

## Perceptions and practices of self-editing in advanced writing

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# Perceptions and Practices of Self-editing in Advanced Writing

**Jennifer Holland**

## **ABSTRACT**

Any writing teacher knows that giving feedback on grammatical errors can be a tedious task. Since students generally highly value this feedback, most teachers accept this task as a necessary component of a writing course. A common issue is that teachers continue to see the same (often careless) errors repeated many times, leaving us feeling that the time and effort spent giving error feedback is being wasted. In recent years, several studies have investigated methods of putting more responsibility on students by asking them to edit their own work. However, the majority of these studies have focused on ESL contexts. In Japan, university EFL students often possess extensive knowledge of grammatical rules, yet fail to apply these rules correctly in their writing. This study examines self-editing practices and perceptions in writing courses at a university in Japan. Data was gathered from both students and teachers via surveys administered at the beginning and end of one semester. Participants were asked to reflect on several aspects of their experiences with grammar editing. This paper will shed some light on the current state of self-editing in these courses.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Advanced Writing at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) is a compulsory course for English majors in their second year of study. The ultimate goal of the course is to complete an extended five-paragraph research essay, typically on a topic of the student's choice. In the first semester, following on the

Basic Writing curriculum from their first year, students write several types of essays, for example, compare and contrast, narrative and argumentative. The bulk of the second semester is dedicated to the research essay.

The volume of work produced in Advanced Writing is significantly larger than in Basic Writing, and anecdotal evidence suggests that students are not always well equipped with the basic skills necessary to take on the second-year writing tasks, as one would expect. During the first few weeks of the Advanced Writing course, teachers spend significant amounts of time reviewing critical elements such as thesis statements and topic sentences. In addition, although the current structure of the Advanced Writing course does not require a focus on grammar, many teachers find it difficult to navigate the content of student essays due to sentence-level errors and often choose to incorporate grammar and editing activities into the course. Students at KUIS have typically completed their primary and secondary education in the Japanese school system and have chosen to study English in their own country. Although they have studied English in their prior schooling, it is common that they have difficulty using their knowledge of grammatical rules accurately in written production. Teachers may devote a large amount of time to giving grammatical feedback on student drafts. The course workload is therefore significant for both teachers and students.

Providing grammatical feedback in particular can be a major undertaking for a teacher, given that each class typically consists of about 28 students. Such feedback practices can be frustrating for teachers who continue to see the same errors repeated over and over again. I am one of those Advanced Writing teachers and

the impetus for this study was to find out if others have the same experiences and attitudes as I do.

In recent years, textbooks have begun to include self-editing checklists for students taking writing courses. While these checklists often cover more content than grammar, they do encourage students to look over their work more carefully in both areas in hopes that they will be able to improve their draft before submitting it to the teacher. The Basic Writing curriculum includes such editing checklists, but the Advanced Writing curriculum currently does not.

To date, studies investigating self-editing practices focus mostly on ESL writing courses with students of varied linguistic backgrounds (Diab, 2005; Ferris, 1995a, 1995b; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1990, 1991). There does not seem to be any research on self-editing of grammar in a university writing course in Japan. Although not a part of the curriculum, some KUIS teachers have introduced self-editing activities into the Advanced Writing course. This study investigates the self-editing practices taking place in the course and what perceptions the Japanese students and their native English-speaking teachers have of such practices. In the course of the study, an attempt will be made to define self-editing as it exists in our courses.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Editing in process writing**

Since the beginnings of process writing in the 1970s, grammar correction has had a place in the writing classroom, albeit a small one at first. Originally, process

writing gave priority to the development of ideas, reserving error correction for the end of the process, where it was merely a “polish” phase for the final draft. In the 1980s and 90s, many teachers began to question the secondary role of editing in the writing process. Over the past two decades, grammar feedback and editing have assumed a far more prominent role (see Ferris, 2002 for an overview of the changing status of editing in the writing classroom). Along with this increased focus on grammar have come challenges for both teachers and students, and a recent focus on self-editing is the latest step in the evolution of editing in writing (see the section on “self-editing” below).

### **Teacher beliefs about grammar feedback**

Truscott (1996) states that “teachers and researchers hold a widespread, deeply entrenched belief that grammar correction should, even must, be part of writing courses” (p. 327). Many others agree that most teachers hold beliefs about the essential value of grammar feedback (see Ferris, 2002; Leki, 1990; and Zamel, 1985). Silva (1990) asserts that a process writing teacher’s role includes helping students learn to edit (p. 15). However, several studies have also noted that giving grammar feedback is a time-consuming undertaking (see Ferris, 1999, 2002; Leki, 1990; Truscott, 1996; and Zamel, 1985). Self-editing may help mitigate this problem.

