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A CASE STUDY OF HOW A LARGE MULTILEVEL EFL WRITING CLASS EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVES MULTIPLE INTERACTION ACTIVITIES

by

Hsien-Chuan Lin

B.A., Tamkang University, 1985 M.A., University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, 1990

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree

Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the Graduate School Southern Illinois University Carbondale December 2009 Copyright by Hsien-Chuan Lin, 2009 All Rights Reserved

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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By

Hsien-Chuan Lin

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Curriculum and Instruction

Approved by:

Dr. Lynn C. Smith, Chair

Dr. D. John McIntyre

Dr. Marla H. Mallette

Dr. Tamara L. Yakaboski

Dr. Laura J. Halliday

Graduate School Southern Illinois University Carbondale August 10, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Hsien-Chuan Lin, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum and Instruction, presented on August 10, 2009, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: A CASE STUDY OF HOW A LARGE MULTILEVEL EFL WRITING CLASS EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVES MUTIPLE INTERACTION ACTIVITIES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Lynn C. Smith

The purpose of this study was to examine students' experiences and perceptions of multiple interaction activities (self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback) implemented in a large multilevel EFL writing class in one private technological university in the southern part of Taiwan. Large size writing classes, quite common in private institutions of higher education in Taiwan, cannot be effectively operated to meet individual students' needs in improving their writing performance. Low achievers have difficulties in keeping up with competent writers in learning writing skills while advanced students complain of their learning too little from the class.

This research, based on the activity system model proposed by Engestrom (1987), was a case study in which interviewing student participants, observing classroom activities, audiotaping peer response sessions, and examining students' drafts and feedback sheets were the methods to collect data. The qualitative software, ATLAS.ti, was employed to analyze interview and peer response data according to the code lists developed for this

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purpose. A rubric was developed to examine the changes students made after having incorporated the three types of feedback into their drafts.

Major findings indicated that intermediate and low achievers, though making more efforts in conducting self-directed feedback, felt unsatisfied with this activity while high achievers, investing less energy and time, gave more positive opinions to this activity. However, intermediate and low achievers gave a higher percentage of satisfaction to peer response activities than high achievers because the former could obtain more constructive peer feedback than the latter. In addition, all students were in favor of modified teacher feedback but gave negative opinions to traditional teacher feedback. On the whole, intermediate and low achievers, based on their preference, ranked teacher feedback the most important, then peer feedback and finally self-directed feedback whereas high achievers placed teacher feedback first, self-directed feedback second, and peer feedback last.

Student writers' responses to each type of feedback were closely related to the amount of constructive comments they received. The more helpful suggestions they obtained, the more positive opinions they gave to a certain type of feedback. In the end of the study, recommendations were made for curriculum designers, classroom practitioners, and further studies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to explore the experiences and perceptions of students after the implementation of a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in a large multilevel English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan. The activity system model developed by Engestrom (1987) was used as the theoretical framework to describe the multiple interaction activities in an EFL writing class. This model, based on Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) concepts of artifact-mediated and object-oriented actions and of internalization/ externalization, had been developed by Vygotsky's students and followers to explore the mutual influence among seven elements—subject, rules, community, tools, object, division of labor, and outcome—in human activity, especially useful to understand the concepts such as action, activity, and operation. A detailed description of the activity system model is provided in Chapter Two. This introductory chapter consists of (1) the context under which this study is conducted, including the researcher's motivation, the background of large writing classes in private education institutions, and some major problems in large EFL writing classes, (2) purpose of the study, (3) research questions, (4) significance of the study, (5) delimitations and limitations, (6) definitions of terms used in this research, and (7) organization of the study.

Context

Taiwan is a resource-poor island-state with limited land for living, agriculture, and industrial and business development. The only way for economic development is to

cultivate highly qualified manpower (brain power) for societal and business needs through higher education. With the revocation of martial law in 1987, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan was no longer a government organization that had higher education under its total control (Mok, 2002). Instead, MOE now plays the roles of facilitator and coordinator by devolving powers to national and private higher education institutions in four aspects: personnel management, academic freedom, finance, and curriculum (Mok, 2002). As a result of this new educational policy, a rapid expansion in the number of universities and colleges developed from 105 in 1987 to 162 in 2009. Of the 162 universities and colleges, 109 are private schools. Of all students in higher education, more than 75% are enrolled in the private sector, as shown in Table 1 (Department of Statistics, MOE, 2009).

Table 1

Number of Higher Education Institutions and Students in Taiwan

School year Institution number				Student nun	nber	
	University and college	Junior college	Total	University and college	Junior college	Total
1986	28	77	105	184,729	244,482	429,211
Private	13	56	69	115,478	190,946	306,424
(%)						(71.4%)
2008	147	15	162	1,006,102	117,653	1,123,755
Private	97	12	109	739,320	105,499	844,819
(%)						(75.2%)

Source: The website of Department of Statistics, MOE in Taiwan 2009

According to Lee (2004), the Taiwan government spent about 19.70% of the total budget on educational expenditure in 2002. The educational budget for higher institutions accounted for 34.97% of the educational expenditure. In addition to democratization, there are other reasons for the opening of new private institutions. First, the state has

difficulty financing all higher education sectors with more social demands, individual needs, and manpower development plans for higher education provision. The use of private resources is one strategy the state uses to cope with the lack of public resources (Wang, 2003). Therefore, a shift from elitism to mass higher education is one tendency of higher education policy. Next, the expansion of the private sector in higher education can relieve the stress experienced by secondary school leavers and their families (Wang, 2003). Taiwan has been deeply influenced by Confucianism that "puts a premium on education" (Wang, 2003, p. 272). Education, especially higher education, is not only a means of social movement (advancement) but also a way for self-realization (success). In the age of elite education, high school students must go through a highly competitive joint entrance examination to be admitted to a limited number of universities. Therefore, the call for mass higher education from society is predictable. Finally, the growing impact of globalization affects the educational policy in Taiwan. In order to make Taiwan more competitive in regional and international trade markets, the government needs to change its governance philosophy. Therefore, the policies of decentralization, privatization, and marketization have been adopted in higher education provision (Mok, 2002). The policy of using private resources to deal with social and individual demands has led to the opening of new private institutions in Taiwan. The prosperity of private institutions is not all rosy. The low quality of private education is one of growing public concerns in the process of shifting from an elite to a mass system (Wang, 2003). The major reason for low education quality in the private sector is the lack of educational resources. In general, the gaps in the educational resources between the public and the private sectors are major factors to sway the quality of education produced. The public

sector has advantages in items such as the ratio of the number of students to teachers, the unit cost per student, library volumes, number of academic staff with a Ph. D., campus and accommodation areas, and cheaper tuitions when compared with the private sector (Wang, 2003). The advantages of educational resources in the public sector attract students with higher academic performance to enroll into different fields of study. As a contrast, students going to private institutions are not as proficient as those studying in public institutions in terms of academic performance, attitude toward and motivation of learning, and self-image.

The Researcher's Motivation

In order to be competitive in international trade markets, not to be isolated from international society, and to let students have opportunities to pursue individual dignity, values, and learning needs, the Taiwan government believes that higher education is an important way to achieve these goals. In higher education, learning English is especially essential for the purpose of international communication, business, and understanding. Learning English as a foreign language has become very popular with many Asian countries in the past three decades. Taiwan is no exception to this global phenomenon. Many colleges focus their attention and enthusiasm on the development of the students' English proficiency, due to the gradually forming global village or just out of the motivation, viewing English as an instrument for specific purposes (e.g., international trade, tourism, advanced studies in English-speaking countries, information and technology advancement for careers). Some scholars in Taiwan have been involved in doing research in the aspects of reading (e.g., Huang, 1998; Kung, 2008; Su, 2008; Wei,

1999), listening (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006, 2007; Chien, 1998; Shang, 2005, 2008), speaking (e.g., Hsu & Chiu, 2008; Sun, 2008; Yang, 2007), writing (e.g., Cheng, 2008; Lee & Krashen, 2002; Liu & You, 2008; Min, 2005, 2006; Tseng, 2004), and translation (e.g., Cai, 2007). Of all these five basic language skills, writing instruction, especially in large multilevel classes, is a field still worthy of a deep and detailed investigation.

It is understood that research in the pedagogy of English composition shows fruitful achievement in English-speaking countries. Is it feasible to transplant all the research results on learning and teaching strategies to Taiwan? Writing in the first language (L1) is different from that in an ESL (English as a Second Language) /EFL language not only because of the varied syntactical expressions but also because of the cultural influence on language and thought (Silva, 1993). The ways of one's thinking and perception of the world are potentially influenced by the language one uses (e.g., culture and language influence each other, a view of Moderate Whorfianism, Chandler, 1995). How to adapt applicable composition theories and practices to Taiwan's learning environment is a job worthy of study, and this is especially true for the case of the private higher education sector.

A writing class with 30 students is already regarded as a large class (Hess, 2001) in the United States; nevertheless, a writing class with 45 or more undergraduates is not an unusual case in most of the private colleges in Taiwan. Could it be that the classroom activities that work in English-speaking colleges are also feasible in those classes of Taiwan? Should a process-oriented or a product-oriented approach be the guideline in a large multilevel EFL writing class? How to provide teacher response to 45 students' papers in a time-saving, but at the same time feedback-comprehensible way, is a

challenge to EFL writing instructors. Some ESL researchers even suggest that error correction contributes nothing significant to improving students' writing ability (Lee, 2003; Truscott, 2004) and, therefore, instructors need not go to great lengths to grade students' papers. Can this be equally applied to the case of teacher feedback on EFL students' writing?

In addition, what kind of role does cultural, social, economic, and political background knowledge play in the process of writing in English? For the low-level EFL students, is guided writing preferable to free writing, or should equal attention be paid to both of them in a writing class? How do students' attitudes, motivation, goals, and language proficiency influence their perceptions and experiences of writing activities? In short, the aim of the present study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of EFL students about the multiple interaction activities carried out in a large multilevel writing class in which students had differing attitudes toward writing, motivations to write, goals for writing, language proficiencies, personal and world knowledge, and personality traits.

The Background of Large Writing Classes

There are several reasons why large writing classes are common in most private colleges of Taiwan. First, budgets are not large enough for private institutions of higher education to build more classrooms on campus or to hire more teachers to reduce class size. The government does not place a high priority on educational resources and funds in the annual national budget because of shifting priorities or a "crowding out effect" (Lu, 2002). Expenditures on environmental protection, national defense, and social welfare are "crowding out" higher education funding. This "crowding out effect," together with slow

economic growth, difficulty in raising funds, and the rising number of universities, is draining the government's existing educational resources (Lu, 2002). The government does not give subsidies equally to the public and the private sectors. The national universities and colleges receive about one-third of the total expenditure each year from the state (Mok, 2002) while the private ones obtain only a much smaller proportion of the subsidy. The principle for subsidy distribution to private institutions of higher education is based on the results of assessment of school administration operation, faculty publication of academic research, curriculum and instruction, and the degree of internationalization (student and professor exchange programs, cooperation with other international universities, attendance at international conferences, etc.). In general, the government adopts the policy that private sectors in higher education should self-manage their own finances by devolving to them the rights to increase tuition fees between 5% and 5.5% each year (Mok, 2002), to invest monies of their University Funds to earn more interest for operations (Lee, 2004), to recruit adult students for life-long learning programs, and to raise funds through different channels.

Another reason for the existence of large writing classes is that teachers cannot persuade school authorities to adopt smaller classes for English composition because policy decision-makers decide to lower the cost by increasing student numbers in writing classes after taking the school's tight budget into consideration, or because they do not have language learning background knowledge, or because there is not enough campus space to build new classrooms in the crowded urban city areas.

Some Major Problems in Large EFL Writing Classes

The major issue of a large EFL writing class lies in the quality and quantity of classroom interaction between the instructor and the students as well as between student and student. One typical case of teacher-student interaction is that low-achieving students have little opportunity to improve their writing abilities and tend to be weaker in class because they do not get much help from their teacher's instruction and interaction which corresponds to the vicious cycle of the "Matthew Effects" where the poor get poorer and the rich get richer (Merton, 1968, as cited in Stanovich, 1986). Moreover, higher achievers become bored because the class, in their opinion, is designed for intermediate students. Hence, they feel they do not learn anything challenging.

Another disadvantage of a large multilevel class is that the students get little teacher feedback because the instructor does not have enough time to allot to each student. The instructor has a hard time monitoring all the students and checking their work because of the constraints of time. Also the issue of evaluating writing is very labor intensive for an instructor compared to grading a multiple choice exam, for example. Other shortcomings of a large-sized class are related to classroom management. It is hard for the instructor to manage so many students in the classroom in terms of learning and individual behavior. It can easily get noisy, and it is difficult to keep classroom discipline effectively in a large class. In addition, it is also hard to develop a good rapport between the teacher and the students. If a teacher does not know the students by being able to call their names and understand their learning situations, it is difficult for the students to develop a close bond and view the teacher as a significant other in the learning process. This situation may lead to a decrease in students' motivation to learn. One common problem in a large class,

according to Nunan & Lamb (1996), is that a teacher is unable to deal well with "the two-zone problem"—those students who sit in the front of the class may have the academic advantage of teacher-student interaction while those in the back cannot see or hear instructional activities clearly, and tend to be demotivated (pp. 147-148).

The interaction between student and student also discloses the disadvantageous features of a large class. First, shy students feel hesitant to interact with others in a large class due to too many strangers making them uncomfortable. Second, pair or group activities are hard to conduct because the teacher is unable to keep a close eye on each pair or group; therefore, the learning style tends to be individualized. Finally, most students who have been under the influence of "teacher talk" (Nunan & Lamb, 1996, pp. 61-67) for many years are used to being receivers of knowledge, not active participants in classroom activities. In addition, to be modest and avoid self-assertion is one of the characteristics seen in the cultural teachings of most Asian countries (Hall, 1976). This cultural influence contributes to the ineffectiveness of communication in a large

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of students after the implementation of a series of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities in a large multilevel EFL writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan. The theoretical framework of this study was based on the activity system model (Engestrom, 1987) to describe the responses of the participants to the multiple interaction activities. The instructor, with the help of the researcher, provided the students with guidelines and

worksheets for these three types of feedback activities, coupled with information about all related rationales for the activities and modeling how to become involved in the actions and operations. The researcher intended to examine the responses of the participants to self-directed, peer, and modified teacher feedback and the potential pedagogical implications that could be drawn from their experiences and perceptions of multiple interaction activities to shed light on composition instruction for large multilevel EFL writing classes in other private higher education institutions.

The studies conducted by other researchers on self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback show quite diverse findings. Some studies show positive evaluation for the implementation of peer interaction, self-directed, and teacher feedback while others offer criticism. Most studies were conducted with small numbers of participants, homogeneous groups, or random grouping. No research was dedicated to examining the experiences and perceptions of the participants in multiple interaction activities in a large multilevel EFL writing class. Compared to the smaller class sizes in previous research, could the implementation of peer response be as beneficial to students in a large writing class with students so differing at the levels of language proficiency, motivation, and background knowledge? After the peer interaction activities, what kind of teacher feedback could supplement what peer response could not provide for the writers' revisions? Could self-directed feedback benefit students in the development of written competence and gradually help students become independent writers?

The participants in this study included 43 English-major students with different levels of language proficiency, attitudes toward writing, and motivation. The researcher adopted heterogeneous grouping (eight students per group in a pre-writing session and

four students per group in a peer response session, rather than peer review dyads) based on students' writing ability and friendship. There were several reasons for adopting peer response groups instead of peer review dyads: first, peer response groups can provide writers with more comments from diverse angles on their essays than peer review dyads (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1984; Spear, 1984). Second, the relationship in a peer response group is horizontal (equal status among group members); a peer review dyad, on the other hand, is hierarchical (tutor and tutee) (Damon, 1984; Sharan, 1984; Slavin, 1980, cited in Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Third, larger groups are more suitable for brainstorming because of "the increased range of abilities, knowledge, experience, and skills available," and they are easier for the teacher to manage in a classroom (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 62). Finally, peer review dyads are impractical for implementation given classroom space constraint and classroom management issues.

The multiple interaction activities consisted of (1) students' outlining the main ideas of the text by following guidelines and checking lists before coming to the class for the pre-writing session, (2) group members' discussing how to generate ideas and organization for the draft in the pre-writing session, (3) a self-directed feedback activity implemented after the first draft, (4) peer review and negotiation on peers' second drafts in peer response sessions, and (5) teacher feedback on the third draft. In general, the guideline (Appendix B) and feedback sheets (Appendices C, D, and E) served to raise the writers' awareness of the writing process in the hope of helping them to eventually be self-regulated writers. In short, the purpose of this study was to examine if the use of peer interaction, coupled with self-directed feedback and teacher feedback, would help students in the process of writing.

Research Questions

In view of the preceding research purpose, five research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1. How do EFL students react to pre-writing discussion sessions on generating ideas and organization?
- 2. What are EFL students' perceptions of self-directed feedback in the process of revision?
- 3. What do student writers think of written and oral feedback from peers in peer response sessions? How do they deal with peer comments in their subsequent revisions?
- 4. How do EFL students respond to the teacher feedback on their revised drafts?
- 5. What do EFL students think of these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher)?

Significance of the Study

A fairly large body of literature exists on peer review in the field of ESL/EFL writing since the process-oriented approach was introduced from L1 composition pedagogy to the L2 setting in the late 1980s (Berg, 1999b). However, within that literature, there is a surprising lack of information about the experiences and perceptions of the students related to peer response in a large multilevel EFL writing class. Most studies were conducted in small classes, focusing on the effects of training for revision and writing quality (Berg, 1999b; Min, 2005, 2006), on comparing the effects of peer and

teacher feedback (Miao, Bedger, & Zhen, 2006; Zhang, 1995), on cultural impact on peer response group interaction (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999), on student interaction and negotiation in peer response sessions (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996), on reader stances during peer response (Lockhart & Ng. 1995), and on the influence of teacher feedback on student revision (Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 1997, 2006; Sheen, 2007; Sugita, 2006). This study attempted to supplement the findings of those earlier studies. The processes for performing the feedback activities were similar to the empirical studies discussed in Chapter Two (literature review) in that the focal points were on the training of students, the teacher's modeling how to interact with peers in a constructive way, the provision for guidelines and feedback sheets, and the need for multiple feedback on multiple drafts and revisions. It differed from previous studies, however, in exploring the experiences and perceptions of the participants, the ways students were placed into groups, how cultural influence worked on the interaction among peers (Do EFL students [e.g., in Taiwan] with shared values, customs, and beliefs perform peer response activities differently from ESL students [e.g., in the United States] with diverse cultural backgrounds?), and how the process-oriented approach to writing was conducted by means of self-directed feedback, peer comments, and teacher feedback together, not simply by any one of them (Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998).

It was hoped that answering the above research questions, in accordance with the experiences and perceptions of diverse participants, would contribute to the holistic understanding of whether a combination of three types of feedback in process-oriented writing would be feasible in a large multilevel EFL writing class, and consequently

inform instructional practice and further studies to lessen the disadvantages of large writing classes in private institutions of higher education in Taiwan.

Delimitations and Limitations

Two delimitations can be found in this research. First, this study confined itself to a large multilevel EFL writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan. Second, this study was limited to twenty-four student informants to investigate their experiences and perceptions of the multiple interaction activities in a large writing class, rather than, as some empirical studies had done, to probe the causes of the improved quality and the revision types of writing texts.

Seven particular limitations may have impacted this study: First, the findings of this research, based on the experiences and perceptions of 24 student participants in a private university, may not be generalized to other writers in other contexts due to the limited number of participants, the length of study period, the writers' multilevel language proficiencies, and the individual differences in motivation, attitude, goal, and personal experiences and knowledge. Second, due to the human and subjective nature of qualitative research, the findings and data may be subject to other interpretations.

Third, since the students' language proficiencies, knowledge and beliefs, goals, and motivation varied, it was possible for the advanced and average students to gain benefits from multiple interaction activities, but difficult for the lower achievers to improve their attitudes toward writing, motivation to learn, and personal goals in only one semester (18 weeks). The implementation of multiple interaction activities made certain lower achievers participate inactively in all activities because language literacy and self-

perception had been developed in a longitudinal process, not in a few months, but for several years. The direct consequence of the Matthew Effects created a negative self-image in the writers' minds, just as Arthur W. Combs argued, "[m]ost important changes in the self-concept probably occur only as a consequence of many experiences repeated over long periods of time" (1978, p. 25).

Fourth, a few advanced students became impatient about the implementation of peer response activities due to the fact that students in private institutions of higher education are charged higher tuition and miscellaneous fees when compared with those students in the public sector (Liu, Chou, & Liu, 2006). The advanced students regarded peer interaction as an activity to teach lower achievers without learning anything significant themselves from the instructor. This cost-benefit consideration from students influenced the effectiveness of the multiple interaction activities in some groups.

Fifth, cultural influence made some students reserved with regard to their comments on peers' writings in peer response activities. In *Beyond Culture* (1976), Edward T. Hall categorized cultures into high-context and low-context. The high-context culture, common in the eastern cultures, values the groups over the individuals. A strong sense of tradition makes the shared values change little over time. To be modest and avoid self-assertion is one of the characteristics to be seen in these cultural teachings. In a high-context culture, many things are left unsaid, letting the culture explain. As a sharp contrast, the low-context culture, common in the United States, places an emphasis on the value of the individuals. A low-context culture explains things further because of diverse backgrounds and drastic cultural change from one generation to the next. After having understood these cultural differences, one should not be surprised to find that most

students in Taiwan tend to be reticent as well as self-censoring writers as a result of socialization. For example, in the activity of peer response, a partner may have some reservations in giving feedback on a peer's writing for the sake of saving face. According to the Politeness Theory proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987), "face" refers to a person's public self-image. Positive face is the desire for appreciation and approval by others. Examples of face-threatening acts include criticism, insults, and a language that shows a lack of respect for other people. As a contrast, negative face is the desire not to be imposed on by others. Examples of face-threatening acts include inappropriate requests, questions, and interruptions (they are generally taken as intrusive rather than cooperative). Any intrusive speech acts are viewed as encroaching upon the "territoriality" of the conversational partners in a high-context culture (Murata, 1994, p. 398). When interacting, a writer needs to balance the concern for a peer's face with the desire to protect her/his own. To avoid self-assertion is one rule of thumb in interpersonal relationship. This face-saving concern led the interaction among the peers to be labeled as about-task or off-task, instead of on-task (de Guerrero & Villamil, 1994).

Sixth, the variance among student participants within the three subgroups (high, intermediate, and low achievers) in the matter of language proficiency, cognitive and affective domain, efficacy expectation, and background knowledge makes it impossible to reach clear-cut and precise conclusions from their responses to different writing activities. For example, Mico, a low achiever in writing performance, is a thoughtful student with strong efficacy expectation after having gone through the two cycles of writing assignments. By contrast, Alison, a high achiever in writing tasks, is impatient with all peer response activities, taking them as a "too time-consuming" learning process.

Sandra, an intermediate writer, expresses certain viewpoints that are quite different from her peers. In short, the findings obtained from data sets are mixed with differing degrees of perceptions and opinions. The results presented, as is so often the case, are only possibilities or tendencies.

The last limitation is related to the translation of the dialogues from peer response sessions and interviews with informants. To get the full and subtle expressions of the students, all oral activities were conducted in Chinese. The researcher encountered some difficulties in the process of translating the transcriptions from Chinese into English. First, in the Chinese versions, the symbols of conversation analysis used in the dialogues of peer response sessions became dislocated and decreased in English versions due to syntactic and logic differences in these two languages. Second, for some expressions in Chinese, no counterparts could be found in English, for example, "a frog in the well," "building a cart behind the closed doors," and "bustle around like a headless fly." As a result, some similar expressions in English were used to make the data comprehensible to readers. Third, some interjections in Chinese had no equivalent words in English, for example, "ai" for a sigh, "yi" for surprise, "en" to express doubt or make a promise, and therefore were rendered as typical English interjections. For the above-mentioned reasons, the researcher makes no claim that the translations of the interviews and peer dialogues are completely faithful, graceful, and expressive as the counterparts in Chinese.

Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

The terms used in this study were defined as follows:

Activity: Activity is "a collective, systematic formation that has a complex mediation structure" (The Activity System, 2003). In the afore-mentioned EFL writing class, the learning activities included interaction among peers and the teacher by using guidelines and feedback sheets, following the agreed-upon class rules, shouldering one's share of a task, and playing different roles on various occasions to engage in a process-oriented approach to the writing tasks.

Multiple Interaction Activities: Activities included are self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback. Training students and modeling how to conduct these feedback processes were provided before these activities were implemented. In addition, pre-writing discussion and debriefing were carried out as parts of the classroom activities.

Self-Directed Feedback: With the guidance of a self-directed feedback worksheet, the writer revised his/her first draft to make it clearer and more readable. The purpose of the self-directed feedback activity was to hold student writers accountable as authors for their own written texts and to raise their awareness of where to place their selective attention about the aspects of writing. This activity aimed to help students to cultivate personal autonomy and assume responsibility in the learning of writing to eventually acquire self-efficacy and become autonomous writers.

Peer Feedback: Similar to peer evaluation, peer review, and peer editing, peer feedback was considered to consist of the following activities: pre-writing discussion, reading each other's texts, providing oral and written feedback through a face-to-face negotiation over the intended and perceived meanings, and seeking for an alternative text. Moreover, the

students assumed the roles of writers, readers, partners, and tutors to recreate their written texts in a cooperative way.

Teacher Feedback: The feedback provided by the teacher in the present study was different from the traditional one. In a traditional teacher feedback activity, a teacher, in accordance with personal experience and belief about an ideal text, gives as many comments and corrections as possible at one time to make the student text complete, cohesive, and coherent. In this study, to avoid the appropriation of student text, the teacher wrote no more than three or four major concerns (Connors & Glenn, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Straub; 2000) about textual changes. It was necessary to tell the student writers that even a final draft could be revised to increase its clarity, completeness, concreteness, and coherence. The motivation of the teacher not to provide students with all possible comments was out of the respect for the students' rights as the owners of the texts and as writers to be.

Organization of the Study

This study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of students after the implementation of multiple interaction activities in a large multilevel EFL writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan. Chapter Two presents the related rationales of peer response (the process writing theory, social-historical theory, collaborative theory, perspectives on interaction from the field of second language acquisition, and cultural-historical activity theory), the pros and cons of peer response, some principles for effective peer response, the debate over the effects of teacher feedback, the concept of writer autonomy, and some previous empirical studies related

to peer response. Chapter Three introduces the qualitative methodology of a case study approach, including participants and setting, instruments, and procedures, data analysis, verification of interpretation, ethical considerations, and subjectivity statement. Chapter Four presents the results and addresses the research questions. Finally, in Chapter Five, major findings of the study are concluded, and pedagogical implications and suggestions for both classroom practice and future research are given.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter comprises eight parts. The first section is related to the higher education system in Taiwan. The second section concentrates on the rationale justifications for peer response. The third section focuses on the evaluation of peer response implemented in the ESL/EFL writing classrooms. The fourth section discusses some principles for effective peer response. The fifth section is concerned about teacher feedback and the debate over appropriation. The sixth section concentrates on issues related to writer autonomy, and on how students can benefit from self-directed learning. The seventh section reviews the previous empirical studies of peer response in ESL/EFL environments. Finally, the eighth section summarizes points of this chapter.

Higher Education System in Taiwan

The most significant change in the history of higher education in Taiwan was the revocation of martial law in 1987, giving rise to a rapid expansion of the number of institutions and students in the private sector (Mok, 2002). There were 105 universities and colleges (36 public and 69 private) in 1987 with 429,211 enrolled students in total in higher education (306,424 in the private sector and 122,787 in the public institutions). In March 2008, the Taiwanese system of higher education encompassed 164 degree granting institutions. Among them were 55 public universities and colleges and 109 private ones. There were 1,326,029 students enrolled in the institutions of higher education. The number of students in the public institutions were 412,035; in private schools, 913,994. The number of faculty members in the public schools were 19,215; in the private ones,

31,913 (Department of Statistics, 2008). In other words, the number of schools in the private sector has increased from 69 to 109, and the enrolled students have increased from 306,424 to 913,994 in the past 21 years. The increasing ratio is 1.58 times in the number of institutions, and 2.79 times in the number of students respectively. Based on the numbers of faculty members and of students in the public and private institutions in 2008, the ratio of the number of students to teachers can be calculated to be 21.44 in the public sector, and 28.64 in the private sector.

The current higher education system consists of comprehensive universities/colleges and professional universities/colleges. The functions of the comprehensive institutions include teaching, research, and service (intramural, social, and communal), with an emphasis on research and teaching. As a contrast, the functions of professional institutions focus on vocational and technological education, research, and the cooperation with business and manufacturing sectors to develop new skills, procedures, and products. Each of these two lines of education has its own educational goals, curriculum, instruction, and student guidance (Lee, 2004).

According to the 2007 Taiwan Yearbook (Government Information Office, 2007), the Taiwan government spent 19.38% of its national budget on education in the 2006 fiscal year. Total educational expenditures for that year were US\$ 21 billion, or about 5.76% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Of the total 5.76% GDP, 1.87% was distributed to higher education. The public institutions received 0.77% (US\$ 2.8 billion) and the private sector 1.10% (US\$ 4.0 billion) educational subvention (Educational statistical indicators, MOE, 2007). In other words, 109 private universities and colleges shared about US\$ 4 billion subsidy from the state according to the results of institutional

and academic assessment done by The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan, an organization sponsored by the Ministry of Education. The educational subsidy the private sector secured from the state was lower than what the public institutions received per student if the numbers of the private and public institutions were taken into consideration.

In addition, most public universities and colleges have been long established and have accumulated many educational resources while about 40% of the private universities and colleges were opened after 1987 and have not had much chance to increase their educational resources. The rapid expansion of institutions in higher education dilutes the educational resources and consequently lowers the quality of education, especially in the private sector. To make the matter more complicated, the drastic downturn in the birth rate every year will soon make some schools in higher education unable to sustain or continue operating because of a lack of students. According to the Ministry of Interior Affairs of Taiwan, the number of new babies in 1991 was 308,569, then decreased to 292,724 in 2000, and finally declined to 192,887 in 2006. That is to say, during the past 15 years, the number change is minus 115,682; this change of the birth rate is a negative 37.49% (Chen, 2007). For most private institutions in tertiary education, tuition and miscellaneous fees are the major source of revenue for school operation. Their students are charged higher tuition and fees. For example, the range of tuition and fees in the public sector was from NT\$ 41,580 (US\$ 1,386) to NT\$ 58,980 (US\$ 1,966) in 2005. As a contrast, students were charged from NT\$ 75,820 (US\$ 2527) to NT\$ 110,460 (US\$ 3,682) in the private schools (Ministry of Education, 2006). In other words, students in the private tertiary education sector have to pay about 1.8

times more than students in the public schools. Generally speaking, students go to private colleges because their grades obtained in the joint entrance examination are not good enough for them to go to the public universities.

The rapid expansion of private institutions in higher education is not only the result of the government's policy to use private sources to establish more universities and colleges to cultivate highly qualified manpower for economic development, but also the reflection of social needs of common citizens. Most parents in Taiwan perceive higher education as a major path for future career development and personal advancement.

Before 1987, high school graduates needed to pass a highly competitive national examination called the Joint University Entrance Examination to be admitted to higher education sectors. With the establishment of more institutions of higher education, students have more choices during a multiple-channel entrance admission process by either completing a recommendation/an exam procedure or applying to the programs and universities they select. Generally, students with outstanding academic performance in schools or winners of competition like International Math Olympics are recommended to enter university without taking the entrance examination.

In response to the impact of the rapid expansion of institutions on higher education provision and the trend of globalization, the Taiwan government revised the University Law in 1994 to give universities and colleges more freedom and flexibility in matters such as university autonomy (personnel management), academic self-determination, authority to enroll students and develop their own curriculum, and more financial autonomy. In other words, the revised University Law "launched an accelerated process of educational liberalization and deregulation" (Yang, 2001, p. 9).

In summary, with too many private universities and colleges established, the dilution of governmental educational resources, the decline in the birth rate, and the downturn of economical growth, the private institutions of higher education in Taiwan will face many challenges soon. They need to make difficult choices among the following situations to survive and develop: to recruit more students with lower academic performance to maintain school operation, to merge with other schools, to recruit more international students if possible, to get more governmental subsidy (the least feasible solution), to transform their educational objective by increasing some attractive life-long learning programs for adults and retired people, to downsize the school, and/or to promote their school's competitiveness and prestige by improving teaching, research, and service quality.

Rationale Justifications for Peer Response

This section consists of five subsections. Each subsection will dwell on one theory that underpins the theoretical framework of peer response. First, the process-writing theory influences the implementation of peer response by emphasizing meaning over form, process over product, and multiple revisions over finished texts in the process of writing. Second, the social-historical theory provides peer response with the concepts of scaffolding and collaboration among peers, as well as the sequence of language development. Third, the collaborative learning theory argues that knowledge is constructed by learners through active participation in the activities in a learning community in a two-way communication. Fourth, some studies in the field of second language acquisition provide insights on the importance of group work in the acquisition

of second language, especially the ideas of comprehensible input, intake, and output through peer interaction. The last rationale for peer response is the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), which can be used to describe the elements of peer response from the perspectives of motivation, goal, and operation as well as the dynamic reciprocal transformation of each element.

Process Writing Theory

The first theoretical foundation of peer response is derived from the process writing theory. In general, the process-oriented writing theory emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the L1 writing setting as a response to traditional product-oriented writing and then was adopted in L2 writing as a pedagogical practice. Process approach writing highlights the importance of the process of writing; students are encouraged to engage in "brainstorming activities, outlining, drafting (focusing on meaning), rewriting (focusing on organization and meaning), and editing (focusing on style and grammar)" (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 3). As a contrast, product approach writing emphasizes the importance of form and the finished text by imitating model essays. Certain factors contributed to the rise of the process approach writing in the composition classrooms. First and foremost, process writing rose in the early 1960s along with the New Education Movement (Connors & Glenn, 1992), which was deeply influenced by Jerome Bruner's ideas on learning, especially the discovery learning theory. For Bruner, learning was a process of discovering meaning, not simply taking in the ready-made knowledge. It was not enough to teach students facts and techniques; instead, education should engage students in the

process of discovering the how and why of something as it was. He illustrated this point clearly in *Toward a Theory of Instruction* by saying that

To instruct someone...is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge. We teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think mathematically for himself, to consider matters as an historian does, to take part in the process of knowledge getting. Knowledge is a process, not a product. (1966, p. 72)

Active participation in a collaborative process with personal past/current knowledge and experience to construct knowledge constitutes what is essential for learning. In a process-oriented writing task, peer response, viewed as one of the important instructional methods, supports the writing activity by students' engagement in constructing texts through negotiation of meanings, multiple feedback from multiple audiences, and multiple revision and editing.

