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Writing Feedback: The Benefits of Conferences

Ju-Youn Sim[*]
(Soongsil University)
Jae-Yeon Heo[**]
(Soongsil University)

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This article investigates how one-on-one writing conferences benefit L2 writers in terms of students' writing performance and their motivational thought process at tertiary level. This sixteen-week longitudinal study employed a qualitative data approach derived from a mixed-method study involving pre- and post-survey questionnaires from college students, their writing drafts and interviews. Overall, the findings suggest that teacher feedback helped: (i) to build up teacher-student mentorship through collaborative interaction; (ii) to improve students' writing performance with supportive feedback; and (iii) to increase students' intrinsic motivation and confidence, finally leading them to new learning goals. The analysis also points out the negative aspects of teacher feedback from conference sessions. Negative feedback without appending positive comments might undermine students' autonomous learning and too many teacher comments were identified as demotivating factors, possibly leading learners to be over-reliant on teacher feedback. Some important implications of this study of writing feedback are discussed to highlight how the potential impact of teacher feedback could be optimized: teacher feedback should be used as a tool to increase student motivation, engagement, and interest. Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to have a strong sense of responsibility for their own writing.

[English writing/teacher feedback/written feedback/conferences/teacher-student interaction]

I. INTRODUCTION

With the academic demand for college students to have suitably developed writing skills, the importance of teacher feedback on student writing in English language

[*]First author [**]Corresponding author

teaching has increased. Despite the significant role of feedback on writing development, giving feedback on student essays, for example, is sometimes considered to be a "tedious and unrewarding chore" (Hyland, 1990, cited in Miao, Badger, & Zhen, 2006, p. 179). This is because giving feedback on student writing requires intensive effort from teachers and the need to give a great deal of their time, yet their careful comments may not bring about considerable improvements in students' subsequent written work. Keh (1990, p. 294) defined feedback as "input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision". In fact, this 'tedious and unrewarding chore' or 'input from a reader' has been identified as having a key role in writing development in many studies (Ellis, 2008; Ferris, 2004; Eckstein, 2013; Hyland & Hyland 2006; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Such studies have explored the role of feedback and its effectiveness for L2 writing development. Many L2 writing researchers have been primarily concerned with how corrective feedback is helpful for improving students' writing performance (Sheen, 2010) and with what types of corrective feedback are effective (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Park, 2011). However, it is also true that the effect of feedback for L2 writing development has been hotly debated (e.g. Truscott, 1996, 1999 & Ferris, 1999).

Previous research about corrective feedback on students' writing skills mainly centered on the effects of written corrective feedback on grammatical errors such as prepositions, the past simple and the definite articles (Ellis et al., 2008; Shin & Seong, 2013; Sheen, 2007) and found that it has a positive effect on the development of learners' grammatical accuracy. Researchers such as Young and Miller (2004) have also indicated that teacher-student writing conferences are useful in that conferences provide opportunities for teachers and students to co-construct discursive roles. Hawe, Dixon, and Watson (2008) also examined how oral feedback supported students' learning in written language.

As mentioned above, conferences provide reciprocal benefits to both teachers and students. Teachers better understand their students' intentions in their writing (Leki, 1990) and learners benefit from "scaffolding and negotiation with their teachers" (Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990, cited in Eckstein, 2013, p. 231).

However, there is scant empirical research in South Korea concerning how teachers' oral feedback affects learners' writing performance and 'motivational thought process'[1].

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways writing conferences play a role in

[1] This term is borrowed from Busse (2013, p. 406). According to Busse (2013), learners' perceptions of feedback are important as feedback can be perceived as both a motivating and a demotivating factor in developing writing skills. In this sense, exploring the effect of feedback on motivation sheds light on the interplay between students' motivation generated through the teacher feedback and improvements in students' writing skills.

developing the quality of interaction between the teacher and the student and how such interactive scaffolding between teachers and students can affect students' subsequent drafts. Thus, the central research question for this study was: 'What is the main benefit of ongoing one-on-one L2 writing conferences for L2 writers'? Related to this main research question, two sub-questions were formed:

1. To what extent does written and oral feedback support students' writing performance?
2. Are conferences beneficial for university students at beginning English levels in Korea? If so, in what ways can it benefit their L2 writing?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Role of Teacher Feedback in L2 Writing

In L2 writing, teacher feedback is essential for students to learn about and develop their writing skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Feedback has focused on teacher's input or instructional response to students' writing by providing information or correction (Keh, 1990; Nicol & Macfarlance-Dick, 2006). However, feedback needs to be interpreted from a more expansive point of view as "the crucial interaction between teacher and student carried out for the purpose of furthering student learning" (Hawe et al., 2008, p. 45 cited in Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & William, 2003). Sadler (1989) also placed emphasis on the teacher's role in facilitating "the transition from feedback to self-monitoring" through the feedback process (p. 122). In the process approach, writing is regarded as "a problem-solving activity" (Hyland, 2003, p. 24) and teacher feedback is one of the most influential means to encourage students to solve their writing problems. In addition, teachers can share the goal of learning with students and have a collaborative relationship with students in their developmental feedback process.

