & Hyon, 2011), and encourage clear and explicit ways of communication (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995). On the other hand, FYC courses are against relying on mode-based pedagogy (which asks students to write an isolated-mode paper such as a compare/contrast, a persuasive, and a
narrative essay) given the complexities of each genre (Costino & Hyon, 2011), prefer implicit and subtle use of language, and seek originality and critical thinking (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995).

Compared with these general academic writing courses, such as ESL and FYC, however, content course instructors consider writing as a medium for displaying and demonstrating how well students (especially undergraduate students) understand disciplinary knowledge (Leki & Carson, 1997). Therefore, the accuracy and legitimacy of content is the most important consideration at the time of evaluation. Also, content course instructors do not expect creativity. Instead, they highly value a piece of writing that is succinct and to the point (Leki & Carson, 1997). Due to such differences, learning transfer is oftentimes hard to achieve from general academic writing courses to content courses (James, 2014).

1.2. Dissertation Goals

With the differences across the three writing contexts in mind, my research investigates the connections and/or disconnections between English 101C, 150, and content courses at ISU from the perspective of writing assessment. Each course requires a number of writing tasks, which are evaluated and graded by the instructors. Given that the composite score of major writing assignments in English 101C and 150 accounts for 60 to 90 percent of a final course grade and that most lessons are planned to help students to complete each assignment, assessment and evaluation of these assignments deserve close attention. Furthermore, considering that no previous research that has examined the relationship among diverse writing contexts has explicitly focused on the assessment and evaluation aspect, the present study is expected to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the following questions:
• How much are writing assignment tasks and their evaluations comparable across English 101C, 150, and other disciplinary courses?
• How valid are the decisions made based on the English 101C assessment results, especially in terms of deciding students’ readiness to take English 150 and carry out various writing tasks at ISU?
• Does learning transfer occur from English 101C to English 150 and other disciplinary courses? If so, how much and in what ways? If not, why?

Each of these general questions will be divided into more specific and detailed questions in later sections. The third question is more concerned with learning and, therefore, may seem irrelevant to the focus of this study, assessment, at first glance. However, the question is relevant given that recent discussion on the validity of test score interpretations and uses takes their consequences and washback effects on learning into account.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Answering the above questions will eventually contribute evidence based on assessments about whether English 101C is attaining its goal, which is preparing international students for English 150 and various forms of written communication in a university setting. Although English 101C has been offered at ISU for over 35 years, there has been little attempt to investigate its usefulness, let alone the connection between English 101C and 150, as well as the extent to which it contributes to carrying out a range of writing tasks in content courses. It is time to evaluate our own practice. I believe that the English 101C program coordinator and instructors also have had similar questions over the course of their teaching careers. If evidence from the assessments indicates that English 101C is fulfilling its role according to the results of the
proposed study, we can justify what we are doing right now. If not, the results can be used for revising the curriculum, training teachers, and figuring out better ways for learning transfer to occur across the three writing contexts.

Most importantly, I initiated this research in the hope of addressing international students’ concerns. I have seen many international students who had done very well in English 101C, but felt frustrated once they moved to English 150 due to low grades (C+ or below) they received. I have also witnessed a number of English 101C students who were worried about taking English 150 and eventually chose to take it later or take it somewhere else and transfer the credit to get an easy A or B. It seems that their concerns primarily stem from the grades and evaluation. This is why the special focus of this study is given to assessment and evaluation in the three different writing situations. What is going on there? Is there really a gap? If so, what makes the gap in grades? Are three groups of instructors different just in terms of severity at the time of grading or do they focus on different aspects of writing? Do they have different views about good writing? Are the purposes of the courses different? I hope that answers to these questions can be a first step to helping international students make smoother transitions across different writing contexts.

Although this study is conducted in the context of ISU, findings of the study are expected to have relevance beyond this particular institution. As the number of international students coming to the U.S. for higher education is continuously increasing, American universities try to provide them substantial support. One such effort is to offer ESL courses so that these students can overcome language barriers and better participate in mainstream courses. Furthermore, most international students take academic writing courses in their home country even before coming to the U.S. Given that these ESL/EFL academic writing courses are designed in a more or less
similar way and have many aspects in common with English 101C, the results of the present study have implications for them as well.

1.4. Outline of the Dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation will be organized as follows. A review of the literature that provided theoretical and empirical background for the current study will be presented in Chapter 2, along with an argument making explicit the interpretations and uses of the English 101C writing assessment that helped me to formulate research questions by pointing to the areas in need in the research. The methodology used to collect and analyze the data will be described in Chapter 3, while the results of data analysis will be presented and discussed in Chapter 4. The dissertation will conclude with a summary of the results along with a discussion of the limitations of the study and the implications of its findings.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate (dis)connections across ESL academic writing, First-Year Composition, and disciplinary courses in the university from a writing assessment perspective. All the relevant research questions stem from the assumptions included in the interpretive argument for the English 101C assessment, which outlines proposed interpretations and uses of the assessment results and underlying inferences and assumptions that need to be supported in order for the assessment to be considered valid (Kane, 2006). Therefore, this investigation can be also understood as an effort to validate English 101C assessment. This chapter reviews relevant previous studies and instructional documents used in ESL, FYC, and disciplinary courses to provide theoretical and empirical background for the present study and identify under researched areas.

First, I will look into the three writing contexts in the university (ESL, FYC, and disciplinary courses). The origins and goals of the two writing courses, as well as the importance of writing in disciplinary courses, will be discussed. However, primary focus will be given to what kinds of writing are done and which writing style is preferred in those courses. For this purpose, not only relevant previous studies, but also the course catalogue and instructional documents used in those courses, such as course syllabi and writing assignment sheets, will be examined.

Then, the chapter moves on to the literature on learning transfer. Given that the goal of the ESL course is to help international students to be prepared for the other two writing contexts in the university (FYC and disciplinary courses), learning transfer is expected to occur from ESL to FYC and disciplinary courses. Transfer of learning constitutes one of the theoretical
perspectives that will guide the analyses and interpretations of the data. Thus, I will first review some basic concepts underlying this theory, and then look into the learning transfer research done on academic writing courses. This review reveals that the findings are very inconclusive and that there is little research on transfer from ESL to FYC courses, despite some studies on the transfer from ESL to disciplinary courses or from FYC to disciplinary courses. Learning transfer is more about learning and, therefore, may seem irrelevant to the focus of this study, assessment, at first glance. However, transfer of learning is relevant given that what was learned in the process of doing assignments (assessment) in ESL courses is expected to help students to accomplish writing tasks in FYC and disciplinary courses given the ESL course’s preparatory goal.

Since the goal of this study is to investigate the (dis)connections across the three writing contexts from an assessment perspective, previous research on writing tasks and their evaluation in an academic setting forms the basis of the current study. The literature on the rater effects in writing assessment is also relevant, because different approaches to evaluation in the three writing contexts may result from differences in instructors’ (raters’) backgrounds.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this research can be also understood as an effort in validating the interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment. Therefore, the last section of the chapter will move on to outlining an interpretive argument for English 101C writing assessment considering its relation to the writing in FYC and disciplinary courses. Creating an interpretive argument is the first step in an argument-based approach to validation, and it will point to the areas that need further research, which implies its usefulness for generating research questions.
2.1. Three University Writing Contexts

The present study is concerned with three writing contexts that international students experience as they pursue an undergraduate degree in the United States: ESL writing course (e.g., ENGL 101C at ISU), first-year composition course (e.g., ENGL 150 at ISU), and disciplinary courses. Because what is learned in ESL general academic writing courses is expected to help students to complete writing tasks in the other two contexts, the literature will be reviewed in terms of what writing assignments are given and which writing aspects are valued in these courses along with their goals and pedagogical concerns in terms of writing. Although there have been few prior studies that devoted exclusive or primary focus to assessment, their discussions on prized writing aspects in each course are particularly relevant to the present study. Also, even though each writing context is examined in separate subsections, the reviews will be conducted in a comparative manner to show some similarities and differences across ESL, FYC, and disciplinary courses.

2.1.1. ESL Academic Writing Course

The number of international students coming to the United States for college degrees continues to grow, reaching nearly 975,000 in the 2014-2015 school year (Turner, 2015). However, some studies have observed that international students’ academic performance is not as good as their American peers in various disciplines, from English (Braine, 1996; Hsieh, 2007) to Science (Abraham, 1987) and Nursing (Brown, 2001; Femea, Gaines, Brathwaite, & Abdur-Rahman, 1994; Guhde, 2003; Malu & Figlear, 1998; Omeri, Malcolm, Ahern, & Wellington, 2003). There are multiple reasons for this challenge, including overall language barriers and cultural differences, but Guhde (2003) and Salamonson, Koch, Weaver, Everett, and Jackson
focused on insufficient academic writing skills. Such a focus makes sense, because written exams and assignments are particularly important in college courses in terms of evaluating students’ level of understanding and achievement (Elander, Harrington, Norton, Robinson, & Reddy, 2006; Whitehead 2002).

As a way of helping and taking responsibility for the international students, many universities are offering ESL academic writing courses where students can practice several different types of writing including argumentative, analytic, and compare/contrast essays. In order to achieve the overarching goal of improving academic writing competence of nonnative speakers of English, these courses have several specific learning objectives such as understanding the demands of written assignments, using the process of multiple drafts and feedback to revise and improve composition (syllabus of Iowa State University), developing critical reading skills to obtain information from academic texts, and identifying and correcting common grammatical and mechanical errors (syllabus of Penn State University). On the other hand, in the case of pre-admission ESL programs, helping students to reach a certain score on the TOEFL or IELTS can be another goal for which they need to learn test-taking strategies as well as general writing skills.

Another way to describe the goal of an ESL academic writing course comes from the consideration of its relevance to other university courses. Course descriptions or syllabi of such courses state that *class activities include analysis of different text-types and how these are related to specific disciplines* (University of Michigan), that *the goal of this course is to help you develop the reading and writing skills you need to participate successfully in academic reading and writing tasks at an American university* (Penn State University). In other words, these courses aim to help international students get ready for producing written communication in
various disciplines. This is why it is argued that academic writing courses should direct their focus to the types of writing assignments students encounter in content courses (Johns, 1991), and provide lessons on the culture of American universities and classrooms as well, so that ESL students are fully prepared for mainstream courses not only linguistically, but also socially and psychologically (BALEAP, n.d.).

While teachers and researchers in this area would not disagree with such practical goals, there have been disagreements on the role of ESL writing instructors in working toward such goals. Spack (1988) pointed out that the Writing Across the Curriculum and English for Specific Purpose movements in L1 and L2 writing instruction, respectively, encouraged writing instructors to teach how to write in various disciplines other than English. Johns (1991) actually recommended that writing teachers should deal with genres and tasks commonly found in students’ major courses. Wardle (2009) agreed with the need to teach discipline-specific writing; however, she also pointed out that general academic writing classes do not have specific and complex rhetorical situations out of which a certain genre emerges. For example, students do not carry out an experiment about which they can write a lab report, which is one of the most common classroom genres in the field of engineering. Thus, she suggested offering courses where students can analyze a range of texts and build competence to judge rhetorical situations of whatever writing tasks they are given and flexibly approach them. Others (e.g., Leki & Carson, 1997) also noted the difficulty of teaching discipline-specific writing unless an instructor is very knowledgeable about the field and suggested teaching basic formats and general skills that are transferrable to other writing situations.

As more and more ESL writing courses are offered, many people have become interested in their effectiveness as well. In order to investigate course effectiveness, some researchers used
the change in a test score as a measure of improvement. For example, Sasaki (2007) compared Japanese students’ test scores on argumentative essays earned at two different points over the course of instruction and showed that total composition scores increased significantly. Similarly, in Xudong, Cheng, Varaprasad, and Leng (2010), a group of students who were tested before and after taking an EAP course showed a gain of more than half a proficiency level in their overall essay quality. Not all the findings are positive, though. In Tsang and Wong’s (2000) study, participants’ essays were graded on five criteria, and scores did not show any significant improvement after 14 weeks of instruction. That the findings are not consistent is probably because instructional contexts in those studies were different in many ways including the focus and length of instruction.

In order to measure improvement, other studies examined various linguistic features, such as accuracy, fluency, and complexity, constructs that are typically used in Second Language Acquisition research. These studies also yielded inconsistent findings. After one semester’s instruction, Storch and Tapper (2009) observed some improvement in students’ writing in terms of accuracy and lexical complexity, but not fluency and syntactic complexity. On the other hand, Shaw and Liu (1998) reported that they did not see any development in accuracy and complexity, whereas Tsang and Wong (2000) observed some improvement in all three aspects. These conflicting findings are partially due to the way researchers defined these constructs. For example, syntactic complexity was measured based on average clause length in words, number of clauses per T-unit, average T-unit length in words, number of T-units per sentence, and average sentence length in words in Tsang and Wong (2000). Yet, measurements of syntactic complexity in Shaw and Liu (1998) included increased use of nominalization, reduction of
clauses to prepositional or participial phrases, and increased subordination or changes in the pattern of subordination.

In order to achieve the course objectives in improving academic writing competence and preparing international students for various kinds of writing required at the university, ESL courses offer students plenty of opportunities to practice writing by giving several writing assignments. In terms of genre, most of these assignments can be classified as an essay, which, according to Gardner and Nesi (2013), contains the structure of introduction, series of arguments, and conclusion, and asks students to “demonstrate/develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills” (p. 38). Also, the essay assignments in ESL courses are usually in the form of an isolated-mode paper where students are asked to focus on one or two rhetorical functions. For instance, the assignments in the ESL course at Iowa State University include compare/contrast, division/classification, and summary/response essay while those at Penn State University include analytic and argumentative essay. With regard to the object of inquiry, the assignments ask students to write about general topics that are familiar to students (Leki & Carson, 1997). Also, Costino and Hyon’s (2011) analysis of the assignment sheet in ESL courses found that instructions proceed straight to the task—“you will write a critique of one of Eric Schlosser’s chapters in Fast Food Nation” (p. 32) —without mentioning the purpose or audience of the writing task. Also, the assignment sheet highlights the structure and vocabulary students are encouraged to use and dictates that both positive and negative evaluation of the book should be included instead of letting students choose what to discuss.

Although Leki and Carson (1997), who examined students’ writing experience in ESL writing and content courses, did not give exclusive or primary focus to the evaluation of writing in ESL courses, they suggested that accuracy or truth of content does not matter in ESL courses,
because students are not expected to learn and display knowledge in subject matter; rather, linguistic and rhetorical forms, such as grammatical accuracy and the use of topic sentences, are frequently evaluated. In addition, Atkinson & Ramanathan (1995), who compared the culture of writing in L1 and L2 university writing programs, found that clear and explicit writing style is preferred in ESL writing courses whereas an implicit, subtle, original, and cogent style is highly valued in freshmen composition courses.

2.1.2. First-Year Composition Course

In most American universities, the first-year composition (FYC) course is mandatory for all students, regardless of their discipline or native language, as a partial requirement of general education courses (Crowley, 1998; WPA Outcome Statement). Compared with the ESL writing course, FYC course has a much longer history; the origin of FYC requirements can be traced back to early American colleges prior to the Civil War. Their aim and curriculum were based on the education in Roman antiquity (Kimball, 1986). Those early colleges aimed to educate students so that they could be virtuous and well-rounded citizens and leaders of a society, which is similar to the goal of education in ancient Athens: producing enlightened citizens and active members of a democratic community (Bok, 2013). At that time, composition was an essential component of their liberal arts curriculum and was usually taught by literature professors, though the responsibility was shared among all faculty, because writing was integral to most classes (Crowley, 1998). Despite the changes in the aims of the university—towards conducting research and preparing students for future careers and professions (Bok, 2013; Crowley, 1998)—university administrators did not throw away the traditional arts curriculum altogether, because it was believed that liberal studies could make a huge contribution to producing men equipped with
civic and moral values (Kuklick, 1992). As a result, composition, one of the liberal arts courses, still remains in university curriculum.

It is not hard to find legacies of liberal arts traditions in the current composition curriculum. For example, composition courses offered at ISU cover not only academic, but also civic and cultural discourse (English 150 Student Guide). Furthermore, the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, developed by Council of the Writing Program Administrator, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project, outlines eight habits of the mind (curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition) that are essential for success in college and discusses how writing instruction can foster these characters. It is also noteworthy that the most recent WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition was developed in line with this Framework.

The WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition, which “attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs’ priorities for first-year composition,” identifies rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, and multiple composing processes, and knowledge of convention as abilities to learn and develop. Compared with the objectives in ESL writing courses, the glaring difference is in developing rhetorical knowledge, which enables students to analyze purpose, audience, and context of the writing and adapt their own compositions accordingly. This is contrasted with the writing tasks in ESL courses that do not impose these rhetorical situations or the focus on the deductive structure, namely, the five paragraph essay. Another difference is that the expectations of conventions are not universal; the FYC course curriculum notes that standards of correctness and appropriateness may differ depending on genre, discipline, and occasion, whereas the ESL course curriculum discusses “common” grammatical and mechanical errors. Despite the differences in terms of specific
knowledge both courses attempt to impart, they share the same desired outcome: preparing
students for communication in other disciplines. A part of the WPA outcome statement, “this
document advises faculty in all disciplines about how to help students build on what they learn in
introductory writing courses,” implies that FYC courses are expected to lay the foundation for
students’ writing in future content courses.

When it comes to writing tasks, FYC course curriculum is against relying on mode-based
pedagogy (i.e., a compare/contrast, a persuasive, and a narrative essay) given the complexities of
each genre (Costino & Hyon, 2011). Unlike ESL courses, FYC course assignment sheets begin
with the purpose and audience of each writing task, not limiting the scope to learning to write.
Instead, FYC instructors expect students to use writing as a tool for promoting critical thinking
and engaging in debate and intellectual exploration. In terms of organization, five-paragraph
essays are disapproved of and rejected, because every topic cannot be divided into and discussed
in three aspects with a brief introduction and conclusion at the beginning and end of the essay.
Structure should not determine the essay; rather, it should serve a writer’s purpose and consider
the needs of the audience. Finally, FYC instructors prefer inductive structure, as well as implicit
and subtle use of language, and seek evidence of students’ critical thinking, insightfulness,
forcefulness, cogency, originality, and creativity (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995).

2.1.3. Other Disciplinary Courses

Since the goal of writing courses, like ESL and FYC courses, is to practice writing, how
students write is often considered more important than what students write. Truth or accuracy of
content does not matter much. As a matter of fact, even if they wanted to, instructors are unable
to deal with content accuracy, because students usually write about general topics, such as
themselves and their home countries, which instructors do not know much about. In other words, students are information holders. In contrast, content course instructors possess much more knowledge on the subject and teach this material, while students, especially undergraduate students, are in a position of absorbing and learning their knowledge. Because writing is considered a medium for displaying and demonstrating how well students understand disciplinary knowledge (Leki & Carson, 1997), the accuracy and legitimacy of content matter most at the point of evaluation. Content course instructors do not expect creativity; instead, they highly value a piece of writing that is succinct and to the point (Leki & Carson, 1997). Also, mainstream course instructors do not expect any specific format, and are largely flexible in this regard (James, 2010).

Meanwhile, some studies on academic writing have focused on particular disciplines. Even though the researchers’ purpose was not to make comparisons between writing and content courses, their findings can be easily compared with the previous discussion regarding writing courses. Although it is generally accepted that demonstrating understanding of new knowledge constitutes the primary purpose of writing in content courses, this is truer in hard science fields. In humanities, on the other hand, making connections among things students read in books or comparing and evaluating different ideas and theories they learned from various sources is oftentimes required in writing assignments (Hyland, 2013). These types of writing tasks also differ from those in ESL writing courses in that the former requires source-based writing whereas the latter asks students to write simply based on their own experiences and opinions.

With regard to the nature of writing tasks, an engineering professor in Zhu (2004) pointed out that design and experimental process is very typical in engineering writing. Similarly, Braine (1989) also identified reporting on a specified participatory experience, such as lab report and
weekly/interim report of ongoing research, as the most common type of writing in the field of science and technology. On the other hand, a professor in business in Zhu’s study said that the writing tasks in his class usually concern problem solving and decision making, because those are critical skills in the real business world. Also, his students are supposed to use a few different modes flexibly and purposefully and make smooth transitions from one mode to another in one piece of writing, which is contrasted with the writing tasks in ESL writing course that mainly focus on one particular mode (e.g., compare/contrast).

Professors in different disciplines also use different evaluation criteria for assessing students’ writing assignments. When instructors’ comments on students’ assignments were compared across four different disciplines, Hyland (2013) found that feedback on content accounted for more than 50% in biology, which was followed by language (24.6%). In engineering, professors still paid a great deal of attention to content (39.5%), but they were highly concerned about the quality of language (27.5%) and argument (26.3%) as well. Interestingly, business faculty gave many more comments regarding language issues (38.6%), followed by content (29.9%) and argument (27.9%). However, history professors did not comment much on content (12%), and instead focused on language (42.7%) and argument (40.4%). Regarding the same set of papers used as data in Faigley and Hansen (1985), the English professor paid attention to surface features while the sociology professor was more concerned about what knowledge a student had acquired than the language or structure of the report.

When instructors’ evaluation criteria were investigated by means of interview, they were very articulate about the criteria depending on the needs of their disciplines. For instance, business faculty stressed the importance of efficient, concise, and direct communication and
emphasized persuasiveness and leaving a great impression on the audience. They expressed dispreference toward the term-paper look while encouraging the use of visually interesting devices. In terms of content, they evaluate consistency between what students propose and the company’s goals and mission as well as plausibility of implementing students’ proposal within company’s limited resources (Zhu, 2004). On the other hand, political science professors in Johns (1991) mentioned six qualities they were looking for: disciplinary schemata, consideration of the larger purpose of a text, well planned text, ability to connect concepts with examples or facts, disciplinary vocabulary, objectiveness, especially when presenting conflicting values, and beliefs. Meanwhile, a professor from economics highly valued persuasive argument with solid evidence form high quality research and was less concerned with creativity (Hyland, 2013).

As shown in this section, writings done in writing and content courses are different in terms of purpose, task type, and evaluation criteria. Being exposed to many types of writing and different views on good writing are likely beneficial for learning diversity and developing flexibility in college education. However, considering the reason for why ESL and FYC courses are offered in a university and students’ urgent needs to produce quality assignments in their major courses in order to receive good grades, Wardle’s (2009) words of caution deserve our attention; writing teachers are so preoccupied with their own genres, such as essay, that they often misunderstand the genre of the English department as representative of college writing.

### 2.2. Learning Transfer from Writing to Other Disciplinary Courses

This section will review the literature on learning transfer, because it is expected to occur across the three writing contexts in the university and also because it constitutes one of the theoretical perspectives that will guide the analyses and interpretations of the data in this
dissertation. First, some basic concepts underlying this theory will be discussed such as its definition and significance in the field of education, and types of and conditions for transfer. Then, I will move on to learning transfer research done on academic writing courses, from ESL to disciplinary courses and from FYC to disciplinary courses, but not between ESL and FYC, due to the absence of such research. Previous studies have produced mixed findings when it comes to whether transfer occurs.

2.2.1. Theories of Learning Transfer

It is said that “transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with other related materials” (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 6452). Although transfer does not always occur in a positive way or help subsequent learning, Perkins and Salomon claim that transfer is fundamental in education and that is what most teachers’ aim is. In college, for example, introductory courses are designated as a prerequisite for upper-level courses, because what students learn in the former will help them to understand more difficult concepts in the latter. Likewise, some senior-level courses are designed to prepare students for the professional world after graduation. Transfer is a key to ESL academic writing courses, too, because it is meant to help international students to perform well and compete with native speakers in FYC as well as content courses; ESL course itself is not the end.

Researchers in the field of education and psychology proposed different types of transfer whose concepts would be useful for discussing why some elements are transferred from writing to content courses while others are not. First, near transfer refers to transfer between very similar contexts, such as a student having learned how to write an argumentative essay in a writing class
and later being asked to write the same type of essay, but on a different topic on the final exam. On the other hand, *far transfer* means transfer between remote situations. Although both English 101C and 150 are general academic writing courses and seem very similar to each other, we should not automatically assume that there is a possibility for near transfer, because students may perceive the two writing courses as remote contexts. Second, *positive transfer* occurs when previous learning facilitates subsequent learning, whereas *negative transfer* refers to a situation where previous learning negatively impacts subsequent learning. For instance, if a particular way to organize an essay learned in a lower-level writing course is not perceived positively in an upper-level course, there is a chance for negative transfer. Perkins and Salomon (1992) claimed that negative transfer is not a big concern, as it is eventually overcome later. However, the present study will still give considerable attention to negative transfer, because different views on good writing and different evaluation criteria in three different writing contexts may have a huge impact on students’ grades if evaluation is done before students have enough time to adjust to a new course/context. Finally, *low road transfer* means that transfer occurs automatically between original and new contexts, whereas *high road transfer* requires a high level of abstraction and a deliberate search for connections between the two contexts. Given that students are always asked to write different types of essay on different topics for varied audiences, writing in different classes may require high road transfer. That is, students may need to figure out some general principles that can apply to different writing tasks.

Perkins and Salomon (1992) also discussed several conditions under which transfer can occur, concepts which could be useful for understanding why transfer occurs or does not occur across different courses: thorough and repeated practice of a performance in a wide range of contexts; abstracting critical attributes of a situation; active self-monitoring of one’s own
thinking process and arousing mindfulness; and using metaphor and analogy. The last point was further studied by James (2008), and he stressed that, in order for transfer to occur, what is more important than the presence of similarities between two contexts is whether a learner can actually perceive such similarities. This is why the present study investigates if there is any similarity across three different courses in terms of writing tasks and evaluation criteria from the perspective of students. Another key concept relevant to the conditions of transfer is *transfer climate* (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993) or *environmental favorability* (Noe & Schmitt, 1986), which refers to perceptions about the environment of a new context that may facilitate or inhibit the use of previously learned skills. Burke and Baldwin (1999) conducted their study in a workplace and found that employees felt supported and were willing to transfer what they had learned from training when their supervisors and colleagues showed positive attitudes about what had been learned in training, demonstrated skills covered in training themselves, and paid attention to the connection between training and the workplace. If I were to apply this concept to the present study, the training context would be English 101C, the workplace would be English 150 and the content courses, and the supervisors and colleagues would be the instructors and classmates in those courses. Thus, depending on their attitudes toward what is learned in 101C, learning transfer can be facilitated or discouraged.

### 2.2.2. Learning Transfer Research on Academic Writing Courses

Transfer of learning has been also investigated extensively by James (2006, 2008, 2009, 2010a, b, 2014) and several others (e.g., Grossenbacher & Matta, 2011; Leki & Carson, 1994) with regard to academic writing courses. In order to see whether transfer occurs to content courses, what is transferred, and what facilitates transfer, these studies used various data from
James (2006) found that some writing skills, such as using appropriate syntactic patterns, organizing ideas, developing topics, establishing coherence, using appropriate vocabulary, and paraphrasing, did transfer from ESL writing to mainstream courses. He also identified several factors that enabled transfer, including 1) there are challenging situations or personal weaknesses that learning transfer could support, 2) what was learned in the writing course is the only resource that a student could rely on, 3) two courses are adjacent in terms of timing, and 4) there are some similarities between the two courses. Regarding the last factor, he emphasized in a later study (2008) that transfer cannot occur without students’ own perceptions of similarities between the two situations, although there is apparent similarity from the perspective of instructors or researchers. Salamonson et al. (2010) also showed that transfer occurred from writing instruction to content course. ESL students in the nursing field showed lower academic success compared with their native speaker peers, so they were taught how to write using a mock assignment and given feedback by both content professors and writing professionals. The effect of instruction was immediate, and this is probably because the students practiced writing using writing tasks that were very similar to the real assignments.

James’ subsequent study (2010b) is more refined in that he considered a few variables that affected the occurrence and degree of transfer. First, what was learned in the ESL writing course was better transferred to Humanities and Social Sciences than to Natural Sciences. Second, some task types, such as synthesizing multiple sources, were better transferred than others like explaining calculations. Third, some learning outcomes (e.g., avoiding fused sentences, using temporal transitions) were better transferred than others (e.g., using past perfect verb tense, using similes/metaphors). Leki and Carson (1994) also investigated which learning
outcomes were frequently transferred and found that task management strategies (e.g., outlining, drafting, revising), as well as thinking skills (e.g., expanding and developing ideas) and rhetorical skills (e.g., coherence, exemplification), were also transferred to a great extent.

However, findings of Grossenbacher and Matta (2011) are not positive. Engineering students found it hard to transfer general writing strategies to the texts in their own field due to completely different rhetorical contexts. Instead, they wanted their engineering professors to give very specific guidelines for every single writing task. As McCarthy (1987) and Carroll (2002) suggest, it is hard to find a way to approach a new writing task without the ability to judge rhetorical situations flexibly and critically.

Leki and Carson’s (1994) study also suggests some reasons for why transfer is hard to achieve from writing to content courses. First, students felt that the assignments in ESL courses are too easy and superficial, whereas content course assignments are very complex. Also, students wished they could have worked on topics relevant to their majors instead of writing about what they already know such as traditions and cultures in their home countries and how they are different from those in the United States. Furthermore, students expressed the need to write quickly and use accurate vocabulary, because they should provide short written responses to a lot of exam questions within a relatively short time while expressing their ideas very precisely. Students thought they could have benefited more if the ESL writing instruction had focused more on these needs instead of having them write several longer essays with no constraint in terms of time and resources they could consult. Meanwhile, James (2010) discussed the difficulty of applying what is learned in writing courses to content courses in light of transfer climate. That is, students did not receive sufficient support for learning transfer in content courses. In fact, they experienced instructors and peers’ negative perceptions about ESL courses
(boring, difficult, waste of time) and academic writing (not enjoyable, unimportant, grammar does not matter). Also, students found little connection between language quality and grades on their assignments in content courses.

As shown in this section, there are some studies on learning transfer between ESL writing and content courses. To my knowledge, however, there was no study that investigated whether transfer occurs from ESL writing to FYC courses. Considering that many ESL academic writing courses in the U.S. are meant to help international students get ready for FYC and that there are some notable differences between these two seemingly similar courses, the present study will focus on the relationship and transfer between ESL and FYC as well as between ESL and content courses.

2.3. Writing Tasks and their Assessment

The purpose of this study is to investigate the (dis)connection across the three writing contexts from an assessment perspective and, therefore, it requires me to see if the writing assessments in those courses correspond with each other. The comparability of writing assessment in those courses can be examined largely from two angles: writing assessment tasks and their evaluation. Thus, I will first review the literature on writing tasks in academic settings to figure out some common task types. More importantly, however, I will give considerable attention to the research methodology used in previous studies to understand how they collected data and what analytical schemes they used to classify a range of writing tasks. It will be also discussed if the classification schemes used in prior research are applicable to the present study for the comparison of writing tasks done in ESL, FYC, and disciplinary courses. Next, I will look into the literature on the scoring rubric and evaluation criteria used to assess writing, because
evaluation criteria included in the rubrics are usually the first materials that instructors refer to. Finally, previous studies on rater effects will be examined, as instructors do not necessarily agree on the evaluation of the same essay due to many factors such as their native language, educational background, and teaching experience.

2.3.1. Writing Tasks in Academic Context

Many researchers have been interested in classifying writing tasks typical in an academic setting. Some of them had descriptive purpose while others, especially those who were working for testing companies like ETS, conducted this line of research to validate their high-stake tests such as TOEFL and GRE. That is, if the writing tasks in such tests turn out to be very similar to the writing assignments actually done at the university, researchers are in a better position to argue that the tasks in the test are authentic and, therefore, better able to predict students’ future performance in target language use domains. Depending on their purpose and needs, different researchers collected different data and used different analytical approaches. This section reviews not only the findings of their studies (i.e., which task types are commonly found in university), but also which data and analytic frameworks researchers used and why they made such decisions. This will help me to come up with my own analytic scheme which best suits my purpose.

Rosenfeld, Courtney, and Fowles (2004) is one of the studies that identified important writing tasks for academic success to provide validity evidence for the GRE writing section. They came up with 50 statements that are descriptive of writing tasks by reviewing literature on needs analyses and the Writing Across Curriculum movement. Examples include abstracting or summarizing essential information, using relevant reasons and examples, and crediting sources
appropriately. Then, they administered a survey to undergraduate and graduate level faculty to ask how important each task type is in their opinion. From their perspective, the least important tasks include *expressing ideas in original ways to attract readers’ interest*, which is considered fairly important and included in the rubrics in English 150, *describing and evaluating the effectiveness of a writer’s rhetorical strategies and techniques*, and *using conventions of a particular genre*. On the other hand, what was considered important included *describing observation*, *crediting sources appropriately*, *summarizing*, *interpreting data*, *writing precisely and concisely*, *avoiding vague or empty phrases*, and *developing a well-focused and supported discussion*. Some of these important tasks (criteria) are covered in English 101C, but not all. By using the survey method, researchers were able to ask about 1,500 professors from various fields in many different institutions, thus increasing generalizability of the study. However, because those 50 statements were given to respondents out of context, the meaning of some words and phrases may not be clear. For example, what does *organizing ideas and information coherently* mean? Do faculty expect to see a clear topic sentence in each paragraph or three distinctive parts (introduction, body, and conclusion)? If these findings are to be used to evaluate relevance of 101C writing tasks to content courses, it should be kept in mind that the authors examined writing tasks in graduate and upper level undergraduate courses, whereas the present study is more interested in the writing tasks in lower level undergraduate courses, which international students take concurrently with or right after 101C.

Hale et al. (1996) shared a similar purpose, validating the TOEFL, but they described and analyzed the tasks actually assigned in the university instead of asking perceived importance of each possible task type. For this, they collected assignment sheets and course syllabi and then analyzed each task based on several dimensions: purpose, locus of writing, length, genre,
cognitive demand, rhetorical task, and pattern of exposition. The essay genre was very frequent, and in terms of rhetorical task, exposition was highly common, followed by argument. However, narration and description were not observed. Absence of description type task is a little bit surprising, because faculty members regarded it as important in Rosenfeld at al. (2004). Meanwhile, common non-essay genres include library research papers, report with interpretation, summary, plan/proposal, and book review. Their classification scheme seems applicable to the present study. Genre, which refers to “conventional ways of doing things, realized through the written texts” (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p. 24), is a very useful concept when I compare tasks in writing and content courses, but more fine-grained dimensions, such as rhetorical task, pattern of exposition, and cognitive demand, would be more useful when it comes to comparing tasks in ESL and FYC, as most tasks in two writing courses belong to one genre family: the essay.

According to Gardner and Nesi (2013), essays have a structure of introduction, series of arguments, and conclusion and ask students to “demonstrate/develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills” (p. 38). The micro-level analyses that focus on rhetorical tasks and pattern of exposition may also be useful for comparing tasks across various disciplines to see if different genres necessarily require completely different rhetorical tasks and cognitive demands. If not, chances are high that students transfer what they learned in writing courses to content courses despite genre differences. However, relying only on the verbatim terms on the assignment sheets has disadvantages due to the possibility that how course instructors defined a certain term may be different from what researchers did. For example, these researchers distinguished analysis and classification, but teachers may have used them interchangeably. Furthermore, teachers sometimes do not specify what rhetorical patterns and
which level of cognitive work they expect. To resolve this issue, having access to the person who wrote an assignment sheet would be helpful.

Moore and Morton (2005) investigated university assignments to compare them with IELTS writing tasks. Their analytic categories included genre, information source, rhetorical function, and object of inquiry. These are not pre-established categories, but generated through inductive examination of actual assignments. The bottom line is that IELTS is not really testing academic writing ability, because its tasks are closer to public nonacademic genres. Most importantly, IELTS examinees are usually asked to give their opinions about an issue without solid evidence or support, whereas writings in undergraduate courses are normally based on reading. That is, writing at the university is usually a response to secondary and/or primary sources. Also, the IELTS exam usually requires examinees to discuss real world situations or actions by asking such questions as *should X be done in Y situation?*, whereas abstract topics, such as ideas, theories, and laws, deserve equally considerable attention in university courses.

The most recent and comprehensive study on academic writing was done by Nesi and Gardner (2012) in the UK context. They only focused on undergraduate writing despite the difficulty of collecting writing samples from students while keeping a balance across levels and disciplines. They also referred to assignment sheets, and the analysis was done based on genre (purpose and general structure). Creme and Lea’s (1997) argument that “one of the most difficult things to learn about being a university student is how to tackle the variety of different written assignments that you will be asked to complete throughout the course” (p. 25) shows the necessity and value of Nesi and Gardner’s extensive work. Their findings suggest that in lower level courses, the essay genre is most predominant (50%), followed by methodology recount (14%) and explanation (10%). The essay becomes less prevalent toward upper level courses. On
the other hand, the results based on disciplines show that the essay (83%) is predominant in Arts and Humanities, methodology recount (22%), essay (18%), and explanation (16%) in Life Science, methodology recount (27%), design specification (14%), and critique (12%) in Physical Science, and essay (56%), critique (14%), and case study (8%) in Social Science. Although this study was carried out in only one university in Britain, the findings would still be useful when discussing the results of the present study in later sections given that it also focused on assessed writing assignments in undergraduate courses.

The above research was of great help in coming up with an analytic framework for this study. I will draw on several analytic criteria from different studies. In determining the task type, I will ask instructors how they envision each writing task as well as thoroughly examine the assignment sheets rather than relying on the categorical terms given on the assignment sheet due to the possibility that those terms are interpreted differently between the instructors and me. Also, given that different researchers have used two terms to mean the same thing or used the same term differently (e.g., Nesi and Gardner [2012] used explanation to refer to a genre whereas Moore and Morton [2005] used it to mean one of rhetorical functions), I will provide definitions of key terms in case of any possible confusion.

2.3.2. Rubric and Evaluation Criteria in Writing Assessment

In most writing assessment, raters are given rubrics and training at the time of grading, and are prompted to use the rubric to assign their ratings. If they follow their own criteria, it is very hard to reach agreement not only about overall or specific qualities of essays, but also about relative ranking of different essays (Brown, 1991; Lumley, 2000; Shi, 2001; Weigle, 1994), as raters are influenced by their own cultural backgrounds and learning/teaching experiences.
(Zhang, 1999). Previous studies discussed advantages and disadvantages of different types of rubric: holistic, analytic (multiple trait), and primary trait. Due to the limitations in terms of generalizing scores (Cohen, 1994; Shaw & Weir, 2007; White, 1985) and too many resources spent on their development (Weigle, 2002), however, primary trait rubrics are rarely used in practice.

Holistic rubrics view writing as a single construct that cannot be separated and are commonly adopted in large-scale tests due to their practicality. In the classroom context, however, analytic rubrics are preferred for a few reasons. Most importantly, they can provide diagnostic information by showing relative strengths and weaknesses of a student’s writing skill (Bacha, 2001; Carr, 2000; Hudson & Brown, 2002). Also, it is generally thought that the use of analytic rubrics can improve the reliability of rating compared with holistic ones (Xi & Mollaun, 2006), although Barkaoui (2007) showed that the opposite was true in his study. In addition, with analytic rubrics, raters are more self-consistent (Al-Fallay, 2000; East & Young, 2007; Knoch, 2009; Nakamura, 2004) and training becomes a lot easier (Cohen, 1994). However, analytic rubrics are not without disadvantage. Their development is generally considered expensive and time consuming (Hamp-Lyons, 2003; Weigle, 2002), and scores provided to one criterion may influence another (Myford & Wolfe, 2003), a process called the halo effect. Also, some instructors were found to be overwhelmed when they had to assign scores to several different criteria for one essay (Becker, 2010). Since scoring is already a complex process which requires a lot of cognitive processes, Hamp-Lyons (2003) claimed that raters should not use a scale of more than nine points and that the most common practice is to have a six-point scale assuming equal distances between them.
Different rubrics may have different influences on the rating process. Barkaoui (2010) found that when raters were given a holistic rubric, they read essays again and again trying to interpret unclear parts and attended to task completion, ideas, and rhetoric (organization and argumentation). In contrast, when given an analytic rubric, raters often read and referred to the rating scale, trying to articulate and justify scores they assigned. In addition, with the holistic rubric, they focused more on each linguistic features, such as spelling and syntax, whereas they paid more attention to overall linguistic appropriateness with the analytic rubric. The authors conjectured that because the analytic rubric discussed these linguistic features as a group under one heading, it led raters to treat them as one category and evaluate them holistically.

Meanwhile, Goulden (1994) showed that analytic rubrics made readers stay focused on the criteria mentioned in the rubric and reduced the cognitive demands of giving weights to each criterion, which implies their suitability for novice raters.

Whichever rubric they use, raters can easily decide a score when an essay is very high quality or very poor quality (Kuiken & Vedder, 2014). When it comes to the intermediate level, however, raters were not sure which score they should assign among a few adjacent levels. Raters also mentioned another difficulty that rubrics, especially holistic ones, do not provide enough and clear guidance on how to determine a final score (Barkaoui, 2007). Usually, each scale in a holistic rubric discusses several different aspects of writing at the same time. If an examinee did a great job on rhetorical aspects, but his language is not good enough and shows many errors, this presents a conflicting situation and thereby increases the cognitive load on the part of the rater. In addition, Lumley (2002) also suggested that there was a gap among rater’s overall impression on the text, specific features of the text, and what was written on the rubric. In
this case, raters oftentimes judged the essay quality independently of the rubric, but “somehow managed to refer to the scale content” to justify their decision (p. 263).

When raters face challenges, as illustrated above, they sometimes come up with their own strategies to overcome them. Raters have been shown to give more weight to one aspect of scale descriptors in order to reach a final score, compare with the quality of previous essays, or rely on their own idiosyncratic criteria (Lumley, 2002). Participants in Barkaoui’s (2007) study were told to stick to the provided rubric, but they all still referred to what they taught and expected. This is why Lumley (2002) argued that raters’ decisions are based on a “complex and indefinable feeling about the text rather than the scale content” (p. 263).

In order to figure out the criteria included in the rubrics used to assess second language writing, Becker (2010) contacted the directors of 43 Intensive English Programs at U.S. universities. The findings based on questionnaire and interview data showed that organization and grammar were the two most common criteria found in the rubrics, followed by accuracy, syntax, coherence, vocabulary, content, language use, and complexity, in order of frequency. Interestingly, however, the order of what was perceived to be important for successful academic writing was slightly different. Organization and vocabulary were perceived as most important, followed by accuracy, grammar, content, language use, structure/syntax, complexity, and coherence. This study is meaningful in that it reveals a general trend in important criteria used to evaluate second language writing in American universities. However, what is meant by each criterion is not clear and, therefore a question is raised about whether the researcher and all the participants understood and used those terms in the same way. What do the directors mean by organization? What is a preferred way to organize a paper? Also, how is grammar different from accuracy or syntax?
Another line of research is about the relative weights attached to different criteria, depending on which a final score may vary greatly. In Janopoulos (1992) and Sweekler-Brown (1993)’s studies, higher order qualities of writing, such as content, played a greater role than low-level attributes, such as mechanics, in determining a final score. On the other hand, Eckes (2008) showed that raters were divided into six different categories according to the importance they attached to each of the nine scoring criteria used to assess the writing section of the Test of German as a Foreign Language: fluency, train of thought, structure, completeness, description, argumentation, syntax, vocabulary, and correctness. Four rater types were generated according to what they considered most important (syntax, correctness, structure, and fluency) while the other two types were based on what they considered least important: non-fluency and non-argumentation. Eckes’ study showed again that different raters note different aspects even when evaluating the same essay. On the other hand, by performing bias analysis between rater and criteria, Schaefer (2008) found that raters who were severe toward content and organization tended to be lenient towards language use and mechanics, while raters who were severe towards language use and mechanics tended to be lenient toward content and organization.

Besides, Kuiken and Vedder (2014) showed that there could be bias between examinee and criteria. In their study, when it comes to evaluating lower proficiency levels, overall comprehensibility, clear text structure, and convincing arguments played great roles whereas raters were more concerned about the use of complex syntactic structures and sophisticated words when evaluating higher levels. In other words, raters pay attention to different aspects of writing and lower or raise their expectations about certain features depending on language proficiency.
2.3.3. Rater Variability

Although the types of rubrics and evaluation criteria included in rubrics have a great influence on the rating process, as shown in the previous sections, Lumley (2002) argued that the rater is at the center of the rating, and this factor is more influential than anything else. Furthermore, Eckes (2012) showed that even experienced raters exhibit a great deal of variability that is hard to eliminate, even with intensive rater training, and clearly defined evaluation criteria. Such rater variability deserves our attention, because it poses problems in terms of interpreting examinees’ scores (Eckes, 2012). Those who need to make a decision based on a student’s score, including a university admission’s office, are interested in a candidate’s true writing ability, not in a score received from a peculiar rater who behaves differently from others.

There are many factors influencing rater variability, and level of experience is one of them. It seems that the findings of previous studies agree in that experienced and novice raters read essays differently and focus on different aspects of writing (Cumming, 1990; Delaruelle, 1997; Erdosy, 2004; Sakyi, 2003; Weigle, 1999). Experienced raters use top-down approaches and are more concerned with the global aspects of an essay, such as ideas and rhetorical aspects, whereas inexperienced raters use a bottom-up approach and rely on simple and easily discernable features, such as syntax and punctuation, to determine a score (Cumming, 1990; Wolfe, Kao, & Ranney, 1998). In addition, as they gain more teaching and/or rating experience, raters become more lenient (Song & Caruso, 1996), as well as more self-consistent and homogeneous, in terms of severity (Barkaoui, 2008).

Prior research also identified the amount of exposure to L2 as a factor leading to rater variability (Vann, Lorenz, & Meyer, 1991). Many English composition graders felt that essays were unacceptable when ESL errors were so foreign and unfamiliar to them (Burt & Kiparsky,
1974; Fein, 1980; Sweedler-Brown, 1993). Similarly, many studies claimed that essays written by ESL students tended to receive lower scores when they were graded by instructors who did not have ESL training. In this regard, the findings of Shi (2001) may seem contradictory, because native and Chinese English teachers in this study did not exhibit any significant difference in terms of rating Chinese students’ English writing. However, the author noted that native speakers in this study had lived in China for a while, suggesting that they already were familiar with and became more tolerant of errors and writing styles unique to Chinese EFL learners.

With regard to the influence of a rater’s L1, findings are inconclusive, probably because research questions and focus, as well as characteristics of tests and examinees, varied across studies. When Johnson and Lim (2009) compared holistic scores assigned by raters of diverse L1 backgrounds using a multi-facet Rasch measurement, they found little impact of the L1 on the scores. Furthermore, there was no interaction effect between raters and examinees’ L1. Questions are raised, however, when it comes to the generalizability of the results due to the small number of raters (four) and the limited range of raters’ L1 (only English, Korean, Spanish, bilingual of Filipino and Chinese). On the other hand, other studies uncovered many differences between native and nonnative speakers of English when it comes to evaluating specific qualities of writing: purpose, audience, specificity, clarity, adequate support (Hinkel, 1994), overall organization, supporting evidence, use of conjunctions, register, objectivity, persuasiveness (Zhang, 1999), students’ paragraph structuring, political/social stance (Hamp-Lyons & Zhang, 2001), tolerance for ESL errors (James, 1977; Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Santos, 1988), and acceptance of grammatically correct but awkward sentences (Kobayashi, 1992).

Two groups of raters were also found to be different in terms of reliability and use of score bands. When Shi (2001) compared the interrater reliability of scores provided by native
and non-native raters using a Cronbach’s alpha, he found that native speakers were more consistent with each other, and they used a wider range of scores compared to Chinese raters, who avoided giving a very high or low score. When he compared comments on the essays given by the two groups, it turned out that native speakers frequently noted the development of ideas, intelligibility, and accuracy of language, whereas Chinese raters often pointed out general quality and structure of essay. In the case of native speakers, however, there was a huge gap between their scores and comments. The native speakers provided a lot of positive comments, but very low scores, which may confuse their students if the same were to happen in a real classroom.

Finally, raters’ professional background also leads to rater variability. First, depending on the discipline, professors give different weights to different criteria (Weigle, Boldt, & Valsecchi, 2003). For instance, among content, grammar, and organization, professors from English are more concerned with grammar, whereas those from psychology attend to content more carefully. Other than these three, which are typically found in the rubrics used to assess ESL writing, content course professors mention some other important criteria depending on the needs or characteristics of their field. Professors in business, for example, highly value efficient, concise, and persuasive style of communication (Zhu, 2004), while the ability to maintain a neutral stance when discussing conflicting positions is regarded as one of the key writing abilities in the Political Science (Johns, 1991).

Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1984) investigated what kinds of ESL errors were less acceptable to professors in various disciplines. The results suggested that, overall, professors were less tolerant of word order, it-deletion, tense, and relative clause errors, whereas spelling, article, comma splice, and preposition errors were more acceptable. However, it was found that professors from different disciplines reacted differently to different types of errors. Professors in
the field of Physical and Mathematical Science were least tolerant of these ESL errors compared with professors from other disciplines, and they were particularly sensitive to relative clause and spelling errors, although they were rather tolerant of tense and preposition errors. Meanwhile, professors in Social Science and Humanities were very concerned with word choice errors, whereas those in Biological and Agricultural Science were sensitive to spelling and article errors.