Next, some researchers dedicated themselves to advocating the process approach to writing in the early 1970s. Janet Emig (1971) argued that in the writing classroom, reflexive (personal) writing, initiated by students, should be used more often than extensive (formal) writing, sponsored by the teacher. Reflexive writing concerns the writers' feelings and experiences, and prompts more planning, drafting, and revising. In contrast, extensive writing focuses on information to be conveyed to a reader, usually the teacher as the target audience. The influence of Emig's study lies in its conception of composition as a process and its suggestion that the composing process should be taught and studied. Peter Elbow is another important figure who supports the practice of process

writing. In Writing without Teacher (1973), Elbow proposed an alternative to the traditional writing approach. Instead of generating thoughts first, mapping an outline next, and starting writing finally as dictated in the traditional approach to composing an essay, he suggested that writing (free writing) in the early draft should be a process to let thinking flow with little concern about grammatical accuracy, diction, sentence structure, or a thesis since too much attention paid to mechanical matters can stifle thought. Only in the late draft should a writer pay attention to revising and editing diction, grammatical items, sentence structure, and rhetoric. For Elbow, writing is a process of cultivating personal voice. To promote the development of personal voice, writers are advised to work with peers instead of with teachers. The teacher-student relationship is not on an equal status (teachers as evaluators of students' works), while peer-peer relationship is equal with regard to the roles they play in the peer interaction. Writers can be students as well as teachers and readers as well as reviewers. Even though some researchers criticize his idea of writing without a prior plan since this practice may miss some important points that logically should have been considered in a well-constructed essay (Coomber, 1975), and his idea of free writing as having the tendency to reject skills instruction and the naïve expectation that frequent practice makes good writers (Fox & Suhor, 1986), Elbow's conception of writing exerts a great influence on the later-on development of peer response in the aspects of multiple drafts and multiple revisions based on multiple feedback from peers, awareness of the presence of audience, and the necessity of an objective attitude in peer exchange of opinions.

Finally, Rohman and Wlecke developed and modified prewriting as a theory of invention and teaching at Michigan State University in the early 1960s (Connors & Glenn,

1992). They argued that prewriting, the initial and important stage of writing, is the stage of discovery in the writing process. Writing should put more weight on invention and the composing process than on creating a finished essay. For Rohman, writing is a process that "shows continuous change in time like growth in organic nature" and "good thinking can produce good writing" and therefore "students must learn the structure of thinking that leads to writing" (1965, pp. 106-107). Pre-writing is one of the elements in the Stage-Model theory—prewriting, writing, and rewriting—that constitutes one strand of the process writing theory. Peer response substantiates the process-writing theory by focusing on brainstorming and multiple revisions.

Social-Historical Theory

The social-historical theory provides a second theoretical foundation for the implementation of peer response in the ESL/EFL writing class. The major contribution of the social-cultural theory to substantiate the rationale of peer response comes from Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and concept of language development. In *Mind in Society* (1978), Vygotsky defined the concept of ZPD by saying that

it is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

There are two salient points in this concept: guidance and collaboration. In other words, Vygotsky points out the essence of the social interaction between teacher and student as well as student and student in a school setting. In both types of interactions, teacher and student can serve in the role of guide and collaborator for other students in the learning community.

In the teacher-student interaction, the teacher serves as guide, facilitator, and coach, or sometimes as co-author with students. Generally speaking, the role of the teacher is to provide scaffolding, and not to directly instruct. The student has to construct his/her own meaning and make his/her own textual decisions.

In the ESL/EFL writing class, what a teacher provides to students should not be a kind of "banking system" (Freire's term, 1998)—the teacher as the dispenser of knowledge and the students as passive recipients. Instead, the students should actively participate in the process of learning to construct knowledge of writing from their past experiences. The principle for this kind of interaction is that a teacher "give[s] more help when the learners get into difficulty, but offer less help as they gain in proficiency" (Wood & Wood, 1996, p. 7).

As for the peer/peer interaction, a student can serve as a tutor or a collaborator. This type of interaction is especially helpful in a large multilevel class with heterogeneous-ability students. In some countries, teaching students in a small class is only a dream, impossible to make true. The school's financial budget cannot afford to have more teachers to fill teaching positions. Under this circumstance, requiring a writing teacher to give students detailed feedback is to demand an almost Herculean task. Even if the effort and energy put into the job of feedback are worthwhile, no teacher can handle the amount of paper correction of three classes with fifty students, respectively, each week.

The benefits of peer tutoring and peer collaboration, according to Forman and Cazden (1986), are that, among the students who interact at a cooperative level, a great deal of mutual support, encouragement, correction, and guidance is exchanged. In addition, collaborative problem solving seems to offer some of the same experiences for students that peer tutoring provides: (1) the need to give verbal instructions to peers, (2) the impetus for self-reflection encouraged by a visible audience, and (3) the need to respond to peer questions and challenges (p. 183). But the most important value of peer interaction is that the student takes an active role in schools where the teacher-student interactions are limited and rigid because the roles are irreversible. With their peers, students can reverse interactional roles with the same intellectual content, giving directions as well as following them, and asking questions as well as answering them (p. 184).

The concept of language development is another contribution of Vygotsky to support the rationale of peer response. The sequence of language development progresses from social speech through egocentric speech to inner speech and finally to written speech (1986). The gist of social speech states that language development is gradually obtained through the communication between learners and more capable peers or adults. The function of social speech is to convey intended meanings to the other party. After mastery of social speech, a learner will be able to develop egocentric speech, or self-talk. Self-talk is the transitory stage for a learner to transform (internalize) social speech into inner speech. In short, "[i]nner speech is speech for oneself; external speech is speech for others" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 225). For most ESL/EFL learners, social interaction is one way to acquire social speech with interlanguage. Social interaction embodies the verve of

peer response activities—negotiating meanings by clarifying the problem, asking and answering questions, confirming, and repairing. It is through the effort of operation and repetition that peers can "create and maintain a shared perspective of the task (i.e., intersubjectivity) and to construct scaffolded help, which enables them to complete their tasks" (DiCamilla & Anton, 1997, p. 609).

In *Thought and Language* (1986), Vygotsky acutely points out the several differences between speech and writing. First of all, writing is different from speech in both structure and function. "It is speech in thought and image only, lacking the musical, expressive, intonational qualities of oral speech. In learning to write, the child must disengage himself from the sensory aspect of speech and replace words by images of words" (p.181). It is the abstract quality that prevents learners from mastering the sign system easily. Next, in writing, unlike in speech, there is no actual addressee presented. Thirdly, speech provides interlocutors with motivation for conversation. "In conversation, every sentence is prompted by a motive. Desire or need leads to request, question to answer, bewilderment to explanation" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.181), whereas writing lacks immediate needs and is more abstract. Fourthly, writing is a task that requires a conscious effort of writers to use higher cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) to transform thought into words (visual speech). Finally, written speech, with no help of body language, intonation, and gesture as in oral speech, must fully present the content of writing in order to be intelligible to readers. The conclusions Vygotsky draws from this comparison are (1) that oral speech is "spontaneous, involuntary, and nonconscious" whereas written speech is "abstract, voluntary, and conscious," and (2) that instruction in writing starts before the readiness of writers. "It must build on barely emerging, immature processes" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.183). In other words, "performance before competence," as Courtney Cazden (1981, p. 5) puts it.

What is the exact relationship, one may wonder, between written speech and peer response? For one thing, peer response activities provide writers with actual addressees (readers and audiences) and also immediate needs and motivation for a writing task. It is through oral and written feedback in peer response sessions that the intelligibility of an essay can be put under scrutiny. The awareness of audience is the major force in a peer response activity. That is, a writer's stance will shift from "expression-oriented" to "reception-oriented" (Rosenblatt, 1994, pp. 1381-1382).

What is more, peer response offers explicit and implicit mediation at the same time. According to Wertsch (2007), explicit mediation "involves the intentional introduction of signs into an ongoing flow of activity" for the purpose of reorganizing the activity, while implicit mediation "involves signs in the form of natural language that have evolved in the service of communication and are then harnessed in other forms of activity" (p. 185). In the case of peer response, checking lists and guidelines, provided by writing instructors as explicit mediation, can be used as cultural tools to bridge students over the gap between what they currently know and what they can achieve in the level of writing competence. In other words, it is an activity in which performance starts before competence. On the other hand, conversation among peers in the interaction sessions can serve the function of implicit mediation. In daily language, student writers and peers are involved in the process of meaning negotiation in order to improve the writing quality—clarity, coherence, cohesion, and concreteness.

One final point is that peers, by giving and receiving comments on peer interaction

occasions, can exchange not only concepts, ideas, and subject knowledge but also vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar knowledge. To put it another way, peer interaction creates the opportunity for students to take in comprehensible input from others and to produce output from what they understand through conversations with peers.

Collaborative Learning Theory

The collaborative learning theory is the third theoretical foundation for promoting the use of peer response in ESL/EFL writing classes. One central tenet of this theory is that learning is viewed as "construction of knowledge within a social context" (Oxford, 1997, p. 443). In the case of college-level EFL writing, active participation in the writing activities (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing) of the learning community is essential for student writers to incorporate discriminately the feedback from peers and teachers into the revised drafts through the process of revision and editing. In general, there are three strands of theories that underpin the framework of the collaborative learning theory. To begin with, Dewey's pragmatic approach to learning states that learning cannot be an isolated activity completed by the individual alone. Instead, learning is embedded in a social context in which the individual is "part of the surrounding community and the world as a whole" (Oxford, 1997, p. 447). In other words, learning occurs while learners are engaged in sociocultural activities in a learning community through a two-way communication.

Next, social constructivist concepts such as *context* and *situated cognition* contribute to the development of the collaborative learning theory. According to Oxford (1997), learning is closely associated with the context (setting and activity) in which

knowledge is developed. Learning is totally situated in a specific social context, with emphasis on the learning process, rather than just the completion of projects, in activity-based situations with meaningful purposes. The student becomes acculturated, enculturated, or reacculturated through classroom activities and through the modeling and coaching of the teacher and many others (p. 448).

Finally, Bruffee (1984) maintains that peer tutoring, "a type of collaborative learning" (p. 87), is an alternative to the traditional classroom learning to help students improve their writing ability through the conversation between tutors and tutees. Conversation, for Bruffee, consists of interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues. Interpersonal dialogue occurs among people while intrapersonal dialogue takes place within the minds of people. The former nurtures the latter by promoting reflective thought, and reflective thought leads to internalization. Therefore, reflective thought is "public or social conversation internalized" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 89). Following this line of argument, he suggests that thought is internalized social talk, and writing is "internalized conversation re-externalized" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 91). The reason for Bruffee to advocate peer tutoring in classroom settings originates in his opposition to teacher-dominant classroom discussion because the teacher-student relationship is hierarchical in terms of power and status. As a sharp contrast, in a knowledgeable community of "status equals: peers," (Bruffee, 1984, p. 93) everyone is positioned on an equal footing to engage in negotiation of meanings or conversation "collaboratively toward new paradigms of perception, thought, feeling, and expression" (Bruffee, 1984, p. 95). What Bruffee advocates for peer tutoring supports the current practice of dyadic peer interaction in peer response activities.

Interaction and Second Language Acquisition

The fourth theoretical foundation of peer response comes from the research on group interaction in second language acquisition. Group work, viewed as an effective pedagogy to increase students' additional practice in the target language to enhance language proficiency, has been widely used in ESL/EFL classroom settings in the past few decades (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Peer response activity is one type of group work. As a general rule, group interaction increases the opportunity for students to engage in the negotiation of meaning on a text or topic and the quantity of practice by using the target language for communication. The negotiation of meaning may lead to increased comprehension that facilitates a faster and better acquisition of the L2 language. A solid theoretical framework underpinning peer response in writing classes can be found in three theories of second language acquisition-- Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, and Swain's Output Hypothesis.

The basic claim of the Input Hypothesis is that the availability of comprehensible input to the learner is one necessary condition for language learning to take place if the learner is inclined to pay attention to it (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). According to Krashen, "[h]umans acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'...We move from i, our current level, to i + 1, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing i + 1" (1985, p. 2).

Krashen also proposes three stages in turning input into intake: (1) comprehending a second language i + 1 form; (2) detecting a gap between the second language i + 1 form and the interlanguage rule that the learner currently uses; and (3) the reappearance of the i + 1 form with minimal frequency (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). The implication of

comprehensible input for peer response activities is that peers' exchange of talk, with the help of guidelines and feedback sheets provided by teachers, can furnish students with comprehensible input to bridge the gap between their current level and the level required for a writing task.

As a first challenge to Krashen's original Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis argues that in order to understand the nature and usefulness of input for learners, L2 teachers should pay attention to the interaction in which learners are engaged. Generally speaking, "the more the input was queried, recycled and paraphrased, to increase its comprehensibility, the greater its potential usefulness as input, because it should become increasingly well-targeted to the particular developmental needs of the individual learner" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p.160). Furthermore, the Interaction Hypothesis highlights the importance of conversational adjustments to achieve the goal of mutual understanding among interlocutors, and this practice may facilitate the acquisition of a second language. The Interaction Hypothesis reminds L2 teachers to strengthen input through interaction by using "conversational tactics such as repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks or clarification requests" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 167). What is more, L2 teachers should know that comprehensible input does not necessarily lead to intake if the learners do not have any motivation to learn or positive attitude toward the learning task. What Long suggests in his hypothesis is the exact attitudes and skills that students are required to have in peer response sessions—active participation, individual accountability, and social and linguistic skills for group interaction.

As a second challenge to Krashen, Swain questions the claim that comprehensible L2 input is sufficient to ensure all-round interlanguage development. She argues in her Output Hypothesis that students could succeed in comprehending second language texts while only partly processing them. In her view, "only second language production (i.e., output) really forces learners to undertake complete grammatical processing, and thus drives forward most effectively the development of second language syntax and morphology" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 160).

The Output Hypothesis engages L2 teachers to face the difference between competence and performance. The ultimate goal for L2 learners is to acquire language proficiency, not language knowledge. The importance of second language production in reading, listening, speaking, and writing performance cannot be overemphasized. As a whole, practicing for students can serve to safeguard the quality of the output and improve the level of text understanding by integrating what learners learn from texts with what they have already stored in their knowledge base. This is especially true in the case of writing classes where peer response is adopted as one of the instructional methods. Peer response activities motivate student writers to produce comprehensible output in the forms of oral and written feedback for peers. To make output comprehensible, students need to engage in explaining, inquiring, repairing, and confirming the meanings and messages they intend to convey to their peers. The concept of comprehensible output forces students to be aware of the actual addressees (those with whom they are communicating) of the communication and to become more concerned with the receptions of that communication by the audience.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

The Activity Theory (AT) provides the last theoretical foundation for peer response activities implemented in writing classes. In general, this theory is a descriptive framework for studying the relationship between human agents and objects of environment mediated by cultural means, tools, and signs. This theory, also called the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), has been developed by three generations of psychologists. The first generation of Activity Theory, according to Engestrom (2001), centers on Vygotsky's concepts of artifact-mediated and object-oriented actions and of internalization/externalization. In Mind in Society (1978), Vygotsky claims that the stimulus-response model of behaviorism is unable to reflect the relationship between a human agent and the environment. He proposes a subject-mediated artifact-object model to explain that human beings are not controlled by impulses to react directly to the environment. Instead, humans work through mediators (artifacts). The artifacts can be instruments, sign systems, machines, methods, processes, procedure, and anything else that facilitates activities (Rajkumar, 2008). Mediators help people to carry out activities, change and transform the characteristics of activities, and become acculturated after having picked up the targeted mediators. The concept of internalization/externalization is used to explain the process of learning, especially the learning of a language. Vygotsky uses social speech, egocentric speech, and inner speech to illustrate the interpersonal and intrapersonal mediation in learning a language.

Based on the foundation of Vygotsky, Leontiev (1981), the major figure in the second generation of the Activity Theory, adds a three-level model of collective object-oriented activity, conscious individual or group goal-oriented action, and unconscious

operation to explain the hierarchical conception of activity. Activity, for Leontiev, is the basic unit of analysis of human activities. Subjects are often oriented by an object-related motive (e.g., play, work, education). Activities can be realized by actions that function as the means or tools for achieving activities. Individuals or subgroups are engaged in actions with a conscious goal in mind. Actions are made up of operations. Operations are skills that have become so well learned that they do not demand any conscious effort to be carried out. The relationship among activity, action, and operation is transformative and iterative. Any activity can be transformed into an action, and further into an automated operation, and vice versa. The third generation of the Activity Theory addresses the issue of the "simultaneous co-existence and interaction of various different cultures and activities—not just the historical evolution of a single culture" (Theoretical Influence, 2003).

The components of the activity system consist of subject, object, tool, community, rules, and division of labor. The relationships among these elements can be displayed as follows:

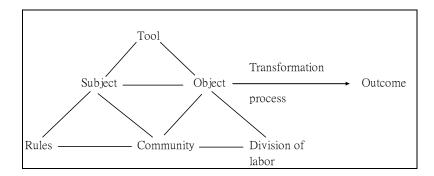


Figure F1. Engestrom's extended Activity System Model (1987)
Note. From Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research (p. 78), by Y. Engestrom, 1987.
Helsinki: Oreinya-Konsultit Oy. Copyright 1987 by Yrjo Engestrom. Reprinted with permission. (See Appendix P)

In the Activity Theory, the subject can be either the individual or subgroup whose viewpoint is taken in the analysis of the activity. The object refers to the target of the activity within the system to be transformed into outcomes with the help of tools. Tools can be internal or external, physical or symbolic mediating artifacts and signs. The community comprises one or more people who share the objective with the subject. The division of labor is concerned with how tasks are divided horizontally among community members or any vertical division of power and status. Finally, the rules serve to regulate actions and interactions within the activity system (Engestrom, 1993).

According to Kaptelinin (1996), the basic principles of the Activity Theory consist of the hierarchical structure of activity, object-orientedness, internalization/ externalization, tool mediation, and development. First of all, the principle of hierarchical structure of activity refers to the three-level structure among activity, action, and operation. Activity is oriented by an object-related motive; action is guided toward a specific goal (conscious); and operation is executed in accordance with the specific conditions. The structure of this three-level activity is not fixed, but can be changed as situations change. Next, the principle of object-orientedness states that human beings live in a reality that is objective. Social and cultural properties of the environment are considered to be objective as well as physical, chemical, or biological. Third, the principle of internalization/externalization states that internalization is the result of transforming external activities into internal ones, whereas externalization transforms internal activities into external ones. Externalization is necessary when an internalized action needs to be evaluated. The fourth principle is tool mediation, which illustrates how tool use serves as a means to carry out activities, and how tools are created and

transformed during the development of activity. Tool use can influence the external behavior as well as mental function of individuals and groups. The last principle is concerned with development. The basic research method in the Activity Theory is formative experiment rather than traditional laboratory experiment. The formative experiment underlines the importance of active participation with monitoring of the developmental changes of the participants. All five principles mentioned above should be considered as an integrated system rather than separate parts because they are closely related to various aspects of the whole activity.

During the past two decades, the Activity Theory has attracted only a small group of researchers in the fields of human-computer interaction and composition studies (Dayton, 2000). Storch (2004) uses activity theory to illuminate different dyadic interaction patterns from the perspective of "the participants' orientation to an activity and, in particular, their motives and goals" (p. 457). Only a few researchers, to date, have attempted to make use of the activity system model to describe the complex interactions occurring between student writers, reviewers, groups, and teachers in the process approach of EFL writing. This model can serve as a means to holistically comprehend the dynamic relationship among different components. In addition, the interplay among components can create new outcomes, and therefore transform the original ones. Transformation is one major feature indispensable in the activity system model. For example, instruments like guidelines and checklists in peer response are created to help writers and reviewers to improve their feedback and revisions. After having learned how to keep these instruments under good control through the process of operation, the participants can internalize them to the extent that they can carry out the operation

without any conscious effort. At this point, these instruments can be adapted for new activities, left alone, added to the rules of peer interaction, used to improve the process of peer communication, or used to reevaluate the object.

Peer response activities can be depicted by means of the elements of the activity system model. The first element is the subject. The subject in the case of peer response can be individual writers, reviewers, teachers, peers, and partners or groups. For different subjects, peer response activities can carry different meanings if approached from their viewpoints. For a writer, feedback from peers and teachers can mean something quite different. It is the possibility of a person assuming different roles in peer response that makes it beneficial to students in the process of learning. Students can play different roles as situations change—writer, reader, tutor, tutee, critic (Forman & Cazden, 1986), partner, audience, and speaker. The next element used to portray peer response activities is mediating artifacts, which contains tools and signs (Vygotsky, 1978). The artifacts used in peer response cover tools (e.g., textbooks, pens, paper, computers, and reference books) and signs (guidelines and worksheets for peer's oral and written feedback, peer dialogues for negotiating over the intended meanings, self-directed feedback sheet, and teacher feedback sheet). These guidelines and worksheets are created to scaffold the process for writers and reviewers as they write drafts and give and receive constructive comments for text revision. These "signs" can also orient the direction of peer response, as well as selfdirected and teacher feedback, to achieve the objective—becoming better writers. In the current study, the usage of artifacts (tools) refers exclusively to guidelines and worksheets in order to avoid confusion.

Another element related to peer response activities is rules. The agreed-upon rules in a class are essential for the success of peer response activities (Liu & Hansen, 2002). The rules in this case should be set up by teachers and students together to facilitate the later-on implementation. Issues to be discussed include time-lasting for each activity, the focus of response (e.g., idea development and organization first; grammar, mechanical devices, and style later on), the order of turn-taking for comments and negotiation, language use (English only, or code-switching), percentage to be figured into the final grade, completion of written comments before going to the class for oral feedback sessions, informant for absentees, ways to deal with excessive absence and lack of preparation of individual group members, a group leader in charge of the operation of peer interaction, whether or not the revised drafts are to be circulated among group members, conflict management, and a reflection section for sharing experiences and making suggestions (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Community is the fourth element used to describe peer response activities.

Community here refers to the members of the whole class, including the writing teacher and the students. In peer response activities, the individual is not isolated but is part of a community (Bellamy, 1996). It is through an individual student's participation within this community that all activities can be carried out. On the other hand, this community provides a social context (Ogawa, et al., 2008) for students' learning writing knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the individual's relationship with the community is mediated by rules and a division of labor negotiated by the community members. Finally, to achieve the common objective of improving the individual's written competence, the activities of the individual need to be organized (Bellamy, 1996) in such a way as to follow the rules,

to use mediating artifacts, and to take responsibility for one's share of labor in this community.

Object, the fifth element of the activity system model, refers to the learning objective (goal) in the case of peer response activities. Generally speaking, the common goal of a large EFL writing class is to improve an individual student's written competence as well as to facilitate other aspects of development (social, affective, practical, and cognitive) (Liu & Hansen, 2002; Min, 2005). According to Ogawa et al. (2008), the object "guides or directs individual actions, connects actions to collective activity, and culminates in outcomes, both desired and unintended" on the one hand and "serve[s] as the motive for activities while providing broad meanings for people's actions" (p. 85) on the other hand. In other words, objects can serve not only as the function of pointing to the directions for individual actions and collective activity, but also provide the meanings for the individual and the group to engage in activities.

Division of labor, the last element of the activity system model, is closely related to what the writer, the reviewer, the partner, the group leader, and the teacher should do in the writing class. The writer needs to read attentively the assigned or self-selected text, to outline the main ideas, and then to write a draft, to negotiate the intended meanings with feedback providers, and to revise it based on the comments from the peers and the teacher. The reviewer should prepare written comments before going to class and clarify the writer's intentions, identify the problems, explain the nature of the problems, and make constructive suggestions in the peer response sessions (Min, 2005). As a partner in a peer response group, the student is expected to make contributions to facilitate the implementation of activities—generating ideas and exchanging mutual support, guidance,

encouragement, and correction (Forman & Cazden, 1986). The group leader should manage the distribution of the drafts to group members, play the role of moderator in the oral feedback sessions, and ensure that everyone in the group has an equal chance to take the floor. Finally, the teacher should provide guidelines, checklists, support (intellectual and emotional), opportunities for practice, and feedback to students. In addition, the teacher should supervise peer response activities so as to understand the actual interactions among group members, the performance of the individual writers, and the problems to be solved.

In summary, the activity system model can describe the activity, action, and operation of peer response in a writing class, and provide an overview of the dynamic interplay between subject, object, artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor. The dialectical relationship among the six elements creates a synergy to transform each other. That transformation is one feature unique in this model to illustrate that changes in any one element will give rise to changes in other elements in the activity. This model also explicates the complex situations of peer response when the whole class is engaged in a common objective through the artifact-mediated actions. In short, through this model, it becomes comprehensible how the acquisition of written competence is embedded in social contexts.

The Evaluation of Peer Response Implemented in the ESL/EFL Writing Classrooms

One of the underpinning philosophies of peer response is derived from the studies of Vygotsky on cognitive development in a given social milieu. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) believed that social interaction is essential for cognitive and language development. Language acquisition is the result of social interaction between the learners and the more experienced tutors. Generally speaking, social interaction in school settings consists of the interaction between teachers and students as well as between students and students. In a large multilevel EFL writing class, it can be expected that students often have acquired differing levels of language proficiency, and individual needs and interests also vary quite extensively.

Researchers have shown that peer interaction in the ESL/EFL writing class can offer numerous advantages. The agreed-upon benefits can be summarized as follows: First of all, the students can take active roles in their own learning (Hirvela, 1999). Peer interaction is a student-centered, not teacher-centered, learning activity. The students need to assume more responsibility for their own learning.

Next, the students can engage in low-risk, less anxious yet exploratory talk that is less feasible in teacher-student interactions. The students can take turns in playing different roles such as tutor, tutee, writer, reader, partner, and critic in the learning process (Forman & Cazden, 1986).

Another benefit is that the students gain a clearer understanding of reader expectations by receiving feedback on what they have done well and on what remains unclear (Mittan, 1989). Responding to a peer's writing also builds the critical skills

needed to analyze and revise one's own writing (Leki, 1990). Peer interactions can also help students build communication skills, learn conflict management strategies, and collaborate with each other as a team (Forman & Cazden, 1986). In addition, the synergy created by the learning community will enhance an individual student's motivation for learning.

The last benefit of peer response activities is the reduced writing workload for the teacher, his/her gaining of important information about individual students' literacy skills and needs (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). In this way, a teacher can make use of time available for teacher-student conference to address the issues individual students need to attend to

However, just as with other pedagogical tools used in classroom settings, peer interactions are not without disadvantage. Several potential problems with peer interaction are revealed through the criticisms of some researchers. The following shortcomings are the most typical reactions to the implementation of peer interaction. The first comment on peer interactions is that the discussion (brainstorming to generate ideas for a topic, problem-solving, feedback on peer's work, and so on) initiated by the students is not necessarily effective and efficient. Some students will engage in an "off-task episode" or "about-task episode" instead of "on-task episode" communication (De Guerreru & Villamil, 1994).

The second criticism of peer interaction lies in the fact that students sometimes provide vague, unhelpful comments, or focus only on surface structure of the peer's work, neglecting larger revising issues (Leki, 1990) such as developing ideas and examining organization. As a result, the students feel uncertain about the validity of their

classmates' responses. Closely related to this doubt is the students' belief, derived from the influence of the "banking system" of education (Freire, 1998), that teachers are the only source of authority on subject matter knowledge.

The third criticism is related to individual student's behavior. Some of them may be hostile, overly critical, or unkind in their response to another's work (Leki, 1990). Some of them (especially those students with lower level language proficiency) may be unable to contribute any constructive opinion in the group discussion. They feel frustrated, anxious, and diffident on such occasions and may keep silent throughout the process of activities.

The final point on the list of criticisms is that students may lack the L2 rhetorical schemata to offer helpful suggestions on the content and structure of a peer's text (Leki, 1990). Their feedback probably leads writers further away from the academic expectations.

Some Principles for Effective Peer Interaction

As shown by studies on peer interactions (e.g., Berg, 1999a, 1999b; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Min, 2005, 2006), the activities to be carried out one by one before any real peer interaction gets started include the students' prior training in the very beginning of the semester, the teacher's preparation for interaction guidelines, grouping strategies, corrective rubrics, and open communication between the teacher and the students on how the peer interaction operates and on what is expected of the students in such activities. The following are principles for effective peer response:

(1) Making peer response an integral part of the course.

- (2) Modeling the process of interaction by the teacher before its implementation.
- (3) Building peer response skills progressively throughout the term.
- (4) Structuring the peer response task with some open-ended yet concrete questions as guidance.
- (5) Varying peer response activities such as prewriting (brainstorming), free writing (writing quickly and steadily on the topic without stop), preparing an informal outline, drafting an introductory passage, first draft, editing, revision, and so on.
- (6) Holding students accountable for giving feedback and considering peer response.
- (7) Considering individual student's needs.
- (8) Considering logistic issues, including
 - (a) the size and composition of group,
 - (b) the mechanics of exchanging papers,
 - (c) time management and crowd control. (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 233)

Even though there are advocates and detractors of peer interaction, one common agreement in the field of ESL/EFL writing is that no matter how effectively peer interactions are implemented, the need for teacher response to students' writing cannot and should not be replaced or drastically reduced (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Jacobs et al, 1998; Miao et al., 2006; Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhang, 1995). It is preferable to have peer feedback on the first draft and teacher feedback on the later revision. In a writing class that is process-oriented, not product-oriented, peer interactions on generating ideas, outlines, drafts, and editing can reduce the

workload of writing teachers and at the same time cultivate students' ability to learn how to write and how to work with others as a team.

The Debate over the Effects of Teacher Feedback

The debate over the effects of teacher feedback on students' writings has been ongoing since John Truscott published his paper, entitled "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes," in 1996. Even several years later, he did not change his ground about the futility of teacher correction. The major stand for his argument on making no correction on students' texts in his study, "Evidence and conjecture on the effects of correction: A response to Chandler" (2004), can be summarized as follows: students' inattention to teacher's feedback, teachers' incompetence in providing feedback, and error correction stifling the development of individual potential as a writer.

In the matter of students' inattention to teacher's feedback, Truscott holds that, as far as some students are concerned, the final grade is the bottom line. All they care about is the grade they get on their papers. They will not spend time on reading and learning from the teacher's feedback; in other words, teacher's response is not considered as a source to improve the individual's writing ability. It is an unfortunate fact that students, without motivation to learn from error treatment, are unable to eradicate the error types they make in their writing. Consequently, feedback can be harmful simply because it takes energy and attention away from more important issues such as students' ideas and time to instruct.

As for teachers' incompetence in providing feedback, Truscott argues that it is an undeniable fact that some teachers may provide feedback (for example, illegible

handwriting and grading symbols) that only makes students confused rather than helping to improve their texts. Therefore, he suggests that a teacher should make the best out of instruction on writing or let students have more practice in writing. But one may argue that the core of the problem lies not so much in a teacher's incompetence in subject matter knowledge and skills as in the creation of a learning community to set up "rules of the game" for teacher/student interaction as well as student/student interaction. For example, Muncie (2000) acutely points out that students can make good use of teacher feedback, even if it is given in the final draft, to produce a summary entitled "How I can improve future compositions" for personal reference in writing future work if a writing class comes to an agreement upon having such a rule of the game. By doing so, students can reap several benefits. For one thing, students can selectively use teacher feedback with a greater degree of freedom. One of the disadvantages of teacher feedback is that students are not left much choice about incorporating teacher response into their revised drafts. For Muncie, this is the reason why teacher feedback on students' writings only has short-term effects because a lack of reflection and critical evaluation from students may lead to a lack of internalization and therefore cannot generate a positive long-term effect. What is more, if students use greater mental effort to evaluate and decide what points of teacher recommendations should be incorporated into the personal summary, this is more likely to turn those points into meaningful learning and lead to internalization of the teacher comments. One final point is that this technique can go further to help students gain a sense of independence, instead of teacher dependence, in their writing and produce long-term improvement in their written competence (Muncie, 2000).

The last reason for Truscott's argument on making no correction is the stifling of the development of individual potential as a writer through error correction. In a writing class, more often than not a teacher will require students to do additional work for errors found in their writing. For those students who try to go beyond their knowledge and ability and let loose the reins of their imagination and creative power, error correction becomes a kind of unjustifiable punishment. They need to do more work than those who adopt the policy of writing short and simple but safe sentences on the same topic throughout the course. It is interesting to note that, in *Writing without Teachers* (1973), Peter Elbow does not support the idea about teacher feedback for this may stifle the development of the real voice of student writers. In a similar way, Leki (1992) argues that "feedback on student writing also falls short of its goal when the changes suggested or requested in the feedback are too readily accepted by student writers" (p. 123).

Truscott's criticism of error correction is valid only under the condition that the classroom is not a shared learning community, without much social interaction between teachers and students, students and students, and no helping relationship at all in the classroom. If there are good relationships and interpersonal interactions, and if the classroom management and the organization of learning materials as well as the grouping are well designed, teacher feedback can become part of the learning by using the synergy created from the shared learning community.

The Problem of Appropriating Student Text

The problem of appropriation of student text can be defined, according to Sommers (1982), "students make the changes the teacher wants rather than those that the student

perceives are necessary, since the teachers' concerns imposed on the text create the reasons for the subsequent changes" (pp. 149-150). Such appropriation occurs when teachers focus on errors in usage, grammar, and style, and, in a directive and summative way, ask students to revise them on a first draft, rather than on the development of ideas and organization of the subsequent drafts. In a sense, teachers' comments distract students' concentration on the target topics, and lead students away from the purpose of writing a particular text in their own voices. The usurpation of students' personal voices constitutes the major accusation of teachers' appropriation of student text.

As a counter-argument to the fear of appropriating student text, Reid (2004) asserts that it is unnecessary to worry about the accusation of appropriating student text because what a teacher does in the matter of error correction is based on the consideration of helping students improve individual writing ability, ushering them into the academic community that has its own conventions and expectations, and guiding them to learn how to communicate effectively with others in the real world. To Reid, the initial purpose to respond to ESL students' texts is that students can learn something from teachers about error treatments. The ultimate goal of error treatments is to cultivate students' competence and acumen in detecting errors on their papers and in doing self-editing, and finally help students to be self-regulated and competent writers.

As a supplement to Reid's perspective on teacher feedback, Ferris (2003) makes several important statements on this controversial topic, the first claiming that writing teachers should give up the practice of imposing their view of the "Ideal Text" on students' writings (p. 6). In citing the findings made by Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), Ferris argues that teachers may unconsciously commit the act of appropriation of student

text by "[wrestling] control of the text away from students" and "[removing] the students' investment, engagement, motivation, and interest in writing" (Ferris, 2003, p. 7). This practice is harmful to students' development as individual writers simply because the final versions of drafts are the teachers' rather than the students' original ones. Next, teacher comments can appropriate student writing when they include written commentary on content and error for the same draft to convey the concept of the ideal text, not to help students find ways to express their intended meanings. Another statement is that teacher feedback on errors should not be used to justify grades. This practice, based on the view of teachers as evaluators, is ineffective in helping students improve their writing abilities. The fourth is that excessive controlling through teacher response may demotivate students to improve their writing skills. Ferris's last statement is that teachers should consider other types of feedback, such as peer response, conferencing, and audiotaped feedback.

Another way to deal with the problem of appropriation of student text is to examine the philosophy of education embraced by teachers. In *The Tact of Teaching* (1991), Max van Manen proposes that teachers "have to reflect on the meaning of teaching as standing *in loco parentis* to students" (p. 21). What is the "meaning" of students in a teacher's life? Teachers need to cherish a caring attentiveness to the unique; to the uniqueness of students, and to the uniqueness of their individual lives. Teaching is a privilege, a mission or calling (vocation), not merely a job to keep body and soul together. Teaching is a job to shape a student's growing potential—"a coming to be" (van Manen, 1991, p. 33), not merely for a student to learn certain subject matter.