2. The Types of Feedback

Teachers can provide different types of feedback to students by using a diversity of techniques including written commentary, oral comments, electronic feedback, rubrics, etc. Among different types of feedback, written feedback including direct and indirect corrective feedback is most commonly employed in L2 writing classrooms (Hyland, 2003). Oral feedback is also used as a better alternative to written feedback to complement its disadvantages, which can be categorized into three formats: one to one conferences, group conferences, and online conferences (Belk, 2012). In this paper, two

types of teacher feedback are mainly discussed: written feedback and oral feedback through one-to one conferences.

1) Written feedback

The purpose of written feedback is to draw students' attention to their writing in terms of accuracy, correctness, or appropriateness related to content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. According to Ivanic (1998), teachers play a role in creating an interactive audience or reader to help students gain a sense of involvement and negotiate meanings and suggestions with their teacher. In particular, written commentary facilitates students' revision of their work and stimulates them to achieve an appropriate level based on individual differences in needs and their approaches to writing (Hyland, 1998). Moreover, students' motivation and confidence in themselves as writers may be positively influenced by teachers' comments on their written work (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Young, 2000).

2) Conferences

Individual conferences involve an interaction between the teacher and student through a face to face conversation. As Ferris and Hedgcock (2004) mention, oral or verbal feedback is a powerful pedagogical tool due to the immediacy and potential for interaction and negotiation. Through the negotiation of meaning, teachers can ask for clarification, check confirmation of oral comments, and help students in decision making (Keh, 1990; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990). Such one to one conferences allow teachers to discover the different level of appropriate instruction for each individual student through scaffolding with more constructive and more accurate feedback being provided than through written feedback.

3. The Effectiveness of Teacher Feedback

A number of studies on teacher feedback in L2 writing have been carried out and many L2 writing teachers and researchers tend to productively focus on questions about how to implement different types of feedback effectively (Ferris et al., 2013). With regard to the effects of teacher written feedback, many studies (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990) have shown that teacher commentary helped students to produce more accurate revisions of their written work. In other studies (Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Hyland & Hyland, 2001), the combination of criticism and

praise in written comments was supportive in that it enhanced students' self-confidence and motivation as writers. In fact, it was reported that ESL students considered their teacher feedback on their writing motivating and important (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Zhang, 1995) and they also valued this feedback for not just focusing on language errors. In ESL/EFL contexts, students responded that such teacher feedback had a highly significant impact on their writing and clearly indicated a preference for teacher feedback as opposed to peer feedback (Paulus, 1999; Miao et al., 2006). As Zamel (1985) points out, however, written comments are likely to take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that students find difficult to interpret, understand or apply. Some low level students may not be able to identify their errors and correct them in response to direct and indirect written feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Corpuz, 2011). In some cases, providing too much corrective feedback may lead to student demotivation with their writing and excessive dependence on the teacher. Contrary to the positive effects of teacher feedback, several researchers (Kepner, 1991; Lee, 2003; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) have claimed that grammar correction or corrective feedback is ineffective. For example, Truscott (1996) argued that grammar correction was ineffective and harmful for students as it caused them to feel stressed and it discouraged them from writing.

As for teacher-student conferences, studies show that oral feedback through individual conferences can lead to better revision and its effects can last longer in the memories of students (Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) due to clearer comments from their teachers (Zamel, 1985). Through one to one conferencing, students are able to discuss their writing, be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and become more independent (Hyland, 2000; Belk, 2012). Sokmen (1988) found that conferences were effective, productive, and focused on leading students to understand implied intentions given by the teacher. With regard to students' perspectives on and preferences for oral feedback, research (Jean & Simard, 2011; Lyster et al., 2012 cited in Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005) has found that the majority of students were very much in favor of oral corrective feedback and were always willing to have their oral errors corrected.

In Korean contexts, the effectiveness of different types of feedback (e.g. direct, indirect, metalinguistic, explicit & implicit, (un)focused, and form-focused feedback) been explored by many researcher (Ma, 2006; Jang, 2012; Shin & Seong, 2013; Yoo, 2014).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative, multiple-case study design; over a 16 week period,

written and oral feedback data (revision drafts) was collected, in-depth interviews were conducted with participant students, and survey questionnaires administered. Using the data collected, this study examined what the benefits of conferences are and what the impact of oral conferences was on students' writing performance and motivational factors.

1. Research Process

The whole study was conducted over a semester period of sixteen weeks in 2013. The research began with administration of the survey questionnaire to analyze participant students' needs and expectations in the classes and their experiences about writing. Over the sixteen-week semester, there were more than four teacher feedback sessions with students: this involved written feedback at two different times, three conferences, and informal talks with students. After finishing their mid-term and final exams, seven students voluntarily participated in retrospective interviews. For practical purposes, audio recording of oral conferences and individual interviews of participating students were conducted. As for the final process of the research, post-course survey questionnaires were conducted. Based on the two in-depth interviews and questionnaires with students before and after the course, students' written drafts, and teacher feedback on these drafts throughout the sixteen-week semester, we hoped to investigate the extent to which the teacher feedback affected students' writing performance and affective aspects. The following table provides the procedure adopted for data collection.

