

**AN ANALYSIS OF PRAGMATIC INTENT OF WRITTEN  
TEACHER FEEDBACK COMMENTARY ON STUDENTS'  
PROJECT ESSAYS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION  
IN GHANA**

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**Abstract**

*The study is aimed at finding out how teachers of St. John Bosco's College of Education, Ghana focus the pragmatic intent of teacher written feedback comments on students' project draft essays. Drawing on Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti (1997), Discourse Analytical Model for teacher written commentary and key concepts like "written feedback commentary" and "feedback," the study, which was essentially a case study, and a descriptive survey, randomly and purposively focused on a sample of 336 comments from 21 students' project drafts of the 2012 academic year in St. John Bosco's College of Education. The study revealed that teachers of St. John Bosco's College of Education employed the pragmatic intent (directive type) of 'make suggestion/request', as a way of getting students to rework their project drafts. The study raises some implications for writing instruction, theory and analyses of teacher written feedback commentary.*

**Keywords:** Teacher feedback commentary, Writing, Project, Pragmatic intent, Ghana, communicative process.

**Introduction**

Teachers spend countless hours evaluating, grading, and writing feedback on students' papers. These judgments provide information

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to the students to help them understand their writing progress, weaknesses and strengths. Teachers usually spend a fair amount of time and effort thinking about the best way to respond to students because of the value placed on giving feedback (Sommers, 1982). Moreover, providing feedback to students is often seen as one of the teacher's most important tasks because it is a chance to offer individual attention that would otherwise rarely be possible under big classroom conditions (Lindsay, 2009). The importance of acceptable writing in academic settings cannot be overemphasized. It is for this reason that a lot of research has been conducted into various techniques of feedback in writing such as teacher written feedback, peer feedback, oral conferences and many others, aiming at improving the proficiency of writing across the various continents. Such monumental writers include: Ashwell (2000); Hyland (2003); Ferris (2003); Hyland & Hyland (2006); Leki (1990); and many others.

The relevance of feedback comments on students' essays has been significantly noted. According to Sekyi-Baidoo (2003), feedback refers to all forms of behaviour which the receiver makes as a result of the information received. It is also seen as a way of evaluating a communicative process. In this regard, teacher feedback is defined as any input provided by the teacher to students for revision (Keh, 1990). Kepner (1991) also defines feedback in general as procedures used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong. Written teacher feedback generally comes in the form of a grade and comments along the margin, at the beginning or at the end of writing, to provide students with a better idea of the rationale behind acceptable and not acceptable answers. Written teacher feedback comments can also comprise both content and form feedback. Content refers to comments on organization, ideas and amount of detail while form involves comments on grammar and mechanics (Ken, 2004).

Given the generally acknowledged pedagogical usefulness of written teacher feedback comments on students' writing (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994), its role as informational, and as a means of channeling reactions and advice to facilitate improvements in students' writing necessitate research in Africa in general and Ghana in particular where very little is known about studies on written teacher feedback

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teacher written feedback comments have received serious attention from rhetoricians, investigators and writing experts across the globe (Frantzen, 1995; Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986) to improve the fluency and accuracy of students' English

composition (Ashwell, 2000) and to enhance teachers' pedagogical practice in English language writing (Frantzen & Rissel, 1987). This disciplinary engagement (written teacher feedback commentary) seemed not to have found expression among African scholars in terms of written teacher feedback commentary on students' English essays and writing in general. Again, very little is known in respect of scope and research literature on teacher response to second language writing (Goldstein, 2001; Chavez & Ferris, 1997 as cited in Mota de Cabrera, 2003). More significantly, successful writing is very challenging for both teachers and students in countries that have adopted English as a second language (L2), to which Ghana is not an exception, compared with those using English as a first language (L1), hence, the need for written feedback comments. Given these combined factors, this study focused on the pragmatic intent of the teacher written feedback commentary students receive on their written project using St John Bosco's College of Education, in the Kasena-Nankana East District as a case study.