The three fundamental conditions of pedagogical authority, according to van Manen, include "loving care," "trustful hope," and "responsibility" (1991, pp. 65-70). First of all, a teacher's affection for a student is premised on the value of becoming and growth. This affection has an impact on the development of the identity, character, and selfhood of the young person. Next, trustful hope is the teacher's experience of the student's possibilities and development. Hope gives teachers insights into the deep meaning of pedagogy itself. Finally, the teacher can only have pedagogical influence over a student when the authority is based not on power, but on love, affection, and internalized sanction on the part of the student.

To give student feedback based on the above-mentioned conditions cannot and should not be interpreted as appropriating. If the concept of pedagogy is defined as "a fascination with the growth of the students" (van Manen, 1991, p. 13), and the real intention is to strengthen the students' contingent possibility for "being and becoming" (van Manen, 1991, p. 34), responding to EFL students' texts is a teacher's responsibility or pedagogical authority. The reason for a teacher's existence in the learning community is his/her expertise and guidance (providing scaffolding to students experiencing learning difficulties). If no feedback is provided, there is no reason for a teacher to be in the classroom because he/she relinquishes his/her duty as a helper for students' growth.

It is equally important for a teacher in the ESL/EFL writing class to remember that any feedback needs to respect the student for what he or she is, and what he or she can become. Since the student is still on the way of learning how to write or to be a competent writer, a teacher should not judge the student's texts with professional criteria, or be so eager to promote the text to an ideal level. Hope is the fountainhead of teachers'

teaching. Hope refers to that which gives teachers patience and tolerance, belief and trust in the possibilities of students in the field of writing. It is noteworthy that Freire (1998) echoes van Manen's viewpoints as he advocates that teachers should have respect for the autonomy of the student—"for the identity of the student, for the student himself or herself, and his or her right to be" (p. 64).

Issues about Writer Autonomy

There is a fairly general agreement that the ultimate goal of a writing class is to cultivate independent and competent writers. Any instruction, feedback, and support from teachers and peers aim to develop students' writing skills and knowledge. It seems that current practice and research in the ESL/EFL writing class place emphasis on the importance of peer response and teacher correction but have not given enough attention to writers' self-efficacy. Under the category of self-efficacy, one can find studies such as self-monitoring (Cresswell, 2000), self-correction (Makino, 1993), self-evaluation (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985), and self-directed feedback (Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998; Zhang, 1995), which all highlight the necessity of efforts made by the writers to develop personal autonomy and shoulder responsibility for their own writings. Self-monitoring has not attracted as much extensive scholarly research as peer response (Cresswell, 2000) and teacher correction, in spite of the much called-for judicious combination of the three in writing pedagogy (Jacob et al., 1998, p. 314). There are three reasons why self-directed feedback has not attracted much attention from researchers and practitioners. First, it is difficult to verify the effect of correction (Chaudron, 1988, as cited in Makino, 1993), especially if it is not done with the teacher's support and

guidance. Second, students are unable to effectively articulate their concerns with their developing interlanguage when focusing on grammar items at the expense of content and organization development (Cresswell, 2000). Furthermore, students might pass on the responsibility of improving their writing quality to the teachers based on the assumption that teachers are under the obligation to correct their essays; that is what they pay tuition for.

According to Zhang's study (1995), students rank the importance of the three types of feedback in the following order: teacher feedback first, peer feedback next, and self-directed feedback last. Similarly, some scholars find that students value teacher rating over peer rating, and peer rating over self rating (Saito & Fujita, 2004) due to personal perception of self-efficacy and subjective points of view. In general, this phenomenon is closely related to students' judgment about expertise and writing abilities. Students view teachers as professionals in the field of writing and evaluation while they take peers to be partners who are able to find blind spots that evaded their own attention. Due to certain psychological factors such as self-confidence, self-esteem, a culture value of modesty, and habits of estimating self-ability (Saito & Fujita, 2004), and actual writing abilities, students do not rely on self-directed feedback as one of the important sources for increasing personal writing performance.

Yet in the tendency of increasing recognition of the importance of writer autonomy, researchers approach this issue from different aspects. For Cresswell, a teacher can help students cultivate personal autonomy and assume responsibility in the learning of writing by giving them control over the initiation of feedback. There are two advantages of this practice: First, intervention, teacher response to students' questions annotated in the

margin of writings, is directed to students' ideas in the developing of essays. Teacher feedback is exactly what student writers need in terms of global content (theme, purpose and readership) and organization (argument structure, main and supporting points) (Cresswell, 2000, p. 238). Second, teacher response can be more accurately targeted at the levels of students' language proficiency. Students' initiation of feedback forces them to closely examine their own writings and reflect on the targeted reader's reception.

Another attempt to study the issue of writer autonomy has been made by Makino who focuses his attention on student self-correction of grammatical errors by using cues provided by teachers. He cites a distinction made by Long (1977) between error feedback and error correction to argue his ground for self-correction. Error feedback is to detect errors while error correction is the "hoped-for result of feedback on errors" (Makino, 1993, p. 338). He further argues that teachers should provide students with detailed hints about errors (error feedback) instead of directly giving answers to errors (error correction). By doing so, teachers give students an opportunity to actively think over their writing, and to pay more attention to the structural forms of their essays. In addition, students can activate their linguistic competence to make necessary corrections of their errors.

A third attempt to examine the issue of writer autonomy is riveted at the aspect of self-evaluation. McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer utilize Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) to argue that students' perceptions of their writing competence are related to their actual writing performance. Performance and belief are mutually influenced. "When performance improves, belief in one's ability increases... Similarly, when belief increases, performance improves" (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985, p. 466). They

suggest that as one important step in improving their writing, it is necessary to strengthen students' efficacy expectations about their writing ability, especially for those students with writing difficulties. In other words, helping students improve their writing skills can increase their belief in their personal writing abilities. Questions, such as "Can you generate ideas for writing?" "Can you write in a variety of language styles to a variety of audiences?" and "Can you adjust the tone of an essay to meet the needs of a given writing situation?" (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985, p. 469), are regarded as criteria to measure students' writing ability. They contend that affirmative answers to these questions on invention and rhetoric are essential in measuring self-efficacy. Their study implies that invention and rhetorical skills are indispensable for writer autonomy and personal management in the matter of the process approach to writing.

In summary, self-directed efforts in improving writing abilities and perceptions of self-efficacy are important steps to achieve the ultimate goal of writer autonomy. In the stage of pre-writing, teachers can model how to use the skills of invention such as listing, mapping, tree diagrams, circle diagrams, double-entry listing, heuristics (Who does what, how, and why?), and matrices (one axis lists questions or criteria to be applied to the items on the other axis) (Meyer & Smith, 1987) to generate ideas for the developing of composition. Once students are able to master these skills, they will increase their writing abilities and transform their perception of self-efficacy. In the initial self-directed revision, students can use self-directed feedback sheets provided by teachers to check content and rhetoric/organization of their own essays. In the matter of content, students may pay their attention to theme, purpose, and readership and ask themselves whether these three elements as presented in their writing are sufficient, well-developed, clear,

consistent or redundant, need more clarification, and concentrate on the strengths and the weaknesses (Liu & Hansen, 2002). As for rhetoric/organization, students can focus on argument structure and main and supporting points, and check their essays to see if there are topic sentences, conclusions, cohesion, connected ideas, and necessary improvement (Liu & Hansen, 2002). In the second self-directed revision, students can utilize the teacher's hints or self-directed feedback guidelines on grammatical items to check global errors first, and local errors next. The purpose of self-directed feedback is to raise awareness of the important elements and conventions in the process of composing essays, and helps students to acquire them in order to become independent and competent writers.

Previous Empirical Studies of Peer Response

Peer response is a complex issue with multiple facets. Researchers and practitioners have attempted to approach this writing pedagogy from different angles. In this section, five lines of empirical studies are reviewed to show the nature and effects of peer interaction in ESL/EFL writing classes. There are several similarities and differences found in these studies, which share certain commonalities in purpose, participant size, and positive results of implementing peer response activities. First of all, these studies are aimed at investigating the effects of peer interaction (peer review, peer tutoring, and peer feedback) on the writing quality from the perspectives of instructing (training) student writers how to write, of cultural impact, of a comparative study of self, peer, and teacher feedback, of types of peer interaction, and of cultural-historical activity theory. Next, they all give support to the effects of peer interaction in improving students' writing abilities after an appropriate procedure of instruction. Finally, most of these studies have been

conducted in small or large classes by focusing on part of the issue. Differences in these studies include subjects' types and their language proficiency levels, questions asked, research motivation, research methodology, findings, and strengths and weaknesses.

Instruction (Training) for Peer Response

One line of research has focused on the effects of training students for peer response. It is generally agreed that instruction (training) for peer response is one of the indispensable elements that leads to substantial revisions of peers' drafts and increases students' writing skills (Bell, 1991; Berg, 1999a, 1999b; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Min, 2005, 2006; Stanley, 1992; Zhu, 1995). Unstructured, learner-centered peer response activities commonly practiced in L1 writing classes, as Bell (1991) points out, may be unsuitable for L2 students, who have difficulties in mastering the target language and in using different rhetorical strategies quite distinct from theirs, and who also entertain differing cultural expectations of peer response. For example, it is difficult for L2 writers to communicate their intended meanings in written feedback with an interlanguage—a language still in the process of development in the aspects of vocabulary, phrases, sentence patterns, and grammatical items, not to mention the ways of content, style, and organization conventionally practiced in the target language. As to L2 writers' need to learn how to use different rhetorical strategies, two examples shall suffice to illustrate this point. The first is Fan Shen's 1989 argument that presents the cultural-social differences in rhetoric between "Western verbal logic" and "Chinese pictorial logic" (p. 465), between individualism as "I" and collectivism as "we" (p. 460), and between American directness (thesis statement, topic sentence used predominantly)

and Chinese indirectness (like peeling off an onion "from surface to core") (p. 462). The second is the indirect rhetoric style of Japanese writing. The reason for Japanese L2 writers to present their viewpoints indirectly is out of the desire to respect others. "By being indirect, the writer doesn't insult the reader by assuming that he/she needs a point spelled out" (Blau & Hall, 2002, p. 27). And this is highly related to cultural teaching—to be modest and avoid self-assertion.

Linguistic and rhetoric differences make it necessary for instructors to give L2 students instruction for peer response. Different researchers and practitioners train L2 students by using various strategies, but they have in common that they provide students with clear procedures, guidelines, feedback sheets, or modeling how to give and receive constructive feedback. Berg's (1999b) empirical study shows that training can be conducted by following an 11-step sequence to help students improve the quality of texts and types of revision. She argues that the common assumption that ESL students know how to involve in peer response activities is unrealistic. The research question addressed in her study is whether trained peer response affects revision types and writing outcomes of ESL student text. In Berg's study, there were 46 students (22 females and 24 males) from four writing classrooms, divided into two treatment groups (trained and untrained). There were two level-3 classes, with students whose language proficiency was corresponding to Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores around 375, and two level-4 classes, with students whose TOEFL scores were around 425. The trained group was instructed in the responding skills; first, how to use appropriate language to respond to peer writing (asking questions, using specific words, stating ideas as opinions), and next, how to concentrate on the points of discussion (discourse-level meanings rather

than sentence-level meanings). As a contrast, the untrained group was given the same opportunities of activities, similar to those in the training—working in pairs, joining class discussion, and practicing writing—except they were provided with no response skills and instruction in peer interaction. Revisions made after the peer response sessions were assessed with the modified Test of Written English (TWE) rubric to measure quality changes between drafts. The results of this study indicated that trained peer response helps ESL students revise and improve the quality of texts, and that relative training effects on writing outcomes are "not influenced by the difference in level of writing proficiency" (Berg, 1999b, p. 230). In other words, training was effective for students in both level 3 and 4 to improve the writing quality of texts.

Another important empirical study was conducted by Zhu (1995) to examine the effects of instruction for peer response in university-level composition classes. There were 169 participants from eight sections, divided into an experimental group and a control group. Each group was comprised of four sections. The participants in the experimental group were instructed and required to practice the strategies for peer response in the teacher-student conference, whereas the participants in the control group did not receive systematic instruction and only watched a video example. The analysis of data showed that the instructed students performed much better in giving constructive feedback and being involved in peer discussion than the students in the control group. Additionally, with more attention paid to the negotiation of meaning, peer feedback tended to be more concrete and specific in terms of formulating the alternatives to the understood meanings.

A third important empirical study on the effect of peer response training was performed by Min (2005) who argues that reviewers' vague feedback and misinterpretation of writers' intentions are two major factors that explain why peer feedback is not always adopted by writers in the process of revision in the EFL writing class. There were 18 students with intermediate English proficiency participating in a two-phase training composed of two stages. In the first stage, the researcher demonstrated and modeled for the students how to use a four-step-procedure (clarifying writer's intentions, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making suggestions by giving specific examples) to give specific written feedback, and then asked the students to practice them in class on subsequent essays. In the second stage, the researcher scheduled a teacher-student conference outside of class. She collected peerwritten comments, and checked them carefully before discussing the comments that failed to follow the procedural steps with the students. Then, she would assist the students in rewriting them. In addition, she also reminded the students of the questions on the guidelines and feedback sheets. The findings in her research revealed that students, as reviewers, reaped several benefits from this training. The first is that all students learned to provide specific feedback on global issues. The second is that making specific suggestions facilitated students in their acquisition of new vocabulary. The third benefit is that the process of reflecting on their own problems and figuring out solutions shaped their self-monitoring. The last benefit is that the training helped less competent writers gain confidence in viewing themselves as capable readers. The students also benefited from this training with regard to their roles as writers. They broadened their horizons and

refined their ideas through peer comments by approaching a specific topic from multiple perspectives, increasing their word bank.

The three studies mentioned above focus only on peer response in small classes or sections with participants at a similar level of language proficiency without touching issues such as implementing a combination of self, peer, and teacher feedback in a large EFL class with 50 students who are heterogeneous in their writing abilities, motivation, and attitude toward the writing tasks. If students' language proficiency, motivation, interests, and needs are taken into consideration, the instruction (training) for self-directed feedback, peer response, and teacher feedback in such a class is quite different from that of peer response in a small, homogenous class.

Cultural Impact on Peer Response

Another strand of research on peer response has investigated the impact of culture on the performance and perceptions of peers in giving and taking oral and written feedback. A series of studies on cultural influence on peer response has been conducted by Carson and Nelson (1994, 1996). Based on a theoretical study on writing group members from collectivist cultures, Carson and Nelson conclude that writing group activities (e.g., peer response) may be problematic for students from collectivist cultures for three reasons. The first is that writing groups function to improve individual texts rather than for the benefit of the collective. The second is that students may be more concerned with maintaining in-group harmony than giving constructive feedback on peers' drafts. The third is that ESL students from collectivist cultures may show hostile, strained, and competitive behaviors to out-groups. In Carson and Nelson's 1996 study,

eleven students in an advanced ESL writing class were placed in three groups and received behavioral guidelines for peer response sessions through a series of role-plays modeled by three ESL instructors before the peer response groups started working. The researchers used audiotaping and interviews to collect data about group interaction. The analysis of the data revealed that Chinese students were more concerned about maintaining group harmony than giving constructive feedback to peers to improve their texts. In general, Chinese students were reluctant to initiate comments, to criticize drafts, to disagree with peers, and to claim authority. They preferred to use questions, not direct statements to soften their critical comments, and this often led their peers to misinterpret their intentions. Their comments, according to Carson and Nelson, reflected "their perception of their own vulnerability within the group. In addition to not wanting to be intrusive, the informants were focused on attending to and seeking consensus in the group" (1996, p. 15). In short, the interaction styles of Chinese students in peer response groups were influenced by the collectivist culture—group cohesion and harmony over individual benefit.

Nelson and Carson continued their research on cultural differences in group interaction in their 1998 study with eleven ESL students in three peer response groups. Instructions for peer response were given through a series of role-plays demonstrated by three ESL instructors. The researchers videotaped the peer response group sessions and reviewed them to compare questions asked in the interviews as a check on the equivalence of the interview procedures. The data to be analyzed were gained from the interview sessions, not from the peer response activities. Several findings were generated from this study. First, both Chinese and Spanish learners of English preferred negative

comments that identified mistakes or errors in their drafts, and did not view grammar and sentence-level feedback as helpful suggestions for subsequent revision. Next, the students preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback in terms of identifying problems in their drafts. Third, cultural differences reflected on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer response. The Chinese students made changes in errors based on group consensus whereas the Spanish-speaking students did not. In other words, a Chinese student would make a change only under the condition that there were no diverse voices about a specific error. In addition, the Chinese students were socially oriented while the Spanish learners of English were task-oriented. Group harmony and interpersonal relationship of the ingroup were the primary goal for the Chinese students. As a contrast, for the Spanish-speaking students, the focus of peer response activities was the constructive feedback for peers to improve their essays.

Based on their findings, both researchers concluded that the use of peer response in the ESL writing class needed to be reconsidered for the following reasons. For one thing, that ESL students' attention was paid wholly to identify errors and mistakes was an attitude to take drafts for products. This was against the instructors' intention of viewing writing as a process-oriented approach. What is more, Chinese students were reticent in group interaction and reluctant to give direct statements on peers' drafts. In addition, students from countries where the belief was held that teachers were "the holders of truth, wisdom, and knowledge" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 129), and dispensers of knowledge valued teacher feedback more than peer feedback. The final point is that peer response was not as effective with L2 learners as with native speakers because of the lack of language proficiency and self-confidence in English. Besides, L1 students shared similar

communication styles and rules whereas L2 students from diverse cultures and language backgrounds did not.

Language proficiency and cultural differences are indeed two factors that may influence the effects of peer response in the ESL/EFL class. What Carson and Nelson (1994, 1996) have overlooked in their studies is that they instructed students how to respond to peers' drafts through role-plays without giving the students detailed written guidelines and feedback sheets for reference. Most ESL students are still in the process of learning how to command English in their writing. Some of them are more visualoriented than audio-oriented in their learning styles. Having neither substantial materials to guide them, nor sufficient practice may cause difficulties when the students are required to be involved in the actual activities. "Careful preparation or training," and "the structure or guidelines provided by the instructor," as Ferris acutely points out, are two crucial factors to decide the success of peer response (2003, p. 171). Besides, worthy of attention for future research are the questions proposed by Carson and Nelson (1996): "Would the interaction style be different if all of the group members were from the PRC [People's Republic of China] or Taiwan? Would the indirect criticism given by the Chinese students be understood as criticism by other Chinese students (i.e., those with similar communication styles)?" (p. 18).

Comparative Studies on Self-Directed, Peer, and Teacher Feedback

A third line of empirical study has examined a comparison of the effects of selfdirected, peer, and teacher feedback on revisions. It has attracted researchers who wish to conduct empirical studies. The first selected empirical study was conducted by Zhang in

1995. The participants in his study were 81 ESL students from six classes taught by four instructors. The researcher first contacted the students and assured them that their grades would not be affected by their willingnesses to participate in the study. Next, he confirmed with the instructors that their students had experience and knowledge of all the three types of feedback. Then, with the hypothesis that, in the order of affective appeal, students would favor peer feedback over self-directed feedback, and self-directed feedback over teacher feedback as commonly shown in the case of L1 settings, the researcher asked the students to answer two questions: (1) Make a choice between teacher feedback and nonteacher feedback (both peer and self) for individual final version, and (2) make a choice between peer feedback and self-directed feedback for the individual final version. The findings from the ESL students' responses revealed that teacher feedback was valued higher than peer feedback, and self-directed feedback was ranked as the last one in preference. Based on the findings of this study, Zhang challenged the common assumption that what worked in L1 settings might also work in L2 environments. The fact that L1 students preferred peer feedback to teacher feedback for the sake of no power differential did not fit the reality that ESL students welcomed teacher feedback more than the other two types of feedback. He suggested that "ESL students' willingness to listen to the instructor and their genuine desire for teacher input deserve better treatment than a summary dismissal" (Zhang, 1995, p. 217).

As a response to the conclusions made by Zhang, Jacobs et al. (1998) conducted a study to examine students' attitudes toward peer response and teacher feedback. The null hypothesis they proposed was that if peer feedback were not highly regarded by L2 learners, they would prefer not to have it as one type of comments on their writing. There

were 121 participants in total from two universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The analysis of the data collected from questionnaires showed that most students (93%) preferred to have peer feedback as one type of feedback for their revision in spite of the fact that the students still ranked teacher feedback higher than peer comments. In other words, students value both types of feedback. The suggestion they made, based on their research, was that taking "a middle path on the issues of types of feedback" (Jacob et al, 1998, p. 314) means that teachers could combine self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback for students' revisions in their composition classes because "[m]ost advocates of process approaches with primary, secondary, and tertiary students, even in L1 context, see peer feedback (and, for that matter, self-directed feedback) as additional to, not in replacement of, teacher feedback" (Jacobs et al., 1998, p. 309).

A more recent study on peer and teacher feedback has been conducted by Miao, Badger, and Zhen (2006). Seventy-nine EFL college students from a university in China were placed into a teacher feedback group and a peer feedback group to compare their improvement in writing quality. The methods the researchers used to collect data included (1) interviews with the student participants, (2) video recordings of the interactions in peer-feedback group, (3) researchers' field notes for qualitative analysis, and (4) a questionnaire survey, (5) first and second drafts in both classes, and (6) peer feedback for quantitative analysis. The findings showed that the students used more teacher feedback than peer feedback to improve their writing, and that peer feedback was beneficial for the students to obtain writer autonomy. Teacher feedback brought more changes at the surface level whereas peer feedback provided "a higher percentage of meaning-change revision" (Miao et al., 2006, p. 193). Their findings were in line with the

account given by Jacobs et al. (1998) that teacher and peer feedback function as a complement to each other, although the researchers did not touch the issue of self-directed feedback.

What Zhang (1995) has not paid attention to in his study, as Jacobs et al. perspicaciously point out, is that feedback should not be an "either…or" choice for students among three types of feedback, while what Jacobs et al. have not noticed is that they have not conducted a thorough research in large multilevel EFL writing classes, ranging from setting up class rules discussed in class, carrying out pre-writing training (social and linguistic skills by modeling), doing self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback, and having teacher-student conferences. All Jacobs et al. have done is examine the issue through questionnaires. Compared with Zhang's and Jacobs' study, the research conducted by Miao et al., though more thorough, has not paid any attention to what effect self-direct feedback may have on student writers' revisions, and whether self-directed feedback is conducive for students to becoming independent and competent writers.

Types of Peer Interaction

A fourth strand of empirical research has focused on types of peer interaction during peer response sessions. The first empirical study, conducted by de Guerrero and Villamil in 1994, concentrates on the notion of regulation based on Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development about aspects of regulatory stages (object-regulated, other-regulated, and self-regulated) and on types of episodes (on-task, about-task, and off-task) occurring in the peer response sessions. There were 54 participants from three sections with homogeneous language proficiency on the intermediate level. Two research

questions were addressed: (1) "What types of interaction occur between members of a dyad engaged in peer revision?" and (2) "What kinds of social relationships result from the participants' cognitive stages of regulation?" (p. 485). After conducting a series of training in two rhetorical modes and providing students with prompt sheets and other materials, the researchers began to collect data by audiotaping students' interactions in peer response sessions. The analysis of the data indicates that (1) about 84% of the peer interactions can be labeled as on-task. Of all on-task episodes, 77% are reader/writer interactive revisions, and (2) students shift along the continuum of self-regulation, other-regulation, and object-regulation as the task demands change. In addition, role-play as either reader or writer affects individual regulation. As readers, students tend to be self-regulated, while as writers, students tend to be other-regulated. The most common type of peer interaction that facilitates learning occurrence is the other-regulation/self-regulation category with partners at different levels of regulation.

The second empirical study on types of peer interaction was undertaken by Mendonca and Johnson (1994). They investigated types of negotiation, frequency of using peers' comments for revision, and students' perception of the usefulness of peer reviews. 12 ESL students from five different countries were engaged in this study. Three types of data were collected for analysis: transcriptions of peer review sessions, students' written texts, and interviews with the participants. The results of their study showed that five types of negotiation could be found in peer review sessions: Question (request for explanation and comprehension check), explanation (unclear point, opinion, and content), restatement, suggestion, and grammar correction (p. 752).

On the whole, reviewers took the lead of negotiation by asking writers to clarify points or giving suggestions for revision. Of all five types of negotiation, only explanation of content is under the control by writers. This finding is in complete agreement with the account given by de Guerrero and Villamil (1994) that student readers are self-regulated, but student writers are other-regulated in peer interaction.

Another finding from their study reveals that students selectively incorporate peer comments (53%) into their revised drafts. Students find peer reviews useful for their redefining unclear terms or revising conclusions. Based on the comments of the students in the interviews, the researchers also recommend that teachers should combine peer reviews with teacher feedback for students to revise their drafts.

The third empirical study on peer interaction was conducted by Storch (2001). There were three ESL dyads from four countries that represented the typical interaction between peers in pair groups. The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of pair interaction and the relationship between their manner of response, and the quality of their joint written product. The data collected for analysis included transcriptions of pair talk, observation notes, and drafts of joint composition. The results of this research showed that a participant's use of personal pronouns disclosed his/her tendency in attitude toward the pair group and the joint task. The first- and second-person pronouns (I and you) used in pair talk indicated non-collaborative orientation whereas the first-person plural pronoun (we) was more collaborative-oriented because "you" and "I" were used to represent the speaker as distinct individual entity while the use of "we" represented the belonging to a group. As a group, the pairs were more likely to negotiate the meanings of the joint work by giving and taking suggestions, asking and answering questions,

clarifying and confirming information, and doing self- and other-repair in the pair sessions. As a contrast, individual-centered orientation often showed the "presence of directives" (p. 45). Another finding of this study is that the degree of non-collaborative and collaborative orientation is a matter of continuum. Dyadic groups can be placed somewhere along the continuum from the non-collaborative to the collaborative. The last finding indicates that a difference in pairs' language proficiency is not a crucial factor to determine whether a dyad is collaborative or not. Instead, what really matters are the writers' attitudes toward the pair work, motives, and goals.

The above-mentioned empirical studies on types of peer interaction furnish a major contribution to researchers and practitioners to understand the nature of peer interaction from different perspectives. What all these three studies have overlooked is that they are not conducted in a large, multilevel EFL writing class. In de Guerrero and Villamil's (1994) study, the subjects are homogeneous in language proficiency, while in Mendonca and Johnson's (1994) and Storch's (2001) study, the participants are from different cultures, and the participants' group size is small. Besides, these three studies have not examined the effects of self-directed and teacher feedback on revision from the view that these three types of feedback are complementary to each other as Jacobs et al. (1998) suggest.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

The last line of empirical research on peer response examines how the culturalhistorical activity theory can be used to explicate the differences of participants' performance in group work from the angles of their motives and goals. Storch (2004) argues that researchers have attempted to explain various patterns of group or pair interactions in terms of personality differences, classroom ideology, differences in language proficiency, and learners' language learning history and cultures (p. 458), but learners' attitudes toward the given task, needs, motives, and goals have been overlooked. With 33 adult participants from two ESL classes, Storch collected data by means of classroom observation, interviews, audiotaping pair dialogues, and questionnaires. Four patterns of dyadic interaction are found in this study—collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice in the first stage of analysis based on the criteria of "equality of contribution and mutuality" (p. 461). Only in pairs identified as collaborative and expert/novice, more evidence of learning is shown because pairs exchange opinions, negotiation, and suggestions, which are oriented toward "complet[ing] the task to the best of their ability" (p. 468), and toward solving problems, answering questions, and providing assistance to the partner's needs. In short, activities in both types of pairs are conducive to the acquisition of writing skills. As a contrast, pairs identified as dominant/dominant are found to frequently use directives and self-repetitions to show individual knowledge and stance rather than use two-way communication with attention focused on joint work. Dominant/passive pairs focus on product, not on learning process. As a final conclusion to this study, Storch suggests that "group/pair work is conducive to language learning only when the participants' goals are shared or complementary and they are focused on learning processes rather than performance" (p. 475).

Other research on using the activity theory to explain peer response, though published by Thorne (2004), actually was conducted by Antonio Jimenez and Gabriela Zapata in a Spanish foreign language program to examine the interaction between novice

writers and advanced student-reviewers using the framework of the activity theory. Participants of this project included 32 students from two classes—one with lowerintermediate students, and the other with advanced students. The novice writers composed essays which then were read and commented on in English by the advancedstudent reviewers via emails. After that, a reflection survey was administered to all students to understand their responses to peer revision. The findings indicated that students held a positive attitude toward peer revision. To the novice writers, the reviewers might represent an achievable level of L2 expertise and set a good example for them to follow because the writers incorporated a high percentage of suggestions on content and grammatical forms into their revised drafts. On the other hand, the reviewers "develop better editing and authoring skills," and experience "a constructive challenge to their own sense of competency" (p. 62) through providing feedback on the essays of the novice writers. In this study, Thorne contends that many 'centering' approaches such as learnercentered, technology-centered, or teacher-centered always highlight the roles of some actors but put other actors or learning contexts in educational settings into the shadows. Learning is a process in which many factors and individuals are involved and influence each other. He argues that human beings construct knowledge through interactions with their environment and other people. In summary, the activity theory can be used as a framework to innovate the practice of peer response in the L2 classroom.

With the broad lens of the activity theory, both Storch (2004) and Thorne (2004) make a significant contribution to our understanding of peer response activity, especially in pair work, and to the awareness raising of "inattentional blindness" (Mack & Rock, 1998, as cited in Thorne, 2004, p. 66). What they have ignored is that pair work is not

feasible in a large multilevel EFL writing class with around 50 students. There is not enough class space to hold 25 dyads for pair interaction activities. What is more, the noise level caused by the students will hinder neighboring classes trying to concentrate on their own learning activities. The final point is that the class instructor is unable to assist and manage so many pairs who work simultaneously on written tasks.

Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter, the researcher first presents the situation of the higher education system in Taiwan, stating the shift from elite to mass education and certain future challenges to private institutions of higher education in Taiwan. After that, the researcher reviews the rationale for peer response, including the process writing theory, the socialhistorical theory, the collaborative learning theory, interaction and second language acquisition, and the cultural-historical activity theory. These five theoretical foundations of peer response have a common ground by sharing the emphasis on constructive interaction between peers, multiple drafts with multiple revisions and audiences, and learning context; yet they distinguish themselves by placing differing weight on various aspects. The process writing theory emphasizes the importance of meaning over form and of process over product. The social-historical theory focuses on guidance, scaffolding, and tutoring between peers. The collaborative learning theory highlights the essence of peer response as issue-relevant conversation. Ideas from the field of second language acquisition underline the importance of practice (comprehensible output) between peer interactions. The activity theory, with a more circumscribed framework, stresses the transformation and dialectical nature of peer response.

In the third and fourth sections, the researcher reviews the pros and cons of peer response in ESL/EFL classrooms and effective principles conducive to carrying out peer response activities. The fifth section dwells on the issue of teacher feedback and the debate over appropriation of students' texts, and suggests that teachers should avoid the ideal version for the assigned work lest they appropriate their students' texts and stifle the personal voices of individual writers. The sixth section explores the issue of writer autonomy, and spotlights self-directed feedback as one way to cultivate students to become independent and competent writers in terms of a long-term effect. The seventh section reviews five lines of empirical studies on peer response, including the effects of training for peer response, the impact of cultural differences, comparative studies on selfdirected, peer, and teacher feedback, different types of peer response during peer negotiation sessions, and the use of the activity theory to innovate and assess peer response activities. It is hoped that a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in this research can explore students' perceptions and experiences in a large EFL writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan, and formulate implications for pedagogical practice and future studies on large multilevel EFL writing classes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. In the first section, the introduction consists of a brief description of the context under study, a restatement of the research purpose and research questions from Chapter One, the researcher's intention to investigate the experiences and perceptions of 43 students about multiple interaction activities by means of Engestrom's (1987) extended activity system model, and the reason for adopting a qualitative design. In the second section, the specific methodology employed is explained. It includes the reasons for adopting the case study method, the goal of this study, an explanation of sampling rationale, and data collection instruments. In the third section, the procedures for the intervention are described—instructing students how to use the guidelines and worksheets for three types of feedback. The plan for data analysis is reported in the fourth section. The software, ATLAS.ti 5.5, was used to analyze the content of interviews with participants and peer response sessions. Students' texts were used to examine whether student writers incorporated feedback from three types of sources—self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback. Conversation analysis was the tool to analyze the transcripts of peer response group talks. After transcribing, translating (from Chinese into English), and coding the interviews with the student participants, the data analysis, based on data reduction and interpretation, aimed at identifying categories and themes. The fifth section focuses on the verification of the interpretation. This section is devoted to trustworthiness and consistency. The sixth section dwells on ethical considerations. The subjectivity statement can be found in the

seventh section to report the researcher's experiences and training, theoretical perspectives, and possible biases. Finally, a summary of the main points of this chapter is given in the eighth section.

The Researcher's Justification

The researcher made use of the activity system model as the research framework for his study to examine the experience and perception of 43 students about the implementation of multiple interaction activities in a large EFL writing class. The activity system model was used to investigate writing classroom activities in a social context including subject (students' attitude toward writing, motivation to write, their goals, and personal and world knowledge), rules (class norms), tools (guidelines and worksheets), object (instructional objective), outcome (the development of written texts), and community (students and teachers in the classroom) and division of labor (the roles to play and the jobs to share in learning activities). According to Guenette (2007), differences in research design and methodology are the major causes of the various results obtained. The following variables may sway among the results of the effects or non-effects of teacher feedback: proficiency level, writing conditions, instructional content, correction/no-correction comparison, study length, types of feedback [focusing on content or form, or both; direct or indirect feedback], procedures, written work grading, elicitation tasks, and individual learner differences in motivation. Guenette's findings can also be equally valid if applied to the research on peer and self-directed feedback.

Different researchers approach the same learning activity from diverse angles and with various research designs, and consequently obtain quite differing results. For example, on the topic of peer response, some researchers give their attention to the instruction (training) of students on peer response activities that lead to substantial revisions of peers' drafts and increase students' writing skills (Bell, 1991; Berg, 1999a, 1999b; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Min, 2005, 2006; Stanely, 1992; Zhu, 1995). Other researchers focus on the impact of culture on the performance and perceptions of peers in giving and taking oral and written feedback (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Still other researchers concentrate on comparing the effects of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Jacobs et al., 1998; Miao et al., 2006; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhang, 1995). The focus attention of another group of researchers is on types of peer interaction (de Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Storch, 2001). All of these studies shed light on the topic for other researchers and practitioners. What they overlooked is that they have not dealt with possible variables as Guenette mentioned in a more circumscribed research framework such as the activity system model can provide.

Another reason for the researcher to adopt the activity system model as research design is that this model can subsume the related theories of peer response. To begin with, the process writing theory can be illustrated with the elements in Engestrom's extended activity system model. The focus on meaning discovery over form imitation and on writing as both linear and recursive processes can be understood from the element of "transformation process." In addition, multiple feedback from multiple audiences, and

multiple revisions and editing are activities between writers (subject) and peers and teachers (community) to help writers to be autonomous writers by means of guidelines and feedback sheets (tool). The attention is given to process instead of product. This process-oriented approach changes the traditional concept about composing an essay. The outcome of writing is no longer to work out a complete and cohesive essay at one time but to eventually learn writing skills and knowledge through consecutive revision and editing. Product-oriented writing is summative while process-oriented writing is formative. The activity system model is formative, not summative, in measuring the outcome of the learning activity.