TABLE 1

The Data Collection Process

Time	Data Collected
Week 1	Teaching how to write an essay
Week 2	Overview of how to write an essay
Week 3	Brainstorming for the introduction section
Week 4	Pre-course survey questionnaire for students
Week 5	Students' electronic draft for introduction (1st)
Week 6	Teachers' written feedback, revision task
Week 7	Conference with students' revised draft (2nd),
Week 8	Mid-term examination (3rd draft)
Week 9	1st in-depth interview
Week 12	Brainstorming for body section
Week 13	Students' electronic draft for body paragraphs
Week 14	Teachers' written feedback, revision task
Week 15	Conference with students' revised draft, revision task
Week 15	Post-course survey questionnaire for students
Week 16	Final examination (final draft)
Week 16	2nd in-depth interview

2. Participants and sampling

The participants were 35 students (twenty juniors and fifteen seniors) enrolled in general English classes called 'Practical Reading and Writing' (PRW, hereafter) at a university in Seoul. The major of the students taking this course varied. Class size averaged 18 students. Students normally had three hours of the PRW class per week for sixteen weeks. Since the students were required to write one multi-draft essay in writing classes as a part of their mid-term and final examination, the researchers were able to collect students′ writing texts, from the first draft to final draft. All of the students (n=35) participated in the pre- and post- course survey questionnaires and seven students volunteered to participate in two in-depth interviews after the mid-term and final examination each regardless of their writing abilities.

3. Context

The overall aim of this course was to enhance students' reading and writing ability, but the teacher focused more on increasing students' understanding of how to write in an academic setting since many of the students had not had a chance to write paragraph-level or essay-level drafts in English back in high school, as was discovered through the pre-survey questionnaire. Before starting to write an essay, students took part in a 'How to write an essay' session and a grammar session. Students were asked to write an opinion essay and the essay topic was extracted from TOEFL writing prompts. The students were required to write three paragraphs for the semester: an introduction paragraph for their mid-term examination and an introduction paragraph and two body paragraphs for their final examination.

4. Revision Process

All students were offered more than four corrective feedback sessions with the teacher researcher: written feedback at two different times and three oral conferences. As Keh (1990, p. 295) states that the role of feedback is that "through feedback, the writer learns where he or she has misled or confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas, or something like inappropriate word-choice or tense", the feedback in this study required students to consider both content and form. Similar to a study conducted by Ferris, Liu, Sinha, and Senna (2013), feedback types used in this study were (in)direct, focused, implicit and explicit feedback. There were two phases to the revision process in this study. For the first phase, students were asked to brainstorm an essay topic with their peers and they then received the

teacher's feedback through a conference session. Based on their outlines, students were asked to submit their first draft of the introduction part by email. After submitting their first introduction draft, students were given electronic comments on their draft using Microsoft Word's track change function - the document was sent back to the student through email (see Appendix A). The students were given time to examine the feedback and then revise the draft according to the teacher's comments and submit a second draft in the following class (typically a week later). With the resubmitted draft (2nd draft), the teacher researcher held oral conferences to afford students opportunities to discuss the marked errors with the teacher. The conferences were intended to be 15 minutes per person but sometimes students received oral feedback after the class due to the lack of time during the class. The second phase of the revision process followed the first process. Table 1 provides an overview of the revision process.

5. Retrospective Interviews

After the mid-term and final examination, seven students participated in semi-structured retrospective interviews. The aim of these interviews was to explore the issues raised in the research questions: (i) how does corrective feedback influence students' writing performance; and (ii) what is the impact of conferences on students' motivational aspects?

Since writing performance (learning outcomes) cannot come about without the learners' motivational and confidence development process, it is noteworthy to investigate both. In this sense, the qualitative interviews allowed the researchers to explore the respondents' perspectives (Patton, 1990) about corrective feedback such as their feelings, intentions, and thoughts that could not be obtained from questionnaires. All 14 interviews (7 students at two different times) were fully recorded and transcribed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section structures the findings and discussion into two main parts: (i) general analysis of the students' writing experience and their revision process; ii) teacher feedback through conferences.

1. Overview of Writing Experience

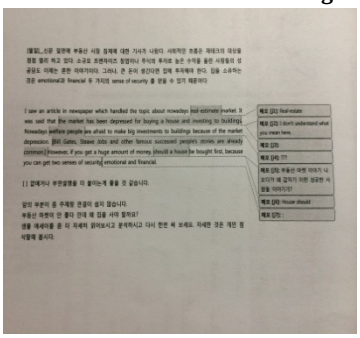
As mentioned in the methodology section (see Research Context), none of the students in this study had written an essay or participated in any writing classes before

this writing course. Overall, the course had a positive impact on the students' writing experience. According to the post-course survey results, 46% of the students replied that it was a great experience to directly write and revise their own essays, 41% responded that it was valuable to have teacher feedback, and 12% said they were able to achieve a basic understanding of how to write in English. With regard to written feedback, the students indicated the following substantial benefits of receiving written comments: being made aware of their weaknesses or deficiencies in writing (51%) and having more time to reconsider and revise their drafts through error correction (42%). As for the advantages of the oral feedback they received, prompt answers from the teacher in response to their questions were addressed by the largest number of students (67%), followed by supplementation of the limited written feedback (17%), and L1 use in interaction with a teacher (11%).