The purpose of this paper was to analyze written teacher feedback comments on students' project essays in St. John Bosco's College of Education, focusing on the pragmatic intent of teacher written feedback comments on students' project draft essays, to point to teachers the need to be aware of issues surrounding the methods of giving teacher written feedback to students' writing. As well, the study will offer teachers the opportunity to better negotiate their intentions and interpretations when responding to students' writing to improve learners' composition with regard to both short and long-term efficiency; in respect to fluency, accuracy, and the overall quality of students' writing and to improve on teachers of English pedagogical practice in teaching writing and responding appropriately to students' writing.

The following research question guided the present study: what is the pragmatic intent of the teacher written feedback comments on students' written project draft essays in St. John Bosco's College of Education? The paper will place teachers at the Colleges of Education in general, and St. John Bosco's College in particular, in a better position to ascertain the changing disciplinary emphasis on commenting, to promote fairness and sensitivity on students' writing. The work is also aimed at helping teachers to establish a more personal connection with students and demonstrate the effects of their comments on students' writing. The research will also provide the teacher with a variety of styles to comment on students' writing, to better illuminate the practices of teachers in their commenting strategies. It is expected that this study will provide the needed insights into the teacher written Feedback and tools which could be used to

help practicing teachers evaluate their own written feedback and to develop the schemata and skills of responding to students writing.

The study will also help researchers to ascertain the kinds of written teacher feedback comments that students receive on their project draft essays at St. John Bosco's College of Education. It will recommend the impact of the feedback comments on both students' project essays concerning long and short-term efficacy of students' writing. The use of feedback is important in improving students' writing; it is significant because students need the skill of writing in academic as well as professional contexts. The importance of writing skills to students calls for adjustments to be made to the methodology of teaching writing and the use of teacher written feedback commentary, and will, therefore, be of significance in this research, since it has the tendency to increase on-task behaviour, increase classroom motivation, academic success, augment student self-esteem, and closer teacher-student relationships. This study will also illuminate the realities of today's ESL writing classroom and other learning situations, and will encourage teachers/supervisors of students' project writing, to reconsider their theoretical and conventional assumptions about the project writing genre and other writing situations and re-evaluate how those assumptions shape their pedagogical practices, interpersonal relations and their responding behaviours towards students' writing.

### **Methodology**

The present study is essentially a case study. It is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context; it relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions. Case study methods involve an in-depth examination of a single instance or event. According to Yin (2002), a case study provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results. In this light, researchers may gain a sharpened understanding of why the phenomenon happened as it did, and what might become important to consider more extensively in future research. Saint John Bosco's College of Education is, thus, selected as a case for study to explore the nature and location of written teacher feedback commentary, and the pragmatic intent of teacher written feedback commentary on students' written project essays.

A case study has some implications for the present researchers, the data (teacher written feedback commentary on students' project essays) and the readers as well. For the researchers, it enabled them to provide a 'thick' description of teachers' pragmatic intent used within the contexts of project essays writing in Bosco's College of Education. Finally, the case study approach enables readers to appreciate the

uniqueness of the proposed model by Ferris's et al. (1997) which allows teachers to examine the pragmatic goals that they employ in their responding behaviours in this study. The study selected twenty (20) students who altogether had thirty one (31) draft project books for the study. This is because some students had as many as three books, with the least having one draft book. Ten (10) teachers supervised the twenty (20) students' draft projects, but only two were consulted during the preliminary studies, to give further insight into the pragmatic intent of their comments on the students' draft project books. This is to help the researchers gain additional information from the teachers, apart from what is realized from the context of their comments.

