

MA-TEFL Thesis Writing Regulations in Iran: Supervisors and Examiners' Comments and Feedback

Sima Shahmohammadi Kaleybar* and Parviz Alavinia

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Urmia University, 57153 Urmia, Iran

ABSTRACT

Scrutinizing the MA theses, as the culmination of candidates' MA studies, in terms of oral and written feedback, the current research was conducted to pinpoint the mostly addressed regulations of thesis writing by both supervisors and examiners. Furthermore, the chapters receiving more feedback/comments on the part of supervisors and examiners, and the potential differences between oral and written feedback were also probed. To these aims, 23 viva sessions along with 24 first drafts of theses submitted to supervisors were gathered as corpora. The corpora were analyzed based on adapted framework to find out the thesis writing regulations addressed more frequently by supervisors and examiners. Finally, Chi Square analysis was run to see if there is any significant difference between oral and written feedback concerning thesis writing regulations and chapters receiving feedback. The findings of the investigation revealed that universal framework for thesis writing was found to be addressed more frequently in providing oral and written feedback. Furthermore, Chapter Two and Chapter One were the target of most of supervisors and examiners' feedback, respectively. The result of Chi square analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in terms of both, thesis writing regulations as well as chapters. It is hoped that the findings of the study will contribute to the process of thesis writing and facilitate successful viva sessions to both, the candidates and supervisors.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 10 November 2017

Accepted: 1 June 2018

Published: 25 March 2019

E-mail addresses:

cma.sima@yahoo.com (Sima Shahmohammadi Kaleybar)

pevinia2006@yahoo.com, p.alavinia@urmia.ac.ir

(Parviz Alavinia)

*Corresponding author

Keywords: Oral feedback, thesis, TEFL candidates, viva sessions, written feedback

INTRODUCTION

As a partial fulfillment of their qualifications, MA candidates are expected to write a thesis. Chandrasekhar (2002) stated that a thesis was the evidence of candidates' ability to carry out a piece of research independently benefiting from supervisors' guidance. Thomas and Brubaker (2000) believed that a thesis was written to achieve two main objectives: 1) to help students in conducting a research by providing some guidelines, and 2) "to contribute to the world's fund of knowledge or improve the conduct of some activity". A well-written thesis is the culmination of hours of research and writing. Akin to this statement, Chandrasekhar (2002) claimed that a thesis might bring the candidates "lifelong benefits" and influenced their academic life even after graduation. Since it is their first time and they have not taken any special training to undertake the task of writing a thesis, they may leave pieces of work with some errors and problems that require the supervisors and examiners' feedback to render their submitted work more accurate and acceptable. Therefore, the importance of the supervisors and examiners' feedback cannot be neglected. Feedback has great potential for student learning and is "one of the most potent influences on student learning" (Jonsson, 2013). Irons (2008) argued that providing feedback was a central aspect of the teacher's role in higher education. In compliance, according to Kumar and Stracke (2011) feedback is the information from the supervisor that may help the students to close the gap between

current level and actual level, and become an experienced researcher in a specific field. Both supervisors and examiners may provide feedback on aspects such as *writing style, methodological issues, and language* that need more improvement. Kumar and Stacker (2007) proposed that in the process of providing feedback, supervisors and candidates might undertake a communication with each other. Feedback is embedded in supervisory relationships. The supervisor/supervisee relationship can propagate a powerful relationship in which one is the master and the other the learner. An important type of information provided by feedback is that it helps candidates understand the expectations of their disciplinary community. It "conveys implicit messages" about the values and beliefs of the discourse community, the nature of disciplinary knowledge and student identities in the community (Hyland, 2009).

Also as Parr and Timperley (2010) contended, one of the conceptual functions of feedback is to shut or shorten the gap between the current and target level of performance. In the same line, Stracke and Kumar (2010) stated that since feedback provided developmental experiences, it might lead to the occurrence of self-regulation. The fact that feedback should result in "dissertation, clarification, and negotiation" is the cornerstone of this argument. In the eyes of East et al. (2012), postgraduate research supervision was an important component of the university teaching and learning environment. Franke

and Arvidsson (2011) argued that research supervision involved both a *knowledge* process and a *relational* process through which the research student was given the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills needed to carry out research effectively.