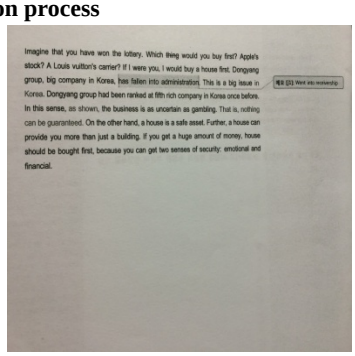
The following samples present the writing revision process through teacher feedback and correction.

FIGURE 1

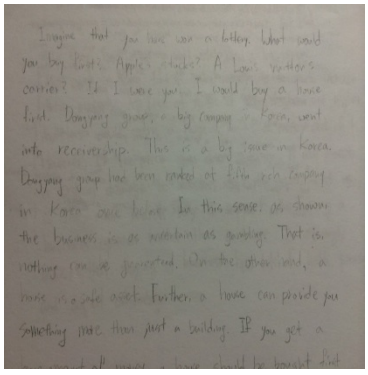
Writing revision process



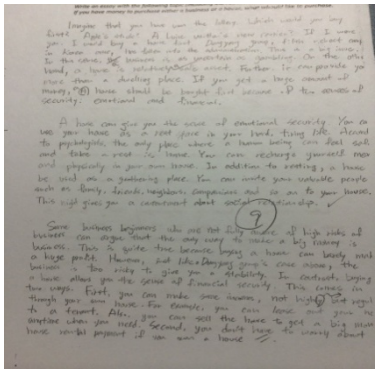
Draft 1



Draft 2



Draft 3



Draft 4

In the first draft (Draft 1), the student first wrote the introduction part in his L1 (Korean) and then translated this into an English version. The teacher mainly pointed out that there was incoherence between the beginning part and the essay topic, and asked some questions about his opinions and advised him to thoroughly read the essay samples given. In a similar vein, the most challenging thing the students in this study felt was to logically express their own ideas or opinions in English (72%). Interestingly, he totally changed the first draft with different opinions, instead of revising it. Through written corrective feedback including direct and indirect types, he revised the second draft and then had a one to one conference with the teacher. As the post-course survey results revealed, the majority of students (78%) preferred oral feedback to written feedback for the following reasons: explicit explanation, simultaneous reply, reciprocal communication, self-awareness of writing proficiency, and tailored correction in prompt responses to individuals. As seen in Draft 3, the revised draft was more focused and more clearly presented his argument, displaying only minor grammar errors. Even though Draft 4 still had errors and mistakes that he needed to correct, he was able to present a better organized structure in three paragraphs and develop his opinions with supportive examples in a full essay format.

2. Teacher Feedback: Conferences

Through in-depth interview data, this section discusses the benefits and limitations of one-on-one writing conferences in the student writing process. In particular, the data pointed to three main positive roles of conferences: (i) a rich mentoring relationship between teacher and learners; (ii) increasing motivation and confidence; and (iii) awareness of self-assessment. As for the limited factors of conferences, the constraints emerged as being of two types: weakening students' autonomous learning, and demotivating students' writing performance. Constraining factors here refers to the obstacles to students' ongoing attempts at improvement in their own writing performance.

1) Positive Factors of Conferences

(1) Teacher-Student Interaction: More Efficient Problem Solving

One advantage of conferences is the interaction between student-writer and teacher-reader (Keh, 1990, p. 298). Indeed, the conference sessions in this study provided a rich mentoring relationship between students and their teacher and also students could benefit from scaffolding and negotiation with their teacher in the writing process. Students were

able to discuss their concerns and writing goals during the conference sessions rather than receive one-way feedback. This increased interaction also enabled students to co-construct their writing process with their teacher. Compared to written feedback, conferences allow teachers to better understand their students' intentions in their writing (Leki, 1990), and to understand the strengths or weaknesses of their L2 student writers, which enables teachers to give more individual instruction. Thus, in this study the teacher's role can be perceived as a 'reader' 'collaborator', or even 'assistant' in the writing process rather than as a grade-giver. Indeed, the following two interview quotations show that feedback from conference sessions gave students a sense of security to ask questions and was ″a key element of the scaffolding" process, as explored by Hyland and Hyland (2006, p. 83):

> Emotionally, I felt insecure and incompetent when correcting the essay by myself. […] Teacher's oral comments during the conference sessions were very beneficial because I was able to take a chance to discuss my problems with the teacher and to understand what was wrong in my essay.

> It's good to have a chance to ask questions and negotiate my argument with the teacher. My teacher was not an authoritative figure. We had a very good relationship […]. I was very comfortable speaking in the conference. If the relationship between a teacher and student was top-down or vertical, I could not ask questions.

The second quotation may be consistent with some recent research (Schwertman, 1987; Walker & Elias, 1987, cited in Keh, 1990, p. 300) in that the "conference fails when teachers assume an authoritarian role, when they lead conversation and ignore questions that do not fit into their preconceived 'ideal' agenda, rather than focusing on the concerns of the students as they emerge in dialogue".

The interview data further demonstrate that teacher feedback during conferences contributed to better communication and avoided the occurrence of misunderstandings between teacher and students.