Two main sampling methods – purposive (non-probability), and random sampling – were employed at different stages of the study to obtain the required data. Through purposive sampling, sixty-three (63) project drafts were collected by choice. Utilizing this sampling procedure enabled quick access to the research data as there was a time constraint for the entire research (Afful, 2005). A second reason for the choice of purposive sampling was its potential in achieving the research purpose, and also allowing for careful selection of data to achieve representativeness. This technique was, therefore, found to be appropriate in the selection of the drafts from each student because the chapters (chapters one to five) of the project drafts were selected without regard for the subject area or the number of chapters in a draft book that may have been vetted by a supervisor.

The sampling mode – purposive – was crucial in ensuring that the questions for which the study sought answers were adequately answered by the targeted data. The purposive sampling method was also crucial in the data collection process because it helped us to gain quick access to the comments and the promise, they held for answering the specific research questions investigated in this study. A simple random sampling technique was, however, employed at a different stage to select thirty-one books from the sixty-three project draft essays that were purposively sampled at the time of data collection. The random selection of the project drafts helped to provide relative representative data for the analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The simple random sampling technique afforded an equal and independent opportunity for each of the project drafts available in the resource centre (Nwadinigwe, 2002; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000 as cited in Akoto, 2013). The selection was influenced by the number agreed with by the three researchers, to be sufficient for the analysis as well as the extent to which they matched with the definition of written feedback commentary.

Students in the 3-Year Post-Secondary Teacher Training Colleges Diploma in Basic Education are expected to undertake an action research Project Work (EPS 399) in their final year to be submitted to the Institute of Education, of the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements or the award of Diploma of Education. Students are expected to identify a classroom situation in any subject area and design intervention activities to address the problem, and thereafter write the report under the supervision of a tutor, who is appointed by the research coordinator, on behalf of the Principal of the college, which count toward graduation and fulfillment of the Diploma in Basic Education requirement. The research is usually organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter one contains the Background to the Study and other sections to orient the reader to the research. Chapter two consists mainly of Review of Related Literature while chapter three deals with the Methodology. Chapter four contains Findings and Discussions. The final chapter, five, contains Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations, followed by References and Appendices.

Students are expected to submit each written draft chapter to the supervisor for vetting, with supervisors providing written feedback commentary on each draft, until the student meets the generic requirements of the Project Essay, as required by the Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast. Again, depending on the supervisor, a student may present a chapter-by-chapter for teacher responses; or some supervisors may even require that students present two or three chapters at a time for vetting. After having sought permission from the Research Coordinator, with the Principal's approval, copies of available students' project drafts were collected. The drafts contained handwritten commentary – both marginal and end comments – provided by the teachers/supervisors. Teachers/supervisors provide comments on students' project essays, since, writing a project for the first time is often a challenge for both native (L1) writers and non-native (L2) writers (Bitchener, Basturkmen, and East, 2010). To acquaint students with any type of new knowledge, some form of written feedback commentary is usually provided to the student writer. A total of 31 project draft books from 20 different students were collected, with some students presenting their drafts in either one or two drafts while others presented about three or more project draft books. Of these, 336 comments were realized from the drafts. The data were collected, taking into consideration the available data at the Resource Centre, hence, the 2012 academic year was considered, since preliminary checks revealed that there were sufficient data for the study concerning the said academic year.



Below is the description of data as presented in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Distribution of data and population of the study

Number of Students	Number of Project Drafts	Number of Comments
20	31	336

We took three steps in gathering the data for the present study. First, there was a preliminary survey of the research site, St John Bosco's College of Education, particularly, the Resource Centre where the project drafts are being kept. This was to familiarize ourselves with the resource centre and also 'build rapport and credibility' (Creswell, 2003:181 as cited in Akoto, 2013) with the gatekeeper of the resource centre. It was also to find out the number and the availability of project drafts in the Resource Centre, as well as the presence of teacher written feedback commentary in students' drafts. The data was collected and coded to examine the raw qualitative hand-written or type-written data collected from the data source (project draft essays) in the form of words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs, and assigning different codes, numbers or labels to them, so that they can easily be retrieved at a later stage for further comparison, analysis, and identification of any pattern. We used numbers, letters of the alphabet and symbols to label the comments and further categorized them, using the analytic framework. Each category was counted for frequency and percentage. These were illustrated in tables for analysis of data.

