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The Combined Effects of Metalinguistic Explanation and Self-Correction on Improving EFL Writing Accuracy

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This study examined whether self-correction or metalinguistic explanation might make a difference in the ability to accurately write two English grammatical structures when learners received indirect teacher feedback in the form of underlining target errors in a Korean EFL college classroom. With the goal of helping low-proficiency students improve their ability to accurately write sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions, four groups were formed: a group which received indirect feedback, a group which received indirect feedback and metalinguistic explanation, a group which received indirect feedback and self-corrected errors, and a group which received indirect feedback and self-corrected errors after receiving metalinguistic explanation. The results showed that the effects of either metalinguistic explanation or self-correction integrated with indirect feedback on learners' ability to accurately write the target structures were not meaningful, while the combined effects of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction were statistically significant.

[indirect feedback/self-correction/metalinguistic explanation]

I. INTRODUCTION

Many researchers have argued that accuracy is needed in order to communicate more effectively in written language (Ferris, 1995; Frodesen & Holten, 2003; Leki, 1991; Little, 1994; Muncie, 2002). ESL or EFL students, however, often fail to precisely express what they think in written English due to the lack of linguistic knowledge. In Leki and Carson's (1994) survey of students' perceptions of writing instruction and writing needs, one of the most frequently expressed specific needs was grammatical accuracy. In addition, more

writing accuracy is required for professional needs or uses. Therefore, teachers who teach writing to students, especially college students, need to recognize their students' needs for writing accuracy. They should help and encourage their students to use accurate forms in order to communicate effectively.

One of those which have frequently been discussed in connection with writing accuracy is corrective feedback. There has been a constant debate between those who believe in giving corrective feedback to students to improve their writing accuracy and those who do not (Guenette, 2007). Truscott (1996, 2007) strongly claimed that error correction is harmful and should be abandoned. Ferris (1999, 2004) refuted Truscott's strong position, arguing that error correction can help some learners to improve writing accuracy. Although it remains controversial whether corrective feedback results in improved accuracy, a number of recent studies have provided evidence that written corrective feedback is beneficial to improving writing accuracy (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Fathamn & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, 2007).

If we consider the role of corrective feedback from student attitudes towards error correction, it may be reasonable to give students teacher feedback on their errors. Studies regarding students' responses to feedback have consistently shown that they have a positive feeling toward teacher error feedback (Cohen, 1987; Chandler, 2003; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Leki, 1991; Schulz, 2001). EFL learners in particular have strongly favorable attitudes toward receiving form-focused feedback (Oladejo, 1993; Schulz, 2001; Katayama, 2007). These studies reported that most students consider teacher feedback on errors valuable for improving their writing accuracy and want their errors to be corrected. Thus, it may be possible to predict that students will think their expectations are not met and complain if teachers do not give them feedback on their errors. Teachers should not disregard students' preference for teacher feedback on errors because they should understand what their students expect in class.

Assuming that it is reasonable to give students teacher feedback on their errors based on what has been mentioned above, we should consider the way to approach error feedback which can help students improve writing accuracy. Ferris (2004) indicated that questions related to corrective feedback options and to supplementing corrective feedback should be considered. As for corrective feedback options, the key distinction is between direct and indirect corrective feedback. Although Chandler (2003) showed that significant effects were found for direct feedback over indirect feedback, indirect feedback has received more support among researchers (Ferris, 2002, 2006; Ferris & Hedgcok, 2005; Lalande, 1982; Frodesen, 2001; Robb et al., 1986). In addition, in classes which have many students, it would be difficult for teachers to correct errors directly by providing correct forms because it is time consuming. Therefore, direct feedback may not be justified in terms of the time

and effort required in a Korean EFL college classroom context, where class sizes are usually not small. As regards supplementing corrective feedback, it should be considered whether self-correction after receiving feedback or a supplemental mini-lesson providing metalinguistic explanation makes a difference in the ability to write accurately.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate whether self-correction or metalinguistic explanation plays a role in improving writing accuracy when learners receive indirect teacher feedback in the form of underlining target errors in a Korean EFL college classroom context. The target structures were sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions. They were chosen because they are principal structures commonly used in English writing but Korean students rarely use them or often make errors in using such structures.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Recent Research on Indirect Feedback