The fact that writing a theses or dissertations will influence the students' academic life after graduation makes them leave a very accurate piece of research as their academic representation. Having the original potential to contribute to the world knowledge is another distinctive characteristic of theses or dissertations. Hence, the above-mentioned functions and characteristics of thesis emphasize and necessitate the role of feedback on thesis provided in the process of writing as the first draft as well as on the end product at viva sessions. As Hattie and Timperley (2007) maintained feedback exerted a significant influence on learning and achievement, and had considerable power to improve teaching and learning. Supervisors' constructive and detailed feedback on written work has been identified as a key characteristic of good research supervision (Engebretson et al., 2008). Furthermore, Bitchener et al. (2011) had proposed that since feedback in many respects replaced the type of instruction other students received in lecture and classroom approaches, it was particularly important for thesis candidates. Moreover, Kumar and Stracke (2017) stated that the examiners judged the quality of the theses and decided if the candidate had reached

the required goals and criteria to gain the degree.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Feedback in postgraduate studies can be considered as a less investigated area in higher education system. Some of the studies undertaken on the supervisors' feedback delved into doctoral dissertations. Kamler (2008) stated that doctoral research was the main source of new knowledge production in universities. However, the doctoral candidates are deprived of adequate instruction and/or structural support. It is argued that supervisors' co-authorship is beneficial to pedagogical practice and may enhance the quality of the publication output and robustness of the work. However, there is a need to consider this co-authorship, as a pedagogic practice, more deeply and explicitly and aid doctoral publication. Along the same lines, considering the self-regulated scholars as the main aim of the doctoral program, Stracke and Kumar (2010) investigated how candidates link the written feedback received to self-regulated learning process and became an independent expert. They analyzed Distribution of Vera's feedback according to speech functions and concluded that referential feedback including praise, criticism, and opinion played a major role in the supervising process. In another study, Kumar and Stracke (2017) analyzed doctoral examination reports from three disciplines to understand whether the examiners' role was that of an evaluator or

a teacher. The majority of the examiners provide assessment and feedback in the form of summative assessment. Nevertheless, the choice between assessment and feedback is based on the individual preference rather than expectation of how candidates fill the critical gap in their theses. They argue that the examiners must provide the candidates with some feedback to fix the critical issues of theses. Under these circumstances, the role of assessment for learning is realized.

The other line of investigations has focused on students' perspective of the supervisors' feedback. In a thorough report, Bitchener et al. (2011) investigated the supervisors' and students' view of the best practices in feedback in New Zealand universities in three disciplines of humanities, science/mathematics and commerce. Moreover, the researchers tried to find out the potential differences regarding supervisors' and students' perspectives. Some advice was also provided to both supervisors and students to have more effective feedback practice in theses supervision. Furthermore, they delved into students' strong and weak points and found out that creating coherence in writing was the main weakness of the candidates. Content, accuracy and appropriateness were the areas that received more feedback. Dealing with the system of providing feedback, it was concluded that most of the supervisors' enjoy face-to-face feedback and a small proportion tended to give written feedback on drafts of texts.

In another study considering the students' perspectives toward the feedback,

East et al. (2012) scrutinized what research students received from their supervisors as feedback and what they considered to be effective. On the basis of the data gathered from interview and questionnaire, students reported the received feedback was in three broad areas of content, organization, and language. Face-to-face feedback was the most utilized feedback system by supervisors as candidates claimed. Interestingly, linguistic background of the candidates may influence how they consider feedback as effective. For L1 students, conducive feedback was direct, less challenged, and language-based. However, L2 students preferred feedback focused on language and organizational matters equally.

Looking at the feedback through a novel perspective, Wang and Li (2011) investigated the effectiveness of the supervisory feedback on international students' thesis writing process. The data for exploratory study were gathered through semi-structured interviews with a group of international doctoral students with non-English background. The findings revealed both positive and negative feedback experiences. Additionally, it was shown that the feedback provided by the supervisors may be culturally embedded. According to the findings, it was suggested that it was essential for the feedback provided to international students to be dialogic and culturally sensitive. The students confirmed the implication for enhancing doctoral supervision with international students.

As the concise review of literature helped reveal, the available body of research on

thesis writing regulations and requirements is still inconclusive. Furthermore, as Kavaliauskien and Darginaviciene (2010) argued, feedback and its efficacy for thesis/dissertation writing had been inspected insufficiently at the university context. Thus, in the current study, an attempt was made to scrutinize thesis writing regulations and thesis chapters addressed more by supervisors and examiners while providing feedback in written and oral forms. In so doing, the researchers attempted to find answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: What thesis writing regulations are addressed more frequently by supervisors and examiners?