### Results and Discussions

The analysis of feedback commentary on students' project draft essays focused on the pragmatic intent of teachers' commentary on students' project draft essays. This section of the analysis and discussion answers the research question:

**Research Question: What is the pragmatic intent/communicative function of teacher written feedback comments on students' project draft essays in St. John Bosco's College of Education?**

This section examines the teacher's goal/intent in writing the comments, and further categorizes these larger units of response more specifically and systematically in line with Ferris et al. (1997) discourse analytic model. The comment types are categorized into three broad strategies of directive types, according to Searle's (1976) taxonomy

of speech acts, as relied on by Ferris et al. (1997): namely, asking for information, making a suggestion/request, and giving information, through which teachers/supervisors respond to students' project draft essays. An additional comment type (paired/multiple act) emerged as a result of new ideas and practices engaged in by teachers/supervisors of students' project writing, as manifested in the data. This type of comment is said to occur when a comment of a teacher/supervisor typically combines two or more directive types (each consisting of a group of sentences, a single sentence, a phrase, or a fragment) from the repertoire of directive comment types formulated by Ferris et al. (1997); hence, the need for them to be addressed, as they also manifest in the data.

Again, grammar/mechanics comments; which were explained by Ferris et al., (1997) as another form of a directive which involved suggestions or requests for information concerned exclusively with issues of grammar, mechanics (spelling, punctuation) were analyzed. To start with, Table 2 illustrates the directive types of asking for information, giving a suggestion/request, and giving information, paired/multiple, as well as the grammar/mechanic, and of written teacher feedback commentary from students' project draft essays, and their corresponding frequencies as evinced in the data set, which the research question sought to answer. Following is the table below:

**Table 2:** Pragmatic Intent/Goal of Teachers/Supervisors' Commentary by Category

Comment Type	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
• Comment Type		
Ask for information	105	31.2
Make suggestion	146	43.4
Give information	81	24.1
Combined acts	4	1.1
• Others		
Grammar/ Mechanics		
Yes	4	1.1
No	332	98.8



The table shows the frequencies of each directive comment type. The most common type of directive comment (pragmatic intent) in the present study was making a suggestion/request comment (43.4%). The second most common directive type, ask for information, constituted 31.2% of the comments, give information category came in a close third at 24.1%. The least directive type realized in the data collected was a paired/multiple comment patterns, with only 4 occurrences, representing 1.1% of the data set. No other category constituted more than 2% of the total comments, although the grammar/mechanic comment came closest (1.1%).

The next step corroborates the quantitative data by offering examples that exemplify the pragmatic intent/goal of teachers' commentary, concerning directive types (pragmatic intent) of asking for information, making a suggestion/request, and giving information, paired/multiple acts, as well as the grammar/mechanic. For example, when the teachers want to suggest an issue to or request a redress of an issue from supervisees, they wrote comments such as the following:

**Example 38:** Reframe this part (m) (Project draft # 1, Comment #1)

**Example 39:** Not necessary (m) (Project draft # 1, Comment #5)

**Example 40:** Reframe this part to have a link with the above paragraph (m) (Project draft # 2, Comment #8)

**Example 41:** Treat as leading answers (m) (Project draft # 5, Comment #34)

From the above excerpts (examples 38-41), these comments which are constructed in the make suggestion/request form and require the student to rework the draft were dominant in the data displaying the enormous power wielded by the teachers/supervisors of St John Bosco's College of Education over the student writers in this discourse, hence, directing the student to effect immediate changes to the work, as pertains in the margins, without the prior consent of the student. Students appeared to take teachers suggestion/requests seriously because they were directly asked by the figure of authority to make a specific change and they could not disregard these orders. This finding supports the results of Smith (1997) in the use of imperative (request) forms and Sugita's (2006) study showing that imperative (request) comments were more reliable or effective than giving information and asking for information in helping students achieve remediation or revision success. Al Kafri (2010) also indicated that students found direct requests more helpful for them to recognize what was missing in their essay. However, it could be argued that some of these comments

may sound a bit vague and imprecise (Sommers, 1982) to students. Comments such as the following were considered to be a bit vague and imprecise to students:

**Example 42:** Not necessary (m) (Project draft # 1, Comment #5)

**Example 43:** Not very clear (m) (Project draft # 2, Comment #7)

As can be seen, most of these comments do not support students in any way to construct meaningful feedback; such comments rather send students into a state of confusion as to what to do when confronted with such vague and imprecise comments. In essence, making suggestion/request is the most frequent teacher written feedback comment in this study. This finding is also similar to Ferris (1997) and Treglia (2009) who found requests to be the most frequent type of feedback comment. Ferris also finds that the students in her study take "the teacher's requests quite seriously, regardless of their syntactic form" (cited in Al Kafri, 2010, pp. 325). The finding however, contradicts Ferris et al., (1997) study that found the most frequent pragmatic intent as being 'asking for information'.

Further, it can be argued that 'asking for information', as a directive, is a mitigated form of constructing comments or disguising a negative evaluation of students' project draft essays. This comment type employed by teachers/supervisors in their commentary strategies was to construct criticisms of students' project drafts in interrogative/question forms. For example:

**Example 50:** Have you forgotten that you stated under population and sampling that you based the research on nine pupils?  
How then are you putting them into five groups of four? (End) (Project draft #24 comment # 286)

**Example 51:** Where did you get this definition of test items as being of any form? (End) (Project draft #24 comment # 282)

**Example 52:** How different is the second paragraph from the first? (End) (Project draft #24 comment # 281)

Frankly speaking, the teacher/supervisor could have gone ahead to dismiss the information provided by the supervisee and call for immediate redress, but, since, 'ask for information', (questions forms) is a means of highlighting knowledge limitations (Hyland & Hyland 2001), it is employed in the above excerpts (examples 50-52). Again, it is also used to weaken the force of a statement by making it relative to the student's state of knowledge, as shown in Examples 50-52. Further, 'ask for information' may also express the teacher/supervisor's ignorance or doubt and, therefore, can mitigate the imposition of a

suggestion or a criticism on students' draft project essays, as evinced in the second excerpt.

The next directive comment type to be considered here is 'give information. Across all the project draft essays, feedback on gaps in students' coverage of the rhetorical structure and organization, linguistic accuracy and appropriateness, content knowledge – its accuracy, completeness and relevance, genre knowledge – the functions of different parts of a thesis argument development - coherence and cohesion of the project essays (Bitchener et al., 2010) were mostly presented in the directive (pragmatic intent) form of 'give information'. For example:

**Example 53:** After the research instruments, comes Data Collection procedure where you talk about how the various tools were used to gather information indicating what constituted each of them. So you still have: observation, nterview, pretest intervention, post-test and the list segment of the chapter, Data Analytic plan. (End) (Project draft#19 comment # 224)

**Example 54:** Research Questions; these are questions tailored to guide the researcher in her quest to finding a lasting solution to the identified difficulties the pupils of Vunania Primary two have regarding addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers.