Direct feedback means providing learners with the correct form when they make an error, while indirect feedback is to indicate the presence of an error without supplying the correct form. It has been disputed which type is more effective in improving writing accuracy. Out of five studies that compared the effectiveness of these two types of corrective feedback (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2006; Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984), two studies reported no difference (Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984), two found significant effects for indirect feedback over direct feedback (Ferris, 2006; Lalande, 1982) and one reported the opposite (Chandler, 2003). Lalande (1982) contended that indirect feedback may be more beneficial than direct feedback because it can guide learning and help learners solve problems by themselves. Robb et al. (1986) suggested that teachers do not need to waste time and effort giving direct feedback to students if both direct and indirect feedback is equally effective.

Ellis (1994) differentiated two types of acquisition: (1) the internalization of new forms and (2) the increase in control over forms that have already been partially internalized. Then Ellis et al. (2008) suggested that "the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback is likely to depend on the current state of the learners' grammatical knowledge" (p. 355) because indirect corrective feedback has the potential to assist (2), while direct corrective feedback can assist with (1).

2. Recent Research on Self-Correction

Self-correction means that students correct their grammatical errors marked by teachers. Teachers can give students a self-correction opportunity by providing indirect feedback on their grammatical errors. Some research findings have suggested that requiring learners to self-correct is effective in facilitating accuracy in ESL or EFL writing (Chandler, 2003; Li & Lin, 2007). Chandler (2003) examined whether students' self-correction after receiving teacher feedback in the form of underlining grammatical errors could help ESL students improve their accuracy in writing. The results of this study demonstrated that grammatical accuracy of the students who were required to correct their grammatical errors was significantly improved both in revision and subsequent compositions as compared with those who were not required. This finding showed that self-correction is helpful for improving writing accuracy. Chandler (2003) stressed the importance of self-correction by saying that "if students did not revise their writing based on feedback about errors, having teachers mark errors was equivalent to giving no error feedback" (p. 280). Li and Lin (2007) investigated the effect of self-correction on the increase of the accuracy of a target form in an EFL context. This study showed a beneficial role of self-correction in promoting the accuracy of the target form. The study clearly demonstrated that receiving teacher feedback in the form of underlining errors without the engagement of self-correction is not effective in facilitating accuracy in an EFL college classroom. In a word, both Chandler (2003) and Li and Lin (2007) suggested that indirect feedback is effective when students are provided with an opportunity to correct their errors by themselves after teacher feedback is given.

3. Recent Research on Metalinguistic Explanation

Error is an indication of lack of knowledge according to Corder (1981). Therefore, it has been examined whether supplemental grammar instruction which can give students knowledge of the error types marked by the teacher, along corrective feedback would make a difference in writing accuracy. Some studies (Lalande, 1982; Frantzen & Rissel, 1987; Ferris, 1995) found positive evidence for supplemental grammar instruction, while some studies (Frantzen, 1995; Polio et al., 1998) did not find positive evidence.

Jong (2005) suggested that explicit explanation may be significantly beneficial to building a knowledge base which is available for production. Some recent studies of direct written feedback urged the importance of providing metalinguistic explanation. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) found that direct written feedback in combination with student-researcher conference that provides learners with metalinguistic explanation has a greater effect than direct written feedback alone on improved accuracy. Sheen (2007)

showed that direct corrective feedback with metalinguistic comments is more effective than direct corrective feedback without metalinguistic comments in improving learners' grammatical accuracy. These findings suggest that metalinguistic information makes a contribution to learners' significant increase in accuracy.

On the other hand, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) found that there is no differential effect on accuracy for three different written corrective feedback options (direct corrective feedback, written and oral metalinguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written metalinguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback only). Ellis et al. (2008) showed that metalinguistic understanding can be induced as a result of direct feedback without metalinguistic explanation. These two studies showed that metalinguistic explanation did not play a decisive role in improving accuracy in the use of two functional uses of the English article system (to express first and second mention). Both of the studies, however, suggested that further research would be necessary to discover whether direct corrective feedback without metalinguistic explanation would be sufficient for more complex structures.