### **Student beliefs about grammar feedback**

In addition to positive teacher views on error feedback, many studies have revealed a strong belief in the value of error feedback on the part of students; it is sometimes valued to the point where students expect it in writing classes (Bates, Lane and

Lange, 1993; Diab, 2005; Ferris, 1999, 2002; Ferris & Roberts 2001; and Truscott, 1996). To go a step further, many students admit they feel they need this feedback in order to improve their drafts, and this results in some students becoming overly dependent on it (Diab, 2005; Ferris, 1995b, 2002; and Truscott, 1996). A survey by Leki (1991) even found that 63 out of 100 students named their teacher as the most helpful source of assistance with errors (p. 207). In addition, 93 of those students said that having a teacher point out errors for them was “very important” (p. 206).

### **Self-editing**

In essence, there are two ways to go about self-editing. First, students use checklists while proofreading a draft and look for the types of errors listed. Such checklists are commonly found in textbooks for process writing (see Ferris, 1995b for a sample list of textbooks which deal with self-editing). Second, students may edit their work based on indirect feedback, that is, a teacher points out an error (for example by underlining or highlighting) and may provide a code or other clue as to the type of error that was made. Bates et al. (1993) and Ferris (1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2002) discuss methods of implementing self-editing and make suggestions for how error feedback should be given to best promote student success. These authors agree that providing selective feedback focusing on the most frequent and serious errors is important. Not only is indirect feedback less time-consuming than direct feedback, but indirect feedback has been shown to be most effective in long-term gains in grammatical accuracy and editing ability (see Ferris, 1995a; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Bates et al. (1993) and Ferris (2002) clearly state that indirect feedback methods also promote learner responsibility.

## METHOD

### Pilot Survey

In May 2008, before the main study began, a pilot survey was administered to Advanced Writing teachers in the English Department. 10 teachers participated in this pilot survey. Since the course curriculum is not rigid, teachers have a lot of freedom to adapt the course to meet the needs of their particular group of students. Knowing that I have changed my own practices over my three years teaching the course, I could not assume that everyone was going about the course in the same way as I was. The pilot survey served as a preliminary investigation of teachers' experiences, practices, and attitudes.

Interestingly, it was found that more than half of the Advanced Writing teachers had little (less than 1 year) or no experience teaching academic writing before coming to KUIS. This was a critical realization for the study and caused me to limit the teacher participants of the main study to those who had previous experience teaching this course. Given the varied educational backgrounds of teachers, there is often a steep learning curve for teachers of Advanced Writing; some even revealed they had never been introduced to the essential metalanguage that our students struggle with (e.g., "thesis statement").

As far as self-editing was concerned, 9 out of the 10 teachers were using indirect feedback, which indicated that they were encouraging students to investigate their own errors. 7 out of 10 teachers replied that they provided proofreading or self-editing instruction in class. For those who asked students to self-edit, such practices consisted of both content and grammar edits, and the fuzzy area where

content and grammar overlap, for example in cases of word choice errors, was revealed to be a common focus of feedback. Although the original intention for the main study was to investigate self-editing of grammar only, it became clear that the distinction would not be easily made. Along these lines, the following definition of self-editing was proposed to guide the study:

**Definition of self-editing (original)**

Students' own proofreading and editing, plus subsequent revision, of their own writing. This may include the use of self- or teacher-produced checklists or other materials to assist in identifying errors.

Here, it is clear that the distinction between revision (typically content-related) and editing (typically associated with grammar) is not clear and it makes sense that they are intertwined, particularly when editing takes place in a drafting process. Teachers in the pilot study were asked to consider this definition and make any additions or changes to suit their own practices and beliefs. Suggestions received are summarized below:

**Teacher suggestions for the definition of self-editing**

- prompting or guiding by the teacher
- correcting errors
- improving the writing
- incorporating feedback from peers and teacher
- based on discussion in class of salient points

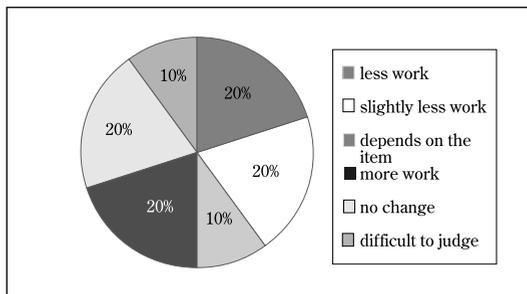
Teachers were also asked how they perceived students feel about self-editing their work:

**Students...**

- lack confidence.
- lack training.
- need guidance.
- rely on teachers to point out errors.
- like peer editing better.
- are encouraged by the opportunity to self-edit.
- don't enjoy editing but see the benefit.