> Getting immediate feedback from the teacher was really good. My questions or problems from the essay were solved more effectively. When I got the written feedback, sometimes the comments were unclear and not explicit. Even though I wanted to ask some questions about the comments in the written feedback, I had to wait about a week until the next class. But immediate communication during the conference session was more helpful to revise my draft.

As a result, a reciprocal relationship with the teacher built through the conferences enabled students to discuss their concerns and negotiate writing goals and to develop their writing skills.

(2) Motivation and Confidence

Broadly, two main affective domains emerged from the interview data: confidence and motivation. Students perceived the writing task as being too challenging and felt incapable of dealing with writing assignments at the beginning of the semester. They initially showed a lack of confidence and poor motivation in writing tasks and this lack of confidence could be attributed to the difficulty they experience writing in English and to their reluctance to write. However, gradually, most students developed positive attitude toward writing and gained more confidence and motivation through the supportive feedback they received. Yang (2010, p. 178) also supports this point that "receiving ongoing feedback from the professor gave students more confidence in writing […] and less anxiety in their writing process". Moreover, a new language learning goal has emerged: willingness to put effort into writing assignments and readiness to perceive the value of writing tasks. Setting a language learning goal has been regarded as an important motivator in L2 writing research as Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999, cited in Kormos, 2012, p.394) state, "language learning goals are only effective motivators if they become internalized to some extent".

According to Ushioda (2007, p.5), "motivation is both an individual and a socially distributed process, emergent through the interactions between human agency and social context". Such a view of motivation has significant implications in teacher-student interactions arising through conferences. Indeed, the interaction through conference sessions motivated students to work harder as a 'student-writer', rather than 'student-learner'. The majority of students reported that teacher's encouraging remarks or positive comments during conferences helped build their confidence as writers. This is because "both self-efficacy beliefs and intrinsic motivation (or enjoyment of language learning) can be affected by feedback" (Busse, 2013, p. 414). Also, this increased confidence and motivation played a crucial role in students' ongoing attempts to write better expressions and revise their draft. For example, two students commented:

> I didn't like this writing class at first and didn't know why I had to write an essay in English. I had a hostile attitude toward this class. However, as time went by, I felt my English writing had been improving little by little. So, I was getting more confidence and wanted to write better. Thus, I made more effort in writing an essay to get more positive feedback from the teacher.

> I got lots of pressure of preparing a writing draft for the conference. The teacher asked us to prepare for conferences with questions or revised versions of drafts. At first, it was very stressful, but I came to realize this process improved my writing skills a lot. When I got good comments from the teacher, I wanted to show better performance. In the beginning, I had a kind of external pressure to study to get a good grade rather than enjoy writing; however, I now want to study English harder and harder.

It is interesting to note that some students displayed different attitudes toward English writing in each interview stage. For example, Tom expressed discontentment with teacher feedback since he thought that his argument was right. He felt frustrated and was demotivated in the first interview, explaining his views as follows:

> I thought I did really well when submitting my first draft. However, I got very harsh and critical comments on the draft. I could not understand and was dissatisfied with the feedback. I was discouraged and felt demotivated, actually.

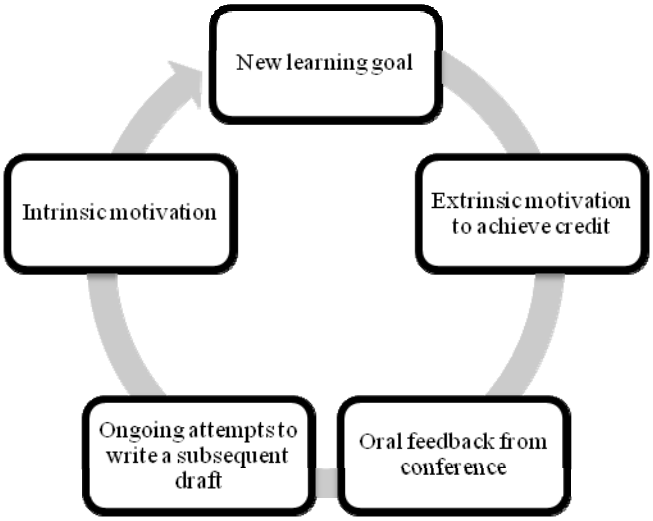
At first, he showed disappointment and frustration when anticipated comments were not received. However, he revealed a different feeling in the second interview.

> In fact, I did not understand what was wrong with my writing and felt frustrated with the fact that we (teacher and student) disagreed with the comments. When I corrected my draft according to the teacher comments, however, I came to know that my first draft was illogical. At first, I lost confidence and felt demoralized. However, after understanding what was wrong with my draft, I got more confidence and interest in English writing.

As can be seen, at first, students had an extrinsic motivation, which refers to “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 55), just to achieve the credit. However, they had to attempt to rewrite and revise their draft based on teacher feedback. In this process, many of the students started to engage in the learning process because they found the writing process interesting and enjoyable, which is indicative of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, ibid). This obtained intrinsic motivation led students to have a new learning goal. Based on the data analysis in this study, the following figure outlines the developmental stages of motivation and confidence.