The above-mentioned studies investigated the effectiveness of metalinguistic explanation in combination with direct written feedback. As far as I know, there has been no study that has examined the effectiveness of metalinguistic explanation integrated with indirect written feedback in improving writing accuracy.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Target Structures

There are two issues concerning choice of errors to correct: (1) whether corrective feedback should be unfocused (i.e. address all or most of the errors) or focused (i.e. address just one or two error types) and (2) which specific errors should be corrected. Both methodologists and second language acquisition/writing researchers favor focused corrective feedback over unfocused corrective feedback. Many studies have given evidence of the efficacy of focused corrective feedback (Han, 2002; Lyster, 2004; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Sheen, 2007).

On the assumption that focused corrective feedback is more effective, two error types were chosen to be targeted in the present study. Ferris (1999) made a distinction between "treatable" and "untreatable" errors. Treatable errors are errors relating to features that occur in a rule-governed way, such as verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, while word choice errors and sentence structure errors are idiosyncratic and untreatable errors. The most recent studies on focused corrective feedback–Sheen (2007),

Bitchener and Knoch (2008), and Ellis et al. (2008)–chose two functions of the English article system as the target structures. Compared with these studies, where the two treatable errors were targeted, the present study targeted two untreatable sentence structure errors.

Two grammatical structures chosen as the target structures are sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions. Examples of these structures are as follows:

(1) The students attending that college receive a good education.
(2) She is looking in the mirror, talking to herself.

The sentence in (1) is an example of a sentence with a nonfinite present participial relative clause and the sentence in (2) is an example of a present participial construction. These structures are in keeping with Harley (1993)'s suggestion regarding forms for effective focus on form. Harley (1993) suggested that the forms that differ from the learner's first language and those that are not salient because they are infrequent are suitable candidates for effective focus on form. Nonfinite present participial relative clauses were chosen because they are actively used in English but Korean learners of English frequently make errors of modification direction due to the difference in head direction between Korean and English. The selection of present participial constructions was motivated by the fact that they are infrequently found in Korean learners' written production compared to complex sentences with conjunctions.

2. Research Questions

Korean college freshmen have received formal classroom instruction in the English language over 6 years. They must have received grammatical instruction in nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions before entering a university. In other words, the two target structures are not completely new structures to Korean college freshmen. In addition, the size of the classes in which the present study was administered was not small. For these reasons, indirect corrective feedback was given to the students in the present study. The study aimed to examine whether supplementing corrective feedback with self-correction or/and metalinguistic explanation makes a difference in student progress in the ability to accurately write the target structures when Korean EFL university students receive indirect teacher feedback in the form of underlining target errors. The research questions were therefore framed as follows:

1. Is there any difference in the effect of indirect feedback with and without self-correction on Korean EFL learners' ability to accurately write sentences including nonfinite

present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions?
2. Is there any difference in the effect of indirect feedback with and without metalinguistic explanation on Korean EFL learners' ability to accurately write the two structures?
3. Is there any difference in the effect of indirect feedback with and without both metalinguistic explanation and self-correction on Korean EFL learners' ability to accurately write the two structures?

3. Subjects

The original pool of participants was 140 freshmen enrolled in 'College English 1' classes at a university in Seoul, Korea. Four departments of students were involved: Theology Department (N=30), Social Welfare Department (N=40), Global Business & Information Department (N=40), Music Department (N=30). 'College English 1' was a compulsory subject for these students. The course was designed to improve their communicative skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. A pretest was used to pick out students who have no ability to accurately write the target structures. In other words, any students who made a score in the pretest were eliminated. Of the original participants, 25 students were excluded from the study (2 from Theology Department; 12 from Social Welfare Department; 10 from Global Business & Information Department; 1 from Music Department). The trial TOEIC taken after the entrance ceremony revealed that the English language proficiency of 115 students picked out in the pretest was low (TOEIC score 215-480). The four departments were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups. In addition, data from 7 subjects (2 from Theology Department; 1 from Social Welfare Department; 2 from Global Business & Information Department; 2 from Music Department) were eliminated from the analyses because they were not present for all the tests administered in the study. In the end, data from 108 subjects were analyzed.

