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EFL Learners' Perceptions on English Writing Tasks and Teacher Feedback*

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This study aimed to investigate how EFL learners perceived English writing tasks and teachers' written feedback. The subjects were 82 mixed major college EFL students aged 19-24; the majority were freshmen females. Based on the scores estimated from the essay evaluation test, they were placed into two groups (proficienand less-proficient writers) and responded to an in-class questionnaire. The results indicated that: (1) regardless of writing proficiency, a large number of the students felt that they were just *fair* writers, which could be derived from low confidence and high anxiety; (2) grammar and vocabulary were perceived as the main features that determined good EFL writers and also prevented the students from performing the writing task successfully; (3) they believed that teachers' feedback contributed to the development of their English writing skills because it helped them apprehend what to improve or avoid in the future, acquire better English usage, and correct their errors; and (4) the proficient writers were more willing to correct errors themselves after being provided clues than the less-proficient writers. Implications of the findings for EFL classrooms are discussed.

[EFL writing/perceptions/teacher feedback, 외국어로서의 영어 쓰기/인식론/교사의 피드백]

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I. INTRODUCTION

In L2 learning, writing is considered to be an important and complicated process. In second language classrooms, writing skills are underlined in that L2 learners can strengthen learning in and reflecting on the L2 and promote the proficiency which is required to write letters, journals, reports, or essays, etc. Nevertheless, L2 learners often suffer throughout the composing process due to a lack of linguistic and cognitive strategies, limited vocabulary, and L2 deficiencies. In short, students are not able to clarify their ideas to the audience in the L2 written texts. The ability to write in L2 with accuracy and coherence is a major accomplishment; even many native speakers of English fail to truly acquire this competence (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Khaldieh, 2000).

There is no doubt that L2 composition teachers' major responsibility is to help their students develop writing abilities according to students' needs and goals. It is crucial that teachers should be aware of what is involved in L2 writing and explore variables that are conducive to understanding L2 learners. Context, cognitive processing, affective factors, and constraints on composing skills have a strong impact on L2 learners' written texts. Over the past twenty to twenty-five years, there have been exponential increase on empirical studies on L2 writing, considerably affected by L1 composition research. For instance, L2 researchers examined students' composing processes and strategies and found some similarities between writing in L1 and L2. Nevertheless, L2 students could not perform their writing tasks as well as L1 students. L2 learners' deficiencies in linguistic knowledge was an impediment to producing high quality texts. Unfortunately, EFL students' perceptions about writing in English which can provide writing teachers with information that can facilitate writing tasks have been paid relatively little attention in L2 research (Chin, 2005; Khaldieh, 2000; Polio, 2003; Raimes, 1985; Reid, 2001; Silva, 1993).

The primary purpose of the present study is, therefore, to investigate college EFL learners' perceptions about themselves as writers and about writing in English. The secondary purpose is to explore their perceptions about teachers' written feedback. Specifically, the following questions are addressed:

(1) What are the perceptions of EFL learners about performing English writing tasks?

a. According to EFL learners' perceptions, what are the characteristics of good EFL writers?
b. How do EFL learners perceive themselves as writers?
c. According to EFL learners' perceptions, what kinds of problems do they have while writing in English?

(2) What are the perceptions of EFL learners about teachers' written feedback?
a. While reviewing teacher's written feedback, what do EFL learners pay attention to?
b. What are the preferences of EFL learners for error corrections?
c. In what ways do they think that teachers' feedback help them improve their writing skills?

(3) What are the differences between the proficient and the less-proficient EFL writers in regard to the above issues?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many of the L1 writing studies have been replicated in L2 writing research and suggested some pedagogical implications for the classroom teachers. With regard to the comparison of L1 and L2 composing processes, researchers have reported contradictory results. Some of the L2 findings (Arndt, 1987; Edelsky, 1982; Zamel, 1983) corroborated the findings of L1 studies, while other research (e.g., Raimes, 1985) revealed some conflicting observations in terms of L1 and L2 composing behaviors. For instance, unskilled ESL students did not return to their texts to revise as often as the unskilled native English speaking students because they were not obsessed with errors.

All in all, composing processes in L1 and L2 generally appear to be similar, but there are also salient differences that teachers should deal with in order to make sure classroom expectations and teaching practices are unbiased and

productive. L2 writers produce shorter texts, are less prohibited by teacher-editing and feedback, and plan less than L1 writers. Furthermore, L2 writing teachers ought to understand individual learner differences which could affect L2 writing development. Evidently a student's goals, competence, and perspectives are likely to determine his or her successful acquisition of L2 writing skills, so they have to be taken into account in activating instructional strategies and developing L2 writing curriculum. As shown in the following, using case studies, interviews, and questionnaires, an increasing number of teacher-researchers have focused on learners' input regarding diverse issues in L2 writing classes which can disclose useful insights (Hyland, 2003; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Reid, 2001).