Next, the social-historical theory is based on the idea of language development, the concept of a zone of proximal development, and the concept of mediation developed by Vygotsky. As a contrast, the activity system model has been extended and developed on the rationale base of Vygotsky's concepts of artifact-mediated and object-oriented actions and of internalization/externalization by his students, Leontiev (1978, 1981) and Lauria (1976), and other followers, Engestrom (1987, 1993, 2001) and Cole (1996). It is not too far-fetched to say that the activity system model can subsume the social-historical theory to explicate the composition studies undertaken by the researchers who use the social-historical theory as the underpinning framework of their studies.

In a similar fashion, one can understand the collaborative learning theory through the lens of the activity system model. One central tenet of the collaborative learning theory is that learning is viewed as "construction of knowledge within a social context" (Oxford, 1997, p. 443). The concepts of the learning community, engagement in interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues, and writing as a process of internalizing

conversation to be re-externalized (Bruffee, 1984) can be explained with elements such as community, subject, tool, object, and outcome in the activity system model.

Finally, the emphasis of the importance of group interaction to increase students' additional practice in the target language in order to enhance language proficiency from the field of second language acquisition can be illuminated with the activity system model. In general, several researchers argue that negotiation of meaning—to give comprehensible input and output—through interpersonal interaction can facilitate a faster and better acquisition of the L2 language. From the perspective of the activity system model, negotiation of meaning is an activity occurring between the subject and the learning community by using helpful social skills and tools available to clarify the trouble sources and to seek for alternative texts for the target essays.

Participants and Setting

The setting for the research study was a private technical and vocational university whose educational objective is to cultivate students' professionalism, caring, vision, and elegance. The school had 11,219 students (Department of Statistics, MOE of Taiwan, 2009). The major part of the student body was related to nursing and medical technology programs. The student number in the Department of Foreign Languages was 579 (Department of Statistics, MOE of Taiwan, 2009). The researcher intended to investigate students' experience with and perception of multiple interaction activities in a multilevel EFL writing class because this school could be representative of other similar private vocational colleges in Taiwan in terms of students' academic performance and their attitude toward and motivation for learning. Generally speaking, students enrolled in

private colleges are those whose academic performance and scores, obtained in the Joint Entrance Examination of Technical and Vocational Colleges, have failed to get them admission into the public schools.

The participants in this study included 43 students (39 females and 4 males) at a university in the southern part of Taiwan. The students enrolled in the fourth grade of a five-year program were similar to freshmen at a four-year university in the American educational system. The students, whose first language was Chinese, were English majors, mainly 18 or 19 years old. They had been learning English as a foreign language for seven years or more. The English proficiency in this class was varied: some students had a language ability at the level of a score of 520 of the TOEFL test, some of 470, and others below 400. The students were mixed in terms of English proficiency, attitude toward writing, motivation to write, and personal and world knowledge. The instructional objective of this writing class was to cultivate students' abilities to write essays of different genres. The class met once a week for two consecutive 50-minute periods. The instructor, having earned a TESOL degree from a U.S. university, had more than six years teaching experience in English at university-level institutions and cram schools. He possessed not only the knowledge of the rationale of peer interaction and collaborative learning but also the practical experience in implementing multiple interaction activities in large writing classes. The purpose of this study was to discover how students perceived a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback as a series within a learning process of an EFL writing class.

Research Design

There has been no previous research on the topic about using the activity system model to examine the perception and experience of students and instructors about multiple interaction activities in a process-oriented EFL writing class. Concerning students' perceptions and experiences, the study is exploratory in the sense that it investigated student participants' motivation to write, attitude toward and goal of writing, and language proficiency through a case study design. A semi-structured interview was used to examine types of feedback incorporated into the students' revised drafts. Next, the study investigated students' opinions about peer response activities—pre-writing discussion, peer oral and written comments, negotiation over meanings, and possible benefits and constraints. Third, the study examined students' concerns about self-directed feedback. Fourth, students' perceptions about the modified teacher feedback were investigated—their concerns about teacher comments and how they dealt with them. Fifth, students' experiences with and preference for these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher) were probed.

This study was to examine the experience and perception of the student participants. Certain factors, such as students' attitude and motivation, goal and language proficiency, tools available, class rules, interactions among peers and teachers, division of labor in a learning community, were not easily to be probed in depth by means of quantitative methods. The richness and complexity in the peer response sessions revealed individual perception, emotional response to peer feedback, and possible conflict between peers that were not easily handled by statistical procedures. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is an inquiry tool to explore a social problem or human behavior. The

researcher wanted to build a holistic picture of the three types of feedback in an EFL writing class, to examine students' texts based on the use of feedback, to report detailed views and responses of the participants, and to conduct the study in a natural setting. In addition, a qualitative design can more fully address cultural influences, especially since students from collectivist cultures (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and China) tend to be reticent and self-censoring writers. In sharp contrast, students from individualist cultures (e.g., America, United Kingdom) are more inclined to be outspoken and self-expressive writers. Gender differences can also affect the interactions among peers. In a conversation, a female speaker is more easily interrupted by other interlocutors than a male speaker (West, 1984) and the cooperative conversational style is more common among female speakers (Coates, 1997) in the Western society. Can the findings be generalized to the Asian setting? In short, the above-mentioned features of this study were suitable for a qualitative design.

Restatement of the Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience and perception of the participants after they went through a series of activities of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback. Through the process of setting up class rules, providing guidelines and worksheets, dividing the job to share and roles to play, and showing how and why to engage in these activities, this study aimed to examine whether a more circumscribed research structure would shed new light on this pedagogical writing practice and convey useful information for future instruction in a multilevel EFL writing class.

The research questions in this study focused on understanding the response of the student participants to a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in a mixed-ability EFL writing class. The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

- 1. How do EFL students react to pre-writing discussion sessions on generating ideas and organization?
- 2. What are EFL students' perceptions of self-directed feedback in the process of revision?
- 3. What do student writers think of written and oral feedback from peers in peer response sessions? How do they deal with peer comments in their subsequent revisions?
- 4. How do EFL students respond to the teacher feedback on their revised drafts?
- 5. What do EFL students think of these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher)?

The Methodology Employed

This study used the qualitative methodology of a case study approach to portray the participants' perceptions and experiences about the changes that occurred in an EFL writing class after having implemented two cycles of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities. The participants of this case study were 43 university-level freshmen within the boundaries of one EFL writing class. Several common traits of qualitative studies could be identified. According to recognized generalists, researchers are more

interested in the process than in the product, and in the meaning interpreted by the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Besides, qualitative research methods are appropriate for uncovering the meanings people assign to their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1994). This trait is quite in agreement with the rationale of the activity system model (Engestrom, 1987) with emphasis on formative assessment and with the goal of the researcher—to understand the participants' response to multiple interaction activities and investigate their experience of the perceived quality of writing improvement.

Another agreed-upon trait of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis through the contact and interaction with the participants (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The researcher goes to the participants and the site to observe behaviors and phenomena in their natural setting when the topic needs to be probed in detail (Creswell, 1998). The present study followed this very trait. The researcher observed the classroom activities, audiotaped peer response sessions, interviewed members of the case study class, and examined students' drafts and comments from self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback.

The third common trait of qualitative studies is that the results of the research are presented in a descriptive way by means of analytic induction procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Researchers report what they have seen or heard about the topic by means of doing observations, conducting interviews, and audiotaping the dialogues of the participants. Through the process of transcribing data and coding them into categories, researchers describe the recurring themes or patterns presented in the study. In addition, Patton (2002) suggests that the qualitative approach

fits the research questions

about people's experiences; inquiry into the meanings people make of their experience; studying a person in the context of her or his social/interpersonal environment; and research where not enough is known about a phenomenon for standardized instruments to have been developed (or even to be ready to be developed). (p. 33)

After having considered what has been mentioned in this trait, the researcher argues that this study fits the conditions for qualitative research. The present study aimed to examine the participants' experiences and perceptions about multiple interaction activities in an EFL writing class, to make an inquiry into the possible meanings they made of their experience, and to study the interpersonal learning activities of the participants in a classroom community.

The Specific Qualitative Design

There are certain distinct characteristics of case study research. According to Yin (1994), the use of a case study approach allows a study to obtain holistic and meaningful traits of a real-life event. The case study focuses on an overall description and explanation of process, condition, and person group. As Yin (1994) observed, a case study is a design suitable for situations in which it is difficult for researchers to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context. This is especially true for the case of the activity system model in which seven elements are mutually influenced, and the interaction of any element with the others will change the relationship among them.

Another characteristic of a case study is the notion of the case as a bounded system

(Smith, 1978). A case study is typically bounded by space, time, participant criteria, or events (Creswell, 1998). The process-oriented approach to writing with the activity system model as research framework can fit the notion of a bounded system with students engaging in different types of writing activities in a specific time and location.

The last trait of the case study approach is that the researchers attempt to gain an indepth understanding of cases through collecting multiple data in different ways, such as observation, interview, recording the participants' conversation, and document (Creswell, 2002). This trait is mirrored in the present study through classroom observation of interaction among students and the teacher, interviews with the participants to understand their views about three types of feedback, audiotaping the conversation in the peer response sessions, and text analysis of the changes the students made after the multiple interaction activities.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for this study was a form of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), the objective of purposeful sampling is to "select information-rich cases strategically and purposefully" (p. 243). In this multilevel EFL writing class, the criteria of the sampling method to identify 24 student participants (21 females and 3 males) were based on the researcher's classroom observations, his listening to the audiotapes of peer response sessions, examining students' feedback sheets and drafts, considering the gender differences of the interviewees, his inviting the instructor's recommendations, and student consent to participate. In addition, educational case studies are appropriate for exploring such topics

as "student-peer interaction" and "teachers' interactions with students" in school settings (Merriam, 2001, p. 197). Generally speaking, the logic of using a case study is to yield in-depth insights for the topic under study. The selection of 24 participants out of the class with 43 students for in-depth studies on multiple interaction activities was appropriate in terms of scope for the issue under study. Within that group of 24, there are 7 students that can be categorized as high achievers; 9 students, intermediate; and 8 students, low achievers based on their writing grades of the past three semesters, the grades they obtained on English proficiency tests, their self-evaluation on writing competence, and the researcher's perusal of their drafts (see Appendix B: Students' Level of Language Proficiency).

Instruments

Instruments were categorized into two types—one designed to help students in the process of writing and the other used to collect data. The tools created to help students to acquire writing skills and knowledge in a process-oriented writing class included: (1) one guideline for writing essays, (2) one worksheet for self-directed feedback, (3) one peer feedback sheet, (4) one teacher feedback form, and (5) one revision feedback sheet. See Appendices C, D, E, F, and G.

The purpose of the guideline was to provide students with scaffolds necessary in the process of becoming good writers. In other words, the writers could employ this guideline for raising awareness about where to place their selective attentions. Appendix C contains one guideline adopted to help writers to comprehend the information of an assigned text and organize the main idea.

The worksheet for self-directed feedback can be found in Appendix D; it draws the writer's attention to content and form analysis. The purpose of this worksheet was to hold student writers accountable for their own writing tasks—to encourage them to think over their drafts and make necessary revisions before turning to the help of peers and teachers. It was a self-help activity.

Appendix E contains the peer feedback sheet developed by Miao et al. (2006) specifically for EFL students to provide constructive feedback on peers' drafts. The ultimate goal of peer collaboration was to cultivate self-regulated (independent) writers as opposed to other-regulated writers. A peer feedback form was adopted to train students to focus on the holistic techniques of writing while giving constructive feedback to peers.

A teacher feedback sheet as shown in Appendix F was used to give students some comments as a complement to self-directed and peer feedback. The sheet provided the students with feedback and helped them understand the teacher's concerns about the students' texts. To avoid the possibility of appropriating the students' texts, the teacher feedback was limited to three or four concerns pertaining to different categories.

The student writers were asked to fill in the feedback revision sheet (Appendix G) to indicate whether they had incorporated peer and teacher feedback into their revised drafts. This sheet served the function of encouraging students to carefully evaluate the comments from peers and teachers based on the consideration of whether their texts had been correctly understood or not. By doing so, the students had to comprehend the comments from teachers and peers and decide whether these responses were appropriate to clarify their intended meanings or to develop their ideas before incorporating them into their texts. By not simply accepting or rejecting teacher and peer feedback, the student

writers could meaningfully and discriminately internalize and re-externalize what had been provided.

Other instruments were related to data collection, including the journal of classroom activities and observation, including the instructor's mid-semester oral survey of students' reactions to the multiple interaction activities; the interview protocol; and audiotapes of peer response group talk. First, the journals of classroom activities recorded the procedures of implementing the research project and interaction between the teacher and the students. The classroom observation focused on the nine issues of observation proposed by Spradley (1980)—space, activity, actor, object, act, event, goal, time, and feelings (see Appendix H). This kind of observation intended to achieve a broad vision of peer-peer interaction as well as teacher-student interaction in the classroom. The descriptive notes obtained from the classroom journals served as the basis to compare and contrast the results of text analysis and interviews with the student participants. Next, an interview protocol for the students (see Appendix I) was constructed with general, openended questions related to the research questions and some specific questions developed from general questions as suggested by Lichtman (2006), and certain improvised questions in case the responses of the students were worthy of further probing in detail. Finally, peer response group sessions were audiotaped to examine the interaction among peers—meaning negotiation, oral and written comments, equal turn-taking and contribution, and possible conflict.

The following section addressed how five research questions in this study were answered by data collecting methods. The first question about students' response to pre-writing sessions was answered through data collected by interviewing student participants

and observing the peer discussion. Interviews with student participants and analysis of their self-directed feedback worksheet were the methods to collect data to answer the second question addressing EFL students' perception of self-directed feedback in the process of revision. The third question concerning students' perception of written and oral feedback and their ways to deal with peer comments was approached by observing and analyzing their performance in peer response sessions, administering a survey in the middle of the semester, interviewing student participants, and examining their revised drafts based on peer feedback. The fourth question about students' response to teacher feedback was addressed by interviewing student participants and reviewing their text changes as a result of teacher comments. The last question concerning student participants' opinions about self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback was approached by collecting data through interviewing student participants and examining their revised drafts.

To sum up, what has been stated above is summarized and presented in Appendix J.

Procedures

Before doing classroom observations, audiotaping peer response group sessions, conducting semi-structured interviews, and collecting students' drafts for analysis, the researcher received permission from the instructor and the student participants by asking them to sign informed consent forms. The process of completing each cycle of a writing assignment was described in detail in the schedule of implementation (see Appendix A and Figure 2: The Flow Chart of Procedures). Two cycles of writing tasks were planned after a series of introduction and training concerning the three different kinds of feedback.

Students' works (drafts and final versions) were collected to examine whether the students had followed the guidelines and engaged in the three types of feedback activities, and incorporated self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback into their revisions. In addition to audiotaping the peer interaction sessions, classroom activities and observations were scheduled during the first writing cycle for later reference so that the instructor had enough time to model and show students the procedures of the three types of feedback. Thus, the student writers could familiarize themselves with the performance of the multiple interaction activities. The researcher took descriptive notes about the classroom environment and the peer response activities including the instructor and the groups of student participants, the activities between them during the class periods, the objects around them, the major events in peer interaction, time (the typical sequences observed in the session), the goals of the session, and the responses of the participants. After this step, the researcher self-reflected on the observation based on the reflective notes and the report of observation by citing convergent and divergent observational foci and the principle of saturation (Shank, 2006, pp. 23-31).

To assure the quality of the interview, the arrangement of places and time was taken into consideration. After considering the students' oral English ability, the researcher conducted an interview with one student at a time in a quiet place in Chinese, trying to establish a rapport with the interviewee at the beginning by engaging him/her in casual talk and making him/her feel comfortable. All interview data were transcribed and then translated from Chinese to English. After having read the content of the interview data, the researcher created code lists covering major and minor themes for the purpose of data analysis and presentation. To sum up, the procedures of the present study were as follows:

Introduction to concepts of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback Instructor's modeling for self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities Draft outline by using guideline for summarizing information about assigned texts (i.e., "Wandering Home" and "The Dog and the Wolf") Pre-writing discussion session (observation) Writing first draft, and then completing the worksheet for self-directed feedback Revision of first draft \rightarrow second draft Peer negotiation over content and organization of writers' texts by reference to peer response sheet \rightarrow Revision (audiotaping peer talk and observation) Peer comments on grammar, diction, and mechanical devices \rightarrow Revision (audiotaping peer talk and observation) Revision of second draft \rightarrow third draft Teacher feedback based on consideration as complement to peer and self-directed feedback Revision of third draft \rightarrow final draft Collecting feedback sheets and drafts for text analysis in second writing cycle Conducting interviews with student participants before the end of the semester

Figure F2. The Flow Chart of Procedures

Data Analysis

The data analysis included two parts—one to analyze interview and peer response data by means of the software ATLAS.ti 5.5, and one to evaluate student participants' drafts by using a rubric to check students' incorporation of the three types of feedback into their revisions. For the purpose of data analysis, three code lists (see Appendices K, L, and M) were developed according to the researcher's perusal of the collected data, as well as theories and empirical studies from other scholars.

ATLAS.ti, a workbench for qualitative analysis of large amounts of data, is designed to deal with "unstructured data, e.g., data that cannot be meaningfully analyzed by formal, statistical approaches" (Muhr & Friese, 2004, p. 2). It is an instrument for knowledge management—to transform data into useful knowledge by means of VISE: visualization, integration, serendipity, and exploration. The object-oriented design aims to offer tools to visualize complex properties and relations between objects. The component of integration synthesizes all data sets of a research project so as not to lose the holistic picture when looking at details. Certain tools and procedures ATLAS.ti provides for the concept of serendipity are object managers, interactive margin area, full text search, and so on. The last component is exploration which is conducive to building theories through data.

To analyze the data collected from the interviews with the 24 student participants, the researcher followed the six steps suggested by Creswell (2002). As for transcripts of peer response talks, conversation analysis skills proposed by Have (1999), Schegloff (1992), and Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) were employed to examine whether the peers' comments were on-task, about-task, or off-task (Guerrero & Villamil, 1994).

Finally, a multiple-trait approach (Hamp-Lyons, 1991a, b) was used to probe whether the student writers had incorporated the three types (self-directed, peer, and teacher) of comments into their revised drafts.

According to Creswell (1998), analysis in case study research consists of constructing a detailed description of the case and its setting. The researcher followed the six steps suggested by Creswell (2002) to interpret the meaning of the interview data:

- 1. Prepare and organize data for analysis.
- 2. Explore the data by carefully examining text segments.
- 3. Describe and develop patterns or themes from the data.
- 4. Represent and report the findings.
- 5. Interpret the findings.
- 6. Validate the accuracy and credibility of the findings. (p. 303)

These six steps are similar to the analytic inductive procedures suggested by other generalists (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 2002). The researcher developed two code lists to investigate potential themes and sub-themes for later interpretation after having gotten a sense of the whole through careful reading of each interview. With the help of ATLAS.ti, the researcher conducted the coding process for individual transcripts through coding, axial coding, and categorizing based on the Code List for Interviews with Students in Multiple Interaction Activities (see Appendix K).

Another data analysis method is conversation analysis. According to Donaldson (1979), conversational rules apply under the following circumstances:

- 1. Two or more participants are involved.
- 2. They take turns talking.

- Consecutive remarks deal with roughly the same subject rather than a random series of subjects.
- 4. At least a minimal exchange of information occurs.
- 5. The transaction is not purely a business transaction.
- 6. No one person is the authority in the situation.
- 7. Utterances have a high degree of spontaneity as opposed to formulaic predictability.
- 8. Members share reciprocal positions. One cannot dominate.
- 9. Imperatives are relatively infrequent due to relative equality.
- 10. Deletion of repetitive material can occur in answering a question. (p. 291)

 These conversational rules can be compared to the key characteristics of peer response activities. First of all, each peer response group in this study was composed of four students who took turns to negotiate peers' texts by exchanging information and opinions about alternative texts. Next, the relationship among the members in a peer response group was equal (Elbow, 1973; Bruffee, 1984), and none was supposed to be predominant in the process of exchange of talks. Finally, the negotiation on text meanings—asking questions and giving answers, and discussing alternative texts—was spontaneous with possible deletion of repetitive material when responding to questions or confirming information.

In *Doing Conversation Analysis* (1999), Paul ten Have suggested that, for conversation analysis, a general outline for research projects should include the following phases:

1. getting or making recordings of natural interaction;

- 2. transcribing the tapes, in whole or in part;
- 3. analyzing selected episodes;
- 4. reporting the research. (p. 48)

The researcher kept to these four phases to record peer response sessions, to transcribe and analyze selected episodes, and finally to report the findings.

In the process of data analysis of peer response sessions, the focus was on speech acts such as asking for clarification, confirmation, repetition, suggestion, repair (self-repair and other-repair for trouble sources such as unintelligible error, mistake, or fault), grammar correction, and eliciting agreement through negotiation to investigate whether the interlocutors achieved an intersubjective understanding of the tasks. In other words, attention was paid to check whether the dialogues were on-task. Another concern was about-task episodes, including peers' pointing out the writers' problems yet failing to provide constructive feedback, "beating about the bush", and giving partially correct comments. The last focus was on off-task episodes—peers offering incorrect and unrelated comments, and shifting away from the topic under discussion. Based on the above-mentioned foci, the Code List for Peer Response Sessions (Appendix L) was developed for the purpose of processing the data analysis.

The last method, a multiple-trait approach, was used to assess the student participants' drafts in the aspect of text changes. According to Min (2006), the three criteria for text improvement include "idea development, sufficiency, and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality" (p. 125). Another criterion, improved grammar, as suggested by other researchers (Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman, 1989; Celce-Murcia, 1992; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992, as cited in Min, 2006), is added to the list of these three

criteria as a characteristic of text changes. The reason for doing so is that most students in this study are still in the process of language development, and, consequently, grammar plays an important role in communicating their intended meanings. The purpose of applying these four criteria was not to evaluate the improvement of text quality but to understand the development of written texts. The multiple-trait approach takes into consideration only the most remarkable traits that are closely related to the writing task (Hamp-Lyons, 1991b). For example, in an argumentative essay, the criterion of idea development includes the introduction to the controversial issue, the opinions for and against the issue with supporting evidence or details, the writer's position with convincing logic and sustaining information, and a persuasive conclusion. The criterion of sufficiency covers "a well-defined thesis and sound synthesized ideas from cited examples and counterexamples" (Min, 2006, p. 125). As for the organization of information, the features to be considered are "a direct expression of viewpoint," and "logic order, paragraph coherence and transitions, and a restatement of main ideas in conclusion" (Min, 2006, p. 125). Finally, the criterion for improved grammar focuses first on global errors that "interfere with the overall message of the text," and then on local errors that "do not inhibit a reader's comprehension" (Ferris, 2002, pp. 57-58). According to Lane and Lange (1999), global errors cover mainly the errors in verb tenses, sentence structure, word order, adverbial and noun clauses, conditional sentences, and connecting words whereas local errors include subject-verb agreement, article use, singular-plural noun use, word choice, word forms, and prepositions. In short, with these four criteria, the researcher developed a rubric (see Appendix M: Evaluation Criteria for the Feedback Effect on Students' Revised Drafts) to assess the drafts composed by the

student participants to investigate their textual changes after a series of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities.

Verification of Interpretation

Triangulation, member checking, and double checks to confirm data are the major ways to establish trustworthiness and consistency of this study. According to Wolcott (1990), nine points can be used to increase trustworthiness: talk little, listen a lot; record accurately, begin writing early, let readers "see" for themselves; report fully; be candid; seek feedback; try to achieve balance; and write accurately. These points were the guidelines for the process of collecting and analyzing data obtained from observations and interviews. The researcher used two forms of data triangulation: (1) Multiple sources of data—multiple participants (24 student participants)—that provided 24 different sources of data. (2) Multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, observations, audiotapes of peer response talk-in-interaction, and the analysis of students' drafts and feedback sheets.

Member checking was another way to seek accuracy and consistency of this study. The participants of this research were invited to read and make changes of the data (Chinese versions) of the interviews for the purpose of accuracy of information. In addition, the researcher entrusted the task of data checking to colleagues in Taiwan to detect possible faults. This process enhanced the data accuracy and consistency. To sum up, the data collected from students' drafts, classroom observations, peer response talk, and interviews were triangulated to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings in this study.

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, the researcher submitted the research design of this study to the Human Subjects Committee at SIUC for approval. After that, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the research results would be used before they participated in this study. An informed consent form was signed by the participants, and the researcher explained the purpose of the research and requirements, and the rights of the participants based on the principle of respect for persons. The participants were informed about "the right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time" and "the right to ask questions, obtain a copy of the results, and have their privacy protected" (Creswell, 2003, pp. 64-65). In addition, interview content would be kept confidential, and the audio tapes would be stored in a secure area and destroyed later. The researcher assured the student participants that what they said would not affect their grades. Their personal opinions about multiple interaction activities would be used strictly for this study and not made available to their instructor. They were encouraged to reflect on their own EFL writing experience coupled with a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback, and to give their honest opinions, regardless of what their instructor had said about feedback activities. In the process of data analysis, the researcher used pseudonyms for individuals and places to protect identities. No information harmful to participants was used in the presentation of research results. The researcher would not use language biased against participants in presenting the findings.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher has been studying the issue of large multilevel EFL writing classes for the past eight years. The first five-year experiences in teaching English composition were full of a strong sense of frustration and disappointment. The students did not learn much from teacher feedback because the bottom line for most students was the grades they received for their writing tasks. The same mistake would recur in the subsequent essays. Giving students too much feedback gave rise to the problem of appropriating student texts, and this was against the spirit of process-oriented approach to writing—having multiple feedback from multiple audiences and then doing multiple revisions. Giving too little feedback might leave students an impression of neglecting a teacher's duty. To complicate matters still further, the time and energy invested in correcting students' texts did not necessarily have reasonable positive learning results when students did not have any intention to learn from teacher feedback.

Four years ago, the researcher was enrolled into the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at SIUC to seek for some possible solutions to this instructional issue in large EFL writing classes. The training and internship the researcher received from the SIUC writing center, the classes (Teaching ESL Composition, Independent Study, Instructional Theory, Principles, and Practices) he attended, and the theories (process writing theory, social-historical theory, collaborative learning theory, interaction viewpoints from the field of second language acquisition, and cultural-historical activity theory) he studied gradually shaped his viewpoints about multiple interaction activities as a feasible alternative to traditional teacher feedback in a large multilevel EFL writing class.

After having studied at SIUC for four years, the researcher had become aware of possible biases. Initially, the researcher assumed that peer response and self-directed feedback that work in American school settings could be equally applied to those in Taiwan. However, most students in ESL writing classes of American campuses come from different cultures and have a strong motivation to survive in the academic communities. As a contrast, students from private colleges in Taiwan, though from the same culture, are inclined to be passive recipients of knowledge and unfamiliar with how to be active participants in the process of constructing knowledge and interacting with peers. For certain students, English writing is only one foreign language skill once or twice a week in the classroom activity and has nothing to do with daily life. Some researchers, after having investigated the effects of implementing peer review in their classrooms in Taiwan, came to the conclusion that peer response, originated from Western individualism, was not feasible as a pedagogical practice for their students, who lacked the stance of self-expression (Scollon & Scollon, 1991). In spite of the fact that some researchers in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China claim that peer response can benefit students if well-planned training and intervention are done before the implementation of the peer response (Miao et al., 2006; Min, 2005, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000), one should not neglect the important factor that students from national (public) universities are distinct from those studying at private colleges in terms of their language proficiency level, attitude, motivation, and self-expectation. The researcher was conscious of the individual and cultural differences in a diverse social context such as that in private colleges in Taiwan.

Another possible bias of the researcher might lie in his expectations of students with the same English proficiency level like his past students or the international students he got acquainted with at SIUC. Four years have elapsed, and the researcher has to confess that he did not know much about the currently enrolled students at the campus of private colleges. The classroom climate might have changed, and so might the current students in terms of their writing skills and knowledge, social values, beliefs, motivations, and learning styles after the shift from elitism to mass higher education in Taiwan (Wang, 2003).

The third bias against which the researcher would have to take caution is that the current students should be able to concentrate their minds on studying; however, the downturn of economic growth in the past few years has forced some students to spend more time and energy on part-time jobs. For students indulging in material comforts, spending time to make money is more practical than studying diligently. For other students, the outside world is more attractive and interesting than classroom learning activities. Still for others, the virtual world of the Internet and games is more real than real life. In short, many factors may distract students from working hard on their writing tasks.

The last bias the researcher might entertain is that the degree of students' dependency on teacher feedback on their writing is lessened as the opportunity for writing practice increases through email and blog communication. The advancement in Internet communication makes national boundaries gradually disappear. Theoretically, practice makes perfect; in reality, without comprehensible feedback from others to point

out errors, writers may unconsciously repeat the same incorrect expressions and, even worse, fall into the habit of using Internet slang in formal writing tasks.

Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter presents a restatement of what the researcher intended to examine by means of the activity system model about the experience and perception of the participants after the implementation of multiple interaction activities in a large multilevel EFL writing class. Forty-three students participated in the activities of this study. Students' English language proficiency was varied, and so were their attitudes toward writing and motivation to write. They came from one mixed-ability class. The purpose and research questions were restated. The need for a qualitative design for this study was explained with the consideration of the activity system model as the research framework. The case study approach was used to understand the participants' responses to multiple feedback. In addition, by using purposeful sampling, the researcher selected 24 students as key informants in this case study. Two types of instruments were employed—guidelines and feedback sheets were designed to help student writers in the process of composing and revising essays, and interview, classroom observation, audiotaping peer response talk, and students' texts were used to collect data. In addition to an implementation schedule over the period of a whole semester, a flow chart of procedures was provided to give a process overview about this study. As for the data analysis, the multiple-trait approach was used to analyze student participants' drafts; conversation analysis was the tool for the transcripts of peer response sessions; and analytic inductive procedures were employed by means of ATLAS.ti 5.5 for the data of participant interviews (24 students) and of peer response sessions (11 groups). Ethical considerations were stated for the process of data collection, analysis, and presentation. A subjectivity statement about the researcher's experiences, training, theoretical perspectives, and possible biases was carefully explained. Finally, triangulation, double checks of all data, and member checking (asking interviewees to read and make changes in the transcripts of interviews; entrusting colleagues with reviewing the data) were used to increase the trustworthiness and consistency of this study.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

As stated in Chapter 1, the study reported here examined in detail the experiences and perceptions of 24 participants in a class with 43 students after the implementation of a combination of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in a large multilevel EFL writing class in a private university in the southern part of Taiwan. This chapter is organized in terms of the five research questions posed in Chapter 1. According to each question, the findings of this study are reported in five sections: (1) students' responses to pre-writing discussion, (2) students' perceptions of self-directed feedback, (3) student writers' opinions about peer feedback (written and oral), (4) students' responses to teacher feedback, and (5) students' views about self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback. There is a summary section to present the findings from these five research questions at the end of this chapter.

Students' Responses to Pre-Writing Discussion

Pre-writing discussion is an activity aimed to help student writers to have a further understanding of the assigned text through the process of brainstorming textual meanings, cultural comprehension, syntactical structure, and personal experiences. To report the findings of students' responses to pre-writing discussion, two data sets are used—the *Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation* and the interviews with participants. In the end of this section, there is a conclusion to present the major findings.

Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation Related to Pre-Writing Discussion

The Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation describes the general situation of the pre-writing discussion activity. The first assigned text, "Wandering Home" by Dominique Browning, was discussed on September 24, 2008, by five groups, each composed of eight or nine students. In spite of the fact that, before the pre-writing discussion, the instructor had exchanged ideas with the students about the concept of "home," asked students to scan the text to get the main idea, compared the author's viewpoints about "home" with those of individual students, the activity was not successful due to the limitation of the students' English speaking ability and the students' unfamiliarity with others in their group. In the notes of the classroom observation, the researcher stated:

At 11:35 a.m., the instructor asked each group to discuss the article "Wandering Home" in English for 15 minutes. The group in which I participated was not very successful because of the limited English-speaking ability. The students were unable to express their ideas thoroughly, and some would use Chinese instead. From the five groups, only two student representatives were able to report the short conclusion of their groups in simple English before the class was dismissed at 12:00 p.m.

It seemed to me that code-switching might be an alternative for students to pass over to the next stage of communication in English only. I discussed this issue with the instructor to improve the effectiveness of the pre-writing discussion. (*Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation*, 9/24/2008)

The second assigned text, "The Dog and the Wolf," a fable stating the advantages and disadvantages of two different lifestyles, was discussed on December 3, 2008. At that time, speaking in Chinese, the students appeared more able to freely communicate their thoughts. The fifth group, attended by the researcher, was in a heated debate over the differences between the dog's lifestyle (restrained yet free of anxiety over physiological needs) and the wolf's (free but insecure about basic needs). The following are two passages from the researcher's classroom observation:

The group that I was in as an observer and audience started the task by the group members taking turns to speak out their opinions about these two different lifestyles. First, Sandra, the leader of the fifth group, said that the wolf in the fable was very foolish because he might die in order to maintain freedom and dignity. If there were no life, there would be no hope at all. The wolf would prefer dying to living without freedom, unlike the dog. Ida responded to this argument saying that the wolf's lifestyle was very similar to that of the wanderers in our last assignment. Could we say for sure that there was nothing praiseworthy in the lifestyle of wanderers? With few material possessions, the wanderers could move from place to place with ease, without having the many anxieties that afflict other people. They had deliberately chosen to lead the life they led, and were fully aware of the consequences. In the same way, the wolf, in seeking independence and dignity, chose a simple way of life without too many constraints.

Sharon suggested that the wolf could not find food around there due to the tight guarding of the dog and his companions. This did not mean that the wolf could not wander away to other areas to find food. Life always presents many choices. Peggy counter-argued that the wolf was in a very weak physical condition, not having any strength to move, so he was lying under a big tree when the dog met him. How could it be possible for him to move to other areas to hunt?

As an observer and audience, I really enjoyed the pre-writing discussion session because the students could communicate subtle feelings and thoughts in Chinese much better than in English. Their active participation contributed to the use of the students' first language, but it highlighted the gap of language proficiency between English and Chinese. In other words, the students still needed to work hard on improving their English competence. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 12/3/2008; emphasis added)

Generally, students' performance in the pre-writing discussion was improved when they familiarized themselves with the procedure and knew one another, and when they were what language should be used in the process of discussion? It seems that students at the stage of language development are still incapable of using the target language (English) well enough to express their intended meanings. However, if they are not given an opportunity to practice the target language they are acquiring, it may be difficult for them to transfer from the stage of interlanguage to that of the target language. If they are required to employ the target language to discuss, they may either keep silent or convey their ideas incompletely. This would hinder two-way communication.

Students' Perceptions of Pre-Writing Discussion as Shown in Interview

Interviews are another source to report student responses to the pre-writing discussion activity. There are three types of responses to this activity: helpful, unhelpful, and neutral. The helpful response type includes two reasons, namely that student writers are able to gain more ideas, examples, and knowledge from peers in the pre-writing discussion to compose their drafts, and that this activity helps them to more thoroughly understand the topic so they can get inspiration from their peers' talks. The following example of Hank's statement can represent the first type of reason:

That is a great favorite of mine. For example, in our discussion that day, some peers were against the wolf's lifestyle, while others were for it. Everyone had a different opinion. You could *absorb much more knowledge* when everyone gave his/her views. You could write your draft *by citing examples given by your peers*. (Hank, para. 37; emphasis added)

The significance of Hank's statement reveals that the major goal of the pre-writing discussion is to gain more ideas, examples, and experience as writing materials from peers through brainstorming to compose the drafts.