RQ2: Which chapters of the theses are mostly targeted by supervisors and examiners' feedback?

RQ3: Is there any significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of the thesis writing regulations on which feedback is provided?

RQ4: Is there any significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of chapters receiving feedback?

It is possible to put forth null hypotheses only for the last two research questions in the following manner:

H01: There is no significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of thesis writing regulations on which feedback is provided.

H02: There is no significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of chapters receiving feedback.

METHOD

Design of the Study

To approach the thesis writing regulations as well as the chapters that are addressed more frequently, 23 viva sessions as well as 24 first drafts of theses gathered from various universities were analyzed. For some research questions descriptive analysis based on corpus analysis was reported. Therefore, enjoying ex-post-facto design, the current study adhered to descriptive design and more closely to corpus analysis.

Corpus

The corpus needed for the study was composed of two parts. The first part dealt with the written feedback applied by theses supervisors/advisors on the first draft of MA theses submitted by candidates. In so doing, 27 theses were gathered as the original corpus of the study. Unfortunately, three of the gathered theses from supervisors and MA candidates were excluded from final corpus as they were incomplete. With regard to the second part, which was concerned with oral feedback provided by examiners on the semi-final draft of theses in viva sessions, 25 viva sessions were recorded by the researcher. Akin to the first part of the investigation, two of the recorded viva sessions were not included in the final corpus because of low voice quality. To sum it up, 24 written drafts of theses along with 23 recorded viva sessions comprise the corpus of the current study. The corpus was gathered from Urmia University, Tabriz University, Shahid Madani University, Azad University

of Tabriz, Azad University of Urmia, Pardis Campus of Urmia University, University of Maragheh, and Azad University of Ahar.

The Criteria for Analysis of Thesis Writing Regulations

In order to analyze the collected corpus, the researchers needed to adapt a framework. The concise explanation of the framework adapted from Shirzad (2013) is as follows:

Language

The CF provided in terms of *grammar, word choice, and spelling* was categorized under the language problems.

Departmental Guidelines for Thesis Writing

Every university is supposed to provide general guidelines for writing a thesis as a piece of research to make the developmental process of research relatively straightforward. Among the above mentioned universities, only students from Urmia University students were found to be more exposed to detailed guidelines for thesis writing including *font, size, pagination, and space*.

Universal Guidelines for Thesis Writing

All around the world, there is a wide range of guidelines for composing a piece of research published by universities, like the ones offered by Cornell University and the University of California. In fact, these guidelines deal with articles rather than theses or dissertations.

The first subcategory of this criterion is APA Style including issues such as tabling, referencing and citation, and punctuation. Additionally, based on Manan and Noor (2014), the content of each chapter is a universal and agreed-upon framework. Therefore, the second subcategory belongs to framework and contents that should be covered in each chapter of the thesis. Last but not least, it was the academic writing style that should be considered under universal guideline for thesis writing. In this regard, issues such as use of personal pronoun (*I* instead of the researcher) were analyzed.

Methodological Issues in Conducting a Research

In conducting every piece of research such as a thesis, some issues and rules should be followed by researchers. The test employed for data analysis, selection of participations, sampling, validation and reliability of the questionnaires and interviews utilized, and implications of the study fall into this category.

Data Analysis

To analyze the first four research questions, descriptive statistics were reported. Simply put, the frequency of the feedback provided on each category and chapter was counted. However, to analyze research questions three and four chi-square analysis was used to find out whether any difference between the oral and written feedback on thesis writing regulations and chapters exists.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Occurrence of Written and Oral Feedback on Thesis Writing Regulation

In dealing with the first research question, initially the 4071 feedback instances provided by supervisors were categorized under the four groups of *language problems*, *departmental guidelines*, *universal framework for thesis writing*, and *methodological issues in conducting research*. Among these categories, universal framework for thesis writing (N=2431) was addressed more frequently. The findings of the study, concerning the first research question, are shown in Table 1.