Clearly, the responses were mostly negative with regards to student perceptions of editing their work independently. Lack of confidence was the number one response to this question. In a Japanese context, one could easily expect such a result. However, I hoped that student responses during the main study would be more in line with the positive end of the spectrum. Confidence in particular was an area I was interested to investigate with students.

Finally, teachers were also asked to assess the perceived impact of self-editing on their workload. Figure 1 below gives a glaring indication of the disorganized state of Advanced Writing containing no clear grammar component. Teachers' practices are quite varied and the impact of self-editing is not always clear or positive.



**Figure 1. Teacher perceptions of the impact of self-editing on teacher workload**

As a result of the pilot survey, it was clear that more time was needed to discover the best method of going about the main study. Much of the variation in responses about self-editing is due to differing beliefs and practices. This was something I had anticipated and a focus group was arranged to attempt to clarify some of the practices taking place.

### **Focus Group**

In December 2008, 4 teachers from the pilot study agreed to participate in a focus group to follow up on some of the areas still needing clarification. Teachers were asked to describe their typical step-by-step process for essay drafting, for example, number of drafts per essay assignment, where editing comes into the process, feedback types used, and expectations of students' proofreading, as the essay writing in semester one would be the focus of the main study. As far as self-editing was concerned, all teachers in the focus group were using checklists and indirect feedback and asking students to edit their work through these methods.

## The Main Study

As mentioned previously, teachers participating in the study had to have at least one year of prior experience teaching Advanced Writing at KUIS. Five returning teachers were available for the study, and all had one Advanced Writing class, except Teacher E, who had two. Details about the teachers and their classes are outlined in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1. Teachers**

Teacher	Nationality	Prior years teaching AW	Class	# of students
Teacher A	USA	2 years	Class A	28
Teacher B	UK	1 year	Class B	29
Teacher C	Australia	1 year	Class C	28
Teacher D	USA	1 year	Class D	27
Teacher E	New Zealand	2 years	Class E	28
“ ”	“ ”	“ ”	Class F	27

The students were English majors taking Advanced Writing as a requirement for their degree program. Student participation in the study was voluntary, and in the six participating classes, the total number of students potentially taking the survey was 167. The actual number of respondents is indicated in Table 2, along with a timeline of the four surveys administered via Survey Monkey for the study.

**TABLE 2. Timeline of Survey Administration**

April 2009 (beginning of semester one)	July 2009 (end of semester one)
Teacher survey 1: 5 participants	Teacher survey 2: 5 participants
Student survey 1: 164 participants	Student survey 2: 148 participants

Before administering the surveys for the main study, it was necessary to take another look at the definition of self-editing. Ferris (1995b) defines self-editing as: “finding and correcting grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors before submitting (or “publishing”) a final written product” (p.18). Based on this and the suggestions given by KUIS teachers during the pilot study, the following definition was given to guide teachers in responding to the survey questions:

**Definition of self-editing (revised)**

Students identify and correct grammatical, lexical and mechanical errors in their own writing. This may include the use of materials such as checklists and is sometimes aided by teacher feedback.

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

**What practices do students use to self-edit?**

**Using checklists**

As mentioned previously, the Basic Writing curriculum at KUIS includes editing checklists like the one in Figure 2. If a Basic Writing teacher was not in the habit of using indirect feedback, such checklists may have been students' only exposure to self-editing at KUIS.

<input type="radio"/> Every sentence has a subject and verb.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> Verbs agree with their subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> The verbs are in the correct tense.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> There are no spelling mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> There are compound sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> There are complex sentences.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 2. Sample Basic Writing checklist

Students were asked about their experiences using these checklists in Survey 1.