Another reason concerning the helpful response type is that a more thorough understanding of the topic can be gained, and peers' opinions can inspire writers to produce their essays. The following example from Sharon can be used to illustrate this point:

S: It's easier for us to understand what the text is talking about if we have eight students together to discuss it; moreover, the opinions from my peers will inspire me when I am composing my own draft. (Sharon, para. 44; emphasis added)

Sharon's response showed another purpose of this activity: to approach the topic from varied angles by different students so that they could better understand the topic and get inspiration for composing their writings.

Second, there is the unhelpful response type to the pre-writing discussion. The students' reasons included that the pre-writing discussion was superficial and discursive in the exchange of ideas, time-consuming with low efficiency, and with no specific goal to reach.

1. Superficial and discursive in the exchange of ideas

The viewpoints of Julia and Belinda can be used to illustrate this type of reason:

J: I think eight people are too many. I feel, um, five people are enough.

Sometimes eight people have too many ideas, but with five people, we can

understand others' ideas in depth. Unless there is plenty of time, fewer people would be better. (Julia, para. 30; emphasis added)

B: Either the group was too quiet, or the discussion was too *discursive*. (Belinda, para. 43; emphasis added)

What Julia and Belinda said points out certain possible defects in the pre-writing discussion activity. Even though the instructor had given a lecture on the topic, some students still were incapable of thinking critically on the issue, and therefore, their remarks tended to be shallow and desultory.

2. Time-consuming with low efficiency

The statements of Alison and Audrey can exemplify this type of opinion:

A: It is easy to become noisy, and an eight-student group *lacks efficiency*.

Probably, four-student groups are better for the discussion to get going.

(Audrey, para. 54, emphasis added)

A: I still feel it's *time-consuming*. (Alison, para. 46, emphasis added)

For students who were used to the teacher-as-knowledge-dispenser learning style, it seemed to be more difficult to change concepts about learning. Generally, they were efficiency-oriented learners—to know the answers directly was much more important than to search for them through a long process. The concept of learning as a process of discovery by learners themselves was foreign to them.

3. No specific goal to reach

Ching's statement can represent this type of response:

C: In addition to there being too many members, there is *no specific goal to* reach for the discussion. As a result, everyone says what he or she likes. We

are keeping on talking and *don't come to any conclusion*. (Ching, para. 52; emphasis added)

Ching's opinion showed that certain students preferred to have one peer to tell them well-assorted viewpoints about the topic under discussion so that they could easily remember and use them to compose their drafts. In addition, they might have felt more confident in using the conclusions reached by group members in a consensus.

Third, there is the neutral response type to the pre-writing discussion. Sandra maintained that the appropriateness of the topic had an impact on the quality of discussion:

S: *It depends on the topic*, I guess. The first topic on "Home" was pretty dry, so no one in our group felt like talking about it. However, when it came to the second topic on "The dog and the wolf," our discussion got so heated that we almost fought each other. So I guess it's better to have a more interesting topic!

H: Are you saying that the efficiency of pre-writing discussion is closely related to its topic?

S: Yes!

H: So it's better to have a controversial topic?

S: Mm, it's also easier to write on. (Sandra, paras. 59-63)

The significance of Sandra's statement reveals two important implications: First, the topic must be at the level of the students' knowledge and experience so that they are able to express their perspectives more vividly and concretely in the discussion sessions. In other words, the required background knowledge for students to understand the assigned

topic should be taken into consideration. Second, a controversial and interesting topic makes it easier for students to produce their essays, which is especially true for the argumentative genre.

In short, students' perception of pre-writing discussion in interviews can be summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Students' Responses to Pre-Writing Discussion in Interviews

Helpful	Writers
Gain more ideas, examples, knowledge for writing drafts Understand topic better and get inspiration from peers' opinions	Mandy (H), Eva (H), Jean (H), Lou (I), Winnie (I), Lisa (I), Hank (L), Chu (L) Sharon (H), Aki (I), Ina (I), Tom (L)
Unhelpful	Writers
Superficial and discursive in exchange of talk Time-consuming and low effect No specific goal to reach	Julia (H), Ava (H), Linda (I), Belinda (L), Flora (L) Alison (H), Ina (I), Jessica (I), Audrey (L) Mico (L), Ching (L)
Neutral	Writers
Topic decides the activity's efficiency	Sandra

From Table 2, one learns that 4 of 7 (57.14%) high achievers, 5 of 8 (62.5%) intermediate writers (Sandra is not taken into calculation), and 3 of 8 (37.5%) low achievers regarded the pre-writing discussion as helpful to them to compose their drafts. Writers at the high and intermediate level of writing ability were more likely to feel satisfied with this activity than those at the low level. The reason that the low achievers tended to feel the pre-writing discussion to be unhelpful can be drawn from the viewpoints of Belinda and Ching mentioned above. Generally, the low achievers seemed to be unable to organize information as effectively as their peers with good writing skills.

Belinda's opinion, "the discussion was too discursive," and Ching's view, "we don't come to any conclusion," reveal that they could not draw key points from the discussion for the following step of draft writing.

Conclusion

There are several findings in the pre-writing discussion from the *Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation* and the student interviews. First, the language used in this activity has an impact on the results of the discussion. Students can communicate their subtle ideas better in their native language than in the target language, but in doing so they may lose an opportunity to practice the language they are acquiring. Second, the advanced and intermediate writers tend to regard this activity as helpful, while the poor writers appear to take it as unhelpful. The less competent writers lack sufficient ability to organize their peers' viewpoints in discussion, and this can be the reason why they hold this activity to be unbeneficial. Finally, the choice of topic matters—controversial and interesting topics matching students' background knowledge and experience can attract them to actively involve in the pre-writing discussion and facilitate their writing.

Students' Perceptions of Self-Directed Feedback

To investigate students' perceptions of self-directed feedback, the researcher interviewed 24 participants out of the multilevel EFL writing class with 43 students and examined their worksheets for self-directed feedback. This section includes (a) in the interview, three aspects of self-directed feedback—general response to, concerns about,

and suggestions for improving self-directed feedback activity, (b) students' self-directed feedback worksheets, and (c) conclusion.

Students' Opinions about Self-Directed Feedback in Interviews General response to self-directed feedback.

With the help of ATLAS.ti, the interview data were analyzed. The findings of students' general responses to the self-directed feedback can be categorized into two types: helpful and unhelpful. The first response type (helpful) is the students' belief that self-directed feedback improves their writing competence because (a) the Self-Directed Feedback Worksheet guides them to check details and raises their awareness of certain items and questions, and (b) this worksheet is more organized and complete for writers to do self-reflection on essays. The opinion that the worksheet is beneficial for student writers to check details can be exemplified by the following statements:

- 1. Two high achievers' (Julia and Sharon) viewpoint about self-directed feedback activity
 - J: I think this self-directed feedback activity is really good. For example, my *organization* is sometimes *in disorder*. Sometimes when I found there *weren't enough details* to support the topic sentence, I would change it into something *more conceptual*, so that *more ideas* could be contained. (Julia, para. 50; emphasis added) [ATLAS.ti uses paragraph instead of line numbers for quotes]
 - S: I think it helps me to check whether I didn't compose *my summary or the conclusion* very well. (Sharon, para. 62; emphasis added)

To Julia, the significance of self-directed feedback activity lay in the fact that the worksheet functioned as a reminder for her to check organization and the sufficiency of the details to support her argument. In other words, the items and questions listed on the worksheet were conducive to raising student writers' awareness. Similarly, Sharon paid attention to improve her summary and conclusion. In other words, both students made use of the activity to improve the content of their essays.

- 2. The responses of two low-achieving writers (Tom and Ching)
 - C: I can understand where my essay went *wrong by checking against some details*. (Ching, para. 74; emphasis added)

T: I think it helps me check whether I have *completed what I need to or not*. (Tom, para. 70; emphasis added)

Tom and Ching stated that this activity helped them to check something wrong or missing. In other words, their concerns were more in the aspect of what should be present in their essays. Their emphasis was somewhat different from that of Julia and Sharon, who placed weight on improving their writings' quality. The former was a passive check of required essay components whereas the latter was active enhancement of the writings' comprehensibility.

Another perceived reason why self-directed feedback is beneficial to writers was that the worksheet was well-organized and complete as a tool for systematic draft checking. The following student statements can illustrate this point:

E: Um...I feel not too bad about it, I think. If you read through your paper after you finish writing, you'll find awkward sentences or misspellings. Then, you take out the teacher's worksheet to check your errors. It's *more organized*:

- you check outlines, grammar, content, sequence, and so on. It's more (2.0)... yes, *more complete*. (Eva, para. 74; emphasis added)
- J: It can be counted as one more check. When I do proofreading myself, I can't think of so many details, but with the worksheet, I may know what I'm missing and what I need to add. (Jessica, para. 68; emphasis added)
- C: I find that there is *a lot of stuff* that demands my attention if I follow the *criteria on the worksheet* provided by the instructor. If any minor part goes wrong in my essay, the readers will probably not be able to understand what I wanted to express. They might misunderstand it. (Chu, para. 58; emphasis added)

To these three students, the worksheet was designed to help them to orient their attention in a systematic way to the questions and items they could not afford to neglect if they wanted to improve their writing performance. To most of the student writers, the details listed on the worksheet were items they could not think of without missing some of them.

The second response type (unhelpful) was that certain students entertained an opposite opinion about the self-directed feedback activity—low efficiency. Their reasons for this response included their failure in spotting errors by themselves, their uncertainty about mistakes, their lack of knowledge to make revisions, and the limitations of the worksheet. The following student examples can be used to illustrate the point that they cannot find anything wrong by checking the items of the worksheet against their essays:

1. Mandy's case

M: Well...when I read my essay, I think *nothing is wrong*, yeah! I feel *everything is fine*; but actually, *I find a lot of errors after I have read peers' works*. (Mandy, para. 86; emphasis added)

It is interesting to note that Mandy was not able to identify her own errors, but upon reading her peers' writings, she could find the same errors peers had made in her own essay. She was too familiar with her own writing to be able to ferret out mistakes, not because of her lack of language proficiency to detect errors but because of her inability to switch her role from a writer to that of a reader to make the necessary revisions.

2. Hank's case

HK: To tell the truth, if I had not been reminded by my peers, I would not have detected anything wrong with my essay when I was engaged in the activity. The stuff I would pay attention to was limited to verb tense and whether an "s" was needed or not. I didn't check my essay with regard to fluency. After all, it was my own writing, and I certainly would assume that I understood what I was saying. The idea of unclearness never occurred to me, yeah. (Hank, para. 53; emphasis added)

Hank's situation was different from Mandy's in the matter of language proficiency. His failure in finding mistakes could be attributed to his lack of writing competence. The statement made by Hank disclosed a concept shared by certain student writers—"I understood what I was saying." It never occurred to them whether the reader could understand what they had tried to convey. This is a characteristic writer-centered concept rather than a reader-oriented one.

3. The case of Winnie and Flora

- W: Um...my response? I think I followed the worksheet to check my [essay], but I feel it didn't work well because *I couldn't find anything wrong with my essay* especially since I *finished it not so long ago*, yeah. (Winnie, para, 62; emphasis added)
- F: I think sort of *blind spots* were there after we just *finished the writing and then did the revision job* because we normally think we did a good job; however, your classmates would tell you what you didn't do well. Your viewpoints might be strange after their reading your essay, and then you would realize, um, they seemed to be right. I think there are sort of *blind spots* there. (Flora, para. 59; emphasis added)

Both Winnie and Flora had something in common—they were unable to find anything wrong due to the time proximity of writing and revision. In spite of the fact that the instructor had asked the students to perform self-revision at least two days after the completion of the drafts, the second self-directed feedback activity was conducted outside the classroom, and therefore it was difficult to find out whether the students followed this rule. Generally, it is hard for a writer to identify errors of his/her writing after having completed the draft very recently.

In short, from these three examples, one can learn that the reasons for failing to detect errors can be attributed to either the inability to switch roles from writer to reader, the lack of language proficiency, or the lack of intervals between composing and revising.

The second reason the students held for low efficiency of self-directed feedback was that they were unsure of their own errors. Jean's statement can be representative for this type of opinion:

J: Because we all discuss together! Yeah, it's more straightforward like this. If you work alone, you may feel there're mistakes but still *can't be sure of them*. So it's better to have some group members to consult with. (Jean, para. 100; emphasis added)

Jean's opinion highlighted the fact that students who were still at the stage of developing their English language proficiency felt easily uncertain about their writings' correctness.

The third reason for low efficiency of self-directed feedback was that the students were able to find something wrong but unable to revise it on their own. The following statement by Audrey can be used to illustrate this view:

- A: I think that *its effect is insignificant*. I usually write what I think is correct, so it is difficult for me to detect my errors. I only get an insignificant result after I have followed the worksheet from the teacher to inspect my essay.
- H: An insignificant result?
- A: Yeah. I think that peer feedback is more helpful because when I read what I have written, I can't spot any errors in my writing.
- H: Are you saying that there are blind spots when you read your own essays?
- A: I may sense that some expressions are weird, but don't know why. I think it is better to have my peers review my essay.
- H: Do you mean that you spot something wrong but don't know how to revise it?
- A: Yeah.
- H: You clearly know that something is wrong, yet you don't have any idea how to improve it?
- A: You know that one paragraph doesn't sound right, but you are incapable of revising it. Perhaps the grammar or something else is wrong. It is absolutely necessary to have your peers' help with your revision. (Audrey, para. 78-86; emphasis added)

The significance of Audrey's response to self-directed feedback lies in the fact that her opinion revealed the difficult situation the less competent student writers may have experienced. They might have felt that the effect of self-directed feedback was insignificant simply because they knew something was wrong but were incapable of revising it without the help of other people.

The last reason for the perceived low efficiency of self-directed feedback was that the items and questions listed on the worksheet may have limited the possible ways of thinking for making revisions. Lou's statement showed the students' concerns about this matter:

L: Respond? I am just wondering whether I was to be restricted by those questions and points. Maybe my classmates and I would have come up with many things; however, *these restrictions might have limited our ways of thinking*. (Lou, para. 72; emphasis added)

It is interesting to compare Lou's opinion with those of Eva, Jessica, and Chu mentioned above. To these three students, the worksheet provided by the instructor was organized and complete in terms of items and questions that were composed of the essential elements of good writing. However, the scope of the worksheet, to Lou, may have become restrictive for revision because more dimensions of concerns could otherwise have been produced.

In summary, students' general responses to self-directed feedback can be categorized into two types: helpful and unhelpful. The reasons for its helpfulness include that the activity is conducive to checking the details of the drafts and that the worksheet is organized and complete in terms of the scope for checking drafts. The first reason can be illustrated by the statements of students of different levels of language proficiency. The high achievers make use of this activity to enhance the content of their essays whereas the low achievers employ this opportunity to check what should be included in their writings. The second reason that the worksheet is a well-organized and complete tool for checking can be explained by students' opinions—the worksheet systematically orients

their attention to good writing criteria. As for the negative responses to self-directed feedback, students' reasons include failure to spot errors by themselves, insecurity of the correctness of their writings, failure to revise errors identified, and the limitations of the worksheet. The failure to spot errors by writers themselves can be attributed to their inability to switch the role from writer to reader, the insufficiency of English language ability, and the lack of intervals between composing and revising. The insecurity of the correctness of one's writing can be explained from the theory of language development—students are still at the stage of interlanguage and unable to have a good command of the target language. The failure to revise errors spotted is also related to students' language proficiency. As for the limited scope of the worksheet, students doubt that it might restrict the possible ways of thinking to what is listed on the sheet. The above-mentioned findings can be summarized as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Student Participants' Perceptions of Self-directed Feedback in Interviews

Helpful	Writers
Helpful to check details	Alison (H)*, Ava (H), Julia (H), Sharon (H), Belinda (L), Ching (L), Tom (L)
Worksheet is organized and completed	Eva (H), Jessica (I), Chu (L)
Unhelpful (low efficiency)	Writers
Unable to find anything wrong	Mandy (H), Aki (I), Ida (I), Ina (I), Linda Lisa (I), Sandra (I), Winnie (I), Flora (L), Hank (L), Mico (L)
Unsure of errors	Jean (H)
Able to identify errors but incapable of revising	Audrey (L)
Items on the Worksheet limits possible ways of thinking	Lou (I)

^{* (}H) refers to students with high writing ability. (I) refers to students with intermediate level of writing ability. (L) refers to students with low writing ability.

During the interview, the high-achieving writers were inclined to give more positive responses to self-directed feedback than the intermediate and less competent writers. The positive response percentage is calculated based on the total number of positive and negative responses students gave in the interviews. In other words, 5 of the 7 responses (71.4%) from the advanced writers, 1 of 9 (11.1%) from the intermediate writers, and 4 of 8 (50%) from the low achievers were found to give positive feedback to the self-directed feedback activity.

Students' concerns about self-directed feedback.

Student participants had different concerns when they were engaged in this activity. Form and content revisions were two major concerns students had. A different proportion of their attention was distributed to these two aspects. For most students, form revision (checking grammatical errors, mechanic device, and vocabulary) was the major part when they conducted the self-directed feedback activity. Next, certain students paid attention to content revision (organization, idea development, and consistency of argument). Two findings of students' concerns in the aspect of form revision can be listed as follows:

1. The concern about vocabulary

Students' paying attention to check words in their essays indicated that they cared that the communication of intended meanings was comprehensible because words are signs used to exchange messages.

H: What part do you focus on when doing this activity?

S: *On grammar*.

- H: On grammar. Did you ever pay special attention to punctuation or vocabulary?
- S: Um, about *word choice*; if I didn't know a certain word, I think I would choose a simpler word with similar meaning to take its place to convey my ideas. (Sharon, paras. 63-66; emphasis added)
- F: Self-directed feedback? What concerns me most are sentence structure and vocabulary. The *words* we use now as fourth graders should be more *precise*, but I think *I still can't achieve it*. (Flora, para. 61; emphasis added)

To Sharon, the major concern in conducting self-directed feedback was word choice—to get the intended meaning through with alternative words. Even though Flora also gave her concern to vocabulary, she emphasized the importance of using precise words to convey her ideas. The significance of their emphasis on the importance of vocabulary is closely related to the background of the acquisition of English in Taiwan. For most students, learning vocabulary is important for all language-related activities—reading, listening, speaking, writing, and translating. However, the dictionaries and electronic translators they depend on to acquire vocabulary mainly use Chinese to explain the definitions of words. It becomes difficult for students to tell the differences between word pairs such as "hope" and "wish," "chance" and "opportunity," and "occur" and "happen" because the explanation in Chinese for each pair is almost the same. Certain students even use electronic translators to write their compositions. To tell the truth, the software developed up to this date for translating one language into another is still at its initial stage.

2. The concern about verb tenses

Another focus of student writers during self-directed feedback was verb tense. The following student statements from interviews can exemplify this view:

- C: Self-directed feedback activity? I still pay attention to *verb tense*, but it seems that I haven't made much progress in this aspect. (Chu, para. 60; emphasis added)
- C: Self-directed feedback? My concerns include some words and *the* consistency of verbs in the same sentences. (Ching, para.76; emphasis added)
- HK: I check *verb tense* and grammar first, and then I read my essay aloud. (Hank, para. 59; emphasis added)
- H: What are your major concerns about self-directed feedback when you are doing it?

W: Um...verb tense. (Winnie, para. 69-70; emphasis added)

What implications can be drawn from these four students' statements? Why does verb tense become their major concern during self-revision? This issue is relevant to cultural differences. The Western linear time concept is foreign to Taiwanese students who are more familiar with the oriental circular time concept (Hall, 1983). The 12 active and 8 passive verb tenses in English to express time concepts are more related to cultural differences than to the acquisition of language skills. It is difficult for students to familiarize themselves with these different types of verb tenses, not to mention the use of subjunctive mood in English because it is hard for people to change their habituated

minds. Chu's statement above, "I still pay attention to verb tense, but it seems that I haven't made much progress in this aspect," can be cited to support this argument.

Another type of concern students had when performing self-directed feedback is content revision. Their attention was placed on idea development and consistency of argument so as to make their writings coherent.

1. Consistency of argument at the level of sentences

A: If I have to rank them, I think the first will be *idea development* and then comes *organization*.

H: Organization?

A: Mm-hmm.

H: So you will focus on this part when you are doing self-directed feedback?

A: Yeah. I will check my writing to see *if there are any sentences that are in contradiction with what I intend to express, the sentences like dropping a brick on your own foot.* (Ava, paras. 74-78; emphasis added)

T: And whether *topic sentences are connected to support sentences*. (Tom, para. 74; emphasis added)

Ava's attention was put on idea development and organization when she was engaged in the self-directed feedback activity. She cared about consistency of her argument at the level of sentences, trying to debug contradictory sentences. Similarly, Tom focused on coherence between topic sentences and supporting sentences. Both of them were concerned about the issue of consistency at the level of sentences.

2. Consistency of argument at the level of paragraphs

J: Content.

- H: Content, for example?
- J: Like whether your *conclusion echoes or relates to the topic*. (Jessica, paras.70-72; emphasis added)
- HK: If I find that a certain sentence doesn't go smoothly, I will use another sentence to take its place. *I will make necessary revisions if I find the front part doesn't echo the back part* after I have read through the whole essay.

 (Hank, para. 59; emphasis added)

In contrast to Ava and Tom, Jessica and Hank were more concerned with the consistency of argument across paragraphs. Their view on this issue was holistic. The significance of the two types of concerns reveals the fact that in the process of learning English, Taiwanese students are gradually acquiring the "Western verbal logic" to replace their "Chinese pictorial logic" (Shen, 1989, p. 465) when they are composing and revising their drafts.

In summary, from the major concerns of the student participants, one can learn, that first, vocabulary learning is essential but difficult with regard to the subtle meanings of words; second, verb tenses, difficult to learn, are related to different time concepts; and third, students' concerns about the consistency of argument at the level of sentences and paragraphs show that they are gradually composing and revising their writings in the way of "Western verbal logic." The findings with regard to students' concerns about self-directed feedback can be shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Students' Concerns about Self-Directed Feedback in Interviews

Form Revision	Writers			
General grammar	Eva (H) ¹ , Sandra (I), Lou (I), Ida (I), Audrey (L), Aki (I)			
Vocabulary	Sharon (H), Lisa (I), Linda (I), Mico (L), Flora (L), Belind			
	(L)			
Verb tense	Winnie (I), Chu (L), Hank (L), Ching (L)			
Conjunction	Tom (L)			
Туро	Mandy (H)			
Content Revision	Writers			
Idea development	Ava (H), Belinda (L)			
Organization	Julia (H), Ava (H), Ida (I)			
Consistency of argument	Ava (H), Jessica (I), Hank (L), Tom (L)			
Irrelevant Answers	Writers			
Asked without answer	Alison (H)			
Teacher feedback is more accurate and helpful	Jean (H)			

From Table 4, the percentage of students' concerns about content and form revisions can be calculated based on their levels of language proficiency. In other words, 2 of 5 (40.0%) high achievers (Alison and Jean are not taken into calculation), 2 of 9 (22.22%) intermediate writers, and 3 of 8 (37.5%) low achievers gave their attention to content revision. On the other hand, 3 of 5 (60%) high achievers, 7 of 9 (77.78%) intermediate writers, and 7 of 8 (87.5%) low achievers expressed their concerns about form revision. It seems that the intermediate and low-achieving students were more concerned with grammatical errors, mechanical devices, and vocabulary than the high achievers, whereas the latter cared more about content revision than the former. It is interesting to compare the findings in Table 3 and 4. In spite of the fact that the intermediate and low-achieving students appeared to give more attention to form revision, this concern apparently did not help them to revise errors, and therefore they gave

negative responses to the self-directed feedback activity. On the other hand, even though the high achievers did not express as much concern as the intermediate and low writers about form revision, they were capable of doing grammatical revision on their own, so they responded positively to this activity.

Students' suggestions for improving self-directed feedback.

When asked how self-directed feedback could be improved, the interviewed students held various opinions. Their responses included: no suggestion, help from the instructor, use resources available, read aloud, and consult peers for self-directed feedback.

1. No suggestion

Of the 24 student participants, 10 did not suggest any way to improve the efficiency of self-directed feedback for the future. They gave short responses such as "I don't have the slightest idea" (Mandy), "Nope" (Ava), "suggest nothing" (Sharon), "I don't know" (Winnie, Jessica, Linda, and Tom), "None" (Lou, Chu, Alison) to the question addressed to them. Only Chu explained why she did not have any suggestion: "I think it works great the way it is now because I have learned a lot from it." What might their responses indicate with regard to the attitude they have toward self-directed feedback? From their general responses toward self-directed feedback as shown in Table 3, one learns that some students consider this activity as helpful while others consider it as hardly efficient. Therefore, the non-suggestion for improvement of this activity by students such as Ava, Sharon, Jessica, Tom, and Alison can be explained by the fact that they, like Chu, had nothing to complain about. On the contrary, Mandy's, Lou's, Winnie's, and Linda's non-

suggestion can be explained by their unfavorable view of this activity and their indifference about improvement.

2. Help from the instructor

Several students suggested that the instructor did something to help students to improve the effect of self-directed feedback. First, Mico suggested that example sentences could be used to increase student writers' writing skills.

M: I think something can be done in this way. The teacher can give *examples of* correct sentences and wrong sentences at the same time for anyone who is poor in grammar. By doing so, one can think about it whether it's verb errors or plural/singular errors. (Mico, para, 64; emphasis added)

Mico's suggestion was important for the less competent writers. Example sentences from peers' writings were helpful for them to improve their knowledge of sentence structure and pattern. The instructor of this class did give students six essays from their peers on November 19, 2008, for this purpose. In addition, he explained on the blackboard the most frequent error types students had made in their essays:

The instructor used some sentences from students' essays as examples to illustrate good/bad sentence structures or clear/ambiguous ideas. He did not mention the names of the students from whose essays the sentences had been culled when he explained why some sentences were well composed and others were not. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation; emphasis added)

Lisa's statement in the interview can be used to support the argument of Mico's

suggestion:

H: What do you think of your writing skills?

- L: I felt my writing skills sucked after I had read the six peer essays that our instructor gave us last week.
- H: ((Laughing)).
- L: ((Laughing)) They used many spectacular syntactical devices, such as the parallel structure, which was amazing to me because it never occurred to me! (Lisa, paras. 11-14, emphasis added)

Apparently, it was easier for students to learn writing skills from their peers than from professional writers because their peers' achievement was not something unachievable for them, so their peers set good examples for them to follow.

Next, the instructor could teach students some basic writing skills to help them improve the effect of self-directed feedback:

J: For example, the teachers can just teach us how to write the opening sentence and topic sentences, how to write supporting ideas without being adrift from the subject. (Julia, para. 58; emphasis added)

The significance of Julia's suggestion is that students at the stage of developing their language proficiency need to acquire the know-how about writing before they are capable of applying these skills to actual writings.

Finally, Hank thought that it was essential for an instructor to give students an indepth lecture on the assigned text before they started writing their drafts:

HK: To improve its effectiveness? I think the teacher can *explain the text first* after having given it to the students. For example, our instructor, Mr. Yang, asked us to read an assigned text first, and then he explained it. Therefore,

we could *understand the text's outline much better*. (Hank, paras. 63; emphasis added)

The instructor could explain the key concepts, themes, structures, and implications of the text so that the students can thoroughly comprehend the text. The function of the lecture was to raise students' awareness and orient their attention to what was essential in the assigned text.

In short, these three suggestions are aimed to improve students' writing abilities through the help of the instructor. After all, students' language proficiency plays an essential role in the process of self-directed feedback activity. This also explains why the less competent students entertained the idea that self-directed feedback was unhelpful to them for improving their drafts whereas the high achievers thought that it was helpful.

3. Use resources available

Some students suggested that when conducting self-directed feedback, student writers could use resources like the Internet, grammar books, or reference books to help them revise their drafts. Two statements from students interviewed can represent this type of suggestion:

I: Um. Actually, when we write, we can *check some of the sentences, such as phrases, on the Internet*. We can type them in and see other people's usage to know if we are right. Some phrases can be done like this, yeah. Then, *sayings*, too. Sometimes we didn't type in the right words. (Ina, para. 136; emphasis added)

Ina's suggestion to check the usages of certain phrases and sayings on the Internet is helpful to improve the efficiency of the self-directed feedback activity. However, students must be cautious when doing so because not all information posted on the Internet is correct. Some websites provide valuable information while others do not.

Aki's opinion to improve this activity was to consult reference books:

A: Consult reference books.

H: Consult reference books?

A: Yeah.

H: Are you saying that you will consult reference books if you are not so sure of what you have composed?

A: Yeah.

H: The errors can be decreased in this way?

A: Mm-hmm. (Aki, paras. 128-134; emphasis added)

Generally speaking, reference and grammar books are more reliable as a source for the purpose of reference because they have undergone the process of proofreading and review before being published.

4. Read aloud

Reading aloud is one way to check the fluency of one's draft and find errors. Eva's statement can represent this type of suggestion:

E: I'd read my composition aloud.

H: Read aloud?

E: Maybe I'd record it.

H: Read it aloud, eh?

E: Then I'd play it to listen. (Eva, paras. 86-90)

Reading the draft aloud is a common practice in most writing centers for tutorials on U.S. campuses. This practice has been introduced to the writing classes in Taiwan, and some students use this technique to enhance the quality of their writings. However, reading aloud does not work for all students. For Eva, a high achiever, this technique may have been helpful to perform the self-directed feedback activity, but it might not work at all for students like Audrey, a less competent writer:

H: What are your major concerns about self-directed feedback when you are engaged in this activity?

A: I read aloud to check fluency.

H: Read aloud to check fluency?

A: Yeah, I usually read my essay several times, and check its grammar, too.

H: Grammar?

A: Yes. *However*, *I still can't spot what went wrong*. (Audrey, paras. 87-92)

5. Consult peers

The last type of suggestion for improving the efficiency of self-directed feedback was to consult peers before engaging in this activity. Ida's opinion can be used to illustrate this type of suggestion:

I: Um, discuss with peers first, listen to what others say, next think on your own, then go back to check your own writing, finally after finishing revision, give it to peers to get their opinions one more time and check if you've taken care of the problems. (Ida, para. 80; emphasis added)

Ida's suggestion included several steps: discussing with peers, thinking and checking on one's own, doing revision, getting peer feedback again, and checking the problems. In other words, a writer may consult peers but should do the work of thinking, checking, and revising on his/her own, then get peer feedback again, and finally review the problems dealt with. To Ida, relying on peers providing error correction was not conducive to improving one's writing competence.

The major types of suggestions can be summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Students' Suggestions for Improving Self-Directed Feedback Activity

Types of Suggestion	Writers		
No suggestion	Mandy (H), Ava (H), Sharon (H), Alison (H), Lou (I), Winnie (I), Jessica (I),		
Help from the instructor	Linda (I), Tom (L), Chu (L) Julia (H), Hank (L), Ching (L), Mico (L)		
Use resources available	Jean (H), Ina (I), Aki (I)		
Read aloud	Eva (H)		
Consult peers	Ida (I), Lisa (I), Audrey (L), Belinda (L)		
Follow worksheet to check	Sandra (I)		
Postpone timeline for checking	Flora (L)		

From Table 5, one learns that the percentage of students giving no suggestion to improve the self-directed feedback was more likely related to their language proficiency. In other words, 4 of 7 (57.14%) high achievers, 4 of 9 (44.44%) intermediate writers, and 2 of 8 (25%) low-achieving writers did not suggest how to improve this activity. The less competent writers tended to give more suggestions either about asking the instructor for help or consulting peers or resources available than the competent writers. It is also interesting to note from Table 3 that the less competent writers seemed to feel unsatisfied with the effectiveness of performing the self-directed feedback activity. Their giving more suggestions may indicate that they needed more help from their peers or instructor before becoming capable writers.

Students' Perceptions of Self-Directed Feedback as Shown on the Worksheets

Based on the Evaluation Criteria for the Feedback Effect on Students' Revised Drafts, the researcher examined students' worksheets for self-directed feedback according to four aspects: idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar. Since this activity was done outside of class by the students themselves, the only resource to evaluate students' performance was their statements on the worksheets. The status of revision includes high, moderate, and low. Any student giving a positive response to the three questions on the worksheet and to the self-evaluation statements in each aspect mentioned above would be given credit for high revision; two for moderate, and one for low. In the aspect of idea development, only 8 students made moderate revision, and 16 made high revision. The following is the example from Ina's Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback. She maintained that she had a clear summary of the target text "The Dog and the Wolf" in the first paragraph. She had a clear beginning and end, and did pretty well in the last paragraph. However, in the question about enough details to support her argument, she said, "I think I should add more examples." The following is the statement of her self-evaluation:

I spent a lot of time on this article, and I did a good job. It does have a clear beginning and end. There is nothing that I have to leave out. But I think I could add some more examples or life experiences to support my argument, and this article would be better. (Ina, Worksheet for Self-directed Feedback)

The status of revision in Ina's case was evaluated as moderate. As for the other seven students, they had the same problem as Ina with a lack of sufficient details to support their arguments.

Another example came from Tom. He claimed in the three asked questions that he had a clearly stated summary, enough details to support his argument, and a persuasive conclusion. The statement of his self-evaluation was, "My opinions are support [sic] the article. I have a strong conclusion." Based on what he stated on the worksheet, the status of revision in Tom's case was evaluated as high. The situation of the other 15 students was similar to Tom—they all gave affirmative answers to the questions asked.

Next, sufficiency consists of well-defined thesis and synthesized ideas. Welldefined thesis can be used to examine whether the student writers has a clear thesis statement in their essays and the title reflects the content of the composition. Generally, a thesis statement has to be present in the last part of the first paragraph in five-paragraph essays—the first paragraph is the introduction; the middle three paragraphs are the body; and the last paragraph is the conclusion. Synthesized ideas are used to examine the cohesion of the essay, that is, the conciseness and compactness of the content or redundancy of any details. The questions listed on the Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback such as "Is it (purpose or topic) stated clearly in the first paragraph?" "Any details you would leave out?" and "Does the title reflect the content of the composition?" were used to examine sufficiency. The following example is from the case of Eva. To the question of the clearly stated topic, her answer was "yes." She maintained that she had nothing superfluous in details, that is, the ideas presented in her essay were compact. Her answer to the title reflecting the content of the composition was "no." In her selfevaluation statement, she stated, "And I found that my topic is not agree [sic] to my content. I should think [sic] a better topic." The status of revision in Eva's case was evaluated as moderate.

Another example used to examine sufficiency is Sandra's case. Her answers to the questions about a clearly stated topic in the first paragraph and the title reflecting the topic of the essay were "yes." She stated that she had no details to leave out. In other words, her ideas were concisely presented. The status of revision in Sandra's case was evaluated as high. Based on these two examples, 17 cases of students' statements were found to be high revision and 7 to be moderate revision.

Third, the organization of information as signs of enhanced quality includes issues such as direct expression of viewpoints, logic order, paragraph coherence and transitions, and restatement of main ideas in the conclusion. Since the questions asked on the Worksheet of Self-Directed Feedback were not sufficient to offer enough information to examine students' statements, the researcher is unable to process this part of the evaluation.