Mohan and Lo (1985) took a survey on L2 learners' perceptions of their experiences and problems while learning to write. The 30 Chinese respondents whose age ranged from 16 to 35 indicated that their major weaknesses in English composition were vocabulary, sentence variety, and transitional words and phrases. In other words, their perceptions about writing difficulties were mostly limited to the sentence level rather than the level of discourse organization. This result was derived from the fact that they were exposed to English instruction in Hong Kong which was oriented to sentence accuracy while discourse organization was neglected. Thus we can see that previous educational experience could be an important factor that determines students' perceptions about L2 writing.

Leki (1991) explored 100 ESL learners' preferences for error correction in college-level composition classes. The results of her survey showed that the subjects figured that good writing is error-free writing. The majority of them (67/100) revealed that they expected their teacher to identify the location of the error and give out a clue about how to correct it. Regarding the error correction process, the majority pointed out that their teachers were the best source of help, followed by grammar books. It is notable that these students were reluctant to find assistance from their native or non-native peers. Leki assumed that since many were new arrivals in the U.S., lack of peer responding experience could be one possible explanation to this finding. It is striking that although many students claimed that grammar, spelling, vocabulary choice, and punctuation were crucial, not many of them always read the marks in those

items carefully enough. On the other hand, the students who always paid attention to teachers' comments on the organization and the ideas outnumbered those who looked carefully at the corrections on those formal features of their writing.

Ferris (1995) examined L2 learners' perceptions about themselves as writers and found that the majority rated themselves either only good (43%) or fair (44%) writers rather than excellent (1%) or poor (6%). She conjectured this result as an indication of the insecurity that most people had against L2 writing. Students' anxiety about writing could be an impediment to becoming more proficient writers. In fact, K. Kim (2006a) explored the relationship between writing apprehension and English writing achievement among 136 college EFL students. The findings of her study showed that students had strong apprehension about writing in English in that negative perception about the writing proficiency was the most influential factor of their writing apprehension. Self-perception about the writing proficiency significantly affected the students' writing performance. Furthermore, low self-confidence about EFL writing was revealed on the questionnaire in that quite a few of the students (55/136) rated their English writing proficiency either as not good or very poor. It is interesting to note that females appeared to be more apprehensive about L2 writing than males.

By conducting appropriate writing activities, however, classroom teachers could reshape students' negative perceptions about L2 writing. For example, Blanton (1987) found that L2 students enhanced their writing proficiency and decreased their anxiety level about themselves as writers while engaging in writing journals, essays, and learning logs. Journal writing gives a positive impact on L2 learners' writing attitudes and habits in that it allows students to experiment with English through writing without regard to mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, or coherence (Clark, 1986; Spack & Sadow, 1983).

On the other hand, the findings of S. Kim's study of 105 college EFL students (2004) indicated that almost all of the respondents considered themselves to be poor writers. According to their beliefs, writing is a means to expand grammar as well as vocabulary. Most students wanted to learn to compose correct sentence structures while few articulated their desire to learn to express ideas in writing. Good writers are defined as the ones who are able

to produce long sentences without the aid of resource materials. While writing speed was regarded as another significant variable, they paid less attention to content and organization as criteria of writing ability. This research corroborates previous findings that ESL writers were primarily concerned about surface features and felt that they could clearly communicate meaning as long as they had enough vocabulary and grammar at their disposal (Joe, 2002; Mohan & Lo, 1985).

Feedback plays an important role in a process approach to writing. It is defined as input that a reader gives a writer in a variety of forms (e.g., comments, questions, suggestions, etc.) for revision. Feedback helps writers figure out problematic areas such as illogical organization and improper vocabulary choice which could lead the audience to confusion (Keh, 1990). Although teachers' written commentary is a major area of feedback, studies of L2 students' reactions to such feedback are relatively rare as opposed to studies focusing on teacher response to student writing both in L1 and L2 contexts. Therefore, Radecki and Swales (1988) looked at 59 ESL students' preferences and beliefs on feedback. Specifically, they surveyed the students' views on the value of multiple types of written comments, the range of teacher markings, responsibility in error marking and correction, and revision. Based on their degrees of acceptance of revision and of teacher intervention in giving out input, the respondents were placed into three groups: receptors, semi-resistors, and resistors. The results showed that the majority of the respondents (87%) expected their teacher to mark all their linguistic errors. In other words, error marking was perceived as the teacher's major responsibility and rewriting was regarded as the correction of surface-level errors.. Like many L1 students, the non-receptive majority in this study reported their negative attitude toward rewriting, while some considered it as punishment, which could impede their L2 writing development.