FIGURE 2

The diagram of developmental stages of motivation and confidence



(3) Development of Error Awareness

① Grammatical Aspect

Since most of the interviewees had no previous experience with writing tasks and naturally had no chance to learn grammar before entering college, they reported that they initially felt ill-prepared to deal with writing tasks and displayed insecure feelings about their ability to cope with the writing tasks. The teacher-researcher tried to address content and grammar issues simultaneously as supported by Blau, Hall, and Spark (2002). Assistance with lexical problems was also provided in addition to content and grammar feedback. The majority of students responded that conferences were helpful when the teacher provided feedback in the area of word-choice, organization, and grammar. In particular, the error correction of punctuation, tense, and use of conjunctional adverbs enabled them to acquire more accurate expressions and better cohesive structures.

> I paid more attention to using commas after conjunctional adverb, for example, ‘therefore’, or ‘however’. I didn’t know that commas are important before. Also, I came to know through the feedback that using subject and verb correctly and subject and verb agreement is important. Still, I am confused about conjunctions and conjunctional adverbs, but I think my grammar has been improved a lot.

> There was a big improvement in using commas, periods, colons and semi-colons etc. In addition, various uses of vocabulary also help me to write a better essay; for example, I always used to use ‘but’ in order to express opposite ideas. However, the teacher suggested that I use a transition marker such as ‘however’, ‘in contrast’, ‘on the other hand’ etc. Now, I know how to use those conjunctional adverbs to link the sentence. These connectors help to structure and organize the essay in a more logical way.

The interview data shed further light on the fact that teacher’s error corrections of students' grammar and lexical problems were very helpful in improving students’ word choice and grammar. They could use teacher feedback as a reference for their subsequent draft. After students had received feedback from the conferences before handing in their final draft for final examination, they were asked to edit or revise their draft. At this stage of the writing process, they referred to input provided by their teachers in the conferences on various grammatical issues with their writing. Even though the teacher intended to prevent students from making the same errors on their subsequent writing drafts, she was easily able to find them making the same errors. However, all of the interviewees also responded that teacher feedback helped them understand their mistakes (errors) so that they were aware of what to improve next time. Therefore, error awareness was greatly developed through teacher feedback, which enabled learners to acquire better expressions and structures.

② Content Organization

Although most studies reveal that students want to receive teacher feedback to highlight their grammatical errors, some indicate that they also want teachers to give them feedback on the content and ideas in their writing. (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Sträub, 1997). Likewise, another compelling finding in this study was that global feedback such as organization and content was very helpful for improving their writing in the tasks they were assigned. The conference sessions focused on both global textual concerns and grammar or form-specific issues. Structure and development of story, coherence, and cohesive issues were emphasized in the process of the conference. As mentioned, since most of the students had no experience with essay-level writing, they did not know at first how to structure and organize the writing task.

> When I wrote my 1st draft of the essay, there was no coherence or logical flow. No ‘general statement’, ‘thesis statement’ ‘reasoning’ ‘examples’… I learned how to structure the content and how to support my ideas through feedback. It’s still difficult to organize the essay with appropriate content. However, when I read some other writing drafts of other people, I can point out what is wrong and what to do next.

As the student revealed, teacher feedback on the content of their writing served as a major cognitive factor (Brookhart, 2008) that gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next. This data also shows that the revision process through conferences contributes to the learning to write process by encouraging students to reflect on and self-assess their own writing. As Myers (2001, cited in Barkaoui, 2007, p. 88) has shown, "encouraging students to reflect on their texts and their writing processes can help them to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs in writing; to become more conscious of their writing processes; and to achieve autonomy".

2) Disadvantageous factors of teacher feedback

(1) Decrease in Self-Autonomy

Many recent studies (e.g. Ferries, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Thonus, 1998, cited in Eckstein, 2013, p.232) argue that many "L2 students prefer and need explicit and directive feedback (as opposed to indirect) in tutoring sessions for revision to be successful". Eckstein went on to say that this may be because indirect feedback is hard for EFL writers to interpret. However, in this study, some students responded that teacher feedback which was too direct and explicit discouraged their self-autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Students sometimes viewed themselves as passive recipients of information (Hyland, 2000) who experience too much exposure to teacher feedback. This might have reduced the opportunity for self-correction, perhaps because students believed that the teacher had pointed out all their mistakes and there was no need for further correction. Further analysis of the interview data showed that over-dependence on teacher feedback likely lowered student initiative and led to fewer self-initiated corrections, which contributed to a decrease in learner autonomy. One student commented:

> When I revised my draft, the revision was completely followed by the teacher feedback, not initiated by myself because I knew that the teacher is the one who gives a grade eventually. Even when I didn’t totally agree with teacher’s suggestions such as insertion of a transition marker, I had to follow the comments to get a good grade.

This result shows that the feedback did not always help students to improve their writing through an autonomous learning approach, which is necessary for feedback to be effective. Moreover, it seems that the teacher feedback had not encouraged students to take a dominant role in the process of revision of their own writing and to establish autonomy in their writing as self-editors. Thus, it is suggested that too much teacher

interventions may lead to students relinquishing control of their writing and revision processes, as well as their written products (Hyland, ibid).

(2) Demotivating impacts

Two demotivating impacts emerged from the analysis of the interview data: (i) critical and harsh comments without appending a positive comment in the written feedback process may make students uncomfortable; and also (ii) teacher's written comments that highlight too many mistakes and provide vague comments with a lack of clarification, were also considered as a demotivating factor in the L2 writing revision process.