The final aspect is improved grammar. Four questions were asked on the Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback—gender and number of all nouns and their agreement with articles and adjectives, subject-verb agreement in number and person, article usage, and checking word usage by using two different sources. Students giving affirmative answers to all of these four questions were evaluated as having performed a high status of revision; students who gave three answers as moderate; and students who gave two answers as low. The following example is the case of Lisa, who gave a "yes" to all the questions asked. In the self-evaluation statement, she stated, "I check the gender and number of all nouns used in the composition. I check all verbs and their corresponding subjects in the composition." Therefore, Lisa was evaluated as having performed a high status of revision.

By contrast, Mico gave three affirmative answers to the questions and one negative answer to the question about subject-verb agreement in number and person. In the self-evaluation statement, she stated

I carefully check the gender and number of all nouns used in the compositions, so this time I made few mistakes. I make sure they agree with their article and adjectives. This time I carefully used verb and "Be verb" on [sic] the same paragraph. In the last article I have [sic] many words wrongly spelled, but I carefully check [sic] them this time. (Mico, Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback)

It is interesting to note that Mico gave a "No" to the question about subject-verb agreement even though she "carefully used verb and 'Be verb'" in the same paragraph.

This message signals that for the less competent writers like Mico, careful checking over grammatical errors is not necessarily helpful for getting rid of the errors they made in their essays. Mico was evaluated as having performed a moderate status of revision.

Alison, the third example, gave two positive and two negative answers to these four questions. She did not explain her answers in the statement of self-evaluation. Alison was evaluated as having performed a low status of revision. Based on these three examples, 17 cases of students' statements were found to be high revision, 5 to be moderate, and 2 to be low. The results of students' perceptions of Self-Directed Feedback as shown on the Worksheets can be summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Students' Perceptions of Self-Directed Feedback as Shown on the Worksheets

Descriptor	Writers		
Idea development	HR*: Eva (H), Alison (H), Julia (H), Jean (H), Ava (H). Sharon (H), Lisa (I), Winnie (I), Jessica (I), Sandra (I), Ching (L), Chu (L), Belinda (L), Flora (L), Hank (L), Tom (L)		
	MR: Mandy (H), Ida (I), Linda (I), Lou (I), Ina (I), Aki (I), Audrey (L), Mico (L)		
	LR: None		
Sufficiency	HR: Alison (H), Mandy (H), Jean (H) Aki (I), Ina (I), Lisa (I), Linda (I), Lou (I), Sandra (I), Winnie (I), Jessica (I), Audrey (L), Ching (L), Chu (L), Flora (L), Hank (L), Mico (L) MR: Ava (H), Eva (H), Julia (H), Sharon (H), Ida (I),		
	Belinda (L), Tom (L) LR: None		
Organization of information as signs of enhanced quality	Not applicable		
Improved grammar	HR: Ava (H), Jean (H), Julia (H), Sharon (H), Aki (I) Ida (I), Ina (I), Jessica (I), Lisa (I), Sandra (I), Winnie (I), Audrey (L), Belinda (L), Ching (L), Chu (L), Flora (L), Hank (L) MR: Eva (H), Mandy (H), Lou (I), Mico (L), Tom (L) LR: Alison (H), Linda (I)		

^{*} HR refers to high status of revision; MR refers to moderate status of revision; and LR refers to low status of revision

From Table 6, the students' performance in conducting self-directed feedback can be calculated as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Students' Performance of Self-Directed Feedback as Shown on the Worksheets

Descriptor	Writers	Status of Revision		
		High	Moderate	Low
Idea development	High	6/7 (85.7%)	1/7 (14.3%)	0
	Intermediate	4/9 (44.4%)	5/9 (55.6%)	0
	Low	6/8 (75%)	2/8 (25%)	0
Sufficiency	High	3/7 (42.9)	4/7 (57.1%)	0
•	Intermediate	8/9 (88.9%)	1/9 (11.1%)	0
	Low	6/8 (75%)	2/8 (25%)	0
Organization of information as signs of enhanced quality		Not applicable		
Improved grammar	High	4/7 (57.1%)	2/7 (28.6%)	1/7(14.3%)
	Intermediate	7/9 (77.8%)	1/9 (11.1%)	1/9 (11.1%)
	Low	6/8 (75%)	2/8 (25%)	Ò

From Table 7, one learns that in terms of idea development, the advanced writers appeared to perform more high status revision than the intermediate and low achievers. However, the latter seemed to perform more high status revision in the aspects of sufficiency and grammar improvement than the former. If the average of these three items is calculated by adding up the high status revision performed for idea development, sufficiency, and improved grammar, and dividing this value by three, it results in 61.9% for high achievers, 70.37% for intermediate, and 75% for the low achievers. Theoretically speaking, the low achievers should have felt more satisfied with this activity than the intermediate students, who in turn should have felt much better than the advanced writers because they had spent more time and energy on conducting the self-directed feedback activity. However, it seems that their efforts were not in good proportion to the results they received because their general perception of this activity in the interviews as shown in Table 3 was that the activity did not help them to improve their essays. Generally, it

appears that the efficiency of revising grammatical errors is related to student writers' language proficiency. The advanced writers, even though they did not make many errors needing revision, were more capable of making grammar corrections than the less competent writers.

Conclusion

There are several findings contained in this section. First, regarding the general perception of self-directed feedback, some students viewed this activity as helpful to improve their writing performance, and others as unhelpful. The reasons for the helpful response type include that this activity was conducive to checking details, and that the worksheet was organized and complete. By contrast, the reasons for the unhelpful response type consisted of the writers' failure to identify errors on their own, their insecurity about errors, their identification of errors but failure to make revisions, and the limitations of the worksheet. Generally, high achievers gave more positive opinions about the self-directed feedback activity than intermediate and low writers.

Second, the major concerns student writers had about self-directed feedback include form and content revision. In the form revision, students paid attention to general grammar, vocabulary, and verb tense, whereas in content revision, they cared about idea development, organization, and consistency of argument. Generally, intermediate and low-achieving writers were more concerned with form revision than high achievers. However, the latter paid more attention to content revision than the former. In spite of the former paying more attention to form revision, they were more likely to feel less satisfied with this activity than the high achievers due to their lack of language proficiency.

Third, the main responses students gave for improving the effectiveness of the self-directed feedback activity include: no suggestion, help from the instructor, using resources available, reading aloud, and consulting peers. The less competent writers were inclined to give more suggestions of how to improve the efficiency of the self-directed feedback than the competent ones, even though the former seemed to feel unsatisfied with the effectiveness of the performance of this activity.

Finally, the students' perception of the self-directed feedback activity as shown on their worksheets indicates that the advanced writers were more likely to perform high status revision in the aspect of idea development than the intermediate and low achievers, whereas the latter performed more high status revision in the aspects of sufficiency and improved grammar. Generally, the low achievers invested more effort into conducting the self-directed feedback activity than the intermediate writers, who in turn were more engaged than the high achievers. However, the intermediate and low achievers felt less satisfied with this activity than the high achievers, probably because the less competent writers' efforts were out of proportion with the results they obtained from the activity.

Student Writers' Opinions about Peer Feedback

To report the findings of student writers' opinions about the peer feedback activity, four data sets are used—the peer response sessions, the survey conducted during the classroom activities, interviews with student participants, and peer comments incorporated into the students' revised drafts. In the section of the peer response sessions, three types of peer interaction among students (on-task, about-task, and off-task) are described to understand the situation of the group members' exchanges of talk over the

textual meaning negotiation. Next, the results of the survey on students' perceptions of the multiple interaction activities, conducted on November 19, 2008, for the purpose of instructional reference and improvement, are recited to reveal the students' opinions of peer response activities. Third, in the section of interviews with students, the findings of the strengths and weaknesses of peer response activities are reported. In the fourth section, the researcher—by scrutinizing student participants' drafts and peer feedback sheets—intends to find the range of revision student writers made based on peers' suggestions after they had undergone the oral and written peer feedback activities. The last section is the conclusion about the major findings of student writers' perception of peer response activity.

Peer Response Sessions

Most of the interactive dialogues among the members in eleven groups can be approached from three aspects—on-task, about-task, off-task. The total number of peers' comments is 517, including 425 on-task episodes, 27 about-task, and 65 off-task. If on-task and about-task episodes are taken together—as being helpful to the writers for error awareness and subsequent revision, and confidence-gaining in their writing skills through positive peer feedback—the effectiveness of peer response reaches 87.4%.

1. On-task episodes

Several findings can be gained from the 425 on-task episodes. First, there were 147 (34.6%) exchanges of talk about form feedback (grammatical errors, mechanical devices, and word usage) with students either providing direct corrections or employing different conversation skills such as requests for explanation, comprehension checks, explanations

of unclear points, restatements, and suggestions. Most of the form feedback is on surface errors ("micro-text-based changes," Min, 2006, p. 126). In other words, the changes do not affect the overall meanings of the original sentences. Examples of this type of feedback are on the issues such as subject-verb agreement, prepositions, countable nouns, inconsistent verb tense, punctuation marks, conjunctions, run-on lines, possessive case, subject agreement, spelling errors, parts of speech, and so on. The feedback providers are still unable to provide "macro-text-based" (textual) suggestions (Connor & Asenavage, 1994, p. 262) that change the direction, overall structure, or substantial content of the essays. The following examples are used to illustrate the type of peer feedback on surface errors:

- Vanna: Uh (.) why do you *put an "s" at the end of "wanderer*," but nothing for "human"? Besides, you need to pay some attention to *punctuation* (3.0). Lou, what do you want to say to justify yourself? (Group 1, para. 103, emphasis added)
- Mandy: *She didn't indent the third paragraph*, then (.) *Paragraph Three and Four had only two blanks left*. Between the lines, what is (.) that something there called? Indention (.) indention? Oh, yeah, the space between two lines and between two paragraphs is different. (Group 1, para. 112, emphasis added)
- Tom: I think her writing is simple and without any global errors. The only thing I find is *the subject-verb disagreement* (.) some verbs do not match their subjects. And her (.) her *verb forms went wrong*. In addition (.) in addition (.) *some words were used wrongly*, and some sentences showed *problems with structure...* (Group 4, para. 95; emphasis added)
- Ching: I'm going to give some feedback to Angela. You haven't identified all the *verbs* and their *corresponding subjects* in the composition. You have to double-check your words. You need to watch out for your grammatical part and revise your essay. You have made *some mistakes in prepositions*, and sometimes, there are some *words missing*. Also, you have *a problem with the usage of singular and plural*. Hmm. That's it. (Group 7, para. 298; emphasis added)

These examples can be representative for a lot of similar feedback that peers give to the writers. The group members gave surface error feedback to the writers because this type of mistake is easily spotted without demanding as much cognitive loading as textual change.

As for the argument that the student readers are unable to give macro-text-based (semantic) suggestions, the following example can be used to demonstrate this point:

Vivian: But in the first part, it only has "well fed," and I am wondering how to link the second part starting with "or" to make it one sentence. ["If you *chose* to be a wanderer you will lose well-fed and well sleep place. *Or choose* well-fed and well sleep place you will lose freedom."]

Aki: It must be because you separated them.

Vivian: Then isn't "or" used to separate them, or what?

Aki: Because here it's present and that is past!

Vivian: So this "or" should be separated from the first part?

Aki: *Either way*, it doesn't matter.

Vivian: So this sentence should be (.) either past or present?

Aki: Just be consistent. (Group 3, paras. 237-244; emphasis added)

This example shows that, while Aki was able to remind Vivian of the problems with tense consistency and sentence structure, she neither told her how to revise them nor pointed out the error in the phrase such as "well-fed and well sleep place." Aki's suggestion "Either way, it doesn't matter" indicated that the second sentence could remain as it was. The problem is that there was no subject in this sentence. This case

exemplifies that it is not easy for student readers to make textual suggestions for acrosssentence errors.

Second, there were 137 (32.2 %) exchanges of talk about content feedback (idea development and organization). The major concerns of peer content feedback included logical argument, higher quantity of examples or content for body paragraphs and conclusion, author's stance for argument, unclarity of intended meaning, insufficiency of length of summary and conclusion, fuller development of examples, higher quantity of real life examples, sentence order, and so on. The examples of this type of peer feedback are as follows:

Laura: we are supposed to write in the essay why we choose the dog or the wolf, aren't we? And then (.) then we can write something as a response to the text about our personal experiences or what we have been through. What Marie did is that she (.) mixed both together so it became *unclear why she chose the dog's lifestyle*. That is (.) why I don't get what she was trying to express. A bit unclear (.) Sort of disconnected logic. (Group 4, para. 25; emphasis added)

Winnie: However, I think she can *make the conclusion clearer*, instead of giving the reader a feeling of *vagueness*. (Group 5, para. 26; emphasis added)

Jean: Generally speaking, your tone should be stronger. You have to make a clear choice between the dog and the wolf.

Hank: Or you agree with both =

Jean: = Or you agree with both, and then, tell the difference between them. (Group 8, paras. 19-21; emphasis added)

Ching: I think your conclusion is a little bit weak. You should *add more* (.) *details to express your feelings*. If you only have one sentence, *the conclusion seems a little weak*. I really feel that it is sort of [insubstantial] (Group 7, para. 38; emphasis added)

As readers, the students in the above examples were concerned with logic, clarity, sufficiency of content (summary, body paragraphs, and conclusion), as well as the

writer's stance. All of these major concerns were composed of what they regarded as essential elements of a good essay.

Third, 82 (19.3%) exchanges of talk were related to positive feedback either about content or form. The reviewers were able to make use of the "sandwich feedback approach" (i.e., giving positive feedback before criticizing) to give the writers not only comments but also praise to make their opinions acceptable. The following examples demonstrate this feedback technique the peer readers adopted to provide their suggestions:

Irene: First, she expresses very well what she wants. Second, her conclusion sentence is very good but does not match her topic sentence. What she said in the sentence, "You cannot sell the cow and drink milk" is similar to a Chinese proverb our instructor mentioned. However, her topic sentence indicates that the comfortable and easy life (.) suits her because she is afraid of living alone. Therefore, I think it is contradictory. Third, she clearly writes and explains her choice, which is like the first point. This is my feedback on Marie's essay. (Group 4, para. 66; emphasis added)

Pamela: Just a few (.) only one or two minor errors. Yeah, just something like "prefer A to B" they mentioned earlier. Another minor error is about punctuation, which I think is due to her carelessness. She should put a comma at the end, yeah. Then, um (.) Ina uses verb tenses correctly, and the structure is complete, so that the reader can clearly get her ideas and get involved in the world of her writing. Just one or two minor errors. If she can correct them, the essay will be great. (Group 2, para. 61; emphasis added)

Both Irene and Pamela gave peer feedback by mentioning praiseworthy strengths, and some defects demanding the writers' attention. This can soften the tone of criticism and make the proposed comments more acceptable.

Finally, the rest of the comments were related to accepting or rejecting peer feedback, doing self-evaluation, or giving response to the activity. Ina's statement in the following can be used to show the writer's typical response to peers' comments:

Ina: From the comments given by my group members, I think I indeed had some grammatical misuses in my essay (.) such as in the sentence "I prefer to be free and starve than to be a prisoner or a slave."... I will pay more attention to this usage...Then Allison also pointed out "To me" as likely to be problematic in the sentence "To me, there is not really has a definition of freedom." I think it is ok for me to use "To me" (.) here. (Group 2, para. 63; emphasis added)

The significance of Ina's response to peer feedback lies in the fact that she adopted peers' comments selectively, and this is important for a writer to cultivate a sense of autonomy—having a right to decide what to revise.

One example about student writers' performance of self-evaluation can be found in Mico's statement:

Mico: Some problems they pointed out in this essay are the same problems present in the last (.) last essay. So all these are *the weaknesses I didn't improve*, but in this essay, *I did improve the ending*. In the last essay I did have a beginning but without a comprehensible ending. In spite of the improvement I made in this writing, I don't think I checked it carefully. I will pay attention to this problem since these two essays have some grammatical problems in common. (Group 2, para. 56; emphasis added) Mico's self-reflection on her problems in the two essays revealed that it was hard for the writers to get rid of the same errors only after one or two times of peer feedback, and

Lou's opinion can support this argument:

- H: Did you learn something from your peer's weaknesses and then try to avoid them when you write next time?
- L: I did. However, it requires practice. You cannot be supposed to acquire these writing skills automatically, just because you come across them one or twice, and then you are capable of avoiding to make the same mistakes. (Lou, paras. 67-68; emphasis added)

Lou's view indicated that language learners should practice the entire process of transforming comprehensible input into intake and finally output, so that they could learn from error treatment.

The last type of comment related to the on-task episode was the students' responses to this activity during the peer response sessions, including positive as well as negative opinions. The following example from Pamela can exemplify positive response:

Pamela: Yeah, I think (2.0) whenever we get involved in this kind of activity; we are capable of finding out where we went wrong. However, when you reread your own (.) own essay after having finished it, we can't ferret out any problems. By means of this activity, group members can peruse your writing and then point out some problems, which you might ignore. Then you will realize, "Oh! I passed some minor parts of my errors." This is why I think this is a great activity because it brings forth good results (.) (Group 2, para. 69; emphasis added)

It is interesting to compare Pamela's view with that of Mandy mentioned previously when the latter stated that she was capable of finding the same error her peers made in her own essay at the moment of reading peers' writings, but she couldn't find anything

wrong on reading her work alone. The statements of Mandy and Pamela highlight one important issue in the peer response activity—the role switch between writer and reader. This is a part not touched upon yet by this project, and would be worthy of the attention of future practitioners and researchers.

Tom's perception of the peer response activity was opposite to that of Pamela. He took it negatively and hoped to get rid of it forever. His viewpoint represented the other extreme of response to this activity:

Tom: This activity helps me understand where my errors are although some of them are *wrongly marked*, but (.) but at least *they can let me know* (.) *I am right*. So (.) I hope *this is the last time for us to do this activity* because it includes too many procedures; *too tiring*. (Group 4, para. 104; emphasis added)

Tom did not have confidence in his peers' comments, and considered what he had composed correct. As a result, he did not give high credit to this activity.

2. About-task episodes

Another aspect of peer response is about-task episodes which consist of the feedback providers giving partially correct comments, beating about the bush, and pointing out problems without feasible suggestions. Of the 26 about-task episodes, 11 could be categorized as the feedback providers giving partially correct comments, 8 as pointing out problems without feasible suggestion, and 7 as beating about the bush. First, two examples about giving partially correct comments can be listed as follows:

Annie: ...Chu knows that she sometimes misses subjects [sic]. For instance, in the sentence, "If I were the dog, maybe I can't to do everything I want to

do," the first "to" and the second "do" should be deleted for the fluency of the whole article. (Group 5, para. 116; emphasis added)

In this example, the feedback provider failed to point out the problem of the second verb "can't" when the subjunctive mood was used in spite of the fact that she correctly identified the problems of the sentence.

Another example about giving partially correct comments is Jean's suggestions for Elaine's essay:

Jean: Another problem is an adjective. In the sentence "He will feel cold, hungry and doesn't healthy," I had asked (.) had asked the opinion of one of my classmates. She said the word "healthy" (.) in "doesn't healthy" was weird. The word "healthy" is an adjective, so it should not go with "doesn't," an auxiliary. I think "not healthy" is better. Yeah! (Group 8, para. 115; emphasis added)

Jean reoriented Elaine's attention to the problem of parallel structure in the sentence and suggested to use "not healthy" to replace "doesn't healthy." Even though she correctly identified the error, she did not give the correct answer, "unhealthy," to Elaine.

It is worthy of one's attention that the 11 cases of feedback providers giving partially correct comments were all related to form feedback. In other words, this type of comment occurs when peers give their feedback on grammatical errors, mechanical devices, and vocabulary.

With regard to the not-to-point comments, the peer readers were unable to hit the target by offering a concrete suggestion to the writers about what had gone wrong. One case can be used to illustrate this point:

Angela: I think some of the words are misplaced.

Audrey: What do you mean?

Angela: It is-

Audrey: Like what?

Angela: I don't know! ((Ha! ha! ha!))

Audrey: Is the word misplaced, or is there a grammatical error?

Angela: There's-

Audrey: The grammar? The structure?

Angela: Not the structure. I think you should *add in more words* to make the essay more fluent.

Audrey: Fewer words?

Angela: Either fewer or more words will make it more fluent. (Group 7. paras.

210-220; emphasis added)

In this case, Angela had an inkling of something wrong about Audrey's essay but was unable to point out where; not to mention about how to revise the errors. She provided the writer with vague and general comments.

In the 7 cases of not-to-point comments, 2 were related to content feedback and 5 to form feedback. In other words, it was easier for peer readers to give this type of comment when they were engaged in the form feedback activity.

There were two examples that could demonstrate the issue of feedback providers' pointing out problems without giving feasible suggestions for the writer to follow for subsequent revision. The first one was the dialogue between Angela (as the feedback provider) and Sunny (as the writer):

Angela: In some parts of your writing, I think you have used too many words.

For example, *the sentence*, "my life is the same of the dog," *doesn't sound right*. I don't know if there is something wrong (.) with the sentence structure or the usage. I know what you would like to express; however, again *it doesn't look right*.

Sunny: It seems that the sentence should not be pieced up in this way, right?

(Group 7, para. 306-307; emphasis added)

In this case, Angela pointed out something wrong with the sentence even though she was unsure whether the problem was in sentence structure or usage. The fact that she was incapable of offering a suggestion can be attributed to her lack of language proficiency.

The second example of this type of comment was a case in which Evelyn played the role of the feedback provider and Sandra as the writer:

Evelyn: ... I think what she expressed (.) and what she wrote is somewhat (.)

She wrote, "The dog just like my fish, is important to me." I feel (.) the comma between "fish" and "is" (.) I feel her logic is not (.) not (.) not like what she said (.) Um (.) I'm not sure if this point is correct. Let's wait for the teacher to prove it.

Sandra: Waiting for the teacher to prove it again! (Group 10, paras. 49-50; emphasis added)

Evelyn sensed that the punctuation usage in this sentence was not matched to the intended meaning that Sandra was trying to convey. Nevertheless, she was incapable of providing a concrete suggestion for Sandra to follow. Generally speaking, using punctuation marks correctly to present the intended meaning is closely related to the

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writing skills a writer has. Without sufficient knowledge of punctuation, Evelyn could not

give Sandra constructive feedback.

From these two examples mentioned above, one learns that the feedback providers

must have enough language proficiency and knowledge of mechanical devices (including

punctuation) before they can deliver helpful comments to their peer writers.

Of the 8 cases of feedback providers pointing out problems without giving

constructive suggestions, 5 were related to form feedback and 3 to content feedback.

3. Off-task episodes

The last aspect of the exchanges of talk among group members is the off-task

episode, which includes incorrect suggestion, topic shift, and unrelated comment. Of the

65 off-task episodes, there were 22 related to incorrect comments, 23 to topic shift, and

20 to unrelated comments. Two examples of incorrect suggestions are listed as follows:

Sunny: But Audrey thinks that you should use a verb in that place, right?

Angela: Yeah! It's a verb (.) it's a verb ((ha! ha!)).

Sunny: A verb!

Angela: The word means "choice between two things." Hmm.

Sunny: The same form can function as a verb as well as a noun!

Angela: That's a verb!

Sunny: *This is a verb*.

Angela: This means that you can't make a choice. There is no other choice.

Sunny: Is there really no alternative left for the wolf?

Angela: He can't choose what he'd like to do. (Group 7, paras. 238-247)

The original sentence in Angela's writing was "Maybe they just have no choice to alternative the things they want to do." Sunny gave an incorrect comment, saying that the word "alternative" could function as a verb after having accepted the explanation of Angela. Sunny did not check the parts of speech of the word, nor did she offer a possible correction such as "Maybe they just have no alternative in the things they want to do" to Angela. Sunny's case shows that without critical thinking and enough knowledge of vocabulary, a feedback provider tends to easily accept the viewpoint of a writer, and this turns out to be unhelpful for the writer to improve his/her drafts.

The second example of giving incorrect suggestions was the feedback Chu offered to Winnie:

Chu: I'm Chu, and I have one (.) one more comment on Winnie's writing. The second paragraph has wrong grammar. In the first line of the second paragraph, "we can't have a perfect life with everything we want." I think she makes some grammatical errors, and I hope that she will pay more attention to it next time. (Group 5, para. 81; emphasis added)

The sentence in this example has no grammatical error but the feedback provider stated that it was wrong in grammar. This feedback discloses that Chu had certain incorrect concepts about grammar knowledge so she made an incorrect comment. This kind of incorrect comment sometimes causes writers to revise their sentences incorrectly.

Of the 22 incorrect comments, 3 were delivered during the content feedback sessions, and 19 during the form feedback sessions. It seemed that incorrect comments occurred more often in form feedback sessions than in content feedback.

As for the issue of topic shift, there were 23 episodes in total. The following dialogues can be used to exemplify this point. The first dialogue was Evelyn making a complaint about the writing assignment to the instructor who was not on the spot:

Evelyn: Teacher, I'm going to make an ending, and I'm speaking frankly: You are really very crafty. Why? *The text you gave us is very easy, but somewhat abstract*. Don't you think so?

Sandra: Yeah, indeed!

Evelyn: *The teacher said that it is the easiest text we've ever had.* We did feel it was easy, but when we thought over this topic at home again, Teacher, *it was hard.* (Group 10, paras. 79-81; emphasis added)

Evelyn's complaint changed the topic from giving writers content feedback to the appropriateness of the assigned text. This shows that during the peer response sessions, students may possibly exchange their viewpoints on something that is beyond the topic under discussion.

Another example concerning topic shift can be found in the following dialogue:

Ann: *How do you memorize vocabulary*?

Julia: You can memorize new words every day =

Ann: = Because in the usual way of memorization, some words are just =

Julia: = Evading.

Ann: Some words can be memorized and forgotten easily.

Julia: Oh, *you can write and memorize an illustrative sentence*. Yeah, you get to remember how a word is used; otherwise, you still don't know how to put

it to good use even if you clearly remember a word. (Group 6, paras. 125-130; emphasis added)

Ann's question changed the direction of the dialogue to a topic that was more suitable for after-class discussion because it was not necessarily important for all group members and was out of the boundary of the topic discussed.

The final example about topic shift can be illustrated by the dialogue between Angela and Ching in which at first they debated about the advantages and disadvantages of the dog's lifestyle, and then switched the topic to the purpose of life:

Angela: Wait a minute. If you have freedom and can't feed yourself, it is useless!

Sometimes, you just have to do something that you are unwilling to do.

It is impossible to have your own will at all times, right? You have your freedom, yet you can't get everything you want. You die and then you go to heaven.

Ching: You eat, you drink, and you sleep all your life, and you don't know what it is for.

Angela: You go to heaven (.) you go to heaven, and then you forget who you are.

Ching: Your life is filled with eating, drinking, and sleeping. (Group 7, paras.

64-67; emphasis added)

In the final part of the dialogue, the tone used by Ching and Angela implies that both of them became too excited to be able to discuss the topic in a reasonable way. Each of them became the spokeswoman for the lifestyle that the dog and the wolf stood for respectively. It is interesting to note that in contrast to incorrect comments, topic shift occurred more often during the content feedback sessions than that of form feedback. Of the 23 cases, there were 19 in content feedback sessions and 4 in form feedback sessions.

As for the issue of unrelated comments in the off-task episodes, several illustrations can be used to show this point. Generally speaking, the peers were easily going beyond the context of the topic to infer what might have happened under certain conditions:

Angela: Only the wolf's life is always ups and downs. One day he is full while the other day he is starving. He just runs here or there without any goal.

You see, if the dog is fired (.) he may feel very down; however, if he finds another master, he will feel very happy.

Sunny: What if he is old?

Angela: How do you know what it is like to be an old dog? ((*Ha! ha!*)) What makes you think that you can make decisions for the dog ((*ha! ha!*))?

Sunny: You see (.) when the dog is old, how can he chase away the wolf?

Ching: He can't run very fast.

Sunny: Indeed! He can't run very fast! (Group 7, paras. 130-135; emphasis added)

Even though Angela doubted the validity of Sunny's "what if" questions, the inferences Angela made about the dog's feeling of having a master or not and about the wolf's goalless life were similar to what Sunny had predicted about the dog's old age. In other words, their comments were irrelevant to what they should have focused on—to offer writers content feedback from the drafts.

Another example with regard to unrelated comments is the dialogue between Belinda and Sharon on moving out the dorm:

Sharon: You could move secretly!

Belinda: I can't move secretly. If I do, I would have to carry the baggage up and down. What's more, you know what a big hill we have on campus! It would be too much for me to carry everything one by one. Besides, because my home is far away, I often bring all my winter and summer stuff once and for all. Do you want to see me making several removal trips, and then die of fatigue? As a matter of fact, I do want to live off campus, but just imagine how I would sweat! It's better to live in the dorm in summer because I don't have to walk up the hill and sweat all the time. I would be exhausted. (Group 11, paras. 46-48; emphasis added)

Originally, the topic was about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the dorm and living off campus. The former stood for a restrained yet regular life whereas the latter represented a free yet irregular life. However, the unrelated suggestion made by Sharon triggered Belinda's complaints of the inconvenience of moving out of the dorm and of individual physical features.

The third example about unrelated comments is the one that Ida gave to Kelly:

Ida: ...Furthermore, the structure in her last paragraph is strange. I think it's because she was going to fall asleep at that moment. She [Kelly] always picked the time most people were sleeping to compose her essays. She was able to maintain alertness upon writing the first few paragraphs, but her

mental power receded when she came to the concluding part, and finally nothing was left. As a result, the final part became (.) "The words fail to express what is meant," and revealed a sense of being all broken up. In other words, she was really in need of a good sleep. (Group 9, para. 73; emphasis added)

At first, Ida's comment was on Kelly's form problem (grammatical errors, punctuation, and vocabulary) but the focus was lost when an explanation was made for Kelly's draft laden with errors.

It is interesting to note that there were 20 episodes related to unrelated comments.

19 appeared in content feedback sessions and one in form feedback. So it seems that during the content feedback sessions, the peers were more likely to go beyond the boundaries of the topic and deliver unrelated comments than during the form feedback sessions.

In short, on the basis of the previous findings, certain characteristics of the peer response sessions can be summarized as shown in Table 8. From Table 8 (see p. 166), one learns that the students focused their attention on different issues when their comments were related to the category of on-task episode. In the form feedback, they gave more surface error suggestions than textual suggestions to their peer writers. In terms of content feedback, they suggested logical argument, more examples and details to support the viewpoints to make intended meanings clear. They also gave positive feedback to the writers. In addition, the about-task episodes mainly occurred in the form feedback sessions while the off-task episodes, except for incorrect suggestions, primarily took place in the content feedback sessions.

Table 8

Characteristics of Peer Response Sessions

On-task	Form feedback Content feedback	Focus on surface errors instead of textual changes Suggest logical argument, more examples and details to support the viewpoints, making intended meanings clear		
	Positive feedback Accept or reject peer feedback	Give the writers credit for their good performance Help to cultivate writer's autonomy		
	Self-evaluating writing performance	Without enough practice, it is hard to learn from peer feedback on errors		
	Students' opinion	Positive as well as negative responses to this activity		
About-task	Partially correct comments	Occur mainly when making form suggestions		
	Beating about the bush	Have an inkling of something wrong but fail to identify the problem; occurs mostly in the form feedback		
	Pointing out problem without feasible suggestions	Occurs more often during form feedback sessions instead of content feedback ones		
Off-task	Topic shift	Occur mainly in the form feedback sessions Happen mostly during the content feedback sessions Get away from the topic during the content feedback		

Survey on Peer Response Activity

The second data set for examining student participants' perception of the peer feedback activity is a survey conducted in the middle of the semester. This survey was administered to understand the opinions of the whole class about the multiple interaction activities. "The instructor asked the students to write down their perceptions and experiences about the multiple interaction activities, including the strengths and the weaknesses of the whole process, so that he could establish a form of two-way communication with them." (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation,

11/19/2008). 13 student participants gave positive opinions to the peer response activity; 9 felt dissatisfied with it; and 2 did not give clear answers to the question.

1. Positive opinions

The students' positive views about the peer response activity can be categorized into several types. First, they thought that peer feedback was beneficial for them to improve their writing competence. Two examples are typical for this view:

Sharon: Actually, this is a good activity. We can learn good sentence structures and how to avoid mistakes by looking at our classmates' works. We can share our own opinions with our group members. They can give us suggestions and teach us how to do the revision. I think if we continue to do the same activities for future writing tasks, my writing competence will improve a lot. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added)

As a reader, Sharon was able to learn from her peers' strengths and weaknesses; as a writer, she was able to share her ideas with her group members and receive comments conducive to revising her drafts. It was the give-and-take process that made Sharon regard this activity as beneficial. Sharon also pointed out one important issue—peer response activity should be part of writing instruction practice not for one semester only but for a couple of years in order to make the best out of it.

Another example concerning students' positive opinion about the peer response activity is the statement of Aki:

Aki: We read others' essays. I found some problems in their writings. These problems made me aware of my own weaknesses. I also got many

suggestions from the other members. They let me know the errors in my work. During the past eight weeks, I learned how to check my writing more carefully, and acquired many skills to improve my essays. I feel happy that I have learned so many things in this class. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added)

Similar to Sharon's statement, Aki's opinion about the peer response activity was positive. The benefit of this activity, to Aki, was that it raised her awareness of the problems in her essay; no matter whether she played the role of a reader or a writer.

Second, the peer response activity is conducive to increasing communication skills. To Belinda, "[t]he peer feedback sessions increased my communication skills" (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added). In the process of offering suggestions to peer writers, Belinda needed to skillfully organize the message to be delivered so that it would be more acceptable. On the other hand, before accepting comments from feedback providers, she had to negotiate the textual meanings with the reviewers so as to be able to incorporate the suggestions into revision without mistakes.

Third, the activity is helpful to cultivate friendship. As far as Ava is concerned, "[t]he advantage was that we shared our viewpoints with each other, and that *I got a closer relationship with my classmates*" (*Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation*, 11/19/2008; emphasis added). In a group of four, the students needed to cooperate to complete the peer response activities—pre-writing discussion, giving and taking form and content feedback, and recording the dialogue of peer response sessions. They had to exchange their ideas about how to manage conflict and to finish the required tasks together; therefore, they could develop a close friendship during this process.

Finally, the activity is helpful to cultivate a self-learning attitude:

Julia: What I have gotten from this course is an attitude of self-learning. During the different activity sessions, I realized that sometimes, nobody can help me better than I myself. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added)

To Julia, different activity sessions were helpful to realize the importance of a self-learning attitude. In other words, help given by peers or teachers cannot last forever; the ultimate goal of all writing activities is to cultivate writer autonomy—self-independence as a writer.

2. Negative opinions

As to the negative opinions about the peer response activity, some reasons can be found in the participants' statements. First, several participants felt that as writers, peer comments were confusing and unhelpful for making revisions, while as readers, they realized that they were incapable of offering constructive feedback to peer writers. The following are examples for this viewpoint:

Jean: I had trouble when I read my partners' articles. I think the sentences were strange, but I didn't know how to correct them. My group members also gave me some opinions that were confusing. During these weeks, I felt stressed and was afraid of writing a paragraph. I would think my sentences were incorrect, or the grammar was wrong. (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added)

There are two points in Jean's statement worthy of being mentioned. Her inability to give suggestions about how to revise the strange sentences can be understood from the

perspective that the mistakes in these sentences were not surface errors but semantic ones. To provide semantic (textual) suggestions is more cognitively demanding, especially for errors occurring across sentences. Another point is related to her anxiety. She felt so stressed that she thought what she wrote was incorrect. In Jean's case, her anxiety was derived from her fear of negative social evaluation. In other words, she desired to make a positive social impression on her peers and the teacher (Brown, 2000).