4. Design

The present study used a quasi-experimental design, with a pretest, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest. Four groups of low-proficiency EFL students participated in the study: Group 1 (Theology Department) was asked to self-correct their target errors underlined by the researcher; Group 2 (Social Welfare Department) received corrective feedback in the form of underlining target errors and metalinguistic explanation of the target structures; Group 3 (Global Business & Information Department) was asked to self-correct their target errors underlined by the researcher after they received metalinguistic explanation of the target structures; Group 4 (Music Department) received corrective feedback in the form of underlining target errors.

5. Procedure

The present study was conducted during grammar instruction aiming to improve writing skills. The researcher was in charge of 'College English' classes for students in the four departments. All four groups completed a pretest, an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest. All the tests involved watching a video sequence and then translating its Korean summary into English. Translation tasks were chosen based on the findings of Uzawa (1996). Uzawa (1996) found that translation tasks may be useful for second language learning because students are able to concentrate on linguistic activities without generating their own ideas and are forced to use words and expressions that are slightly beyond their levels when they translate. The translation task was designed to force the subjects to use the target structures by asking them to translate a summary including Korean sentences with the target structures (see Appendix). The procedure adopted for the summary translation task was as follows:

1. First, the students watched a video sequence after the researcher told them that they were going to summarize the video sequence.
2. After watching the video, the researcher explained the key words and discussed the contents of the video sequence with the class.
3. The researcher handed out a Korean summary of the video sequence.
4. The students were asked to translate the Korean summary into English.
5. The researcher collected the students' translations.

In the first week of the first semester of the 2009 academic year, the first summary translation task, which served as the pretest, was carried out. One week later, the students' first summary translations were returned and then the treatment was provided. For Group 1, after looking over their feedback, they were asked to self-correct their errors underlined by the researcher. And then they carried out the second summary translation task. For Group 2, after looking over their feedback, they received a mini-lesson in the target structures. In the mini-lesson, the researcher provided the students with metalinguistic explanation that gave them declarative knowledge of the target structures. Immediately after the lesson, they were asked to do the second summary translation task. For Group 3, they looked over the feedback and then received a mini-lesson in the target structures. The mini-lesson was the same as that given to Group 2. Following the lesson, they were asked to self-correct their errors underlined. After self-correction, the second summary translation task was administered. For Group 4, the second summary translation task took place as soon as they had looked over the feedback. In the following class, they received their second

translations back with feedback. The same procedure as provided in the preceding class was followed. The third summary translation task administered in this class served as the immediate posttest. The translations for all four groups were returned one week later. The fourth summary translation task, which served as the delayed posttest, was carried out three weeks later.

Table 1 summarizes the schedule for the study. The entire study was conducted over a period of 6 weeks. There was a gap of 3 weeks between the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest, during which there was no activity related to the target structures for all four groups.

TABLE 1

Schedule for the Study

Week	Group	Activity
1	All Four Groups	Summary Translation Task 1 (Pretest)
	Group 1	Feedback on Task 1
		Self-Correction of Errors Underlined in Task 1
		Summary Translation Task 2
	Group 2	Feedback on Task 1
		Mini-Lesson (Metalinguistic Explanation of the Target Structures)
2		Summary Translation Task 2
	Group 3	Feedback on Task 1
		Mini-Lesson (Metalinguistic Explanation of the Target Structures)
		Self-Correction of Errors Underlined in Task 1
		Summary Translation Task 2
	Group 4	Feedback on Task 1
		Summary Translation Task 2
	Group 1	Feedback on Task 2
		Self-Correction of Errors Underlined in Task 2
		Summary Translation Task 3 (Immediate Posttest)
	Group 2	Feedback on Task 2
		Mini-Lesson (Metalinguistic Explanation of the Target Structures)
3		Summary Translation Task 3 (Immediate Posttest)
	Group 3	Feedback on Task 2
		Mini-Lesson (Metalinguistic Explanation of the Target Structures)
		Self-Correction of Errors Underlined in Task 2
		Summary Translation Task 3 (Immediate Posttest)