- What are the causes of the pupils' difficulty in adding and subtracting two-digit numbers?
- How will these teaching and learning materials be presented to facilitate pupils' understanding of the topic to be taught? (End) (Project draft #14comment # 148)

From the excerpts above (Examples 53 and 54), the supervisors provide the supervisees with what they consider to be the right information to what is required in the various chapters of project writing. This 'expert – novice' relationship is greatly attributed to the power dynamics that viewed or designated the teacher/supervisor as the repository of knowledge, gatekeeper, judge, evaluator, who is endowed with the requisite expertise to mentor the student (notice) to become member of the research/project community or discipline. Thus, in line with Hyland (2009:132 as cited in Bitchener et al. 2010), the assertion that feedback helps students understand 'the norms and values of their particular disciplines, and thus facilitates students' enculturation into disciplinary literacies and epistemologies'. You would find out that teachers who engage in the above kinds of comments have the ultimate goal to ensure compliance by the novice writers (students) and to ensure the on-going need to remind students about the functions of a

particular part-genre in the project writing discipline (Bitchener et al., 2010). More seriously, you find the power dynamics more heightened when this directive comment of 'give information' appears in the imperative form, though not so frequent when compared with the statement linguistic forms of the comment. For example:

**Example 55:** Review your literature based on subtopics formed from your research questions. (End) (Project draft #16 comment # 201)

**Example 56:** Present the pretest result first, followed by the interview and then post-test, (m) (Project draft #19 comment # 232).

From Examples 55-56, it is evident that students were unconditionally given information imperatively to make certain information as per the principles purported to have underpinned the project discipline, and since students were engaging in this particular discourse (project writing) for the first time, it behoves the teacher/supervisor, as an expert, to direct such a student writer appropriately, in an imperative form. However, Ferris (1997, as cited in Gascoigne, 2004) indicates that the give-information comment is less effective because it does not explicitly instruct the writer to incorporate the information that is supplied.

The last directive type to be considered in this chapter is 'paired/multiple comment (combined acts)'. This occurs, as indicated earlier, when a comment of a teacher/supervisor typically combines two or more directive types (each consisting of a group of sentences, a single sentence, a phrase, or a fragment) from the repertoire of directive comment types identified from the data analysis (Table 2). This paired/multiple comment (combined act) occurred a few times, with only 4 (1.1 %) occurrences in the data. These comments were used purposely by teachers to perform multiple functions; thus, to give students a suggestion to do some work on the project, provide few specifics to guide the students in the project writing, or better still, ask for information on certain rhetorical structures or genre knowledge that students may or may not have provided at the end of the project. For example:

**Example 57:** Your tables show that the pupils were fifty (50). Where from the other fifteen (15) making your sixty-five (65)? You're not analyzing data on your table! (End) (Project draft #19 comment # 217)

**Example 58:** What is the average mark?

It is not clear on your table that two (2) pupils scored it.  
Analyse your table again in a better way!

See me if you don't understand! (End) (Project draft #18 comment # 218).

From the foregoing, you would notice that in the excerpts provided (examples 57-58), the first one in particular, the teacher/supervisor resorted to more than one of the directive types, in an attempt to get the student to respond to the right thing as may be required by the supervisor's genre knowledge of data analysis, thereby drawing the student's attention in a 'give information' directive, followed with a 'ask for information' and finally, concluding with a 'make a suggestion/request' to the student, to rework on the proposed analysis since the information provided did not reflect what the student had earlier on provided. Also, the comment revealed that there is the need for the teacher to draw the student's attention to the discrepancy by first, providing/reminding the student of his data (give information), and second, by asking for verification (ask for information), before he/she finally suggests to the student what is not done or what needs to be done (make a suggestion/request).

In the second excerpt (57), the teacher first asks for information, and then follows that up with three directive type of make suggestions; thus, tasking the student to re-think over his/her analysis, and possibly see the supervisor, in question, for appropriate redress. This pattern of directive seems to share similar characteristics and opinion with Smith's (1997) classification of end comments into 'patterns of secondary genre', where such genre composed of two or more 'primary genres', and Hyland & Hyland's (2001) category of 'paired pattern', with similar composition, where they intimated that such patterns were interesting, because of their dialogic nature or intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1981, cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2001) expressed through the back references to previous feedback.