**Q1. Last year in Basic Writing, you probably used a checklist (like the example above) to self-edit the grammar and sentences in your draft. At the end of the year, do you think you could use the checklist well?**

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Always	30	18.29%
Sometimes	101	61.59%
Not useful	2	1.22%
Didn't use	31	18.90%

About 81% of students had experienced using checklists to edit their work in Basic Writing.

**Q2. This year in Advanced Writing, do you want to use a checklist to self-edit your drafts?**

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	141	85.98%
No	23	14.02%

Nearly 86% of students indicated that they would like to use a similar checklist in Advanced Writing. This was a positive result for teachers' plans to use self-editing in the six classes.

Next, students were asked to consider their own proofreading or editing practices.

**Q3. Answer the questions about writing tasks for classes at KUIS. (Survey 1)**

	Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Almost never	Never
I read my drafts and check them carefully for errors before I hand them in.	79 (48.17%)	71 (43.29%)	13 (7.93%)	1 (.61%)	-
I use the spelling and grammar checking tool on my computer (Microsoft Word).	72 (43.90%)	33 (20.12%)	31 (18.90%)	15 (9.15%)	13 (7.93%)

More than 90% of students claimed to have already been in the habit of proofreading their written work all or most of the time. In addition, more than 60% regularly used the editing tools available in Microsoft Word. One of the suggested introductory activities in the Basic Writing course is an introduction to basic word processing skills and students' knowledge of the spelling and grammar tools may

have come from that previous coursework.

Students were asked these same questions at the end of the semester, to see if a focus on self-editing promoted the use of these editing practices.

**Q3. Answer the questions about the writing tasks you did in Advanced Writing this semester. (Survey 2)**

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Almost always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Almost never</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>No response</b>
I read my drafts and check them carefully for errors before I hand them in.	76 (51.35%)	60 (40.54%)	11 (7.43%)	1 (.68%)	-	-
I use the spelling and grammar checking tool on my computer (Microsoft Word).	93 (62.84%)	25 (16.89%)	18 (12.16%)	7 (4.73%)	4 (2.70%)	1 (.68%)

The number of students regularly proofreading shows little change, which in this case is good, since most students do it. By the end of the semester, the number of students regularly using the editing tools in Microsoft Word increased to nearly 80%; another positive indication that students were looking to independently improve the accuracy of their written work.

### What are students' perceptions of self-editing their work?

Students were also asked to rate their perceptions of self-editing on Likert scales.

Please give your opinion about the statements below. (Survey 1)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q4. It is important to use correct grammar and spelling in my writing.	112 (68.29%)	51 (31.10%)	1 (.61%)	–
Q5. I want to study grammar in Advanced Writing.	97 (59.15%)	63 (38.41%)	4 (2.44%)	–
Q6. Students should be required to correct errors on every draft, including the final draft.	73 (44.51%)	81 (49.39%)	10 (6.10%)	–
Q7. I need my teacher's comments to help me find errors in my draft.	130 (79.27%)	33 (20.12%)	1 (.61%)	–
Q8. I want to learn how to FIND errors by myself.	88 (53.66%)	68 (41.46%)	7 (4.27%)	1 (.61%)
Q9. I want to learn how to CORRECT my errors by myself.	106 (64.63%)	53 (32.32%)	5 (3.05%)	–

In accordance with previous studies on students' views on the importance of accuracy (Ferris 1995a, 2002), 99% of the students agreed that accuracy is important (Q4), with nearly 98% desiring a focus on grammar in Advanced Writing (Q5). Similarly, Leki's (1991) study found that 91 out of 100 students surveyed considered accuracy to be "very important" (p. 205). In addition, 94% of students indicated they expected to focus on errors throughout the entire drafting process (Q6).

Ferris (1995a) asserts that training students to find and correct errors is an essential part of self-editing. At the beginning of the semester, 95% of students agreed that they wanted to learn to find errors in their own drafts (Q8). However, 99% felt they needed the teacher's assistance in locating the errors (Q7). This indicates that indirect methods of teacher feedback may be the preferable feedback method. In addition, 97% of students said they wanted to learn to correct the errors found in their drafts (Q9). This is a very positive result which indicates a high level of motivation for self-editing.

As a follow-up, similar questions were asked at the end of the semester.