	Group 4	Feedback on Task 2 Summary Translation Task 3 (Immediate Posttest)
6	All Four Groups	Summary Translation Task 4 (Delayed Posttest)

6. Scoring

The Korean summaries used in the three tests administered in the study included 3 Korean sentences with nonfinite present participial relative clauses and 3 Korean examples of present participial constructions. The researcher attached the condition that relative pronouns such as *who*, *which*, *that* and conjunctions such as *while*, *after*, *and* must not be used in order that the students might not use finite relative clauses and complex sentences with conjunctions. They were instructed to ask for any vocabulary they needed. Ten points were given to each correct use of the target structure. For the correct use of sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses, it was checked whether the structure *noun* + *verb-ing*... was correct and for the correct use of present participial constructions, it was checked whether the structure *subject* + *verb*..., *verb-ing*...was correct. Each of the two target structures was scored separately. Therefore, the highest score was thirty for each target structure. Errors related to articles, tense, and spelling and incorrect vocabulary were admissible. Other structure errors were disregarded.

IV. RESULTS

The pretest was designed to pick out the students who scored zero points, those who do not have the ability to accurately write either of the two target structures. Therefore, the pretest mean score for all four groups was zero, which means that any differences found on the posttests can be attributed to the treatment because all four groups started at the same pretest score.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the immediate posttests and delayed posttests for those students who scored zero in the pretest.

TABLE 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Four Groups

Group	N	Target Structure	Immediate Posttest		Delayed Posttest	
			M	SD	M	SD
Group 1	26	T1	0.7692	2.7175	0.3846	1.9612
		T2	0.3846	1.9612	0.3846	1.9612
Group 2	27	T1	1.4815	4.5605	0.7407	2.6688
		T2	0.7407	2.6688	0.7407	2.6688
Group 3	28	T1	6.0714	9.1649	3.9286	3.3733
		T2	3.9286	6.8526	2.8571	5.9982
Group 4	27	T1	0.3704	1.9245	0.3704	1.9245
		T2	0.0000	0.0000	0.000	0.0000

T1: sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses

T2: present participial constructions

Group 4's mean score for T1 improved slightly on the immediate posttest but in fact the score was about equal to the pretest score of zero and the immediate posttest score for T2 remained the same as the pretest score. Groups 1 and 2 showed a greater increase than Group 4, but paired *t*-tests revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the pretest and the immediate posttest for Group 1(T1: $F(2, 50)=9.917$, $p=.155>.05$, T2: $F(2, 50)=4.340$, $p=.322>.05$) and between the pretest and the immediate posttest for Group 2 (T1: $F(2, 52)=13.777$, $p=.113>.05$, T2: $F(2, 52)=9.830$, $p=.155>.05$). Group 3 markedly improved from the pretest to the immediate posttest, showing a significant difference between them (T1: $F(2, 54)=82.020$, $p=.001<.05$, T2: $F(2, 54)=61.700$, $p=.004<.05$).

The pairwise comparison between group means on the immediate posttest showed a significant difference between Groups 1 and 3, Groups 2 and 3, Groups 3 and 4 for both T1 and T2. No other comparisons proved statistically significant.

TABLE 3

Pairwise Comparison of Immediate Posttest Mean Scores

Target Structure	Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error of Means	P-value
	G1 - G2	-0.7123	1.0362	0.495
	G1 – G3	-5.3022	1.8704	0.007
T1	G1 – G4	0.3989	0.6449	0.539

	G2 – G3	-4.5899	1.9635	0.023
	G2 – G4	1.1111	0.9526	0.249
	G3 – G4	5.7011	1.8014	0.003
T2	G1 - G2	-0.3561	0.6454	0.583
	G1 – G3	-3.5440	1.3946	0.014
	G1 – G4	0.3846	0.3773	0.313
	G2 – G3	-3.1878	1.4123	0.028
	G2 – G4	0.7407	0.5136	0.155
	G3 – G4	3.9286	1.3192	0.004

T1: sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses

T2: present participial constructions

$p<.05$: statistically significant

All four groups showed decrease from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttest. Figures 1 and 2 show the change of the group mean over the three test administrations.