This is also evident in excerpts 54 and 56, where students were referred back to other rhetorical structures and tables respectively in their draft project essays. Such examples, Hyland & Hyland (2001) maintain, illustrate the importance of context for a complete understanding of the analysis of feedback. They also argue that "this strategy serves to both mitigate the potential threat of criticism and to move students towards improving either their current text, or their writing processes more generally in the longer term" (p 196). In light of the above illustrations, it is clear that teachers/supervisors of students' project drafts employed other forms of commentary (paired/multiple directive types/patterns), aside the traditional/original taxonomy provided by Ferris et al., (1997) discourse analytical model, in their responding practices or behaviours. These studies (e.g. Smith, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2001) consider paired/multiple comments (combined

act) as a tutoring or motivational opportunity or a clear recommendation for remediation given to students to improve upon their writing.

Another category that was analysed separately aside the directive comments was grammar/mechanics comment which is seen as another form of directive that involved suggestions or requests for information concerned exclusively with issues of grammar, mechanics (spelling, punctuation). Analysis of the data indicates that there were a few occurrences of grammar/mechanic comments, thus; 4 comments were realised in the data. The insignificant nature of these comments implies that, as indicated earlier, the teachers were much less likely to deal with either formal or academic (Grammar/Mechanic) aspects of the drafts/texts, as only few comments, 4, (1.1%) were realised in this category. Rather the teachers focused their written feedback comments on ideational content; the rhetorical structure and organization, linguistic accuracy and appropriateness, content knowledge – its accuracy, completeness and relevance, genre knowledge – the functions of different parts of a thesis/project argument development - coherence and cohesion of the project essay, as espoused by Bitchener et al. (2010). Following are examples of excerpts from the data that deal with grammar/mechanic issues include:

**Example 59:** Work on your punctuations and do the corrections.  
(End) (Project draft #5comment # 39)

**Example 60:** Use capital letters for names. (End) (Project draft #22  
comment # 261)

The above examples, coupled with the few frequency occurrences of grammar/mechanics comments in the data, clearly suggest that teachers were not particular about the formal (grammar/mechanics) aspects of the language in their responding practices, but rather they were particular about the genre-knowledge pattern of the project discipline. The preferable use of make suggestion/request comments, in the imperative form, without any recourse to politeness, to the other directive types appear to suggest that many of these comments moved beyond specific problems in the project draft essays to provide more general advice on research conventions, and writing to student writers (Gascoigne, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

The present study examined the pragmatic intent of teacher written feedback commentary on students' project draft essays in college of Education in Ghana: the case of St John Bosco's College of Education. The results revealed that the dominant directive type (pragmatic intent) of the teacher written feedback commentary was 'Make suggestion/



request, as previously shown in Table 2, as against 'Ask for Information', in Ferris et al.'s, (1997) study. The overwhelming admission of this directive type (make suggestion/request) indicates that teachers used this directive type of 'make suggestion/request' to direct the students to effect immediate changes to their project drafts, because, as previous studies revealed, students appeared to take teachers' requests seriously, particularly, when they are directly asked by the figure of authority that is their project supervisors to make a specific change.

The findings of this study, which are greatly informed by the theoretical and analytical frameworks adopted, have several key implications. First, teachers should try to utilize a wider range of responding techniques such as encouraging self and peer editing strategies and giving oral feedback through conferencing with students on an individual or group basis in order to support their written. It is hoped that the description offered here may encourage teachers to reexamine their feedback to ensure it is clear and constructively helpful to students in their writing discourse. Second, since responding to students' writing is thought of as an essential part of successful writing in the L2 context, it is important for English teachers and teachers of writing in general to also adapt this analysis model system to become aware or make their writing students aware of the significance of feedback and its impact on students' writing in terms of the nature and location of written feedback, pragmatic intent and the linguistic forms of their written feedback comments. College of Education teachers/supervisors could use vetted students' project drafts and analysis variables induced from the data in this study to demonstrate to students the "real" teacher response or commentary and to build trainees' schemata about the substance and form of written teacher commentary, as found in the present study.

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