Cohen (1987) researched the issue of student processing of teachers' feedback on papers in L1 and L2 classrooms. His findings indicated that students not only paid great attention to teacher comments referring to mechanics and grammar, but they also substantially attended to the features of vocabulary, organization, and content in which teacher comments were numerically restricted. It is of importance to note that self-rated better learners gave more

attention to comments on vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics than did self-rated poorer learners. Furthermore, self-rated poor writers gave less attention to teacher comments on grammar than those who gave themselves higher self-ratings to a significant level. Learners reportedly used a limited set of strategies in processing teacher feedback. "Making a mental note" of the teachers' comments was reported to be the most common, while "rewriting the paper" was rarely performed and more prominent among self-rated poor writers.

Likewise, Enginarlar (1993) investigated 47 EFL students' perceptions regarding the utility, interest, and instructional value of the feedback procedure on the texts. The feedback procedure basically employed an error coding system which dealt with surface, grammar, lexis, and mechanics. His results revealed that most of the students admitted that the feedback procedure contributed to their writing development, although they did not enjoy revising their texts. With regard to the responsibility of giving out feedback, Enginarlar's finding was consistent with Leki's (1991) finding that L2 learners wanted the teacher to intervene during the error correction process.

III. METHOD

1. Subjects

The subjects in the present study consisted of 82 EFL students who were enrolled in three sections of a required English course at a private university located in Gyeongsang province, South Korea. They were nearly all freshmen, and also the females outnumbered the males. All of them were non-English majors and aged 19-24 years. In order to examine the subjects' English language proficiency, the researcher administered a pretest during the first week of the spring semester of 2005. Specifically, the subjects took a 60 item English language proficiency test that covered vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. The test was a shortened version of a TOEIC practice test from *Building Skills for the TOEIC Test* (Richardson & Peters, 2001). The results disclosed that the subjects' English language proficiency levels varied from 19

to 51 correct items.

2. Data Collection

1) The Writing Task

The researcher required the subjects to write an English essay on the topic of "Discuss three criteria that you would take into account when choosing your career after graduation" during the fifth week of the spring semester in 2005. The essay task was accomplished as a homework assignment and ranged in length approximately from 300 words in the case of the high performers to 230-250 words for the intermediate and low performers. Students were allowed to consult any kind of reference materials in case of need except translation software. Any revision assistance from native English speakers was, however, prohibited. They had to hand in two copies of their essay to be evaluated by two native English speaking instructors. In order to gain insight into their perceptions toward writing in English, the researcher asked the subjects to keep track of all the procedures they employed while fulfilling their writing task.

2) Questionnaires

During the last week of the spring semester in 2005, all the subjects were directed to fill out a questionnaire which composed of two parts. Part I was designed to explore the subjects' perceptions about writing in English and about themselves as EFL writers, whereas part II was to find out their beliefs and preferences regarding their teacher's written feedback. The questions on the questionnaire were written in English, but the subjects were allowed to respond in Korean. Some of the questions were derived from the findings of the previous studies (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991). With regard to the procedure, students were supposed to briefly report their opinions referring to the open-ended questions (1-6) in part I of the survey. In part II, the subjects were directed to respond by circling the number that came closest to representing their own behaviors regarding question 7. Responses of each item were presented on a four-point Likert Scale: A lot (1), Some (2), A little (3),

and None (4). On the other hand, questions (8-9) dealing with error corrections were given in the form of multiple choice questions. Question 10 was open-ended where the subjects were to provide their beliefs about the effects of their teachers' written feedback on the improvement of their writing skills.

3. Data Analysis

After collecting the subjects' essays, the researcher asked two experienced native English speaking instructors (two male Canadians) to review and rate them on a 100-point scale. The instructors were on the teaching staff at the subjects' university. The evaluation of the essays were performed according to six categories: content (0-24), organization (0-20), discourse (0-20), syntax (0-12), vocabulary (0-12), and mechanics (0-12) (Brown, 1994, p. 343). When the two instructors independently completed evaluating the subjects' essays, they returned them to the researcher. As a final score, she added up each subject's two scores from both instructors and averaged them. The inter-rater reliability was .76. The data pool revealed that the subjects achieved total scores ranging from 47 to a maximum 100 points. Based on the scores gained from the essay evaluation, they were classified into two groups. Subjects who achieved a score of 80 points and above were placed into a group of "proficient" writers (mean = 89.6) while those who scored below 80 points were placed into a group of "less-proficient" writers (mean = 70.9).