FIGURE 1

Mean Score Change over Time for T1

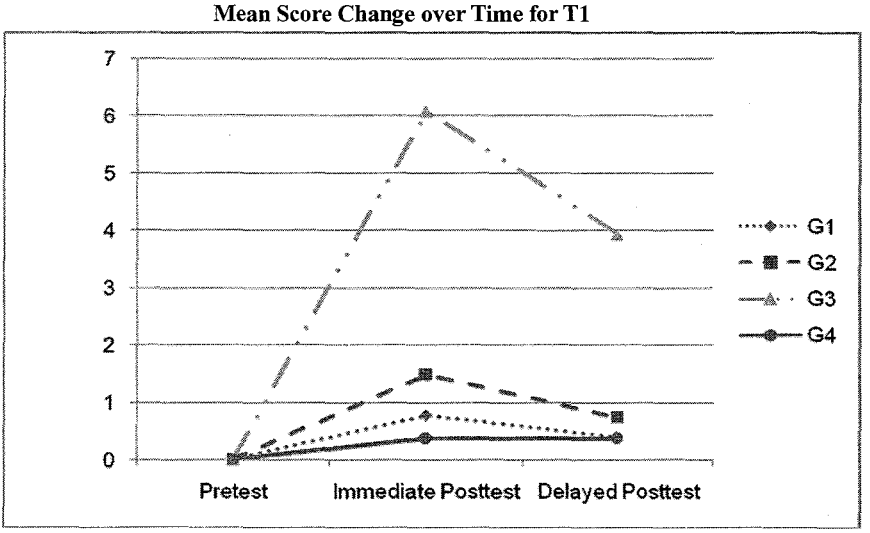
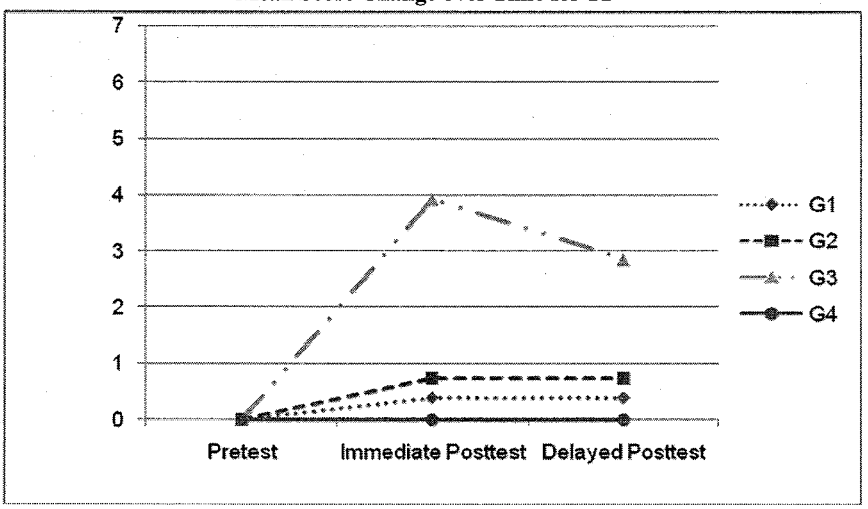


FIGURE 2

Mean Score Change over Time for T2



Group 3 greatly exceeded the pretest score on the immediate posttest and then arrived at lower score on the delayed posttest. However the difference between the immediate posttest and delayed posttest means was not significant (T1: $F(2, 54)=2.618$, $p=.339>.05$, T2: $F(2, 54)=2.042$, $p=.405>.05$), so a significant increase was sustained between the pretest and delayed posttest means (T1: $F(2, 54)=52.978$, $p=.007<.05$, T2: $F(2, 54)=28.172$, $p=.028<.05$). Meanwhile, for Groups 1, 2, and 4, there was no statistically significant difference in mean scores over time.

V. DISCUSSION

The first research question examined the relative effects of indirect feedback with and without self-correction and the second research question examined those of indirect feedback with and without metalinguistic explanation. The results of the study showed that Group 1's subjects did not make significant progress in the ability to accurately write the target structures. This indicates that they did not benefit from self-correction in combination with corrective feedback. Similarly, Group 2's subjects did not show significant improvement in the ability to accurately write the target structures, which suggests that the provision of metalinguistic explanation of the target structures in combination with corrective feedback did not have substantially beneficial effects on the ability to accurately write them. It was also found that corrective feedback alone did not produce a significant effect on the ability to accurately write them. These findings indicate

that indirect feedback with and without self-correction did not have differential effects and that neither did indirect feedback with and without metalinguistic explanation.