Song and Caruso’s (1996) research is also noteworthy in that they compared ESL and English faculty, which may represent English 101C and 150 instructors, respectively. The two groups of teachers were asked to grade timed-exam essays used to determine whether a student could pass an ESL course and move on to a FYC class. Findings showed that English and ESL faculty assigned quite similar scores to the essays, despite differences in their background and training. Interestingly, English faculty members were a little bit more lenient. Even when rhetorical and linguistic features were evaluated separately, no significant difference was found between the two groups. Also, both groups agreed in terms of the relative weights given to those two features (about 65% to content and organization, and about 35% to language). Most importantly, there was no significant interaction effect between rater group (English vs. ESL) and essay type (NS vs. NNS), which implies that English faculty did not show any bias against ESL writing. This finding is notable given that English faculty are likely to have both American and international students in their composition classes as more and more international students come to the U.S. to pursue college degrees.

In this section, a wide range of studies on writing assessment were reviewed, with particular focus given to task types, rubrics, evaluation criteria, and rater variability. It appears that many prior studies have investigated various types of tasks actually carried out in a university context. However, research on other areas, including the use of rubrics and rater
variability, was usually done in large-scale testing contexts, not in actual classrooms. Given that classroom assessment is different from large-scale tests and holds the purpose of measuring how well students understand what is covered in class and providing diagnostic feedback for better future performance, and that teachers are supposed to evaluate students’ writing based on what they teach within a certain curriculum, those findings cannot be directly applicable to the contexts of interest in this study (ESL, FYC, and content courses). With respect to evaluation criteria, although there are some studies done for ESL writing and content courses, very few have been conducted for FYC. Furthermore, even though previous studies examined some commonly used evaluation criteria, the researchers rarely discussed what was meant by each criterion and how raters interpreted them. Therefore, these gaps will be kept in mind when I attempt to answer the research questions proposed in this study.

2.4. From Interpretive Argument to Research Questions

Investigating (dis)connections across ESL, FYC, and disciplinary courses from an assessment perspective actually constitutes an effort in validating the interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment, as will be seen in this section. Therefore, I will briefly go over the interpretations, uses, and consequences of English 101C writing assessments and then explain my approach to validation. Since I use an argument-based approach, I will create an interpretive argument for an English 101C writing assessment, which will point to the areas that require research and will be used to generate research questions.
2.4.1. Overview of Interpretations, Uses, and Consequences

Scores and feedback on English 101C writing assessments should provide an indicator of students' ability to write an academic paper coherently using college-level vocabulary and expressions with an appropriate sense of audience. Also, English 101C assessment results are used for making decisions about the effectiveness of the instruction as well as the extent to which a student has mastered what was taught/learned in the course. In combination with other scores on quizzes, journal assignments, the final exam, and participation, this score is ultimately used for making decisions about whether the student should/should not pass English 101C and move on to English 150/retake English 101C. By using the test result in an appropriate way, the following intended consequences are expected: students study more effectively by focusing on areas in need of improvement and are, thereby, better prepared for the final exam; teachers provide more effective instruction so that students can make up for weaknesses; those who have passed English 101C complete English 150 without much difficulty; and a homogeneous level of students’ writing ability in English 150 facilitates teaching.

2.4.2. Approach to Validation: An Argument-Based Approach

To develop the interpretive argument, I mainly referred to Chapelle, Enright, and Jamieson’s (2008) approach to TOEFL validation. This means first that my interpretive argument accommodates both competency-centered and task-centered frameworks, which are characterized as two opposing approaches for score interpretation in Messick (1994). In other words, the interpretive argument concerns a theoretical construct of writing competence that each examinee possesses as well as a university-level academic context in which examinees are supposed to perform tasks. Following Chapelle, Enright, and Jamieson’s approach, my argument
is also organized by inferences, and a warrant is defined as a generally held rule that legitimizes claims based on relevant grounds (Chapelle, Enright, & Jamieson, 2008) rather than as a “[statement] that elaborate[s] the qualities of a claim” (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 161). However, I added the claim of consequence building on test use (decision) and named the inference between the two claims as ramification following Chapelle, Cotos, and Lee (2013). Given that the target assessment is performed in a classroom setting and that the course has a very clear goal to achieve, ramification deserves special attention. Also, I sometimes use such terms as student and assessment record instead of examinee and score, respectively, to imply that the discussion involves a classroom assessment. Finally, I use qualifiers such as is likely to in order to indicate the strength of the claim (Toulmin, 1958).

The interpretive argument outlines “the proposed interpretations and uses of test results by laying out the network of inferences and assumptions leading from the observed performances to the conclusions and decisions based on the performances” (Kane, 2006, p.23). Since those claims, inferences, and assumptions should not be taken for granted, however, they need to be evaluated by means of validation. That is, the interpretive argument defines the scope of subsequent validation projects and allocates research efforts especially in backing, and the validity argument examines the plausibility, clarity, and coherence of what is proposed in the interpretive argument (Kane, 2006).

2.4.3. Interpretive Argument for English 101C Writing Assessment

The assessment investigated in this study is the evaluation of major writing assignments in English 101C classes, which require students to write four different types of essay. This assessment has both a summative and a formative nature: students are supposed to write different
essays after they learn about each; they use the score and feedback on these writing tasks to improve their writing skills and prepare for the final exam. The interpretive argument for this particular assessment includes a total of seven inferences and eight grounds/claims, as shown in Figure 2.1. As illustrated in the figure, each claim is connected and justified by different inferences, with an earlier claim serving as the grounds/data for the next claim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The student studies more effectively by focusing on areas that need improvement, thus is better prepared for future academic writing tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teacher provides more effective instruction so that the student can strengthen his/her strengths and make up for his/her weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The student who has passed ENGL 101C completes the written assignments in ENGL 150 and content courses without much difficulty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A homogeneous level of students’ writing ability in university courses facilitates teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ramification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test Uses (Decisions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The student has/has not mastered what was covered in the instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The instruction is/is not effective in improving academic writing skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The student should/should not pass ENGL 101C and move on to ENGL 150/retake ENGL 101C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is likely to write a y-level academic paper in university context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrapolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s score of y indicates y-level of ability to write a coherent essay with y-level vocabulary, expressions, and sense of audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is likely to receive a score of y on the parallel versions of tasks and from other raters/instructors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Generalization |
The student received a score of \( y \) on these writing tasks.

When asked to write four types of essay of different lengths on given topics, a student produced sample writings of \( x \).

Completing assignments and taking exams in English-medium university courses require academic writing skills, which are taught in ENGL 101C.

Figure 2.1. An illustration of the claims and inferences in the interpretive argument.

To complete the general outline of the interpretive argument for the English 101C assessment shown in Figure 2.1, the detailed warrants and assumptions associated with each of the seven inferences are presented in Table 2.1. The final column of the table illustrates the type of analysis that needs to be conducted to see whether each assumption is supported or not.

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inference</th>
<th>Warrant</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Backing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain Definition</td>
<td>Observations of performance on 101C through-course summative writing assessments reveal relevant knowledge, skills, processes, and strategies representative of those required for academic writing in university courses, particularly those taught in ENGL 101C.</td>
<td>Assessment tasks that are representative of the academic writing domain can be identified.</td>
<td>Domain analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical language knowledge, skills, processes, and strategies needed for completing writing tasks required in university classes can be identified.</td>
<td>Expert judgment Corpus-based text analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Generalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical writing tasks required in university and critical language knowledge, skills, processes, and strategies needed for completing those tasks are taught/learned in ENGL 101C.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observations scores are estimates of expected scores over the parallel versions of tasks as well as across administrations and raters/instructors.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment tasks that require important skills and are representative of the academic writing domain can be simulated.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scores from different administrations of the test are consistent.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The criteria and procedures for rating students’ performance on the assessment tasks are appropriate for providing evidence of targeted language abilities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scores from parallel versions of writing tasks are consistent.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Test administration conditions are appropriate for providing evidence of targeted language abilities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ratings of different instructors are consistent.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rubric development and use</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parallel-channel (Word file vs. Criterion) reliability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback and revision studies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prompt analysis Parallel-form reliability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Inter-rater reliability Rater training</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Different ratings by the same instructor are consistent.</th>
<th>Intra-rater reliability Rater training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected scores reflect a construct defined as the ability to write a coherent essay, adapt writing to the knowledge and expectations of the target audience, and use college-level vocabulary and expressions.</td>
<td>Linguistic knowledge and writing process and strategies required to successfully complete tasks are in line with theoretical expectations.</td>
<td>Response process studies Revision studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance on this assessment relates to performance on other test-based measures of academic writing ability, as expected theoretically.</td>
<td>Concurrent correlational studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test performance varies according to the amount and quality of learning about academic writing.</td>
<td>Differential-groups studies Intervention studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrapolation</td>
<td>The construct of academic writing competence assessed by the ENGL 101C assessment accounts for the kind of academic writing skills required in a university setting.</td>
<td>Performance on the test is related to other criteria for academic writing ability in the university context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The characteristics (e.g., input, expected response, genre) of the assessment tasks closely correspond to the writing tasks required in university courses.</td>
<td>Comparison of task characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization</td>
<td>Estimates of the quality of academic writing in the university setting obtained from the 101C writing assessment are useful for making decisions about the effectiveness of instruction, the extent to which a student has mastered what was taught/learned in ENGL 101C, and advancement to ENGL150.</td>
<td>The meaning of test score and feedback is clearly interpretable by students, ENGL 101C, 150, and content course teachers, and program coordinators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramification</td>
<td>Decisions made based on the target score are beneficial for learning and teaching (i.e., prerequisite learning in ENGL 101C facilitates subsequent learning, and a homogeneous level of students facilitates teaching in ENGL 150 and content courses).</td>
<td>Transfer of learning occurs from 101C to 150 and content courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 continued

- The criteria and procedures for evaluating the performance on the 101C assessment tasks closely correspond to those identified by instructors as important for assessing writing assignments in mainstream university courses.

- Comparison of scoring rubrics

- Utilization Estimates of the quality of academic writing in the university setting obtained from the 101C writing assessment are useful for making decisions about the effectiveness of instruction, the extent to which a student has mastered what was taught/learned in ENGL 101C, and advancement to ENGL150.

- The meaning of test score and feedback is clearly interpretable by students, ENGL 101C, 150, and content course teachers, and program coordinators.

- Score interpretation materials

- Ramification Decisions made based on the target score are beneficial for learning and teaching (i.e., prerequisite learning in ENGL 101C facilitates subsequent learning, and a homogeneous level of students facilitates teaching in ENGL 150 and content courses).

- Transfer of learning occurs from 101C to 150 and content courses.

- Student and teacher interview

- Survey
The figure and table show that the claims of target scores, test uses, and consequences and, therefore, the inferences of extrapolation, utilization, and ramification, are especially pertinent in investigating the connections across the three writing contexts (English 101C, English 150, and content courses). These connections are the focus of the proposed research. According to the claim made about the target score, the scores that a student receives on the major writing assignments indicate his/her ability to write in a range of university courses, not just in an English 101C class. Such extrapolation is plausible on the grounds that the target domain considered in this assessment is English-medium university courses, and the assessment evaluates the ability to write university-level academic essays. Also, one of the claims regarding the decisions made based on this assessment maintains that this assessment result is used to determine whether a student is ready to take English 150 and engage in various written communications in content courses. Finally, claims about consequences also show the connections between English 101C and 150 by claiming that those who have passed 101C based on this assessment result can take 150 and content courses without much difficulty, and the readiness of students facilitates the teaching of these courses.

2.4.4. Research Questions

However, since those claims, inferences, and warrants should not be taken for granted, they need to be evaluated by means of validation research. Therefore, in my dissertation, I am aiming to determine whether three of the seven inferences are warranted by addressing the following overarching questions:

- How much are writing assignment tasks and their evaluation comparable across English 101C, 150, and content courses? (Extrapolation)
• How valid are the decisions made based on the English 101C assessment results especially in terms of deciding students’ readiness to take English 150 and carry out various writing tasks at ISU? (Utilization)

• Does learning transfer occur from English 101C to English 150 and content courses? If so, how much and in what ways? If not, why? (Ramification)

To make these questions more specific, I referred to the assumptions for extrapolation, utilization, and ramification inferences shown in Table 1. Since these assumptions need to be satisfied in order to claim that English 101C assessment is valid and useful, I transformed them into specific questions addressed in the study. Positive answers to the following questions will provide backing for the assumptions and, therefore, warrant one inference in the validity argument for the proposed interpretations about the target score as well as corroborate the connection between English 101C, 150, and content courses.

1. Are grades on the English 101C writing assignments related to other criteria of academic writing ability in a university context? (Extrapolation)

2. Do the characteristics of the English 101C writing assignments closely correspond to the writing tasks required in English 150 and content courses? (Extrapolation)

3. Do evaluation criteria and procedures used by English 101C instructors closely correspond to those used by English 150 and content course teachers? (Extrapolation)

4. Is the meaning of grades and feedback on English 101C assessment clearly interpretable by students and instructors? (Utilization)

5. Does good performance on this writing assessment mean that a student is ready to take English 150 and engage in various written communications in university? (Utilization)
6. Does positive learning transfer occur from English 101C to English 150 and content courses? (Ramification)

Writing tasks of interest in this study are the major writing assignments required in English 101C, 150, and content courses. Various minor writing tasks are not included, because teachers oftentimes do not provide formal grades or feedback on them, and they are not considered as important as the major ones. Furthermore, those minor assignments are not accompanied by an assignment sheet, which makes it difficult to make comparisons regarding the characteristics of writing tasks. Another term that needs clarification is the grade. Given the purpose and specific research questions of the study, I am only interested in the scores on each major writing assignment and their composite score, but not in a final course grade, which also concerns attendance and participation.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study to answer the six research questions presented at the end of the previous chapter. The chapter contains five main sections. The first section explains a mixed method approach used in the study, with a special focus given to reasons for mixing methods as well as describing and justifying the particular type of mixed methods design to be used. The second section provides information about the research participants: international students and instructors of ENGL 101C, ENGL 150, and other disciplinary courses who taught these students and evaluated their writing. The third section describes the procedures for data collection in a chronological manner while the fourth section provides the details of the data collected for this study (course documents, students’ writing assignments, evaluation materials, interviews, and surveys). Finally, the fifth section details how the data were analyzed to answer each research question.

3.1. Approach: Mixed Methods

The overarching goal of the study is investigating the connections and disconnections across English 101C, 150, and content courses at ISU from the perspective of writing assessment. This investigation is also understood as an effort in validating the proposed interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results that have to do with English 150 and content courses. Since Messick (1989) defined validity as a unitary concept that encompasses all traditional types of validity and more, the validation process has become more complex than before and requires many different types of evidence. In order to examine validity from diverse angles, employing multiple types of data and analyses was inevitable. In other words, due to the
complexity of the issue, this is a mixed methods study requiring both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses.

Each research question addresses a complex issue and, therefore, requires multiple points of view. For example, Research Question 3 (correspondence of evaluation criteria and procedures used by English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary course instructors) necessitates four different types of data (scoring rubrics, interview, feedback, and grades) and both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Although the four types of data were collected and examined to answer one question regarding evaluation criteria used by instructors, each data source actually uncovers slightly different aspects of the evaluation criteria used in three different writing contexts in the university. That is, rubrics illustrate evaluation criteria that the instructors are supposed to follow at the time of grading. They are external materials given by the department, and not all the instructors interpret and use them in the same way. To learn about how instructors interpret criteria, interview data were used to reveal instructors’ general perceptions of good writing or their teaching philosophy that might influence the evaluation criteria. Simultaneously, instructors’ feedback on the authentic assignments and their ratings of 25 randomly selected essays show the outcomes of evaluation as well as the criteria they focus on. Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to study related, yet different, facets of an issue for enriched understanding, I used mixed methods for the purpose of complementarity according to five reasons suggested by Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989). According to Greene et al. (1989), complementarity is distinguished from triangulation in that researchers with a triangulation purpose use different methods to explore the same conceptual phenomenon, whereas those with a complementarity purpose use different methods to investigate similar, but different aspects of the same phenomenon.
Among the several possible designs for a mixed methods study (e.g., Creswell & Clark, 2011; Morse and Neihaus, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), I chose a convergent parallel design. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data collection/analyses are done at the same time. Given that one is neither embedded in the other nor influencing the other, quantitative and qualitative strands are considered equally important. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed independently following their own analytic methods, and the results from each strand are compared and synthesized later to draw conclusions.

Following the procedures of implementing a convergent parallel design, I gave equal focus to quantitative and qualitative findings. For example, Research Question 5 asks if good performance on the English 101C assessment means that a student is ready to take English 150. To answer this question, on the one hand, I compared the English 150 grades earned by previous English 101C students with those received by American students and international students who were exempted from English 101C. Let me assume that the grades among these three groups of students are not significantly different. Then, based on this statistical analysis, I could likely say that the satisfactory performance on English 101C assessment indicates the readiness to take English 150. However, students’ interview data may show that previous English 101C students still feel a huge challenge in doing 150 assignments and that it takes them much longer time to finish each assignment due to their low English proficiency. Also, teachers’ interview data may suggest that English 150 instructors become more lenient when grading international students’ papers relative to how they grade L1 English students. If this were the case, it would be difficult to maintain the conclusion drawn from the quantitative analysis. Since students’ perceived readiness and the challenges they feel in the process of completing the assignments are equally, if not more, important as the grades they receive in the end, I would give equal weights to
quantitative and qualitative findings to answer this research question. Also, if the grades are based not only on students’ writing ability, but also on raters’ leniency, such grades mean more than just students’ writing competence or readiness to take English 150.

Also, the findings of quantitative analyses did not affect the data collection or analyses of the qualitative strand. Once I collected all the data, I started analyzing the quantitative data, because it would help me to see the overall picture and general trends in the assessments in English 101C and 150. Through these quantitative analyses, I found that some instructors were within the normal range in terms of severity and others were particularly severe or lenient or showing unique rating patterns. However, I did not selectively recruit interview participants based on the quantitative findings, because all the English 101C and 150 instructors exert the same amount of influence on the grades of their students regardless of their rating behavior.

The reason for choosing the parallel design partially derived from practical constraints. Since it made sense to use the quantitative findings to inform the qualitative strand at some points of the study, I thought of partially using an explanatory sequential design. In order to do so, I collected and analyzed quantitative data before I started collecting qualitative data so that I could tailor and narrow down the focus of interview questions, for instance. However, the quantitative data that I needed for this study, a composite score of all the major writing assignments, was only available at the end of the semester, and the collection of qualitative data, such as student and instructor interviews, could not wait until then. I had to conduct interviews with students right after they submitted a particular assignment and received grade/feedback from their instructors on that assignment, while they would still remember what the assignment was and what evaluation they received. In other words, I wanted to meet with students when their memories were still fresh to get informative, high quality data. For the same reason, I had to
meet with instructors when they were done with grading a particular assignment or, at the latest, before the end of the semester.

Figure 3.1 below illustrates the steps that I took to conduct this study following a convergent parallel design.
For the quantitative strand, I collected grades on the writing assignments in Step 1, and then conducted statistical analyses in Step 2, including the Intraclass correlation and Spearman’s
correlation, to examine the relationship among the grades from three different writing contexts, a
many-facet Rasch measurement, to investigate rater variability, and a Krusin-Wallis test, to
compare the performance level of international students who took English 101C with that of
other students. On the other hand, for the qualitative strand, I collected syllabi, assignment sheets,
and rubrics, as well as conducted interviews with students and instructors, in Step 1. Then, I
compared the collected instructional documents, as well as coded the interview data, across three
writing contexts in Step 2. In Step 3, I identified the results from both quantitative and qualitative
analyses that could possibly answer each research question and synthesized them. In this step,
instrutor feedback data that was coded according to the issues instructors address was quantified
as well. Finally, the results from both data strands were interpreted and related to each other to
draw conclusions.

3.2. Participants

International students who took English 101C and/or 150 at Iowa State University and
the instructors of those two writing courses, as well as instructors in disciplines other than
English, participated in the study. In Fall 2013, about 230 English 101C students were invited to
participate in the study, and 167 of them expressed interest. However, 108 students eventually
participated in the study; others did not respond to an email requesting an interview or
questionnaire. These students were required to take English 101C, because they did not meet the
minimum requirements of TOEFL or IELTS (a score of 640 or above on the paper-based TOEFL;
270 or above on the computer-based TOEFL; 105 or above on the internet-based TOEFL; or a
score of 8.0 or above on the IELTS) and did not pass the writing section of English Placement
Test at the time of admission. These international students came from diverse countries, with the
majority being L1 speakers of Chinese, Korean, and Malaysian. They volunteered to be in the study and received proofreading services for their writing assignments given in any class as a compensation for the participation. All signed the informed consent forms approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at ISU (see Appendix A), but the extent to which they participated in the study differed, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Participants and their Type of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students (N=108)</th>
<th>Instructors (N=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared assignments and grades/feedback (85)</td>
<td>Sharing their feedback and grades on students’ assignments (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had ENGL 101C student interview (20)</td>
<td>Having an interview (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had ENGL 150 student interview (26)</td>
<td>Graded a set of 25 essays for Rasch analysis (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed 101C-150 transfer survey (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed 101C-content courses transfer survey (41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3.1, another group of participants is the writing and disciplinary course instructors. They include 14 English 101C, 18 English 150, and four content course instructors who had international students in their class. All the English 101C instructors majored/were majoring in Applied Linguistics/TESL, and ten of them were international TAs while four were American TAs/lecturers. It should be also mentioned that I was one of the English 101C instructors and that my students, their assignments, my feedback, and the grades on their assignments were included in the study. However, I was not interviewed nor did I grade a set of 25 essays that were used for Rasch analysis.

In contrast, 15 of the English 150 instructors were American TAs/lecturers whereas three were international graduate students. They were majoring in or had studied Rhetoric and Professional Communication (7), Creative Writing (4), Literature (2), or TESL/Applied Linguistics (5). Usually, the number of English 150 instructors who are in the field of
TESL/Applied Linguistics is much smaller than the number of those who major in Communication, Creative Writing, or Literature. The relatively large number of instructors from the TESL area willing to participate in the study was probably due to the fact that they were acquainted with me and wanted to help me with my research.

Outside the English department, four instructors from biology, political science, accounting, and religious studies participated, and all of their L1 is all English. Due to the small number of participants and disciplines, their writing assignments and evaluations discussed in the interviews are not likely to represent the practice of instructors in diverse disciplines on the ISU campus.

3.3. Data Collection Materials

Unless the data pre-existed in a natural classroom setting, such as course documents, students’ writing assignments, and grades/feedback, data collection materials were used to elicit data. First of all, an interview protocol for semi-structured interviews with English 101C students was developed (Appendix B). The protocol included questions that asked about clarity of feedback and grades, similarities/differences between English 101C and content courses in terms of writing tasks and evaluation, and learning transfer between English 101C and content courses. An interview protocol for English 150 students (Appendix C) consisted of questions that asked students about their impression of English 150, similarities/differences between English 101C and 150 with regard to writing assignments and evaluation, and learning transfer between the two writing courses. Student interviews were conducted with the aim of obtaining their own perceptions of writing tasks, evaluation, and learning transfer in three different courses.
On the other hand, questions on the protocol for interviews with English 101C instructors (Appendix D) included their educational/teaching background, their perspectives on good writing, their evaluation process, and achievement of learning transfer from English 101C to 150 and content courses. In the protocol for interviews with English 150 teachers (Appendix E), most questions asked to English 101C instructors remained the same for the purpose of comparison, and additional questions were added regarding their perceptions of international students’ writing, grading standard for international and American students, and learning transfer between English 101C and 150. For the instructors in content courses, the protocol was prepared (Appendix F) to ask about writing tasks and their evaluation in their course, perceptions of international students’ writing, and the possibility of learning transfer from English 101C to their own courses in terms of writing.

Other data collection materials include two questionnaires. One questionnaire developed with the purpose of understanding learning transfer between English 101C and 150 consisted of 41 items on writing knowledge/skills learned and evaluated in English 101C (Appendix G). It asked students to mark the usefulness of each item in completing English 150 writing assignments using a four-point Likert scale (incorporating the categories not useful at all, not very useful, somewhat useful, and very useful). The other questionnaire was designed to discern learning transfer between English 101C and content courses (Appendix H). It first asked students to choose one writing assignment that was given in any discipline other than English and copy and paste the assignment sheet along with their written response. Then, students were asked to answer to the questions regarding (a) similarities and differences between English 101C writing assignments and the one they copied, (b) if what they learned in English 101C helped them to do
the written assignment they copied, and (c) what skills they wish they had learned in English 101C in order to complete the copied assignment.

Lastly, two essay rating rubrics were developed to elicit assessment results used for a Mann-Whitney test and a many-facet Rasch analysis. Seven English 101C and six English 150 instructors were asked to evaluate the same set of 25 essays, which were written and submitted as Assignment 3 in English 101C in Fall 2013. The rubric used by English 101C instructors (Appendix I) was similar to the one that was actually being used to grade that particular assignment in their course; it included five evaluation criteria (context, substance, organization, style, and delivery). The only difference was that the rubric used a four-point scale, rather than a five-point scale for each of the criteria. The four-point scale included the nodes excellent, good, fair, and needs work. This change from English 101C’s original rubric was made to avoid neutral responses and the central tendency effect. For the rubric used by English 150 teachers (Appendix J), the original English 101C rubric was significantly modified so that it reflected the terms and perspectives of the English 150 curriculum and incorporated more detailed descriptors for each of the five criteria. This rubric was not unfamiliar to English 150 instructors, because it was based on the same five criteria and the same four scales they normally used in their English 150 course. The decision to use two different rubrics was made, because the two courses were using different rubrics, and this discrepancy was what students actually experienced as they moved from English 101C to 150. In other words, even though the rating results used for the t-test and the many-facet Rasch analysis were collected in an experimental setting, efforts were made to keep the authenticity of natural classroom setting. Therefore, in interpreting the results of the analyses, the difference in rubrics was considered as a factor contributing to the different course
difficulties (i.e., different instructor/rater severity at the group level) along with differences in the two groups of instructors.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

This research is a longitudinal study with data collected for nearly two years (from Fall 2013 to Spring 2015). One year was spent tracing the same group of students while they were taking English 101C and 150, and additional time was needed to collect further data outside these writing courses. Table 3.2 overviews data collection procedures, and the rest of this subsection will provide detailed explanations of the procedures in a chronological manner. As this study adopted a convergent parallel design among several possible designs of a mixed methods study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed independently without being interdependent on one another. Thus, all data were collected when each of the data sources became available.

Table 3.2

Overview of Data Collection Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruit English 101C instructors and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect course documents from English 101C (syllabus, assignment sheets, scoring rubrics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect major writing assignments at the end of each unit along with teachers’ evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct student interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct student surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect writing assignment submitted in other disciplinary courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Recruit ENGL 150 instructors (Some of the English 101C students recruited in Fall 2013 took English 150 in Spring 2014, so students were not recruited again.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collect course documents from English 150 (syllabus, assignment sheets, scoring rubrics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collect major writing assignments at the end of each unit along with teachers’ evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conduct student interviews and surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collect writing assignment submitted in other disciplinary courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conduct teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ask English 101C and 150 instructors to grade the same set of 25 essays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recruit instructors from diverse disciplines and conduct interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Fall 2013, I recruited English 101C instructors by sending an email to briefly explain the purpose of the study and ask if they were willing to participate. As all of them gave a positive answer, we had a face-to-face meeting to discuss the details of the study and logistics of data collection. After the meeting with instructors, I visited their classes to recruit student participants. I gave the students a brief overview of the research and explained what they would need to do if they were to participate. I also informed them that the participants in this study would receive proofreading services for their writing assignments given in any class as compensation. Then, they were given an informed consent form.

Next, the course syllabus, assignment sheets, and evaluation rubrics were collected to figure out what writing tasks students were supposed to complete, when each assignment was due, and based on which criteria they were evaluated. Then, each major assignment was collected at the end of each unit when teachers were done with grading the final draft. I received these data directly from the instructors either in electronic files or hard copies. If students agreed to participate in the study, instructors gave me their assignments and evaluation with their names. Even in case of non-participants, I could still collect their assignments, but all the personal
identifiers had to be removed by the instructor in advance, according to the IRB approval. In this way, I was able to collect all the assignments produced by all the English 101C students in Fall 2013. In addition, individual conferences between students and teachers were recorded if feedback was given orally.

Student interviews were conducted at the end of Unit 3, because Assignment 3, an analysis essay, was analyzed in detail to examine how each teacher provides comments on student papers; interviews were also conducted at this stage, because the writing samples of this particular assignment were graded by both English 101C and 150 instructors to determine rater variability between the two groups using Mann-Whitney test and many-facet Rasch measurement. This particular assignment was chosen due to the possibility of greater rater variability given that different teachers may define analysis differently and expect different levels of analysis. Each interview lasted between 30-50 minutes and was scheduled right after students received a final grade on this assignment so that we could discuss teachers’ comments and grades, as well as the whole process of completing this task, when their memory was still fresh (see Appendix B for the interview questions). Also, students were asked to conduct a survey about the learning transfer between English 101C and content courses (see Appendix H for the survey questionnaire). Finally, interviews were conducted with teachers to ask about their evaluation criteria and procedures as well as their perceptions about good writing (see Appendix D for the interview questions). The teachers’ interviews were scheduled at the end the data collection process so that I could have enough time to analyze their feedback and that we could discuss some interesting points that students had made during the interview.

In Spring 2014, recruitment emails were sent to English 150 instructors to give brief explanations about the study and ask if they were willing to participate. If they did not respond to
the email, I visited their respective offices during their office hours. If they agreed to participate, they sent me a list of their students so that I could determine how many participants were in each class. I followed similar procedures and logistics to collect several types of data from English 150: documents (course syllabus, assignment sheets, and scoring rubrics), assignments and teacher evaluation, and student interviews and surveys as well as teacher interviews. Major writing Assignment 4 was the focus of analysis, and the student interview was conducted right after this assignment was returned to students with feedback and grades (see Appendix C for the interview questions). This assignment was chosen given that it is also an analysis paper, as is Assignment 3 in English 101C, which was the focus of investigation. Interviews with 150 instructors were conducted at the end of the semester (see Appendix E for the interview questions).

In Fall 2014, I collected data for the Mann-Whitney test and many-facet Rasch analysis by asking both English 101C and 150 instructors to grade essays written by international students. However, the rating design could be significantly improved by making it a fully-crossed design (i.e., having all the raters grade all the essays), which is “the optimum design from a measurement point of view since it leads to the highest precision of model parameter estimates possible, and to a data set that has not a single missing link” (Eckes, 2011, p. 112). Thus, another attempt was made in the following semester. In Spring 2015, the two groups of instructors were asked to grade the same set of 25 essays. The number of essays (25) was decided based on a practical consideration (the workload of each rater).

In Spring 2015, I also contacted nine instructors in various disciplines. When students shared their assignments in disciplinary courses with me, they were asked to specify the course name and instructor name as well. Using that information, I looked up the instructors’ email
address on ISU website and contacted them via email. If they were willing to participate, I asked them to share some documents (course syllabus, writing assignment sheets, and evaluation rubrics) and students’ written assignments along with their feedback and grade. After I had some time to examine those materials, the instructors were asked to have an interview with me about their perceptions of international students’ writing as well as their evaluation criteria, and four instructors agreed.

3.5. Data

In this section, I will describe the data collected for this study. The data consisted of (a) course documents in the form of syllabi, assignment sheets, and scoring rubrics; (b) students’ writing assignments; (c) evaluation results in the form of grades and feedback obtained from a natural classroom setting as well as grades obtained for the purpose of conducting a Mann-Whitney test and a Rasch analysis; (d) student and instructor interview recordings; and (e) questionnaires responses.

3.5.1. Course Documents: Course Catalogs, Syllabi, Assignment Sheets, Scoring Rubrics

Course document data were collected in the form of course catalogs, syllabi, assignment sheets, and scoring rubric from the three writing contexts, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

| Course Documents Data: Course Descriptions, Syllabi, Assignment Sheets, and Rubrics |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | ENGL 101C       | ENGL 150        | Content courses | Total           |
| Course descriptions in the catalog | 1               | 1               | 29              | 31              |
| Syllabi                         | 1               | 5               | 1               | 7               |
| Assignment sheets for writing assignments | 4               | 28              | 29              | 61              |
| Rubrics for grading writing assignments | 4               | 19              | 14              | 37              |
Brief, official descriptions of courses offered at ISU are available on the university website (catalog.iastate.edu). According to this course catalog, the official name of English 101C is English for Native Speakers of Other Languages: Academic English II--Undergraduates. Some international students are placed in this course based on the result of the English Placement Test taken at the time of admission, and the website states the course is recommended by the English department. Although credit from this course does not count toward graduation, it is clearly stated that “completion of the English 101 requirement prepares students for English 150,” which shows its preparatory nature. In contrast, credit from ENGL 150, Critical Thinking and Communication, counts toward graduation. According to the course catalog, this course introduces basic oral, visual, and electronic communication principles to support writing development, and students learn how to apply critical reading and thinking abilities to topics of civic and cultural importance.

Since the course catalog only provides very brief information for each course, however, course syllabi were collected as well. From English 101C, I collected only one syllabus, which was created by a program coordinator. All the instructors of this course were using the same syllabus individually adapted only with minor changes in the due date of each assignment and daily classroom activities. The types of assignments and their evaluation criteria remained the same. However, five different syllabi were collected from English 150. One of the syllabi was created by the director of this first-year composition program and used in most sections of the course. On the other hand, four instructors who participated in this research designed their own syllabus to meet their students’ needs and interests or to emphasize what was more important, from their perspective. One of the four instructors modified the original syllabus to a great extent
considering that her class meets intensively over six weeks instead of one entire semester, and this is why the instructor designed all the assignments (writing summary, outline, first draft, revised draft) with one big, final project (writing a research paper) in mind. Types or topics of the essays that students are asked to write in these modified syllabi are different from the ones suggested in the original syllabus, but the evaluation criteria used to grade the assignments are quite similar, all containing a basis in the rhetorical pentad (context, substance, organization, style, delivery).

The last types of course document collected for this study included assignment sheets and scoring rubrics. Because all 101C instructors followed the same syllabus, which required four major writing assignments, a total of four assignment sheets and four corresponding rubrics were collected. All the four scoring rubrics basically adopt the same categories of evaluation criteria, but their specific details were tailored considering the nature of each assignment and the focus of the lesson in each unit (e.g., regarding a thesis statement, the rubric for Assignment 2 states “A thesis contains a controlling idea naming the points of comparison in noun phrases of parallel form” whereas the rubric for Assignment 3 states “A thesis contains a controlling idea naming the analytical categories in parallel form”). From English 150, a total of 28 assignment sheets and 19 rubrics were collected, whereas 29 course catalog descriptions, one syllabus, 29 assignment sheets, and 14 rubrics were collected from various disciplines, as shown in Table 3.3.

3.5.2. Students’ Writing Assignments

Students’ writing assignments were collected after instructors gave grades on their final drafts of each assignment. In the case of English 101C, instructors usually gave feedback on the (first or) second draft, so that students could revise their writing based on the instructors’
comments before submitting the final draft. Thus, in these cases, two drafts were collected per assignment (the final draft and the draft on which instructors commented), so that I could observe how students interpreted teachers’ feedback and used it to make revisions. The number of drafts collected from each assignment can be seen in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Students’ Writing Assignments Collected from English 101C and 150

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Role model paragraph</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Critical evaluation of different marriage and family traditions</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cultural analysis: Division and classification</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Summary and response: Discussion of global economics</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Designing visual communication: Brochure or poster</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Portfolio: Revision and reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1777</strong></td>
<td><strong>237</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contrast, in English 150, only the final drafts of each assignment were collected, because instructors normally provided feedback on the final drafts. As can be seen in Table 3.4, a total of 237 drafts were collected from English 150.

Students’ writing assignments were also collected from diverse disciplines other than English, as shown in Table 3.5. Many assignments were obtained from engineering and business in particular.
Table 3.5

*Students’ Writing Assignments Collected from Content Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others disciplines included computer science, mathematics, religious studies, economics, psychology, political science, and architecture. Unlike the writing courses, students only wrote a single draft for the written assignments in content courses, and a total of 66 assignments were collected.

3.5.3. Evaluation Materials: Grades, Feedback, Rating Results

Three types of evaluation materials were collected for this study. The first two types of evaluation data are instructors’ feedback and the grade given to each assignment. As shown in Table 3.6, these data were collected from three different writing contexts.

Table 3.6

*Feedback and Grades Collected from English 101C, English 150, and Content Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENGL 101C</th>
<th>ENGL 150</th>
<th>Disciplinary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of assignments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with feedback from all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of grades on</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments from all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the writing courses, although I was unable to collect all the drafts for each of the assignments, I could collect the grades given on each assignment completed by international students, because all the instructors had records of grades at the end of the semester.

The third type of evaluation data comprises the rating results collected for the Mann-Whitney test and many-facet Rasch analysis. Since the scores collected from the natural classroom setting were not appropriate for these analyses given that each essay was rated by only one instructor, I asked seven English 101C and six English 150 instructors to rate the same set of 25 essays for this study. The instructors provided not only a holistic score of each essay in the form of a letter grade ranging from A to D-, but also gave analytic scores on four different evaluation criteria using a four-point scale ranging from 1 to 4 (excellent, good, fair, needs work). However, because some instructors used half points for the analytic scores, I doubled the raw values to eliminate half points from the data (Linacre, 2014). As a result, ratings on a 1-8 point scale were used for analytic scores, and an 11-point scale (letter grades from A to D-) for holistic scores.

Instructor severity at the course and individual levels were compared based on the holistic scores of each essay. Although the holistic scores consisted of letter grades (ordinal data), the t-test was going to be used to investigate course difficulty if the following conditions were met: (1) there were enough samples for each category (i.e., the number of the grade categories that have at least 20 cases was at least five); (2) data were normally distributed; and (3) the samples were similar in terms of variance. The first condition was satisfied, but the data did not meet the normality assumption, let alone the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The skewness and kurtosis for the scores yielded by English 101C instructors were -.187 and -.404, respectively; the skewness and kurtosis for the scores yielded by English 150 instructors were -
.787 and -.683, respectively; also the Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests for both sets of data were significant (p<0.05). Therefore, a non-parametric alternative of a t-test, the Mann-Whitney test, was used.

In order to investigate if English 101C and 150 instructors were different in their rating severity within each group, the many-facet Rasch analysis was conducted. Because Rasch models generally require a single trait or dimension, such as academic writing proficiency, the assumption of unidimensionality should be satisfied. The participant instructors in my study were given the rubrics that included four evaluation criteria and asked to mark analytic scores; it was then examined whether those four criteria were measuring a single construct. Among several varied approaches to testing for unidimensionality (e.g. Linacre, 2010; Smith, 2002; Tennant & Pallant, 2006), I referred to mean-square infit and outfit statistics, which provide evidence in favor of psychometric unidimensionality when fit statistics are close enough to their expected values (Eckes, 2012). Table 3.7 shows that in the rating scores produced by English 101C instructors, the four criteria mean-square infit indices all remained well within an acceptable range of 0.8 and 1.2 (Wright, Linacre, Gustafson, & Martin-Lof, 1994).

Table 3.7

*Measurement Results for the Criterion Facet: The Rating Results Produced by English 101C Instructors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Difficulty Measure</th>
<th>Model S.E.</th>
<th>Infit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
<th>Outfit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also, the four criteria’s mean-square infit indices fell within an acceptable range of 0.8 and 1.2 (Wright et al., 1994) regarding the rating results produced by English 150 instructors, as shown in Table 3.8 below.

Table 3.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Results for the Criterion Facet: The Rating Results Produced by English 150 Instructors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above results of the four criteria’s mean-square fit indices, it was concluded that the unidimensionality assumption held.

3.5.4. Interview (Students and Instructors)

The data from the student interviews consisted of 20 interview recordings with English 101C students and 26 recordings with ENGL 150 students. There were 13 students who participated in the interview twice, once as an English 101C student and a second time as an English 150 student. Each recording lasted about 30 minutes. The instructor interview data consisted of eight interview recordings with English 101C instructors, ten recordings with English 150 instructors, and four recordings with content course instructors. Each recording with the instructors lasted about 40 to 60 minutes.
3.5.5. Survey

The data from the survey about learning transfer between English 101C and 150 consisted of 25 questionnaire responses completed by international students who took both writing courses. On the other hand, the data from the survey regarding learning transfer between English 101C and the content courses consisted of 41 questionnaire responses completed by international students who had taken or were taking English 101C.

3.6. Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to address the research questions. First, in order to see if the grades from English 101C were related to other criteria in academic writing ability in a university context (Research Question 1), correlation analyses were conducted across a composite score of English 101C major writing assignments, a composite score of English 150 major writing assignments, and a score on a disciplinary course writing assignment. To produce a possible maximum composite score of 100, weights were given to each assignment considering the percentage that each assignment accounted for in the final course grade. Then, these numerical composite scores were converted to letter grades. For this step, I followed the grade scale values that these instructors used, except that I divided the original A range (93-100) into A+ (97-99) and A (93-96) for the purpose of comparability with Bs, Cs, and Ds. I decided to use the letter grades for the correlation analyses for two reasons. First, the letter grades are what students actually see on their transcripts, and their GPA is also calculated based on the letter grades they earn from each course. In other words, 89 and 87 are equally considered as B+ on the official record. Second, the use of a letter grade may wash out the individual instructors’ differences in terms of severity/leniency in rating. For instance, if one
instructor is consistently more severe than another, his/her rating may consistently be two to three points lower. However, if a letter grade is used, such differences may be cancelled out, although students on the borderline might be impacted substantially more.

Due to the small number of students who took English 101C in Fall 2013 and English 150 in Spring 2014, I could not use statistical approaches, such as a hierarchical linear model, which can factor in individual instructors’ differences in terms of severity within each course. A hierarchical linear model could have allowed me to see only the course effect (101C vs. 150 vs. disciplinary course). However, it was acceptable to disregard the instructor effect in each group at that time, because the first research question investigated whether students received highly correlated grades from the three courses regardless of the students’ instructor. Furthermore, it is the instructors’ rating that students eventually see on their transcripts, so these are the relevant targets for analysis.

The correlations were examined in terms of the degree of both exact agreement and consistency of rank orders. The level of exact agreement was defined as the number of students who received the identical letter grades in English 101C and 150 (and in English 101C and content course), divided by the total number of students. The analyses were done using an intra-class correlation. The level of consistency meant the extent to which English 101C and 150 instructors (and English 101C and content course instructors) assigned the same relative ordering to the same group of students on the assessments in their respective courses. I used Spearman’s correlation, because the analysis was concerned with the rank order of these students in three different contexts.

Then, to investigate the correspondence of writing assignments in English 101C, 150, and disciplinary courses, I examined and compared course syllabi and assignment sheets to examine
what is required for each assignment and how task characteristics are explained. I also referred to teachers’ interview data to see how they envisioned each task. The comparisons were made in terms of the texts’ genre (Nesi & Gardner, 2012), purpose, audience, information source, object of inquiry (Moore & Morton, 2005), rhetorical function, and length (Hale et al., 1996; Moore & Morton, 2005).

In order to see whether evaluation criteria and procedures used in English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses were similar (Research Question 3), four analyses were conducted. First, I compared their scoring rubrics to identify what evaluation criteria were included, how many scale points were used to evaluate each criterion, and which criteria were considered relatively more important than others. Second, I compared the feedback students received on their assignments from their English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary course instructors as a normal part of the class routine. By doing so, I hoped to find out what aspects of writing instructors paid attention to and how they provided suggestions for improvement. Third, I transcribed and analyzed what each group of instructors said during the interview regarding their evaluation of student writing. I coded the interview data to identify their perspectives on good writing, evaluation process, the use and interpretation of rubrics, and the aspects of writing to which they pay attention. I also identified comments that verified or contradicted my analyses of instructors’ feedback that provided an additional explanation for my initial interpretations.

Fourth, two writing course instructors’ severity in essay rating was examined using a t-test and many-facet Rasch analysis. First, in order to see if English 101C and 150 instructors are differentially severe at the group level (i.e., course difficulty difference), mean ranks of letter grades for the raters from the two courses were compared by running a Mann-Whitney test to determine if they were significantly different. In interpreting the results, it was kept in mind that,
because the two groups of instructors, who used different rubrics, were compared at the same
time, it could be the rubric and/or instructors’ experiences in teaching and grading different
courses that impacted the course difficulty (difference in rater severity at the group level).

Second, in order to see if individual English 101C and 150 instructors were differentially
severe within each group, a many-facet Rasch analysis was conducted. Each group was
calibrated and analyzed independent of the other using FACETS 3.71.4 (Linacre, 2014). As can
be seen in the commend files (Appendix K for the analysis of English 101C instructors’ ratings
and Appendix L for the analysis of English 150 instructors’ ratings), the specified model for
these analyses included two facets: students’ writing ability (non-centered, positive) and
instructor severity (centered, negative). To see the difference in rater severity at the individual
level, I referred to the instructor measurement report. In particular, I noted the rater separation
index, which is “the number of statistically distinct levels of rater severity in a given sample of
raters” (Eckes, 2012, p. 45), and the reliability of rater separation index, which indicates “how
well the elements within the rater facet are separated” (Eckes, 2012, p. 45). In other words, these
statistics provide global measures for all the raters in each group and evaluate if all 13 raters can
be considered as a homogenous rater group. Furthermore, raters’ infit mean square statistics were
also examined to investigate the degree of raters’ consistency.

In order to answer Research Question 4 (Is the meaning of grades and feedback on 101C
assessment clearly interpretable by students and instructors?), score interpretation materials,
such as rubrics and assignment sheets, were examined along with the grades and comments
given on students’ papers. In investigating how students and teachers interpreted the grades in
light of the rubrics, analyses of interview data played a great role. Although coding categories
were inductively developed by examining the actual interview data, a tentative set of coding
categories included meaning of each criterion and scale, perceived importance of each evaluation criterion in the rubric, meaning of the final grade on each assignment (questions for both students and teachers), clarity of feedback (questions for students), whether instructors only stick to the rubric, whether instructors apply the same criteria for American and international students’ writing, and weights given to each criterion (questions for teachers). Also, by comparing students and teachers’ answers to relevant interview questions, I could discern if what instructors intended to mean with grades or feedback agreed with what students actually understood.

In order to answer Research Question 5 (*Does good performance on the English 101C writing assessment mean that a student is ready to take English 150 and engage in various written communications in university?*), I compared the performance of three groups (97 international students who took English 101C, 40 international students exempted from English 101C, and 262 American students) in English 150 in Spring 2014. Here, it was assumed that if a good performance on an English 101C assessment is an indicator of readiness to take English 150, former English 101C students’ performance in English 150 should be comparable with the other two groups, if not better. Again, I defined the performance level as a composite score of major writing assignments, and this analysis was done by conducting a Kruskal-Wallis Test using SPSS. Because the normality assumption seemed untenable (both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics are significant), I could not employ a one-way ANOVA. Although ANOVA is quite robust against the violation of normality with equal group sizes (Keppel & Wickens, 2007; Kirk, 1995), the sample sizes of the three groups in my data cannot be regarded as equal, because the ratio of the largest to smallest group size is greater than four to one (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, the Krusal-Wallis test, a non-parametric procedure, was used as an alternative to a one-way ANOVA. In addition to these quantitative comparisons,
interview data were consulted as well, especially regarding international students’ perceptions of writing tasks given in English 150 and disciplinary courses as well as English 150 and disciplinary course instructors’ perceptions of international students’ writing.

In order to answer the last research question (Does positive learning transfer occur from English 101C to English 150 and content courses?), survey and interview data were consulted. One survey about the learning transfer between English 101C and 150 listed 41 items of what was learned in English 101C and asked students to mark the usefulness of each item using a four-point Likert scale. In order to distinguish which learning aspects were considered helpful, I calculated means and standard deviations of the responses to each item. The other survey included open-ended questions about the learning transfer between English 101C and content courses. Thus, students’ responses were analyzed with respect to if, how, and/or why what they learned in English 101C helped them to complete the content course assignment. Student interviews were also coded with regards to usefulness of English 101C in accomplishing written tasks in English 150 and content course, specific learning aspects that were helpful and that were negatively transferred, and reasons for English 101C not being useful. Instructor interview data were consulted regarding the potential of positive learning transfer from English 101C to English 150 and content courses. Finally, both student and instructor interviews were referenced to reveal what suggestions each group put forward for English 101C to enhance the transfer of learning.

3.7. Chapter Summary

Summarized and mapped in Table 3.9 below are data and data analysis methods used to answer the six research questions posed in the study.
# Table 3.9

**Data and Analyses Required for Each Research Question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are grades on the 101C writing assignments related to other criteria for academic writing ability in a university context? (Extrapolation)</td>
<td>Grades on the writing assignments in 101C, 150, and disciplinary courses</td>
<td>Intra-class correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spearman correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do the characteristics of the 101C writing assignments closely correspond to the writing tasks required in 150 and content courses? (Extrapolation)</td>
<td>Syllabuses Assignment sheets Teacher interview</td>
<td>Theme-based coding and comparison across three courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do evaluation criteria and procedures used by 101C instructors closely correspond to those used by 150 and content course teachers? (Extrapolation)</td>
<td>Rubrics Interview Feedback Ratings on 20 randomly selected essays</td>
<td>Theme-based coding and comparison across three courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coding based on the issues addressed by feedback and counting frequency of each issue Multi-facet Rasch measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is the meaning of grades and feedback on 101C assessment clearly interpretable by students and instructors? (Utilization)</td>
<td>Rubrics Syllabuses Teacher interview Student interview</td>
<td>Theme-based coding and comparison between students’ and teachers’ interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does good performance on this writing assessment mean that a student is ready to take 150 and engage in various written communications in university? (Utilization)</td>
<td>English 150 grades of three groups of students Teacher interview Student interview</td>
<td>Krusal-Wallis test Theme-based coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does positive learning transfer occur from 101C to 150 and content courses? (Ramification)</td>
<td>Survey Teacher interview Student interview</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics Theme-based coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the results related to the six research questions. The findings of the study are also used as evidence to support or challenge the assumptions within the interpretive argument of English 101C assessment. The data used in the analysis included (a) course documents in the form of syllabi, assignment sheets, and scoring rubrics, (b) students’ writing assignments, (c) evaluation results in the form of grades and feedback obtained from a natural classroom setting as well as an experimental condition, (d) student and instructor interview recordings, and (e) survey responses. Overall, the study found both positive and negative evidence regarding connections across English 101C, English 150, and content courses at ISU in terms of writing assessment. That is, the proposed interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results in relation to English 150 and content courses are only partially supported and, therefore, need reconsideration.