On the basis of the results regarding the first research questions, *Universal Guidelines for Thesis Writing* (N=2431) received most

of the provided feedback by both supervisors and examiners. Additionally, among the subcategories of this framework, most of the feedback was applied to *APA Style* including tables, referencing and citation, as well as punctuation and word capitalization. Looking through the subcategories of the *Universal guidelines*, it can be concluded that as far as oral feedback is concerned, there is no considerable gap between the content (N=132) and APA Style (N= 134). Regarding the subcategories of the *language*, grammar was given more feedback by examiners in viva sessions. However, in the case of written feedback on linguistic issues the focus was mostly on *vocabulary and word choice*. According to Casanave and Li (2008), because of the fact that students

Table 1

The frequency of written and oral feedback on theses writing regulations

Thesis Writing Regulation	Type of Feedback	
	Written	Oral
Language		
Grammar	590	74
Vocabulary	721	48
Spelling	32	5
Departmental Guidelines		
Font	25	7
Space	46	5
Outline	157	27
Universal Guidelines		
APA style	1471	134
Content and Organization	621	132
Academic writing style	339	17
Methodological issue	59	78

have difficulties regarding the sentence-level structure, the grammar should also be noticed and commented by the supervisors. The high number of feedback and comments provided by supervisors on the theses (N=590) is indicative of their emphasis on this aspect of thesis writing. Additionally, in line with the findings of the current study, Basturkmen et al. (2014) revealed that the linguistic accuracy was one of the concerns of supervisory feedback. Moreover, only a small portion of the feedback provided on first and semi- final drafts of theses is allotted to *Departmental Guidelines*.

APA Style is further analyzed in detail to give a more transparent picture regarding the issues covered in this subcategory. Table 2 delivers the findings regarding subcategories of APA Style clearly.

Table 2 shows most of the supervisory feedback was targeted to *Punctuation and word capitalization*. On the other hand, it was *Referencing and Citation* that attracted most of the examiners' feedback and comments in viva sessions. In both types of feedback, *tabling* did not receive much of the feedback from either supervisors or examiners.

In line with this result, Shirzad (2013) came up with a similar result in his investigation. He found that the majority of MA candidates' problems regarding their theses might refer back to APA style of writing and therefore more feedback was needed in this regard. Additionally, in Shirzad's (2013) investigation, *Style* category, akin to the current study, was followed by *language*, in that it was claimed that most of the final versions of MA theses in the field of TEFL suffered from language problems. Similar to the current findings, he indicated that methodological problems were the least observed problem in theses and were in need of less feedback.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study are also supported by Bitchener et al. (2011) who concluded that most of the teachers' feedback was targeted toward content of the theses. In accordance with our finding, in Bitchener et al.'s (2011) investigation, after content language and accuracy received the highest feedback from supervisors. Moreover, Stracke and Kumar (2010) came up with similar results claiming that supervisors' feedback mostly focus on content of the thesis and editorial

Table 2
The frequency of written and oral feedback on APA style

APA Style	Feedback	
	Written	Oral
Table and Figure	231	19
Referencing and Citation	509	87
Punctuation and Word Capitalization	731	28

issues (accuracy and grammatical points). Basturkmen et al. (2014) in their study on focus of the feedback showed that most of the feedback provided by supervisors were directed to content.

For most of the candidates, writing a thesis is their first experience of academic writing during their academic life. The lack of previous experience and/or qualified instruction could lead the candidates to have more erroneous productions in some areas and regulations than others. Hence, universal framework for thesis writing was addressed more frequently in the findings of the current study, both in first and semi-final drafts, in comparison to other regulations. As a consequence, Hartely (2008) argued that MA students should be trained to write a scientific work (e.g. thesis) before undertaking the process. Similarly, Bailey (2004) believed that scientific writing education might provide the learners with an awareness of basic writing skills and paved the way toward achievement. Also, the fact that the methodology and methodological issues are written and finalized under supervisors' supervision—as an experienced researcher and expert in the field—justifies the result that methodological issues received less written and oral feedback (N= 59, P= 1.44 %). However, this frequency rose to N= 78, P= 15.14 % in viva sessions since the examiners might ask candidates to clarify their methodology, data analysis, or results. Furthermore, in providing both oral and written feedback, spelling in *language category* received the least amount of corrective moves. One

of the main reasons for this occurrence may be existence of technology. All of the candidates type their theses in computers equipped with dictionaries that suggest the correct word spelling in the case of wrong or inappropriate ones.

The Occurrence of Written and Oral feedback on Chapters of Thesis

In their attempt to pinpoint the chapters of thesis that mostly received feedback, the researchers calculated the frequency of feedback provided by supervisors and advisors for each of the chapters. The total number of the provided feedback toward 24 first drafts of thesis equaled 4071. Out of the mentioned number, acknowledgments, table of contents, list of abbreviations, abstract, Persian abstract, and final referencing, which were not considered as chapters, received 520 feedback instances. Table 3 shows the frequency of the written and oral feedback on each chapter.