**Please give your opinion about the statements below. (Survey 2)**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>No response</b>
Q10. Self-editing is a valuable skill.	73 (49.32%)	74 (50.00%)	1 (.68%)	–	–
Q11. Self-editing my drafts is motivating for me.	33 (22.30%)	98 (66.22%)	16 (10.81%)	–	1 (.68%)
Q12. I am more confident to self-edit my drafts now.	12 (8.11%)	73 (49.32%)	56 (37.84%)	7 (4.73%)	–
Q13. Compared to the beginning of the semester, I am able to FIND more grammar errors in my draft by myself now.	41 (27.70%)	80 (54.05%)	26 (17.57%)	1 (.68%)	–
Q14. Compared to the beginning of the semester, I am able to CORRECT more grammar errors in my draft by myself now.	30 (20.27%)	89 (60.14%)	26 (17.57%)	2 (1.35%)	1 (.68%)

Q15. I need my teacher's comments to help me find errors in my draft.	98 (66.22%)	47 (31.76%)	3 (2.03%)	-	-
Q16. I want to do self-editing next semester.	53 (35.81%)	76 (51.35%)	17 (11.49%)	2 (1.35%)	-

In the pilot study, some teachers indicated that they believed students valued and were encouraged by self-editing opportunities in the classroom. Indeed, 99% of students agreed that self-editing is a valuable skill (Q10) and nearly 89% agreed that they were motivated by doing so (Q11). These are satisfactory results and stand in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly negative beliefs held by teachers in the pilot study. In terms of confidence, Ferris (2002) notes that through training, students' confidence can increase when ability to self-edit is realized (p. 84). In this study, there was 58% general agreement among students that their confidence to self-edit had improved over the course of the semester (Q12). 42% disagreement is still a fair proportion and may be worth investigating in a future study. 80% agreement related to improved ability to both find (Q13) and correct (Q14) errors is another encouraging result for self-editing in Advanced Writing. Although they may not have all been confident in their abilities, the perceived improvement in these abilities is notable. Regarding teacher intervention in determining ability to self-edit, the end-of-semester result is similar to that of the beginning of the semester (Q7), with 98% of students agreeing they needed teacher feedback (Q15). Encouragingly, 87% of students responded favorably to continued self-editing practices in semester two of Advanced Writing (Q16).

Student responses to questions about self-editing perceptions seemed to indicate that indirect methods of teacher feedback would be favorable. The next question attempted to confirm this.

**Q17. Teachers may give many different kinds of feedback on grammar errors. Which kind of teacher feedback is MOST HELPFUL for you?**

	Survey 1	Survey 2
The teacher corrects all of my errors.	19 (11.59%)	8 (5.41%)
The teacher shows me where the error is (ex. highlight or underline) so I can correct it by myself.	68 (41.46%)	62 (41.89%)
The teacher shows me where the error is (ex. highlight or underline) AND tells me what kind of error it is (ex. article, spelling, verb tense) so I can correct it by myself.	77 (46.95%)	75 (50.68%)
Grammar feedback from the teacher is not helpful.	-	3 (2.03%)

Indeed, the results of Q17 indicated that students' preferred feedback method was indirect, both at the beginning of the semester and at the end, with the percentage slightly increasing from 88% to 93% over that period. The number of students preferring coded feedback increased slightly over the semester, while preference for un-coded feedback remained stable. In agreement with several previous studies, Ferris & Roberts (2001) found that although students prefer coded indirect feedback, this has not been shown to be more successful in improving students' editing ability than un-coded indirect feedback.

## Student Survey 2

At the end of the semester, students were also asked to reflect on the usefulness of grammar and editing activities that took place in their Advanced Writing class over the course of the semester. It should be noted that the activities taking place in each class varied.

**Q18. How useful were the following class activities in helping you to improve your ability to self-edit grammar in your drafts?**

	Very useful	Mostly useful	Sometimes useful	Rarely useful	Not useful at all	N/A	No response
Editing checklists	53 (35.81%)	64 (43.24%)	28 (18.92%)	1 (.68%)	1 (.68%)	1 (.68%)	–
Grammar lessons	67 (45.27%)	56 (37.84%)	21 (14.19%)	2 (1.35%)	–	1 (.68%)	1 (.68%)
Grammar textbook exercises	33 (22.30%)	54 (36.49%)	37 (25.00%)	10 (6.76%)	–	14 (9.46%)	–
Error recognition exercises	49 (33.11%)	67 (45.27%)	24 (16.22%)	2 (1.35%)	–	4 (2.70%)	2 (1.35%)
Computer training (ex. using spell check)	37 (25.00%)	49 (33.11%)	33 (22.30%)	4 (2.70%)	1 (.68%)	14 (9.46%)	10 (6.76%)
Keeping track of errors (ex. error log)	32 (21.62%)	55 (37.16%)	49 (33.11%)	6 (4.05%)	1 (.68%)	5 (3.38%)	–

The next section will look at some of these results in more detail.