4.1. Relationship among Grades in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses

This section aims to answer the first research question regarding the relationship among the grades in English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses. For this, the grades that the international students received on their writing assignments in the three different courses were compared, and their relationship was investigated by means of correlation. The results suggest that the grades between English 101C and English 150 are moderately correlated and that those between English 101C and disciplinary courses are weakly correlated. Before moving to the detailed descriptions of the findings, descriptive statistics of the grades used in this analysis will
first be introduced, because they play a crucial role in determining which correlation coefficients should be used.

Two sets of grades were used to answer this research question: one for examining the relationship between English 101C and English 150, and the other for investigating the relationship between English 101C and disciplinary courses. The first set consists of composite scores of major writing assignments, whose possible maximum score is 100, which was earned by 73 international students who took English 101C in Fall 2013 and English 150 in Spring 2014. However, two students were excluded from the analysis, because they did not submit one or more major writing assignments in either course. Descriptive statistics of these grades are shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1**

*Descriptive Statistics for English 101C and 150 Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENGL 101C (N=71)</th>
<th>ENGL 150 (N=71)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>86.37</td>
<td>87.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval</td>
<td>84.48 - 88.26</td>
<td>86.14 – 88.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>5.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>60.91</td>
<td>69.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>98.61</td>
<td>96.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-1.17 (Std. Error: .29)</td>
<td>-1.08 (Std. Error: .29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness/Standard error</td>
<td>-4.11</td>
<td>-3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>1.11 (Std. Error: .56)</td>
<td>1.40 (Std. Error: .56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis/Standard error</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in the table, the average score in English 150 is slightly higher than the one in English 101C, which is quite surprising given the students’ complaints about the difficulty of assignments and the severity of instructors in English 150, as indicated in the interview data. Skewness and kurtosis, which are often used to tell if data are normally distributed and affect
which correlation coefficient can be used, are another piece of information worthy of attention. According to Bachman (2004), if the ratio of skewness or kurtosis to standard error is equal to or less than minus two or equal to or greater than plus two, then the scores can be considered as being non-normally distributed. Based on this criterion, it can be said that the distributions of both English 101C and English 150 scores were not normal. In addition, the significant values of both the Shapiro-Wilk statistic (.907 for English 101C and .928 for English 150 when df = 71) and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (.126 for English 101C and .117 for English 150 when df = 71) also suggest non-normal distributions of the grades.

The second data set of grades consists of the composite scores of English 101C major writing assignments and the grades on writing assignments in various disciplines, whose possible maximum score is 100, which was earned by 22 international students who took English 101C in Fall 2013 and some courses outside English department during the same time. Descriptive statistics of these grades are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Descriptive Statistics for English 101C and Disciplinary Course Grades*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENGL 101C (N=22)</th>
<th>Other Disciplines (N=22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>84.73</td>
<td>90.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Confidence Interval</td>
<td>79.77 – 89.68</td>
<td>86.19 – 95.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-2.14 (Std. Error: .49)</td>
<td>-1.2 (Std. Error: .49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness/Standard error</td>
<td>-4.35</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>6.14 (Std. Error: .95)</td>
<td>1.92 (Std. Error: .95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis/Standard error</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that students received a higher score on average in other disciplines than in English 101C. Again, the ratio of skewness or kurtosis to standard error, as well as both the Shapiro-Wilk statistics (.800 for English 101C and .815 for disciplinary when df = 22) and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (.168 for English 101C and .263 for disciplinary when df = 22), suggest non-normal distributions of grades in both contexts.

In order to explore the relationship of the grades between English 101C and English 150 and between English 101C and disciplinary courses, correlation analyses were conducted. I expected that these grades would be correlated in a positive way to some degree, because the writing assignments in three different courses measured the same construct, academic writing ability, from a broad perspective. Also, given that the goal of English 101C is to prepare international students for writing in English 150 and in various disciplines, the writing skills and strategies learned and evaluated in English 101C should be applicable to students’ completion of the writing assignments in other courses; this implies that similar skills and strategies are assessed in the three different courses and, therefore, their grades should be related.

First, in order to see if the grades were consistent in rank across these courses, a Spearman’s correlation was used. Spearman’s correlation indicates the extent to which different groups of instructors assigned the same rank order to the same group of students on two different measures. The Spearman’s Rho that indicated correlation between English 101C and 150 grades resulted in a value of 0.446. According to Mukaka (2012), this coefficient can be understood as indicating low positive correlation. On the other hand, the Spearman’s Rho that showed the correlation of grades in English 101C and disciplinary courses was only 0.252. According to the same reference (Mukaka, 2012), this correlation while statistically significant is a negligible size, which means that the grades that international students received on their writing assignments in
other disciplinary courses were only slightly related to the grades on their writing performance in English 101C.

The Spearman’s correlation measures similarity in terms of orderings of the scores in two different courses. Therefore, this correlation could potentially be very high, even though the score each student obtained in one class was several points higher than the one obtained from the other class, as long as the instructor in one course was consistently more lenient than the instructor in the other course. In other words, such correlation “merely assesses the extent to which scores go together and not whether they are close to each other in absolute terms” (Kazdin, 1982, p. 58). With this limitation in mind, I used another type of correlation, Intraclass correlation, in order to explore the relationship between the two sets of grades in terms of absolute agreement. The ICC coefficient that indicated the relationship of English 101C and 150 grades resulted in a value of 0.543.

At the time of running SPSS for this analysis, I chose absolute agreement, not consistency, for the type, and selected two-way random for the model, because I assumed that my student participants were not very different from the rest of international students who could possibly take English 101C and that English 101C and 150 instructors included in this data were not very different from the rest of those instructors, given that they had completed the same training procedures. Also, the use of single rather than average measures was more appropriate, because each assignment was graded by only one instructor. The ICC correlation coefficient of 0.543 was interpreted as indicating moderate agreement (StatsToDo).

On the other hand, the ICC coefficient that shows the relationship of the grades from English 101C and disciplinary courses was only 0.144. Everything was set equal with the previous analysis except that I chose a two-way mixed for the model, because the instructors
from various disciplines who participated in this study were not assumed to be similar with other instructors in the university in terms of the way they evaluated students’ writing. According to the same source (StatsToDo), the ICC correlation coefficient of 0.144 can be interpreted as indicating poor agreement, which means that students did not receive similar grades on their writing assignments in English 101C and other disciplinary courses. However, a few considerations should be noted in understanding the results. First, the very weak Spearman and ICC coefficients for the relationship of the grades from English 101C and other disciplines may be due to a limited amount number of data (22 students total). Although a greater number of students shared their writings in diverse disciplines, used as data for other parts of this study, most of them did not receive formal, numerical scores from the instructor. Second, the students were asked to share any writing that they thought was representative of the writings done in their discipline, and it is possible that they chose the sample on which they received the best grade, which could be different from their average writing performance.

It should be also noted that correlation analyses were employed despite the limitations of the data. As shown in this section, the correlations were investigated in a non-standard way by disregarding the fact that there were multiple raters in each group. It would be ideal to use statistical approaches, such as hierarchical linear model, which can factor in individual instructors’ differences in terms of severity within each course, thereby allowing examination of only the course effect (English 101C, 150, vs. disciplinary course). Yet, I could not use such statistical approaches, due to the small number of students included in both data sets. However, it is acceptable to disregard instructor effect in each group at this stage, because the first research question investigates whether students received highly correlated grades from the three courses
regardless of which instructor they received grade from. Also, it was the instructors’ rating that students eventually saw on their transcripts.

To conclude, the relationship between English 101C and 150 scores was not very strong in terms of both consistency and absolute agreement, although both courses focused on the essay type of writing and used the same five evaluation criteria. Furthermore, the relationship between the grades on international students’ writing from English 101C and other disciplines was very weak in terms of both consistency and absolute agreement to the extent that the correlations were almost a negligible size.

Answering the first research question was an attempt to see if one of the assumptions (performance on the English 101C assessment is related to other criteria of academic writing ability in university context) included in the extrapolation inference (the construct of academic writing competence assessed by the English 101C assessment accounts for the kind of academic writing skills required in a university setting) is met or not within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment scores. Given that the goal of English 101C is to prepare students for writing in English 150 and other disciplinary courses, the grade on the English 101C writing assessment could be more meaningful and useful when it is able to account for the level of students’ writing performance in the university setting, not just limited to English 101C. However, given the results shown in this section, the first assumption of the extrapolation inference is not supported. However, this is not the only assumption underlying the extrapolation inference, because there are many other factors to consider in the writing assessment, such as the nature of writing tasks, instructors’ qualitative feedback on the assignments, and the reasons behind the grades assigned to the assignments. For this reason, the following research questions were investigated.
4.2. Comparison of Writing Tasks in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses

This section answers the second research question regarding the correspondence of writing assignments in English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses. In order to answer this question, course syllabi, assignment sheets, students’ written assignments, student surveys, and student/instructor interviews were analyzed. The results suggest that English 101C and 150 assignments are different in terms of purpose, audience, information source, topic, and rhetorical functions, although they are all essays in terms of genre. English 101C and disciplinary course assignments differ with regard to genre, information source, purpose, rhetorical functions, and length. Interview data also show that students tended to notice more differences than similarities in assignments in different courses.

4.2.1. Writing Assignments in English 101C and 150

To examine the correspondence of writing assignments in English 101C and 150, two course syllabi, nine assignment sheets, 26 interviews with English 150 students who previously took English 101C, and interviews with eight English 101C and ten English 150 instructors were analyzed. According to the course syllabi, English 101C includes five major writing assignments while English 150 has six, as shown in Table 4.3.
Table 4.3

Major Writing Assignments in English 101C and 150

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Major Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 101C   | 1. Role model paragraph  
        | 2. Critical evaluation of different marriage and family traditions  
        | 3. Cultural analysis: Division and classification  
        | 4. Summary and response: Discussion of global economics  
        | 5. Final exam |
| 150    | 1. Where I’m from: In-class writing  
        | 2. Sharing Experiences: Letter-as-essay and map  
        | 3. Exploring a campus program or organization: Public document and profile  
        | 4. Understanding campus place or artifact: Report and commentary  
        | 5. Designing visual communication: Brochure or poster  
        | 6. Portfolio: Revision and reflection |

For the analysis of writing task characteristics, however, I excluded the final exam in English 101C, because students were supposed to finish it within 35-40 minutes without consulting any resource or having sufficient time to plan and revise; the conditions for this task were not comparable to those for other assignments. More importantly, different sections of English 101C contained different prompts in order to prevent students from knowing the topic of the final exam in advance, and the final exam was not provided to students along with an organized assignment sheet, without which it was impossible to analyze intended characteristics of the writing task. Assignment 5 in English 150 was also excluded from the analysis, because it asks students to make a poster or brochure in which visual elements play an important role, in addition to asking the students to demonstrate writing skills. Furthermore, Assignment 5 essentially requires students to work on the same content as what they produced in either Assignment 3 or 4 and with the same purpose and audience in mind, but only using a different medium for communication. Thus, an analysis of this assignment would not have added new information about students’ application of rhetorical functions.
Assignment 1 in English 150, which was not included in an investigation of the relationship between English 101C and 150 grades, because it is an ungraded assignment, was considered for the analysis described in this section. Given that the topic of this assignment is similar to English 101C’s Assignment 3, it was important to compare how the two courses asked students to approach the same topic. Unlike the final exam in English 101C, the first assignment in English 150 is usually accomplished outside class, according to interviews with English 150 teachers, although the syllabus specifies the assignment as in-class writing.

The results of the assignment analysis show many differences in the nature of writing tasks in the two courses, although all assignments can be broadly classified as an essay genre, except for the poster/brochure. In English 101C, topics for the assignments are familiar to students, as indicated in two student interviews (Student 19 and 108): their role model, marriage and family tradition in their culture, their ethnic identity, and their hometown city. Since most assignments ask students to discuss themselves and their culture, the student writers do not need to refer to outside sources; instead, students simply write an essay based on their own experiences and thoughts. Even in Assignment 4, which is about global economics, students can respond to a news article based on their own opinions, without referring to other news articles or expert opinions. In terms of audience, assignment sheets indicate that the target readers are their classmates and the course instructor, an aspect also confirmed by one English 101C instructor (Instructor 2) during the interviews. That is, the writing does not extend beyond the classroom context. Instructors and classmates are required to read the essays to give grades and feedback, but it is questionable how these assignments can address the needs and interests of the audience. Given that a majority of English 101C students are Chinese, the information in their classmates’ essays may have little value or significance to the readers, because the classmates already know a
great deal about the topic. It appears that students learn to write and practice how to structure an essay without really achieving any meaningful purpose for the audience.

On the other hand, the topics of English 150 assignments revolve around the ISU campus: places, organizations, programs, buildings, and arts on campus. Although students come to campus almost every day, they do not know much about their surroundings unless they are deeply involved in some program or organization or they do research on a building or piece of art for their own interest. Therefore, to complete the assignments and meet requirements in English 150, students must locate and understand information in public documents, such as websites and brochures, and integrate it into their essays. Furthermore, Assignment 4 in English 150 explicitly asks students to choose a building or artwork they have seen, but do not know much about, further forcing the students to explore their unknown surroundings.

The audiences for English 150 assignments go beyond the classroom context, a fact mentioned not only on the assignment sheets, but also by five English 150 instructors during interviews. In the cases of Assignments 3 and 4, about a campus organization or program and campus building or art, respectively, the intended audience is the general public or, more specifically, ISU students, faculty, or staff who might be interested in knowing more about the campus. While emphasizing that their students are writing for a general audience, two English 150 instructors explained what that means; students need to consider how much their audience knows about the topic and provide enough context so that readers can follow what is argued for in the paper.

Usually for 150, I would say you are talking to a general audience. It’s an open audience. So anybody everybody could be reading this. So what assumptions can’t we make, what assumptions can we make, what does the general public know about your topic, and what
do they not know, so you have to consider things like media, is my topic something commonly understood, if not, what does that mean. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

One of the first lessons that I teach every semester have imagined audience no matter what you say, you need your imagined audience for your presentation or for paper you have this imaginary reader, so imagine the reader they know nothing about you as a person, they don’t even know you are in college, inform them of everything they need to know before you try to build on that, so that’s context. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)

It is also worth mentioning that one English 150 instructor was making a new attempt to give her students a more concrete way to conceptualize an audience outside the instructor and classmates by asking students to post all the assignments on blogs.

This is something that I struggled with throughout my 150 and 250 teaching, trying to get them to see the audience, besides me, or besides peers, so one of the ways to address that this semester is through blogs. So some of them chose to use the privacy setting so that it’s not available to the public, but I still ask them to pretend there is and consider a broader audience, that could include anyone. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, some assignments have a more real, specific audience. For instance, Assignment 2 requires students to choose a younger relative, a family member or a friend, who is not at ISU right now and to write a letter to this person to share their experience regarding a place on campus. Another good example of an intended specific audience involves an assignment not included in the programmatic curriculum that was designed by Instructor 25. Her students wrote a proposal about The Casey Land, a place that really exists in the local community around ISU. The instructor explained in the interview that by inviting the committee members of the land to
class while students were making presentations based on what they wrote about The Casey Land, she wanted to make students aware that their work is relevant to a real audience. By including these explicit requirements, such assignments push students to consider the audience’s needs and interests when they decide what and how to write. Given an authentic, specific audience, the purpose of English 150 assignments goes beyond simply *learning to write* to share experiences and inform readers. In addition, considering that students get to know more about the campus or the community by carrying out these assignments, the assignments also carry the purpose of *writing to learn*, a goal clearly stated in the assignment sheet; “This assignment asks you to deepen your understanding of the history, importance, and appropriateness of a building or piece of art on the ISU campus.”

The assignments in the two courses exhibit differences in terms of rhetorical functions as well. In Table 4.6 below, the required rhetorical functions for each assignment are outlined, along with verbs and nouns, which show what students need to accomplish more specifically. These verbs and nouns are presented here, because they provide clarifying information for determining the rhetorical functions of each essay. Most of those verbs and nouns were directly copied from the assignment sheets, but some verbs were changed to clarify their meaning. For example, English 101C assignment sheets use *discuss* quite often, but this verb simply means “writing about something” (Collins online dictionary, n.d.), a definition which is too generic. Thus, I found more specific and relevant words, such as *describe* to represent “giving a written report of how something is done or of what someone or something is like” (Cambridge online dictionary, n.d.) and *illustrate* to mean “giving examples or details in order to make something easier to understand” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).
Also, there are a few terms that need to be defined now. I used explain to suggest giving reasons or justifying, not to mean describing or giving details, because those meanings are already covered by describe and illustrate. Next, analyze denotes “breaking material into its constituent parts and determining how the parts are related to each other or to an overall structure” (Mayer, 2002, p. 230). If an essay only breaks or divides an idea into different parts without discussing the parts’ relationship, it is considered classification. Finally, evaluate is used to signify expressing writers’ opinions, such as (dis)agreement and (dis)preference, and explaining reasons for the opinions.

Table 4.4

Rhetorical Functions in Each Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Major Assignments</th>
<th>Rhetorical Functions</th>
<th>Verbs and Nouns in the Assignment Sheets (adapted if needed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English 101C</td>
<td>MA1 Description</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Describe role model, characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA2 Comparison</td>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>Illustrate actions, attitudes, behaviors by providing specific examples and details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA3 Classification</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Compare and contrast two view points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Evaluate benefits and drawbacks of each view point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>Express your opinion and explain why you feel that way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Analysis)</td>
<td>(Analyze the relationship between parts and the whole: only applies to Topic 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA4 Summarization</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Summarize main points of the article, causes and effects of an economic situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluate author’s points, discuss your own thoughts on what those reasons are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 4.4, description is required in almost every assignment in both classes. It appears that description appears to be basic in discussions of ideas and is usually combined with other rhetorical functions. However, English 101C and 150 assignments require different levels of description. English 150 assignment sheets explicitly ask for vivid and specific descriptions, which international students are not usually capable of integrating well, as indicated in the interview data (Student 44, Instructor 19). Other observed differences in the assignments include a more intense focus on illustration (giving examples) in English 101C assignments. Also, comparison/contrast and classification tasks are unique to English 101C assignments. These distinctions do not mean that students never use these rhetorical functions in English 150 writing, but rather that these functions are not used predominantly or consistently throughout the paper. In contrast, English 150 assignments concentrate more on having students explain why something is significant or analyze how something is relevant or connected to ISU’s mission and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4 continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English 150</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MA2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MA3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MA4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MA6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
history. In addition, an interpretation of someone else’s intended meaning is only found in Assignment 4 in English 150. Finally, since English 150 assignments normally require some degree of research, summarizing and paraphrasing is essential, although these functions are not shown in the table.

If students do not pay close attention to some rhetorical functions that are newly emphasized in English 150, such as explanation and analysis, their essays may end up as mere factual descriptions. It is also possible that students recognize the newly introduced rhetorical functions, but realize they do not have enough language to express them, because they did not learn it in English 101C. Eventually, however, the assignments’ foci on different rhetorical functions should be discussed and evaluated based on what functions are predominantly and regularly required in other disciplinary courses, especially considering that the purpose of both English 101C and 150 is to prepare students for various written communications in a university setting.

Thus far, correspondence of writing tasks in English 101C and 150 have been discussed based on syllabi, assignment sheets, and instructor interviews. Such discussions on similarities and differences of assignments deserve attention, because they affect how writing is evaluated and how well learning transfer occurs. As James (2008) suggests, however, students may not perceive similarities or differences in the same ways as instructors or researchers do, and what really matters in learning transfer is students’ own perceptions. Thus, during the interview, English 150 students were also asked to compare the writing assignments in the two courses. Only two similarities were cited out of the 26 interviews: the overall organization required for essays (mentioned by five students) and the use of sources (only for Assignment 4, in the case of English 101C) (mentioned by two students). Many more comments were made about the
courses’ differences. The students made comparisons in all the five respects discussed earlier (purpose, audience, information source, topic, rhetorical functions), although discussion on each comparison point was sometimes not thorough enough or was sparked by only a few people. In terms of topic, nine interviewees pointed out that English 150 assignments are all about the ISU campus and are related to each other topically, while English 101C assignments are about the students themselves or their cultures. Two of the nine interviewees felt that English 101C topics are more familiar and more interesting, whereas English 150 topics are difficult and not exciting. One student discussed the differences in assignments in terms of purpose. Given that all the assignments are about the ISU campus, Student 44 thought that the purpose of writing in English 150 was *write to learn*, especially learning about the school, not just *learn to write*.

150 seem to put more emphasis on school than on writing. Because freshmen don’t know much about school, the school wants us to take 150 as a chance to learn about school, look at the good side of school rather than improving students’ writing skill. (Student 44, ENGL 150, interview)

In addition, five students believed that the kinds of writing they do in the two courses are different. Two of them classified all the writing tasks in English 101C as essays, and even said that all of the required assignments follow the same pattern in terms of flow and organization.

In 101C we have fixed things to do like thesis, describe three main points, transition words like first, second, third, and repeat the thesis in conclusion. (Student 20, ENGL 150, interview)

For 101C you can just directly write thesis, say it at the last sentence in the first paragraph, the first sentence of each paragraph should be topic sentence, first sentence of conclusion is restatement of thesis, second sentence is your further thoughts or your view,
Both student quotes above suggest there is a sort of template that can be followed in all the assignments in English 101C. Two students also said that the English 101C’s assignments are similar to what they completed in high school or college in their home country, while one interviewee even compared the English 101C assignments with TOEFL writing. On the contrary, two students thought that English 150 assignments incorporate all different kinds of papers. For example, although all the English 150 assignments (except for Assignment 5) belong to the essay genre, according to Nesi and Gardner (2012)’s classification, Student 69 considers them to be different genres, which is contrasted with his definitions of all the English 101C assignments as essays:

To me, 101C assignments are all like argumentative essay. Give your opinion, main idea in each paragraph, and supporting points, all the assignments in 101C have the same pattern. But, all the 150 assignments are different in terms of genre/type. (Student 69, ENGL 150, interview)

Furthermore, although none of the five students used the term “rhetorical functions,” ten students compared the assignments in both courses along those lines. They distinguished that English 150 assignments require detailed, vivid descriptions of a certain place, organization, building, or piece of art on campus, and an in-depth analysis of their significance on campus, as exemplified in the following interview excerpts.

150, a lot of detailed descriptions of visual, analysis about art/building, brochure is like design. (Student 3, ENGL 150, interview)
In 101C, find three points, write about it, length requirement pretty short, the discussion is at surface level. But 150, assignments pretty long, ask to find a deep significance of the points, add some my view, let the reader know more information. (Student 34, ENGL 150, interview)

150 is higher level. Title of English 150 is critical thinking and communication, that is very different from 101C. In 150, I spend more time on critical thinking for analysis. I don’t know how to explain it. I don’t remember much about 101C, but in 150 for example, I’m writing about this fountain, have to write about its significance, like it can make our campus more beautiful, stands for different way of life and culture. (Student 4, ENGL 150, interview)

In terms of information sources, ten students said that English 101C assignments are mostly based on their personal experiences and opinions, as opposed to requiring research, whereas English 150 assignments are based on secondary courses, yet require students’ own reflections, analyses, and interpretations, as opposed to reporting facts. Because of the requirement of research, 12 interviewees identified the necessity for citation as the most glaring difference between English 101C and 150 assignments.

In 150, we need to do a lot of research, need to write about campus although I don’t know to know about it. So, citation is a must, more academic. (Student 3, ENGL 150, interview)

In 101C we don’t really focus on citation. We do citation, but it's not that critical. But now everything you write, we need citation. Regarding citation, paraphrasing is difficult because you need to avoid plagiarism. Second it’s really hard to cite source. I forget about it a lot. When I write a paper, I think it’s my own thing. I don’t write this sentence
and cite source. Instead write them all and get the source. But I will probably change that because it’s not a good habit. (Student 56, ENGL 150, interview)

While mentioning the requirement of citations in English 150 assignments, Student 3 associated these essays as being more academic, and Student 56 highlighted a few challenges in incorporating citations, such as paraphrasing, and not having developed the habit of referencing.

Dissimilarities in audience were noted by two students, too. Students usually write for an instructor or do not consider audience at all in English 101C, whereas they have a clear audience in mind in English 150.

In 150, we have clear audience for each assignment, but in 101C, just write for professor.

In 150, the first step is choose purpose and audience. Audience can be students, staff, visitors. And depending on the audience, I change the content a bit. But in my case, the audience is always students. (Student 88, ENGL 150, interview)

In 150, it [audience] was mainly her [instructor] because my blog was private. But I made it public later, so it became general public. For 101C, I wrote for my instructor. (Student 68, ENGL 150, interview)

The English 150 class that Student 88 took followed the curriculum given by the department, so all the assignments were about ISU campus. This is why the audience for his writing was ISU students, staff, and visitors who might be interested in the school. On the other hand, the course section that Student 68 took included special assignments designed by the instructor and, more importantly, involved writing in a blog, with the intended audience being the general public, due to the nature of the medium.

To summarize, based on my analyses of course syllabi, assignment sheets, and instructor interviews, English 101C and 150 assignments were all essays in terms of genre in that they
required the development of a coherent argument, as well as the structure of introduction, body, and conclusion (Gardner & Nesi, 2013), but showed differences with regard to purpose, audience, information source, topic, and rhetorical functions. Student interview data suggested that students were also aware of such similarities and differences, but they paid more attention to differences than similarities. Although they occasionally demonstrated less sophisticated or inaccurate understanding of the assignments, the interview data were valuable in that they revealed what similarities/differences are frequently noted by students as well as how such similarities/differences impact students’ writing processes.

### 4.2.2. Writing Assignments in English 101C and Disciplinary Courses

To examine the correspondence of writing assignments in English 101C and disciplinary courses, 27 assignment sheets, 27 students’ writing samples, 42 student surveys, and interviews with four content course instructors, as well as eight English 101C instructors, were analyzed. Outside the English department, a total of 27 assignments that came with the formal assignment sheets were collected from 16 different disciplines, as shown in Table 4.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of Collected Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>200 and 300</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineering</td>
<td>100 and 300</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>300</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Science</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the survey asked international students to share written assignments required in their major study area, general education, or elective courses they were enrolled in while taking English 101C, most assignments were collected from 100- or 200-level courses, as can be seen in the second column in Table 4.5. Also, as the table shows, more than one third of the sampled students study in engineering fields. Thus, the collected assignments for this study do not represent written assignments across courses in the whole university in a balanced way in terms of disciplines and levels. However, given that many international students choose to major in engineering and take lower level courses while taking English 101C, and that English 101C is supposed to serve these students’ immediate needs, such data collection is not necessarily problematic in terms of identifying how much the writing tasks in English 101C correspond with and, therefore, are helpful for completing the assignments in other disciplinary courses. Students can learn how to write in upper-level disciplinary courses by taking more advanced writing courses, such as English 150 and 250 or technical or business writing classes.

By conducting interviews with four instructors from different disciplines, I was able to obtain more information about the written assignments in their courses. One professor teaching a 200-level biology course said he required only three writing assignments throughout the semester, and that writing accounts for a small portion of the final course grade. One of those
three assignments involves students reading a story about how biology works and then answering each question prompt in a paragraph. Students then exchange their responses with classmates and discuss additional questions in class. Another assignment entails writing down any remaining question or what students found interesting about the topic covered in each unit, a task which does not yield a right or wrong answer. Still another assignment involves generating and writing questions about biology using field-specific terms in a few sentences.

One professor teaching a 200-level religious studies course claims that he includes five reading comprehension assignments over the semester. Students are supposed to answer the prompts about assigned readings such as: “What is the story of Ikemefuna that Achebe tells in the first eight chapters of Things Fall Apart? What role(s), if any, did the people of Umuofia’s religion play in Ikemefuna’s life?” Each paper is worth 5% of the final grade and, therefore, altogether the equivalent of 25%, a significant portion of the final grade.

Meanwhile, one professor teaching a 200-level political science course assigns four short essays of 350-500 words on four different topics over the semester. The essay prompts ask students to apply and relate the general concepts learned in class to the political situation of a particular country. These essay assignments are worth 20% of the total grade. Lastly, one professor teaching 200- and 300-level accounting courses remarked that she formerly included essay assignments in her courses, but does not include them anymore, because they are painful to grade, especially when she has a big class. While identifying accounting as a field of reporting, the instructor said the most common type of assignment in her course involves writing a report about the operation of a business or a financial statement using a specified format. As expected of writing in the field, students are also expected to write in a concise, to the point, and easy to understand manner.
Despite the many differences in writing assignments in English 101C and 150, as discussed above, the assignments have a few shared characteristics; they are all essays which involve discussing an issue and developing arguments to support a thesis, and have a three-part structure consisting of an introduction, body, and conclusion (Gardner & Nesi, 2013). In the essays, students are expected to demonstrate an ability to reason independently and construct a coherent argument (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). However, none of the assignments collected from disciplinary courses belong to the essay genre family, according to Nesi and Gardner’s (2012) classification. As shown in Table 4.6, the explanation and exercise genre families are predominant in the written assignments outside the English department.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre Families</th>
<th>Number of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Recount</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology Recount</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be mentioned that there are a few assignments that instructors argue are essays, but, in reality, are explanation, according to my analysis using Nesi and Gardner’s classification. For example, an assignment from civil engineering that asks students to describe their personal experiences during a meeting with their advisor was identified by the instructor as an essay on the assignment sheet and requiring a minimum of three paragraphs in the form of an introduction, main body, and conclusion. According to the instructions, however, the introductory paragraph does not need a thesis statement, and students are not expected to develop
one coherent argument. Instead, in the first paragraph, students should identify their advisors, as well as the names and responsibilities of their team members, whereas the remaining paragraphs require students to describe their experience. Also, the assignment sheet concludes by stating “remember, this is you telling a story.”

Unlike an essay, which requires independent reasoning and a coherent argument, explanation and exercise genre families largely expect students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding acquired from classes or other resources (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Because the purpose of these genre families is different from that of the essay, there are some structural and linguistic differences between the essay and explanation/exercise genre families. First of all, explanation and exercise genre assignments do not require a three-part structure and are shorter than the essay, as can be seen in the average number of words of each genre family shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

| Length of Essay, Explanation, and Exercise: Adapted from Nesi and Gardner (2012) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
|                               | Essay             | Explanation | Exercise |
| Words                         | 2455             | 2075        | 1568      |
| Words per sentence            | 28               | 25          | 21        |
| Sentences per paragraph       | 5.6              | 4           | 3         |
| Figures                       | 0.3              | 3           | 4         |
| Tables                        | 0.1              | 1           | 2         |

Also, explanation and exercise genre assignments tend to include shorter sentences and shorter paragraphs, as can be seen in the words per sentence and sentences per paragraph, respectively. However, the explanation and exercise genre families tend to include more diagrams, commonly in the form of figures and tables, through which students demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
In addition, Nesi and Gardner’s (2012) multi-dimensional analysis of the three genre families, based on Biber (1988), found that although essay, explain, and exercise genres cluster close to each other on the less persuasive and impersonal dimensions, they exhibited some differences on the remaining three dimensions. First, the exercise genre is less informational than essay and explanation, meaning that it includes more present tense verbs, private verbs, first and second person pronouns, and contractions. Second, the essay is more narrative than the exercise and explanation genres and is likely to include past tense, third person pronouns, perfect aspect, and public verbs such as say, tell, and explain. Third, the essay is more elaborated than the exercise or explanation genres, meaning that texts express, and can be comprehended in, situations potentially removed from their originally occurring environments and, therefore, include more explicit referents such as relative clause constructions, nominalizations, and time and place adverbials.

As discussed above, explanation and exercise genres are different from the essay in terms of purpose, length, and structure, as well as the types of linguistic features represented. In order to succeed in written communication in other disciplines, students must recognize these generic differences and develop writing skills and strategies that work well for these genres. In addition, if these generic differences lead to different evaluation criteria, students need to keep these separate guidelines in mind. If the goal of writing courses, such as English 101C and 150, is to prepare students for written communication in other university courses, writing course instructors must consider incorporating assignments targeting a variety of genres other than the essay, especially explanation and exercise, that students frequently encounter in their major or general education courses.
Topics of writing tasks in content courses are reflective of each discipline and may vary greatly, covering themes such as the previous year’s operation of a company in accounting, to inheritance patterns in biology, local civil structure in civil engineering, and religious pluralism in religious studies. With regard to the use of source materials, most English 101C assignments do not require external references, whereas about 60% of assignments in other disciplines ask for their incorporation, as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Required Sources</th>
<th>Number of Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary sources</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary sources</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both primary and secondary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distinction between the primary and secondary sources in the table is based on whether the authors in the source materials report their first hand experience or discuss what other people experienced or thought. Approximately 25% of the assignments in disciplinary courses require the use of primary sources such as FASB Accounting Standards Codification, an income statement of an incorporation (accounting), newspaper articles about current technology (computer engineering), and the department website (engineering); another 25% of the assignments mandate the use of secondary sources including textbooks (biology) and Wikipedia webpages about electricity (electrical engineering). Meanwhile, there are a few assignments that necessitate both primary and secondary sources.

Another interesting difference is found between English 101C and disciplinary courses when it comes to the assignments that do not require the use of source materials. In English 101C, students can complete essays easily based on their prior experience, pre-existing
knowledge, or personal opinion. In disciplinary courses, however, students often are required to do more work in their assignment completion, such as attending an event, observing a civil structure, and conducting an interview, unless they are simply asked to answer a series of short exercise questions with some calculations.

On the other hand, 23 out of 27 assignment sheets in content courses do not mention general or specific details about the target audience of the writing tasks. However, given that disciplinary courses prominently involve exercise and explanation genre assignments, whose purpose is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, and that the assignments are only seen by instructors, it could be inferred that the writings’ audience includes course instructors most of the time (24 out of 27 assignments).

However, in the case of one assignment that asks students to write down discussion questions based on readings as a preparation for thought-provoking discussion among classmates, the target audience includes classmates as well as the instructor. Meanwhile, two assignments have an imaginary, yet specific, audience. One assignment from accounting specifies on the assignment sheet that students are preparing a memo to a partner at an imaginary accounting firm at which they are employed. Another assignment from civil engineering asks students to write a cover letter and resume imagining that they are applying to a company to get an internship, meaning that the target audience of the assignment is the recruiters of the company, although the real audience is their instructor. In the meantime, one instructor in religious studies said during the interview that he tells his students to write as if they were writing to a general, educated audience and emphasizes that they not write as if they are writing only to him. He further explained what that means: “They need to define technical terms such as dogma, apologetic because the general reader might not know what the term is. And also they
need to show me in the texts where they are drawing ideas from, where readers can find these ideas in the text” (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview). According to this perspective, writing to a general audience means that students need to define technical terms, because readers might not be knowledgeable about the field of religion. Also, students should reference sources in their writing, since readers might want to later find the reference and read further.

Regarding the audience of the assignments, it should be also noted that all assignments given in university courses are primarily read and evaluated by course instructors, regardless of whether the supposed target audience involves real or imaginary readers. Yet, how much instructors know about the topic of assignments is different in English 101C and content courses. In English 101C, because students write about their role model and culture, it is hard for instructors to judge the accuracy of the content. Even for the last assignment (about global economics), two English 101C instructors said during the interview that it is difficult for them to evaluate the assignment fairly and accurately, because they are not knowledgeable about the field of economics and do not perfectly understand the news articles to which the students are supposed to respond. In contrast, content course instructors are experts in their fields, so they are in a position where they can evaluate the quality and accuracy of content, in addition to the language and structure of the produced writing.

As for the purpose of the assignments, nine different purposes were identified on the assignment sheets in disciplinary courses, as shown in Table 4.9. In cases where the assignment sheets did not directly declare a purpose, I chose the most appropriate one among the five discussed in Nesi and Gardner (2012). It should also be noted that some assignments include more than one purpose, which is why the total number adds up to 32 not 27, the number of collected assignments.
Table 4.9

*Purposes of Written Assignments in Disciplinary Courses (Based on 27 Assignment Sheets)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Demonstrating knowledge and understanding    | Reading an article relevant to your major and discussing three things you learn from the article (AESHM)  
Reading Wikipedia page about electric circuits and identify the meaning of resistor, capacitor, and inductor (EE) | 15     |
| Writing for oneself/others                   | Writing a cover letter and resume (CE)                                    | 5      |
|                                              | Interviewing an upper class student to ask about Agriculture Business program and get some advice and then writing about the conversation (ECON) |        |
| Preparing for professional practice         | Writing an executive round performance report about if the company achieved all the goals for this round and plans to improve performance in the text round (ACCT) | 3      |
| To be familiar with and increase understanding of the field | Assuming you are employed at a CPA firm and researching FASB codification to answer questions your partner asked in a form of concise memo (assignment sheet states the goal is to become comfortable and familiar with FASB standards codification) (ACCT) | 3      |
| Developing powers of informed, independent reasoning | Summarizing the financial positions of the two companies on the basis of profitability, solveney, and liquidity and indicating whether you believe the company to be a good investment based on your ratio analysis, horizontal analysis, and other research (ACCT) | 2      |
| Facilitate/prepare for meeting, class, discussion | Describing your experience during about the mentoring meeting with your advisor and classmates (assignment sheet states it is a good idea to complete this assignment within a week of meeting with the professor so you can easily recall your conversation) (ENGR) | 2      |
| Practice writing skill                       | Reading a story about biology and answering the prompt questions (assignment sheet states the objective is to improve our written communication as well as increase our understanding of what science is, what it is NOT, and how science is done) (BIO) | 1      |
As can be inferred from the prevalence of exercise and explanation genres in disciplinary writing, many assignments in the content courses share the purpose of demonstrating knowledge and understanding. Examples of such assignments are illustrated in Table 4.9. However, none of the assignments in the data aim to develop research skills, which is one of the purposes of writing assignments at the university, according to Nesi and Gardner’s (2012) analysis of British Universities; the absence of assignments aiming to develop research skills may be a result of the fact that most assignments in this data sample were collected from lower level courses.

Meanwhile, during the interview, three instructors from three different fields discussed more diverse purposes behind their writing assignments than were discussed above in the assignment sheets. These purposes are summarized in Table 4.10, and disciplines are indicated in parentheses.

Table 4.10

*purposes of written assignments in disciplinary courses (based on interviews with three content course instructors)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading a story about Biology and answering some prompt questions (Biology)</td>
<td>• Checking students’ understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflecting on what they have read/learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing remaining questions or what was particularly interesting at the end of each unit (Biology)</td>
<td>• Checking students’ understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflecting on what they have read/learned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10 continued

| Writing questions about biology using field specific terms (Biology) | • Checking students’ understanding  
• Resolving any remaining questions  
• Communicating in writing using field-specific terms  
• Practicing asking questions in the field and relating what they learn in class and what is happening in the real world  
• Earning extra credits |
| Writing short essays on four different topics (Political Science) | • Learning in-depth knowledge about one of the countries in the world  
• Applying general political concepts learned in class to one particular country  
• Learning how to choose and evaluate resources  
• Practicing writing |
| Reading comprehension assignments: Answering the prompts that ask about reading (Religious Studies) | • Helping the reading process and getting students to read the text closely |

The professor from biology was quite articulate about his assignment’s purpose during the interview; I could sense that he had designed the assignments with clear objectives in mind. All three biology assignments share the same purpose of checking students’ understanding, and the professor can correct any misunderstanding and plan for the next lesson using the feedback gained from students’ writing tasks. Students can take the opportunity during completion of these assignments to ask any remaining questions about course content or to receive some extra credit. What the biology professor highlighted most during the interview, however, was one of the purposes pertinent to the third assignment: asking questions about biology using field-specific terms.

The goal of the third assignment is a little bit different. In the end, science is really about asking questions. Sometimes it gets really fancy, but really it’s about asking questions about how the world works... When do you learn to be skilled at asking questions in
particular discipline? The answer is graduate school. It seems way too late for me.

(Instructor 33, biology, interview)

As shown in the above excerpt, the professor believes that the field of science really begins and is developed by asking questions, so he wants to encourage students to develop their own questions in the context of biology through requiring such an assignment.

Meanwhile, the professor from political science acknowledged four purposes behind her essay assignments including applying general concepts to a particular circumstance and learning how to include outside sources in writing. She also wanted to give students an opportunity to practice writing, because she believes that college education should improve the ability to competently write a short essay. By contrast, the professor in religious studies actually gives writing assignments to help with students’ reading. He provides prompt questions about course readings, since he realizes that college students often do not know what to focus on, what is important, what are the arguments that the author is trying to make, and what evidence and reasons are used to support the arguments. This religious studies professor believes that the reading and writing skills that he is trying to teach through the assignments are useful for other university courses as well.

Given the genre of writing (essay), as well as the purpose of the course, the assignments in English 101C are targeted at helping students practice writing skills and develop abilities to engage in informed, independent reasoning. However, the above tables show that the assignments in content courses usually aim to have students’ demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of key content concepts, as well as facilitate students’ learning. That is, few of the content course assignments share the same purposes with those in English 101C. Because the purposes of writing differ in English 101C and the content courses, the two groups of instructors
may not share the same perspectives in terms of evaluation, as will be seen in the following sections. Also, the difference in writing tasks may affect how much transfer occurs from English 101C to content courses.

As far as rhetorical functions are concerned, a wide range of functions were identified from the collected assignment sheets; those observed more than three times are listed in Table 4.11 below, along with a few examples of the prompts eliciting the responses.

Table 4.11

*Rhetorical Functions in Writing Assignments in Disciplinary Courses (Based on 27 Assignment Sheets)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Functions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Examples of the Prompts in Assignment Sheets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Describe             | 12        | Describe structural materials (civil engineering)  
Describe the multiple allele system of human blood types, codominance, and how blood type is inherited (biology) |
| Evaluate             | 12        | Indicate whether you believe the company to be a good investment (accounting)  
Did your company achieve the goals? What didn’t meet expectations? (accounting)  
Quality and effectiveness of the acting performances (Theatre) |
| Explain              | 12        | Why do you suppose that in the past, leisure time was associated with doing science and other forms of scholarship? (biology)  
Why you chose this article? (apparel, events, and hospitality Management) |
| Identify             | 10        | Individual responsibilities for each group member (civil engineering) |
| Interpret            | 9         | Theme or message of the play (Theatre) |
| Summarize            | 6         | Read the chapter that we went over in class and write a summary/reflection paper (psychology)  
Summarize the financial positions of the two companies (accounting) |
| Illustrate           | 5         | Notice that there are actually two creation accounts in Genesis…In what ways do they differ? Give examples (religious studies) |
| Define               | 4         | What are the definitions of cash and cash equivalents? (accounting) |
Students mainly learned how to describe, illustrate, and compare and contrast in English 101C, while they are asked to perform more diverse rhetorical functions in disciplinary courses such as describing, evaluating, explaining, identifying, and interpreting. Without enough preparation for performing a range of rhetorical functions, students might not have sufficient English proficiency to express those functions, even if they conceptually know what to write based on their writing experience in their native language.

Finally, concerning the length of the assignments, it was discovered from the analysis that most writing assignments in disciplinary courses are shorter than those in English 101C. In English 101C, except for the very first assignment that asks students to write a paragraph of 300-400 words, all essays have the length requirement of about 750 words, and students usually meet this requirement by writing four or five paragraphs. Out of the 27 assignments collected from the sampled content courses, 12 specify the length requirement while 15 do not, in which case I referred to students’ writing samples to gather a rough estimate. As can be seen in Table 4.12, some instructors specify the length requirement in words while others enumerate it in the number of pages, paragraphs, or sentences.

Table 4.12

Length Requirements of the 27 Writing Assignments in 16 Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Length Requirement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>600-1000 words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>1 page (250 words)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 pages (250-500 words)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 pages (500-750 words)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4+ pages (1000 words +)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>One paragraph (150 words)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A few paragraphs (300-450 words)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence</td>
<td>A few sentences (75w)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7- sentences (175 words -)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the purpose of comparison, all the units are converted to and indicated in the number of words in parentheses assuming that a page is 250 words, a paragraph is 150 words, and a sentence is 25 words. The table shows that 23 out of 27 assignments ask students to write less than 500 words, which is less than most English 101C assignments (typically 750 words required). This implies that students need to know how to answer prompts or questions in a more concise and direct way, as well as how to develop an argument throughout a relatively long text.

On the other hand, students’ perceptions of the similarities and differences of assignments in English 101C and content courses were analyzed based on a student survey that asked participants to copy and paste one written assignment given in disciplines other than English and compare it with English 101C assignments. Among the 42 students who participated in this survey, four mentioned that English 101C and the content course assignments are similar in terms of the required three-part organization (introduction, body, and conclusion), expectations for appropriate grammar, and provision of supporting details or evidence to justify arguments. Meanwhile, three of the 42 participating students remarked that both English 101C and disciplinary course assignments require formal, academic English. Other similarities, such as importance of clarity and use of transitions, were mentioned by only one or two students.

Regarding differences between writing assignments in the courses, 14 out of 42 students mentioned genre distinctions. Students usually write reports about experiments, research papers, or simply short answers to a series of questions in disciplinary courses, whereas English 101C assignments are all essays. The next most frequently mentioned differences involved a diminished importance of grammar (eight out of 42 students mentions) and no requirement for integrating the three-part essay structure (seven out of 42 mentions) in content course
assignments. The answers about grammar and organization may seem contradictory in that the same were noted as similarities above, but this could be due to the different fields in which students study. The heavy use of technical or field-specific terms in content course assignments were factors cited by four students. The differences recalled by three students include the requirement of research and data analyses, as well as the importance of the content itself and being concise in the writing. Other differences, such as inclusion of equations/formula and importance of content accuracy, were mentioned by only one or two students.

To summarize, based on my analyses of assignment sheets and instructor interviews, English 101C and disciplinary course assignments differed in terms of genre, topic, information source, purpose, rhetorical functions, and length, although they were similar in that the target audience of the writing is course instructors. According to survey data, differences perceived by students include genre differences, diminished importance of grammar, and no requirement of a three-part structure, whereas some students noted the structure of writing, expectations of proper grammar, and provision of supporting details or evidence as similarities between English 101C and content course assignments.

Answering the second research question involved an attempt to see if one of the assumptions (the characteristics of the English 101C assessment tasks closely corresponding to the writing tasks required in university courses) included in the extrapolation inference (that the construct of academic writing competence assessed by the English 101C assessment accounts for the kind of academic writing skills required in a university setting) is or is not met within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment scores. Given that the goal of English 101C is to prepare students for writing in English 150 and other disciplinary courses, English 101C assignments would be more helpful if they are more similar
to the assignments in other courses. However, given the results shown in this section, the second assumption of the extrapolation inference is not well supported, especially because students tend to notice more differences than similarities. Also, the lack of relevance in terms of writing tasks may affect correspondence of evaluation criteria and procedures in these courses, the third assumption in the extrapolation inference that will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3. Evaluation Criteria and Procedures in English 101C, English 150, and Disciplinary Courses

This section answers the third research question regarding the correspondence of evaluation criteria and procedures in English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses. In order to answer this question, scoring rubrics, instructor interviews, and assessment results (scores and feedback) on students’ writings obtained from natural classroom setting as well as experimental condition were examined. The results show that the rubrics in the three courses contain many shared evaluation criteria, although different emphases on the various criteria, as well as some qualities highly expected in only one or two courses, were observed. The findings from the interview and feedback data also indicate that the three groups of instructors share many evaluation criteria despite the fact that some criteria deserve more attention from English 150 (e.g., audience consideration, clear purpose of writing) or content course instructors (e.g., conciseness, accurateness) than English 101C teachers. The analyses of scores suggest that severity among English 101 and 150 instructors represents more of an individual difference than group difference.
4.3.1. Comparison of Evaluation Rubrics

4.3.1.1. Comparison of evaluation rubrics in English 101C and 150.

In both writing courses, every assignment comes with its own rubric, all of which are based on the same five evaluation criteria (context, substance, organization, style, and delivery). Given the students’ familiarity with these criteria from their English 101C experience, they are expected to have a solid understanding of what each criterion means in English 150. However, in the analysis of rubrics, some marked differences were noticed as well. English 101C uses a five-point scale (with the degrees of extra, good, okay, some, and lack), but there is no explanation for what each point on the scale means. By contrast, the rubric for English 150 uses a four-point scale (with the levels of excellent, good, fair, and needs work), and explains what each point represents in terms of the degree of necessary revisions. For example, excellent means that a “writer responds thoughtfully and creatively, requiring little or no revision” while fair means a “writer responds mostly competently, requiring focused, substantive revision.” Such descriptions not only help students to understand what each score means, but also show the relevance to the notion of process writing.