Another example for the negative opinion of peer response is Sandra's account: "Sometimes, it was not useful for my revision. My classmates gave me incorrect directions or suggestions. Maybe I had been right in the early draft after all" (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added). Sandra's opinion reveals that suggestions given by peers can sometimes be misleading if a writer does not adopt them selectively.

Second, some of the students held that the peer response activity was quite limited and time-consuming. Two cases help to exemplify this perspective:

Alison: Personally, *I think the effect of this teaching method is limited*, and that this method is less useful than others. Even though the teacher had explained why we did this, I still could not completely understand why. (*Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation*, 11/19/2008; emphasis added)

It is interesting to note that Alison felt that the effect of peer response was limited; she did not change this view from the time of this survey in the middle of the semester to the end-of-the-semester interview (see Table 10). To Alison, any action related to this activity, including pre-writing discussion, peer feedback on content and form, and the

recording of peer dialogues, was inefficient. During the long process of the activity, she felt that she did not learn much from her peers.

Another example is Tom's statement, "I think that it took too much time to do all activities, and my group members didn't catch my obvious mistakes" (Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation, 11/19/2008; emphasis added). It is also interesting to note that Tom, unlike Alison, felt that the peer response activity was time-consuming and ineffective in the survey but held that his peers were able to help identify errors in his drafts in the interview (see Table 10). It seems that Alison, a high achiever, does not change her perception of the peer response activity while Tom, a low achiever, does; his viewpoint change may be attributed to his peers' growing ability to offer constructive feedback, or his deeper understanding of the activity and improved communication with his peers.

3. Not applicable

When asked about personal opinions of the peer response activity, Lou did not respond clearly. He merely suggested, "[w]e choose our friends as group members. I think we would be happier and work harder" (*Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation*, 11/19/2008). In the same vein, Hank answered, "[t]he self-directed feedback activity can let me know how to write a better article" (*Journal of Classroom Activities and Observation*, 11/19/2008). Lou's and Hank's answers were not applicable for judging their responses to the peer response activities.

In short, what has been mentioned above can be summarized as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

A Survey of Students' Perceptions of Peer Response Activity

Positive feedback	Writers		
Share viewpoints and build friendship	Ava (H)		
Help to improve writing competence	Sharon (H), Lisa (I), Ina (I), Ida (I), Aki (I),		
	Linda (I), Audrey (L), Ching (L), Jessica (I)		
Help to cultivate self-learning attitude	Julia (H)		
Able to identify the errors peers made	Mandy (H)		
Increase communication skills	Belinda (L)		
Negative feedback	Writers		
Peer feedback confusing; unable to	Jean (H), Sandra (I), Winnie (I)		
give writers useful suggestions	Mico (L), Flora (L)		
Dislike the recording job	Eva (H)		
Limited effect	Chu (L), Tom (L), Alison (H)		
Not applicable	Writers		
Suggest to have self-forming groups	Lou (I)		
Self-directed feedback more helpful	Hank (L)		

From Table 9, the degree of satisfaction of the participants at different levels of writing competence with the peer response activity can be obtained through calculation: 4 of 7 (57.1%) high achievers, 6 of 9 (66.7%) intermediate writers, and 3 of 8 (37.5%) low achievers responded positively to the activity. Apparently, high and intermediate writers were more likely to give positive responses than low achievers to peer response activity in the middle of the semester.

Student Participants' Opinions about Peer Response Activity in Interviews

Of the 24 students interviewed, 16 gave positive feedback and 8 negative to the peer response activities. For those who responded affirmatively to the peer response activity, the major function of interaction lay in the fact that their group members helped them to

orient their attention to what they had overlooked or what had never occurred to them before. In other words, peer interaction raised their consciousness or awareness of certain aspects of composition. Four salient features can be gathered from their responses to this question. First, as readers, they could learn writing skills from peer writers or realize that they had made the same mistakes when reading their peers' essays. The following examples can be used to illustrate this point. The first example is Winnie's response to the peer response activity when she played the role of a reader:

W: Um, Perhaps... upon looking at my peers' errors, I would think about whether I had made the same mistakes or neglected a certain point in my writing.

H: How about your peers' strengths?

W: Uh, if one peer did a good job with his writing, *I would remember and apply his well-composed sentences to my future essays*. (Winnie, paras. 54-56; emphasis added)

When Winnie assumed the role of reader, she was able to examine peers' essays as well as hers. The errors made by her peers made her question whether she had made the same errors in her essay. In addition, as a reader, she absorbed the good sentences created by peers for her future writings.

Another example is Ina's opinion about reading her peers' essays:

I: I would be especially careful. Some people did not paragraph well when they wrote. They didn't put the title for their works. There were many wrong words.

They didn't consult a dictionary. Then I had to be very careful because I also use wrong words sometimes. (Ina, para. 92; emphasis added)

As a reader, Ina became cautious about the errors she found in her peer's writings. She would try her best not to make the same mistakes in her essay. The benefit of reading peers' works, for Ina, was to raise her awareness to frequent errors.

Second, as writers, the peer readers were able to help identify errors the writers had made and to give them suggestions for subsequent revision. The following opinions of four students explain this view:

- T: Yes. *The repeated opinions let me know my errors*. (Tom, para. 44; emphasis added)
- L: I think it is great that *my peers can find the errors in my essay*, and it is helpful that we can get teacher feedback. (Lou, para. 38; emphasis added)
- I: I have some thoughts. Some of their opinions are useful to me because I am often careless when I write. I don't notice wrong words, grammar, or structures. When other people read my work, it's easy for them to find them. Then I feel (.) I can make some improvement. (Ina, para. 76; emphasis added)
- A: I think it is fruitful. For example, in my essay, "The dog and the wolf," my presumption was that *the dog grew up on the farm and didn't have any ideas about freedom*. However, the comment given by one of my peers said that *the text didn't have any clue to indicate that the dog grew up on the farm*. I had not found this contradiction until my peer told me.
- H: Are you saying that peer response activities are helpful to you?
- A: Yeah. (Aki, paras. 58-60)

For Tom, Lou, and Ina, the errors their peers marked were related to grammar, punctuation, format, and vocabulary. In a group of four student members, writers were able to get repeated opinions about certain types of errors; therefore, it was helpful to raise the writer's awareness about form mistakes. On the other hand, with the help of peers' comments on content (idea development, organization, and logic argument), writers, like Aki, were able to know whether their arguments on certain issues are persuasive or not.

The third feature is that peer interaction helped them to improve their writing competence. The following viewpoints of the interviewed students can illustrate this argument:

Chu: Although they were very tiring, during the process, we wondered why we were asked to engage in *so many activities*; however, we felt that *we had a fruitful harvest after completing the whole activity*. (Chu, para. 36; emphasis added)

Ava: It's great! At first, I thought it was quite boring because I didn't really understand why we had to record and discuss with our classmates. In addition, it took me a lot of time to go through it for the first essay.

Nonetheless, I learned a lot when the instructor gave us some conclusions about this activity! I really learned something from the example sentences the instructor culled from other classmates' essays. He explicated where the sentences might have gone wrong, and I felt this way was to be very effective to improve my writing. (Ava, para. 42; emphasis added)

The general statements from Chu and Ava show that this activity was beneficial for the students to improve their writing abilities. Both felt the whole process was boring, tiring, and time- consuming at first, and could not figure out the reason for doing so many activities. However, they had learned a lot through the interaction activity among peers and the instructor's commentary on their peers' example sentences.

The last feature from the individual interviewees included that the peer interaction could enlarge their visions, help them develop the essay's content but not to revise grammatical errors, create synergy for the writing activity, or cultivate writer autonomy

by evaluating peers' comments before incorporating them into the revision. These perspectives can be illustrated by the following examples.

1. Enlarging writer's visions

To Julia, the major benefit of the peer response activity is that she is able to gather more information to substantiate the content of her writing:

J: I think peer response is quite nice. One main point is that I can hear different opinions. What I missed, other people could point out. It helped to increase the different aspects of my thinking in writing. (Julia, para. 28; emphasis added)

The significance of Julia's statement is that she pointed out the importance of idea development in composition. For certain students, the major problem in their composing an essay was that they did not have enough ideas, experiences, or examples to use or expand when engaging in a creative writing activity. Through peer interaction (prewriting discussion and peer feedback), the writers were able to apply the information gathered from their peers to composing and revising their drafts. This activity enlarged their vision of the assigned topic.

2. Helping to develop content but not to revise errors

In the case of Ching, the benefit of peer feedback limited itself to content development:

C: I think that all my classmates can do is provide me with some ideas from which I can draw my inspiration. *They just give me diverse sources of inspiration*. As regards grammar, they are not so good at it, and sometimes

their suggestions only make our understanding become more confused, so it isn't very desirable. (Ching, para. 46; emphasis added)

Some students entertained the idea that peer feedback on content was more reliable than that on grammar, and this was especially true when it was provided by less competent writers. Generally speaking, they did not have confidence in peers' grammar comments due to their past experience and their knowledge of their peers' language deficiencies.

3. Creating synergy for writing activity

In Hank's statement, the major benefit he received from the peer response activity was that he could share ideas with his group members. This made him excited about producing his essay:

HK: I think I like these kinds of writing activities very much; I prefer teamwork instead of individual work. *I become enthusiastic about writing my essay if we share ideas in a group*. I didn't have many ideas about how to compose the first essay, "Home," and felt bored about writing. By contrast, I didn't have much to complain about when composing the second essay, "The dog and the wolf." (Hank, para. 33; emphasis added)

Hank's response implies that a sense of target audience was gradually being developed. In the traditional product-oriented writing activity, the instructor is the only audience of students' essays. By contrast, in the multiple interaction activities, the audience includes the writers themselves, peers, and the instructor. The exchanges of talk about how to develop content and how to revise in the aspect of content and form made students like Hank become "enthusiastic" about the activities. For this type of student (audience-oriented writers), this activity creates synergy to learn from one another among peers.

Writing is no longer for a one-to-one dialogue between a student writer and the instructor; rather, it becomes a multiple-side conversation among the writing community. This endows a writer with a strong sense of the immediate goal to put more effort into the activity.

4. Helping to cultivate writer autonomy

Ida's statement points out another important issue of writing activity: writer autonomy.

I: Then I felt more, felt...for example, Linda and I were in the same group, but I felt she was much better than I, so *I usually took her (advice)*. *It's using my own ideas and viewpoints to adopt the suggestions that I felt better*. (Ida, para. 44; emphasis added)

The concept of writer autonomy includes that a writer has enough writing skills in invention and rhetoric, possesses a sense of ownership of the work (having a right to do what is taken as appropriate for the writing), and assumes more responsibility for the writing activity. In Ida's case, her adopting peers' suggestions through the process of evaluation was one essential step to cultivate writer autonomy.

Just like other pedagogical strategies practiced in classrooms, the peer response activity did not get favorable responses from all student interviewees. Three points are worthy of being mentioned. First, the student writers were unsure of the correctness of their peers' comments. Two examples can be used to illustrate this type of response. Audrey's insecurity of her peers' feedback in grammar was typical:

A: We have to revise our drafts one more time after the peer feedback activity, right? I do that, but *I can't do much in the aspect of grammar because I*

don't know for sure about the correctness of their grammatical feedback.

Therefore, I don't follow their suggestions on grammar in general. (Audrey, para. 56; emphasis added)

Quite similar to Ching's opinion mentioned above that peers' grammatical feedback was undesirable, Audrey was unsure of the correctness of her peers' suggestions, and decided not to incorporate them into her revision.

Jean's response is another example about writers' uncertainty of the correctness of peer feedback:

J: Sometimes peer comments and my ideas somewhat contradict each other.

Yeah, I'm not sure whom I should listen to, or perhaps it's my mistake. Then I don't know how to make decisions. (Jean, para. 52)

Jean's response to peer feedback is similar to that of Audrey because she was also uncertain about the validity of peer feedback. However, unlike Audrey, she felt hesitant about following peer feedback.

Next, certain feedback providers were unable to give helpful suggestions to their peers due to either their lack of language proficiency or insecurity of the correctness of their peers' writings. Two cases were found in the interviews:

W: I felt it was very...very difficult for me to give my peers feedback at the early stage of the activities *due to my poor grammar skills*. Even though I thought *my peers' writings didn't read well, or read very weird, I couldn't give them any suggestions about how to revise the wrong sentences*.

H: How about later on?

- W: In addition, even after reading their essays twice, I felt nothing wrong with them. I couldn't detect anything incorrect, and this was at the early stage.

 Later on, I was able to find some errors, but I felt that what I suggested to my peers wasn't necessarily helpful.
- H: Are you saying that some sentences sounded weird, but you didn't know how to give your peers correct suggestions?
- W: Yeah. (Winnie, para. 38-42; emphasis added)

In Winnie's case, her inability to offer grammatical suggestions to peers can be attributed to her lack of grammar skills, even though she knew certain sentences were incorrect. In addition, she did not have confidence in the quality of her feedback. Winnie's opinions revealed that less competent writers, as feedback providers, had a problem giving constructive suggestions to their peers, which caused them to regard the peer response activity to be unhelpful.

Another example is Sharon's statement about her inability to give constructive feedback to her peers:

- S: During the peer feedback sessions, *I don't really know how to give feedback* on the essays for my group members because what they wrote seems to be a little bit similar to what I wrote.
- H: Are you trying to say that you know what errors they have made, but you just don't know how to advise them to revise or...?
- S: Not really. It's just that *I might not know whether the things they wrote are correct or wrong*. As a result, I don't know how to help and advise them what to revise. (Sharon, 40-42; emphasis added)

Like Winnie, Sharon was incapable of giving feedback to peers. However, the explanation she made is that she was unsure of the correctness of peers' writings, owing to the shared similarity between her essays and theirs. The significance of Sharon's statement is that it is difficult for a feedback provider to ferret out problems in essays that are too similar in style to his/her own one. In other words, blind spots are more easily present when a writer reads essays similar to his/her own, and this is not directly related to a writer's language proficiency.

Finally, certain individual students did not think highly of the peer response activity due to problems among the members, limited effect with high time consumption, peers' incapability of identifying errors, or time pressure. These viewpoints can be illustrated by the following examples:

1. Problems among the members

B: There was a male member in our group. We were a team of only three. He remained silent during the recording. In recording the peer feedback activity for the second essay, he didn't express his ideas but kept asking us questions. We wouldn't have cared about his doing so if he only had absorbed our answers to help him improve his writing. However, the key point is that he was a person who didn't understand yet showed you an I-don't-care-a-bit manner. He simply kept asking questions, and we did all the talking. I didn't know what he wanted to express. Whenever we finished our turns, he just responded to our talking with some shallow comments. This made me really unhappy. (Belinda, para. 39; emphasis added)

Member problems made Belinda hold that the peer response activity was undesirable and unhelpful. A member with a passive and desultory attitude toward the ongoing activity influenced the morale of the whole team and made the exchange of ideas ineffective.

2. Limited effect with high time consumption

H: The second question I'd like to ask is about the peer response activity we did in class. What do you think of it in general? How do you perceive it?

A: I feel it's somewhat time-consuming.

H: Time-consuming? How do you feel the time spent on peer response affects your writing?

A: *It helps more or less, but I feel it helps rather slowly*. We wrote only two essays this semester, so *there is not much that we could revise or learn*. (Alison, paras. 41-44)

Alison argued that the effect of peer response was out of proportion with the time spent on it. Two essays in a semester were not enough to make improvements in writing ability. Alison's statement indicates that certain students still held the idea that "practice makes perfect"—the more practice a writer gets, the higher proficiency he/she will acquire. This type of learning mode neglects the importance of feedback given by reviewers and reflection done by the writers themselves. Without knowing the defects in the writing, a writer cannot effectively improve his/her writing competence, even though he/she practices a lot.

3. Peers' incapability of identifying errors

S: Because we have to give many responses just to one composition. Sometimes

I finished checking and marking my classmate's writing errors and passed it

to the next person, but when it came back to me, I was surprised to find there were still many errors that I hadn't spotted earlier. (Sandra, paras. 50-53)

In spite of the fact that the class teacher instructed the students to mark the major types of errors instead of identifying comprehensive errors, students like Sandra still insisted that the peer response activity was unhelpful due to the peers' failure to identify all possible errors. The concept of "ideal text" existed not only in the minds of certain instructors but also in those of the students.

4. Time pressure

L: At the beginning, I felt very bored and thought how tired they made me. I felt very nervous when Wednesday was coming. I think the time spent on the first essay was pretty long, and it was ok with me. However, I was really in a rush for the second essay because we had to complete the content feedback and record our dialogue in the first period of class, and then work on the form feedback in the next hour. (Lisa, para. 26)

Time pressure was the major reason for Lisa to regard this activity as undesirable. She did not consider the difference between the first and second cycles. The purpose of the first cycle was to let students familiarize themselves with the procedure; therefore, it took longer to complete the writing cycle. By contrast, the second cycle was supposed to be conducted in a normal pace according to the schedule.

In short, the above-mentioned interviewees' perceptions can be summarized in Table 10.

Table 10
Student Participants' Opinions about Peer Response Activity in Interviews

Positive feedback	Writers	
Learn from peers by reading their essays	Ava (H), Jessica (I), Mico (L), Mandy (H)	
Help to improve writing competence	Eva (H), Ina (I), Chu (L), Flora (L), Linda (I)	
Peers help to identify errors	Lou (I), Aki (I), Tom (L)	
Different opinions enlarge vision and	Julia (H)	
help revising		
Helpful in content but not in form	Ching (L)	
Cultivate writer autonomy	Ida (I)	
Create synergy from activity	Hank (L)	
Negative feedback	Writers	
Unsure of the correctness of peers'	Jean (H), Audrey (L)	
comments		
Unable to give helpful suggestions to others	Sharon (H), Winnie (I)	
Time-consuming; limited effectiveness	Alison (H)	
Fail to identify all errors	Sandra (I)	
Member problems	Belinda (L)	
Time-pressure	Lisa (I)	

From Table 10, one can learn that the intermediate and low achievers tended to feel more satisfied with the peer response activity than the high-achieving writers if the positive response percentage is calculated based on the total number of positive and negative responses the students gave in the interviews. In other words, 4 of 7 (57.1%) high achievers, 6 of 9 (66.7%) intermediate writers, and 6 of 8 (75%) low-achieving writers gave positive responses to the peer feedback activity. Overall, the high achievers' responses to the peer feedback indicate that they were eager to learn more from the class but could not because of their peers' limited language proficiency and incapability to provide them with constructive feedback. Because there were only two cycles of writing activities for the whole semester, they became impatient with the time-consuming nature

of the activity. The responses of the intermediate writers to this activity show that although some students experienced difficulties with giving useful suggestion to peers, handling time-pressure, and identifying all errors, others appeared to feel positive about the results of the peer interaction. By contrast, most of the low-achieving writers were more likely to benefit from this activity by receiving helpful comments from the high and intermediate writers, even though two writers encountered problems such as uncooperative members and uncertainty of the correctness of peer feedback. The major reason that students gave positive opinions about the peer feedback activity was that they received many ideas, examples, and knowledge from their peers for developing their essays. By contrast, the reason that they felt peer feedback was unhelpful was closely related to their peers' or their own failure to identify grammatical errors and offer constructive feedback.

It is interesting to make a comparison between the findings in Table 9 and 10. The survey on the peer response activity was conducted in the middle of the semester while the interviews were completed at the end of the semester. The competent and intermediate writers maintained the same percentage of satisfaction in both tables while the less competent writers increased their positive opinions from 37.5% to 75% due to their enhanced understanding of the peer response activity. This phenomenon highlights the fact that an implementation of any classroom activity takes time for low-achieving students to familiarize themselves with the content and gist of the target activity.

Peer Comments Incorporated into Revision

The fourth data set—peers' comments being incorporated into the revised drafts—is used to examine student participants' responses to the peer response activity. In this section, four descriptors, including idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar, are employed to investigate the amount of peers' suggestions incorporated into subsequent revisions. The feedback providers gave their comments to the writers by means of a Peer Feedback Sheet which included two parts—content and form. In the content feedback section, Question 3, "What part(s) should be developed more?" is related to idea development; Question 2, "Of the proofs, reasons, or arguments given to support the writer's opinion, which one/ones is/are irrelevant or illogical to the topic?" is linked to organization of information as signs of enhanced quality (logic order, coherence, and transitions); and Question 4, "What part is confusing?" is connected with defined thesis and synthesized ideas. Three peers per group gave their suggestions for each question. If writers were able to follow three peer comments on each question during their revision, the status of revision would be taken as high; if they followed two, the status was considered moderate, and if they followed one or zero, the status was regarded as low. In the form feedback, each feedback provider offered three written suggestions related to grammar, mechanical devices, and vocabulary. If a writer was able to incorporate seven or more comments into the revised draft, the status of revision would be taken as high, four to six as moderate, and below three as low. According to these criteria, only four students were found to have incorporated their peers' suggestions about idea development into their revised drafts. Two students made revisions for sufficiency (well-defined thesis and synthesized

ideas), and five students revised for organization of information as signs of enhanced quality (logic order and paragraph coherence and transitions), while 16 students revised their grammatical errors after the peer response sessions. Examples of the original and the revised texts are listed to illustrate different types of revision:

1. Aki's case

On the Peer Feedback Sheet, Eva, Vivian, and Lillian gave Aki their feedback on idea development as follows:

- (1) You said that you can do everything you like if you live alone. You can give some examples such as you can go home late or host a party all night, and so on. (Eva)
- (2) Try to say [sic] more examples [sic] what you want to do if you have freedom. (Vivian)
- (3) You can write more reasons about why you want to live outside. (Lillian) In the aspect of sufficiency, their comments are listed as follows:
 - (1) The story didn't mention that the dog was [sic] grown up in [sic] the farm.

 (Eva)
 - (2) You can give more examples to support the words you use. (Vivian)
 - (3) In the second paragraph, I don't understand why the dog is like a frog in a well. (Lillian)

As for the organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, they provided Aki with the following suggestions:

(1) The story didn't mention that the dog was chained up when he was a puppy.

Maybe the dog chose to stay in [sic] the farm after he had been wandering

all over some places because to live by himself was too hard. (Eva)

- (2) Your logic that the dog is like a frog is hard for me to understand. (Lillian)
- (3) The way of reasoning in "Although I will do the house work by myself, I still want to live by myself. I want to freedom" is strange. (Vivian)

As a response to their suggestions to add more content to the paragraph, Aki revised and expanded her second paragraph. The following are Aki's original and revised drafts:

In this story, I against the wolf going to live with the dog. If the wolf will be chained up at night such as the dog, the wolf will be unhappy because he lost freedom. The dog and the wolf are different. The dog was live in the ranch house since he was a puppy, but the wolf wasn't. The wolf was grew up in the forest and used to free life that he can go everywhere he want to go. The dog just like a frog in a well, he didn't know the freedom, so he didn't mind being chained up at night. The situation is the so-called "You can't sell the cow and drink the milk."

In my life experiences, I lived with my grandmother for 18 years old, but I want to live outside now. If I rented a house outside and live in. I can do everything that I want to do. Although I will do the house work by myself, I still want to live by myself. I want to freedom. (Aki's original text)

In this story, I against the wolf going to live with the dog. If the wolf will be chained up at night such as the dog, the wolf would be unhappy because he lost freedom. The dog and the wolf are different. Provided that the dog lived in the ranch house since he was a puppy, the wolf wasn't. The wolf grew up from the forest and used to free life that he could go everywhere he wanted to go. The dog just likes "a frog in a well," he didn't know the freedom, so he didn't mind being chained up at night. The situation was the so-called "You can't sell the cow and drink the milk." So we could said, from different grew up background and different personality, we should choice work which was fit for yourself. Some person love to enjoy staying in comfortable place, per what he can offer to make a safety and normal life. Some person does think freedom is most important, even sometimes he can't get enough food to eat or can't get a safety place to live, he still think, it is best life to him. So, in this story, I feel nothing right or wrong, just follow your personality to choice the lifestyle you can take and enjoy it.

In my life experiences, I lived with my grandmother about 18 years. She gave to me a safe life, but now I am 19 years old. Sometimes I think maybe it is

good time to live outside now in my image. If I **rent** a house and live in, I can do everything that I want to do. Although I will **need to do** the house work by myself, but about my age it is good time to do something by myself without family's help. That will make me grow up more, also I can learn how to control free life by myself and enjoy it. (Aki's revised draft)

In Aki's revised draft, she expanded the paragraphs substantially (italicized passage), revised the grammatical errors (the boldfaced words), and changed the logic order (the underlined sentence) according to her peers' suggestions. Two things are worthy of one's attention in Aki's revised drafts. First, some obvious grammatical errors can be found in the part of expanded passages, including the misuse of "choice" as a verb, the ill-constructed phrases such "love to enjoy," "some person," "about my age" and the inconsistency of the pronouns in the sentence "we should choice work which was fit for yourself." In other words, the expanded passage, without peer feedback, has more errors than the part revised based on peer feedback. This highlights the importance of peer feedback for a writer to improve his/her draft. Next, the grammatical feedback given by her peers was mainly on past tense and noun ending. Aki revised only the errors her peers mentioned and neglected those they didn't. This indicates that Aki was still incapable of making a comprehensive revision on her own.

On the basis of Aki's revised draft, the aspect of idea development can be ranked as high status of revision because she followed three comments to expand the content of the two paragraphs. The aspect of sufficiency can be ranked as moderate because she didn't explicate the question about the dog being like a frog. The aspect of the organization of information as signs of enhanced quality (especially the logic order and coherence) can be ranked as moderate due to her giving no response to the comment about the logic of the dog being like a frog in a well. Finally, in the aspect of improved grammar, the status

of revision can be ranked as high if the grammatical revisions in other paragraphs are taken into consideration.

2. Audrey's case

On the Peer Feedback Sheet, Angela, Sunny, and Ching gave Audrey suggestions in the aspect of idea development; Sunny offered one suggestion on the organization of information as signs of enhanced quality; and no one gave any comments on sufficiency. The feedback on idea development can be listed as follows:

- (1) Last paragraph should be developed more. (Angela)
- (2) Maybe you need to add more details to support your arguments. (Sunny)
- (3) The second paragraph didn't sound right and you should add more details of your own opinion in the conclusion. (Ching)

Sunny's suggestion on organization of information as signs of enhanced quality was:

Some of your paragraphs are not long enough. I think you can probably combine some of them together to make your paragraphs look longer. (Sunny)

Audrey combined three short paragraphs into a longer one and revised and expanded the second and the last paragraph as a response to her peers' suggestions.

In my opinion, I support the wolf's point of view, I want freedom, I can do everything what I want, I don't need to limit by anyone; just one thing I need to worry about is food. Freedom is more important than food.

Like me, I always thinking that I can live by myself, I want to be independent. I know that would be very hard to live by myself, it's a big challenge for me, but I want to try.

Many guys who lived in the dormitory at school or rent outside all told me that "Don't be so stupid, you will regret for it." "God helps those who help themselves." So I think I can.

"There is no such a thing as free lunch." If you want to get something, you need to pay. (Audrey's original text)

In my opinion, I support the wolf's point of view. I want the freedom because I can do everything what I want to do. I always **think about** that I can live by myself. I know it is a big challenge for me but I want to try. I can decide that what time I want to go home, what hairstyle I like to cut; maybe live with parents is not bad, but I still want to be "the wolf." Many guys who **live** in the dormitory at school or rent **a house** outside all told me that "Don't be so stupid, you will regret for it." There is a proverb "God helps those who help themselves," so I think I can do it well.

About this story, I want to say, "There is no such a thing as free lunch." If you want to get something, you need to pay first. (Audrey's revised text)

In her revised text, Audrey developed more content (the italicized passage), corrected grammatical errors (the boldfaced words), enhanced logic order and coherence (the underlined sentence, deleted the contradictory sentences such as "I don't want to limit by anyone; just one thing I need to worry about is food. Freedom is more important than food" from the original text, and combined three short paragraphs into a long one to increase its coherence), and synthesized ideas (crossing out the sentences "I want to be independent. I know that would be very hard to live by myself" from the original text and organizing the long paragraph to be cohesive and concise). However, just like Aki, she was unable to get rid of some errors in the newly expanded passage. One grammatical error can be found in sentence such as "maybe *live* with parents is not bad, but I still want to be 'the wolf'" (emphasis added). This type of error discloses that Audrey did not know that by using a gerund structure such as "living" she can make the sentence more acceptable. In addition, Audrey was incapable of revising errors that her peers had not pointed out.

Based on Audrey's revised text, the aspect of idea development can be ranked as high status of revision because she followed three peer comments to expand the content.

The aspect of sufficiency and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality

can be ranked as moderate if considering the substantial revision she made. The aspect of improved grammar can be ranked as moderate.

3. Linda's case

In the aspect of idea development, the suggestions Ida, Peggy, and Kelly made on the Peer Feedback Sheet can be listed as follows:

- (1) I like your using a famous entrepreneur as an example; you should give a more detailed description about him. (Ida)
- (2) I think you can have more details for your example. (Kelly)
- (3) You can increase more about your example [sic]. (Peggy)

However, these three feedback providers did not suggest anything for sufficiency and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality.

Linda developed her paragraphs more fully as a response to her peers' suggestions about idea development:

I think the wolf not only wants to have freedom also wants to have health, but he doesn't want to work. He is lazy so I agree with the dog, because "There is no free lunch". Although the dog doesn't get free in his life. He works and eats regularly. I think to have healthy body is an important thing in our life. If we don't have healthy body, we should take more time to rest.

For example, Wang Yong-qing, Taiwan called him "the god of managing". He earned lots of money and he had three wives and many children. He can't take out anything to heaven. To be healthy is more important. In my opinion, the dog made the better choice, because he is loyal he steady and sure everything of doing. I think someone will think the wolf made the better choice, because they think freedom is more important than health. There isn't have certain answers just about our think. (Linda's original text)

I think the wolf not only wants to have freedom also wants to have health, but he doesn't want to work. He is lazy, so I agree with the dog, because "there is no free lunch". Although the dog doesn't get free in his life, he works and eats regularly. He never worried about food but the wolf does. He is free but he always worried about food. I think he is not happy at all. To have healthy body is an important thing in our life. If we don't have healthy bodies, we should take more time to rest. We can't do anything with ourselves including freedom.

For example, Wang Yong-qing, **Taiwanese** called him "the god of managing". He earned lots of money and he had three wives and many children. He can't take out anything to heaven, <u>because if he is dead he can't do anything about his work.</u> To be healthy is more important. That is why I think if we have a strong body, it can do everything we want.

In my opinion, the dog made the better choice, because he is loyal, **steady** and **sure of doing everything**. He will not be hungry everyday. But I think someone will think the wolf made the better choice, because they think freedom is more important than health. They will say, if we have freedom we can do everything we like. There isn't **having** certain answers just about our think. (Linda's revised text)

From Linda's revised text, one can find that she developed certain ideas more fully (the italicized sentences), corrected some grammatical errors (the boldfaced words), and changed logic order (the underlined sentence) but neglected the sporadic syntactical errors in her text. The sentence, "There isn't having certain answers just about our think," is worthy of giving special attention because Linda's peers marked the sentence as problematic in structure but she failed to make a correct revision. This highlights the issue that Linda's peers were capable of identifying errors, albeit unable to suggest how to revise them, and Linda understood the incorrectness of the sentence, still being incapable of improving it on her own.

Based on the revisions Linda made by adopting her peers' suggestions, the aspect of idea development can be ranked as high status of revision, the aspect of sufficiency as low, the organization of information as signs of enhanced quality as moderate, and the improved grammar as moderate.

4. Hank's case

On the Peer Feedback Sheet, Jean, Elaine, and Flora offered Hank suggestions on idea development, but none of them gave him any comments on sufficiency and

organization of information as signs of enhanced quality. Their feedback on idea development can be listed as follows:

- (1) You should give some details to support your argument; you can describe more about your life experience. (Jean)
- (2) You can add more life-related examples. (Flora)
- (3) I think you need to write more details to support your life examples. (Elaine)

Jean, Elaine, and Flora offered him two content suggestions on idea development—to give more details to support his argument, and to write more about the examples of his life experience. Hank did not follow their suggestions to expand his essay. However, he improved some of the sentences based on his peers' marked hints and comments on grammar. Several original sentences and the revised ones are listed as follows:

- (1) I agree with the dog, in this story, dog guard the sheep everyday, he give up his freedom to exchange every meal eat regularly. (The original text)
 - I agree with the dog. In this story, dog guards the sheep everyday. He gives up his freedom to exchange every meal so that he can eat regularly. (The revised text)
- (2) Then he met the dog, and the dog was guard to the sheep, when the dog saw the wolf, dog was felt sorry for the wolf, then the dog was invited the wolf to live with him. (The original text)
 - Then he met the dog, and the dog was **guards** to the sheep. **When** the dog saw the wolf, **he was** sorry for the wolf. **Then** the dog **was inviting** the wolf to live with him. (The revised text)
- (3) In the real life, I give up my free time to work, I work everyday, when I come off work, I still need to do the homework, I can't play! Even though I can't play, I told myself, when I go to work, I can chat with my partner, I can play with him. For me, it's another freedom. (The original text)
 - In the real life, I give up my free time to work. I work everyday, when I come off work, I still need to do the homework. I can't play. Even though I can't play, I told myself that when I go to work, I can chat with my partner and can play with him. For me, it's another freedom. (The revised text)

On the basis of the passages above, one finds that Hank's writing had some problems with subject-verb agreement, two verbs in one sentence, punctuation marks, and run-on lines. Hank only made partial correction of his sentences based on peers' suggestions. His revisions focused mostly on run-on line sentences. The errors his peers did not mention were not revised. He mainly paid attention to improving grammatical errors, not idea development, sufficiency, and organization of information. Therefore, the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality can be ranked as low status of revision. Nevertheless, the aspect of improved grammar can be ranked as high status of revision. Hank's case can be used to represent several intermediate and low writers with similar problems in their revised drafts.

In summary, based on the examples mentioned previously, the results of student writers incorporating peers' comments into their revised drafts can be shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Student Writers' Incorporating Peers' Comments into the Revised Drafts

Descriptors	Status of Revision High Moderate Low		ision	Student writers	
_			te Low		
Idea development	3/24	1/24	20/24	H: Aki (I), Audrey (L), Linda (I)	
				M: Lisa (I)	
Sufficiency	0	2/24	22/24	M: Aki (I), Audrey (L)	
Organization of	0	5/24	19/24	M: Aki (I), Audrey (L), Sandra (I)	
Information as signs of enhanced quality				Linda (I), Belinda (L)	
Improved grammar	4/24	12/24	8/24	H: Mico (L), Aki (I), Hank (L), Belinda (L)	
				M: Lou (I), Alison (H), Linda (I),	
				Chu (L), Ava (H), Jessica (I),	
				Audrey (L), Ching (L), Ina (I)	
				Flora (L), Ina (I), Sandra (I)	

From Table 11, one learns of several features presented in student writers' incorporation of peers' comments into their subsequent revisions. First, based on peer feedback, the intermediate and low-achieving writers were inclined to make more revisions than the high achievers in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality (logic order, paragraph coherence and transitions), and improved grammar. The high achievers improved their essays in the aspect of idea development mainly when they conducted the self-directed feedback activity (see Table 7). Second, the high achievers appeared to incorporate fewer peer comments on grammar into their revision than the intermediate and low achievers. This fact can be explained by examining their drafts. Generally, they had fewer grammatical errors in their drafts than their peers. Therefore, the feedback providers could not identify many errors. Another explanation is that the less competent writers were less likely to ferret out grammatical errors due to the insufficiency of their own language proficiency. The third explanation for this phenomenon is that, overall, the high achievers did not adopt certain grammatical suggestions given by their peers because of their insecurity with the correctness of peer feedback. In sharp contrast, the intermediate and low achievers indicated more confidence in their peers' suggestions, especially those given by the high achievers. Third, the high achievers' incorporating less peer feedback into their revisions reflects the lower degree of satisfaction they gave to the peer response activity in Table 10. Table 10 shows that about 57.1% high achievers, 66.7% intermediate writers, and 75% low achievers perceived the peer response activity as helpful to improve their writing performance. In other words, the degree of satisfaction

with this activity as ranked by student writers appears to be related to the amount of peer feedback they incorporated into their revised drafts.