The third research question examined the relative effects of indirect feedback with and without the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction. Group 3, who received metalinguistic explanation of the target structures and self-corrected their errors after receiving corrective feedback, significantly bettered Groups 1, 2, and 4 on the immediate posttest, showing a significant difference between the pretest and the immediate posttest. This result indicates that indirect feedback with and without the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction had differential effects: indirect feedback with the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction was superior to indirect feedback without the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction.

The study showed that either self-correction or metalinguistic explanation which was integrated with corrective feedback did not play a crucial role in increasing accuracy in the subjects' written production of the target structures, whereas the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction integrated with corrective feedback led to significant progress in writing accuracy. In other words, the findings of the present study seem to suggest that the combined effects of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction led to significant improvement in the subjects' ability to accurately write the target structures. A possible explanation for the effectiveness of the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction on writing accuracy might be related to attention.

Recent research in cognitive psychology and second language acquisition has expressed the opinion that attention plays a crucial role in learning (Izumi, 2002; Leow, 2001; Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1995, 2001; Tomlin & Villa, 1994). According to Schmidt's (1995, 2001) *Noticing Hypothesis*, focal attention, or noticing is requisite for learning. One of different types of noticing which Swain (1998) pointed out is *noticing the gap* between the interlanguage and the target language. This type of noticing may enable learners to carry out a comparison between what they want to produce and what they can produce. Noticing the gap has been considered a step toward second language acquisition (Ellis, 1991; Long, 1996; Lightbown, 1998). Corrective feedback serves as a stimulus for noticing the gap because it triggers learners to recognize the difference between the target input and the non-target-like output. (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998; Schmidt, 2001). Direct corrective feedback can directly prompt learners to notice the gap by not only indicating the presence of errors, but also providing correct forms. For indirect corrective feedback, a question arises: How does indirect corrective feedback help learners notice the gap? The answer is concerned with output.

One of the functions of output specified in the *Output Hypothesis* (Swain, 1995, 1998) is the noticing function of output. Noticing can occur in the form of noticing the gap. Swain (1985) introduced the concept of *pushed output.* Pushed output refers to corrections or

rephrasing elicited for production of language that is accurate. Pushed output allows learners to reanalyze and modify their nontarget output (Lyster, 1998). Swain (1995) advocated pushed output. In other words, she argued that forcing learners to rephrase their output can lead them to notice the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say. Self-correction, which indicates fixing errors identified by teachers, is a type of pushed output. Therefore, self-correction may offer the opportunity for learners to notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language. In other words, self-correction, namely pushed output driven by indirect corrective feedback, may contribute to language learning by stimulating learners to notice the gap and pushing learners to produce more accurate forms.

Another issue discussed in relation to attention is the role of awareness in L2 development. Schmidt (1995, 2001) posited two levels of awareness: awareness at the level of noticing and at the level of understanding. Noticing is some low level of awareness, while understanding is a higher level of awareness. Some studies found that awareness at the level of understanding leads to significantly greater accuracy of written production when compared to awareness at the level of noticing (Leow, 2001; Rosa & Leow, 2004). Understanding requires knowledge (Sheen, 2007).

Error concerns cognition/knowledge (Corder, 1981). In other words, error shows that a learner lacks knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be given by explicit explanation (Jong, 2005). Therefore, a mini-lesson which provides learners with explicit metalinguistic explanation of the target structure may help them get explicit knowledge of it and then have awareness about it at the level of understanding. Therefore, a mini-lesson involving explicit metalinguistic explanation may lead to gains in accuracy.