First, not all the students felt that it was helpful to receive critical comments on their written drafts. One student mentioned:

> In fact, I felt demoralized getting harsh feedback; it is very disheartening to see that. I'm really unconfident about my writing and negative feedback without very many positive comments made me feel more and more insecure.

As can be seen in the above quote, even though it is true that the student had low confidence in his writing ability from the beginning, he felt more incompetent after receiving negative feedback. Busse (2013, p. 418) asserts that "this kind of feedback [negative feedback] is harmful since as Bandura (1997) mentions that existing self-efficacy beliefs are more easily destroyed by negative feedback than restored by positive feedback". It is true that learners' individual differences can also influence students' perceptions of and preferences for feedback (Kormos, 2012); however, teachers need to keep in mind the importance of maintaining a balance between positive reinforcement and criticism to maximize the impact of teacher feedback. To support effective feedback, teachers should also keep in mind that positive feedback is considered 'positive reinforcement' whereas negative feedback is considered punishment' (Brookhart, 2008).

It is worth mentioning that comments which are too abstract and which do not provide sufficient explanation can make students feel demotivated. Instead of specific strategies, questions, and suggestions that might help students reshape their texts, students may find they have been given vague prescriptive advice (Zamel, 1985, p. 83). One student, for instance, recalled her conference session, saying that:

> I really didn't know what to do. Actually, the teacher identified all mistakes but didn't comment on any of them in depth or give clear correction. The teacher kept saying that I would need to restructure and reorganize the content and underlined language mistakes with a red pen.

The interviewee-student added:

> I felt very demotivated and lost confidence... you know what? What made me feel difficult? Above all, too many things to correct […]. I didn't know how to correct it because the teacher didn't give me corrective feedback, but just suggested some ideas. I obviously want my mistakes to be corrected. It's also difficult to distinguish what is an important and not very important area to focus on.

Thus, students may be at a loss concerning how to improve their writing draft on the basis of vague or poorly considered comments provided by their teacher. This is possibly one factor, lack of clarification in the teacher feedback, which may have contributed to the decrease in students' intrinsic motivation. Students might expect to receive more constructive and clearer feedback from their teacher in order to revise their draft successfully as well as receive comments that have been clarified rather than receive abstract and vague ones. As one study (Ziv, 1984, cited in Zamel, ibid) has indicated, "when cues remain implicit, whether at the conceptual, structural, or sentential level, these responses are often misunderstood, misinterpreted, and unhelpful to students in their efforts to rethink the problems being addressed".

V. CONCLUSION

This study has responded to the following research question: To what extent does written and oral feedback support students' writing performance? Even though the degree of impact of written feedback on student writing varied according to the students' individual differences, overall, the students felt that they had benefited considerably from the teacher feedback. Despite impedimental elements such as students' tendency to overly rely on the teacher and so lack a sufficient level of learner autonomy, it has been shown that most students valued their writing experience and learning through the whole process of teacher written feedback and teacher-student conferencing. In particular, one to one conferences enabled the students to dynamically interact with the teacher, develop their revision process, and enhance their confidence and motivation in English writing and learning. That is, teacher feedback can be more effective when the teacher interacts with the student, not with the text (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

In Korean EFL contexts, it is still challenging to instruct writing classes and provide appropriate feedback to students in accordance with individual differences and their needs. While this research suggests that the ways teachers and students co-construct each other in the feedback relationship are important, teachers should be more aware of the

importance of providing effective feedback for the development of L2 learners' writing performance. Feedback can encourage and develop student with a focus on "growth rather than grading" (Sadler, 1983, p. 60). As discussed in the results and discussion section, the teachers' main role should be that of helpful facilitators offering guidance and encouragement in accordance with students' writing proficiency and their preferred feedback types in their instructional contexts. Moreover, teachers need to consider the balance between encouragement and constructive criticism in order to optimize the potential benefits of feedback.

Finally, for the teachers, the writing feedback process should also be an opportunity to encourage self-reflection as they seek to improve their feedback style and classroom instruction. Considering that there has been little research on English writing teachers in Korean educational contexts, it is recommended that further research should focus on such writing teachers with regard to their teaching beliefs, self-reflection process, actual teaching practice and experience, and professional development.

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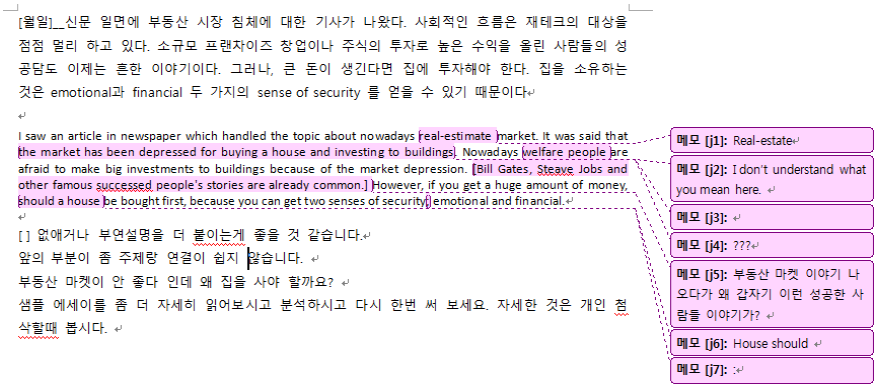
APPNEDIX A

Draft 1


[월일]__신문 일면에 부동산 시장 침체에 대한 기사가 나왔다. 사회적인 흐름은 재테크의 대상을 점점 멀리 하고 있다. 소규모 프랜차이즈 창업이나 주식의 투자로 높은 수익을 올린 사람들의 성공담도 이제는 흔한 이야기이다. 그러나, 큰 돈이 생긴다면 집에 투자해야 한다. 집을 소유하는 것은 emotional과 financial 두 가지의 sense of security 를 얻을 수 있기 때문이다.