Another noticeable difference between English 101C and 150 rubrics is that the rubrics used in English 150 provide detailed descriptors of the features of writing corresponding to each level across every evaluation criterion. This allows students to distinguish the characteristics of an excellent, good, or fair conclusion, for example. The rubric states that an “excellent conclusion sums up main points and leaves the reader with something to think about; good conclusion sums up main points; fair conclusion may be general or cliché.” That is, whether a writer provides some additional idea to think about determines whether the conclusion is excellent or good, and whether a writer simply uses a general cliché or really sums up the main
points of a particular essay determines whether it constitutes a *good* or *fair* conclusion. However, the English 101C rubrics only state that “a concluding paragraph reinforces the connection between the parts and the whole,” seeming to imply that the decision of the conclusion’s quality depends on the amount of desired quality. It does not specifically indicate to students how *extra* and *good* conclusions can be differentiated.

Other than these generic variations, additional differences were uncovered in the way that each criterion is evaluated. As for context, instructors using the English 101C rubric are looking for whether an introduction contains a thesis statement with controlling ideas, as well as sufficient background information, thereby successfully setting up the context of the topic. In addition to these elements, instructors using the English 150 rubric are also looking for whether the purpose of the writing is clear so that readers are not left with “so what” questions and whether the audience’s needs and interests are satisfied. Also, an introduction should not be based on a cliché, but be original and engaging. A further difference is found in how the quality of a good thesis statement is explained. English 101C rubrics describe what a thesis should contain very specifically and what kinds of language should be used (e.g., using parallel forms). Also, the characteristics of a good thesis change in the assignment-specific rubric. Thus, students do not need to think about what kind of thesis statement works best in a particular essay. In contrast, English 150 rubrics consistently articulate that a thesis should be clear and succinct, but never mention any particular linguistic form, whatever assignment is being evaluated. Thus, students have a great deal of freedom in what and how to write the thesis statement, as long as it is clear and succinct. This means, however, that students truly need to consider the purpose, audience, and main points of an essay to come up with a thesis that works best in a particular paper.
Considering substance, instructors using both rubrics are concerned with supporting details and relevance as well as whether required rhetorical tasks are performed according to the assignment sheets. Other than these, English 150 rubrics also consider if the substance is appropriate for the intended audience and if it is presented in an interesting and vivid manner. Furthermore, an essay should address the significance of the topic the student chose so that readers can see why a writer chose one topic over another. Because English 150 assignments require research and citations, their rubrics also concern how well a writer blends secondary sources with personal insights where the depth of insights and ideas also matters.

Regarding organization, instructors utilizing both English 101C and 150 rubrics look for a clear topic sentence and supporting details in each body paragraph, good use of transitions, a close relationship between a thesis and what is actually discussed in body, and a logical flow. However, English 150 rubrics additionally examine whether the organization pays attention to the audience’s needs and whether an essay is organized originally and innovatively as well as logically. In terms of the conclusion, it would suffice to simply restate a thesis in English 101C, but students need to provide a notion for readers to think about in order to receive an excellent score in English 150.

With respect to style, English 101C rubrics only attend to grammar and mechanics and focus on a few specific grammar points, such as the use of noun phrases and adjective clauses, that are taught in each corresponding instructional unit. English 150 rubrics additionally incorporate considerations of stylistic issues such as appropriateness of language for a target audience, clarity and maturity of writing, and a variety of sentence structure. Regarding delivery, both rubrics address document formatting, such as fonts and margins, but English 150 rubrics additionally allude to the use of MLA citations and the integration of visuals. However, such
differences in delivery could be merely due to the different nature and requirements of the assignments, not necessarily different perspectives on student writing.

To conclude, the rubrics used in the two courses share many evaluation criteria (e.g., the five generic criteria, a clear thesis statement and sufficient background information in the introduction, provision of supporting details and relevance of discussion to the main points, clear topics sentences and proper transitions, and grammatical accuracy). At the same time, some differences were observed as well. In general, English 150 concerns more kinds of qualities (e.g., clear purpose, audience consideration, and originality/engagingness) in addition to that evaluated in English 101C, as repeatedly mentioned in the descriptors of each evaluation criterion. If students only notice that the two courses use the same five evaluation criteria, but overlook the details of what each criterion is looking for in English 150, they may not be able to receive a score that is as good as what they earned in English 101C. It is important for students to answer the “so what” questions, adapt their content and writing style depending on the target audience, and make writing more creative and engaging once they move onto English 150, because English 150 instructors pay attention to these qualities, a finding that will be shown later in the discussion of the interview data. Also, it appears that English 150 rubrics urge students to find writing styles that work best for the given purpose and audience instead of deciding what to include and how to develop an argument for their paper for students. This means that students need to gain rhetorical knowledge, which is emphasized in the English 150 curriculum, develop the ability to analyze purpose, audience, and context of each written assignment, and then compose a wide range of texts based on such rhetorical analyses.
4.3.1.2. Comparison of evaluation rubrics in English 101C and disciplinary courses.

Among the 27 assignment sheets collected from content courses, only eight were accompanied by grading rubrics/guidelines. Due to the small amount of data, it would be unreasonable to draw generalizing conclusions based on the analysis of rubrics about evaluation criteria used to assess writing assignments in the content courses. However, it would be still interesting and valuable to compare the rubrics provided in the content courses with those used in English 101C in order to see what differences students may encounter, as this would be helpful for students and instructors.

Except for the one rubric from political science, which contains four criteria (content; research and citations; organization and structure; and grammar, punctuation, and spelling) with detailed descriptors and specifies weights for each, rubrics in the content courses are, generally, not as detailed as those given in English 101C. The rubric for the project report in mechanical engineering includes five criteria (coefficient, quality, clarity, accuracy, and completion) without any further explanation of the assessed aspects. For the purpose of comparison, each evaluation criterion mentioned in the content course rubrics was categorized into five groups of criteria (context, substance, organization, style, and delivery) used in English 101C rubrics. For example, “your project must follow the format requirements above” in the biology rubric was placed in the delivery category, while “be sure to include a topic sentence in each paragraph” in the civil engineering rubric fits into organization. The frequency of occurrence of each evaluation criterion included in the content course rubrics was categorized by category and counted, as can be seen in Table 4.13.
Table 4.13

_Evaluation Criteria in Eight Content Course Rubrics_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Category</th>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Each Evaluation Criterion</th>
<th>Percentage of Each Evaluation Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Context: audience consideration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction (forecasting)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addressing the assigned topic/question</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding of the subject matter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarity (content &amp; organization)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citation/research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paragraph breaks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic sentence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Format (presentation)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Sketch/figures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citation style (delivery?)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that substance-related evaluation criteria are included in the rubrics most frequently (38%), followed by style (25%), organization (16%), delivery (15%), and context (6%). It should be noted, however, that the category of higher frequency does not necessarily
represent the category of more importance in terms of weight given to the category; for example, although style is alluded to more than organization, instructors may give more weight to the structure of students’ writing than to grammatical accuracy. Because instructors usually do not specify the weight given for each criterion, what is considered more important at the time of grading is still unknown.

Evaluation criteria regarding substance include accuracy, completeness (accounting), clearly presenting answers to each question, using ideas from class, the course textbook, and the article in presenting answers (biology), quality of the information, understanding of structure systems (civil engineering), systematically addressing these seven key elements (political science), and responding to writing assignment topic (religious studies). Among substance-related criteria, clarity is most frequently included, which is followed by relevance to the given topic/question, accuracy, and use of citations/research. In the English 101C rubrics, the use of supporting details and relevance to the topic are primarily judged to be part of the substance category and, therefore, are taught and evaluated over the semester. Given that content course instructors also mention those two criteria in their rubrics, what international students have learned in English 101C may help them to complete the writing assignments in other university courses. However, some substance-related criteria that are considered important in content courses, such as depth of knowledge in subject matter, accuracy of content, depth of research, and incorporation of source materials, are not extensively taught and evaluated in English 101C.

Evaluation criteria regarding style, such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and quality of English, are extensively found in content course rubrics. While it is unknown how much weight is given for each of these criteria at the time of grading, the elements are included in almost all the rubrics. Actually, a few rubrics seem to strongly emphasize style. For example, the rubric in
biology asserts that style is only worth three points out of 30 points, but improper written English can impact students receiving high scores in other categories such as substance and organization of writing. Similarly, the rubric used in the political science course specifies that style is only worth 10% of the total grade, but if a paper contains more than five grammatical, spelling, or word usage errors, it will receive zero points for this category. One of the assignments collected from this course actually received zero points for style, which led to a low total score despite the writing’s strong performance in other categories. The instructor said in her feedback on the received assignment, “You did a good job of discussing most of the required content. Very nice job of citing with in-text citations and using scholarly sources. Unfortunately many spelling/grammar errors,” and gave a 78 out of 100 possible points. In such cases, international students may receive a low score due to their low English proficiency, despite having and demonstrating adequate knowledge of the subject matter.

On the other hand, compared to the considerable importance placed on organization of essays in English 101C, this area does not receive much attention in content course rubrics. Criteria regarding organization of writing include “transitions between parts of the paper are smooth and effective;” “as a minimum the report should have three paragraphs: an introductory paragraph, a main paragraph, and a concluding paragraph;” and “be sure to include a topic sentence in each paragraph.” Fortunately, since all the mentioned components are extensively taught and evaluated in English 101C, students should be familiar with them.

In terms of delivery, content course rubrics are concerned with document formatting, such as length, spacing, margins, text font and size, all of which most instructors specify clearly on either the rubrics or the assignment sheets. The rubric from political science is also concerned with citation style and states that “sources are appropriately documented in text and in a Works
Cited page,” because the assignment requires extensive research and incorporation of primary sources. On the other hand, the rubric used in civil engineering is also concerned with the use of sketches and figures, which makes sense given that the assignment is about the analysis of local civil structures (e.g., buildings, bridges, and utility towers). Although citation and integration of visuals is discussed and evaluated in English 150, these elements do not receive attention in English 101C.

Finally, context-related criteria, which are considered significant in English 101C, were found to receive the least attention in content courses, accounting for only 6% of all evaluation criteria. The rubrics from political science and religious studies mention that the paper should include a clear introductory paragraph that indicates what the paper will be examining. Although the rubrics do not use the technical terms, such as thesis statement, they directly signify the use of a clear thesis/forecasting statement, which is emphasized and evaluated in English 101C. By comparison, another context-related criterion was found in the rubric from accounting. The instructor even uses the term “context” in the rubric and states that it means “proper writing for an intended audience.” Audience consideration, however, does not receive much attention in English 101C, although it is emphasized in the English 150 rubrics. Context-related criteria (e.g., a clear thesis statement in the introduction) are not mentioned often in content course rubrics, potentially because of the genre of the assignments, whose majority are in the explanation and exercise, not essay, genre families.

To summarize, compared with grading rubrics used in English 101C, the rubrics used in disciplinary courses are more concerned with substance and style and less concerned with context. Commonly found evaluation criteria include use of supporting details, relevance to topic, grammatical/mechanical accuracy, use of transitions and topic sentences, document formatting,
and forecasting statements in the introduction. Although there is no guarantee that students can seamlessly apply what was learned and evaluated in English 101C to content course assignments, the evaluation criteria repeatedly mentioned in the English 101C rubrics should be, at least, familiar to and better understood by students. On the other hand, what was found in content course rubrics, but not in English 101C rubrics, include depth of knowledge in subject matter, accuracy of content, depth of research, use of sources and citations, integration of visuals, and audience consideration. Given that content course instructors consider writing as a medium for displaying and demonstrating how well students understand disciplinary knowledge (Leki & Carson, 1997; Nesi & Gardner, 2012), less emphasis on the content accuracy and depth of knowledge in English 101C can be a matter of great concern, especially if students develop a habit of neglecting its importance.

Ultimately, however, evaluation is accomplished by the instructors, not the rubrics themselves. Therefore, the evaluation criteria actually used in the grading process depends on how the instructors use the rubric. To paint a more complete picture of the writing evaluation process, it would be useful to investigate teachers’ individual perspectives, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3.2. Comparison of Instructor Interviews

In the previous section, scoring rubrics used in English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses were examined. Rubrics play a significant role in the grading process by specifying to instructors what evaluation criteria they should apply and how many points on the scale to consider. However, instructors may evaluate the same essay differently, despite the fact that the same rubric is externally provided by the department, as their assessments also depend
on their general perceptions of good writing as well as their backgrounds and teaching experiences. To examine these perceptions more in depth, interviews were conducted with the three groups of instructors (eight English 101C, ten English 150, and four content course instructors) to determine what they consider during their evaluations. The first set of interview questions concerns instructors’ perceptions of good writing, the second is about grammar errors, and the third regards the evaluation process and standards. The content in this section is organized in the order of questions through comparisons of the three groups of instructors.

4.3.2.1. Perceptions of good writing.

Good writing.

The first question asked to all instructors who participated in the interview regarded their general perceptions of good writing. The participating instructors were asked to say whatever comes to their mind when they think of “good writing,” preferably in terms of their teaching contexts. Out of the eight English 101C instructors interviewed, seven identified good organization or structure as a critical condition for good writing. By good organization, they meant organizing ideas in a coherent manner, including three parts of the essay (introduction, body, and conclusion), having a clear thesis statement in the introduction, having a topic sentence in each paragraph, and ensuring topic sentences match what was mentioned in the thesis statement. Two instructors even remarked that good organization is most important for obtaining a good score:

A clear structure with clear thesis statement, controlling idea, make sure topic sentence match those controlling ideas. When I grade, I first look at this. If they do a good job on this, they have a higher chance to get a good score. (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)
The most important is the structure, and also the writer needs to make his meanings/idea across to the audience. Those are two most important things. In terms of the structure, I expect them to have a very clear introduction, different body paragraphs, and conclusion. And the body paragraph is consistent with their thesis statement, I think this is important as a first step to writing research paper, I think it’s a preparation. It’s different from free writing. (Instructor 6, ENGL 101C, interview)

Other than good organization, understandability of the message (three of eight English 101C instructors mentioned), clear purpose, appropriate vocabulary, grammatical accuracy (two of eight mentioned, respectively), relevance to the topic, appropriate transitions, sufficient and specific supporting details, and having a focus (one of eight, each) were mentioned as elements of good writing. Interestingly, Instructor 5 defined good writing from a learning point of view, arguing that as long as an essay contains all the elements learned in class, it is considered good writing:

Well I look for in my students’ papers whether they are good papers or not is if people are applying what we learned in class and so, When they come into the class, I’m expecting them to be bad writers I suppose, but as long as they’re applying what we are doing in class in their papers, then I would say they are good writers, so having like a topic sentence and supporting details, and just being clear about the order of their body paragraphs, I guess I would call that a good writer and expanding on their ideas, but I don’t know. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

When English 150 instructors were asked the same question, they also mentioned organization most (nine of ten English 150 instructors mentioned). While six of the nine instructors generally described good writing as including a good structure or a logical flow of
ideas, three of the nine defined it more specifically by mentioning the incorporation of a hook, a clear thesis statement, and a clear conclusion, based on the curriculum given from the department, as exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

Well, to certain degree, I have to go by what was given to me. ISUComm has a particular vision for what they want. When I came in, they gave me training, they gave us rubric … so I was very much looking for certain structure for the papers where they have hook at the beginning, to establish the topic was important or interesting, there would be a clear thesis statement with forecasting statements giving the topics in the body paragraphs, and clear conclusion after body paragraphs, and things like that. (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

The next most frequently mentioned element of good writing was audience consideration (six of ten English 150 instructors mentioned), which none of the English 101C instructors noted. In English 150, students are expected to write with an audience in mind rather than writing just for the sake of completing an assignment. Instructor 22 said she spends some class time discussing the importance of having an imaginary audience and explaining what it means for writing:

One of the first lessons that I teach every semester is, have imagined audience no matter what you say, you need your imagined audience for your presentation or for paper, so imagine the reader they know nothing about you as a person, they don’t even know you are in college, inform them of everything they need to know before you try to build on that. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)
Instructor 24 also noted that audience consideration has recently become more important in the English 150 curriculum, due to guidelines from the government that encourage writing for a particular audience:

Another big part of ISUComm especially become focused on this year has been audience. At the beginning of the school year, we had a big meeting because there was some new guidelines from the government about how things were supposed to be done, and they wanted to emphasize even more the audience, I was trying to focus even more on it in my class more often, so audience sensitivity, writing for particular audience. (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, five of the ten interviewed English 150 instructors identified having a clear thesis statement and well developed/supported ideas important elements of good writing. As a means of expanding upon ideas, the instructors mentioned doing research and incorporating source materials as well as providing specific details and examples. Intelligibility was another aspect of good writing noted by four English 150 teachers. Although the English 150 curriculum and grading rubrics underscore originality and innovativeness in terms of ideas and organization to engage the audience, instructors place much more emphasis on the clear communication of the message, as one instructor said, for example: “Good writing is something that is clear and very intelligible, doesn’t have to be poetic or creative, but something that gets the point across very clearly for the reader” (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview).

Clear purpose of writing and mechanical accuracy were cited by only three English 150 instructors respectively, but it is worth paying attention to what they mean by clear purpose, because this is highly emphasized throughout the English 150 curriculum, yet rarely taught and
discussed in English 101C. Having a clear purpose in writing basically means that a paper is communicating something important and worthwhile, as Instructor 25 remarked:

Good writing has something important to say and finds ways to convince the reader that that is something important. It’s that there is a broader sort of significance, it’s not just an exercise, I mean you can do a little bit of writing exercise, and you can still develop your writing ability, those are valid writing experiences, but you wouldn’t come a way and says that this is a good writing. Good writing has to sort of transcend those mechanical aspects of writing to actually communicate something worthwhile. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

Clearly communicating the purpose of writing is in line with students answering the “so what” question, which is consistently mentioned in English 150 scoring rubrics. For example, the rubric for Assignment 2 indicates that in order to receive an excellent for the context criterion, the “purpose for writing should be clear and provide an answer to the reader’s ‘so what’” question.” This “so what” term is understood by Instructor 15 as follows: “Why are we talking about this, why is it important, what aspect of this deserves attention, it’s not just hey mom let me tell you about library, why does your mom want to know or why do you want to tell her because that’s the first step to getting the focus” (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview).

For comparison purposes, three instructors from accounting, political science, and religious studies were asked about their perceptions of good writing. (The instructor in biology who discussed the assignments completed in his course did not answer this question, because he claimed to give grades on assignments only based on completeness and not really evaluate the quality of the writing.) There were two qualities mentioned by all the three interviewed content
course instructors. One concerned the relevance of writing to given topics/questions, as can be observed in the following interview excerpt:

    I want the students to answer the question, the major questions of the essay quickly. I don’t want a lot of extraneous information like Russia is a large country in northern Europe. There are a few students who will start an essay saying things like Russia is a large country in northern Europe according to the CIA world fact book it was blab blab blab population no things that are absolutely irrelevant to the question of the essay and extremely general that they are not answering the question. (Instructor 34, political science, interview)

Instructor 34 expects students to answer the given questions quickly and directly and does not want to see any irrelevant information, especially because students are supposed to answer several questions in a relatively short paper of 350-500 words, which means the writing may consist of only two or three paragraphs.

    Another element mentioned by all three instructors was mechanics (e.g., spelling, grammar, and punctuation). According to the instructor in religious studies, even though grammatical accuracy is not as important as the quality of the answer or a clear introductory paragraph, its role should not be underestimated, because it affects the clarity of the writing:

    Sometimes they [what makes some sentences not making sense] are simple, grammatical things like run on sentences. That go on so long that I can’t understand the point or I see too many points are being made, issue of clarity, sometimes sentences that are cut off in the middle with no reason, those are things of unclarity that I encounter. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)
Two of the content course instructors also identified comprehensibility as a condition for good writing. In particular, the instructor from accounting underscored that, although the concepts discussed in the assignments are complicated, the language should not be overly complex. She also added that a major authoritative body in accounting published a guideline stating that writing done in the field should be understandable by 8th graders.

The qualities of good writing that content course instructors discussed above were mentioned by English 101C instructors as well. However, Instructor 36 in accounting further noted two qualities that are unheeded in writing courses; one is the conciseness of student writing. In English 101C, students are supposed to write relatively long essays, provide sufficient background information in consideration of readers, and expand upon their ideas with supporting details and examples, as shown in the interview data above. In the accounting course, however, the opposite is often preferred, given that the purpose of writing is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and the target audience is the course instructor, who is knowledgeable about the questions students are asked to answer. The other quality encompasses being correct in terms of content knowledge. In English 101C, students are required to discuss their role model and their own culture based on their own thoughts and opinions, and, therefore, the accuracy of content does not matter much. Also, even if students provide inaccurate information, instructors may not notice it. However, Instructor 36 in accounting characterized her field as a field of reporting and said that writing a correct report, by reasonably reflecting on what has actually happened in the world, is highly important.

To summarize, English 101C and 150 instructors cited good organization most frequently as an element of good writing, whereas content course instructors mentioned mechanical accuracy, as well as relevance of writing to the given topic/prompt, most frequently. What was
commonly mentioned by all three groups of instructors was comprehensibility of writing. What were considered relatively more important by English 150 instructors compared with English 101C teachers included development of ideas with supporting details, audience consideration, and clear purpose of writing, the last two of which are particularly consistent with the English 150 rubrics. On the other hand, what were regarded as relatively more important by content course instructors included conciseness, correctness, and relevance to the prompt. If the purpose of English 101C is to prepare international students for completing writing assignments in other university courses and help them to receive successful evaluations from other groups of instructors, English 101C instructors may consider paying more attention to meeting the needs of the audience, addressing the purpose of writing clearly, and expanding upon ideas as well as writing in a concise, correct, and relevant manner.

**Good substance.**

Because “what is good writing?” is a fairly broad question, I went into more detail by asking instructors about good substance, organization, and style, separately. As a response to “what makes good substance,” six out of eight English 101C instructors mentioned well-supported or well-developed ideas with specific, detailed examples. For instance, Instructor 5 responded:

Some 101C students will give examples from their own personal life, but it will be a very short example, like just a sentence, and it will be very general and very basic. But some of the really good writers that I have, they brought in like facts from some article, they may give a personal example, but they expand on it, and they give details, so if they have
their topic sentence and then they give their some kind of general statements and they
give their details that’s very expansive and pretty. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

Another English 101C instructor noted, however, that some students misunderstand developing
ideas as making a series of general statements, rather than providing specific details, to support a
general statement:

Substance has to specifically name and describe. It has to illustrate. It has to paint a
picture. Again what happens is there becomes generality. You can make a general
statement, and then make another general statement, and then make another general
statement. And students think they developed their topic or they developed their
paragraph because they put a lot of sentences that named a lot of things. (Instructor 7,
ENGL 101C, interview)

The next frequently mentioned aspect of good substance was relevance to the given topic
(five of eight English 101C instructors mentioned). Two of the five instructors also stated during
the interview that some first drafts they receive are completely off topic, and they attributed this
to students not carefully reading the instructions on the assignment sheets. Other aspects of good
substance discussed by the instructors included being specific instead of making a series of
general statements and providing sufficient background information so that readers can
understand the main points of essay.

Because English 150 rubrics emphasize originality and engagement of the audience, as a
follow-up question, I also asked English 101C instructors if having creative and interesting
content matters, and three of the seven asked responded “yes.” For instance, Instructor 3
responded:
I: Oh yes. Sometimes I say write something fun for me. Write something interesting to me. If you do that, your score may become higher. I even say so. You know most of them just try to submit the assignment. They are not thinking writing as an art or something. So if there’s something interesting, creativity, I will highlight this is very interesting.

R: What do you mean by interesting?

I: I would say to interpret a certain point, the way to interpret the point, so maybe people would say eating pizza, usually it’s bad. But if someone can say eating pizza is actually good and why is it good. This for me is an interesting point. So you are really thinking about it. You are not just writing because of the writing. (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)

It seems that Instructor 3 looks for a unique perspective in terms of approaching a topic and making an argument. Also, she does not want students to write just for the sake of practicing writing, although the purpose of English 101C involves learning how to write.

On the contrary, the other four English 101C instructors remarked that interesting or creative content does not necessarily contribute to a higher score on student essays, although they personally enjoy reading it as a reader. Instructor 6 said that writing an interesting essay is too advanced given the level of English 101C students, and that there are many other basic skills to be covered in English 101C:

It’s important, but it’s not required for 101C students. Most students, they are still struggling with contents, putting appropriate information, providing sufficient supporting ideas. And for that one [interesting], it could be something for really advanced level,
maybe for 150 or 250. There are so many things to address like grammar, content in my class. (Instructor 6, ENGL 101C, interview)

Instructor 7 also said that there are too many writing skills to teach in English 101C, so she cannot take into consideration the interesting or engaging parts of student writing. More importantly, given that the purpose of English 101C is to prepare international students for writing in other courses, she does not feel the need to teach how to write an interesting, engaging essay:

Do they need flowery, engaging introduction for their lab reports in chemistry? No, so I want them to get formal structure that the introductions are providing framework, there’s a thesis statement, definitely that’s gotta be there. But when you tell students at this level make it engaging, you will get bunch of sentences that have exclamation points after them. It will read like a really bad tour pamphlet. In 101C, we have to pick our battles. We can’t fight every battle. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

Another follow-up question regarding good substance is accuracy of content, because it is considered quite important in disciplinary courses in which the purpose of writing assignments is often for students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding (Leki & Carson, 1997). Two of the seven questioned instructors confessed they actually had never thought about the truth of the content, because English 101C centers more on teaching students organization and writing strategies. Thus, these instructors simply assumed that all content is accurate in students’ papers, because they mostly are discussing themselves or their own cultures. Meanwhile, two out of the seven English 101C instructors said the importance of content accuracy depends on the assignments. In terms of expressing their personal opinion, it is okay for students to make things up for the purpose of completing the assignments, but when it comes to summarizing an article,
which is required in Assignment 4, all the information should be accurately represented. One of the two also highlighted the importance of content accuracy as a preparation for written assignments in other disciplinary courses, remarking “They can make things up, but the content should be accurate for Assignment 4. It’s on the rubric too. Also you really need to show off you know in most of your writing assignments in university. There’s gonna be an instructor making sure you understand the material you read” (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview).

In contrast, three of the seven English 101C instructors are not concerned with content accuracy in their evaluations, because of their ignorance about the topic and the course’s focus on organization, not content; also this lack of concern stems from an aim to ensure fairness, as exemplified in the following interview excerpts:

Accuracy doesn’t matter much because the purpose is “learn to write.” Also, I don’t know the content either. I tell my students to google it and cite it or make it up. (Instructor 2, ENGL 101C, interview)

I don’t take off points for inaccurate information. It’s not fair if I take off points of Chinese students because I only know about China. Even for Assignment 4, I didn’t comment on the accuracy of content because I’m not sure either about that economy related topic. As long as what they say makes sense within their own paper, I accepted it. But accuracy of info may be important when it comes to writing in other courses.

(Instructor 6, ENGL 101C, interview)

The cited instructors above do not or cannot evaluate the truth of the content first, because they are not knowledgeable about the topics. Also, Instructor 2 thinks that the purpose of her class is learning how to write mostly in terms of the structure of an academic essay, so the content itself is not a big concern. In addition, Instructor 6 was reluctant to evaluate content, due to the issue of
fairness. When the essays are about students’ own culture, Instructor 6, as a Chinese person, can
determine the truth of the content when it is about China, whereas she has no choice but to
believe whatever students say about other cultures, which is disadvantageous to Chinese students.
It is worth highlighting, however, that Instructor 6 is also aware that the accuracy of content is
highly important in other disciplinary courses.

The same set of questions about good substance was also asked to English 150 instructors.
The most frequently mentioned aspect of good substance is well-developed or well-supported
ideas (seven of ten English 150 instructors mentioned). This same important aspect was cited by
English 101C instructors, as discussed earlier. Even though English 101C emphasizes the
development of ideas with supporting details and the teachers strive to develop these skills in
their students, English 150 instructors feel that students still struggle to support their ideas, as
shown in Instructor 19’s response:

You always need to support your claims. If you have vague claims, that’s not good
writing. What happens in 150, unfortunately, is that you have students that throw these
ideas on paper and think that they have a good writing. But they have said I love this, but
why do you love this, they don’t get into the details. You have general claims, but you do
not have the details to support that. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)

Another element of good substance that was discussed by two English 150 instructors,
but not by English 101C teachers, was depth of thoughts, or discussion. For example, for
Assignment 2, which involves analysis of a place on the campus, Instructor 15 expects students
to produce more than simple statements to discuss the place’s significance and relation to the
purpose of the university. Meanwhile, for Assignment 4, which asks students to describe a
building or piece of art on the campus, Instructor 16 expects to find critical interpretations and insights in the writing, not just mere descriptions:

Where I see good versus excellent [content] in terms of rubric is are they able to go into some sort of deeper perspective of significance, since a lot of our assignments are focused on a place, can they delve into, not just this is a good place for me to eat, what does it mean to have a good place for me to eat on campus, and how they relate to the purpose of university. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

For example, one of the assignments, they have to go and analyze building or piece of art, so I want them to understand this is your interpretation first, your whole idea, it’s what you are gonna taking throughout the analysis and you support it with outside sources, looking to see how critically they can think about an art piece, some students have more insights than other students. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

Other aspects of good substance mentioned by English 150 instructors included relevance of the discussion to the topic, conciseness of the writing, faithfulness to the directions for the assignments, being interesting, having a good thesis, incorporating strong, valid information from research, and enabling readers to understand the significance of the points.

Again, as a follow-up question, English 150 instructors were asked if students should write an interesting essay to receive a higher grade. Just as it is emphasized throughout the English 150 curriculum, most instructors (eight of ten) said “yes.” Instructor 25 explained that composing an engaging text is important, because it may not otherwise capture the readers’ interest:

Absolutely, I think the purpose of English 150 and 250 is as I understand it, to prepare students for writing situations after that class is over. And that includes academic
situations and that also includes professional and civic writing situations as well. In academia, your instructors are required to read your work, but outside academia, that is not the case. So if the writing is not engaging and doesn’t show sort of an awareness of audience’s needs, regardless of the main points of the substance, if they aren’t communicating effectively, the piece of writing might not even get read outside of academia. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

In addition, because what is considered interesting/original/creative is subjective, English 150 instructors were asked how they define “interesting.” Instructor 22 discussed creative or interesting in terms of usage of metaphors, comparisons, and symbolism, instead of a focus solely on straightforward facts and use of simple statements and compound sentences. Other than her, however, most instructors explained “interesting” in terms of engaging an audience by using some hooks and strategies typically used in an introduction, as well as providing fresh perspectives on a topic:

When the person started to say something that was unique and went a little bit further with their research, or they focus on different aspect of it, or their own interpretation, that was more interesting and creative. I also think that their hooks which we talked about and their titles making sure that they engage their audience. When it comes to interesting, I think it’s more about audience engagement, just making sure that they are thinking about that. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

Well, going beyond common knowledge. If you are gonna just tell general audience what they already know, who’s going to listen to that? … So it’s not necessarily topic selection, but the angle and information that you are focusing on within that topic. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)
Because there is a tendency that people have a very short attention span, and so if you don’t have something right at the beginning that establishes that this matters to me, then most people will just pass over your paper. That’s why I was encouraging my students to establish whatever their topic is they should find a way to make it connect to people, statistics, personal anecdote, startling fact, or question or whatever. (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

On the other hand, two of the ten interviewed English 150 instructors were not highly concerned with an interesting essay, despite its importance in the English 150 curriculum and in the instructors’ home disciplines such as literature and creative writing. Both Instructor 16 and 22 tend to focus less on the creative and interesting aspects of student writing, deeming them unnecessary in most university courses:

I try to teach creative side is not as important as getting in background information or whatever your reader needs to know in order to understand your argument, so I try to focus on background and that thesis. I think at the collegiate level, looking at kind of that creative hook, I do look at that and I do teach to that, but that’s more high school, when you get to college and more academic areas, we don’t spend time writing like here’s a story or here’s a quote, we do it in some ways, but I’m trying to get them to see writing as a one step above that kind of high school-ish. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

I try not to just because I know it’s unfair, it’s something that I really like and I value about, but I understand that a lot of my students are not coming from that same background, and to be honest a lot of what they want to go into, they are in science majors or political science majors or anything, or you can just major in what doesn't require a lot of writing, just basic writing is what they need to learn, so if I focus on
creativity, I’m not preparing for what they should be doing. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)

When the ten English 150 instructors were asked about the accuracy of the content, all of them said accuracy matters in the English 150 context:

It’s really easy to kind of verify if the information is correct or not, but I did have a couple of problems where people got some of the facts confused when they were writing papers, then I had to say well you have to think about if this is what the sources is saying, I think that can become very tricky when they are working with sources because that could run into problems like plagiarism, not even taking it how it is supposed to mean, so I think that’s very important. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

It’s incredibly important to ethically represent someone else’s words, and so I do think that it’s important in scholarship, for their own credibility, to represent their sources accurately and fairly. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

According to these instructors, the truth of the content seems to matter due to the topics of the assignments (e.g., a place, organization, or piece of art on ISU campus), as well as the requirement of doing research and incorporating sources in writing, where there is room for misrepresenting the original information.

The four instructors in other disciplinary courses were also asked an interview question about the accuracy of information, which I assumed would matter greatly given that the purpose of the predominant genres (explanation and exercise) is demonstrating knowledge and understanding of subject matter. The instructor in accounting said that it is very important in her field to write a correct report by reasonably reflecting on what is actually happening in the world, whereas the instructor in biology stated that there is no right or wrong answer in some of his
assignments. On the other hand, the instructors in political science and religious studies said that they do not necessarily look for a single, correct answer, but students may give an incorrect answer by misrepresenting facts, information in the readings, or an author’s argument:

There are maybe several possible right answers. There are certainly wrong answers. When I’m grading for country content, if somebody says for instance, Russia is a communist country, I take off points because really they missed something. (Instructor 34, political science, interview)

They are reading texts. They are interpreting texts. If their argument is just completely unfounded in the text, they are misinterpreting sentences that they uses as evidence, or they give me no sentences as evidence, and they say just exactly what the author does not want to say, that would be wrong. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

To summarize, both English 101C and 150 instructors most frequently mentioned well-developed ideas with supporting details/examples as indicators of good substance. However, English 150 instructors were much more concerned with interesting/engaging and accurate content than English 101C instructors. When it comes to the content accuracy, instructors outside the English department gave different responses, depending on their fields and assignments, but most of them acknowledged the importance of accurately representing what has happened in the real world as well as incorporating information from the course readings. As the goal of English 101C is to prepare students for completing written assignments in other university courses, instructors may consider further emphasizing the use of hooks and strategies, especially in the introduction, as well as the provision of fresh perspectives on a given topic, as ways for engaging the audience. Also, English 101C instructors may give more focus on accurately representing others’ words in source materials in order to better achieve the course objective.
**Good organization.**

Three groups of instructors were also asked about their perceptions of “good organization.” Among six English 101C teachers asked this question, five mentioned the importance of a thesis statement in the introduction and a topic sentence in each paragraph that matches what is mentioned in the thesis statement. Instructor 2 also added that she wants her students to stick to such a basic structure, not for the sake of following the rule, but because it really helps them to better organize their essays; “I emphasize this not because they simply need to stick to this structure but because this structure helps them to learn how to organize their ideas. Seeing the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph helps them keep on track. So I do this for this purpose.” Two of the six English 101C instructors also discussed the quality of a good conclusion, which constitutes an essential part of the essay organization. They look for final thoughts, such as providing solutions and recommendations, in addition to a summary of the body paragraphs, which is usually a restatement or paraphrased version of the thesis statement in the introduction.

Seven English 101C instructors were also asked about their perceptions of the five-paragraph essay that English 150 curriculum tries to steer away from, and none of English 101C instructors regarded it as a big problem. Three of the seven English 101C instructors said they do not care much about the number of paragraphs in the essay. As long as the essays have three distinct parts (introduction, body, and conclusion), students can develop as many or as few paragraphs as they need. Meanwhile, the other four instructors actually encourage the five-paragraph structure, because this is a basic essay organization that is preferred in American
academic contexts and that students can expand upon later, as shown in the following interview excerpts:

Even though some people criticize the 5 paragraph is old style and old school, or like TOEFL test, you are teaching TOEFL test, but what’s in my mind is that if you cannot manage this 5 para, you cannot expand to 10 to 20 papers. (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)

I told them this is the basic structure, and outside of this class, you will want to expand on this, but in this class we are learning how to write the basic structure. So you have to learn the rules before you can break the rules. I said this is your basic essay structure in the United States. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

It should be noted that even the instructors who encourage the five-paragraph organization are not necessarily obsessed with the number of paragraphs. According to Instructor 1, however, it is the students themselves who ask how many paragraphs they need to write in order to receive a good score.

The same set of questions about good organization was asked in the interviews with the English 150 instructors. Like the English 101C instructors, this group of instructors also most frequently noted a clear thesis statement (five out of ten) as an element of good organization. Even Instructor 22, who tries to steer students away from any formulaic organization, still requires a thesis statement in the first paragraph. She also discussed the importance of the location of the thesis statement and provided a reason for that:

It should be the last sentence in their introduction, but at the same time it sometimes comes earlier than that, and they finish with a sentence so that it transition to the next section better, so if that happens I usually point out that maybe it should come at the end, but if it works where it is, here’s thesis, check it’s there. Usually I recommend it comes at
the last sentence of the first paragraph, because you want the reader to have that sentence in mind as they go into where the rest of your main points that’s organized the rest of the paper, but if it’s followed by another sentence that works as well, that’s fine with me.

(Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, Instructor 17 described the characteristics of a good thesis statement as being specific, yet not wordy: “It should be clear, specific, and give your reader a good idea of what the paper is going to be about without trying to cover every little detail.”

Given that English 101C instructors also emphasize the significance of a thesis statement and give a special focus on it in class instruction, students are expected to write a good thesis statement when they move onto English 150. However, students are commonly not able to write a strong thesis statement as pointed out by two English 150 instructors:

They want to keep their big revelation, it’s like a mystery and develop until very end, this is what I mean. Whereas I try to teach that you have to front load everything and tell us everything and then go to more specifics. Sometimes students will come up with ah ha overall so what idea or explanation at the very end. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

What I have notice if I generalize the idea of having a thesis statement at the beginning of the essay, often times it’s missing for international students. I wonder if that’s a function of just different way of writing, so I say in class American audience really want you to hold their hand this is what I’m doing, and this is why I’m doing in step by step. Or it could be a different definition of thesis statement, they will give a topic, I’m going to talk about this place, but then it’s still missing the so what, why are you talking about it, why should we listen to you. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)
From the perspective of these instructors, a thesis statement is missing in international students’ papers. What actually happens, however, is probably that students have included a thesis statement using a strategy learned in English 101C, but it is not considered a complete, perfect thesis statement in English 150. As both teachers note, their definition of a thesis statement includes the “so what” of the paper, which is the significance of points made in an essay. By contrast, the thesis statement in English 101C only involves forecasting main ideas or topics that are going to follow in the rest paper.

Another important element contributing to good organization that was mentioned as frequently as a clear thesis statement was the use of transitions (five out of ten English 150 instructors mentioned). Again, although transitions are taught in English 101C, two English 150 instructors still notice students are not skilled at using appropriate transitions, especially those seguing from one paragraph to another. Thus, the instructors spend considerable amounts of time discussing transitions during class time. Also, the two instructors remarked that they would like to see meaningful transitions that actually demonstrate the connections between ideas in a more smooth, natural, and creative way, instead of students using simple ones, such as “first, second, and third,” as seen in the following quotes:

So I’m shooting for them to have a clear organization, that being shown through meaningful transition between, not just first second third, so now what actually are the connections why do you put here and why not here. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

Using these key transition words, like first, second, things like that those are adequate but not innovative. If they say they got good in organization and I have transitions then I say yes this is functional, this does give me a signpost but you could find a smoother and
creative way to make that transition without relying on these you know sort of back
pocket transition things like that. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, three English 150 instructors mentioned the importance of including one idea
in each paragraph. Again, this concept is also taught in English 101C, along with the importance
of having a topic sentence in each paragraph. However, Instructor 22 and 24 said that a lot of
students have difficulty executing this in their written essays:

What I see a lot in 150 is they start out great with topic sentence, go into their topic and
then shift into this other topic and under that topic, it’s pretty easy to say look you’ve got
two paragraphs here, not only this is a little long, but also you shifted into a new subject
here, where it should be its own paragraph, stick to one point of the paragraph. (Instructor
22, ENGL 150, interview)

Another part of organization is that each para has a particular topic, they stick to that
topic because a lot of students will struggle with that and they write very vague topic
sentence and go here and there all over the place, it doesn’t really come together.
(Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

Three English 150 instructors also mentioned that they like to see papers with a good conclusion
that summarizes the main points of an essay, but without exactly repeating the thesis statement.
One of these instructors also suggested one strategy (returning to the introduction) that students
could use in the conclusion to achieve a sense of unity among ideas:

The one thing that I definitely suggest is sort of returning to the introduction in
conversion, but not in the standard restating the thesis way, but more in terms of going
back to the creativity. That they should have opened to engage, in the end they should
Other aspect that English 150 instructors consider important for good organization include an introduction that starts from some general concept and moves to one that is more specific, as well as provides enough background information, effective use of paragraph breaks and topic sentences, logical order of thoughts, clear three parts (introduction, body, and conclusion), clarification of the so what and purpose of an essay in the introduction, and consistency between the thesis statement and what is discussed in the body paragraphs.

Eight English 150 instructors were also asked about their perceptions of the five-paragraph essay. Their responses showed that six of them find the five-paragraph essay acceptable, even though the course curriculum aims to steer students away from that typical structure. Three of those six said the number of paragraphs does not matter as long as the structure that a student uses makes sense, and they do not take away evaluation points for use of the five-paragraph essay. According to Instructor 15, however, sometimes students are obsessed with this five-paragraph structure: “The five-paragraph is helpful in 150 if student is not familiar with the basic structure of an essay, but I see in 250, students kind of crippled for where they go, I don’t have third main point, so they mix something up that doesn’t belong, because they think that has to be there.”

On the other hand, the other three of the six instructors actually encourage this typical structure with their students for a few different reasons: laying foundation for other various structures; providing a comfort zone to students; easy teaching of the concept. These reasons are illustrated in the following excerpts:
In 150, students come in they are not really sure how to write, it intimidates them, so I do stress kind of start with five paragraph essay, but I also say you don’t have to have five paragraphs. I try to tell them once you have some sort of foundation, you can do branch off and find your own academic voice or personalize a little bit. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

I oftentimes push towards my international students, because they will often look for what do you want from me. They want formula, so I will give them that structure. So giving them that formula, at least they have a comfort zone from which to jump. So sometimes I say let’s do the introduction, first main point, second main point, and third main point, and conclusion. And if they can at least start from there, they feel comfortable beginning with that. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

Easy for students and teachers. For students who needs sort of structure, this is what I push them towards. We departed from that from Assignment 4, they had really trouble with that because it didn’t follow that five-paragraph structure. (Instructor 21, ENGL 150, interview)

On the contrary, two of the eight English 150 instructors aim to guide students away from the five-paragraph structure in order to let them explore and find an alternative that works best for their essays:

I don’t have any problem with the essay that happens to be a five paragraphs, but I feel like the five paragraph essay formula is most often used as crutch to prevent students from having to think about what the best way to organize this particular essay is. I try to push them away from that to realize there are alternative ways to organize the essay, and sometimes the five-paragraph essay is not the appropriate way to do it… each essay has
a unique structure, not necessarily fit in a predetermined formula. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

Three content course instructors were also asked what makes a well-organized paper. The accounting instructor said that, although she does not need to see any introduction or conclusion paragraph, she would like to see an opening and concluding sentence in each paragraph, the latter of which does not correspond with what is taught in English 101C. The instructors from political science and religious studies stressed the importance of an introductory paragraph that forecasts the rest of the paper, even though they claim they do not require a conclusion. More specifically, the instructor in political science expects the first paragraph to answer the major questions of the assignment, while the instructor in religious studies wants the introduction to summarize the argument of the paper in three to four sentences and, if it does not, he commonly subtracts points.

To summarize, the five-paragraph structure seemed acceptable to most writing course instructors. As elements representative of good organization, English 101C instructors most frequently mentioned a clear thesis statement in the introduction and a topic sentence in each paragraph while English 150 teachers most frequently cited a clear thesis statement and transitions. However, expectations for the thesis statement and transitions were higher in English 150: a thesis statement is expected to include the “so what” of the paper, which is the significance of points made in an essay, in addition to forecasting main ideas or topics of the paper; more smooth, meaningful, and natural transitions are encouraged instead of simple, mechanical ones such as “first, second, and third.” In order for English 101C to better prepare international students for English 150, English 101C instructors may consider establishing higher standards for thesis statements and transitions. Likewise, English 150 teachers, once they realize
such differences, may explicitly explain them to students, because students may not notice those
differences on their own and keep writing thesis statements and using transitions in English 150
as they did in English 101C, as will be shown in a later section.

Meanwhile, none of the content course instructors required the three-part structure
(introduction, body, and conclusion), although they still expected to see a forecasting paragraph
at the beginning of the assignments as well as topic sentences. Also, the closing sentence at the
end of a paragraph mentioned by an accounting instructor was not discussed by English 101C
teachers at all. To better prepare students for written communication in other university courses,
English 101C instructors may aim to require different types of writing other than essays that
entail varied organizational techniques.

Good style.

During the interview, some English 101C and 150 instructors were asked how they define
good style, which is one of the five evaluation criteria used in their courses. Among English
101C instructors, only two were asked this question due to time constraints, and both stated that
intelligibility is most important in their evaluation of student writing. Instructor 7 and 5
responded as follows:

Generally if I read a sentence and then I got what! I read second time, maybe third or
fourth, maybe I have to point that one out. If I read a sentence and I didn't quite get it,
got back and oh it just caught on quickly, I might just let that one go, depending on how
much load I put on that writer, and depending on individual, some of them are more
ready than others. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)
To me as long as I can follow what you are saying and make sense, them I’m fine with whatever my students do. So if they are creative as long as they make sense, then I think that’s really good. But if their style is just too confusing, I would say we need to work on something. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

In addition, Instructor 7 also discussed what usually causes unintelligibility in her students’ writing: incorrect or awkward expressions, awkward vocabulary, and non-native like structures.

On the other hand, nine English 150 instructors were asked the same question, and five of them said they would like to see the use of a formal, academic writing style, although Instructor 20 noted that the writing needs to be formal, but not overly academic, like a research paper. All five instructors pointed out that they do observe the use of numerous informal idioms and colloquial language in students’ papers. The following excerpt is Instructor 24’s response to the question about what constitutes “good style”.

Second is how formal is it because a lot of students will come in, even in 250, they will be writing like writing to their? there are a lot of very informal idioms in their papers, stress that hey I like informal writing, but this isn’t the place for it, this is a place for a very academic writing, which means formal. (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

The next most frequently mentioned elements of good style (three out of nine English 150 instructors mentioned) included: proper word choice; clarity/intelligibility; variation in vocabulary, sentence length, sentence structure, and the way sentences are started; and mechanics, such as grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Other aspects of good style noted by one or two English 150 instructors included: directness/straightforwardness, being concise and creative; use of concrete and vivid language; active voice; not being choppy; and
having an appropriate tone. As for directness, Instructor 18 explained that a concise and direct style is preferred in the U.S. over a wordy text:

It’s kind of American way to have a little bit more of a direct style, sometimes essays that are not direct are beautiful, but I think I mean more not wordy, so making sure that your sentence is making sense, because a lot of times, people are very wordy, so have to tell them to try to be more direct so that they can get away from that. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

Similarly, Instructor 20 commented that she prefers a concise style as opposed to student writing being wordy and redundant. It is worth discerning that she mentioned different reasons for redundancy among writing by American versus international students, stating that international students are often repetitive in an attempt to make themselves clear:

I’m minimalist. Why are you telling me this in three different ways. Tell me once and move on. But it’s not just international students. American and international students do it for different reasons. Native speakers do it to sound smart. And if I keep this same thing, it will be a long, elaborate essay, it’s very academic to be redundant. No. But I think international students do it because they are trying to be clear. They probably do it a lot in speaking, and they want to make sure that their meaning is coming across, cause they know they have language barrier, so they are trying to be clear. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

As for the use of concrete language, Instructor 24 pointed out that students often use unclear pronouns that can lead to several different interpretations. The following excerpt is a portion of his response about what is regarded as “good style:”
The third thing is the concrete language versus very vague language because I have a lot of students whose sentences are more or less grammatically accurate, but they are using unclear pronouns and things. If it’s really vague and if I read it I can interpret in several different ways, then that’s a problem. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

To summarize, as a quality of good style, intelligibility was cited by both of the interviewed English 101C instructors while formal, academic writing style was mentioned most by English 150 teachers. Because only two English 101C instructors were asked about good style, it is hard to say that their responses represent the whole group of English 101C instructors’ perceptions. Still, given that English 150 instructors regularly look for a wide range of qualities in terms of style, English 101C instructors may consider working on them as a way of preparing students for English 150.

