



# Effectiveness of teacher feedback

Renske Bouwer & Huub van den Bergh

## Feedback for learning to write

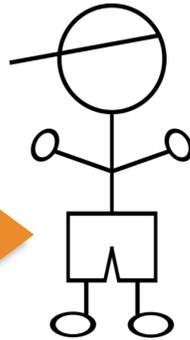
The goal of writing is to communicate ideas adequately to a reader.

Effective feedback helps students to learn how they perform in relation to this goal and what is needed to improve their writing.

To optimize learning, feedback should be differentiated according to the individual needs of the student.

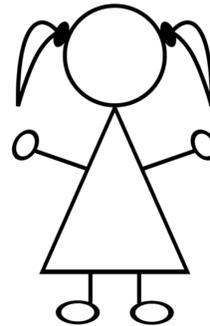
### Struggling writer

His writing is problematic on different levels. Main problem is that readers experience difficulties in understanding the message of the text, due to missing information and ill-structured passages.



## What do different students in primary school need to become better writers?

- Both students need to know what they are doing well (positive sign)
- Both need to know what they still can improve (negative sign) → **He** mainly needs feedback on higher level (HL) aspects of the text. **She** needs feedback on both higher and lower level (LL) aspects.
- Both need instructions on how to improve instead of receiving corrections in the text → **He** needs explicit and directive guidance. **She** needs facilitative feedback in the form of hints, questions or reader responses.



### Proficient writer

Although she generally writes a clear and well-structured text, which is comprehensible for the reader, she may still improve her writing by optimizing its style and conventions.



## Research aim

Do teachers differentiate between high and low achieving students?

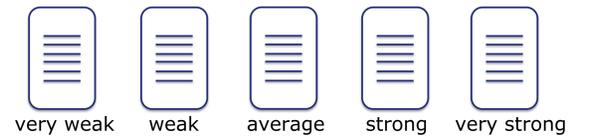
## Research questions

- 1 How do teachers provide feedback to student's text?
- 2 Are there differences between teachers?
- 3 Is there an effect of text quality on amount, content and form of provided feedback?

## Method

**Participants** 14 primary school teachers

**Material** 15 student texts in 3 different genres and of varying levels of text quality:



**Instructions** "Provide feedback on these student texts, like these are your students."

**Feedback quality** Measured on following dimensions 1) amount, 2) content (feedback directed on higher vs lower level aspects and on positive vs negative aspects), 3) form (comments vs error corrections and whether feedback was directive or facilitative).

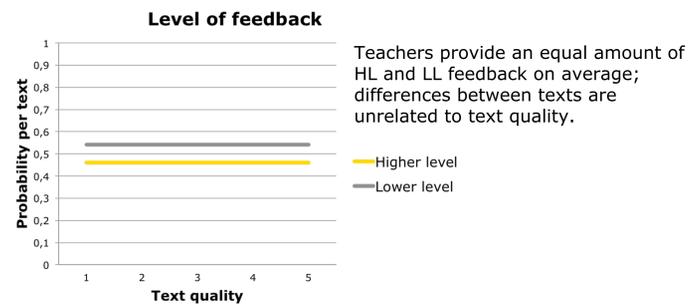
## Amount of feedback

7 points of feedback per text, on average. Differences between texts are unrelated to text quality.

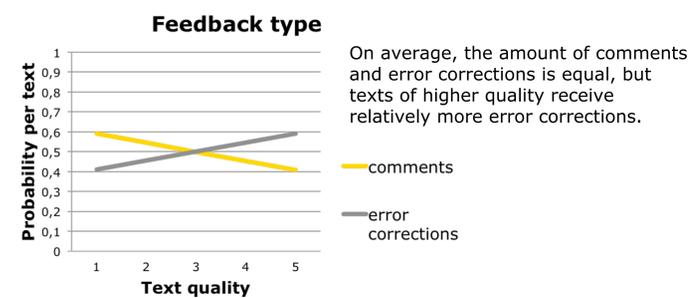
**H**igher level feedback mainly addresses problems in content.

**L**ower level feedback mainly addresses problems in punctuation/capitalization or conventions.

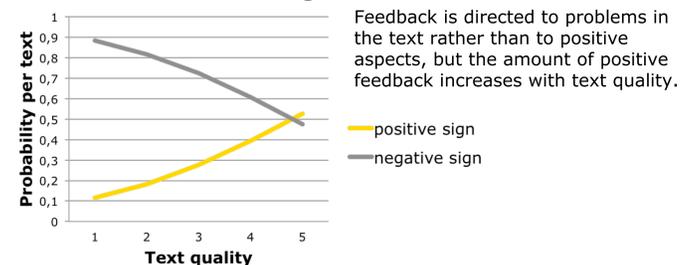
## Content of feedback



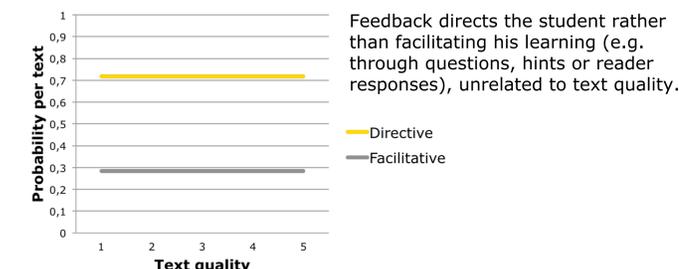
## Form of feedback



## Feedback sign



## Function of feedback



Tables. There are large differences between teachers, and between texts.

	Differences between teachers	
	Min	Max
Amount	3	22
Higher level	25%	69%
Positive sign	1%	32%
Comments	9%	98%
Directive	47%	88%

	Differences between texts	
	Min	Max
Amount	3	22
Higher level	24%	70%
Positive sign	2%	22%
Comments	45%	78%
Directive	58%	83%

## Conclusions and Implications

### Differentiated feedback

On average, teachers provide multiple directive comments or error corrections per text, mainly directed on HL and LL problems. Only for sign and type, feedback is related to text quality.

### Feedback style of teacher

Differences between teachers in the amount, content and form of feedback suggests that feedback largely depends on teacher's feedback style rather than on the quality of the text. For instance, some teachers mainly provide HL feedback, while others hardly provide HL feedback but focus on problems in punctuation or conventions.

### Effectiveness of feedback

Teachers seem to provide feedback on every problem they encounter in a text, instead of adjusting their feedback according to what is needed to improve the text. This sheds doubt on the effectiveness of teacher feedback.