### What practices do teachers provide for self-editing?

All 5 teachers participating in the study indicated in Survey 1 that they intended to use self-editing in their classes, as defined in the revised definition, and also confirmed that they had actually done so in Survey 2.

Data in the following tables indicate the number of teachers (as opposed to classes), out of a possible 5.

**TABLE 3. Activities completed in Advanced Writing**

	<b>Survey 1 (intended)</b>	<b>Survey 2 (actual)</b>
Editing checklists	5	5 (classes A,B,C,D,E & F)
Grammar lessons	2	2 (classes A & D)
Grammar textbook exercises	1	2 (classes A & B)
Error recognition exercises	4	4 (classes A, B, C & D)
Computer software training	4	2 (classes A & D)
Error logs	2	2 (classes A, E & F)

As mentioned previously, checklists are probably the most common means of introducing students to self-editing. As such, it is not surprising that all of the teachers used checklists in all six classes. In addition, most teachers engaged students in error recognition exercises. Teacher comments indicated that these exercises typically took the form of a worksheet created using sentences from student essays which contained a common error. Students would then work independently or in small groups to find and correct each error. Ferris (1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2002) suggests using sample student work to train students in error recognition and generally raise their awareness about the types of errors they make most frequently. Table 4 compares results from Q18 of the semester-end student survey isolated only to the classes which used these two most common practices.

**TABLE 4. Usefulness of the most common editing activities**

	<b>Checklists</b>	<b>Error recognition*</b>
Very useful	36%	39%
Mostly useful	43%	42%
Sometimes useful	19%	12%
Rarely useful	1%	1%
Not useful at all	1%	–

\*6% did not respond or said they did not do this activity.

Students seem to generally agree that checklists and error recognition exercises are useful in building self-editing skills.

Teachers were also asked about the types of grammatical feedback they provided. Table 5 illustrates the feedback types used in the six classes.

**TABLE 5. Grammar feedback types provided**

	<b>Survey 1 (intended)</b>	<b>Survey 2 (actual)</b>
Indirect – coded	2	3 (classes A, B & D)
Indirect – un-coded	5	5 (classes A,B,C,D,E & F)
Direct	5	3 (classes A, C & D)

Although students preferred coded indirect feedback (see Q17), it was more common that students received un-coded indirect feedback. It would be interesting to investigate why students preferred a method they did not necessarily receive.

Teachers indicated that they sometimes used direct feedback, typically in cases where an edit was necessary, but they felt the student would be unable to successfully edit the item themselves, for example prepositions, word choice and complex verb tenses. It should also be noted that Teachers A and D gave students a choice in the type of feedback they received.

**What are teachers’ perceptions of student self-editing?**

Teachers were also asked to reflect on their perceptions of self-editing using Likert scales.

**Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Survey 1 responses are shaded, with the responses for the same question on Survey 2 in the un-shaded box below it.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
Q19. KUIS students want to improve their grammatical accuracy.	4	1	-	-	-	-	-
	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
Q20. Self-editing is motivating for students.	-	3	2	-	-	-	-
	1	3	-	-	-	1	
Q21. Students at KUIS are confident to self-edit.	1	1	2	1	-	-	-
	-	1	1	1	2	-	-

Q22. Asking students to check their writing with a grammar checklist before they hand in a draft is a waste of time.	-	-	-	1	1	3	-
	1	1	-	-	2	1	-
Q23. Learning to self-edit is a valuable skill for students.	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Q24. It is natural that students may not be able to self-edit some error types (ex. word choice, prepositions)	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
Q25. Self-editing should be integrated into the Advanced Writing curriculum at KUIS.	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
	2	3	-	-	-	-	-

Q4, regarding the importance of accuracy, showed 99% agreement among students. Q19 in the table above shows that teachers realized this perception of accuracy. Teachers also generally agreed that self-editing is motivating (Q20), which corresponds with the 89% of students who agreed in Q11. Q21 is interesting because although students reported higher confidence by the end of the semester (Q12), teachers' perceptions of student confidence actually declined. This makes me wonder if teachers' expectations of gains in ability to self-edit were higher than those of the students, who may gain confidence as a result of improved ability on even one grammar item.