Chapter Two, encompassing theoretical background and related literature, was the target of the majority of the feedback given by supervisors (N= 1292). On the contrary, the last chapter received the lowest number of the feedback directed to first drafts (N= 370). In accordance with oral feedback, *Chapter One* received the most and chapter five the least number of feedback.

One reason for this finding may be the length of the second chapter. The second chapter, reviewing the previous literature and theoretical background, is typically the longest chapter of a thesis and hence it is the target of more WF compared to other

Table 3
The frequencies of written and oral feedback on each chapter

Chapters	Feedback	
	Written	Oral
Chapter 1	674	142
Chapter 2	1292	73
Chapter 3	567	126
Chapter 4	648	91
Chapter 5	370	39

chapters. The more the bulk of the chapter, the more the frequency of feedback and comments by supervisors.

The Difference between Oral and Written Feedback in Terms of the Thesis Regulations

Table 4 shows the result of chi square analysis regarding the potential difference between oral and written feedback directed to thesis writing regulations.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of thesis writing regulations addressed in semi-final and first drafts of theses ($p = 0.001 \leq 0.05$) and therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected. Also this

difference is depicted in Table 5 in a more elaborate manner.

Table 5 depicts that frequencies of language (N = 1353, P = 33.24%), departmental (N = 228, P = 5.60%) and universal areas (N = 2431, P = 59.72%) in providing written feedback are significantly higher than OF group. The frequencies of these areas in OF group are (N = 124, P = 24.08%), (N = 35, P = 6.80%) and (N = 278, P = 53.98%), respectively. Also, as shown in Table 5, the frequency of methodological area in OF (N = 78, P = 15.15%) is significantly higher compared to WF group (N = 59, P = 1.45%).

Table 4
Chi square results for the comparison of OF and WF on thesis regulations

X2	302.66
Df	3
Sig	0.001

*Sig level ≤ 0.05

Table 5

Oral and written feedback in terms of thesis writing regulations

Group	Language		Departmental		Universal		Methodological		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Oral	124	24.08	35	6.80	278	53.98	78	15.15	515
Written	1353	33.24	228	5.60	2431	59.72	59	1.45	4071
Total	1477		263		2709		137		4586

The Difference between Oral and Written Feedback in Terms of Chapters Receiving Feedback

Table 6 illustrates the Chi square results for the comparison of oral and written feedback on different chapters of theses.

Based on the results of Chi square test, there is a significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of chapters that receive feedback in viva sessions as final draft or in the process of thesis writing as first draft ($p = 0.001 \leq 0.05$). The second null hypothesis, therefore, is rejected.

Furthermore, the detailed findings regarding this difference are shown in Table 7.

In accordance with Table 7, frequency and percentage of written feedback provided on chapter 1 ($N = 674$, $P = 18.98\%$), chapter 2 ($N = 1292$, $P = 36.38\%$), chapter 3 ($N = 567$, $P = 15.97\%$), chapter 4 ($N = 648$, $P = 18.25\%$), and chapter 5 ($N = 370$, $P = 10.42\%$) in WF are significantly higher than the OF group. To sum it up, there is a significant difference between oral and written feedback in terms of chapters receiving feedback.

Table 6

Chi square results for the comparison of OF and WF on different thesis chapters

X ²	109.21
Df	4
Sig	0.001*

Table 7
Comparing oral and written feedback in terms of the chapters receiving corrective feedback

Group	Chapter 1		Chapter 2		Chapter 3		Chapter 4		Chapter 5		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Oral	142	30.15	73	15.50	126	26.75	91	19.32	39	8.28	471
Written	674	18.98	1292	36.38	567	15.97	648	18.25	370	10.42	3551
Total	816		1365		693		739		409		4022