Both Group 1, who self-corrected their errors, and Group 2, who received metalinguistic explanation, did not show significant improvement in the ability to accurately write the target structures. These results can be interpreted as suggesting that either the noticing function of self-correction as a type of "pushed output" or the learners' awareness of the target structures at the level of understanding through metalinguistic explanation was not sufficient to lead to significantly improved ability to accurately write the target structures. On the other hand, Group 3, who received metalinguistic explanation and then self-corrected their errors, made significant progress in the ability to accurately write them. This result indicates that both noticing the gap and awareness of the target structures at the level of understanding were necessary to significantly improve the ability to accurately write them. This means that attention both to the gap between the interlanguage and the target language and to explicit knowledge is necessary to lead to significant improvement in writing accuracy. In other words, it can be said that there is a significant improvement in the ability to accurately write the target structure only if explicit metalinguistic explanation is provided to learners so that they can have awareness of it at the level of understanding

and then they are required to self-correct their errors in order that they may be pushed to notice the gap and to produce more accurate forms on the basis of explicit knowledge provided by metalinguistic explanation.

Group 3 showed a decrease in mean score from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttest, but the decrease was not significant. That is, the delayed posttest score was not significantly different from the immediate posttest score. Thus, it can be said that the subjects in Group 3 maintained the ability they exhibited on the immediate posttest, which means that the combined effects of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction had endured.

VI. CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The present study was intended for low-proficiency students in a Korean EFL college classroom context. Because the number of students in a class was not small and the two target structures, sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions, are not completely new structures to Korean college freshmen, indirect feedback was given to the subjects. The study was intended to examine whether combining indirect feedback with other activities would be more effective in improving the ability to accurately write the target structures.

In light of the results presented above, the following findings emerged from the study:

1. When the subjects received indirect teacher feedback in the form of underlining target errors, the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction led to significant improvement in the ability to accurately write the target structures.
2. Indirect feedback alone did not produce a significant effect on improving the ability to accurately write the target structures.
3. Self-correction integrated with indirect feedback did not produce a significant effect on improving the ability to accurately write the target structures when the subjects did not receive metalinguistic explanation.
4. Metalinguistic explanation integrated with indirect feedback did not produce a significant effect on improving the ability to accurately write the target structures when the subjects were not asked to self-correct their errors.

The findings, summarized above, show that the combination of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction had a significantly greater effect on improving the ability to accurately write the target structures than self-correction alone or metalinguistic explanation alone when target errors were indicated by indirect teacher feedback.

The result that self-correction did not play a significant role in improving the ability to accurately write the target structures is contrary to some self-correction studies (Chandler, 2003; Li & Lin, 2007) which showed that self-correction is significantly beneficial to improving writing accuracy. The result that metalinguistic explanation did not lead to significant improvement in the ability to accurately write the target structures is also contrary to some studies which found beneficial role of supplemental grammar instruction (Lalande, 1982; Frantzen & Rissel, 1987; Ferris, 1995) and to Jong's (2005) claim that explicit explanation is significantly beneficial to improving writing accuracy. The present study found that the effect of either self-correction or metalinguistic explanation integrated with indirect feedback on the learners' ability to accurately write the target structures was not meaningful, while the combined effects of metalinguistic explanation and self-correction were statistically significant.

Finally, the present study leads to four suggestions:

1. Corrective feedback may be necessary in EFL writing instruction since students' need for accuracy and strong desire for error feedback should not be ignored.
2. Indirect feedback may be recommended for a writing class whose size is not small in terms of the time and effort required.
3. Mini-lessons which provide students with metalinguistic explanation of the target structure should be given to them so that they can have awareness of it at the level of understanding.
4. Students should be required to self-correct their target errors so that they can notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language.

There are some limitations of the present study. The researcher made low-proficiency Korean learners of English the subjects of the study and chose two complex structures, sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and present participial constructions, as the target structures. Further research is necessary to investigate whether the findings of the study apply to Korean learners at other proficiency levels and whether they are also true for other grammatical structures.

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APPENDIX

Korean Summary Example

The three underlined parts are Korean sentences including nonfinite present participial relative clauses and the three boldfaced parts are Korean examples of present participial constructions. A Korean summary handed out to the students did not include underlines and boldfaces.

이 에피소드는 한 대학에서 수업 첫 날에 일어납니다. 교실 밖 복도에 서

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Examples in: English
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