In analyzing the subjects' responses to the qualitative questions on the first part of the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the corpus, searched for commonalities and patterns, and devised a set of coding categories. In doing so, she followed Holsti's guidelines (1969) to examine the efficacy of categories: (1) the categories corresponded to the studies' questions and purpose; (2) the categories were thorough in that all pertinent items in the collected data were able to be sorted into a category; and (3) the categories were exclusive to each other, so that no single item could fit into more than one category. In the process of applying the identified coding categories to the remainder of the data, they were refined and updated multiple times because of the revelation of new regularities and/or inappropriateness (Seliger & Shohamy, 1997). For the sake of convenience, students' qualitative responses that were under 5% in total were

simply sorted into "miscellany" as a whole. It should be noted that in response to the open-ended questions, students were allowed to address more than one feature which was sorted into a separate category. Consequently, total percentage of all the categories to each of these questions could come to more than 100%. On the other hand, students' quantitative responses to questions (7-9) in part II were tallied and summed. As a subsequent investigation, t-tests were run to determine the statistical significance between the proficient and less-proficient writers regarding question 7. All the responses to each question in the survey were tabulated and compared to examine similarities and differences between the two groups.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. EFL Learners' Perceptions about English Writing Tasks

As shown in Tables 1 and 2 (see the Appendix), the first question of the questionnaire asked the subjects to rate themselves as EFL writers. A large number of the students felt that they were fair writers (proficient 62.5% vs. less-proficient 64%), while less than a third of the students assessed themselves as poor writers (proficient 22.5% vs. less-proficient 26%). It is notable that regardless of writing proficiency, nobody rated himself/herself as an excellent writer. Only a few of the subjects believed themselves as good writers (proficient 15% vs. less-proficient 10%). A possible explanation of this finding is that the majority of the subjects feel insecure and/or anxious about writing in English which could be indicative of having low self-confidence about themselves as EFL writers (Ferris, 1995). L2 learners' high level of anxiety could be detrimental to L2 learning development (Y. Kim, 2005).

In response to question 2, strong English vocabulary (proficient 75% vs. less-proficient 73.8%) was ranked first as the characteristic that could determine a good EFL writer, followed by a good command of English grammar (proficient 72.5% vs. less-proficient 57%). Further, the proficient writers ranked being a good Korean writer, a lot of English reading, and self-confidence equally in third place (17.5%), followed by fluent English speaking proficiency

(15%), strong background knowledge (10%), and being a good Korean speaker (7.5%). In miscellany, awareness of audience, a good sense of English, creativity, and frequent English writing practice, etc. were included. In contrast, the less-proficient writers ranked being a good Korean writer and fluent English speaking proficiency equally in third place (21.4%), followed by strong background knowledge (16.7%), self-confidence (9.5%), and a lot of English reading (7.1%). In miscellany, creativity, risk taking, and being a good Korean speaker, etc. were included.

Question 3 was to explore obstacles that prevented EFL learners from performing English writing tasks successfully. A great number of the proficient writers indicated weak vocabulary (72.5%) and lack of grammar (62.5%) most often, followed by lack of self-confidence (7.5%), insufficient English writing practice (7.5%), and a tendency to translate Korean into English (5%). In miscellany, inaccurate mechanics and weak organizations were found. Likewise, the less-proficient writers claimed lack of grammar (59.5%) and weak vocabulary (50%) most often; a tendency to translate Korean into English and unwillingness to take risks to create complex sentence structures were ranked equally in second place (7.1%). With regard to miscellany, anxiety about writing in English, low self-confidence, and lack of background knowledge, etc. were included.

Question 4 asked the subjects to report what they think they have to do in order to improve their English writing skills. A large number of the proficient and less-proficient writers said that they ought to increase vocabulary (62.5% vs. 66.7%), strengthen grammar (52.5% vs. 61.9%), read English materials (35% vs. 33%), and practice English writing (32.5% vs. 14.3%). In addition, the proficient writers mentioned that they had to promote self-confidence (7.5%) and improve English speaking proficiency (7.5%), while learning the culture and history of English speaking countries and being exposed to mass media such as English channels on TV were found in miscellany. The less-proficient writers indicated developing English speaking proficiency, promoting self-confidence, and extending background knowledge in miscellany.

Question 5 was to investigate what the subjects would pay attention to the most while writing in English. Both the proficient and less-proficient writers reported attending extensively to grammar (52.5% vs. 50%) and vocabulary

(30% vs. 33.3%), followed by content (27.5% vs. 23.8%), organization (20% vs. 19.1%), and mechanics (2.5% vs. 2.4%). A possible explanation for this is that since the proficient and less-proficient writers all perceived grammar and vocabulary as their major obstacles, they were more likely to focus on those two features over others in the process of writing in English.