4.3.2.2. Grammar errors.

*How to give feedback on grammar errors.*

After discussing good style in writing in general, the interview moved onto specific questions about grammar. Grammatical accuracy is one of the evaluation criteria included in the style category in both writing courses’ rubrics, and international student writing exposes weaknesses in this respect. The question about the way instructors give feedback on grammatical errors was only asked to writing course instructors, because content course instructors did not usually give written comments. Six English 101C instructors were asked this questions, and they all responded differently. Instructor 2 marks all the errors, though it is very time consuming, because accuracy matters a great deal in academic writing:
I try to mark all the errors that I notice because I don’t think academic writing can be incorrect. I find it as one of my responsibilities because they are supposed to know grammar when they come to 101C. It’s pretty sad because they are coming from 101B and still don't know grammar, it’s our unsuccess. Once they leave 101C, the professors in their major are not gonna correct their grammar errors. If they don’t understand something, they will just give bad grade. So this is their last chance to learn grammar. I tell them even if your essay is perfect in terms of content and organization, grammar breaks down the flow of the essay, so I lower the grades. (Instructor 2, ENGL 101C, interview)

The remaining five instructors, however, comment on grammatical errors in a selective manner. Instructor 5 points out only complicated errors, because students can find and fix simple errors on their own or they can take advantage of Criterion, an automated writing evaluation tool developed by ETS:

Last semester, I tended to point out almost all of their mistakes, but now, this semester, I’m just encouraging them to use criterion all the time, For Assignment 1 and 2, I did point out errors like s-v agreement errors, verb tense. Because those are the things they should be able to recognize themselves by now, during the class, I asked them to look at a paragraph that had a bunch of those errors, and they could find them all. So I said so you can find them in your own papers, so I’m not gonna do it anymore. I want them to take advantage of criterion, so now. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

On the other hand, Instructor 6 only comments on those errors intensively discussed during the class, selected based on the language focus in each unit, grammar lessons in the appendix of the textbook, and a list of common and treatable errors provided by the program coordinator.
Meanwhile, Instructor 1 points out all kinds of errors, but not the ones repeated more than three times. Still, another two instructors adjust the amount of their feedback depending on the level of students’ proficiency and motivation, as can be respectively noticed in the following two direct quotes from the interviews:

I used to point out all errors but not anymore because somehow they [students] improved. But again, depending on student level. If only a few mistakes, I will point out all of them. If too many, just focus on content because I don’t know what to do. In case of middle level, I would say say “is this what you mean?” (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)

The amount of feedback depends on the student. They have to be motivated. If they just want to get through 101C with least amount of interaction, they can do that. I can save that energy for the people who are just coming to my office hours, asking me questions in class. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

Instructor 7 also said that she tries not to give too much feedback, because too many comments may discourage students:

I point out very little. Me as a undergraduate student, if I got papers back that were just red pen marking all over everything, I would just feel emotionally crushed, and feel like ah I have to get through this class, because I’m a terrible writer. And I would feel disaffection toward the instructor, okay you are the English instructor and you are showing off that you can find all the problems. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

Furthermore, Instructor 7 noted that so-called sandwich feedback, which provides compliments or encouragement before and after negative feedback, does not really work well for students:

So I used to take the advice of all those people who say you gotta do this, sandwich of your feedback, you have to give compliment say they are doing great and well this is
where you need to work on it, but you are still doing great, and I found that my students read the bread and didn’t read the meat of the sandwich. I don’t even start this is great this is great. I usually say it would be good if you focus on this part, and improve this part. I don’t glow about their paper. I think it's confusing to them if you glow about their paper, and they get a C. If it’s a C paper, I’m not gonna say this is great. They don’t trust you anymore. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

On the other hand, three English 150 instructors were asked about their practice of giving feedback on grammar errors. Instructor 22 marks most errors for students’ future reference, but does not usually detract points for most grammar mistakes. On the other hand, Instructor 19 underlines the errors that students should focus on and explains what kinds of errors they are, but does not correct them, forcing students to figure them out on their own:

In 150, we shouldn’t have that kind of problem. I point out but I do not correct anything for them. But for internationals, I do take some time to comment on the grammar, major errors to avoid, and from one paper to next, they start paying closer attention to the problems, and I have suggested going to writing center, and come and talk to me, and suggested some sources. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, Instructor 17 varies the amount and focus of the feedback, depending on the students, and also uses different commenting methods, depending on error types:

If there’s a lot, I will focus on what I think is the biggest one, or the same errors made multiple times. With punctuation, I would rather correct them, but leaving them to figure out, with things like incorrect tense. I highlight and say incorrect tense, incorrect plural. (me) what kinds of errors are big and deserve your attention?) Depends on the students. If a student has five or six places in their paper that used wrong tense, and in one place they
use incorrect article, in that person’s case, I would focus on tense, because that’s what they are doing a lot. (Instructor 17, ENGL 150, interview)

In terms of giving comments on grammar mistakes, each instructor has developed his or her own practice over the course of their teaching career, as illustrated above. It appears that there is no clear distinction between English 101C and 150 instructors at the group level in the way they provide feedback on students’ grammar.

**Annoying grammar errors.**

Instructors in other disciplines were not asked how they give feedback on students’ assignments, because most of them specified that they simply give a grade without providing written comments. However, all three groups of instructors were asked what errors they consider annoying, thus impacting their evaluation of students’ writing. Incorrect verb tense was mentioned most frequently by English 101C instructors (four out of six respondents instructors), followed by run-on sentences (three out of six instructors), subject-verb disagreement (two out of six instructors), fragmented sentences, and incorrect verb forms (one out of six instructors). Although English 101C teachers do not exactly agree with each other in terms of the kinds of errors annoying them, they all mentioned the same reason for the types of errors that frustrate them. From their perspective, the errors mentioned above are actually basic level grammar concerns and are discussed a lot in class; therefore, the English 101C instructors believe students should be able to fix these errors on their own. Also, because they represent basic level grammar, those errors only show students’ carelessness and haste in the composition process.
Five English 150 instructors were asked the same question about the errors they consider annoying. Again, not all interviewed instructors pointed out the same errors as annoying. Those issues mentioned included capitalization, awkward expressions, run-on sentences, fragmented sentences, reflective and personal pronouns, and subject-verb disagreement. Instructor 25 said it was hard to believe that her students do not know such fundamental rules (e.g., capitalization) as college students. She is not lenient on students’ improper use of basic grammar, because it certainly affects their credibility as writers. Among instructors outside the English department, only one professor in political science was asked this question. (The question was not asked to the instructors in accounting and religious studies due to time constraints during the interviews, or the biology instructor, because he evaluates writing assignments only based on completeness, not writing quality.) The professor in political science remarked that she is bothered a lot by incomplete sentences, subject-verb disagreement, sentence fragments, comma splices, and occasional words that are completely misused.

It is hard to draw a firm conclusion about what are considered as annoying errors due to the small number of respondents, especially from content courses, but based on my interview data, all three groups of instructors seemed to be bothered by subject-verb disagreement, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences. English 101C instructors were bothered by verb issues, such as incorrect verb tense and form, relatively more than English 150 or content course instructors, whereas they were less bothered by awkward expressions and inappropriate word choices. The majority being international teaching assistants, English 101C instructors themselves may have a difficult time finding proper and natural words and expressions and, therefore, be more tolerant of their students’ similar weaknesses. Also, even if they feel students’ expressions and vocabulary do not sound appropriate in a given context, they may not be
confident in providing better alternatives. In either case, given that most instructors that students will meet after leaving English 101C are Americans and that expression and word choice issues influence instructors’ grading, as well as bother them, English 101C teachers should find a way to work on word and expression issues if they aim to help students prepare for writing in other university courses.

Grammar errors hindering comprehensibility.

In the last question about grammar, instructors were asked if there is any grammar error that hinders communication, thus, greatly impacting their evaluation of students’ assignments. Due to time constraints, however, only two English 101C, four English 150, and one content course instructors had a chance to respond to this question. One English 101C teacher mentioned wrong word choice, which is usually caused by the use of bilingual dictionaries (Instructor 2), and another mentioned word form-related errors, especially inappropriate direct object position: for example, *the government tries to improve economic; China wants to maintain grow; he have good concentrate* (Instructor 7):

> When they [adjectives] are in direct object position, that one kills me. You are gonna say that this verb is gonna do something to adjective, really? What does that say? It really blocks comprehensibility. The thing they are saying, cannot happen. I think they rarely have adjective in the subject position, but they will have it in object position. Come on, that’s not an English sentence. It is rule-governed and clearly repairable by students at the level I teach. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

On the other hand, wrong word choice, incorrect verb tense, awkward expressions, and confusing sentence structures were regarded as factors blocking comprehensibility by English
150 instructors. Out of the four English 150 instructors, two pointed out wrong word choice as impeding comprehensibility, which usually results from the use of a thesaurus, according to the perspectives of Instructor 16 and 17. Instructor 19 noted incorrect verb tense, awkward expressions, and confusing sentence structure:

Verb tense is a big thing. Expression is a problem, it’s annoying because you don’t understand what it is, and the grading gets really complicated and time consuming because you are trying to figure out what they mean. Internationals have problems with fragments and also with confusing sentence structure, for missing verb or subject missing, relative pronoun, so when you read it, things don’t make sense, and it’s kind of hard to tell them what’s wrong with it, other than confusing sentences. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)

Instructor 18 pointed out problems regarding sentence structure, but particularly sentence boundary issues (e.g., run-on sentences, comma splices, and fragments); “I think these are the ones that take away from the meaning most. When people tend to run on especially, I think the meaning of the sentence is lost very easily.”

Meanwhile, the instructor in religious studies also identified inappropriate word choice and incorrect sentence structures, including run-on sentences and cut-off sentences, as hindering comprehensibility the most. The following excerpt shows his response to the questions about what makes some sentences unclear:

The wrong choice of words. There are many technical terms that are used in a specific way, but also can be vacuous and meaningless. So if they are using those sentences that sound good to them because they are using large words, but they don’t really communicate anything, that would be a sentence that doesn’t make sense to me. I don’t
understand what they are trying to say when they use spirituality. Sometimes they are simple, grammatical things like run on sentences. That go on so long that I can’t understand the point or I see too many points are being made. Issue of clarity. Sometimes sentences that are cut off in the middle with no reason, those are things of unclarity that I encounter. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

Again, it is difficult to draw a certain conclusion about what are considered as errors decreasing comprehensibility, due to the small number of respondents from each group of instructors, but based on the current data, all the instructors cited inappropriate word choice as a factor blocking comprehensibility. What was mentioned by English 150 and content course instructors, but not by English 101C instructors, included sentence structure issues, such as run-on and cut-off sentences, on which English 101C instructors may consider placing more emphasis in order to help students produce writing that is more comprehensible to other course instructors.

4.3.2.3. Evaluation processes and standards.

Evaluation process.

Three groups of instructors were asked about their process of evaluating students’ papers. Results showed there was little difference in responses at the group level; instead, more differences arose at the individual level. Therefore, in this section, the results of the analysis will be presented according to the themes that have emerged regarding the evaluation process instead of focusing on group distinctions. To begin with, two instructors read the assignments multiple times, each time focusing on different aspects of writing. Instructor 1 (English 101C) reads an assignment, first with a focus given to meaning, second to organization, and last to grammar,
whereas Instructor 25 (English 150) focuses on context first, substance second, and then organization. Second, two instructors simply read an entire paper first and then move onto commenting and grading (Instructor 15 and 17, both English 150), while the other two start commenting right away as they read a paper for the first time (Instructor 2 and 22, English 101C and 150, respectively).

Third, one English 101C instructor (Instructor 5) and three English 150 instructors (Instructor 16, 18, and 19) read all students’ papers before they examine each paper more closely and give a grade on each, as shown in the following excerpts from the interviews with Instructor 5 and 19:

I usually try to read all papers of the class before I grade any of them, because I don’t know where my students are, what their levels are, and then I grade cause I know what is in that A range for my class, and what is in the B range, cause I don’t want to say no one got an A. So I put them all in a pile according to that A, B, C range, and then I look at all the rubrics and see if you have more of the first column [extra] or second column [good], and then from there, I try to divide them into A- B+. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

I tend to read some to see what the level’s like, because I found this fantastic and I give an A, and then there’s one that’s super fantastic, what do I do now? And then you have the one that’s so crappy, but compared to other one, it’s great. I just want to be fair. What if you give a very low grade and then you figure out maybe it’s not that bad? (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)
These instructors seem to read all the students’ papers first in order to get a sense of the entire class’s submissions and then divide all the papers into different grade groups evenly and fairly, which means that they conduct a sort of norm-referenced assessment.

Fourth, Instructor 18 and 19 (both English 150), based on their experiences teaching the same class for several semesters, can get a sense of a total score for each paper while they are first reading it and assign a score holistically without thinking about analytic scores:

I don’t use mathematics anymore. I used to. Now I’m more trained, and my eyes are calculating. Students get the final score, not analytical scores. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)

I think that when you teach class long enough, you know instantly about where it’s gonna land. Sometimes after I read the introduction, I think I can assume and you can figure out after that. Is it gonna go that way (most of the times, this case) or is it gonna change drastically? You can just usually tell because you can tell like amount of content, sources, the amount of research they put, usually you can tell right away. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

On the contrary, Instructor 21 and 22 (both English 150) are opposed to reliance on such overall impressions, and instead produce a total score based on analytic scores that they mark on the rubrics:

I get out the rubric down and look at the paper, I’m circling different things [marking scores for each evaluation criteria on the rubric]. Having a rubric with exact numbers down actually helps a lot. I don’t need to worry about what should I give them, am I being too harsh or am I being lenient, which is the hardest part of the grading. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)
So what I will do is I will highlight that box, one thing that I do is put numbers. Without those numbers, should I do like oh this feels like a B paper? Giving the numbers also allows students to know where I’m focusing on. (Instructor 21, ENGL 150, interview)

The rubrics used by Instructor 21 and 22 were based on those provided by the department, but slightly tailored, and contain points along a scale with exact numbers. According to these two instructors, relying on numerical analytic scores to produce a holistic score helps them not to worry about their harshness or leniency and helps students to see the aspects of writing on which their instructor focuses.

In summary, each instructor has developed his or her own process to evaluate students’ assignments. The differences that emerged during the interviews include single versus multiple rounds of reading; reading from a reader’s perspective first and then evaluating versus reading and evaluating at the same time; awarding a grade on each paper after looking at all students’ papers versus grading each paper right away; and grading holistically versus calculating the final grade by summing analytic scores. The differences in terms of evaluation processes are more indicative of individual instructor differences rather than differences among the groups of instructors.

**Faithfulness to the rubric.**

Next, the writing course instructors were asked if they adhered to the rubrics at the time of evaluation. (Content course instructors were excluded from answering this question, because it was found that most instructors outside the English department do not provide any formal grading rubric, as mentioned in a previous section.) Five of the eight English 101C instructors and three of the ten English 150 instructors interviewed answered “yes.” Three among these
eight instructors who reported they adhered to the rubrics, however, tailored their rubrics in advance in case they desired to look for qualities not mentioned in the department-provided rubric:

Sometimes I do add categories. In my class we covered something specific, in unit 3 their introductions and conclusions were really short, so we had an extra day to work on introduction and conclusion strategies, so I added “use at least two introduction strategies” cause we covered that. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

I changed my rubrics but they are based off of the programmatic rubrics. When I first teach 150, the rubric was not representative of what I was actually looking for, it wasn’t until I grade their papers I realize oh what I was looking for are not in line with what’s actually on the rubric, so I’ve taken great care of trying to represent what I’m looking for. I think my rubric do reflect pretty well what I’m evaluating on and I try to stick to the rubric. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

An additional three instructors who adhere to the rubrics remarked that they do so in consideration of fairness, although they sometimes feel that some important points are missing in the rubrics: “I comment on other important things, won’t let them slide, but I can’t grade that if it’s not part of rubric” (Instructor 19); “I’m noticing something in the students’ paper that I would like to mark them down for, but it’s not on the rubric, so I have to stick with what’s here. I do because it’s not fair” (Instructor 7). As a result, from these instructors’ perspectives, the total score based on the rubric seems higher than what the paper actually deserves.

On the other hand, three of the eight English 101C instructors and seven of the ten English 150 instructors claimed they do not always follow the rubrics. Also, one English 101C and six English 150 teachers specifically discussed some factors influencing their grading. What
was mentioned most (five English 150 instructors) was the amount of effort students put into completing the assignment. Instructor 18 thinks that she should consider the degree of effort in her evaluation of the student, especially because the curriculum is based on process-writing pedagogy, not only the product:

A lot of times, students influence that [grade] as well, not like my relationship with them, but seeing where they come with writing, seeing if they are really trying, is really important as well. I think if we were going to emphasize writing as a practice not a product, you really have to, when I get their papers and when I get their jobs, see that they come to me couple of times for the conferences, you know it’s not gonna go from B to A, it may add that little plus at the end. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

Similar to Instructor 18, Instructor 25 also remarked that a significant effort does not change the grade significantly, because evaluation should stay true to the essay’s quality. This instructor does, however, give a second look to the writing if those who worked really hard received a low score.

I don’t get a strong feeling what the grade is, but I do get a strong sense of how hard each of my students work, and so if it’s really hard working students gets a really low grade I will re-read their paper and see did I miss something that was a virtue, because I know they put a bunch of time into this. I’m not completely changing it or anything like that, I will stay true to it, I look at it again. To make sure I did justice. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

Factors mentioned by a smaller number of instructors, but still worth referencing here, include the degree of improvement between the rough and final drafts (Instructor 2, English 101C; Instructor 15 and 20, both English 150), students’ language proficiency (Instructor 16 and
20, both English 150), instructors’ interpretation of the rubrics (Instructor 16 and 18, both English 150), what was emphasized in class (Instructor 24, English 150), and instructors’ familiarity with the students’ drafts (Instructor 15, English 150). By “familiarity” with the draft, Instructor 15 meant that if she had a chance to look at a certain student’s draft because the student asks questions or visits her during office hours, she becomes familiar with the draft, and that usually affects grading in a positive way. Regarding students’ proficiency, Instructor 16 and 20 said that they are usually more lenient on international students than on their American counterparts. Finally, Instructor 16 and 18 noted that even though almost everybody uses the same rubric, each word or phrase could be understood or interpreted differently.

To summarize, there were more English 150 instructors than English 101C instructors who do not always adhere to the rubric while grading students’ assignments. In addition to the evaluation criteria included in the rubrics, English 150 teachers also take into account the amount of effort, degree of improvement between the first and final drafts, students’ L1, their own interpretations of the rubrics, what they emphasized in class, and their familiarity with students’ drafts. In order to better prepare for English 150, international students should first improve their writing competence through English 101C, but it would be beneficial to know that there are other factors positively influencing grading in English 150.

*Weights for different evaluation criteria.*

The writing course instructors were also asked about the weight of each evaluation criterion. (Again, content course instructors were excluded from this question, because it was found that most of them grade holistically.) Three out of the seven English 101C instructors interviewed and three out of the nine English 150 instructors interviewed distribute equal
weights to all five criteria, while the remaining instructors place more emphasis on particular criteria. Instructor 1 (English 101C) and Instructor 16 and 20 (English 150) evenly emphasize all five criteria, because they deem all of equal importance, as shown in the following excerpts:

They are all of equal importance. And it goes back to clarity. I mean who cares if your organization is wonderful if I can’t understand your sentence structure? Or if you are constantly full of errors, or if you are not citing sources, if one of those things off, it throws everything else off too. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

I’m looking at the whole paper, essentially I want students to see that throughout the whole writing process, you need to be kind of well rounded, so if they can’t do a very nice introduction, also keep up with substance, I think it shows them this is where I’m not so good at, but then it also conveys the idea that their whole product I mean whole paper is one big picture so it is an equal importance I think personally. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

On the other hand, Instructor 25 (English 150) gives equal weight to all criteria, but for a completely different reason. She thinks that equally distributed weights given to relatively unimportant criteria that she does not heavily consider can offset her strictness on the criteria she considers truly important:

The reason why they are weighted the same, I’ve experimented with twicking it with different categories with more or less but what I found is style for example, I said I don’t emphasize in my teaching or grading, but that means that that can help balance out more strict attention to context. So when I’m emphasizing context in class, and when I see they are not doing things we talked about in class. Then I’m ruthless in grading the context,
and the style can help balance out such strictness. I think context, substance, and organization are three biggest ones for me. (Instructor 25, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, Instructor 8 simply thought he was required to distribute equal weights to all criteria based on the layout of the rubric, where all five criteria seemed equivalent. He also discussed the merits and demerits of his practice:

To be honest, grammar and document format are not worth that much weight, I mean as much as context, substance, or organization. However, to justify myself, it may make sense education wise. Because grammar and document format are pretty basic, and they are one of the few things that students can learn relatively easily and fix as long as they are making an effort. I think much weight to those basic things will encourage students to work on them. I’ve been doing this way quite for a while, and none of them raised objection yet. (Instructor 8, ENGL 101C, interview)

From his perspective, giving equal weight to all criteria does not seem appropriate in terms of judging the quality of the essay, because style and delivery are not as critical as context, substance, and organization. However, considering that style and delivery can be learned and improved relatively easily, substantial weights for those two categories may motivate students to learn.

In contrast, five of the seven English 101C instructors and six of the nine English 150 instructors give different weights to different criteria, because some criteria are considered relatively more important than others. Six instructors declared that context, substance, and organization are more important than style or delivery. Three of these six (Instructor 6, 18, 19) did not specify the weight for each criterion in an exact percentage. On the other hand, Instructor 15 (English 150) gives 20%, 25%, 25%, 15%, and 15% to context, substance, organization, style,
and delivery, respectively, because she was encouraged to do so by her mentor; simultaneously, Instructor 3 and 7 (both English 101C) give 75% to context, substance, and organization, and 25% to style and delivery, because it was encouraged in the training for English 101C instructors at the beginning of the semester.

Among the remaining four instructors, Instructor 2 (English 101C) provides equal weight to context, substance, organization, and style, and less to delivery. Instructor 22 (English 150) considers substance and organization most important, context and style next, and delivery least (3, 2, 1, out of 11 points on the scale, respectively). Instructor 17 (English 150) noted the importance of context and substance, remarking that delivery matters only when a works cited page is not done properly. Finally, Instructor 24 (English 150) gives the most weight to substance, because it is the most important aspect, from his perspective:

This semester what I was doing is 20 for context, 30 for substance, 20 for organization and 20 for style, and 10 for delivery. Delivery is just does the paper have proper margins, double space, page numbers, and citations. Before I didn’t have substance quite so high, but it seems like that’s the biggest thing that matters in paper. (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

In summary, there were more writing instructors who give different weights to different criteria than those who distribute equal weights to all five criteria. The criteria that were considered relatively more important included substance, organization, and context. Because the decision about weights for different evaluation criteria turned out to be more resultant of individual instructor differences rather than course differences, it is important for students to discern their own instructors’ practice in order to receive a good grade on the writing assignments.
Applying the same standards to American and international students?

Finally, eight English 150 and two content course instructors whose classes contain both American and international students were asked if they apply the same standard to both groups of students when grading papers. Five of the eight questioned English 150 teachers said they tend to be more lenient towards international students as far as grammar and style are concerned, while both groups are held to the same standard when it comes to other aspects of writing, as shown in Instructor 16 and 22’s responses, for example:

When it comes to ideas. Because all students in one class are learning the same material, so I need to make sure that I evaluate them on the equal basis. But at the sentence level, some students really have choppy sentence structure, but I take into account if I was trying to write in Chinese, I would probably sound like that too. So I try to feel a little more flexible with those aspects. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

It’s my natural reaction to become more lenient toward NNS in terms of grammar and style considering my own experience of learning another language. But at the same time, I also understand that they are supposed to be held to the same standard. So in case of a lot of mistakes on international students’ paper, instead of giving D right away, I try to work on it together, give them a second chance to revise, and only count off a few points for lateness. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, in the cases of Instructors 20 and 24, their leniency is not only limited to grammar and style considerations. International students’ attitudes, such as putting in extra effort and asking for help, as well as the instructor’s experience working with them, seem to affect these instructors’ generosity in their overall grading.
One Korean student, if I were to grade him to the standard of a native speaker, he would be failing out of that class. But his effort is just off the charts, he stays after everyday and clarifies what happened in class, and he’s really stepping up to the plate. He’s doing a really nice job, he doesn’t ask for extra time, he’s doing a great job and his writing is improving. But if I were to grade really harshly, international students fail out. It’s not just realistic. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

My guess is I’m probably a little bit more lenient with them in some ways. Because it’s my background [TESL], I like international students, I like working with them. I sympathize with them, maybe because of that it comes out in the grade sometimes. I think it’s more of an attitude type thing. They will really pay close attention to the assignment sheets, they will come in for extra help on their papers, they will spend more time working on incorporating the sources or developing their arguments or whatever.

(Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview)

In contrast, Instructor 19 said it is not fair to use double standards when it comes to grading. To the question about whether she is more lenient towards international students in her grading, she responded:

No, you tend to be, but you have to remember that’s not fair, for one population [international students] or the other [American students]. Plus, both groups have what they are good at. The only way I’m lenient is not placing super heavy weight on grammar except for confusing sentences, the ones that I can’t read, understand, they interrupt with the flow of their paper. If the ELLs have problems, they should look for help. Nobody has come to my office after a million offers. So I’m not gonna be lenient if you don’t look for help. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)
Like most English 150 instructors, instructors in political science and religious studies also said they tend to be more forgiving with international students as long as they are trying. At the same time, however, the instructor from religious studies stressed that he applies the same standards to both groups of students when it comes to including a clear introductory paragraph and engaging readings:

I try to be a little bit forgiving with international students, but I’m not completely forgiving. Unfortunately, with international students, if they are lazy, it’s really clear. With American students, laziness is not always so evident for them. But I find that international students who are lazy in writing their essay can turn in a very bad essay. In those cases, I take off lots of points. But if I think the student is actually trying to write well, I’m generally more forgiving. (Instructor 34, political science, interview)

I am more lenient when the sentences don’t make sense. I might be more lenient, I’m not saying I’m trying to do this, I don’t want international students to fail all the writing assignments because they are in a difficult situation. But I apply the same standard to everybody in terms of looking for the introductory paragraph, engaging text, in-text citations, I want them to make an argument that makes sense based on readings. Those standards are in place. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

To conclude, most English 150 and content course instructors tend to be more lenient towards international students, especially where grammar and style are concerned. This means that the grades on international students’ assignments reflect not only their writing proficiency or quality of assignments, but also instructors’ forgivingness of their low English proficiency.
4.3.3. Comparison of Instructor Feedback

The analysis of instructors’ feedback on assignments may shed light on what aspects of writing they pay attention to, how well their comments reflect what is written in the rubric, and whether the focus of evaluation is different across English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses. Instructors are supposed to provide thorough feedback on students’ papers in English 101C and 150, but this is not the case outside the English department. Instructors in other disciplinary courses simply give numerical or letter grades; because of this, the number of comments analyzed and compared with those from the writing courses is very small. For the feedback analysis, 131 essays written by 71 international students who took English 101C in Fall 2013 and English 150 in Spring 2014 were examined (two essays per student, one from English 101C and the other from English 150; but eleven essays missing from English 101C). Although other students’ papers were available in the overall data set, the analysis was limited to the assignments completed by the selected group of students.

Using this method, it was revealed how the same group of students received similar/different comments in two different writing courses. Also, for this particular analysis, only Assignment 3 in English 101C and Assignment 4 in English 150 were used, because they are relatively similar types of essays, both of which require students to perform an analysis, although their topics are completely different: one is about ethnic identity or the culture of a home city, and the other is about a building or piece of art on the ISU campus. On the other hand, the number of assignments that received instructors’ written comments in other disciplinary courses was very small, so I used all the available ten assignments for this analysis. The data collected and used for the feedback analysis are summarized in Table 4.14 below.
Data Used for the Feedback Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
<th>Disciplinary Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of instructors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of assignments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of comments</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of comments per paper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although I aimed to collect all the assignments written by 71 students from both English 101C and 150, some data were missing from English 101C, because eleven students did not share their assignments with me when the feedback was given on the hard copies.

To paint a bigger picture first, in English 101C there were more grammar-related comments than those regarding context, content, and organization; in English 150, there were more non-grammar comments than grammar comments, but still relatively equal; in disciplinary courses, a few more grammar comments were provided, as shown in Table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar/mechanics</td>
<td>852 (72%)</td>
<td>915 (49%)</td>
<td>48 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-grammar (context, substance, organization, format, citation)</td>
<td>327 (28%)</td>
<td>962 (51%)</td>
<td>40 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results presented in Table 4.15 above, it can be inferred that English 101C instructors pay more attention to grammar than English 150 or content course instructors (or that more grammar errors appeared in the English 101C papers), though it is difficult to draw a definite conclusion about the content courses, due to the small amount of data. From here, however, the feedback on grammar/mechanics and the feedback on more global issues, such as content and organization, was analyzed separately. Given that the latter requires more revision efforts and
better contributes to improving the paper quality, it is not fair to treat one article error and one content-related issue equally based on the frequency-based analysis.

When it comes to grammatical/mechanical issues, all three groups of instructors commented most frequently on expressions, as shown in the Table 4.16 below. The numbers in parentheses indicate a percentage of each issue in each course.

Table 4.16

Ranked Issues on Grammar/Mechanics in Three Courses Pointed Out by Instructors (N=1815 errors that received comments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Issue</th>
<th>Frequency (N=852)</th>
<th>Type of Issue</th>
<th>Frequency (N=915)</th>
<th>Type of Issue</th>
<th>Frequency (N=48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>114 (13)</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>202 (22)</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>11 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb form</td>
<td>86 (10)</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>81 (9)</td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>6 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>77 (9)</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>74 (8)</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>68 (8)</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>71 (8)</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>67 (8)</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>68 (7)</td>
<td>Verb form</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>64 (8)</td>
<td>Verb form</td>
<td>55 (6)</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>58 (7)</td>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>46 (5)</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>56 (7)</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>45 (5)</td>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run-on</td>
<td>44 (5)</td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>42 (5)</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>43 (5)</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>40 (4)</td>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>30 (4)</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>33 (4)</td>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>28 (3)</td>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>31 (3)</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>26 (3)</td>
<td>Fragments</td>
<td>27 (3)</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>22 (2)</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>Run-on</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>SV</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>12 (1)</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>15 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>11 (1)</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>11 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>Run-on</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SV = subject verb agreement; SS = sentence structure; RC = relative clause
Most of the time, instructors highlighted an awkward expression, noted that the meaning was not clear, and requested rewording, as exemplified in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

*Feedback on Awkward Expression*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The culture in Fuzhou is a typical southern Chinese culture which influence people living there have a spirit of combining different cultures. (101C)</td>
<td>Not sure what you mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After George Washington Carver’s father passed away just before George came to the world, George’s mother was abducted by slave traders when George was still a baby. (150)</td>
<td>Try rephrasing this sentence—it’s a bit awkward and long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support our hypothesis, participants can see the results from experiments. (psychology)</td>
<td>Reword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He ruled Georgia with quite of Soviet model, and with republic way. (political science)</td>
<td>Underlined “quite of Soviet model, and with republic way” and said “wording”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes, instructors kindly explained how the expression could be interpreted differently than what students intended: “This sentence implies that the sculpture is named Nina de Creeft Ward, not that the sculpture is by Nina de Creeft Ward. Consider rephrasing this” (English 150). Other times, instructors gave specific suggestions on how to correct an awkward expression. Some examples are provided in Table 4.18 below.

Table 4.18

*Feedback on Awkward Expression with Suggestion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By throwing a traditional Chinese rice – pudding into the river, people wish the fish can be fed therefore Qu Yuan’s corpse stay intact. (101C)</td>
<td>By throwing a traditional Chinese rice – pudding into the river, people feed fishes in the river so that Qu Yuan’s corpse stay intact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The representatives of fast food are hamburger, French fries, pizza and fried chicken. (150)</td>
<td>…common items on a fast food menu are hamburgers, ….</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.18 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are total of 69 subjects including makes were 23 and females 46 in our psychology 102.</td>
<td>There were total of 69 subjects including makes were 23 and females 46 recruited from psychology 102. (Only underlined part was corrected by the instructor although there are other ungrammatical elements in this sentence.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the awkward expressions, instructors also pointed out redundant or unnecessary expressions and suggested removing them. However, such comments were observed much more frequently in English 150 than in English 101C or content courses. A few typical examples are provided below.

Table 4.19

*Feedback on Redundant/Unnecessary Expression*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During this critical period of his career life, he has created 12 public sculptures for Iowa State campus. (150)</td>
<td>Highlighted “life” and said “unnecessary word”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretically, as AMSISU has a lot of members; in other words, AMSISU has a lot of man power, so it can organize many activities. (150)</td>
<td>Highlighted “in other words, AMSISU has a lot of man power, so” and said “cut”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast food is always a central point when talking about the cause of obesity, and the majority of people are concerned about their large body size and weight on balance scale. (150)</td>
<td>Fast food is always a central point when talking about the cause of obesity, and the majority of people are concerned about their large body size and weight on balance scale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, what was commented on relatively more in English 101C than in the other two courses included verb form, verb tense, word form, subject-verb agreement, and run-on sentence errors, examples of which are provided in Table 4.20. Purple highlights in some examples below indicate the instructor feedback that was inserted in students’ texts.
Table 4.20

*What Issues Received More Comments in English 101C*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb form</td>
<td>This diversification of Lanzhou is showed as following aspects</td>
<td>This diversification of Lanzhou is showed <em>(shown)</em> as following aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The food in Fuzhou is also have differences than other areas.</td>
<td>The food in Fuzhou is also have <em>[VF]</em> differences than other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>After Bagan becomes the most cultural, oldest, and beautiful city of Myanmar, some hotel businesses move to Bagan, so many native people in Bagan have jobs and increase their income.</td>
<td>After Bagan becomes <em>(became)</em> the most cultural, oldest, and beautiful city of Myanmar, some hotel businesses move <em>(vt)</em> to Bagan, so many native people in Bagan have jobs and increase <em>(vt)</em> their income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From the specific culture, the person living in that area will have different ethnic identities, which makes people different.</td>
<td>From the specific culture, the person living in that area will have <em>[VT]</em> different ethnic identities, which makes people different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>Last but not least, Islam reminds me to treat those who treat me bitter, better.</td>
<td>Last but not least, Islam reminds me to treat those who treat me bitter <em>(wf)</em>, better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia is a beautiful and harmony country</td>
<td>Malaysia is a beautiful and harmony <em>(wf)</em> country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-verb agreement</td>
<td>The culture in Fuzhou is a typical southern Chinese culture which influence people living there have a spirit of combining different cultures.</td>
<td>The culture in Fuzhou is a typical southern Chinese culture which influence <em>[SV]</em> people living there have a spirit of combining different cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We usually clean the house, decorates, and buys new clothes before the 23rd of December.</td>
<td>We usually clean the house, decorates, and buys <em>(sv)</em> new clothes before the 23rd of December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run-on sentence</td>
<td>The taxi fare is very cheap for the near distance and lot of taxis exist in Seoul, passengers can catch a taxi in a minute.</td>
<td>Highlight the entire sentence and say run-on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The main areas in Amman are named after the hills that they lie on, due to level difference from one mountain to another, the weather changes accordingly.</td>
<td>Highlight the entire sentence and say run-on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues listed in Table 4.20 above are rather basic English grammar issues, and English 101C instructors said, during the interviews, that they frequently provide direct instruction on
these errors in their courses, especially at the beginning of the semester. On the contrary, the
issues commented on comparatively more in English 150 than in the other courses include
article, punctuation, and preposition errors. Some examples are provided below in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>This building also has entertainment facilities, food court, study rooms, University Book Store, Gold Star Hall, and a hotel.</td>
<td>This building also has entertainment facilities, (a) food court, study rooms, (the) University Book Store, Gold Star Hall, and a hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Even though, it went through many changes and constructions, this building serve it purpose to the people of Iowa State University.</td>
<td>Even though, it went through many changes and constructions, this building serve it purpose to the people of Iowa State University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As the old saying goes, “Life is short carpe diem”, time flies but does not restore.</td>
<td>As the old saying goes, “Life is short: carpe diem,” time flies but does not restore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>Hoover’s great features are that they it has all the equipment in on e building, which other buildings in ISU may not.</td>
<td>Hoover’s great features are that they it has all the equipment in on e building, which other buildings in (at) ISU may not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The reason why he is famous artist in Iowa State is that he built many different types of architecture or sculptures for the Iowa State’s sculptor-in-residence from 1934 to 1955.</td>
<td>Highlight for and say as would be a better word choice here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among grammar errors, article errors were second most frequently pointed out in English
150, whereas the identified proportion was relatively low in English 101C. During her interview,
Instructor 3 (English 101C) said that it was not easy for her to notice and explain article errors as
a non-native speaker. Given that the majority of English 150 instructors were native speakers,
they were probably able to point out article errors more confidently. The feedback on article
errors was found four times in content course assignments. Since the number of grammar comments totaled only 48, it is difficult to highlight an overall tendency in the comments.

On the other hand, in the analysis of non-grammar comments, the data were largely divided into five categories, depending on the kinds of issues receiving feedback: context, substance, organization, format, and citation. However, the proportion of each category was different in the three different courses, as shown in Table 4.22. The numbers in parentheses indicate the percentage of occurrence of each category per course.

Table 4.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
<th>Disciplinary Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td>175 (54)</td>
<td>344 (36)</td>
<td>25 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>43 (13)</td>
<td>137 (14)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>58 (18)</td>
<td>113 (12)</td>
<td>7 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>8 (2)</td>
<td>183 (19)</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>17 (5)</td>
<td>90 (9)</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>26 (8)</td>
<td>95 (10)</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>327</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all three courses, however, feedback on the substance category was most frequent relative to other categories, especially in content courses, the details of which will be discussed shortly. One glaring difference between English 101C and 150 was that many comments centered on citation and format in English 150 compared with English 101C, and this is likely related to the requirements for the assignments. For Assignment 4 in English 150, students wrote about a building or artwork on ISU campus that they did not know well, so conducting some research on the topic was inevitable. The grading rubric also states that in order to get a high score on the assignment, students should use “secondary sources to discuss the campus landscape, building, or art, and blend them with personal insights from writer’s experience with
the landscape, building, or art to support main thesis.” Meanwhile, in terms of document formatting, students were supposed to use MLA style, requiring them to pay attention to a number of details. Another difference was that English 101C instructors commented more on organization than on context, while the opposite was true in English 150. Such results corresponded with the interviews where English 101C instructors stressed the importance of good organization in their evaluations. Again, it is hard to draw a conclusion about feedback in the content courses, due to the small number of provided written samples, but, at least in this data set, there was no provided feedback about context. This is likely because the genres of writing assignments were not essays that require an introduction or thesis, which were often commented on by writing course instructors in the category of context.

In addition, there were some differences across the three courses in terms of exactly what kinds of feedback were given for each category of evaluation criteria. In all courses, various comments were given when it comes to substance, as shown in Table 4.23. Again, the numbers in parentheses indicate a percentage of each issue in each course.

Table 4.23

*Feedback on Substance (N=544 substance-related issues that received comments)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
<th>Disciplinary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of ideas</td>
<td>35 (20)</td>
<td>Analysis/so what/naysayer (go beyond descriptive/informative)</td>
<td>71 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not logical/not legitimate</td>
<td>29 (17)</td>
<td>Development of ideas</td>
<td>70 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>26 (15)</td>
<td>Explain/clarify</td>
<td>53 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>20 (11)</td>
<td>Quality/depth of idea/information</td>
<td>39 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/clarify</td>
<td>20 (11)</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.23 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis/so what (go beyond descriptive/informative)</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
<th>Quality/depth of idea/information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answering the prompt</td>
<td>Truth of content</td>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive/redundant/unnecessary</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>Not logical/not legitimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Background info</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality/depth of idea/information</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Repetitive/redundant/unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth of content</td>
<td>Answering the prompt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both writing courses, what was most frequently requested by instructors regarding substance was the development or expansion of ideas by giving examples, specific details, or evidence instead of simply providing general statements, claims, or arguments. This is not surprising, because the importance of developing ideas was mentioned by many writing course instructors in the interviews. Some examples of such feedback are as follows.

**English 101C**

- Could you further elaborate on the feature of stilt houses.
- Can you provide concrete examples that well illustrate the difference?
- I think you have a good start to this essay, but you need to develop your points more. The first and the third body paragraphs need more explanations and examples. I think you
could have more substance if you focus on how your city is today. What does it look, sound, or even taste like? Those details will make it more vibrant.

- Could you explain some features of Malay language used in the daily life? Here is an example. In one of student writing, she mentions, “Korea language has difference when they treat to the old people by using honorific. As an example, American just say hello to all people regardless of age with gesture of waving hands, on the other hands, in Korea, they say Anyeong to friend and Anyeonghaseyo to the old by bowing. As they separate the language when they say to the old, it shows politeness to the old.”

**English 150**

- Good. I like how you detail the specific financial struggle it took to change the MU into a living memorial

- I think you need to further expand upon how the Left-sided Angel can be interpreted as you have done so. Explain how it shows that not everyone will make it and that college can be difficult. You have the groundwork for this, you just need to make it more clear. Consider writing a paragraph about the interpretation.

- Is there any research to support the points made in this paragraph to make it stronger?

- Example? Details? What games should they play?

- However, I wanted to hear a little more about why the AMSISU activities they are doing are so successful in your mind. What makes them successful?

- Yes. I like how you explain, but be careful with this last statement. how does this affect student behavior?

- Is this all personal knowledge? If so, wonderful, but consider some numbers to back up some of these claims.
• Incorporate your personal experiences by stating “these words reflect the process of studying”

However, English 150 instructors asked students for more diverse ways of expanding upon ideas, such as backing up arguments with research, specific numbers, and personal experiences, in addition to providing more explanations and examples than English 101C instructors typically requested. By contrast, in content course assignments, only three comments were found regarding the development of ideas/points (three out of 25 comments about substance): “You need to explain question 6 in detail;” “Give me more details;” “Difference between groups? More detail.”

Meanwhile, there were several kinds of comments that were somewhat more frequently observed in one course than the others. English 101C instructors were more concerned with coherence, focus, and logicality. Regarding coherence, they pointed out a sentence that did not connect to its previous or following sentence, as well as an element that was not relevant to an overall topic, thesis statement, or the topic of a particular paragraph. They also noted when there were a few different topics in one paragraph or when there was a sudden shift in focus or topic. Examples of such comments are provided below:

**English 101C**

• What does this paragraph talk about who you are (your ethnicity)? This part seems off-topic.

• This section may be something you wish to tell us, but I do not see how it supports the point of this paragraph. Connect it or delete it.

• How are these two sentences related? There is a big jump between them.
• Also, this highlighted part doesn’t seem that relevant to your main point.

• You have been talking about Seoul? Why to switch to the country now? Don’t break your cohesion.

• What’s the focus of this paragraph? Food or relaxing mode? It’s a little bit confusing.

An essay containing coherence is very basic and essential in writing, and English 150 instructors’ comments on coherence were not very different from these. Though English 101C instructors provided a great deal of feedback on coherence, students seemed to make the same mistakes in the upper level course, as noted by an English 150 instructor in the interview:

“Another part of organization is that each para has a particular topic, they stick to that topic because a lot of students will struggle with that and they write very vague topic sentence and go here and there all over the place, it doesn’t really come together.” (Instructor 24, ENGL 150, interview).

In the category of focus, instructors noted when students were trying to discuss many different ideas instead of focusing a few concepts and fully developing them, or when students’ scope of discussion was not clear, as shown in the following feedback:

**English 101C**

• In your writing, you talk about many cities. Could you pick up one city (e.g. Ladwa) and identifies its different districts.

• Again, you can only focus on your faith and explain how it helps build your ethnic identity.

• Focus on only one aspect. Here you are talking about religion, and food. Plus, which one is the focus of your writing, Srilanka or Colombo?
• However, sometimes I’m confused if you are talking about Malaysia in general or the Chinese Malaysian culture. This needs to be clearer.

In addition to coherence and focus, English 101C instructors also made several comments on text that was not logical or nonsensical, as shown in the following examples.

**English 101C**

• In our class, we also discuss the scope of culture: “Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts.” The natural scene in this area is not one aspect of its culture. You can delete this part and focus on its rich cultural heritage.

• You don’t have 3 identities. You have one identity but these three cities contribute to part of your identity.

• If she has enough, why does she ask?

On the other hand, English 150 instructors were relatively more concerned with discussion of the “so what” question, explanation/clarification, quality/depth of ideas or information, interesting information, and the truth/accuracy of information. By requesting further discussion of the “so what” aspect of the essay, instructors encouraged students to tell readers why they are writing about a particular subject, why it is important, and why it deserves the readers’ attention. This is usually achieved by doing an in-depth analysis instead of simply giving facts, information, or descriptions, as the rubric warns students: “The writer’s paragraph topic sentences are supported by detailed, factual, and descriptive sentences that go beyond a
meme factual description of the campus landscape, building, or art to a discussion of its cultural or
historical relevance to ISU.” Some examples of such feedback are provided below:

English 150

- However, the personal interpretation is missing from your paper. In addition to the
  research, this assignment asks you to interpret the building and discuss what it means to
  you. That could the emotion you feel while looking at or what you think an architectural
  element symbolizes.

- Additionally, make sure that you explain the meaning of the fountain. Why is it an
  important fountain? What is its role at ISU?

- What you could improve upon is adding more about what these three panels mean to
  current students. What is the purpose? What does it show them? What message does it
  send? This is an important part of this paper, and I feel it is mostly missing from your
  paper

- however, this paper, which was to be an analysis, reads like a history report where several
  facts are tossed into a word document.

- I'm not sure what your argument is and much of this paper is based on secondary sources
  with little of your own words. The idea is for you to go see the features of the fountain
  and come up with your own interpretation, then use secondary sources to support your
  ideas.

- good details in this story but be sure to explain clearly what the experience mean to you

Through feedback, English 150 instructors also often asked for further explanation or
clarification of what is being discussed, as shown below.
English 150

- During which year?
- The volunteers of what and where?
- A lot of money -> how much?
- In conclusion, food has magical strength -> to do what? be direct and specific
- Who is this?
- It may help to actually define what “food science” is, and how it is different from culinary science, etc.
- Also – how do people know if they or someone they know is addicted to fast food? How often does an addicted person eat it vs. someone, like a student, who has few choices or very little money?
- I’m a bit confused. In the last paragraph, you told us that she was hired by the University of Northern Iowa. If she’s working there and not at Iowa State, why would she create Shoulders of Giants for Iowa State? Could you better explain?
- You need to explain why it is a problem that only 30-40 students come.
- I know lots of games, but it might be hard for non-game users to understand what they are standing for.
- It would help your reader understand why the building's name changed to Catt Hall if they knew a little bit about Carrie Chapman Catt
- As a reader, I’m not sure what this style is. Could you help me understand what this means?
Instructors seemed to request further explanation or clarification when the writing was not specific enough, when what was discussed was confusing, when a phrase or segment of text did not make sense, or when further information could assist readers’ understanding.

In addition, unlike English 101C instructors, English 150 teachers sometimes commented on the quality or depth of coverage of an idea or information, as shown in the following examples:

**English 150**

- I really enjoyed the perspective that you, as an architectural student, brought to this paper. You shared some insights about how Beardshear is built and how the different features function (like the skylight) that I’ve never considered before.
- My one suggestion is that we find a way to connect this analysis back to a more convincing argument other than the MU is popular at ISU. We could say this about any building. Is there a more meaningful concept we can tie this to? Like MU honors students past and present?

Also, as emphasized in all rubrics in English 150, instructors made comments regarding whether ideas or information provided in a paper were interesting or not.

**English 150**

- Interesting! Good way to end this paragraph. It makes me want to continue reading.
- Interesting! I did not know this.
- Overall, as a reader, I felt very engaged (though perhaps depressed by your pessimism) while reading your introduction.
- You provide many interesting facts about the rich history of Morrill hall
Interestingly, such comments were mostly positive. Instructors rarely remarked that a part of the text was not interesting.

Last, unlike English 101C teachers, English 150 instructors were concerned with the truth or accuracy of information, as can be seen in the following feedback:

**English 150**

- I am confused by the Cyride pass part. Why would a student need a bus pass when they have their ID?
- I’m not sure if this was a major event. I think it was just something that happened, and had been going on for years up until 1943. Consider rephrasing. Instead of saying a major event, just give us some of that history.
- Delete—I don’t believe he was a student, but the word “other” implies that he was. Wasn’t he just leading the students?
- I think he was talking about the art that is included in Parks Library. I don’t think he was talking about other buildings.

These instructors may be sensitive to the accuracy of information, because the assignment required students to conduct research and incorporate some information from the source materials, mostly the school website, which means that students may misrepresent the information in the sources. Also, because their students were writing about the campus, which instructors knew a lot about, English 150 instructors were in a better position to determine the truth from the content.
However, compared with English 150, let alone English 101C, the majority of substance-related comments in content courses pertained to how well knowledge or understanding was demonstrated, and most of them were positive feedback, such as “you understand this very well,” which was given at the end of an experimental report in the psychology class. Comments that challenged students’ misunderstandings were found as well. For instance, in the assignment on explaining and evaluating argument about the problem of evil, a student wrote “passive evil is evil which occurred by natural events regardless of our free will,” but the instructor wanted the student to think about passive evil from a different angle by commenting “also suffering caused by other evil actors.”

When it comes to organization, a wide range of comments was given, which can be largely divided into four categories: structure, conclusion, transition, and topic sentence. The feedback on structure included comments on overall organization of a paper, order or position of sentences and paragraphs, and the use of paragraph breaks. As shown in Table 4.24, the most glaring difference between English 101C and 150 is that the latter gave much more focus to transitions. Again, the numbers in parentheses indicate the percentage of occurrence of each issue in each course.