I saw an article in newspaper which handled the topic about nowadays real-estimate)market. It was said that the market has been depressed for buying a house and investing to buildings). Nowadays (welfare people)are afraid to make big investments to buildings because of the market depression. [Bill Gates, Steave Jobs and other famous successed people's stories are already common.])However, if you get a huge amount of money, should a house be bought first, because you can get two senses of security(emotional and financial.

[ ] 없애거나 부연설명을 더 붙이는게 좋을 것 같습니다.
앞의 부분이 좀 주제랑 연결이 쉽지 않습니다.
부동산 마켓이 안 좋다 인데 왜 집을 사야 할까요?
샘플 에세이를 좀 더 자세히 읽어보시고 분석하시고 다시 한번 써 보세요. 자세한 것은 개인 첨삭할때 봅시다.

메모 [j1]: Real-estate

메모 [j2]: I don't understand what you mean here.

메모 [j3]:

메모 [j4]: ???

메모 [j5]: 부동산 마켓 이야기 나오다가 왜 갑자기 이런 성공한 사람들 이야기가?

메모 [j6]: House should

메모 [j7]: :

Draft3

Imagine that you have won a lottery. What would you buy first? Apple's stocks? A Louis vuitton's carrier? If I were you, I would buy a house first. Dongyang group, a big company in Korea, went into receivership. This is a big issue in Korea.

Dongyang group had been ranked at fifth rich company in Korea once before. In this sense, as shown, the business is as uncertain as gambling. That is, nothing can be guaranteed. On the other hand, a house is a safe asset. Further, a house can provide you something more than just a building. If you get a huge amount of money, a house should be bought first because you can get two senses of security: emotional and financial.

Draft 4

Imagine that you have won the lottery. Which would you have first? Apple's stock? A Louis Vuitton's new carrier? If I were you? I would buy a house first. Dongyang group, the fifth richest company in Korea once, had fallen into the administration. This is a big issue. In this sense, a business is as uncertain as gambling. On the other hand, a house is relatively safe asset. Further, it can provide you more than a dwelling place. If you get a huge amount of money, a house should be bought first because of two senses of security: emotional and financial.

A house can give you the sense of emotional security. You can use your house as a rest space in your hard, tiring life. According to psychologists, the only place where a human being can feel safe and take a rest is home. You can recharge yourself mentally and physically in your own house. In addition to resting, a house can be used as a gathering place. You can invite your valuable people such as family, friends, neighbors, companions and so on to your home. This might give you a contentment about social relationship.

Some business beginners who are not fully aware of high risks of business can argue that the only way to make a big money is business. This is quite true because buying a house can barely make a huge profit. However, just like Dongyang group's case above,

the business is too risky to give you a stability. In contrast, buying a house allows you the sense of financial security. This comes in two ways. First, you can make some incomes, not high but regularly from your own house. For example, you can lease out your tenants. Also, you can sell a house to get a big money when you need. Second, you don't have to worry about rental payment if you own a house.

APPENDIX B

Post-survey questionnaire

1. What do you think you learned in this course?
①to write and revise my own essay by myself
②to achieve a basic understanding of English writing
③to experience a one to one tutorial with a lecturer
④to be motivated to study English
⑤nothing

2. What was the most challenging part that you felt in your writing?
①grammar ②vocabulary and lexical choice ③logical sequences
④background knowledge about a topic ⑤other(s):_____

3. Written feedback experience

3-1. Write about the benefits of written feedback you experienced in this course.

_____

3-2. Which aspect do you think is beneficial in developing your writing?
①grammar correction ②logical thinking ③natural sequences ④lexical choice
⑤a diversity of expressions and vocabulary ⑥other(s):_____

3-3. Write about the most challenging element for you when you revised your writing based on teacher feedback.

_____

4. Oral feedback experience

4-1. Describe the oral conferences that you experienced in this course.

_____

4-2. What do you consider to be the advantages of oral conferences for your writing?

_____

4-3. Have you experienced any disadvantages or challenging issues through engaging in oral conferences?

_____

5. What are your suggestions for improving teacher's writing feedback?

_____

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College or university

Ju Youn Sim
Soongsil University
369, Sangdoro, Dongjak-gu
Seoul, Korea
TEL: 010-5676-1665
Email: joan7475@gmail.com

Jae Yeon Heo
Soongsil University
369, Sangdoro, Dongjak-gu
Seoul, Korea
TEL: 010-7462-7377
Email:ninajy@hanmail.net

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