Also interesting is Q22 about the usefulness of checklists. Although 79% of students thought they were useful (see Table 4), two teachers strongly felt they were a waste of time.

All 5 teachers strongly agreed that self-editing is a valuable skill (Q23) and this correlates with the 99% of students in Q10 who strongly agreed or agreed. Table 5 showed that all teachers were using direct feedback in some cases, so it was expected that teachers would feel that not all error types can be successfully self edited (Q24). Finally, I found it encouraging that all of the teachers were in agreement that self-editing should be part of the Advanced Writing course (Q25). Clearly, teachers and students saw the benefit of such practices and it would no doubt be worthwhile to attempt to integrate self-editing into the course in some form.

**TABLE 6. Improvement as a result of self-editing**

	Survey 1	Survey 2
	I expect to see improvement as a result of students' self-editing this semester.	I generally saw improvement in the number of grammatical errors as a result of students' self-editing this semester.
Strongly agree	2 (Teachers A & C)	-
Agree	3 (Teachers B, D & E)	2 (Teachers A & C)
Disagree	-	2 (Teachers B & D)
Strongly disagree	-	-
N/A	-	1 (Teacher E)

In relation to Q21, Table 6 presents teachers' perceptions of the outcomes of students' self-editing. The results seem to lend themselves to my suggestion that

teachers have higher expectations than students as far as success rates in reducing the number of errors. Although teachers were optimistic at the beginning of the semester, most were less so by the end. In the case of Teacher E, improvement could not really be gauged because she has always used self-editing and does not have anything to compare her students' abilities to.

If student self-editing is meant to lessen the burden on teachers, Q26 clearly shows that it is difficult to gauge this through perceptions over a semester. A separate study is needed to properly answer this question.

**Q26. I spend less time marking grammar errors when students self-edit their work.**

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Always	1	-
Almost always	4	2
Almost never	-	-
Never	-	-
N/A	-	3

**LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Students in the survey were only identified by their class numbers, in order to match them with their teacher. One of the major limitations of this study was that student ID numbers were not collected and therefore, individual changes from the beginning to the end of the semester were not fully traceable. Admittedly, there is too little consistency in the questions on the student surveys for this to have been useful anyway. In addition, when attempting to gauge practices and perceptions, it

is difficult to know whether or not you are getting truly honest answers. The fact that the surveys were administered in English may also be a limitation, as students could have misunderstood a question. It also would have been interesting to follow up with students in a focus group or interview on some of their responses, especially where teacher and student responses were quite different.

Clearly, given the difficulty of defining self-editing due to the various practices, not all teachers necessarily agree with or fit within the boundaries of the definition used in the study. In addition, considering that there are 12 Advanced Writing teachers, having only 5 participate in the study was not ideal.

Concerning the survey data itself, Student Survey 2 had several instances of answers left blank; a result of a technical difficulty with the electronic data collection. As pointed out earlier, a different number of students took Survey 1 and Survey 2, which also makes the data difficult to accurately correlate. Data on student perceptions of the value of the activities done in class may also have been more accurate had it been gathered throughout the semester, preferably as each activity was completed.

As for future research, certainly the actual effectiveness of these practices remains to be seen. Ferris (1995a, 1995b) has successfully taught students to self-edit and I have no doubt that KUIS students can learn to do so too. In addition, given the number of teachers who engage their students in peer feedback, it would be interesting to see how willing and able students are to self-edit from peer feedback, an investigation which may serve to further reduce the burden on teachers who

give grammatical feedback.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the state of self-editing in the Advanced Writing classes at KUIS. Through surveys of teachers and students, practices and perceptions of self-editing were investigated. It seems that self-editing does indeed have a place in the Advanced Writing curriculum. Although it seems that integrating self-editing into the course could be a positive contribution, such integration is likely to be met with some resistance. Self-editing and the activities which may be necessary for reaping the full benefit of such practices are likely to be time-consuming. Teachers are already struggling to complete the assignments necessary for the course within the semester timelines and often do not have time to give what they may feel is due attention to grammar. If the pilot survey in particular is any indication, an attempt at streamlining these practices would likely fail, as teachers have the right to continue entertaining a certain freedom of choice in their classrooms and to do what is in the best interest of their students. This study has shown that there is a desire for self-editing on the part of both teachers and students, so certainly, checklists and other self-editing practices should be talked about, shared and explored further in the Advanced Writing courses.

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