Question 6 was to find out what the subjects would do when they had difficulty expressing complicated ideas or creating complex sentence structures. The proficient writers reported that their first choice (60%) was to seek assistance from better writers (e.g., instructors, peers, family members, native speakers, etc.), but consulting reference materials (e.g., grammar books, dictionaries, etc.) was not far behind (52.5%). They also surf the internet (20%) and eliminate or simplify problematic structures (17.5%). In contrast, the less-proficient writers claimed that first of all, they either consult reference materials or ask better writers for help to the same extent (54.7%). Both surfing the internet and eliminating or simplifying problematic structures were equally ranked (21.4%) as alternatives. It is of importance to note that instructors were simply included in the category of 'better writers.' In other words, the students in this study failed to show an exclusive dependence on their instructors as a separate source of help, which contrasts with the result of Leki's (1991) research.

2. EFL Learners' Perceptions about Teachers' Written Feedback

The results for question 7 are shown in Tables 3 and 4 (see the Appendix). While reviewing the teacher's written feedback, the proficient writers reported attending extremely closely to teacher comments regarding grammar (100% marked "a lot" or "some"), vocabulary (95% indicated "a lot" or "some"), and organization (90% reported "a lot" or "some"). They also reported paying considerable attention to the areas of content (77.5% "a lot" or "some") and mechanics (65% "a lot" or "some"). It is notable that 72.5% of the students pay *a lot* of attention to grammar but only 17.5% pay *a lot* of attention to mechanics. Yet there were still 35% who reported paying only *a little* attention to mechanics. A possible explanation for this might be that the proficient writers pay the most attention to grammar but the least to mechanics. Likewise,

the less-proficient writers indicated giving great attention to teacher comments regarding grammar (97.6% "a lot" or "some"), vocabulary (88.2% "a lot" or "some"), and organization (88.2% "a lot" or "some"). They also appeared to be substantially interested in the areas of mechanics (78.5% "a lot" or "some") and content (62% "a lot" or "some"). In more detail, 71.4% of the students pay *a lot* of attention to grammar but only 19.1% pay *a lot* of attention to content. Again, there were still 35.7% who reported paying only *a little* attention to content. Thus it can be interpreted that the less-proficient writers pay the most attention to grammar while content is their least concern. As shown in Table 5 (see the Appendix), t-test results between the proficient and less-proficient writers revealed that there was no significant difference found in regard to all those five items on question 7. All in all, the findings of this study suggest that both the proficient and less-proficient writers primarily attend to grammar problems, a result which corroborates that of previous studies of L2 learners' views regarding teacher feedback (Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). It should be noted, however, that the students' responses revealed that teacher feedback on other areas (e.g., organization and vocabulary, etc.) were not neglected.

Questions 8-9 were to explore the students' preference for their teacher's error corrections in their written work. When asked, "When you made many errors in your text, what do you need your teacher to do?," more than half of the proficient writers (52.5%) preferred that only the errors that the teacher considered major be checked, and another 37.5% preferred that all errors, major and minor, be checked. Only 3 students wanted teachers to check all repeated errors whether major or minor (7.5%), and one student preferred that only errors that might interfere with communication be checked (2.5%). On the other hand, 42.9% of the less-proficient writers preferred that all errors, major and minor, be checked, and another 31% preferred that only the errors that the teacher considered major be checked. 14.2% chose to have all repeated errors, whether major or minor, checked. The remaining 11.9% preferred that only errors that might interfere with communication be checked. In other words, the less-proficient writers appeared to be more obsessed with errors, regardless of importance (i.e., major or minor), than their counterparts. Being concerned about making errors could be an impediment to making progress (Kim, 2006b).

In response to the question of how the students wanted their teachers to point out an error in their written work, 55% of the proficient writers responded that they wanted their teachers to show where the error was and to provide a clue about how to correct it. Another 45% wanted teachers to cross out what was incorrect and to provide correct answers. No students wanted teachers to only show where the error was with no clue, or to ignore the errors and only to comment on the ideas expressed. In contrast, a large number of the less-proficient writers (61.9%) said that they wanted their teachers to cross out what was incorrect and to provide correct answers. Another 35.7% preferred that teachers indicate where the error was and to provide a clue about how to correct it. Only 2.4% preferred that teachers ignore the errors and only comment on the ideas expressed, and no student wanted teachers to simply locate the error without any clue.