Table 4.24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback on Organization (N=178 organization-related issues that received comments)</th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
<th>Disciplinary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>19 (33)</td>
<td>35 (31)</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>16 (28)</td>
<td>29 (26)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>15 (26)</td>
<td>37 (33)</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Sentence</td>
<td>8 (14)</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English 150 instructors not only gave more feedback on transitions than English 101C instructors, but also provided qualitatively different comments. Some comments on transition from both groups of instructors are presented below for the purpose of comparison.

English 101C

- Need transition here
- besides that? You don’t need to use transition word here.
- however: There is no "comparison" here; you're just trying to show the second detail in your essay.
- Besides means something like “Even if you don’t count what I said before, it’s still important.” I think a different transition would work better here.

English 150

- Need a stronger transition here. It is not entirely clear how lab grown meat is related to individual choices about food and fast food as discussed in the previous paragraph.
- The next step would be to work on meaningful transitions at the beginning of each paragraph to carry us from point to point.
- Consider adding a transition sentence from this paragraph to the next. How can you make this paragraph about Wood’s style relate to the painting that you are referring to?
- I like that you connect him to When Tillage Begins. Perhaps use this as a way of transitioning from his life to the art work you are discussing.
- above all -> don't need "filler" phrases like this
- to sum up -> you don't actually need filler concluding phrases like these
As shown in the examples above, English 101C instructors made comments when transitions were missing, when there was an unnecessary transition, or when a wrong transition was used. On the contrary, English 150 teachers encouraged students to use more meaningful and stronger transitions when their transitions were limited to first, second, and last. Also, the transitions that English 150 instructors suggested were not limited to words or phrases; they sometimes wanted students to try sentence-level transitions as well, which was not found in English 101C teachers’ comments. In addition, it is worth recognizing that some of the instructors thought it was better not to use filler phrases, such as to sum up and in conclusion, which were used a lot by international students, but never received negative feedback from English 101C instructors. Meanwhile, only two comments were found regarding transitions in the content course assignments. Interestingly, both of those comments pointed out that the transitions students used (to be specific and in detail) were unnecessary.

When it comes to the structure of a paper, both groups of instructors provided many generic, positive comments, such as “this is a well-structured paper” and “good organization,” at the end. Other than that, instructors suggested changing the location or order of a sentence or a paragraph as follows:

**English 101C**

- This should be mentioned in the Introduction
- Why don’t you mention this right after the first sentence?

**English 150**

- The interpretation could easily be moved to the next paragraph, especially since that is one of the main focuses in it.
• What if we switches around the staircase paragraph with the Alcove paragraph? I think flipping these 2 paragraphs will help your reader understand the significance of the staircase inscriptions better.

• Since you list “activities” first, I expected you to write about activities first

Disciplinary Course

• Method. This isn’t intro content (pointing out a part of introduction) (Psychology)

Also, teachers sometimes suggested combining two paragraphs or splitting one paragraph into two, but this was observed more often in English 150.

English 101C

• Your focus in this paragraph is the manners of Hakka. Then, what about the previous paragraph? Do you think what you discuss in the previous and current paragraph is clearly distinguished? Or is there any possibility that you can group them together? Please think about the structure one more time.

English 150

• You may consider starting a new paragraph somewhere in here. Ask yourself: am I still discussing the reason Petersen decided to make the statues? It seems to me like you are discussing what the statues are all about now.

• If you were to revise this, you may consider breaking the paragraphs apart and having one on each side of the mural. Then explaining its history and importance to ISU.

• Probably good to break this into several paragraphs to cover the different material. Have a paragraph about the website and another about the activities. Or restructure this paragraph.
Disciplinary Course

- What is the topic of this paragraph? We’re covering a lot of information at once here, which can make it hard for your readers to keep up. Where could you include more paragraph breaks to focus the organization more clearly (Civil Engineering)?

Interestingly, however, there was only one comment about the five-paragraph essay in English 150 assignments, although moving away from this structure is heavily emphasized in English 150 curriculum as well as in class.

- If you’ve been taught that your essays should be five paragraphs long, that is not the case in this class. When outlining your paper, plan it in three parts: beginning, middle, and end. For your first body paragraph, develop that idea completely before starting a new one. You may find that your paper only needs to be three paragraphs long. Or four. Sometimes it will be five, but don’t force that structure onto the assignment.

As far as conclusions are concerned, only one comment was found in the content course assignment, pointing out that a conclusion was missing, whereas feedback in English 101C and 150 could be largely divided into covering five issues, as presented in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example of Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion is too short</td>
<td>There is only one sentence in your conclusion. A paragraph should include at least 3 sentences. You also only restate your thesis statement. You can add more to the end of conclusion. Please look at some examples from your textbook and revise. (101C) However, toward the end of the paper, you leave me confused as a reader. Your conclusion is only one sentence long. We expect you to recap and then end in a paragraph. (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.25 continued

| Conclusion is not relevant to previous discussion | What you say in the conclusion doesn’t seem that relevant to what was previously discussed. (101C) Clear transitions, great intro, but the conclusion should touch on your main topics. (150) |
| Concluding paragraph needs more strategies and creativity | Looking forward toward future assignments, I encourage you to be more creative in your introductions (including coming up with a title!) and conclusions. Review NFG Ch. 30 and EW Ch. 8f for tips. (150) |
| Conclusion has a new point that was not discussed in body paragraphs | New information (101C) | Missing conclusion; the paragraph above includes new information so it cannot function as conclusion to your paper. (150) |
| Conclusion does not go over all the main points. | Somewhere in conclusion, you need to mention "age" so it will summarize what you wrote earlier. (101C) Giving your suggestions for improvement is more the point of the paper than simply finding the positives, so try to focus on your solutions a bit more in the conclusion. (150) |

Other than English 150 instructors encouraging students to write a more creative conclusion, there was not much difference between the two courses when it comes to the feedback on conclusions.

The last organizational issue that instructors pointed out was topic sentences, although this was not observed in content courses. Because the amount of such feedback was not large, however, it is difficult to discern what kinds of problems were commonly identified. Table 4.26 lists all kinds of issues pointed out by English 101C and 150 instructors regarding topics sentences along with typical examples of feedback on each issue.
Table 4.26

*Feedback on Topic Sentence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example of Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Should be concise</td>
<td>In the topic sentence, you need to identify your ethnic identity from one perspective (e.g. clothes). You can make a comparison of the clothes of your ethnic groups with those of others, but you can discuss in the body paragraph, not in your topic sentence. (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be a summary including all the main points</td>
<td>This topic sentence is NOT a summary of this paragraph, which includes celebration, food, and religion. (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic sentence needs to also address what the stained glass does. (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should represent what the paragraph is about</td>
<td>In this paragraph, I guess you want to say that Chengdu has a lot of entertainments (or people are able to enjoy their life by engaging in a lot of activities). But if you write the first sentence like this, it sounds like the focus of this paragraph is MaJiang itself. (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be one sentence</td>
<td>But the first two sentences need to be combined into one in order for the topic sentence to fully summarize the entire paragraph. (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clear topic sentence is missing</td>
<td>There are a few times where ideas jump around a bit and are confusing as a reader. Using transitions and topic sentences to explain the connection between ideas and clearly divide thing up will be helpful in future revision. (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be in your own words</td>
<td>Topic sentence should be your own words. (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to the evaluation criterion of context, no relevant feedback was found in the content courses. In both writing courses, most comments were made about the thesis statement, followed by comments on introductions and titles. English 101C instructors were relatively more concerned with thesis statements while English 150 teachers made more comments on titles, as shown in Table 4.27.
Table 4.27

Feedback on Context (N=180 context-related issues that received comments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>English 101C</th>
<th>English 150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Statement</td>
<td>29 (67)</td>
<td>60 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12 (28)</td>
<td>45 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>2 (5)</td>
<td>32 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the thesis statement, instructors in both writing courses made comments in the following cases: 1) when a thesis statement was missing, 2) when a thesis did not incorporate all the main points, 3) when a thesis was situated too late in the text, 4) when a thesis did not match body paragraphs, and 5) when a thesis was not written in one sentence. Examples of each case are presented in Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28

Feedback on Thesis Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example of Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis statement missing</td>
<td>Where is your thesis and what are you going to talk about in the following paragraphs? (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good intro, but where is your thesis statement? how does this food connect to you? (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need a thesis that tells us what you’ll be discussing about the marriage ring. (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis does not show all the main points</td>
<td>Is this it for the controlling idea? What about food and entertainment you are discussing in the first and second body paragraphs? Please rewrite a thesis statement. (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, the forecasting statements were a little unclear. Remember to focus on your main topic—you are giving advice for change. It wasn’t clear that you were going to give a solution as the main point—it almost sounded in the introduction like you wanted to write a paper arguing against change because you are so happy with the way things are now!) (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.28 continued

| Thesis comes too late | (Ah… is your purpose to analyze some reasons why people in Chengdu have a slow pace and relaxing life? Then, you should be explicit about your intention in the previous body paragraphs as well as in the introduction.) (101C)
| Thesis – body mismatch | Be sure to hint about your thesis even in the first paragraph, even if you include the full thesis only at the end of the second paragraph (150)
| Thesis not written in one sentence | be sure to hint at what you are doing early on, though. The reader has to read two paragraphs before getting a good idea of why you are writing this (150)
| Thesis not written in one sentence | make sure your body paragraphs are in the same order as in your thesis statement (101C)
| Thesis not written in one sentence | make sure thesis statement is one sentence (101C)

The thesis statement-related comment that was only observed in English 150, but not in English 101C addressed how a thesis statement should contain the answer to the “so what” question, as exemplified below.

- Your thesis does a good job of previewing the main points of your paper, but does not really address the “so what” question.
- Consider mentioning what the purpose is here to make your thesis more specific.
- Give us more of a purpose to read on (thesis)—why does it appeal so much to you?

It seems that, according to English 150 instructors, simply forecasting the main points of the essay was not enough. In line with the English 150 instructors’ perspectives, a thesis statement should also convey to readers the purpose of the essay and significance of the messages, thus convincing readers that the essay was worth reading and deserved their attention.

Other context-related comments regarded the introduction. In the comments from both writing courses, very generic comments about the introduction, such as “great introduction” and “this is a weak and insufficient introduction,” were frequently observed. Also, instructors were
concerned with whether the introduction provided sufficient and relevant background information, as shown in the following feedback.

- There is almost no background information in your introduction. Please look at your chapter and see what kind of questions we can answer in the introduction. Then revise your introduction. (101C)

- I think this inclusion of Morrill hall on a fund raising effort is interesting background info (150)

However, there were a few kinds of introduction-related comments that were predominantly observed in English 150, as shown in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29

*Feedback on Introduction in English 150*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example of Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make introduction more engaging</td>
<td>How much. Can you think of a startling statistic to get your reader interested in this topic? This introduction does a great job of capturing the readers’ attention and showing how it is interesting to you. Good hook Good, hook with statistics Try to hook the audience Great hook showing the need for more international interaction,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction is unnecessarily long</td>
<td>this intro is much too long and a lot of this information could come after the intro very long introductory paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be more creative</td>
<td>Looking forward toward future assignments, I encourage you to be more creative in your introductions (including coming up with a title!) and conclusions. Review NFG Ch. 30 and EW Ch. 8f for tips.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among these, English 150 instructors particularly made a lot of comments about the use of a hook, which was consistent with the curriculum that emphasized making writing interesting so that it can engage the audience.

The last category of context-related feedback concerned the essay’s title, which was also expected to forecast the overall message of an essay together with the thesis statement. In English 101C, comments on titles were limited to pointing out that a title was missing or that the first letter of each word should be capitalized. On the contrary, the majority of feedback on titles in English 150 asked students to make them more creative, appealing, and engaging. Also, Instructor 24 (English 150) noted that a title did not accurately show the purpose of an essay. In his section of the English 150 class, one of the assignments was about a campus program or organization, as suggested in the given curriculum, but the instructor modified it a bit so that the genre was a public document and argumentation at the same time. The assignment sheet also made it clear that the essay should include an argument about how to improve a program or an organization as quoted below.

For this project, you need to choose an organization, group, or club on campus, analyze their mission, interview at least one member or group leader, and then analyze whether the organization, group, or club is doing well in realizing their mission. Your job, then, is to introduce the club or organization to the reader, explain what they are doing, and make an argument as to how they may improve what they are doing. Your critique can include suggestions for minor changes, a moderate restructuring, or even a complete overhaul of the organization’s activities.

According to the assignment sheet, an appropriate title for this assignment may look like the first example in Table 4.30.
Table 4.30

*Feedback on Title (Not) Demonstrating the Purpose of Essay*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How about cultivating Ag Business Club?</td>
<td>Good title—glad you took my suggestion ☺</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Eternal Brotherhood</td>
<td>Remember to make it clear what you are trying to do in your title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities in Alpha Tau Omega</td>
<td>Be sure to make it clear, even in your title, what kind of paper you are writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This makes it sound like your whole paper is just informative rather than making any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kind of argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Club in ISU</td>
<td>Be sure to make it clear that you are analyzing and looking for ways to improve the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the time, however, the titles in students’ papers sounded as if the paper was simply informative rather than including any argument about solutions to identified problems, so the instructor asked students to come up with a title that could demonstrate the real purpose of the paper.

Meanwhile, comments on format were concerned with font type, font size, spacing, margins, or alignment, and were straightforward in all courses. On the other hand, the amount and content of feedback on citations varied greatly. In content course assignments, only three comments were pertinent to citations: two were about citation format, and the other represented positive feedback, noting *very nice job of citing with in-text citations and using scholarly sources*. In English 101C, the feedback was given only when a citation was missing, a sign of potential plagiarism. The small amount of comments on citations was due to the fact that the assignment did not require research unless students themselves wanted to include some information or an idea from external sources. On the contrary, English 150 instructors made a large number of comments on citations, which was greater than the amount of provided feedback.
on context or organization. In addition, the comments were very diverse in terms of issues pointed out. Some of the comments were simply about the format of in-text citations or a works cited page, but many comments went beyond such mechanical aspects, as illustrated in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Feedback on Citations in English 150

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Example of Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Missing/redundant citation        | • How do you know it was made in 1935? Do you have a source to cite for this?  
• Where did you get your information from? It’s very important to tell your readers what came from outside sources and what is yours  
• Since you already cited Ghani earlier in the sentence, you don’t need the following parenthetical citation |
| All from one source?              | • Is this the source where all that specific information came from?  
• Is all of your introduction from this source? |
| Dual reference list               | • I’m confused. Why are there two sets of references listed? There should be one list that includes everything you mention in your paper. |
| Format of Works Cited page        | • Center this and call it “works cited”. Make sure you have hanging indents  
• Overall, these citations look good. Make sure to include Works Cited at the top of this page, double space the citations, and also make sure to put a comma after the author’s last name. |
Table 4.31 continued

| Format of in-text citation | • Also, your use of in-text citations are not quite correct. Please reference *The Everyday Writer* and Purdue OWL for help. Remember, you use the information from the Works Cited page (specifically, the first word from each entry) to create the in-text citations.  
• Just last names needed in in-text citations.  
• Place last names first: Salt, Chris.  
• If there is no author, the name of the page is cited first in “”. No underlining. Double spaced and alphabetization is needed  
• What is this? Make sure if it is an author, the name is not in “”  
• This is a rare incidence, where you would want to write a number after the name to indicate which Shelton source it is. For example, (Shelton 1) would tell us that it is the first source by Shelton.  
• Place commas inside quotation marks.  
• Be sure the periods appear after the in-text citation, not before.  
• This citation could go at the end of the sentence so as not to disrupt flow  |
| Direct quotation – need a quotation mark | • Is this a direct quotation? Use quotation marks when citing information verbatim  
• If it's a word-for-word quote, quotation marks need to be used.  |
| Block quote | • Quotations of 40 words or more need to be “block formatted” – you can see an example and information about this in your handbook. Look up “long quotes”  
• This quotation is over four lines long, and so should be a block quote  |
| Mismatch between in-text and works cited | • Make sure that your citations match how your source is listed in the works cited list.  |
| Paraphrase, not word-for-word citation | • Consider making this a paraphrased quote as the information, not the wording, is what’s important here.  |
| Quotation/citation not at the beginning or end of a paragraph | • When it comes to quotations, be careful of your placement. Avoid using a quotation to begin or end a paragraph (you take charge here).  |
Table 4.31 continued

| Introduce/explain quote | • Introduce quote, don't just drop it in  
|                         | • This quotes don't mean anything unless you explain what the author is talking about  
|                         | • Explain source and connection. A source doesn't work to support your points unless you explain to reader how it connects  
|                         | • Introduce all sources and quotes fully, so your reader isn't confused by their sudden appearance  
|                         | • Good connection between your point and source, and good choice of quote  
| Good choice of important quote | • Good choice of important quote + clear connection  
| Include enough quote so that it makes sense | • Include enough of the quote that it makes sense alone  
| Over reliance on source | • Avoid relying too heavily on secondary sources. this will be ~ after you establish your own argument about Morrill hall.  
| Wikipedia not trustworthy source | • Don't use wikipeida in academic essays  
|                         | • Typically, we don’t think of Wikipedia as a trustworthy source for an academic paper.  
| Author credentials | • Are these two scientists? Professors? Researchers?  
|                         | Give us a little information like you did with some of your other sources. To state where they are from or what they do helps your credibility as a the author.  
|                         | • Consider telling us what these people’s credentials are.  
| Overall, great use of sources | • You did a great job with the research in this paper.  
|                         | • You did a great job with the historical research part of this assignment; there’s a lot of interesting and specific facts included in your paper.  

Unlike English 101C instructors, English 150 instructors’ focus went beyond commentary on the presence or absence of citations. The requests for introducing quotes and explicitly connecting them to the points that students were trying to make, as well as not placing them at the beginning or end of a paragraph without contextualization, show that instructors were concerned with smoother incorporation of quotes in writing so the external citations did not disrupt the flow of the paper. These requests and requests for inclusion of enough quotes also show instructors’
consideration of readers’ needs. In addition, English 150 instructors were also concerned with the importance and trustworthiness of what was being quoted, as can be seen in their comments on students’ choice of quotes, use of Wikipedia, and requests for mentioning the credentials of original authors. English 150 instructors also noted too much of a reliance on direct quotations and sources and, instead, encouraged paraphrasing original wordings and establishing a balance between the incorporation of external sources and students’ own thoughts.

To summarize, the proportion of grammar/sentence-level comments to non-grammar/above sentence level comments was higher in English 101C than in English 150 or content courses. However, all three groups of instructors commented most on awkward, redundant, and unnecessary expressions more than other sentence-level issues, and English 150 instructors particularly focused on redundant ones. Among a wide range of grammar issues, what was pointed out more in English 150 than in English 101C included article, punctuation, and preposition errors.

Among non-grammar issues that were categorized as substance, context, organization, citation, and format, English 150 instructors made more comments on citation, format, and context than English 101C instructors. More specifically, regarding substance-related comments, both English 101C and 150 instructors provided most comments on students’ development and expansion of ideas, whereas content course teachers mostly commented on how well knowledge or understanding was demonstrated in the writing. What was noted more in English 150 than in English 101C student texts included discussion of the “so what,” explanation/clarification, quality/depth of ideas/information, and engagingness, as well as accuracy of information.

Where organization-related comments are concerned, English 150 instructors provided more comments on transitions than English 101C teachers, and their comments went beyond
alerting students to missing, unnecessary, or incorrect transitions, but instead requested more meaningful and stronger transitions. It was also found that both English 150 and content course instructors did not want students to use filler phrases as transitions, on which English 101C teachers did not provide any negative feedback.

In terms of context-related comments, one significant difference was that English 150 instructors expect a thesis statement not only to forecast the main points of the essay, which was enough to English 101C instructors, but also to contain the answer to the “so what” question so that readers may understand why the essay is worth reading. Another glaring difference was that English 150 teachers expect students to come up with an appealing title and write an engaging introduction.

No significant difference was found across the three courses in terms of provided format-related feedback, but when it comes to citations, English 150 instructors made much more comments than the other groups, and their feedback extended commentary on the presence/absence and format of citations. English 150 teachers requested introducing and contextualizing quotes as well as explicitly connecting quotes to the points that students are trying to make. Also, they evaluated the importance and trustworthiness of quotes and warned against overreliance on sources and direct quotations.

Instructors’ feedback on students’ assignments shows what aspects of writing they pay attention to and direct students’ attention to when assessing student writing, a process that influences students’ learning as well as the revision process. English 101C instructors invest much time and effort into providing many comments on each paper, and the comments are all valuable and contribute to improving the quality of draft as well as developing students’ writing competence. However, given that the goal of English 101C is to prepare students to succeed in
written communication in other university courses, English 101C instructors need to be aware of other instructors’ foci and expectations in English 150 and content course assignments. Also, English 101C teachers may consider giving feedback on what other instructors attend to, thereby directing students’ attention to features requiring improvement; this may help students to better meet their instructors’ expectations in future courses.

In addition, the analysis of instructor feedback provided valuable information that the feedback, one form of assessment results that students can see, does reflect the instructors’ perspectives reported in the interviews and is consistent with the rubrics and curriculum mandated by the department.

4.3.4. Comparison of Instructor Severity

This section also aims to answer the third research question regarding correspondence of student writing evaluation in English 101C and 150, especially in terms of instructor severity in grading/scoring. In order to answer this question, the rating results of seven English 101C instructors and six English 150 instructors on the same set of 25 essays were analyzed by means of a Mann-Whitney test and a many-facet Rasch analysis. Results showed that there was no evidence for significant differences between English 101C and 150 instructors at the group level in terms of severity. However, individual instructors within each course, especially English 101C instructors, were differentially severe, indicating that each group of instructors cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group in terms of severity.
4.3.4.1. Course difficulty difference.

The difference in course difficulty between English 101C and 150 was operationalized as the difference of mean ranks of letter grades awarded by the instructors (raters) from the two courses. Because the data took the form of letter grades, which are regarded as ordinal, and the normality assumption was not met, a Mann-Whitney test was used as an alternative to a t-test. According to the result, letter grades awarded by English 101C instructors (Median = 8, which is B) did not differ significantly from those given by English 150 teachers (Median = 8, which is B), $U = 12271.500, z = -1.023, p = 0.306$. Considering that the two groups of instructors used two different rubrics, meaning that rubric and instructor variables were not separated, the result can be interpreted in the following way: English 101C and 150 instructors were not different in terms of rater severity, and/or the two different rubrics used by these writing course instructors were not different in terms of difficulty; or, it could be that instructors’ leniency in one course is offset by the rubric’s difficulty.

4.3.4.2. Individual instructor severity difference.

Although no evidence was found that English 101C and 150 instructors were differentially severe at the group level, instructors were differentially severe at the individual level within each group. First, to investigate possible severity differences across seven English 101C instructors, the instructor measurement report, an output produced by FACETS, was examined (Table 4.32), with special focus given to separation and reliability indexes, both found at the bottom of the table.
Table 4.32

Instructor Measurement Report: English 101C instructors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Model S.E.</th>
<th>Infit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
<th>Outfit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-101C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean S.D.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSE (Model)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>Adj S.D.</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed chi-square:</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>d.f.: 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>significance:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The separation index for these seven raters was 4.03, with a reliability of 0.94, suggesting that the instructors could reliably be separated into at least four distinct levels of severity. The raters’ severity estimates ranged from -1.33 to 0.73, displaying a relatively wide spread in severity (2.06 logits). This constituted about 60% of the logit spread observed for student’s writing ability measures (3.53 logits). Thus, seven English 101C instructors were not considered a homogeneous group of raters in terms of severity. Given that only one instructor graded each student’s essay in a classroom context without a double or triple rating system (as in large-scale standardized testing), such differential severities deserve serious attention.

Second, to investigate possible severity differences across six English 150 instructors, the instructor measurement report was examined (Table 4.33), again with special focus given to separation and reliability indexes, found at the bottom of the table.
Table 4.33

Instructor Measurement Report: English 150 instructors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Model S.E.</th>
<th>Infit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
<th>Outfit MnSq</th>
<th>ZStd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-150</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSE (Model)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>Adj S.D.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed chi-square:</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>d.f.:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>significance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The separation index for these six raters is 1.86, with a reliability of 0.78, suggesting that the instructors could be separated into almost two distinct levels of severity. The raters’ severity estimates ranged from -0.42 to 0.30, displaying a relatively narrow spread in severity (0.72 logits). These six English 150 instructors were considered a relatively homogeneous group of raters in terms of severity.

In summary, no evidence was found for the differential severity between English 101C and 150 instructors in terms of grading students’ assignments. However, individual instructors substantially differed in severity within each group, especially among English 101C instructors.

Answering the third research question involved an attempt to see if one of the assumptions (the criteria and procedures for evaluating the performance on the English 101C assessment tasks closely correspond to those identified by instructors as important for assessing writing assignments in other university courses) included in the extrapolation inference is met or
not within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment results. The rubrics used in the three courses shared many evaluation criteria, although different emphases were placed on different criteria, and one course looked for additional qualities for certain criteria compared with the other courses.

The analyses of instructor interviews and feedback revealed that three groups of instructors shared many evaluation criteria (e.g., comprehensibility and grammatical accuracy as qualities of good writing), but content course instructors were more concerned with conciseness, accurateness, and relevance of writing than English 101C instructors. Meanwhile, English 150 instructors were more concerned with audience consideration, engagingness, clear purpose of writing, accuracy of content, depth/quality of ideas, and citation than English 101C instructors. English 150 teachers also had higher expectations for thesis statements and transitions. It was also found that both English 150 and content course instructors were more lenient with international students’ papers, especially regarding grammar and style. Finally, the analyses of the rating results on the same set of essays (by means of Mann-Whitney test and many-facet Rasch analysis) showed that individual instructors were differentially severe within each course, but did not provide evidence that English 101C and 150 instructors were significantly different at the group level in terms of severity.

Taken together, the rubrics and instructors in the three courses shared many evaluation criteria in terms of assessing students’ writing assignment, despite different emphases on different criteria and some additional qualities expected in one course but not the others. Also, English 101C and 150 were not significantly different in terms of course difficulty, estimated with the inclusion of rubric difficulty and instructor severity. Therefore, the third assumption of the extrapolation inference was partially supported by the findings. Given that the goal of
English 101C is to prepare students for writing in English 150 and other disciplinary courses, English 101C instructors may consider attending to some evaluation criteria that are regarded as important in other courses when they give comments on students’ assignments.

4.4. Interpretation of Grades and Feedback on English 101C Assessment

This section aims to answer the fourth research question: *Is the meaning of grades and feedback on English 101C assessment clearly interpretable by students and instructors?* For this, interviews with 20 English 101C students and eight English 101C instructors, along with the scoring rubric and instructors’ evaluation of Assignment 3 submitted by these 20 students, were examined. The results suggest that, although several reasons were identified for some unclear comments, most feedback was understood by students as their instructors has intended. However, grades were less comprehensible to students due to the students’ perceptions of unclear evaluation criteria and scales, as well as weighting for each criterion and, therefore, need more explanation and justification. The results also suggest that even instructors are sometimes unsure about how to understand and use the rubric given by the English 101C program coordinator, which makes the teachers less confident about their evaluations.

4.4.1. Students’ Interpretation of Instructor Feedback

Students are the main beneficiaries of instructors’ comments on the assignments. Thus, 20 English 101C students interviewed were asked how they understood feedback given on Assignment 3. Out of 15 students who were specifically asked if the feedback was clear, 12 answered positively, as shown in the following example quotes:

*Her feedback is really clear. (Student 43, ENGL 101C, interview)*
It is easy to revise based on her feedback (Student 20, ENGL 101C, interview)

I can understand pretty much all the feedback. She discussed these issues in class already. (Student 44, ENGL 101C, interview)

It was difficult to understand his feedback on the first assignment, but as time went by I got used to his style. Now, most feedback is clear. (Student 105, ENGL 101C, interview)

Student 56 also stated that it was not difficult to understand her instructor’s feedback, because she could always ask her and clarify any questions she had, especially during one-on-one conferences. Regarding the error codes used in the feedback, Student 55 said they were not hard to understand, because he could refer to the handout that explains all the codes used by the instructor.

On the other hand, three out of the 15 students answered negatively. For example, Student 24 responded he could usually understand what kinds of problems were being pointed out in the feedback, but it was not always easy to address the problems based on the comments. In the case of Student 3, as her instructor normally provided comments on her paper orally during the conference, comments were not easy to understand and remember due to limitations in the student’s listening skills. The remaining five out of 20 students interviewed were not asked this particular question explicitly either, because the interview moved directly to discussing each comment or because the interviewed students were my students, in which case it may have been hard for them to honestly make any negative evaluation.

Although most students claimed instructors’ feedback was clear and easy to understand, they sometimes failed to show a solid understanding of comments’ meaning and instructors’ expectations when asked to tell me in detail how they understood each comment. All the 20 interviewed students had at least a few comments they were unsure about. It was also found that
the reasons contributing to the lack of clarity were diverse. In the following, I will present four cases, with relevant examples, exemplifying the diverse assortment of unclear feedback as interpreted from the perspectives of the students: 1) cannot understand what is wrong, 2) cannot understand what is wrong, but blindly accept the instructor’s suggestions, 3) understand what is wrong, but cannot fix it, 4) understand the comment, but do not agree with its suggestion.

Case 1: I don’t even understand what’s wrong.

In the first case, students could not even figure out what was wrong with their writing based on instructors’ feedback, let alone make the appropriate changes; seven different reasons for this confusion were identified for such cases. First, feedback did not alert students to what the problem was. Instead, instructors simply used a double question mark or made a very generic comment, as shown in the examples in Table 4.34.

Table 4.34

Examples of Feedback that did not Identify Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Isaan food is also mainly grilled or streamed. Thus, it is also the low-calories food that has good taste and is good for health.</td>
<td>Highlighted “streamed” and “It” and said “??” for each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) In conclusion, difference regions provide difference identities of Thai food.</td>
<td>Highlighted “difference regions provide difference identities of Thai food” and said “Revise it more clearly.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Example (1), Instructor 8 used a double question mark for both *streamed* and *It*. For *streamed*, Student 69 said he did not know why the teacher could not understand the word *streamed*. For *It*, on the other hand, he remarked he did not understand what the double question mark meant and guessed that his teacher probably did not know what *it* referred to. The student seemed confused by the words *streamed* and *steamed*, the latter of which was appropriate in the
context, or he simply mis-spelled it. Because the instructor did not explicitly pinpoint what was wrong, however, the student had no idea what the instructor intended to express by providing this comment. As far as it goes, because it seems rather obvious that it was referring to Isaan food, given the previous sentence, as well as the flow of the essay, it is not clear whether the instructor wanted to point out its unclear reference, as the student guessed, or simply wanted to note the unnecessary capitalization in the middle of the sentence. Whatever the instructor’s intention was in his use of the second double question mark, it is apparent that he used the same symbol to point out two different issues, which may have been confusing to students.

Meanwhile, in Example (2), Instructor 8 made a generic comment, “revise it more clearly,” without actually stating what specifically made the sentence unclear. Student 69 simply ended up guessing that he probably needed to change the whole clause or use another word other than different based on a previous comment that prompted the student to avoid using different. Since the student did not understand exactly which part was unclear or how to improve it, no change was made in the final draft.

Second, even though feedback did indicate what the problem was, error codes or the way instructors explained an issue may not have made sense to students. In Example (1) in Table 4.35, Instructor 7 used the term pronoun and the error code sv in her feedback. During the interview, Student 56 said that she understood what was meant by pronoun, which was fully spelled out, but was not sure about sv, which actually stands for subject-verb disagreement, even though she received an error code chart at the beginning of the semester that explained all the errors codes used in the feedback.
### Examples of Feedback that used Ambiguous Codes or Explanation to Identify Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) I find out myself are not the same as other ethnic groups in terms of my outer appearance, my lifestyle, and some particular viewpoints about family.</td>
<td>Highlighted “myself” and “are” and said “pronoun” and “sv” for each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The Only major city that would not have farming would be Mumbai</td>
<td>Highlighted the first “would” and said “v”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) I would speak Haryanvi because it is.</td>
<td>Highlighted “because it is” and said “frag: missing adjective”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) However, in recent years, Seoul has facts that contribute to the culture of the city as a whole are convenient transportation, the shopping system and rapid growth of economic development.</td>
<td>Highlighted the whole sentence and said “frag, check the subject and the predicate of this sentence”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) The cities in India are almost all the same, there is nothing special about that city except for only one monument in each city if it does have one.</td>
<td>Highlighted “The cities in India are almost all the same, there is nothing special about that city” and said “ro: the cities are &amp; there is”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Due to different factors in different regions, there is a variety of food that has not only a unique flavor but also has colorful in its appearance.</td>
<td>Highlighted “colorful” and said “Colorful what?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the feedback shown in the second example above, Student 9 said “Which would be? That would be? We can’t use wouldn’t in the essays? I would change that to which.” Because the essay was describing a fact about the city of Mumbai here, the student was supposed to write the sentence in the present tense (does not have) instead of the past tense (would not have). However, since the student did not understand what was meant by v, he tried a few different ways to correct the error during the interview and eventually decided to change that to which, which is not even a verb-related change when, presumably, Instructor 6 intended for the student to modify the verb.
On the other hand, in Examples (3) and (4) in Table 4.35, Instructors 6 and 2 added a little more explanation to the error code \textit{frag}, but Students 9 and 44 said they still did not understand what the comments meant. Teachers’ explanations that were loaded with grammatical terms, such as \textit{fragment, predicate, adjective, and subject}, may not have been straightforward to students not majoring in English. As a result, students could not use these comments to revise their drafts.

In Example (5) in Table 4.35, while pointing out that the text was a run-on sentence, Instructor 6 also wrote “the cities are & there is” in the comment to show that there were two clauses in the sentence that were connected without any conjunction. As Student 9 struggled to understand this feedback, I asked him why he thought the instructor wrote the feedback in such a way. He answered “Past tense? There is something, there was something… I don’t know.” His interpretation was totally different from what was intended by the instructor. In Example (6), a noun was missing after the adjective \textit{colorful}. By writing “colorful what?” in the comment, Instructor 8 noted that a noun was needed in the place of \textit{what}; however, Student 69 had no idea about such an intention, stating “Teacher highlighted \textit{colorful}. Maybe I need to change the word to make this one more clear.”

Third, students sometimes failed to understand what was wrong with their writing when instructors gave suggestions on how to make revisions without explaining why such changes were needed. Some examples are provided in Table 4.36 below.
Table 4.36

*Examples of Feedback that did not Explain why Suggested Changes were Needed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) This language is commonly spoken to most of the Malay race.</td>
<td>Highlighted the whole sentence and said “use a active voice here instead of a passive”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Most of tourists who come to visit Bangkok know that they have to try Tom Yum Kung, which has been recognized as the most famous Thai food and Pad Tai, noodle flied with several good condiments such as eggs, shrimp, vegetable and other sauce.</td>
<td>Highlighted the space between <em>Thai food</em> and <em>and Pad Tai</em> and said “Missing comma?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Plus, the southerners mainly take cane sugar while the northerners take beet sugar as the result of the different raw-material abundance area.</td>
<td>Highlighted the whole sentence and said “So, what kinds of food people enjoy in each area due to the difference (sugar cane vs. sugar beet)?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) This embroidery was invented in Han dynasty and reached a peak in Three Kingdoms Period. Nowadays, it could be a symbol of Chengdu.</td>
<td>Highlighted <em>Chengdu</em> and said “To explain historically rich aspect of the city, you showed a few different examples, which is nice. Could you discuss a little bit more about how they affect the life of people or the culture of the city these days?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responding to Instructor 9’s feedback for Example (1), Student 31 said that it was not difficult to change passive to active voice grammatically, but he did not understand why such a change was needed in that context. In Example (2) in Table 4.36, the feedback gave a straightforward suggestion in terms of grammar. During the interview, however, Student 69 said that, even though he put a comma in the final draft, as suggested by Instructor 8’s comment, he still did not understand why a comma was required in this instance. It seems that a comma was needed to separate the relative clause *which* that follows *Tom Yum Kung*, but the student thought that the comma was related to the conjunction *and*: “because you have to put comma before *and* if you have several items.”

By contrast, in Example (3) in Table 4.36, Instructor 9’s feedback prompted Student 108 to add a comparison between the southern and northern area in terms of food. When I asked the
student why such a comment was made, he was only able to give a very generic answer: “because usually essays are developed that way.” Given the topic sentence of that particular paragraph (First, the food in China has significant difference from south to north), which was about comparing foods, not ingredients, in two different regions, such a modification may have been necessary to maintain consistency between the topic sentence and the supporting details.

The feedback in Example (4) asked Student 33 to add more discussion about how the examples in the paragraph illustrated the historically rich aspect of the city and its effect on the lives and culture of the people. Because Instructor 4 did not explain why such further discussion was needed, however, the student had trouble identifying the need for further discussion and deduced “because people are the major part of the city.” It seems that the instructor provided the comment mainly because what was lacking in the student’s paper was one of the major requirements of the essay, according to the assignment sheet.

Fourth, comments were sometimes confusing to students when a highlighted part, intended to indicate a problem area, did not actually match what instructors were trying to specify. Two such examples are provided Table 4.37 below.

Table 4.37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) I was born in Chengdu, a capital of Sichuan province, located in southwest of China. This fertile land breeds the locals from generation to generation. There is a special group of people who also receive grace by the land that are neither considered as native nor outsiders, however.</td>
<td>Highlight “breeds” and say “What do you mean by this? This sentence doesn’t make sense.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Tom Yum Kung and Pad Tai are the most well known food in central region, which has difference in taste and appearance.</td>
<td>Highlight “appearance” and say “Generally, your essay is good. But you need to check capitalization and word forms before submit it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I asked Student 40 how she interpreted the feedback in Example (1) in Table 4.37, she gave an explanation for the entire sentence instead of simply focusing on the highlighted word *breeds*. By highlighting that particular word, Instructor 4 aimed to say that the student had chosen the wrong word, and, because of the inappropriate word choice, the sentence did not make sense. Yet, the student did not notice that her instructor was specifically referencing one word, because the teacher alluded that the entire *sentence* did not make sense and did not exactly pinpoint the word. As a result, the student deleted the full sentence in the final draft. Because the feedback was not clear, the student could not revise her draft as the instructor intended and also missed the chance to learn about the word *breed*.

In the second example in Table 4.37, Instructor 8 highlighted only one word (*appearance*) and then pointed out capitalization and word form issues. Given that the instructor discussed the overall quality of the essay in the same comment, the note about capitalization could also be deemed as relevant to the entire essay. Responding to the instructor’s feedback in Example (2), Student 69 did claim to understand what capitalization was, but had no idea why he should change *a* to *A*. In this case, the highlighted portion made the entire comment unclear.

Lastly, there were some comments that students thought they understood well, but were actually misinterpreted and, therefore, could not be addressed as the instructors expected. For instance, in Example (1) in Table 4.38 below, Instructor 14’s feedback pointed out the location of a thesis statement. When Student 55 was asked how he responded to this comment, he revealed that the sentence was intended as a thesis statement, which was the first sentence of the paragraph in his writing; his follow-up action involved more clearly connecting each of his body paragraphs to the introduction and making the thesis statement more understandable. However,
the student did not realize that the main point of the feedback actually regarded the location of the thesis statement, so the portion of text remained in the first sentence of the introduction in the final draft.

Table 4.38

Examples of Feedback that was Misinterpreted by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) I am a Chinese, and I am a dreamer and a hard worker. These three labels are very suitable to describe what kind of person I am. As a young boy growing up in the countryside in China and then learning in America, I have many complex experiences. It is hard to tell my stories to anyone who didn’t have the similar experience and expect him/her to understand me. I carry the pressure to be a successful Chinese who can earn a fortune after returning from America. Although I also desire to be a man of value, I know I have to work harder and harder every day. This is the composite portrait of who I am.</td>
<td>This is a good introduction, but it needs a thesis statement at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Moreover, the cultural mosaic of Penang naturally means that they are a great number of festivals to celebrate.</td>
<td>In this paragraph, did you discuss any specific places and emphasize their cultural contribution? Are there any locations that people celebrate those festivals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) In traditional china, although a Chinese has spent ten year to prepare for the national exam, and he is luckily admitted to be a politics, he have no choices but resigning to return home if his parents are ill or pass away.</td>
<td>Can women take the exam?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The feedback in Example (2) was misunderstood by Student 24 as well. Because the assignment sheet asked the student to discuss different neighborhoods of the city and their contribution to the culture of the entire city, Instructor 6 suggested specifically mentioning a few locations in the essay. However, when the student was asked how he interpreted this comment, he said “I didn’t really specifically tell how this celebration contributes to the state of Penang.
For example, it helps to bring tourists inside and increase the income of Penang.” He did not seem to understand that he should write about different neighborhoods of the city to meet the assignment requirement.

The Example (3) in Table 4.38 showed that Student 55 did not understand the intended meaning of the comment. Because, in the past, only men could take a national exam to become a government officer in China, the student used the pronoun *he*. However, Instructor 14, who is American, was not aware of this fact and asked if women could take the exam. It seems like the comment contained a simple question, but chances are high that the instructor wanted the student to clarify this point for readers who were not familiar with Chinese history. In other words, the comment may not have been a simple question asking for an answer, but rather a request for clarification. Yet, because the student confirmed the information in the text is correct, he made no change in the final draft.

*Case 2: I don’t understand what’s wrong, but blindly accept the instructor’s suggestions*

Sometimes, students failed to understand the nature of problem based on feedback, but blindly accepted the instructor’s suggestions. Two such examples of this scenario are provided below.

Table 4.39

*Examples of Feedback that Provided Direct Correction without Explanation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Malaysians are mainly consists of Malays that speak Malay, Chinese that speak Mandarin and Indians that speak Tamil.</td>
<td>Malaysians are mainly consists of Malays that speak Malay, Chinese that speak Mandarin and Indians that speak Tamil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) By sharing the same culture transmitted by ancestors, people find their cultural identity and a great sense of belonging.</td>
<td>By sharing the same culture that has been transmitted from ancestors to descendants, Chinese people find their cultural identity and a great sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first example, Instructor 9 crossed out *are*, because the verb *consist* did not need a *to be* verb. Even though Student 31 did not understand why *are* should be deleted, he completed the request following the instructor’s correction, but did not address the subject (Malaysians) and verb (consists) disagreement, which was not noted by the instructor. Similarly, in the second example, Instructor 9 made several corrections using a Track Changes function in the Word. When Student 108 was asked why these changes were needed, he said that he honestly did not know, but directly copied the instructor’s corrections for the final draft. In this case, he could make a successful revision and received a higher grade on the final draft, but missed a chance to learn from the mistake.

Case 3: *I know what’s wrong, but cannot fix it.*

On the contrary, there were some cases where students understood what was wrong with their writing based on the instructors’ feedback, but were unsure of how to fix the problem, as shown in the following examples in Table 4.40 below.

**Table 4.40**

*Examples of Feedback that Indicated the Problem but did not Tell how to Fix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) However, in recent years, Seoul has facts that contribute to the culture of the city as a whole are convenient transportation, the shopping system and rapid growth of economic development.</td>
<td>Highlighted “economic development” and said “art”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The architecture of Penang includes buildings and monuments which has over a century and a half of British presence, as well as the confluence of immigrants and the culture they brought with them.</td>
<td>Highlighted “buildings and monuments which has” and said “sv”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.40 continued

| (3) Chicken curry noodle, Khao Soi, one of the famous quick dishes, has a spicy and sweet taste because of a few peppercorns and aromatic savor because of garlic and other herbs. | Highlighted the entire sentence and said “Too many commas here.” |
| (4) To be able to understand or to speak Malay, the Malaysian (?) government set Malay language as a compulsory subject in the primary and secondary schools that all Malaysian students are required to learn. | Highlighted “To be able to understand or to speak Malay” and said “Make it clear since I do not get what you are talking about here.” |
| (5) Though countless generations, Chinese culture has been transmitted and developed into multifarious varieties. | Highlighted “varieties” and said “Can you be more specific here? Provide some examples.” |
| (6) Regarding the entire essay | Your biggest grammar mistakes are verb tense and s-v agreement. |

Regarding the feedback in Example (1), Student 44 argued that he knew that *art* meant “article error” and that most nouns in English language require an article. Because he was not very knowledgeable about the English article system, however, he usually chose either *a* or *the* based on his intuition at the moment. In the subject-verb disagreement error in the second example in Table 4.40, Student 24 stated that he knew the meaning of the error code, but admitted it was not always easy to correct that kind of error, although it appears simple and straightforward to instructors. In Example (3), Student 69 could literally understand what the feedback means, but asserted “I don’t know how to correct it at all. I want to include all the phrases in one sentence. As far as I know, we can use relative clause to put many clauses in one sentence or use comma. I don’t usually ask other people. When I don’t know how to correct it, I just change the whole sentence.” Because the inclusion of too many commas was not a kind of error that the student could correct himself based on his grammar knowledge, the feedback that only identified the problem was not useful for revision. From Instructor 9’s comment in Example (4), Student 31 understood that his expression was awkward, but, because he did not know how
to correct it, he simply deleted the whole sentence. Conversely, what was requested in the feedback in Example (5) was clear and obvious to Student 108, but the suggestion was not followed, because it did not involve a quick, easy revision. The feedback in Example (6) was provided as a part of an overall comment at the end of Student 3’s paper. Regarding such indirect grammar feedback, the student made a comment, which is worth quoting here: “When I write each paper, I do my best based on all the grammar knowledge that I have. And my grammar knowledge does not suddenly improve between the second and third drafts. Then, how can I correct errors based on such simple, generic comments?” According to her argument, in the cases of errors, not mistakes, instructors should provide direct grammar feedback in order for it to be most useful for revision and learning.

**Case 4: I know what you mean, but I think I’m right.**

Last, an interesting case involves students understanding the problems and suggestions mentioned in the instructor feedback, but disagreeing with their instructors. Most of the time, when defending their compositions, students also have a strong justification for what and how they wrote a passage. Some examples of this case are provided in Table 4.41 below.

Table 4.41

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Writing</th>
<th>Instructor Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Second, traditional Chinese festivals are celebrated and treated seriously across the country. The biggest traditional festival is the spring festival.</td>
<td>Second, traditional Chinese festivals are celebrated and treated seriously across the country. The biggest traditional festival is a spring festival.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.41 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(2) I am a Chinese, and I am a dreamer and a hard worker. These three labels are very suitable to describe what kind of person I am. As a young boy growing up in the countryside in China and then learning in America, I have many complex experiences. It is hard to tell my stories to anyone who didn’t have the similar experience and expect him/her to understand me. I carry the pressure to be a successful Chinese who can earn a fortune after returning from America. Although I also desire to be a man of value, I know I have to work harder and harder every day. This is the composite portrait of who I am.</th>
<th>This is a good introduction, but it needs a thesis statement at the end.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3) Regarding the entire essay</td>
<td>Also, after you establish what your categories for analysis are, you will need to eliminate some of the repetitive items. I think you repeat yourself a bit too much.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Example (1), Student 108 originally wrote *the spring festival*, and Instructor 9 changed *the* to *a*. During the interview, the student said he did not follow the instructor’s suggestion in the final draft, because the article “the” should come before a proper noun based on his understanding of article usage. The instructor, who does not share the same home country as the student, probably does not know that the Spring Festival, also called Chinese New Year, is one of the most important annual events for Chinese people and is most definitely considered a proper noun. In the second example, Instructor 14 explained that a thesis statement should appear at the end of the introduction. During the interview, Student 55 said the following, while highlighting the first sentence of the introduction, which was intended as a thesis statement and matched well with each of the body paragraphs.

Well, I did have a thesis statement in another place. I don’t think it necessarily has to be at the last sentence of the first paragraph. Actually, I looked at an example in our
textbook. An author didn’t put thesis at the end of intro either. But teacher told me that’s advanced and that I need to follow what we learned in class. I don’t agree with teacher’s comment. (Student 55, ENGL 101C, interview)

From this quote, it can be observed that, although the student still did not agree with his instructor and believed that the location of a thesis statement can be flexible as long as it functions properly in a particular paper, he tried to change the text according to the instructor’s feedback; he kept the first sentence in the same place and added a slightly more specific thesis statement at the very end of the introduction: *These are my characteristics: a responsible Chinese, an ambitious dreamer and an optimistic hard worker.*

The feedback in Example (3) is a part of a comment provided at the very end of the paper. Though Instructor 7 recommended the removal of some repetitive items, Student 43 kept all the sentences from her second draft and even added more that were similar to the existing sentences. When the student was asked why she did not remove any of the repetitive sentences, she responded that she wanted to make her writing clearer, maintaining that the text included discussions of her home country’s culture, a subject not familiar to readers or the instructor. In other words, the student believes that the more she writes, the clearer her message is.

Unfortunately, this is the exact problem that was pointed out by one English 150 instructor.

I’m minimalist. Again it comes down to tone, academic writing, clarity. Why are you telling me this in three different ways? Tell me once and move on… I think international students do it because they are trying to be clear. They probably do it a lot in speaking, and they want to make sure that their meaning is coming across, cause they know they have language barrier, so they are trying to be clear. Then I think part of that cross out is
we get it, you are being clear. In fact, to be clearer, just say it once. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

Interestingly, Student 43 met Instructor 20 in English 150 the following semester and received the same comment, showing that the problem is a longitudinal issue that the student is clearly not resolving.

To summarize, a majority of the interviewed students claimed that most feedback provided by their instructors was clear and easy to understand. However, when they were asked to discuss in detail how they understood each comment, it turned out that some comments were not clear to them in that they 1) could not understand what was wrong, 2) could not understand what was wrong, but blindly accepted the instructor’s suggestions, 3) understood what was wrong but could not fix it, or 4) understood the comment, but did not agree with its suggestion.