CONCLUSION

The researchers in the current study strived to investigate the thesis writing regulations and chapters addressed more by supervisors and examiners. The result of the scrutiny regarding regulations revealed that universal guidelines for thesis writing received most of the feedback on the part of both supervisors and examiners in viva sessions. Among the subcategories of the universal framework for thesis writing, APA Style was the most targeted dimension. However, departmental guidelines for thesis writing were followed well by the candidates since they received the lowest feedback. The present study, according to its aims and findings, would make its greatest contribution to the MA candidates who are endeavoring in the challenging process of thesis writing. Based on the findings of the study, the MA candidates will be aware of the regulations of thesis writing that are more focused by examiners and supervisors. Curriculum developers and designers are the other group that may profit a lot from the findings of the current study. They may aim to design and compile the university curricula and materials in a way that paves the candidates' way as it regards thesis writing. Adopting material which gives better account of academic writing, research process, and thesis writing may be more advantageous for postgraduate students. However, it is difficult to generalize the findings due to the small size of corpora, and more generalizable and safer results may be obtained via drawing on larger corpora.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our deepest thanks to all post-graduate MA students in TEFL who provided us a great help by giving the first drafts of their theses as well as the ones who permitted us to record their viva sessions. We appreciate the assistance and aid of all the people who helped us with their valuable input as we could not have succeeded in our research without this.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, S. (2004). *Academic writing - A practical guide for students*. Abingdon: RoutledgeFalmer
- Bitchener, J., Basturkmen, H., East, M., & Meyer, H. (2011). Best practice in supervisor feedback to thesis writers. Retrieved November 21, 2017, from <http://akoaootearoa.ac.nz/best-practice-supervisor-feedback>
- Basturkmen, H., East, M., & Bitchener, J. (2014). Supervisors' on-script feedback comments on drafts of dissertations: Socializing students into the academic discourse community. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(4), 432- 445.
- Casanave, C., & Li, X. (Eds.) (2008). *Learning the literacy practices of graduate school: Insiders' reflections on academic enculturation*. Ann Arbor, USA: The University of Michigan Press.
- Chandrasekhar, R. (2002). *How to write a thesis. A working guide*. Retrieved November 21, 2017, from <http://www.ciips.ee.uwa.edu.au/pub/HowToWriteAThesis.Pdf>
- East, M., Bitchener, J., & Basturkmen, H. (2012). What constitutes effective feedback to postgraduate research students? The students' perspective. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 9(2).
- Engebretson, K., Smith, K., McLaughlin, D., Seibold, C., Teret, G. & Ryan, E. (2008). The changing reality of research education in Australia and implications for supervision: A review of the literature. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13(1), 1-15.
- Franke, A., & Arvidsson, B. (2011). Research supervisors' different ways of experiencing supervision of doctoral students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(1), 7-19.
- Hartley, J. (2008). *Academic writing and publishing - A practical handbook*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 81-112.
- Hyland, K. (2009). *Academic discourse*. London, England: Continuum.
- Irons, A. (2008). *Enhancing learning through formative assessment and feedback*. London, England: Routledge.
- Jonsson, A. (2013). Facilitating productive use of feedback in higher education. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 14, 63-76.
- Kamler, B. (2008). Rethinking doctoral publication practices: Writing from and beyond the thesis. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(3), 283-294.
- Kavaliauskiene, G., & Darginaviciene, I. (2010). Feedback at university level studies. *SOCIALINIS DARBAS*, 9(1), 131-140.
- Kumar, V., & Stracke, E. (2007). An analysis of written feedback on a PhD thesis. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(4), 461-470.
- Kumar, V., & Stracke, E. (2011). Examiners' reports on thesis: Feedback or assessment? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10, 211-222.
- Kumar, V., & Stracke, E. (2017). Reframing doctoral examination as teaching. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 55(2), 219-227. doi: 10.1080/14703297.2017.1285715

- Manan, N. A., & Noor, N. M. (2014). Analysis of reporting verbs in master's theses. *Social and Behavioral Science, 134*, 140-145.
- Parr, J. M., & Timperley, H. S. (2010). Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress. *Assessing Writing, 15*(2), 68-85.
- Shirzad, A. (2013). *Common problems found in MA theses submitted to ELT departments of Iranian universities* (Masters thesis), Urmia University, Urmia, Iran.
- Stracke, E., & Kumar, V. (2010). Feedback and self-regulated learning: Insights from supervisors' and PhD examiners' reports. *Reflective Practice, 11*(1), 1932.
- Thomas, R. M., & Brubakker, D. L. (2000). *Theses and dissertations: A guide to planning, research, and writing*. Westport, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Wang, T., & Li, L. Y. (2011). 'Tell me what to do' vs. 'guide me through it': Feedback experiences of international doctoral students. *Active learning in higher education, 12* (2), 101 -112.