Finally, question 10 asked the students to give their opinions about teacher feedback: "In what ways do you think teachers' feedback help you improve your writing skills?" A large number of the proficient writers (62.5%) indicated that their teacher feedback help them figure out their weaknesses so that they could know what to improve next time. Another 37.5% reported that teachers' error corrections were very helpful in terms of the development of vocabulary, grammar, and/or organization; 30% said that they could use teacher feedback as reference to other written work; 20% reported that teachers' encouraging remarks or positive comments build their confidence as writers and motivated them to work harder; 10% reported that teacher feedback prevent them from making the same errors; and 7.5% mentioned that teacher feedback enables them to acquire better expressions and structures.

In contrast, 42.9% of the less-proficient writers reported that teachers' error corrections were very helpful in terms of the development of vocabulary, grammar, and/or organization; 35.7% reported that teacher feedback helps them figure out their weaknesses so that they could know what to improve next time; 11.9% reported that teacher feedback enables them to acquire better expressions and structures; 9.5% reported that they could use teacher feedback as reference to other written work; and 7.1% reported that they could estimate their writing proficiency level based on teacher feedback. It should be noted that unlike the proficient writers, the less-proficient writers did not address teachers'

encouraging remarks or positive comments at all. A possible explanation for this outcome might be that because the less-proficient writers were not able to perform as well as the proficient writers, they were less likely to receive that type of commentary which they might find discouraging. A summary of the responses to questions 8-10 is provided in Tables 6 and 7 (see the Appendix).

V. CONCLUSION

The primary question of this research was how EFL learners would perceive themselves as writers and about writing in English. More than half of the proficient and less-proficient writers mentioned that they regarded themselves as *fair* writers rather than *excellent* or *good* writers. It is hard to figure out exactly why the students felt this way, but it may partly reflect the fact that the vast majority of them were nursing, engineering, or history majors, so they would feel more confident of their academic knowledge than of their English writing abilities. According to their perceptions, vocabulary and grammar were the main aspects that could determine good EFL writers. Thus, it is not surprising that weak vocabulary and lack of grammar were believed to be the major impediments to carrying out their writing task. Interestingly, both groups of writers chose L1 writing competency and English speaking proficiency as other features that make good EFL writers. While writing in English, the proficient and less-proficient writers reported paying the most attention to grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization in that order. In other words, the primary concern of the students in this study appeared to be surface level features. As the best source of help, the proficient writers relied on better writers, while the less-proficient writers considered reference materials and better writers equally.

Another question to be answered was in regard to teachers' written feedback. Overall, the students seemed to appreciate their teachers' comments and error corrections and respect their advice. While reviewing their teachers' feedback, both groups of EFL writers reported paying the most attention to comments on grammar than any other aspects of their written work. The proficient writers attended to mechanics the least while the less-proficient writers to content.

Even when there were many errors in their papers, the less-proficient writers were more likely to expect their teachers to mark all errors, major and minor, than their counterparts. Neither group of writers seemed to give exclusive attention to errors that could lead to communication breakdown. The proficient writers, however, were more willing to correct their errors with a clue by themselves; more than half of the less-proficient writers rather wanted their teachers to give correct answers. Both the proficient and less-proficient writers claimed that their teachers' feedback contributed to the development of their writing skills because it helped them apprehend what to improve or avoid in the future, acquire better usage, and correct their errors. In addition, the proficient writers reported that their teachers' feedback could enhance their confidence, while the less-proficient writers mentioned that it could allow them to measure their writing competency. Neither of the two groups, however, said that it could help them develop the content of their texts (e.g., clarify their ideas). In other words, this study revealed that EFL writers were in desperate need of "content-oriented feedback."

Limitations of the present study should be acknowledged for future research. First, the majority of the subjects were females who were mostly freshmen. Therefore, the findings of this research as a whole may not be applicable to EFL classrooms which comprise both males and females or to mixed years. This study should be replicated with a balanced ratio which covers a different year-subject group. Second, this study explored EFL learners' perceptions about teacher feedback in single-draft situations. Future research should investigate student reactions to teacher feedback in multiple-draft contexts where students are allowed to rewrite their essays. In that setting, students would be more likely to pay attention to teacher feedback on their rough drafts to make the most of their opportunity to work on them prior to final grades (Ferris, 1995). Possibly, students' preferences and attitudes toward teacher comments and error corrections would vary according to their needs. Third, instead of focusing on one type of feedback (i.e., teachers' commentary), this research should be replicated on a larger scope. For instance, it would be worthwhile to expose EFL writers to a variety of feedback such as conference, peer reviews, and e-mail correspondence in addition to teacher commentary on papers and conduct a comparative analysis with regard to student preferences and processing

strategies for each type of feedback. The effects of each type of feedback on the improvement of EFL writing skills would be another issue to examine. The findings of such studies might allow teachers to gain a more in-depth insight on EFL composition and pedagogy.

VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study suggest the following pedagogical implications for EFL writing teachers. First, the fact that EFL learners tend to pay the most attention to grammar problems on teacher feedback does not mean that they do not appreciate anything but grammar feedback. The survey showed that they also valued teachers' advice about other features. If teacher feedback mostly deal with accuracy in form rather than with meaning, it may have limited impact on the EFL learners' writing development. Giving extreme attention to EFL students' grammar problems on papers, therefore, would be counterproductive. The students' responses, however, did not reveal that their teachers' feedback helped them clarify their ideas. Accordingly, teachers should make efforts to give suggestions that concern more with content in addition to surface level features (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; McCurdy, 1992).

Second, a considerable number of the EFL learners in this survey rated themselves just *fair* writers which could be derived from low confidence and high anxiety. In order to build their confidence and lower their anxiety level, teachers should make sure to provide students with comments of encouragement or praise while constructive criticism is not abandoned, regardless of their writing proficiency. That way, EFL learners would be more likely to be engaged in writing tasks and to process teacher feedback, utilizing multiple strategies (e.g., make a mental note), to become better writers. For higher grades, students would attend to teacher feedback more seriously on preliminary drafts than on final drafts. If teacher feedback is to significantly contribute to helping EFL students revise and develop their writing, it is an essential prerequisite that they should be allowed to write their essays in multiple-draft contexts (Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991).

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APPENDIX

Table 1
Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part I): Perceptions about English Writing Tasks
(data in percentages; n = 40)

1.	How would you rate yourself as an EFL writer? excellent good 15% fair 62.5% poor 22.5%
2.	What are some characteristics that determine a good EFL writer? -strong vocabulary: 75% -a good command of grammar: 72.5% -a good Korean writer: 17.5% -read a lot of English materials: 17.5% -self-confidence: 17.5% -good English speaking proficiency: 15% -strong background knowledge: 10% -a good Korean speaker: 7.5%
3.	Describe some obstacles that prevent you from performing English writing task successfully? -weak vocabulary: 72.5% -lack of grammar: 62.5% -lack of self-confidence: 7.5% -insufficient writing practice: 7.5% -a tendency to translate Korean into English: 5%
4.	What do you think you have to do in order to improve your English writing skills? -increase vocabulary: 62.5% -strengthen grammar: 52.5% -read English materials: 35% -practice writing: 32.5% -promote self-confidence: 7.5% -improve English speaking proficiency: 7.5%

5.	While writing, what do you pay attention to? -grammar: 52.5% -vocabulary: 30% -content: 27.5% -organization: 20% -mechanics: 2.5%
6.	What do you do when you have difficulty expressing complicated ideas or creating complex sentence structures? -seek assistance from better writers (e.g., instructors, peers, native speakers, etc.): 60% -consult reference materials: 52.5% -surf the Internet: 20% -eliminate or simplify problematic structures: 17.5%

Table 2
Less-Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part I): Perceptions about English Writing Tasks
(data in percentages; n = 42)

1.	How would you rate yourself as an EFL writer? excellent good 10% fair 64% poor 26%
2.	What are some characteristics that determine good EFL writers? -strong vocabulary: 73.8% -a good command of grammar: 57% -a good Korean writer: 21.4% -good English speaking proficiency: 21.4% -strong background knowledge: 16.7% -self-confidence: 9.5% -read a lot of English materials: 7.1%
3.	Describe some obstacles that prevent you from performing English writing task successfully? -lack of grammar: 59.5% -weak vocabulary: 50% -a tendency to translate Korean into English: 7.1% -unwillingness to take a risk to create complex sentence structures: 7.1%

4. What do you think you have to do in order to improve your English writing skills?

-increase vocabulary: 66.7%
-strengthen grammar: 61.9%
-read English materials: 33%
-practice English writing: 14.3%

5. While writing, what do you pay attention to?

-grammar: 50%
-vocabulary: 33.3%
-content: 23.8%
-organization: 19.1%
-mechanics: 2.4%

6. What do you do when you have difficulty expressing complicated ideas or creating complex sentence structures?

-seek assistance from better writers (e.g., instructors, peers, native speakers, etc.): 54.7%
-consult reference materials: 54.7%
-surf the Internet: 21.4%
-simplifying problematic structures: 21.4%

Table 3
Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part II): Perceptions about Teachers' Written Feedback (n = 40)