Although there were a few cases where such perceived lack of clarity simply resulted from students’ misunderstanding of the feedback, in most cases the feedback could have been clearer and, therefore, more useful with the following efforts on the part of instructors: 1) identifying problems specifically, 2) using unambiguous codes and explanations to identify problems, 3) explaining why suggested changes are needed instead of simply providing better alternatives, 4) accurately locating the source of problems, 5) making a request in an explicit manner instead of just asking a question, 6) providing explanations about direct corrections, 7) offering specific suggestions on how to address problems, or 8) finding ways to convince students that their suggestions are worth implementing.
4.4.2. Students’ Interpretation of Grades

In addition to feedback, grades are another essential element of assessment results. While feedback may be more useful for revising and learning purposes, grades offer a quick, straightforward summary of students’ performance on writing assignments. Also, given that most writing course instructors give analytic scores for different evaluation criteria, as well as a total score, grades can signal both strengths and weaknesses in a student’s writing. Furthermore, English 101C grades on major writing assignments are a major component of the final course grade, which is used to determine the pass or fail status of English 101C participants and students’ eligibility for taking English 150. Just as grades play significant roles in assessment and are used for a variety of purposes, they should be correctly understood by students and instructors.

Thus, 20 English 101C students interviewed were asked how they understood the grades given on Assignment 3. Out of 16 students who were specifically asked if the grades they received were clear and convincing to them, seven responded positively as shown in the following example quotes:

Yes, most part. (Student 108, ENGL 101C, interview)

I can understand why I got this… did not really disagree with him. (Student 3, ENGL 101C, interview)

I think it’s based on what she taught, book, you have the thesis statement, supporting points, examples, you have to express yourself, your own points too. (Student 56, ENGL 101C, interview)
However, nine of the 16 students answered negatively, so as a follow-up question, they were asked to discuss why the grades were not clear and reasonable from the students’ perspectives. Seven reasons contributing to the lack of clarity were identified in students’ responses.

First, findings showed that the rubric used for assessing compositions in English 101C is not specific enough. As shown in Table 4.42, the rubric explains five evaluation criteria for the essay in a few sentences each and also shows how the instructors evaluate student essays using a five-point scale, ranging from extra to lack, for each criterion.

Table 4.42

*The Scoring Rubric for Assignment 3 in English 101C*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria Categories</th>
<th>Extra</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Lack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thesis contains a controlling idea naming the analytical categories in parallel form.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening contains the needed background information to establish the context of the topic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting points are defined by a logical basis of division.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each point is fully developed with a variety of details.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each topic sentence is clearly linked to the controlling idea of thesis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas within paragraphs are logically developed and cohesive. Cohesive devices are applied.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions move the reader between paragraphs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A concluding paragraph reinforces the connection between the parts and the whole.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.42 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun phrases are expanded to include more accurate and specific adjectives and nouns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective clauses add more specific detail to your descriptions and provide deeper information in longer and more fluid sentences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with grammar and mechanics are minimal and do not distract the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses required document formatting (font, margins, indents, line spacing, full heading)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student 69 complained that the rubric gives too little information regarding how the essay will be assessed, mentioning that a few sentences are not enough to aid understanding of what each criterion means, and there are no descriptors conveying the meaning of the scale categories for each criterion.

The second reason for students interpreting the grades incorrectly may come from the fact that students do not know what each node on the five-point scale (extra, good, okay, some, and lack) represents, nor how to distinguish adjacent scales (e.g., good versus extra), as discussed by three students.

But I don’t understand the meaning between good and extra. (Student 69, ENGL 101C, interview)

I think the chart that she evaluates me is not so relevant. If she marked good for my transition, what is the level of good here? Does good mean I did a good job, but I still need to improve it? Then, how can I improve to get extra? (Student 20, ENGL 101C, interview)

I got lack, but I don't know how she gives this score. I understand that I made a lot of mistakes and words are not enough, but I don’t know how she divides those levels. What
kinds of essay receive extra, good, okay, some, lack or A, B, C, D? (Student 107, ENGL 101C, interview)

Both Student 69 and 20 raised questions about the distinction between good and extra, a designation that would be particularly helpful for students to make improvements to receive a higher score on the final draft. Meanwhile, Student 107 was unsure of the meaning of lack and wanted to see example essays for each point on the scale. Furthermore, four students complained that the scores they received for some criteria were lower than what they thought they deserved, which may also result from their not knowing what each node on the five-point scale represents. Table 4.43 illustrates students’ reactions to the analytic scores they obtained.

Table 4.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant evaluation criterion</th>
<th>Received Score</th>
<th>Students’ reaction to score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A thesis contains a controlling idea naming the analytical categories in parallel form</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>I think I did everything as required and also the order in the thesis matches body paragraphs, but the grade was lower than I thought. (Student 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting points are defined by a logical basis of division</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Sometimes, I disagree with her. I think I had logical division. (Student 108)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each point is fully developed with a variety of details</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>I’m pretty sure I know best about where I come from. I didn’t describe more due to the length limit of the essay. This score is lower than I thought. (Student 105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with grammar and mechanics are minimal and do not distract the reader</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>For the final draft, I fixed grammar errors, but still its score was very low. (Student 44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown from the reactions to received analytic scores in Table 4.43 above, students thought they did a good job or met all the requirements on the rubric and, therefore, did not understand why they received good or okay, and not extra. Such ambiguity may also result from
unclear meanings for each node on the five-point scale, as some students explicitly pointed out above. However, providing detailed descriptions of each scale for each criterion on the rubric alone may not resolve such misunderstandings, because instructor interview data showed that different instructors held varied standards for each scale. For example, regarding the evaluation of a thesis statement, the rubric states that “a thesis contains a controlling idea naming the analytical categories in parallel form.” In the interview, Instructor 9 said that, although students write a clear thesis statement in their essay (including two or three controlling ideas in a grammatically parallel form), they might not receive a score of extra unless the overall sentence or expression is fluid. Regarding the same evaluation criterion, Instructor 8 responded that, a “good” thesis statement should meet the requirements laid out in the rubric, contain two or three controlling ideas that are not only parallel in terms of grammar, but also at the same conceptual level, and be fairly smooth, despite a few grammar errors. Instructor 8 also added that if the sentence is fluid and without grammatical error, it is capable of receiving an excellent score in the evaluation of thesis statements. He went on to say that text’s inclusion of controlling ideas that are conceptually at the same level is important; if this requirement is not met, Instructor 9 does not give a score higher than okay.

Third, Student 69 raised questions about his grade on grammar in comparison with the feedback he received from Criterion, an automated writing evaluation system developed by ETS. Because Criterion provides not only numerical scores, but also written feedback that can be used by students to improve their drafts, the tool was being used in all sections of English 101C to help students mainly with grammar mistakes. Once students submit their draft, Criterion highlights grammar errors and gives suggestions. However, because there are certain grammatical issues that are not well recognized by Criterion, the program’s evaluation of
grammar may not coincide with the instructors’ evaluation. If a student is not aware that a potential discrepancy may exist, instructors’ feedback may be confusing to him/her, as shown in the following interview excerpt:

I only got good for delivery. Before I submit the final draft to my teacher, I checked with Criterion for grammar mistakes. After I corrected all the mistakes based on Criterion feedback, I submitted my draft again to Criterion. Then, it says no mistake. But I still got good from my teacher. (Student 69, ENGL 101C, interview)

Because Criterion did not find any grammar mistake in his draft, the student thought his paper was perfect in terms of grammar and expected to get the highest possible score, extra, from the instructor as well. The instructor’s evaluation of delivery did not make sense to the student, as he did not understand that Criterion carries limitations in terms of detecting grammatical and mechanical problems.

Fourth, Student 9 stated that it is not clear how the marks for each evaluation criterion on the rubric are related to the total score:

I don’t see how she got this [total] score based on this table. There is only one score this low, so if you would read this 1 through 5 or something, this [total score] should have been more than 14. But I’m not the teacher anything, I’m just guessing. Because there’s couple and most of them are in the good section, I was thinking this [total score] should be 18, 19 for the score. (Student 9, ENGL 101C, interview)

Out of ten specific evaluation criteria, this student received two extra, five good, two okay, and one some markings, and 14 out of 25 for a total score. Considering seven out of the ten categories were awarded a score higher than okay, the student thought he deserved a total score higher than 14. If students do not see any relevance between the analytic scores (or marks on the
rubric) and the holistic score, chances are high that they are not aware of the weights given to each criterion. The rubric did not indicate the weight distribution, and different instructors were distributing varied weights to each criterion, as shown in the previous analysis of instructor interview data.

Fifth, Students 44 and 106 thought the loss of some points was mainly due to grammar and expression issues or errors, which may not be completely true. For example, Student 106 said as follows about the score of 91 she received on Assignment 3: “I talked about this assignment with my instructor. Some problems that I made are grammar and awkward expressions. I think that I lost those nine points because of grammar and expression.” Even though the instructor pointed out grammar and expression in this student’s second draft, it is less likely that the student lost all nine points as a result of the sentence-level issues, given that her instructor pays much more attention to context, substance, and organization, according to the interview data. Again, such a misunderstanding may be due to the student not knowing the aspects of writing on which her instructor mainly focuses. Also, because the student is aware of her limited English proficiency, as are other international students, she may be overly sensitive to grammar among all the evaluation criteria.

Sixth, in order to completely understand their grades, Students 3 and 67 wanted to know where they lost points and what they could do to get a full score, as shown in the following excerpts from the interviews.

I can understand why I got this score, but I want to ask where I lost points. I want something like, here if you did this and that, you could get 100. But he said don't come to see me if you got higher than 90. (Student 3, ENGL 101C, interview)
Score on the final draft is 39 out of 40, but it’s not totally understandable. I would like to know where I lost that one point so that I can do better in the next assignment. (Student 67, ENGL 101C, interview)

Student 3 received 90 out of 100, and Student 67 earned 39 out of 40 as a holistic score. (These are the scores on their second drafts. One instructor used 100 as the possible maximum score and then considered the percentage of the second draft later when he calculated the final score on this assignment; the other instructor used 40 as the possible maximum score from the beginning, because the second draft accounted for 40% of the final score of the assignment in her class.) Although both Students 3 and 67 obtained almost the highest possible scores from their instructors, they still wanted to know what they missed in order so they could make perfect sense of their holistic grades.

Seventh, Student 9 raised a question about the way the final grade for each assignment was calculated. In most sections of English 101C, the grade on each major assignment represented a combination of the scores on the first, second, and final drafts, as well as students’ participation in peer review. Usually, the final draft accounted for 50-60% of the final grade on each major writing assignment, while the first draft was worth 10%, which was mainly awarded in its entirety if the assignment was submitted on time. Regarding the way the final grade was calculated, Student 9 said the final draft should be worth way more than 50%; otherwise, he could not achieve a high score, even though he put much effort into making improvements on the final draft due to the points that he already lost for the earlier drafts.

I don’t know why the final draft is worth only 50%. Usually the final draft is the best, that should be worth a lot more than that so that we can make up for the points that we missed previously. In earlier drafts, we make a lot of mistakes. If we miss all those points at the
beginning, it is really hard to get a high score for the major assignment. (Student 9, ENGL 101C, interview)

English 101C instructors took into account earlier drafts and the peer response, in addition to the quality of final draft, in order to teach students that writing is a continuous process that requires repeated drafting and revising. In addition, the score on the first draft was provided to motivate students to start on the assignment instead of procrastinating until the last moment; also, without such a reward on the first draft, students might show up to the peer response session without any paper to be reviewed by their classmates. In this case, knowing teachers’ intention and educational purpose behind such a practice may have helped Student 9 to better understand the grade on his assignment.

To conclude, more than half of the students asked stated that the grades they received on the assignments were not entirely clear and convincing to them, and diverse reasons contributing to the lack of clarity were found. In order to help students to better understand the evaluation results, English 101C instructors may consider incorporating the followings into their future courses: 1) creating more specific, detailed rubrics; 2) clarifying the meanings of and expectations for each scale node; 3) letting students know a potential discrepancy between the instructor’s and Criterion’s evaluations; 4) telling students the aspects of writing they attend to as well as the weights to the different evaluation criteria; 5) pointing out what students should do further to get a higher score; 6) explaining the intention and educational purpose behind the practice of taking into account the whole writing process, not just the quality of the final draft.
4.4.3. Instructors’ Confusions about Evaluation Criteria and Scales

Students were not the only ones unsure about the interpretation of grades and feedback on the writing assignments in English 101C. Instructors were also uncertain about evaluation criteria and scales, as well as the relative importance of each criterion. This uncertainty could possibly be because the rubric was created by one person, the program coordinator of English 101C, and given to the instructors to be used in the evaluation process. Since instructors did not participate in designing the rubric, they sometimes had unresolved questions about it and, therefore, were not absolutely confident about the assessment results. In the following, I will discuss what questions instructors raised in the interviews. It should be noted, however, that instructors were not specifically asked if the evaluation criteria or scales were clear to them. The following discussions about their uncertainties emerged when instructors were talking about their evaluation process and use of rubrics.

To begin with, four English 101C instructors raised questions about the evaluation criteria described in the rubric. For example, regarding the evaluation of style, the rubric says: “Noun phrases are expanded to include more accurate and specific adjectives and nouns; Adjective clauses add more specific detail to your descriptions and provide deeper information in longer and more fluid sentences.” However, Instructor 9 pointed out that the style category is focused on aspects of writing that are too specific, thus making the evaluation process challenging, as illustrated in the following excerpts.

The rubric is asking us to evaluate very specific things, noun phrases and adjective clauses. Those are sentence-level things. But style is a matter of how an essay is written overall. It does not make sense to look for each adjective clause and noun phrase and see if they are well written. So, I just skim and scan everything to evaluate style and give a
good score if it is read smoothly in general. If I find all the adjective clauses and noun phrases to evaluate style as the rubric says, it will take forever. (Instructor 9, ENGL 101C, interview)

From this instructor’s perspective, the style category is supposed to evaluate how ideas are expressed and how the essay is written in general. Also, evaluating minor grammatical aspects, such as noun phrases and adjective clauses, is almost impossible in the assigned 700-word essays.

Instructor 8 mentioned that style and delivery categories overlap a bit. On the rubric, both grammatical/mechanical accuracy and document formatting are discussed in delivery, whereas style just focuses on adjectival clauses and noun phrases. From his perspective, grammar and mechanics are also a matter of style, while delivery simply refers to the format of documents, such as font, margins, indents, and line spacing. Thus, the instructor suggested moving grammar and mechanics to the style category.

In addition, Instructors 3 and 7 pointed out that some important criteria that should be included in the rubric were missing. The following represents a portion of their responses to the question about whether they only adhered to the rubric to grade students’ papers:

When I see this [students’ papers] I have a sense of where the overall score should be. But sometimes when I calculate, it’s not there. Because I taught this several times, I should know where the level should be. Okay, sometimes, for example I feel that student’s content is not that good. But in the rubric, there is no criterion that the quality about content that I’m specifically looking for. Then, I try to find closest item to make it [the grade] lower. That’s what I will do. (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)
I will say that sometimes I feel trapped that I created the rubric, and then I’m noticing something in the students’ paper that I would like to mark them down for, but it’s not on the rubric, so I have to stick with what’s here. I do because it’s not fair. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

Both instructors quoted above sometimes felt that the evaluation criteria specified in the rubric were not sufficient to fairly grade the assignment, but they differed in that Instructor 3 evaluated what was not specified in the rubric and reflected it in the grade, while Instructor 7 still stuck to the rubric for the purpose of fairness.

On the other hand, three instructors were less secure in their use of the five-point scales integrated into the rubrics, as exemplified in the following interview quote.

I think this kind of scale is very tricky. What is the boundary between extra and good, and what would be the score for extra and good? Actually, I have three scales in my mind, good, okay, and lack. Some and extra is not in my mind… Okay means you have it, you kind of understand it, but there are problems with it, that affect understanding. If I have some and extra as well, I also need to think the degree of how much you have it, not just whether or not you have it. That’s too much for me. (Instructor 1, ENGL 101C, interview)

The instructor was unsure about how to differentiate adjacent scales, as well as how many points should be given to each scale node, which was needed to produce a holistic score. This is why he simplified the scale system and ended up using only three scales, so that he could be confident about the grades he assigned.

It was also found that three instructors differed in terms of the letter grades they used to match each node on the scale. Instructor 1, who used only three points of the scale instead of
five, matched good with A, okay with B, and lack with D or F. Students receive Cs and Ds or pluses and minuses of A and B for a total score, when the three scales are mixed for different criteria. On the other hand, Instructor 5 associated extra with A, good with B, okay with C, some with D, and lack with F. Meanwhile, Instructor 6 was most generous in this regard in that extra was worth A and good A-. That is, these instructors assign different grades to the same node on the scale. In addition, as discussed previously, different instructors give different weights to each evaluation criterion. This is probably because the rubric does not clearly indicate the weight of evaluation criteria for instructors, and also because the weight was not discussed at all during the English 101C instructors’ meeting, as Instructor 8 mentioned in the interview.

In summary, English 101C instructors raised questions about the evaluation criteria and scales as well as relative importance of each criterion: 1) style category focusing on too specific aspects of writing, 2) overlap between style and delivery, 3) the rubric missing some important criteria, 4) the meaning of and the points corresponding to each scale as well as differentiation of adjacent scales, and 5) weight of each evaluation criterion. Such uncertainties may be addressed by having discussions and revising the rubric with other instructors and the coordinator who created it. As noted at the beginning, however, the instructors were not specifically asked about the clarity of evaluation criteria or scales. Instead, those uncertainties were mentioned while instructors discussed their evaluation process and use of the rubric. Thus, instructors’ potential, positive perceptions regarding the rubric and its use were not specifically elicited during the interviews. This may have made the discussion in this particular subsection one-sided, but it was still deemed worth reporting instructors’ uncertainties, as they are relevant to the interpretation of the assessment results on English 101C writing assignments.
The fourth research question attempts to answer whether the first assumption (the meaning of test score and feedback is clearly interpretable by students and instructors) included in the utilization inference is met within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment results. Most interviewed students (12 out of 15) responded that the instructors’ feedback was mostly clear and easy to understand, although all of them had difficulty in comprehending a few comments. On the other hand, many of the questioned students (9 out of 16) reported the grades they received on the assignments were not clear and convincing to them. Additionally, some instructors also mentioned some uncertainties they had regarding the information on the rubric, which made them not confident about the assessment results. In light of the evidence provided in the interview data, the first assumption of the utilization inference is lacking in good support. When instructors’ feedback does not clearly indicate problems or does not provide specific, reasonable suggestions for how students may fix them, students cannot make the best use of the feedback for revising or learning. When grading scales or the meaning and relative importance of each evaluation criterion are not clear, students and instructors are not on the same page with the interpretation of grades and, therefore, decisions made based on the grades might not be satisfactory to all the stakeholders.

4.5. English 101C Assessment Results as an Indicator of Readiness for Written Communication in University

This section aims to answer the fifth research question: Does good performance on English 101C writing assessment mean that a student is ready to take English 150 and engage in various written communications in university? To answer this question, the scores on English 150 major writing assignments of three groups of students (97 international students who took
English 101C, 40 international students exempted from English 101C, and 262 American students) were compared by means of a Kruskal-Wallis Test. In addition, students and instructors’ interviews were analyzed to determine their perceived readiness of international students for producing written communication in university courses. The statistical analysis of English 150 scores shows that the grades of international students who took English 101C were not significantly different from those of other students. However, analyses of interviews yielded mixed findings regarding previous English 101C students’ readiness for written assignments in other university courses.

4.5.1. Comparison of English 150 Grades across Three Groups of Students

As a way to investigate if good performance on English 101C writing assessment indicates students’ readiness to take English 150, the scores on English 150 major writing assignments of three groups of students (97 international students who took English 101C, 40 international students exempted from English 101C, and 262 American students) were compared. Two assumptions were made here: (1) the fact that students had passed English 101C and were eligible for English 150 means that they showed good/decent performance on English 101C assessment; and (2) if previous English 101C students are ready to take English 150, they are expected to write as well as American students or international students who tested out of English 101C.
Table 4.44

*Descriptive Statistics: English 150 Scores of Three Groups of Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American students</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>87.07</td>
<td>5.886</td>
<td>86.35-87.79</td>
<td>.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students exempted from 101C</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>89.02</td>
<td>5.362</td>
<td>87.31-90.74</td>
<td>0.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students who took 101C</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>86.64</td>
<td>6.424</td>
<td>85.34-87.93</td>
<td>0.652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.44 shows 95% confidence intervals for the score average of the three groups in English 150 major writing assignments. The mean score of international students who took English 101C was 86.64, for the international students who were tested out of English 101C is 89.02, and for Americans is 87.07. The average score of previous English 101C students was a bit lower than those of the other two groups, but the confidence intervals for the means showed a slight overlap between them (87.31-87.93 and 86.35-87.93). To ensure that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of grades across the three groups of students, a Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted using SPSS. Because the normality assumption seemed untenable (both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics were significant), I could not employ a one-way ANOVA. Although ANOVA is quite robust against the violation of normality with equal group sizes (Keppel & Wickens, 2007; Kirk, 1995), the sample sizes of the three groups in my data could not be regarded as equal, because the ratio of the largest to smallest group size was greater four to one (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, as an alternative, the Krusal-Wallis test, a non-parametric procedure, was used, and the results are summarized in Table 4.45.
The result of the Kruskal-Wallis Test indicated that the scores of previous English 101C students were not significantly different from those of American students or international students exempted from English 101C. Based on this statistical analysis, it can be inferred that satisfactory performance on English 101C assessments indicates readiness to take English 150. However, how students felt about their own readiness for English 150 or what their instructors thought about their writing performance was not evident in the grade data, which also constitutes an essential piece of information in terms of deciding if such interpretations of English 101C assessment results are valid. Thus, interviews were conducted to identify the perceptions of students and instructors, and the results of analysis will be discussed in the following section.

4.5.2. Students’ Perceived Readiness

Interviews with students began with a question regarding their general perceptions of English 150. Out of 26 English 150 students who previously took English 101C, 21 answered this question in terms of difficulty. Thirteen of the interviewed students noted the course was very challenging, whereas seven said they were doing okay and the English 150 experience was not too bad. On the other hand, one student said she was nervous about taking English 150 at first, but after realizing that the content of American students’ paper was not as good as she thought, she gained confidence: “At first, I couldn’t participate much due to my English. I felt
alienated. But when I looked at American classmates’ papers, their English is good but content is so so, I started to gain confidence.” (Student 3, ENGL 150, interview)

Students discussed several different reasons for the difficulties in English 150. Nine out of 13 students who said English 150 was challenging stated that the assignments were on a higher level, especially in terms of doing research and incorporating citations, as well as performing advanced level rhetorical tasks, as shown in the following interview excerpts.

She questions me a lot. What does addition mean? She wanted me to be more specific although I just wanted to discuss why fast foods are addictive. She also wanted me to find some research to support my point. She always thinks deeper than me. She wants me to write deeper and more specific. (Student 41, ENGL 150, interview)

I really don’t know how to write a good paper. The whole paragraph I was describing something without my opinion, I just describe the facts, without telling what they mean. And for this paper [Assignment 2 in English 150], I really don’t know what info I should put to make it more meaningful. (Student 50, ENGL 150, interview)

Finding material is a challenge because we have to find supporting materials from different resources, either from online or book. We have to read through paper, which part we would use in our paper. It takes time. Finding the right source is most difficult. (Student 32, ENGL 150, interview)

Sometimes, when we have to talk about a building in university, I’m finding resources in reading. I sometimes need to look up dictionary to understand what a certain word means. (Student 17, ENGL 150, interview)

In English 150, students were asked to think and write more specifically and more in-depth (Student 41) as well as go beyond simply describing facts to discuss the meaning and
significance of the topic (Student 50). Also, in terms of incorporating source materials, finding suitable, reliable, and authoritative sources was not easy (Student 32), and understanding vocabulary in scholarly articles was another challenge (Student 17).

Four out of 13 students who said English 150 was challenging remarked that the difficulties mainly resulted from competing with American classmates. When they had a chance to read American classmates’ papers during the peer response sessions, they noticed that American peers’ writing was superior in terms of grammar and expression, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

My class is half American and half internationals. I want to be as good as American.

When I read their essays during peer response, wow, the way they phrased their sentence, grammar they use is really good. (Student 24, ENGL 150, interview)

Most classmates are American, during peer response, I noticed that their writing is really good. Not their organization, but their sentences. I need to work harder. (Student 32, ENGL 150, interview)

Meanwhile, three students said that the challenge came from grammar and expression. Students 34 and 44 said that their English expressions, which were influenced by their native language, decreased their grades. Student 3 said her grammar was not good, so she was able to receive a high grade only after having her paper proofread by native speakers.

There’s only three Chinese students, the rest are all American. Some expression that I learned in China doesn’t work here. My grammar is good enough, but such wrong expressions take off some points (Student 34, ENGL 150, interview)
For all assignments, I got 5-10% lower grade than average regardless of whether I put much effort or not. I just gave up grammar part. My expression is kind of Korean style. My teacher said he doesn’t understand it. (Student 44, ENGL 150, interview)

Grammar. In 101C, my score is between 90 and 95. The first essay in 150 was 89. All the contents, she said good or excellent, but grammar is fair. If it was better, I could have got A- at least. We recently did analysis paper, got proofreading from two people, the words that they used were really different than what I used, I got 94 for that. (Student 3, ENGL 150, interview)

The other challenge, mentioned by four students, though not necessarily relevant to writing, came from international students’ limited oral proficiency. They not only felt nervous about speaking in class, but also had difficulty in understanding what the instructor or classmates said.

At first, 150 scared me. This is not ESL class, many American students. What if they don’t understand me? In 101C, I participated a lot, answered a lot of questions, I felt really confident in 101C. (Student 25, ENGL 150, interview)

When they [American students] talk to instructors, I don’t understand especially what is funny about it. I think my instructor is very humorous, makes American students laugh a lot. At that moment, I feel really embarrassed. One of my Chinese friends, her English is really good, but she said this class is so difficult and dropped the course. Very stressful. (Student 41, ENGL 150, interview)

On the other hand, among seven students who did not feel challenged much in English 150, Student 55, who is from China, said that even though he was very nervous before the first class, he became comfortable and confident right after knowing that the instructor was also Chinese. Three out of those seven students gained confidence in English 150 after they received
the grades on the first assignment, which were not necessarily lower than their grades in English 101C. Meanwhile, the other three said they felt they were ready for the course, due to their experience taking English 101C.

Assignments were kind of similar to 101C. 101C was kind of basic 150 is more advanced. (Student 86, ENGL 150, interview)

At first we were asked to write an essay (letter) about our campus to somebody in our home country. I remember it was different than 101C because I knew how to start, I need to have a thesis, supporting ideas, how to organize essay. When I first started 101, I didn't know how to start an essay, how I’m going to introduce what I’m going to say to my reader at the beginning. So it was easier to start in 150. (Student 17, ENGL 150, interview)

To summarize, 21 out of 26 interviewed English 150 students who had taken English 101C described their experience in English 150 in terms of difficulty. More than half of the students remarked they felt challenged due to the more advanced assignments and their lack of writing proficiency, especially in terms of grammar and expression, compared with their American peers. Although the scores that these international students obtained in English 150 were not significantly different from those earned by American students, interview data suggested that they were having difficulties in completing English 150 assignments. Since students’ perceived readiness and the challenges they felt in the process of completing the assignments are equally, if not more, important as the grades they received in the end, the conclusion drawn from the statistical analysis of scores (the adequate performance on English 101C assessment means that students are ready to take English 150) may not be maintained. Before making the final conclusion regarding the interpretation and use of English 101C
assessment results, another piece of evidence, instructors’ perceptions about international students’ writing performance, will be examined in the following section.

4.5.3. Instructors’ Perceptions of International Students’ Writing

Ten English 150 instructors were asked about their perceptions of international students’ writing in comparison with American students. As a response to this question, three instructors mentioned that it is hard to make a general comment about international students, because students all differ and that they do not really categorize their students as American and international. On the other hand, six instructors discussed in what respects international students are not ready for English 150. All six noted that international students have problems with incorporating source materials. More specifically, many international students forget to insert an in-text citation in cases of indirect quoting, although they include a reference in a Works Cited page (Instructor 18). Meanwhile, three of them said some international students have problems with understanding assignments. Even though assignment sheets specify what they should discuss in each paper, they often end up missing major components of the essay (Instructors 15 and 19) or confusing one assignment with another (Instructor 18).

The assignment where they do report and analysis, a large part of my internationals focused a lot on report part, I talked about the history and I’m done, and they didn’t do a lot of the analysis, so missed out on a significant part with that. Or the letter, for sure I had several students not just focus on one place in particular, and go in depth to one place and talk about all the different places on campus. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

There are three students in one of my classes who seem to get a little bit more confused about their assignment, what they are supposed to do than other students do, so that’s
caused couple of issues with their papers, such as two of them they were wonderful papers for Assignment 2, which was about the organization or place, but they ended up writing it in a way that was more like Assignment 3. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

In addition, two instructors said that international students generally make more mistakes (Instructor 19 and 24), and Instructor 19 made critical comments on some international students’ poor grammar and their lack of readiness for English 150.

I haven’t taught 101C, but some students come to 150, but should not. I have one student this semester who was not ready for 150. His grammar is really poor, and his organization is not great, so what is going on in 101C that are allowing people that shouldn’t move onto 150 move on to 150? I can’t answer that because I haven’t taught that class. (Instructor 19, ENGL 150, interview)

Instructor 19 criticized that English 101C allows students to move onto English 150 although they are not ready for such an advanced class; she suggested having a higher passing grade.

Instructor 19 also noted that description is challenging for international students. For instance, for Assignment 4, students were supposed to describe a building or piece of art in detail, but international did not have the vocabulary to do so, which made one student in her class copy and paste almost two entire paragraphs from a secondary source. Furthermore, Instructor 21 pointed out that international students, especially Asian students, are not good at expressing their own ideas. Based on his observation, it is not that students do not have the linguistic resources to express their thoughts, but it is that they do not have their own voice or opinion due to influences from their culture:
But the struggles that international students have is being able to express their own ideas. They just simply can’t do it. If they were not told what to think, they can’t think on their own. They have really difficult time putting on paper their thoughts. And 150 is all about your opinion. And the other thing is analytical thinking, thinking outside of what you see, it was so difficult to my students. Especially Chinese students. Koreans are NOW taught to look at things and have voice and opinion, but still the Chinese are not so much. They are told this is your opinion. (Instructor 21, ENGL 150, interview)

On the contrary, Instructor 20 said that international students perform well in the class and that American and international students’ grades are very close in her class, which may sound as if the writing performance of the two groups is similar. However, when she was answering the question regarding whether she applies the same standards to American and international students while grading assignments, she said she is a bit more lenient to internationals.

    But I have to say I sometimes take into account the students’ ability to write. So for example, international students there are times that I should be a little bit more lenient…

    So I think if international student were to turn into me a five paragraph essay, polished, they have obviously have done a lot of work, they’ve come a long way, they’ve obviously gone into writing center, they are trying, and there’s two or three errors maybe, but that’s it, they will probably get an A. whereas if another student, native speaker I know they are capable of, if they turn in this five paragraph essay, it isn’t changed much since their first draft, there still like a few errors in it, I would say high B. you met the requirements you did a good job but there’s no real innovation. There’s no eloquence in it. (Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)
Even though two students in Instructor 20’s class submit the same quality paper, they may receive different scores depending on who they are. If this is the case, American and international students may receive similar grades, not necessarily because their writing proficiency is similar, but because of the instructor’s double standards.

Three content course instructors were also asked about their perceptions of international students’ writing, because they had both American and international students in their class. The professor in biology said international students struggle more in general, but the challenge with clear communication applies to everyone. The professor in religious studies also noted the same issue. Especially in the case of international students, the ideas that they intend to convey are not clearly communicated, due to unclear wording and phrasing.

If I have a class of 35, about 3 are international students. A lot of times, you can tell English is second language. Their sentences that I can guess what they are trying to say, but the writing doesn’t clearly convey it, that’s a much bigger problem. So those are papers that are challenging to grade, because every sentence, I could highlight and rephrase for them, but then there would be 100 comments. So I will try to rephrase a few sentences for those students, just give five comments per page and hope they can keep improving on if they see an example of how to say this in a clearer form or what’s wrong with a particular sentence. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

The professor in accounting, on the other hand, noted that international students do not know how to cite when ideas or words are referenced from external sources. In addition, she pointed out that they do not pay attention to the presentation of the paper, such as use of the same font throughout the paper or provision of a label to tables. Like the professors in biology and religious studies, she also pointed out that international students’ strange grammar patterns decrease the
readability of their writing and mentioned wrong word choice, singularity/plurality, and typos as common issues in their papers.

In summary, out of ten interviewed English 150 instructors, three said they could not find any common problems in international students’ writings, because individual students were all different. However, six of them pointed out some areas that these students were not ready for: citing, understanding assignments, using appropriate grammar, providing vivid descriptions, and expressing their own ideas. All three interviewed content course instructors mentioned that international students’ writings did not convey their intended message in a clear manner due to ambiguous wording and phrasing as well as strange grammar.

It is not expected for international students to be perfectly ready for every aspect of writing after taking English 101C, as they take English 150 to learn something about writing. However, the fact that English 150 and content course instructors could point out some common problems in international students’ writing means that they, as a group, are not ready for certain areas of writing. Based on the instructor interview data, it is hard to conclude that the decent performance on the English 101C assessment means student are sufficiently ready for written communications in other university courses, which means that the use of the English 101C assessment results to decide eligibility for English 150 may need reconsideration.

The fifth research question attempts to answer whether the second assumption (good performance on the English 101C writing assessment implies that the student is ready to do the written assignments in English 150 and content courses) included in the utilization inference is met within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment results. Based on the scores they received on the assignments, international students who took English 101C performed as well as other students in English 150. However, based on
the interview data, more than half of the students felt challenged in completing English 150 assignments, and the instructors perceived that this group of students was not ready for certain aspects of writing. Thus, the second assumption about the meaning of English 101C assessment results, as an indicator of readiness for English 150 and content courses, is only partially supported.

4.6. Learning Transfer from English 101C to English 150 and Disciplinary Courses

This section aims to answer the last research question regarding learning transfer from English 101C to English 150 and disciplinary courses. In order to answer this question, student surveys, as well as student and instructor interviews, were analyzed to determine whether English 101C is helpful for assisting the successful completion of writing assignments in other courses; if so, what are the beneficial aspects and, if not, why is the course not helpful and is any knowledge/skill negatively transferred? Students and instructors’ suggestions for English 101C to be modified to enable better transfer were also examined. The results suggest that grammar and organization skills learned in English 101C are most helpful for students completing assignments in English 150 and other disciplinary courses. The reasons why English 101C is not helpful include the differences in writing assignments and evaluations and different preferred writing styles in content courses. Both students and instructors made suggestions for improving English 101C to ensure more successful learning transfer to writing in other courses. In the following section, transfer between English 101C and English 150 and between English 101C and disciplinary courses will be discussed separately; the section concludes with a presentation of suggestions for improving English 101C.
4.6.1. Transfer between English 101C and English 150

In order to understand whether and how learning transfer occurs between English 101C and 150, a survey was administered to 25 international students who were interviewed about their readiness for English 150 (one out of the 26 students interviewed did not participate in the survey due to time constraints). The survey consisted of 41 items (a list of what was learned and evaluated in English 101C), and asked how much each item assisted in students’ completion of English 150 writing assignments (see Appendix G). Specifically, participants were asked to mark the usefulness of what was learned in English 101C using a four-point Likert scale (incorporating the categories not useful at all, not very useful, somewhat useful, and very useful). For the presentation of the results in Table 4.46, items are clustered based on their relevant evaluation criteria and then organized in the order of the mean values.

Table 4.46

Usefulness of What Was Learned in English 101C in Doing English 150 Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Writing a three-level paragraph (topic sentence, supporting ideas, specific details)</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Connecting controlling ideas in a thesis statement and the main point (topic sentence) of each body paragraph</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Using transitions between sentences</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Writing a topic sentence in each paragraph</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Using transitions between paragraphs</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Writing a conclusion</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Putting the supporting points in the body paragraphs in the same order as they appear in the thesis statement</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Cohesive strategies</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Developing an essay in a logical manner (using a logical order based on time, sequence, or order of importance)</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.46 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context (Introduction)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Writing a thesis statement and controlling ideas</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Providing background information in the introduction</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Writing an introduction</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Setting the context (time, people, place) and major factors of the topic in the introduction</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 Providing supporting points for the topic sentence</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Providing examples/details to support a topic sentence</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Providing clear reasoning for the argument/position</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Developing ideas logically within a paragraph</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Providing balanced point of view for a few different points of discussion</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Writing in a consistent point of view</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Writing only about connected (relevant) ideas in each paragraph</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar/vocabulary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Word forms</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Combining sentences using coordination and subordination</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Using adjective clauses (e.g., King Sejong, who invented the Korean alphabet, ruled Korea suing a time of peace; The Korean alphabets, which has 14 consonants and 10 vowels, is relatively easy to learn.)</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Verb tense</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Reducing grammatical errors</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Using synonyms (different words that have a similar meaning)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Vocabulary of compare and contrast</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Vocabulary of cause and effect</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Using parallel forms (in the controlling idea)</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Using specific, expanded noun phrases (a musical group instead of a group; an apartment building instead of a building; an area of small family farms instead of an area)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Using pronouns (using him instead saying Tom again and again)</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Repeating same key words</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Using similar sentence beginnings in each topic sentence</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.46 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34 Summarizing an article</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 Writing a summary and response essay</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Adding your commentary/opinions to the summary</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Writing a compare and contrast essay (along with critique and evaluation)</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Providing evaluative statements and critical perspective</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Writing a division and classification essay</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Making an outline and revising a paper multiple times</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Document formatting (font, margins, indents, line spacing, heading)</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category total</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the table, organizational skills, such as structuring a paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting ideas and specific details, connecting a thesis statement and body paragraphs, and using transitions, were found to be most useful in carrying out English 150 assignments; this may be because these organizational skills can be applicable to the composition of almost all essay assignments required in English 150, despite differences in the assignment in terms of topics and rhetorical functions. Also, providing supporting points and examples or details to structure a topic sentence turned out to be useful for students in doing English 150 assignments. These skills can be used to develop and expand ideas, which are considered highly important in essay evaluation, as was mentioned in the interviews with both English 101C and 150 instructors. In addition, writing skills applicable to the introductions of almost all essays, such as writing a thesis statement and controlling ideas, as well as providing background information, were found to be very useful. Where grammar is concerned, knowledge about word form, sentence combination, and relative clauses were found to be particularly helpful in accomplishing writing assignments in English 150.
In addition to the responses provided on the survey, student interviews also yielded data regarding learning transfer between the two writing courses. After being reminded of the goal of English 101C, as is outlined in the syllabus (to prepare international students for written communication in English 150), 26 students were asked if they thought the goal of the course had been achieved. Twenty-three out of 26 students gave positive answers about the helpfulness of English 101C as a foundation for English 150: “I’m doing well in 150 probably because of 101C” (Student 6, ENGL 150, interview); “Yep, before, I didn’t know how to write an essay in American college” (Student 25, ENGL 150, interview); “Now I know how to start and how to end. 101C was very important” (Student 17, ENGL 150, interview).

To follow up, I asked students what aspects of the English 101C course were particularly valuable. Like the survey results, organization-related skills were cited most in the interviews (12 students), including strategies for how to structure the whole essay, how to write a thesis statement and a topic sentence, and how to use cohesive devices. The following represents a portion of students’ answers to the question about whether the goal of English 101C was achieved.

I think so. I had problems with my organization for essay, so that helped me quite a bit. Before taking 101C, I just wrote what came into my mind. (Student 86, ENGL 150, interview)

Yep! Especially structure issues. Very big, general structure of the essay. Without it, moving on to advanced structure would be very confusing. In English 150, I modify a little bit based on the basic structure. (Student 50, ENGL 150, interview)

The next most frequently mentioned knowledge category useful for performing English 150 assignments was grammar (nine students). Student 19 said that he noticed a huge improvement
in his and his classmates’ papers in terms of grammar and style during the course of English 101C. Student 17 even added that she learned word forms and parts of speech in English 101C, which enabled her to more effectively look up and understand a dictionary entry and to know how to use each word appropriately in a sentence.

However, not all the students agreed that English 101C supported their writing development in terms of grammar.

My writing style doesn’t change that easily. Even though 101C teacher pointed out comma errors and article errors a lot, they don’t get improved. They stay the same in my 150 assignments. (Student 44, ENGL 150, interview)

I still have some trouble in 150 with writing a paper, so many grammar problems. Every time when I do some peer review, they correct a lot. (Student 90, ENGL 150, interview)

In the example quotes above, it is clear that these students think it takes a long time and requires much practice to improve grammar, because knowledge of grammatical rules does not always guarantee the students can use the rules correctly in diverse contexts of actual writing.

Yet, other students presented reasons for positive transfer between English 101C and 150 as the similarity in types of assignments and evaluation criteria in the two courses (mentioned by two and four students, respectively). In particular, Students 3 and 40 noted that the summary part of Assignment 4 in English 101C was helpful, because most English 150 assignments required the use of secondary sources, which means the students were required to conduct research and summarize or paraphrase sources to incorporate them into their own papers. On the other hand, Student 69 stated that the compare and contrast essay (Assignment 2 in English 101C) and cause and effect essay (Assignment 4 in only one section of English 101C) were relatable to English 150 assignments, whereas the analysis essay (Assignment 3) was not very useful in terms of
This response came as a bit of a surprise, considering no English 150 assignments explicitly require compare/contrast or cause/effect rhetorical functions; one English 150 assignment does, however, ask students to analyze a piece of art or a building on the campus, although the kinds of analysis required in that English 150 essay may diverge from what was required of students in English 101C.

Meanwhile, seven students acknowledged value in the writing practice they had experienced in English 101C and the role of English 101C as a bridge course, though no writing skill or strategy was specifically illustrated in students’ response to the question asking if the goal of English 101C had been accomplished.

Yes, it definitely helped me. You get the intuition when you write a lot. But you are not really aware that all those practice helps in your next writing because you write more naturally than you think. After some practice, you just do it. (Student 56, ENGL 150, interview)

I think it helps. Because when you write more, you become better at writing. So no matter what, it helps. (Student 32, ENGL 150, interview)

It made me keep thinking about English. Without it I probably forgot how to write an essay and got lower grade in English 150. (Student 20, ENGL 150, interview)

It’s useful. 101C is foundation for 150. In 101C, we can do many preparations. Also many students are new to American university. For a majority of international students, it’s gonna be a good bridge between basic and advanced courses. (Student 41, ENGL 150, interview)
Yeah, before I took 101C, I thought there are not many problems with my writing. But while I was taking 101C, I realized that there are a lot of things to work on. At the end of 101C, my writing became different greatly. (Student 89, ENGL 150, interview)

Yet three out of the 26 interviewed students declared that English 101C was not that helpful for scaffolding their writing in English 150, and three specific reasons were explicated. First, in English 101C, Student 40 practiced producing many different types of essays, but only wrote a research paper in English 150, which she did not practice at all in English 101C. (In her section of English 150, the instructor modified the curriculum and mainly focused on writing a research paper.) A second reason for English 101C being unhelpful comes from lenient grading. Student 24 claimed that, because he and most of his friends were able to get an “A” without putting much effort into completion of their coursework for English 101C, they were not really motivated to learn. Third, Student 55 said that he and his classmates were not highly motivated in English 101C, because they were required to take the course to fulfill the mandated university ESL requirement and recognized that the grade they received for English 101C was not included in their GPA.

Regarding the learning transfer between English 101C and 150, another question posed to students asked if there was any learning aspect that transferred negatively. Among several writing skills that worked well in English 101C but not in English 150, different expectations for a thesis statement are particularly worthy of attention given that both writing courses’ instructors considered it as one of the most essential elements of the essay. The following quotes represent a portion of what three students discussed during their interviews regarding different ways of writing a thesis statement in English 101C and 150.
Thesis statement is different. In 101C, you can just write what are you gonna talk about in your essay. But in 150, it’s not just a summary of main points. (Student 40, ENGL 150, interview)

150 doesn’t care much about the order you stated in the thesis, the sequence doesn’t matter. (Student 87, ENGL 150, interview)

In 150, teacher told me not to give the main points, but overall view of the essay. For example, in 101C, the benefits of eating healthy foods are point one, point two, point three. But in 150, eating healthy can give us healthy body. I got used to 101C, so I need to change a little bit. (Student 20, ENGL 150, interview)

According to the students quoted above, in English 101C, students were expected to forecast main points of the body paragraphs by explicitly mentioning each of them in a thesis statement. Also, the main points should be ordered in the thesis statement as they appear in the body paragraphs. On the contrary, in English 150, a thesis statement should demonstrate the overall scope of the essay instead of simply listing the main points. However, Student 20 could not elaborate on what he meant by “overall view” in the interview, either because of his limited English proficiency or due to his lack of understanding of what the instructor expected. Fortunately, it could be inferred from the interview with Instructor 15 that the “overall view” of the essay indicates the “so what,” or the purpose, of the paper. The following text is an excerpt from her answer to the question about international students’ weaknesses in terms of writing.

What I have notice if I generalize the idea of having a thesis statement at the beginning of the essay, often times it’s missing for ELLs. I wonder if that’s a function of just different way of writing, so I say in class American audience really want you to hold their hand this is what I’m doing, and this is why I’m doing in step by step. Or it could be a different
definition of thesis statement, they will give a topic, I’m going to talk about this place, but then it’s still missing the so what, why are you talking about it, why should we listen to you. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

The second half of this response explains what Student 20 probably attempted to express in the interview, as well as what English 150 instructors expect. Students’ perceived differences about expectations for thesis statements in English 101C and 150 were also confirmed in the instructors’ feedback. For the purpose of comparison, Table 4.47 below shows thesis statements in both English 101C and 150 students’ papers and instructors’ comments on them from both courses.

Table 4.47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis statements</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to describe my ethnic identity in three major aspects: (1) Malaysian language, (2) food, and (3) festivals.</td>
<td>I like your thesis statement in that it clearly shows what you are going to talk about in the body paragraphs. However, why don’t you define your identity first here? It seems that you identify yourself as Malaysian, right? Then state it before mentioning the three major aspects. (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are my characteristics: (1) a responsible Chinese, (2) an ambitious dreamer and (3) an optimistic hard worker.</td>
<td>No comment (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, in recent years, Seoul has facts that contribute to the culture of the city as a whole are (1) convenient transportation, (2) the shopping system and (3) rapid growth of economic development.</td>
<td>highlight “economic development” and say “art” highlight the entire sentence and say “frag, check the subject and the predicate of this sentence” (101C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beardshear Hall, with its massive pillars and impressive size and design, catches the eye and mind to start wondering about (1) its history, (2) design, and (3) purpose.</td>
<td>Consider mentioning what the purpose is here to make your thesis more specific. (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.47 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beardshear Hall is one of the buildings located at the western part of the central campus and well known for (1) its greek style architectural style, (2) its history, and (3) its status for Iowa State University.</th>
<th>Your thesis does a good job of previewing the main points of your paper, but does not really address the “so what” question. (150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thus, it is very important to know about history of (1) Morrill Hall, (2) design of building, and (3) why this building constructed and reconstructed.</td>
<td>So what? Explain to your reader specifically what you're arguing. (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequently, Carrie Chapman Catt Hall has influenced college students by those meaningful additions designed by Bart, including (1) the Plaza of Heroines, (2) the staircase inscription, and (3) the Alcove, which encourage ISU students to learn social contribution spirit, master academic skills, and understand the importance of book.</td>
<td>Good. Very specific thesis statement that includes the argument and the so what? (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first three instances in Table 4.47 are representative of the most common type of thesis statement found in English 101C students’ papers. All of these statements forecast three main points to be discussed in the body paragraphs, which I have numbered. However, the three examples do not indicate to readers what the writer ultimately wants to express about his ethnic identity, characteristics, and the culture of his native city by discussing the three main points, which is considered the “so what” in English 150 instructors’ terminology. Other than highlighting a few grammar mistakes, however, English 101C instructors did not provide any substantive comments prompting the students to reconsider their thesis proposals.

After progressing to English 150, some international students wrote thesis statements similar to those they have produced in English 101C, as shown in the next three examples in Table 4.47. Again, the three main points the author elaborated on are numbered. English 150 instructors, however, made critical comments, remarking that the thesis statements do not address the purpose of the essay, or answer the “so what” question. The thesis statement that
instructors expect to see resembles the last example in Table 4.47. This thesis statement not only forecasts what each body paragraph will discuss (the Plaza of Heroines, the staircase inscription, the Alcove), but also indicates what they mean or why they are significant and worth knowing about (encourage ISU students to learn social contribution sprit, master academic skills, and understand the importance of book).

One student reported that the five-paragraph essay structure also transferred negatively from English 101C to English 150.

I did the same thing but it didn’t work. It was a long longer paper, about eight pages. My teacher said my paragraphs are too long. But I don’t know how to divide further because I thought each paragraph was talking about one thing with supporting details. (Student 40, ENGL 150, interview)

This student thought she should discuss three points, not four or more, in the body of the essay. Most English 150 instructors find the five-paragraph essay acceptable as long as the points flow logically from the thesis in this manner in a given assignment. None of instructors actually penalize students for using that structure. However, the student should compose more than five paragraphs if the assignment requires her to produce a much longer text than what was required in her English 101C course. Some students’ obsession with the five-paragraph essay, even in situations where it is inappropriate, was also identified by an English 150 instructor.