Question 7	Mean SD	Frequency/ % of Responses A lot %	Some %	A little %	None %
-How much attention do you pay to grammar on teacher feedback?	1.28 0.45	29 72.5	11 27.5	0 0	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to mechanics on teacher feedback?	2.18 0.71	7 17.5	19 47.5	14 35.0	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to vocabulary on teacher feedback?	1.5 0.60	22 55.0	16 40.0	2 5.0	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to organization on teacher feedback?	1.55 0.75	23 57.5	13 32.5	3 7.5	1 2.5
-How much attention do you pay to content on teacher feedback?	2 0.75	10 25.0	21 52.5	8 20.0	1 2.5

Table 4
Less-Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part II) : Perceptions about Teachers' Written Feedback (n = 42)

Question 7	Mean SD	Frequency/ % of Responses A lot %	Some %	A little %	None %
-How much attention do you pay to grammar on teacher feedback?	1.31 0.52	30 71.4	11 26.2	1 2.38	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to mechanics on teacher feedback?	2.02 0.72	9 21.4	24 57.1	8 19.1	1 2.38
-How much attention do you pay to vocabulary on teacher feedback?	1.55 0.71	24 57.1	13 31.1	5 11.90	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to organization on teacher feedback?	1.81 0.63	13 31.1	24 57.1	5 11.90	0 0
-How much attention do you pay to content on teacher feedback?	2.21 0.78	8 19.1	18 42.9	15 35.7	1 2.38

Table 5
T-test Results of Proficient and Less-Proficient Writers' Responses to Question 7

Question 7	proficient (N = 40)		less-proficient (N = 42)		t-test
	M	SD	M	SD	P
-How much attention do you pay to grammar on teacher feedback?	1.31	0.52	1.28	0.45	0.7490
-How much attention do you pay to mechanics on teacher feedback?	2.02	0.72	2.18	0.71	0.3405
-How much attention do you pay to vocabulary on teacher feedback?	1.55	0.71	1.50	0.60	0.7433
-How much attention do you pay to organization on teacher feedback?	1.81	0.63	1.55	0.75	0.0938
-How much attention do you pay to content on teacher feedback?	2.21	0.78	2.00	0.75	0.2097

Table 6
Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part II): Perceptions about Teachers' Written Feedback (n = 40)

8.	When you made many errors in your text, what do you need your teacher to do?
	-check only the errors that the teacher considers major: 52.5%
	-check all errors, major and minor: 37.5%
	-check all repeated errors whether major or minor: 7.5%
	-check only errors that might interfere with communication: 2.5%
9.	How do you want your teacher to point out an error in your text?
	-The teacher shows where the error is and provides a clue about how to correct it: 55%
	-The teacher crosses out what is incorrect and provides correct answers: 45%
	-The teacher shows where the error is with no clue: 0%
	-The teacher ignores the errors and only comments on the ideas expressed: 0%
10.	In what ways do you think teachers' feedback help you improve your writing skills?
	-helps me figure out my weaknesses so that I know what to improve next time: 62.5%
	-error corrections are very helpful in terms of the development of vocabulary, grammar, and/or organization: 37.5%
	-can be used as reference to other written work: 30%
	-encouraging remarks or positive comments build my confidence as writers and motivates me to work harder: 20%
	-prevents me from making the same errors: 10%
	-enables me to acquire better expressions and structures: 7.5%

Table 7
Less-Proficient Writers' Responses to Questionnaire (Part II): Perceptions about Teachers' Written Feedback (n = 42)

8.	When you made many errors in your text, what do you need your teacher to do?
	-check only the errors that the teacher considers major: 31%
	-check all errors, major and minor: 42.9%
	-check all repeated errors whether major or minor: 14.2%
	-check only errors that might interfere with communication: 11.9%
9.	How do you want your teacher to point out an error in your text?
	-The teacher shows where the error is and provides a clue about how to correct it: 35.7%
	-The teacher crosses out what is incorrect and provides correct answers: 61.9%
	-The teacher shows where the error is with no clue: 0%
	-The teacher ignores the errors and only comments on the ideas expressed: 2.4%
10.	In what ways do you think teachers' feedback help you improve your writing skills?
	-error corrections are very helpful in terms of the development of vocabulary, grammar, and/or organization: 42.9%
	-helps me figure out my weaknesses so that I know what to improve next time: 35.7%
	-enables me to acquire better expressions and structures: 11.9%
	-can be used as reference to other written work: 9.5%
	-estimates my writing proficiency level: 7.1%

예시 언어(Examples in): English
적용가능 언어(Applicable Languages): English
적용가능 수준(Applicable Levels): College

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