It [five-paragraph structure] is helpful in 150 if student is not familiar with the basic structure of an essay, but I see in 250 student kind of crippled for even in 150 where they go I don't have third main point, so they mix something up that doesn’t belong, because they think that has to be there. So we do address that it’s one way of organization, it
shows us a basic set up, but you could have one idea that takes two paragraphs, or you could have more than three main points. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

However, when English 101C and 150 instructors were asked if the goal of English 101C is being accomplished and, therefore, learning transfer is occurring between the two writing courses, all of them hesitated to answer, as shown in the interview excerpts below; the reason could be because these instructors, except for Instructor 7, who has experience teaching both English 101C and 150, know very little to nothing about the other course.

I don’t know because I don’t know much about 150. I’m just guessing I’m preparing my students for good, basic organization and acceptable level of grammar, which are applicable to any piece of writing. (Instructor 3, ENGL 101C, interview)

I don't know although it’s a very important question. I know very little about 150. We should probably have a meeting or report. I guess, yes, 101C may be helpful if you see 101C in terms of raising awareness of language, but no in that we don’t focus on how to communicate a bigger picture. I heard English 150 don’t focus on each rhetorical function in each assignment. Our Assignment 4 can be helpful in that it requires the use of secondary sources. (Instructor 1, ENGL 101C, interview)

I wish I had a chance to know more about 101C or international students. Things we heard in English 500 are not specific enough. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

I actually don’t know much about 101C. I mean I know that it’s a class for international students unless they are tested out. That’s all I know, honestly. (Instructor 18, ENGL 150, interview)

What is more surprising, however, is that one English 101C instructor was not even aware that the goal of their class is relevant to English 150, even though this was explicitly
written in the syllabus provided by the department. The following reveals part of the answer to the question, “what is the goal of English 101C.”

I don’t remember. But my goal for 101C, for my class is to make sure they understand the basic structure of an essay in the United States, and they know the writing strategies they can use to accomplish that essay. But I think we might also talk about different genres of writing too, well, I don’t know. (Instructor 5, ENGL 101C, interview)

Meanwhile, Instructor 7, who also has experience teaching English 150, provided a fairly positively response about accomplishing the goal of English 101C.

Yes, I think we are achieving their preparedness for reading an assignment sheet, understanding what the assignment is asking for, knowing how to get a draft going that’s on the topic, knowing how to go to media center to get help, I think we are preparing them for better group work, for the group activities in 150 class. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

Different from Instructor 7’s conjecture, however, English 150 instructors perceived that international students have problems with understanding assignment sheets and miss some major components required in the assignments, as discussed in an earlier section.

To summarize, 23 out of 26 interviewed students reported that what was learned in English 101C was helpful in completing English 150 assignments and, therefore, the goal of English 101C (to prepare international students for written communication in English 150) seems to have been achieved. According to the student survey and interview data, what was positively transferred from English 101C to 150 included organizational skills, such as structuring a paragraph, connecting a thesis statement and body paragraphs, and using transitions and grammar knowledge, especially about word form, sentence combination, and relative clauses.
Students also acknowledged the value of writing experience or practice itself in English 101C. However, it turned out that English 101C and 150 instructors have different expectations for thesis statements, which was also confirmed in the instructors’ feedback on the assignments. On the other hand, English 101C and 150 instructors could not answer the question about the transfer between the two writing courses because they knew little about the other course.

4.6.2. Transfer between English 101C and Disciplinary Courses

Questions of whether and how learning transfer occurs from English 101C to other university courses outside the English department were examined using several data sources: surveys and interviews with international students and interviews with content course and English 101C instructors. The survey asked students to copy and paste one writing assignment from a course in any discipline other than English and to discuss if, how, and/or why what they learned in English 101C helped them to complete the written assignment. Out of the 42 respondents, 33 answered positively about the helpfulness of English 101C in accomplishing the non-English course assignments, responding yes, a lot, or a little. Nine of the 42 students said no, not much, or not at all, responding negatively to the question on whether the 101C course helped their completion of another writing assignment. Many respondents elaborated on their answer by discussing what was particularly helpful. Specific results are summarized in Table 4.48.
Table 4.48

_Aspects of Learning in English 101C that were Helpful in Doing Content Course Assignments_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Learning Aspects</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary/Using synonyms</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of writing practice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference/Citation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing more clearly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing more logically</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing more coherently</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently mentioned learning aspect was grammar. Many students said that instruction, exercises, and feedback on grammar helped them to reduce grammatical mistakes in their other writing assignments. Increased understanding of how to structure writing and an expanded vocabulary, along with the use of synonyms, also was regarded as useful. Also, six students said that intensive writing practice not only made them more confident in their writing, but also actually improved their writing skills. By indicating the category “sentence structure,” students meant that they became able to write more complex, elaborate, and clear sentences after taking English 101C.

Additionally, when 26 students were asked in the interview if what they learned in English 101C helped them to complete written assignments in other courses at ISU, half of the respondents gave positive answers. Expanding vocabulary and writing a topic sentence are helpful in general, while writing an introductory paragraph and structuring an essay with three parts (introduction, body, and conclusion) are particularly helpful for accounting and business assignments, respectively. One student also remarked that English 101C taught him to think
deeply and write in detail, so that readers can understand what he is trying to say; this same skill applied to the writing he completed for a mechanical engineering class project (Student 24).

However, the other half of the students did not recognize that English 101C helped them, mainly, as the students note, because the writing assignments required in English 101C and other disciplines are different in terms of topic, genre, style, and evaluation.

I’m an engineering student and we usually write a lab report. The way we write for the lab report is so different from what we did in 101C, so it’s not helpful at all. (Student 69, ENGL 101C, interview)

We are now writing a performance report in a business class, but I don’t see so much connection because it’s more about analysis and more objective. Also, I should combine all our members’ thoughts instead of just writing about my thought. (Student 33, ENGL 101C)

For one assignment, we are supposed to monitor how a person eats, so we are supposed to look at it and discuss how to improve it. I don’t really see the connection because assignments are not really essays, I don’t need to write paragraph by paragraph. It is more like answers to questions. (Student 86, ENGL 101C, interview)

Business writing, topics are totally different. Also, I usually write straight to the point. You don’t need story or anecdote for business writing, just be straightforward, that’s difference. So I just go to the main points. Also, business assignments go into more details like you have to tell them why you do this, the reason behind this decision, what is the sequence of this decision. In that respect, 150 is more relevant because now we are looking at the purpose and history behind the building. (Student 17, ENGL 101C, interview)
When it comes to evaluation, all the half who did not recognize the usefulness of English 101C, regardless of their major, said that instructors in other disciplines focus on the quality of content or answers to specified questions, whereas English 101C focus too much on grammar or English proficiency.

By contrast, instructors in political science and religious studies were able to see the relatedness of their own assigned compositions and English 101C assignments in terms of topic and genre, although they are not exactly the same. These instructors provided the following answers after being informed of the kinds of writing conducted in English 101C.

All of those activities sound relevant. And these are all relevant kinds of essays.

(Instructor 34, political science, interview)

Assignment about comparing marriage culture, that overlaps with kind of what we do in our world religions class, comparing institutions from different cultures. How they differ even in the same culture over time, how they differ between different religions and civilizations. The piece about cultural identity overlaps as well although I never ask about their culture and their identity, I’m trying to get them to focus much more on religions as historically created things. I very much want them to detach themselves from their view of what religion should be, because I’m not really in the business of teaching them how they should practice their religions, I want them to get a better perspective maybe on their own or other religions in terms of how diverse they are in time and place. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

The students’ and instructors’ views on the relevance of writing tasks in composition and content courses may differ, because they come from different disciplines. Because the majority of international students at ISU major in business or engineering, including the above interviewees,
it may have been better if I had interviewed the professors in those two fields. The instructors in political science and religious studies are more positive about the possibility of learning transfer from English 101C to their courses, potentially because the kinds of writing typically accomplished in their fields more closely resemble the essay genre.

English 101C instructors were also asked about the learning transfer between English 101C and disciplinary courses. English 101C teachers may have had no idea about how to answer this question as they had no opportunity to instruct/observe courses outside the English department, but it was still worthwhile to examine their perspectives concerning achievement of the English 101C course objective. Most of the interviewed teachers did not convey positive responses regarding the accomplishment of their course objectives, possibly due to the same reasons English 101C students mentioned (differences in terms of topic and genre), although they believe that they are training students for general academic writing.

My students usually write lab report or business report, and they don’t see any connection between those assignments and what we are doing. Because of such disconnection, students are demotivated. We are not doing good job in this regard. I think it’s more for English 150 and 250. (Instructor 1, ENGL 101C, interview)

I don’t think the types of writing we do in 101C is really applicable to other ISU courses. It is applicable only when they are writing essay type, but not report. Absolutely not. Content course wise, topics that we do like culture, role model, and ethnicity and essay types such as paragraph writing and analysis are not relevant. Compare/contrast and cause/effect may be better. (Instructor 2, ENGL 101C, interview)

Instructor 7 also argued that English 101C is not preparing students for reading for information and writing to demonstrate knowledge and understanding gained from readings, which are the
most common purposes of writing in undergraduate disciplinary courses (Leki & Carson, 1997; Nesi & Gardner, 2012).

I don’t know whether we are improving their confidence, I don’t know if we are improving their reading. So I’m concerned that we might not be helping them with that reading for information and writing to express understanding. I’m not sure how we can improve that. I wish I would like us to be better at developing non-150 skills, reading their chemistry textbook. (Instructor 7, ENGL 101C, interview)

In summary, 33 out of 42 surveyed students and 13 out of 26 interviewed students responded positively about the helpfulness of English 101C in accomplishing the non-English course assignments. Positively transferred learning aspects included improved knowledge of grammar, organizational skills, and expanded vocabulary. Intensive practice of writing done in English 101C was perceived as having a positive influence as well. On the other hand, nine out of the 42 surveyed students and 13 out of the 26 interviewed students reported that English 101C was not that helpful for completing assignments in disciplinary course, s because topic, genre, and style of writing, as well as the evaluation criteria, were substantially different. English 101C instructors were negative about the transfer from their course to other content courses for the same reasons, whereas two interviewed content course instructors were positive about the transfer, because they believed the assignments in their courses and those in English 101C to be related. Since the number of content course instructors was very small, however, their opinions may not be representative of instructors across the disciplines.
4.6.3. Suggestions for English 101C

At the end of the survey and interview about learning transfer from English 101C to English 150 and disciplinary courses, students and instructors were also asked what English 101C instructors could implement to ensure more successful transfer of writing skills. In the student survey (used to understand if and how the writing skills learned in English 101C helped students to do the written assignments in disciplinary courses), the last question elicited information about what skills students wish they had learned in English 101C to complete the assignment they selected for reflection. Students’ answers were quite diverse, and many of them were suggested by only one student. Issues of vocabulary, organization, grammar, summary, and analysis were mentioned by more than two students. Vocabulary was referenced most frequently, mentioned by nine students who particularly wanted to learn native-like expressions, cause and effect-related vocabulary, and how to use technical terms in the fields of chemistry, mathematics, and aerodynamics. Five students mentioned "organization" to mean the structure of the report, which is frequently incorporated in business and engineering writing. One of the five students also wished to learn how to organize ideas in the order of importance. Meanwhile, four students majoring in business especially wanted to learn how to analyze data and summarize and report the results of the analyses.

Suggestions for English 101C improvement were made by 12 out of 26 interviewed students, with each category recommended by only one or two students. Some suggestions that students made in the interview somewhat overlapped with what they noted in the survey: more focus on grammar, native-like expressions, organization, cohesion, and content. Some students offered specific suggestions in terms of writing skills they wished they had learned in English 101C such as choosing an interesting topic, convincing readers why my paper is worth reading,
making an interesting title, and inserting images. Also, two students wished they had learned about citations in English 101C and said their instructors subtracted points from their grades in English 150 due to missing or inappropriate in-text citations or references on their works cited pages.

Suggestions were made regarding the kinds of writing tasks English 101C could possibly incorporate such as practicing many different genres/types of papers and doing short, daily writings that students believed would help with major writing assignments. Also, Student 44, who was highly aware of the goal of English 101C as a preparatory course for English 150, recommended including at least one assignment about the ISU campus in English 101C courses.

Include at least one essay about campus. Get us prepared. Or half of the curriculum can be devoted to preparation. Also, for once, we can deviate from that five-paragraph structure and get students to practice understanding teachers’ unique requirements.

He also wanted to practice a different organization other than the five-paragraph essay whose first paragraph include a thesis statement that forecasts main points and whose body paragraphs exactly match the controlling ideas in the thesis, even order wise. This is because he was asked to use an unfamiliar structure for the art analysis essay in English 150, but did not understand what the instructor expected, so lost a lot of points for the organization. (Student 44, ENGL 150, interview)

In addition, Student 41 suggested being asked to read more texts in English 101C to gain greater information and knowledge about content and to acquaint students with some good model passages, both tasks she believed would contribute to more effective paper writing in the long run. Furthermore, Student 32 wished her English 101C instructor had explained the five evaluation criteria in detail, because English 150 used the same criteria.
Suggestions for improving the English 101C course curricula were made by three groups of instructors as well. In order to facilitate the transfer between English 101C and disciplinary courses, Instructor 2 (English 101C) recommended conducting research on what kinds of writing are done in ISU courses outside the English department, so that English 101C instructors can teach diverse genres other than the essay and allow students exposure to language and structure of writing in their own disciplines. On the other hand, from the perspective of Instructor 34 in political science, some international students are not even equipped with basic grammar or knowledgeable about the basic format of essays that are expected in American college. The following is part of her answer to the question on what English 101C instructors could do to help international students to write better in her class.

In my impression, for ELLs, there should be some basic acculturation for what form of the essay is typically assigned. So you need a title, name, so the mechanics of how the essay is submitted. This is sometimes missing… I understand you can’t teach somebody English in one semester, but there are some students who don’t write complete sentences, every English sentences requires both subject and verb. So emphasizing the importance of having a subject and a verb in every sentence may be useful for some ELLs.

(Instructor 34, political science, interview)

Instructor 34 also suggested that English 101C instructors emphasize the importance of hard work, because laziness really shows in situations involving international students. She would like international students to understand that they sometimes need to work harder than other native speakers to get the same grade.

Instructor 35 in religious studies emphasized the importance of topic sentences in each paragraph and situating quotations when source materials are referenced.
Things like the first sentence of the paragraph ideally should be a lead sentence that gives you an idea of what the paragraph is about. Sometimes students just plan to quote in the first sentence of the paragraph, there’s no context, so confusing to the reader although paste and quote in and explain what it means, the quote is not clear in the face of generally educated people so I need explanation. I don’t think I’m really looking for specialized writing skills that are specific to my discipline, so I assume these are things that can be reinforced in your class. (Instructor 35, religious studies, interview)

Even though English 101C instructors also teach and emphasize the importance of having a topic sentence, students may not know how to appropriately integrate a topic sentence when they also need to incorporate other sources, because English 101C assignments do not require essays referencing primary or secondary sources.

Meanwhile, Instructor 36 in accounting made somewhat different suggestions, in addition to stressing the importance of accurate citation. This may be because writing in her field is very different from the essay genre, taught in composition classes, or the explanation genre, common of political science or religious studies courses, disciplines the instructors quoted above teach. The accounting instructor wished that English 101C could teach that what really matters in writing is not length, but simplicity and conciseness, aspects not emphasized in the English 101C curriculum and not observed in English 101C instructors’ feedback on students’ assignments. In addition, Instructor 36 would like English 101C instructors to train students to answer given questions or prompts in a clear and direct manner.

Varied suggestions were offered by English 150 instructors about how to best facilitate the transfer between English 101C and 150. Almost all interviewed English 150 instructors said
they struggled to teach the use of sources and citations with international students and suggested raising awareness of copyright issues and working on citation integration in English 101C.

Getting them to know about copyright issue. I know some cultures where all information is shared whereas in the U.S., we push copyright, this is my individual property, intelligence. Using secondary sources why do I have to cite it, citing courses we didn’t have to do that, I guess if you don’t have any writing classes, you are not using that, or working on that either. (Instructor 16, ENGL 150, interview)

Regarding citations, two of the interviewed English 150 instructors also recommended teaching students how to discern valid sources in academic writing, as evidenced in the following two comments.

The consistent problem that I’ve seen with students coming out of 101C is that they love using Wikipedia. Some students say you can see the citation here so it’s academic. Technically yes, but culturally we never accept wiki. (Instructor 22, ENGL 150, interview)

A website is not a valid source; you need to go to the library. (Instructor 21, ENGL 150, interview)

Instructor 20 pointed out that international students’ papers do not have a clear organization and suggested that English 101C instructors work to improve this problem.

Organization, I think it’s the biggest issue that the ELLs have. I read a lot of essay’s first drafts that have no organization what so ever, they just go on and on for a few pages, and again sometimes circle around the topic, come back to it, restate the same thing over and over again. Doing great job on weekly journal assignment, which is short. But when it gets to the longer projects, that’s where they struggle. I think one reason they probably
struggle with that is because of research. They are being asked to do a lot of reading in a language that is not their native language, and then not only understand that, some of them are very scholarly information, but then incorporate it with on your own writing.

(Instructor 20, ENGL 150, interview)

Instructor 20’s comment comes as a surprise, however, because English 101C curricula and instructors focus heavily on organizational aspects of student writing; students also mentioned their awareness of organizational features of the essay. The essays’ poor organization may be due to the length of the papers, as well as the requirement of incorporating research, as the instructor mentioned. Instructor 24 even suggested that English 101C give students more lengthy assignments, because he noticed that some international students simply cannot produce extended discourse, which, from his perspective, may be interpreted as them putting in little effort.

Instructor 19 recommended a greater emphasis on grammar, because her lower level students continued to produce essays that included poor grammar. On the contrary, Instructor 20’s suggestion does not involve grammatical correctness, because international students seem to know language rules better than American students, though knowing the rules does not mean that the non-native speakers can always appropriately use them. Instead, she suggested that English 101C instructors work on transitions, variations in sentence structure, and avoiding redundancy.

Meanwhile, two instructors identified better understanding of assignment sheets and rubrics as priorities over working on specific writing skills or strategies, because misunderstanding of assignments often leads to students missing major components and receiving low grades.
Better understanding of assignment sheets and rubrics, or ask some questions about the assignment. Things really go wrong when they have totally wrong understanding. They miss out on the substance, it doesn’t match what the assignment was looking for, or they are missing some major components. (Instructor 15, ENGL 150, interview)

Instructor 15 further explained that international students’ typical misunderstandings of each major assignment, providing the example that Assignment 4 is a report on and analysis of an art piece or a building on the campus, but many international students focused on the report portion, instead of the analysis part, both equally significant parts of the assignment. Assignment 2 involves writing a letter about a place on the campus, and students are supposed to focus on one place and go into depth in their discussion of the place. However, many international students discussed several different places, without deeply discussing any of them.

Some suggestions were made by an English 150 instructor regarding writing evaluation as well. Instructor 19, who is familiar with the English 101C curricula, suggested that English 101C instructors’ feedback target problems that each individual student has. Each semester she has a few international students in her English 150 class whose grammar is exceedingly poor, often to the extent that she cannot understand the arguments in their essays. For those students, she would like English 101C instructors to focus on grammar, even if it is not the major focus of the course. The same instructor also emphasized the need for a higher passing grade. Currently, students can pass English 101C and move onto English 150 as long as they do not get an F; she, as an English 150 teacher, feels that she is teaching students who are not ready for the more advanced English course at all.

Finally, two suggestions were made related to the goal of English 101C as it involves preparing students for English 150. Instructor 19 said that there seems to be a huge gap between
the two writing courses in terms of difficulty and, therefore, some action should be taken to fill the gap, such as creating another course between the two or generating English 101C and 150 instructors’ collaborative efforts to help students better prepare for and adjust to the other course. For such collaboration, however, instructors should know about writing expectations in the other course first. As a few instructors recommended, English 101C and 150 instructors could have a regular meeting to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of international students, what writing assignments are assigned, and how the assignments are evaluated.

To summarize, both international students and the three groups of instructors offered suggestions concerning what English 101C teachers could implement to ensure more successful transfer of knowledge and skills to writing in other university courses. Suggestions included use of sources and citations, incorporation of more diverse types of writing (e.g., summary and report of the data analyses), use of native-like expressions and technical terms, and simple, concise, and direct style of writing, which are not emphasized in English 101C. Suggestions were also made about what English 101C already focuses on, because, from the perspective of English 150 and content course instructors, international students’ writings are still not strong in the following respects: basic grammar, clear organization, topic sentence, transitions, and better understanding of assignments.

The sixth research question attempts to answer whether the assumption (transfer of learning occurs from English 101C to English 150 and content courses) included in the ramification inference is met within the interpretative argument for the uses and interpretations of English 101C assessment results. According to the survey and interview data, many students perceived that what was learned in English 101C was positively transferred to accomplishing assignments in other university courses. However, English 150 and content course instructors
reported that international students did not successfully apply some writing knowledge and skills that were emphasized in English 101C in completion of assignments in their own courses. In addition, English 101C teachers, who were supposed to know what writing skills would be helpful for students in their future courses and plan their lessons accordingly, had very little to no idea about what kinds of writing are actually accomplished in other university courses. Considering both students and instructors’ perceptions, the assumption concerning the learning transfer from English 101C to other university courses is deemed partially supported.

4.7. Summary of Results

Table 4.49 summarizes answers to the six research questions posed in this study along with the sources used to answer them.

Table 4.49

*Summary of Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Answer (Whether it supports assumption)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are grades on the 101C writing assignments related to other criteria of academic writing ability in a university context?</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
<td>Intraclass and Spearman correlations of scores on the writing assignments in 101C, 150, and disciplinary courses were low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do the characteristics of the 101C writing assignments closely correspond to the writing tasks required in 150 and content courses?</td>
<td>Not well supported</td>
<td>Analyses of assignments and instructor interviews found substantial differences as well as similarities. Students noted more differences in the interview data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do evaluation criteria and procedures used by 101C instructors closely correspond to those used by 150 and content course teachers? (Extrapolation)</td>
<td>Partially supported</td>
<td>Rubrics used in three courses included many shared evaluation criteria, despite some differences. Analyses of instructor interviews and feedback showed three groups of teachers used similar criteria, although they gave different weights to different criteria and one group had higher expectations for certain aspects of writing than the others. Based on Mann-Whitney test and many-facet Rasch analysis, differential severity across individual instructors was found, but not at the group level (101C instructors vs. 150 instructors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is the meaning of grades and feedback on 101C assessment clearly interpretable by students and instructors? (Utilization)</td>
<td>Lacking in good support</td>
<td>Students thought instructor feedback was mostly clear, but not grades. Some instructors were also unsure about the information on the rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does good performance on this writing assessment mean that a student is ready to take 150 and engage in various written communications in university? (Utilization)</td>
<td>Partially supported</td>
<td>The scores that previous 101C students received on the 150 assignments were as good as American students, although they still felt challenged in accomplishing them. English 150 and content course instructors thought international students were not ready for some aspects of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does positive learning transfer occur from 101C to 150 and content courses? (Ramification)</td>
<td>Partially supported</td>
<td>Students’ perceptions about learning transfer was mostly positive, although 150 and content course instructors noted some writing skills learned in 101C in which international students’ writing was not still strong.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This study investigated the connections and/or disconnections across English 101C, English 150, and content courses at Iowa State University from the perspective of writing assessment. The investigation also represented a process for validating the proposed interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results that pertain to English 150 and content courses. The study found that English 101C is not very well connected to English 150 or content courses in terms of writing tasks, evaluation, and learning transfer. In this chapter, I summarize the findings of the study by restating how the six assumptions and three relevant inferences in the interpretive argument are or are not supported in light of the study results. I also discuss implications of the study and put forth some recommendations for English 101C students and instructors at ISU who assign writing tasks in their course, which is followed by the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

5.1. Summary of the Study

The first three research questions are about correspondence of assignments and their evaluation as well as scores on the writing assignments across English 101C, English 150, and disciplinary courses. These questions are all pertinent to the extrapolation inference included in the interpretive argument: the construct of academic writing competence assessed by the English 101C assessment accounts for the kind of academic writing skills required in a university setting. The assumption about similarity of evaluation was partially supported, because the rubrics and instructors in the three courses share many evaluation criteria in terms of assessing students’ writing assignments (e.g., comprehensibility of writing, relevance of writing to the given prompt,
grammatical accuracy), despite different emphases on different criteria and some additional qualities expected in one course but not the others. Also, English 101C and 150 are not significantly different in terms of course difficulty, defined as including rubric difficulty and instructor severity. On the other hand, the assumption about the similarity of assignments was not well supported, because English 101C and 150 assignments showed noticeable differences in terms of purpose, audience, information source, topic, and rhetorical functions, despite the assignments requiring student composition of the same genre, the essay. Also, English 101C and content course assignments exhibited substantial differences with respect to genre, topic, information source, purpose, rhetorical functions, and length, in spite of the similarity in terms of target audience, the course instructor. Furthermore, the assumption about the relationship of scores on the writing assignments was not supported, because Spearman’s and Intra-class correlations of scores on the writing assignments between English 101C and 150, as well as between English 101C and content courses, were low. Therefore, the extrapolation inference cannot be considered to be fully warranted.

The next two research questions regarded the clarity of assessment results and how well they indicate students’ readiness for writing in other university courses. Both questions are pertinent to the utilization inference included in the interpretive argument: estimates of the quality of academic writing in the university setting, obtained from the English 101C writing, assessment are useful for making decisions about whether or not students are ready for written communication in other university courses and advancement to English 150. The assumption about the clarity of assessment results was lacking in adequate support, because the grades and some comments on the assignments were not clear and convincing to students, as indicated in the student interview data. Students reported that instructor feedback was mostly clear, but, for
various reasons (e.g., use of ambiguous codes and explanations to identify problems, no explanation on why suggested changes are needed, failure to convince students that their suggestions are worth implementing), some comments were not understood by students as the instructor had intended. In addition, most students thought the grades were not clear or convincing to them for various reasons (e.g., unclear meanings of and expectations for each scale node, discrepancy between instructor and Criterion’s evaluations, unclear weights to the different evaluation criteria). This means that feedback might not be helpful for students’ learning and revising, while scores may not be useful for students’ precise understanding of their own writing competence.

The assumption about the performance on the English 101C assessment as an indicator of students’ readiness for writing in other courses was supported by the score data. According to the result of the Krusal-Wallis test on the scores on English 150 major writing assignments of three groups of students (international students who took English 101C, international students exempted from English 101C, and American students), the scores that previous English 101C students earned were as good as those of American students or international students exempted from taking English 101C. However, student and instructor interview made me question the face value of the quantitative finding, as students still felt challenged in accomplishing English 150 assignments and that English 150 and content course instructors noted international students were not ready for certain aspects of writing. Furthermore, English 150 and content course instructors reported in the interviews that they tended to be more lenient with international students’ writing, which implies that the good scores that previous English 101C students achieved in English 150 may not necessarily be due to their writing competence, but partially because of instructors’ forgivingness. The quantitative and qualitative data collected to
investigate this particular assumption yielded contradictory findings. Because I decided to give equal focus to quantitative and qualitative strands, based on the procedures of implementing a convergent parallel design, a reasonable conclusion would be that the use of English 101C assessment results to decide students’ readiness for writing in other courses is only partially supported, and therefore, requires reconsideration. Considering the results of investigations on both assumptions included in the utilization inference, this inference is not considered to be fully warranted.

The last research question is about learning transfer from English 101C to English 150 and content courses, which is relevant to the ramification inference included in the interpretive argument: decisions made based on the target score are beneficial for learning and teaching (i.e., prerequisite learning in English 101C facilitates subsequent learning). The assumption about learning transfer is supported by student interview data, where a majority of students reported that what they learned in English 101C was helpful in assisting the successful completion of writing assignments in other courses (e.g., organizational skills such as structuring a paragraph, connecting a thesis statement and body paragraphs, and using transitions; improved knowledge of grammar; expanded vocabulary). However, the assumption is challenged by instructor interview data, where English 150 and content course instructors reported that international students did not show satisfactory performance in their own courses in terms of the writing skills learned and practiced in English 101C. Thus, it can be concluded that the assumption about the learning transfer and the ramification inference is partially warranted.

Taken together, to the question of connection across the three courses in terms of writing assessment, the evidence is not strong. The proposed interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results that have to do with English 150 and content courses (i.e., extrapolation,
utilization, and ramification inferences in the interpretive argument) are not considered fully warranted. Thus, it is concluded that English 101C is not very well connected to English 150 or content courses in terms of writing tasks, their evaluation, and learning transfer.

5.2. Implications, Recommendations, Limitations, and Suggestions

The implications of the study are as follows. First, considering that no previous research examining the relationship among ESL writing, first-year composition, and disciplinary courses has explicitly focused on the assessment and evaluation aspect, the present study is expected to fill a glaring gap in the literature. Although the findings of the study are expected to have relevance beyond Iowa State University, given that ESL academic writing courses in American universities are designed in a more or less similar way and share goals with English 101C, more studies of this kind would help to understand what findings apply and do not apply in other institutions. It is hoped that the methodology, as well as the way in which the research questions were generated in my study, will become a useful example for others who wish to conduct research of a similar kind.

Second, the findings of the study provided evidence needed to evaluate validity of the interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results which were proposed in light of the goal of the course: preparing international students for English 150 and various forms of written communication in a university setting. Because both positive and negative evidence was obtained, it can be concluded that the proposed interpretations and uses of English 101C assessment results are not entirely valid. Negative evidence originated from the lack of resemblance in writing tasks and evaluation criteria between English 101C and other courses, as well as lack of usefulness of English 101C assessment results in students’ revision and learning
and the judgment of students’ readiness for diverse written communications in other courses. It is hoped that the findings of the study can be used for revising writing assignments, modifying evaluation practice, and determining ways to enhance learning transfer across the three writing contexts.

With such negative evidence in mind, I put forward recommendations for instructors and program coordinators. First of all, English 101C instructors and the program coordinator could make efforts (e.g., conduct research) to identify what kinds of writing are required in other courses at ISU. This would help them to discern changes that should be made in the curriculum or teaching practice to better accomplish the course objective. Based on the findings of the present study, I would suggest English 101C assignments (1) require research and incorporation of source materials, (2) ask for demonstration of knowledge and understanding gained from readings, (3) demand rhetorical functions, such as specific, vivid description, explanation, interpretation, evaluation, and summary, (4) target real, specific audiences outside the class, and (5) include genres other than the essay, such as explanation and exercise. Also, English 101C instructors could pay more attention to some evaluation criteria that are heeded in other courses and incorporate them in their own feedback on students’ assignments: clear purpose of writing, audience consideration, depth of knowledge in subject matter, content accuracy, being concise, and contextualization, as well as trustworthiness of quotes. Furthermore, English 101C teachers may want to thoroughly deliberate on whether the English 101C assessment results reasonably represent students’ writing ability and indicate students’ readiness, especially for writing in English 150. English 150 and content course instructors perceived that international students are not ready for certain areas of writing, such as citation, grammar, clearly conveying their intended meaning, and expressing their own ideas, as well as understanding assignments. Additionally,
one English 150 instructor criticized that English 101C allows students to move onto English 150, although they are not ready for such an advanced class. If this is the case, English 101C may consider having a higher passing grade.

Secondly, English 150 and content course instructors can facilitate learning transfer by understanding what is learned in English 101C and creating a favorable “transfer climate” (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993) in their own courses. Instructors may achieve this, in light of the findings of Burke and Baldwin (1999), by showing a positive attitude about what was learned in English 101C, demonstrating skills covered in English 101C themselves, and paying attention to the connection between English 101C and their own courses. Also, because students may not be able to notice how their writings are evaluated in their courses and how this is similar or different from what was done in English 101C, English 150 and content course instructors can assist students by making their expectations about writing assignments very clear and explicit.

Thirdly, there are also recommendations for English 101C students based on the findings of this study. As indicated in the student interviews, it is rumored among international students that English 150 assignments are extremely difficult and it is hard to receive a good score in English 150. However, this study found that previous English 101C students performed as well as American students or international students who were exempted from English 101, and several students reported that they did not feel overly challenged in English 150. Also, findings revealed that rater severity differences could be attributed to individual instructors, not to courses (i.e., English 101C versus 150 instructors). Therefore, students do not need to worry about taking English 150 after taking 101C. As one student said in the interview, once international students take English 150, it may turn out to be okay. Instead of worrying about taking English 150, it would be wiser for students to figure out the distinctions in evaluation and adapt their writing
styles and strategies accordingly once they move onto courses outside of English 101C. In addition, given that some English 150 and content course instructors take into account the amount of effort, degree of improvement between the initial and final drafts, students’ native language, and the instructors’ familiarity with a draft in the process of evaluation, one practical piece of advice would be that students can take advantage of factors other than writing quality that influence grading.

Certainly there are limitations to the study. The first limitation is that the rubric and instructor effects were confounded in the rating data used for the many-facet Rasch analysis. English 101C and 150 instructors were given different rubrics that reflect the perspectives and terminology of the course that they were teaching. This decision was made with the intention of reflecting the natural instructional setting in this experimental part of the study, but it caused difficulties in interpreting the results, because the instructor severity could not be disentangled from the rubric difficulty. This is why a Mann-Whitney test was used to examine course difficulty differences, which encompass rubric difficulty and instructor severity differences. It would have been neater if the different severity of the two groups of instructors was also investigated through Rasch analysis, which provides a more accurate and in-depth account of rater differences in assessing writing (Eckes, 2011). If a future study is designed in a way that the two effects are not confounded, all analysis pertinent to rating severity could be accomplished with a Rasch analysis. More specifically, this could be achieved, for example, by having some English 150 instructors use the same rubric with English 101C teachers and others use a different rubric of their own.

Second, only four content course instructors were interviewed, so this population was not representative of the instructors across diverse disciplines at the university. Thus, the findings
based on their perception data may not be generalizable to all disciplines. More importantly, none of the content course teachers were from engineering fields. Given that many international students major in engineering, engineering professors’ perspectives on good writing and their evaluation criteria could yield valuable data for investigating the correspondence between English 101C and content course in terms of writing assessment, which could be used as evidence for determining if English 101C adequately prepares international students for writing in their future courses. Those who wish to conduct a similar study should absolutely consider recruiting instructors from a wide range of disciplines to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

The third limitation is that some international students could not fully express their thoughts due to their limited English proficiency. To investigate whether instructors and students had a shared understanding of the five evaluation criteria used in the writing courses, students were asked to explain those five criteria as they understood. Although students responded pretty well to relatively concrete questions (e.g., comparison of assignments and instructor feedback, learning transfer), they typically responded with a few words to abstract, conceptual questions. Although I could sometimes guess what students wanted to say based on the translation of those few English words into their L1, as I—the interviewer—am proficiency in Chinese and Korean, the native languages of a majority of the interviewed students, I could not include these deductions in the study as valid data, because too much of my own interpretation would be involved. Thus, future studies may consider hiring a translator and conducting interviews in students’ native languages.

To conclude, this study investigated the connections and/or disconnections across English 101C, English 150, and content courses at Iowa State University from the perspective of writing
assessment. Although this study was conducted within the context of Iowa State University, the findings of the study are expected to carry relevance beyond this particular institution, given that many American universities have courses similar with English 101C and 150. It is hoped that the identified sources of disconnections and recommendations made for instructors and students are useful for filling the gaps across the three writing contexts in the university.
REFERENCES


The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.

- Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study, when documented consent is required.

- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study by submitting a Modification Form for Non-Exempt Research or Amendment for Personnel Changes form, as necessary.

- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

- Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.

- Complete a new continuing review form at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from patient records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.
APPENDIX B
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH ENGLISH 101C STUDENTS

1. First reaction to 101C
   a. What do you like about it?
   b. Any challenge?
   c. Grade/evaluation
   d. Class atmosphere

2. Look at feedback on Assignment 3
   a. Look at teacher feedback: first reaction; anything unclear?
   b. What does your instructor care about?
   c. Look at evaluation rubric (How would you make a good paper?)
   d. Score interpretation (excellent, good…)

3. Compare 101C and other classes
   a. Task (show syllabus)
      i. In terms of input, expected response, genre
      ii. Any similarities and differences?
   b. Rubric
   c. Focus/teacher expectation
   d. Feedback

4. Transfer
   a. Goal of 101C is …
   b. What are helpful?
   c. Improved over the semester?
   d. What kinds of writing assignment should be included?
   e. How should they be evaluated?
APPENDIX C
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH ENGLISH 150 STUDENTS

1. First reaction to 150
   a. Any challenge?
   b. Grade/evaluation
   c. Teacher evaluation
   d. Interaction with teacher and classmates

2. Look at feedback on 150 Assignment 2&3
   a. Look at teacher feedback: first reaction; anything unclear?
   b. What does your instructor care about?
   c. Look at evaluation rubric (How would you make a good paper?)
   d. Score interpretation (excellent, good…)

3. Compare 101C and 150
   a. Task (show syllabus)
      i. In terms of input, expected response, genre
      ii. Any similarities and differences?
   b. Rubric
   c. Focus/teacher expectation
   d. Feedback

4. Transfer
   a. Goal of 101C was …
   b. What are helpful? (Show them a list of learning objectives)
   c. Positive/negative transfer
APPENDIX D
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH ENGLISH 101C TEACHERS

1. Background information
   a. Nationality, major
   b. Previous teaching experience, any training?

2. Perspectives on good writing
   a. Definition of good writing, context, substance, organization, style, delivery
   b. How did you explain good content, organization, and context?
   c. What is good content?
      i. Creative, interesting, and engaging?
      ii. Truth, accuracy, richness of content? (You don’t know about their role model or their culture)
      iii. Strength of argument? Convincing?
      iv. What they write vs. how they write
   d. What is good organization?
      i. What about 5-paragraph essay? What do you think about very clear-cut, formulaic organization?
      ii. Relationship between structure and content?
      iii. Inductive or deductive structure?
   e. What is good style?
      i. Implicit and subtle or explicit and straightforward?
      ii. Which grammar errors deserve attention?

3. Rating practice
   a. Please explain your evaluation process of each paper.
   b. What’s included in the grade for each major assignment? (Only the quality of the final draft or the process as well?)
   c. Severity/leniency
      i. Major, minor writing assignments, final course grade: different levels of severity?
      ii. Toward the end of the semester, does it change?
d. Criterion-referenced or norm-referenced?
   
   i. Only consider the focus of each unit (a certain grammar features)? Only consider what’s written down in the rubric? Or evaluate the general quality of each criterion?
   
   e. Stick to the rubric or your thoughts affect grading?
   
   f. How much weight given to each criterion?
   
   g. The total score is simply the sum of each analytic score?
   
   h. What is average?

4. Rubric interpretation
   
   a. What do extra, good, okay, some, lack mean to you?
   
   b. How well do you think students understand the rubric and your feedback?

5. Learning transfer
   
   a. Do you expect that students will use what they learned in 101C to do written assignment in 150 or other disciplines?
   
   b. Which skills do you think they will apply?
   
   c. Which skills do you think are difficult to apply?
   
   d. Can you think of any skill that you want to include in 101C curriculum?
APPENDIX E
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH ENGLISH 150 TEACHERS

1. Background information
   a. Nationality, major
   b. Previous teaching experience, any training?

2. Perspectives on good writing
   a. Definition of good writing, context, substance, organization, style, delivery
   b. How did you explain good content, organization, and context?
   c. What is good content?
      i. Creative, interesting, and engaging?
      ii. Truth, accuracy, richness of content?
      iii. Strength of argument? Convincing?
      iv. What they write vs. how they write
   d. What is good organization?
      i. What about 5-paragraph essay? What do you think about very clear-cut, formulaic organization?
      ii. Relationship between structure and content?
      iii. Inductive or deductive structure?
   e. What is good style?
      i. Implicit and subtle or explicit and straightforward?
      ii. Which grammar errors deserve attention?

3. Rating practice
   a. Please explain your evaluation process of each paper.
   b. What’s included in the grade for each major assignment? (Only the quality of the final draft or the process as well?)
   c. Severity/leniency
      i. Major, minor writing assignments, final course grade: different levels of severity?
      ii. Toward the end of the semester, does it change?
   d. Criterion-referenced or norm-referenced?
i. Only consider the focus of each unit (a certain grammar features)? Only consider what’s written down in the rubric? Or evaluate the general quality of each criterion?

   e. Stick to the rubric or your thoughts affect grading?
   f. How much weight given to each criterion?
   g. The total score is simply the sum of each analytic score?
   h. How do you determine a grade? What is average?

4. Rubric interpretation
   a. What do extra, good, okay, some, lack mean to you?
   b. How well do you think students understand the rubric and your feedback?

5. International students
   a. What do you think about NNS writing?
   b. Do you apply the same evaluation criteria? Become more generous?
   c. Grammar, how much is it important in your evaluation?
   d. What grammar errors are common? What grammar errors annoy you and need to address?
   e. How would you compare American and international students? Their strengths and weaknesses?

6. Learning transfer
   a. Have you heard anything about 101C?
   b. (Show 101C syllabus and assignment sheet) What do you think about it?
   c. How do you think 101C should prepare international students for them to succeed in 150?
1. Background information (L1, major)
2. Perspectives on good writing
   a. What is considered good writing in your teaching context?
   b. Is truth/accuracy of content important?
   c. Grammar
      i. What grammar errors are annoying to you?
      ii. What grammar errors decrease comprehensibility?
3. Rating practice
   a. Please explain your evaluation process of each paper.
   b. What aspects of writing are considered relatively more important in your evaluation?
4. International students
   a. What do you think about NNS writing?
   b. Do you apply the same evaluation criteria? Become more generous?
   c. Grammar, how much is it important in your evaluation?
   d. What grammar errors are common?
      i. What grammar errors annoy you and need to address?
      ii. What grammar errors decrease comprehensibility?
   e. How would you compare American and international students? Their strengths and weaknesses?
5. Learning transfer
   a. Have you heard anything about 101C?
   b. (Show 101C syllabus and assignment sheet) What do you think about it?
   c. How do you think 101C should prepare international students for them to succeed in 150?
Followings are what you learned in ENGL 101C last semester. Please indicate how much they are useful in doing major writing assignments in ENGL 150.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not useful at all</th>
<th>Not very useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing a three-level paragraph (topic sentence, supporting ideas, specific details)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a compare and contrast essay (along with critique and evaluation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a division and classification essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a summary and response essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing an essay in a logical manner (using a logical order based on time, sequence, or order of importance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing an article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding your commentary/opinions to the summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a thesis statement and controlling ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing background information in the introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the context (time, people, place) and major factors of the topic in the introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a topic sentence in each paragraph</td>
<td>Not useful at all</td>
<td>Not very useful</td>
<td>Somewhat useful</td>
<td>Very useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing supporting points for the topic sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing examples/details to support a topic sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing evaluative statements and critical perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing balanced point of view for a few different points of discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing clear reasoning for the argument/position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing only about connected (relevant) ideas in each paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing ideas logically within a paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in a consistent point of view</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connecting controlling ideas in a thesis statement and the main point (topic sentence) of each body paragraph</th>
<th>Not useful at all</th>
<th>Not very useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using transitions between sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using transitions between paragraphs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting the supporting points in the body paragraphs in the same order as they appear in the thesis statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Not useful at all</td>
<td>Not very useful</td>
<td>Somewhat useful</td>
<td>Very useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating same key words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using synonyms (different words that have a similar meaning)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using similar sentence beginnings in each topic sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using pronouns (using <em>him</em> instead saying <em>Tom</em> again and again)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing an introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing grammatical errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining sentences using coordination and subordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using parallel forms (in the controlling idea)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary of compare and contrast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using specific, expanded noun phrases (a musical group instead of a group; an apartment building instead of a building; an area of small family farms instead of an area)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary of cause and effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using adjective clauses (e.g., King Sejong, who invented the Korean alphabet, ruled Korea during a time of peace; The Korean alphabets, which has 14 consonants and 10 vowels, is relatively easy to learn.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document formatting (font, margins, indents,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line spacing, heading)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an outline and revising a paper multiple times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Writing Experience in Other Disciplines

By looking at your writing assignments in other disciplines, I want to better understand what kinds of writing skills you need in a university context. Also, I want you to think about what kinds of writing skills are required in order to do those assignments. Please include the followings in a word file.

1. **A writing assignment sheet**: Please choose a writing assignment that is given in any discipline other than English. Please choose the one that you think is typical and representative. Please copy and paste it. If the assignment sheet doesn’t include the course name (and number) and instructor name, please provide them.

2. **Your written assignment**: Please copy and paste the assignment you submitted in response to the assignment sheet above.

3. **Teacher’s evaluation**: Please provide all the feedback and grade you received on this assignment. If you handed in a paper copy and received hand-written feedback, please scan it.

4. **Your thoughts**: After you copy and paste all the materials, please briefly answer the following questions.
   
   • What are some similarities and differences between ENGL 101C writing assignments and the one you copied here?
   
   • Did what you learned in ENGL 101C help you to do the written assignment you copied here? If so, how? If not, why?
   
   • In order to do the assignment you copied here, what skills do you want to learn in ENGL 101C
## APPENDIX I
RUBRIC USED BY ENGLISH 101C INSTRUCTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (4) (Writer responds thoughtfully, requiring little or no revision)</th>
<th>Good (3) (Writer responds fully, requiring some revision)</th>
<th>Fair (2) (Writer responds mostly competently, requiring focused, substantive revision)</th>
<th>Needs Work (1) (Writer responds incompetently, requiring extensive revision)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thesis contains a controlling idea naming the analytical categories in parallel form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening contains the needed background information to establish the context of the topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting points are defined by a logical basis of division Each point is fully developed with a variety of details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each topic sentence is clearly linked to the controlling idea of thesis. Ideas within paragraphs are logically developed and cohesive. Cohesive devices are applied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions move the reader between paragraphs. A concluding paragraph reinforces the connection between the parts and the whole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with grammar and mechanics are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
minimal and do not distract the reader. Noun phrases are expanded to include more accurate and specific adjectives and nouns. Adjective clauses add more specific detail to your descriptions and provide deeper information in longer and more fluid sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Score</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J
RUBRIC USED BY ENGLISH 150 INSTRUCTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (4)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Fair (2)</th>
<th>Needs Work (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Writer responds thoughtfully, requiring little or no revision)</td>
<td>(Writer responds fully, requiring some revision)</td>
<td>(Writer responds mostly competently, requiring focused, substantive revision)</td>
<td>(Writer responds incompetently, requiring extensive revision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction engages audience’s interest and previews content well with a clear thesis statement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sense of audience and consistent attention to audience’s needs by providing relevant background information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose for writing is clear and provides an answer to the reader’s “so what?” question.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content is fully developed, substantial and relevant to thesis; details are carefully chosen and specific.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each paragraph focuses on and develops a single topic or idea in an interesting and vivid way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs go beyond a mere factual description to the analysis and discussion of how each aspect contributes to the culture of the city as a whole based on the writer’s own perspective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Organization**
Paper is organized logically (and innovatively) and arranged for effective emphasis and audience engagement. Transitions function well to tie one idea to the next. Conclusion sums up main points and leaves the reader with something to think about. Each paragraph contributes to explaining and analyzing hometown city with clear topics and deliberately arranged supporting details. All paragraphs support thesis and are structured around controlling ideas.

**Style**
Writing is clear, fluid, and mature. Precise, vivid and appropriate word choice. Sentences varied. Subordination and coordination used effectively. Assignment is free from sentence-level and word-level errors.

**Final Score**

**Letter Grade**
APPENDIX K
FACETS COMMAND FILE: ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH 101C INSTRUCTORS’ RATINGS

Title = Essay 101C grade
Facets = 2 ; examinees, instructors
Positive = 1 ; for examinee, greater score equals higher logit
Inter-rater = 2 ; instructor facet
Noncentered = 1 ; examinees are noncentered
Arrange = mN ; Sort Table 7 by measure

Labels=
1, Examinees
1-25 ; 25 examinees

2, Instructors
1 = A-101C
2 = B-101C
3 = C-101C
4 = D-101C
5 = E-101C
6 = F-101C
7 = G-101C

Models =
?, ?, grade ; letter grade

Rating scale = grade, R11 ; the 11 grades
1 = D-
2 = D
3 = D+
4 = C-
5 = C
6 = C+
7 = B-
8 = B
9 = B+
10 = A-
11 = A

Data= essay101Cgrade.xls
APPENDIX L
FACETS COMMAND FILE: ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH 150 INSTRUCTORS’ RATINGS

Title = Essay 150 grade
Facets = 2 ; examinees, instructors
Positive = 1 ; for examinee, greater score equals higher logit
Inter-rater = 2 ; instructor facet
Noncentered = 1 ; examinees are noncentered
Arrange = mN ; Sort Table 7 by measure

Labels=
1, Examinees
1-25 ; 25 examinees
*

2, Instructors
8 = H-150
9 = I-150
10 = J-150
11 = K-150
12 = L-150
13 = M-150
*

Models =
?, ?, grade ; letter grade
*

Rating scale = grade, R11 ; the 11 grades
1 = D-
2 = D
3 = D+
4 = C-
5 = C
6 = C+
7 = B-
8 = B
9 = B+
10 = A-
11 = A
*

Data= essay150grade.xls