Conclusion

In this section, several major findings from four data sets are present. First, in peer response sessions, three types of episodes can be found: on-task, about-task, and off-task. In each type of episode, students focus their attention on different issues. The on-task episodes include content and form feedback, positive opinions for writers' performance, accepting or rejecting peers' comments, self-evaluation of writing performance, and responses to the peer response activity. In the form feedback, students focus on surface instead of semantic errors. In the content feedback, student readers give suggestions related to logical argument, more details to support writers' views, and recommendations to make the intended meanings clearer. Some peer readers give praise to the writers before delivering comments by using the sandwich feedback technique. Other writers evaluate peers' suggestions before adopting, which helps to cultivate writer autonomy. Still others examine their own writing performance and find that without sufficient practice, writers have difficulty ridding themselves of the errors mentioned by their peers in the feedback. In the peer response sessions, students give positive as well as negative responses to this activity. The about-task episodes, including the feedback providers giving partially correct comments, beating about the bush, and pointing out errors but failing to offer constructive feedback, occur mainly in the form feedback session. The off-task episodes consist of students offering incorrect and unrelated comments and shifting away from the discussed topic. Incorrect comments occur mostly in the form

feedback sessions, whereas topic shift and unrelated comments occur mainly in the content feedback sessions.

Second, students' opinions about the peer response activity shown in the midsemester survey contain positive and negative feedback. The reasons for the helpful
response type include that students can share viewpoints and build friendship, and that
the activity helps to improve writing competence, cultivate a self-learning attitude, and
increase communication skills. By contrast, the reasons for the unhelpful response type
include that peer feedback is confusing and unbeneficial, that the recording job is
undesirable, and that the effect of this activity is low. When compared to the semesterend interview, the high and intermediate writers maintained the same percentage of
satisfaction with the activity while the low achievers increased their positive response.
Therefore, one could conclude that it takes more time for the low achievers to familiarize
themselves with the content and gist of this activity implemented in the classroom.

Third, student participants' perceptions of the peer response activity in the interviews can be categorized as positive or negative. Positive perceptions include that, as readers, students learn from peers by reading their essays, and, as writers, they can receive error feedback from peers. In addition, the activity helps to cultivate writer autonomy and create synergy for writing and revising essays. The negative responses reflect students' insecurity about the correctness of peer comments, their failure to give helpful suggestions to peers, perceptions of the activity's limited effect, group member problems, and time consumption. Generally, the intermediate and low achievers felt more satisfied with this activity. The dissatisfaction of the high achievers appears to be

attributable to their failure to receive constructive feedback owing to their peers' limited language proficiency and the insufficient amount of practice.

Finally, when incorporating peer feedback into their revised drafts, the low and intermediate writers tended to accept their peers' comments for revision more than the high achievers in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar. The low percentage of the high achievers incorporating peer comments into their revisions may reflect their dissatisfaction with this activity. Generally speaking, the degree of satisfaction with this activity as ranked by student writers is closely related to the amount of peer feedback they incorporated into their revised drafts.

Students' Responses to Teacher Feedback

Two data sets, interviews with students and students' incorporation of teacher feedback into their final drafts, are used to report the findings of student participants' responses to teacher feedback. The interviews consist of three parts: responses to the traditional teacher feedback (TTF) and the modified teacher feedback (MTF), concerns about MTF, and strategies adopted to deal with the lack of clarity of the teacher's comments. At the end, a conclusion section presents the major findings.

Students' Responses to Teacher Feedback as Shown in Interviews Participants' perceptions of TTF and MTF.

The question posed to students in the interview is "How do you see the modified teacher feedback in this activity as compared with the traditional one?" The purpose of

this question is to examine student writers' opinions about the differences between the MTF (giving marked hints with correcting symbols and comprehensive comments, one-on-one teacher-student conference, and requiring the writers to ponder over the errors and consulting peers before making revision) and the TTF (giving direct corrections and scores without the revision requirement).

All the 24 students interviewed agreed on this point that the modified teacher feedback was more helpful to improve their writing competence than the traditional one. The major view students held was that the series of activities of the modified teacher feedback drove them to think over the errors they had made. Another reason was that the instructor provided the student writers only with marked hints instead of direct corrections; therefore, the students needed to become actively involved in the learning process so as to find possible answers for the marked hints. This trial and search process left a vivid impression on the students' minds about the errors they had made. By contrast, in the traditional teacher feedback, an instructor provides students with corrections for their errors and scores for their writing performance. This practice, according to the interviewed students, may deprive them of the opportunity to think over the errors in their essays. Therefore, they might not be motivated to find why and where their writings went wrong. They might be incapable of learning from their errors. In addition, skimming the teacher's corrections may only leave them with a vague impression of a "finished" text which departs quickly from them. Some of them held that the direct corrections limited the possible answers to only a few; therefore, they could not effectively absorb the fossilized corrections for their errors. Two examples from student statements can be used to illustrate the first major finding that the modified teacher feedback drives students to

think over their errors whereas the traditional one does not. The first example is Sharon's statement:

S: Um, in the traditional one, the teacher gives you corrections on your essay and *you will know his/her instructions directly* once you get your essay back. However, in the modified version, the feedback is provided with marked codes, and *you have to think over it by yourself to make sure you have revised in an acceptable way.* You will be *more impressed* after you go to ask your teacher because *you have already done your thinking.* (Sharon, para. 72; emphasis added)

Two points in Sharon's statement are worthy of being mentioned. First, thinking plays an essential role in improving students' writing skills. Composing and revising an essay are complex processes that demand an integrated thinking ability; without thinking, students will soon forget what they have learned. Second, writing ability does not equal writing knowledge. The direct error correction provided by the instructor in TTF is knowledge while the answers to errors pursued by writers in MTF are more likely to be transformed into writing competence.

Another example that MTF is beneficial for writers to think over errors while TTF is not can be found in Flora's statement:

F: I think the traditional way is a bit fossilized and standardized that doesn't give us much chance to think. A teacher simply gave us back our essays, and we just revised them according to the teacher feedback but didn't really know why it was wrong when we were writing it that way. Yeah, for instance, I am not good at tenses; therefore, I would have a better understanding of using the

correct tense from feedback such as this. I would probably know what kinds of tenses were needed for revision. I think the modified version is easier to make me think over my writing. As you know well, students tend to be slack; they might think it unnecessary to ponder over it again because what the teacher gave them must be correct. Therefore, I think the modified version is better than the traditional one. (Flora, para. 79; emphasis added)

Flora's viewpoints reveal that in TTF, an instructor may deprive students of an opportunity to think over errors by means of giving correction feedback which limits the answers to a few. Without thinking and discussing, student writers might not know why they had made mistakes, and learn nothing from their errors. Second, the marked hints in MTF may drive students to search for answers to their errors and to revise their drafts. In other words, MTF is an on-going activity, while TTF is a once-for-all activity, not necessarily requiring any subsequent revision.

The second major finding is that the MTF makes students become actively involved in the learning activity whereas the TTF does not. Two statements from students are used to illustrate this point. The first is Ching's opinion:

C: In the traditional one, since the teacher has already provided us with the answers, we probably just have a look at the feedback, and then put it away. As regards the one using codes as hints, I will try to figure out why the teacher marked the sentences which I assumed to be correct. Therefore, I will ponder over them, looking up some books to find what I am supposed to use for the sentences. During the period of seeking for answers, I will find something quite beyond what the direct answers from the teacher could have

offered me. Anyway, I will become more actively involved in learning. (Ching, para. 82; emphasis added)

Ching's statement shows that students pay less attention to teacher feedback in the traditional version than in the modified one because the latter requires students to search answers for their own errors while the former does not. The process of searching answers brings forth more results than teacher's correction feedback. In MTF, students are motivated to revise the errors they made, and this leads to their active engagement in the revision activity.

Another example of this active engagement comes from Audrey's statement:

A: I think the type we have been practicing has an impact on me. I would rather find the answers to the marked errors on my own than being given the solutions.

H: Mm-hmm.

A: I pay more attention to my problems in the modified version. I don't like getting the corrected answers and a score. Yeah! *I don't care about the errors once I got a score*. The main point for me is whether the teacher has calculated the score correctly. *If nothing is wrong with the score*, *I will just put it away*. As for this one, *the teacher has not yet given me a score*, and I am required to make revisions. I will try to improve it to be as comprehensible as possible. In addition, *the teacher announced that all revision procedures would be counted for the final score*. Therefore, I will check my revision with my classmates before I turn it in. (Audrey, paras. 98-100; emphasis added)

Audrey's view represents the typical responses of most of the students to the teacher feedback: the score is the bottom line. Once they get their scores, they do not care about the errors. This type of response highlights the relationship between instruction and evaluation. If the evaluation is summative like the one in TTF, students might become demotivated to do the revision work. On the other hand, if the measurement is formative like the one in MTF, students may be more motivated to revise their drafts to be as comprehensible as possible. That is to say, the evaluation method adopted in MTF strengthens students' motivation to improve the quality of their essays. To get a better score for their writing becomes an immediate goal for students, and makes them actively involved in the learning activity.

The third major finding, namely, that the effect of MTF is vivid and long-lived whereas TTF is vague and short-lived, can be exemplified by the following cases:

HK: Take me for example. I still remember clearly where some sentences went wrong in the modified version. However, if the feedback is given by offering direct corrections and a score, I will look at my score and errors at best, and then put it away forever. (Hank, para. 69; emphasis added)

Hank's response to TTF was similar to that of Audrey in his concerns about scores and his disregard of errors. Without much thinking over their errors, writers usually get only the short-lived effect of TTF. However, the results of MTF for Hank lasted longer than those of TTF because he was able to remember the errors clearly after the series of activities—thinking over errors, discussing with peers, and consulting the instructor in the teacher-student conference.

Another similar view about the effect of teacher feedback comes from Mico's statement:

M: I think your grammar won't be improved if you have the traditional feedback in which a teacher gives you answers directly since you won't be inclined to think about and revise your errors. The next time you still make the same mistakes and the teacher will pretty sure mark them. On the other hand, I think the modified feedback is great. It forces you to think more than ever before about the correct answers. If you still have problems to figure them out, you can go ask your friends. If you still don't get it, you can go to the teacher. I think this is much better for you to understand, to remember what the teacher said about "what not to do" when you are going to compose an essay. In the traditional one, you won't really understand your errors due to the answers directly given by the teacher. (Mico, para. 70; emphasis added)

The following points can be obtained from Mico's statement. First, without going through the process of thinking, a writer is more likely to make the same errors in the future owing to the lack of a thorough understanding of his/her problems. Second, Mico, like Hank, held that a series of activities greatly helped writers to improve their writing skills. Third, MTF drives students to think hard about their errors and makes the instructions given by the teacher easier to remember.

In short, Table 12 summarizes the above-mentioned findings of students' responses to the teacher feedback during the interviews.

Table 12
Students' Perceptions of Modified Teacher Feedback and Traditional One

Modified Teacher Feedback	Writers		
Drive to think over errors	Mandy (H), Ava (H), Sharon (H), Lisa (I), Jessica (I), Winnie (I), Flora (L), Belinda (L), Mico (L)		
Become actively involved in learning	Eva (H), Ida (I), Linda (I), Hank (L), Ching (L), Audrey (L)		
Make a vivid impression	Julia (H), Lou (I), Ina (I), Aki (I), Sandra (I)		
Raise awareness	Jean (I), Tom (L)		
Make good use of teacher's comments	Alison (H), Chu (L)		
Traditional Teacher Feedback	Writers		
No motivation to think over errors	Eva (H), Ava (H), Lou (I), Winnie (I), Lisa (I), Jessica (I), Linda (I), Sandra (I), Mico (L), Chu (L), Audrey (L), Ching (L)		
Unable to know why	Ina (I), Ida (I), Belinda (L), Flora (L), Tom (L)		
Vague impression	Julia (H), Aki (I), Hank (L)		
Limit answers to a few	Mandy (H), Sharon (H)		
Direct corrections look messy	Jean (H)		
Didn't answer the question	Alison (H)		

From Table 12, one learns that in TTF, the instructor, as knowledge dispenser, cannot effectively motivate students to actively engage in the learning activity because the type of learning is teacher-centered and the teacher is the only audience for the student writers. Besides, the teacher might deprive the students of an opportunity to think through their errors. Without going through the process of pondering, the students are more likely to make the same errors in future writings. By contrast, in MTF, the instructor, as a facilitator, is capable of motivating the students to search for corrections to the errors they have made. In addition, more audiences are included in this type of

activity—the writers themselves, the peers, and the teacher. Therefore, it is a student-centered, rather than teacher-centered, activity, and the students are more willing to assume the responsibility writers should have. After having gone through a series of activities (thinking hard over errors, consulting peers and teachers), the student writers possess a long-lived memory about their errors, and, therefore, they are less likely to commit the same errors in future writings.

Students' concerns about MTF.

The students showed different concerns in the interviews about the modified teacher feedback. On the whole, their concerns can be divided into three categories: marked hints and comments, marked hints, and comments given by the instructor. Two examples are used to illustrate the point that students pay their attention to the marked hints and comments from the instructor. The first case is from Ava's statement:

- A: Looking at the comments first just reflects a kind of my personal attitude. If the teacher said I did a good job, I'd think I indeed did something great in a certain aspect. Then that would become a power to drive me to correct my grammatical errors.
- H: You do think that the positive feedback and encouragement from the teacher is something really important to improve students' writing motivation, don't you?
- A: Yes, it's really important to students. If the teacher criticizes the essay of a student too much, the student may dislike this class. The student may feel puzzled why you deliver so much harsh criticism. Why don't you just tell me

the reason why you give me such criticism? (Ava, paras. 110-112; emphasis added)

Ava stated that she was concerned about not only the marked hints but also the positive comments given by the instructor. One salient point in her statement is that the encouragement from the instructor is an indispensable element of teacher feedback. The teacher's positive opinions can power students to do the revision work. On the other hand, harsh criticism caused by the teacher's adherence to the concept of ideal text can demotivate students regarding future learning and create the misunderstanding that the teacher's criticism was out of personal prejudice rather than writing issues. Eva had the same concern as Ava about teacher feedback:

E: If the teacher's feedback is positive, it means I write well, and I'll be happy.

H: Mm-hmm. Yes, this is the question I asked, what do you care about more in terms of teacher feedback?

E: It's *the encouragement to us*. (Eva, paras. 106-108; emphasis added)

Both writers' statements highlight the issue of positive comments from the instructor, especially for a class of students at the stage of language development.

The second example of students' concerns about marked hints and comments from the instructor can be found in Mico's case:

M: Actually, *I care very much about both of them*. You need to think very carefully over what the teacher has given you because *his comments are definitely only for the errors on your essay*. Besides, the purpose of giving codes is simply to tell you that something went wrong there and doesn't imply anything about your essay. *By combining hints and comments, I get to*

understand what the teacher might have felt about my essay. (Mico, para. 74; emphasis added)

Even though Mico, like Ava, cared about both marked hints and comments given by the instructor, she paid her attention to the marked errors instead of positive opinions from the teacher, and held that she could learn more about the teacher's opinion of her essay by combining both types of feedback.

The second concern type is that students pay more attention to teacher comments.

The following two students' statements represent this type of response:

- J: I am concerned more about the comments in the latter part because *comments* are more integral. I care more about the integration because you can go to reference books for details by yourself! (Julia, para. 72; emphasis added)
- I: I could see how the teacher gave feedback on my writing structure or other things. Yeah. If I could make corrections directly, it would be easier for me.
- H: So, are you saying that the comments in the second part were more capable of presenting your concerns?
- I: Yes.
- H: The clues in the first part only provide you with a lot of fragments of information, so that you can't effectively know your own strengths and weaknesses?
- I: Yes, yes, yes. *That's exactly what I mean*. (Ina, paras. 172-176; emphasis added)

Both Julia and Ina shared the view that teacher comments were more organized and integral than the marked hints because the former were concerned with errors types,

content development, and suggestions whereas the latter were related to errors scattered all over the essay. For Julia, the marked errors were something she could deal with by referring to books. This underscores the fact that Julia, a high achiever, was capable of revising her grammatical errors on her own. For Ina, the teacher comments gave information about her strengths and weaknesses while the marked hints were just many fragment messages that could not help her effectively to improve her writing performance.

The third concern type is related to students' focusing their attention more on the marked hints. Two typical examples can be found in the statements by Linda and Hank:

HK: *I will be more concerned if there are a lot of errors in my essay*. I think it's ok if I made errors only in verb tense because at least my teacher is capable of understanding what I want to express. I don't think it's a big deal if I use wrong tenses to communicate with foreigners because they still comprehend what I am trying to say. (Hank, para. 71; emphasis added)

L: *I think my attention focuses on the hints to see where my essay went wrong.*(Linda, para. 100; emphasis added)

Both Hank and Linda cared more about the marked hints given by the instructor. However, Hank held that merely using verb tenses incorrectly in his writing was not problematic because in daily communication, people would not care very much about wrong verb tenses in his speech. What Hank neglected is the difference between writing and speaking. In oral communication, people are able to use facial expressions, gestures, and pitch and stress to indicate their intended meaning while in essays, the signs of language are the only media to get messages through.

On the basis of the three concern types mentioned above, the following findings can be summarized as shown in Table 13.

Table 13
Student Writer's Concerns about the Modified Teacher Feedback

Focus of Concern	Writers		
Marked hints and teacher	Alison (H), Ava (H), Lou (I), Lisa (I), Jessica (I)		
comments	Audrey (L), Mico (L), Tom (L)		
Teacher comments	Eva (H), Julia (H), Mandy (H), Sharon (H), Ida (I), Ina (I), Winnie (I), Ching (L), Chu (L), Flora (L)		
Marked hints	Aki (I), Linda (I), Sandra (I), Hank (L), Belinda (L)		
Not applicable	Writer		
Opinions from other people are not always correct	Jean (H)		

From Table 13, one finds that 4 of 6 (66.67%) high achievers (Jean is not taken into consideration), 3 of 9 (33.33%) intermediate writers, and 3 of 8 (37.5%) low achievers showed their concern about teacher comments. However, 3 of 9 (33.33%) intermediate writers and 2 of 8 (25%) low achievers cared more about the marked hints, and none of the high achievers paid attention to them. Overall, the finding that the high achievers were more concerned about teacher comments (content development, suggestions, and error types) whereas the intermediate and low achievers cared more about the marked hints (grammatical errors, mechanical devices, and vocabulary) is similar to the finding in students' concerns about self-directed feedback (see Table 4). In other words, the high achievers in both activities tended to care more about content development to get a holistic picture of their writings while the intermediate and low achievers were inclined to put more weight on form revision to improve the comprehensibility of their essays.

Strategies to deal with the lack of clarity of teacher's comments.

In the interviews, the student participants showed that they employed different strategies to deal with the lack of clarity of the teacher's comments as shown on the Teacher Feedback Sheet. On the whole, their strategies can be divided into five types: (a) a writer thinks or revises based on the puzzling comments given by the instructor, consults peers, and then goes to ask the instructor, (b) a writer discusses with peers, then goes to ask the teacher if the peers' help is unsatisfactory, (c) a writer goes straight to the teacher and asks about unclear comments, (d) a writer revises whatever can be done, then goes to consult the teacher, and (e) a writer may just asks classmates for their opinions about the confusing comments, and does not go to ask the teacher. The following example of Julia can be used to illustrate the first type of strategy:

J: Yeah. Sometimes I discussed with others and searched for possible answers on the Internet. And then, I would ask the teacher to see which answer was better. Perhaps he has a better one. (Julia, para. 80; emphasis added)

The significance of Julia's statement is that she did not depend solely on peers or the instructor to solve the puzzling comments given by the teacher. She did what she could before going to consult the teacher for better answers. This highlights the fact that Julia, a high achiever, was capable of dealing with problems on her own by assuming an active attitude toward the learning task.

The second strategy type is that a writer, without making any effort on his/her own, discusses with his/her peers, and then, if the peers' opinions were unhelpful, goes to ask the teacher. Two statements from Aki and Sandra represent this type of strategy:

A: I would discuss with my classmates first, and if I still couldn't find answers, I would go ask my teacher. (Aki, para. 152; emphasis added)

S: If I don't understand, I'd ask him or classmates. The second part he wrote is perhaps...a little scribbling because he had to give comments on many compositions. So we'd first look at each other's comments to see if he gave us the same comments. It seems that his earlier comments were more neat and orderly while later ones were written in a hurry. We'd check if we got the same. If not, then I'd ask him. (Sandra, para. 113; emphasis added)

Both Aki and Sandra had something in common: consulting peers before going to ask the instructor. However, Sandra's case was different from Aki's in the cause of the lack of clarity of teacher comments. Sandra's statement pointed out one important issue in a large writing class—teacher feedback should be given in a short period of time if the class schedule is strictly followed. Under the pressure of time and loadings such as other classes, research projects, and administrative services, a teacher is less likely to provide students with neat and orderly handwriting for the comments. This may contribute to the unclearness of teacher feedback and many similar comments among student writers.

The third strategy type is that student writers go straight to the teacher to ask about the confusing comments. The statements from Belinda and Lisa exemplify this type of strategy:

B: I would first ask the teacher to make sure what he meant, and then reflect on what I really meant. If a difference was found, I would tell him what I tried to convey. It could either be that he misunderstood me or that I did not express myself correctly and misguided him. (Belinda, para. 93; emphasis added)

L: *I would go ask the teacher*. For example, in the last essay, "Home," the teacher marked one sentence and asked whether I meant a hospital because I said that a child's first home was the very place where the mother gave birth to him/her. It was a little bit beyond my imagination that the teacher could interpret it in a different way. I didn't have the slightest idea how to revise it. *Only after I had consulted the teacher, I knew how to revise it*. (Lisa, para. 64; emphasis added)

Both examples indicate that Belinda and Lisa did not revise on their own or discuss with peers before going to the instructor. Their going to ask the teacher directly reveals that they thought that the teacher, the comment provider, was the only person who could explain what puzzled them. For Belinda, the reason for misinterpreting the message could be attributed to the teacher's misunderstanding or her misguidance of him. For Lisa, the teacher's reading of her example was different from what she had intended to express. Both cases demonstrate that there is a gap between the perceived meaning and the intended meaning. A writer has to role-switch from an author to a reader to evaluate the clarity of the conveyed message.

The fourth strategy type is that a writer revises what can be done, and then goes to ask the teacher for the still unclear points. Mandy's statement demonstrates this point:

M: I would revise whatever I could figure out. If there was something about which I wasn't quite sure, I would write it down, and then ask the teacher whether it was ok if I expressed it in this way, yeah. (Mandy, para. 130; emphasis added)

Mandy did not discuss with her peers; she revised all she could by herself. This attitude reveals that she did not have confidence in her peers' opinions, and this corresponds to her negative opinion about the peer response activity mentioned previously. Mandy, a high achiever, assumed an active attitude toward the writing task by doing what she could before consulting the teacher to confirm her revision.

The final strategy type is that a writer regards the lack of clarity of teacher comments as a kind of different opinion and accepts whatever a teacher offers. Mico's opinion can be used to illustrate this point:

M: I think usually *I would just leave it there*. *I would assume the teacher might just have different opinions*. Yet, *I would still go ask my classmates why the teacher gives the feedback in such a way*. I want to get their opinions on whether the teacher's thinking is differently from mine. (Mico, para. 78; emphasis added)

Mico assumed that any lack of clarity of teacher comments just reflected different perspectives for something, and that it was not necessary to go to ask the instructor for clarification. She consulted her classmates for the possible implications from the teacher's comments.

Based on the five types of strategies to deal with this lack of clarity of teacher's comments, some points can be summarized in Table 14.

Table 14

Strategies Students Employ to Deal with the Lack of Clarity of Teacher Comments

Type of Strategies	Writers
Think or revise first, consult peers, and go	Julia (H), Ida (I), Linda (I), Audrey (L),
to ask teacher	Hank (L)
Consult peers, then go to ask teacher if peers'	Ava (H), Sharon (H), Eva (H), Sandra (I),
opinions are unhelpful	Lou (I), Winnie (I), Aki (I), Jessica (I),
Go straight to teacher	Flora (L), Ching (L), Chu (L), Tom (L) Alison (H), Jean (H), Ina (I), Lisa (I),
Go straight to teacher	Belinda (L)
Revise first, then go to teacher	Mandy (H)
Ask only classmates	Mico (L)

From Table 14, one learns that only six students in the first and fourth types do revising and searching work before either discussing with peers or going to ask the teacher. This fact indicates that student writers tended to depend more on peers or the teacher than on themselves to solve the problem of puzzling comments given by the teacher. Next, the quality of teacher feedback, especially with regard to handwriting, is another explanation for the lack of clarity of teacher comments. Finally, from the third and fourth types, one finds that only 3 of 7 (42.86%) high achievers, 2 of 9 (22.22%) intermediate writers, and 1 of 8 (12.5%) low achievers went straight to the teacher for the unclear comments without discussing with peers.

Student Writers' Incorporating Teacher Feedback into Revision

The second data set used to investigate student writers' response to teacher feedback is the writers' actual incorporation of teacher feedback into their final drafts, including the amount of suggestions in the aspect of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar adopted

into revision. The marked hints on students' drafts and the comments on the Teacher Feedback Sheets are used to probe the amount of instructor suggestions incorporated into the students' final drafts.

The items listed on the Teacher Feedback Sheet can be used to investigate the four aspects of the effect of teacher feedback on students' revised drafts. Three items on the sheet are in agreement with their counterparts in the aspect of idea development. First, the item on the sheet "main idea is clearly stated" is related to "summary of the target text" since the instructor required the students to summarize the text "The Dog and the Wolf" as the main idea about two different types of lifestyles. Next, the item on the sheet "major points are well supported with details" is linked to "opinions for or against the issue with supporting details." Finally, the item on the sheet "a clear conclusion" is associated with the criterion "a persuasive conclusion." As for the aspect of sufficiency, only one item on the sheet, "thesis statement is clearly stated," is related to "well-defined thesis;" therefore, this part is not applicable for investigating how many teacher suggestions are incorporated into revision. In the aspect of organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, three items on the sheet, "Ideas are logically presented," "connectives are appropriately used," "The main idea is reinforced in the conclusion," are associated with "logic order," "paragraph transitions," and "restatement of main ideas in conclusion." Similarly, three error types concerning grammar and mechanics listed on the Teacher Feedback Sheet are closely associated with the criteria items in the aspect of improved grammar. If student writers are able to follow all three of the teacher's suggestions in each aspect to revise their drafts, the status of their revisions is ranked as high; two as moderate; and one or zero as low.

On the basis of these criteria, in the aspect of idea development, all student writers' revision is ranked as low. Even though the instructor gave two students (Julia and Winnie) suggestions about expanding their content, none followed his advice. 18 students incorporated the teacher's comments to revise their drafts in the aspect of organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, especially those suggestions related to logic order, coherence, and transitions. All students adopted the teacher's comments and marked hints into their revised drafts in different degrees of change—15 students' revisions can be regarded as high status of revision; 8 as moderate; and 1 as low. Examples of the original and the revised texts are listed to illustrate different types of revision:

1. Aki's case

On the Teacher Feedback Sheet, the instructor gave Aki two positive comments and three suggestions in error types. No specific comments can be found to be related to the improvement in the aspects of idea development, and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality. The following is the instructor's feedback:

- (1) Your summary is well done.
- (2) The main idea about your support for the wolf's choice is reinforced in the conclusion.
- (3) Pay attention to run-on line.
- (4) Check some word usages and their forms in your work.
- (5) Take care of verbs in your sentences.

As a response to the teacher feedback, Aki revised errors of three different types and improved logic order and coherence for her final draft. The following are Aki's third

and final drafts:

In this story, I against the wolf going to live with the dog. If the wolf will be chained up at night such as the dog, the wolf would be unhappy because he lost freedom. The dog and the wolf are different. Provided that the dog lived in the ranch house since he was a puppy, the wolf wasn't. The wolf grew up from the forest and used to free life that he could go everywhere he wanted to go. The dog just likes "a frog in a well," he didn't know the freedom, so he didn't mind being chained up at night. The situation was the so-called "You can't sell the cow and drink the milk." So we could said, from different grew up background and different personality, we should choice work which was fit for yourself. Some person love to enjoy staying in comfortable place, per what he can offer to make a safety and normal life. Some person does think freedom is most important, even sometimes he can't get enough food to eat or can't get a safety place to live, he still think, it is best life to him. So, in this story, I feel nothing right or wrong, just follow your personality to choice the lifestyle you can take and enjoy it.

In my life experiences, I lived with my grandmother about 18 years. She gave to me a safety life, but now I am 19 years old. Sometimes I think maybe it is good time to live outside now in my image. If I rent a house and live in, I can do everything that I want to do. Although I will need to do the house work by myself, but about my age it is good time to do something by myself without family's help. That will make me grow up more, also I can learn how to control free life by myself and enjoy it. (Aki's third draft)

In this story, I am against the wolf to go to live with the dog. If the wolf would be chained up at night like the dog, the wolf would be unhappy because he lost freedom. The dog and the wolf are different. Provided that the dog lived in the ranch house since he was a puppy, the wolf wasn't. The wolf grew up in the forests and used to free life that he could go everywhere he wanted to go. The dog was just like "a frog in a well," he didn't know the freedom, so he didn't mind being chained up at night. The situation was the so-called "You can't sell the cow and drink the milk." So we could say, from different grew up background and different personality, we should choose work which was suitable for yourself. Someone enjoys staying in a comfortable place, what he can offer to make a safe and normal life. Someone does think freedom to be most important, even sometimes he can't get enough food to eat or can't get a safe place to live in. He still thinks that it is best life to him. So, in this story, I feel no right or wrong choice, just follow your personality to choose the lifestyle you can take and enjoy it.

In my life experiences, I **have lived** with my grandmother *for* about 18 years. She gave me a <u>safe</u> life, but now I am 19 years old. Sometimes, I think maybe it is good time to live outside now *on my own*. If I rent a house **to** live in,

I can do everything that I want to do. Although I will need to do the <u>housework</u> by myself, *at* my age it is good time to do something by myself without family's help. That will make me grow up more. *Also I can learn how to control free life by myself and enjoy it*. (Aki's final draft)

In the final draft, Aki revised verb errors (the boldfaced words), corrected word usages and forms (underlined words), run-on lines (the italicized sentences), and prepositions (the boldfaced plus italicized words and phrases) based on teacher feedback. The revision of two run-on lines and the sentence "So, in this story, I feel no right or wrong choice, just follow your personality to choose the lifestyle you can take and enjoy it" increase the logic order and transitions of the writing. According to the criteria mentioned above, in the aspect of idea development, Aki's final draft can be ranked as low status of revision while that of improved grammar can be regarded as high because she followed all three grammatical suggestions from the instructor. Even though the instructor did not suggest anything about logic order, coherence, and transitions, Aki's substantial revision in her final draft can be ranked as having performed moderate status of revision, especially the change she made in the expression "Although... but..." which is considered a typical way of reasoning in Chinese but is unacceptable in English.

2. Audrey's case

The feedback the instructor offered to Audrey included two positive opinions and three suggestions on error types. No comments related to idea development and organization of information as signs of enhanced quality were found. The suggestions from the instructor can be listed as follows:

- (1) You did a great summary, and your personal experience in making a hard choice is quite interesting.
- (2) Major ideas and examples are logically presented.

- (3) Some run-on lines need your attention.
- (4) The word "like" in your sentence is not used as a verb. Check your verbs in your essay.
- (5) Notice the usage of quotation marks when you use them.

Audrey followed the teacher feedback to correct her grammatical errors and improve logic order and coherence for her final draft. The following are Audrey's third and final drafts:

In my opinion, I support the wolf's point of view. I want the freedom because I can do everything what I want to do. I always think about that I can live by myself. I know it is a big challenge for me but I want to try. I can decide that what time I want to go home, what hairstyle I like to cut; maybe live with parents is not bad, but I still want to be "the wolf." Many guys who live in the dormitory at school or rent a house outside all told me that" Don't be so stupid, you will regret for it." There is a proverb" God helps those who help themselves," so I think I can do it well.

I had made a choice that limited my freedom. I had no lessons on Friday afternoon so I would go out with my friend, but there was one thing I had to do was lied to my mom. I said I had chosen more credit so I needed to stay at school. But actually, I was went shopping. My friend was suspended from school last week. Unfortunately, the lie let me had to stay at school Friday afternoon. I regret very much.

The foreign laborers in Taiwan just like the dog in this story, the company give you housing but you need to work and pay for them. Day after day, work and work, then you need to obey the company rules. That made life nothing exciting. I know everybody have different ideas, I hope everyday will happen something very surprising me. (Audrey's third draft)

In my opinion, I support the wolf's point of view. I want <u>freedom</u> because I can do everything what I want **to**. I always think about that I can live by myself. I know it is a big challenge for me but I want to try. I can decide <u>what</u> time I want to go home, what hairstyle I like to cut; maybe **living** with parents is not bad, but I still want to be "the wolf." Many guys who live in the dormitory at school or rent a house outside all **say**, "Don't be so stupid, you will regret for it." There is a proverb "God helps those who help themselves," so I think I can do it well.

I had made a choice that limited my freedom. I had no <u>classes</u> on Friday afternoon so I would go out with my friend, but there was one thing I had to do: **lying** to my mom. I said I had taken more <u>credit hours</u> so I needed to stay at school. But actually, I was **going** shopping. My friend was suspended from the

school last week. Unfortunately, the lie **made** me **have** to stay at school Friday afternoon. I regret very much.

The foreign laborers in Taiwan **are** just **like** the dog in this story. *The* company gives you housing but you need to work and pay for them. Day after day, work and work, then you need to obey the company rules. That made life nothing exciting. I know everybody have different ideas; <u>I hope something very surprising will happen to me everyday</u>. (Audrey's final draft)

Following the teacher comments, Audrey corrected verb errors (the boldfaced words), changed the position of quotation marks, revised the run-on line (the italicized sentence) and the last sentence to increase their comprehensibility, and corrected word usages and forms (the underlined words). On the basis of the criteria previously mentioned, Audrey performed low status of revision in the aspect of idea development, moderate in logic order and coherence by revising the run-on line and the last sentence, and high in the improved grammar because she completely incorporated her teacher's grammar feedback into her final draft.

3. Linda's case

The comments Linda obtained from the instructor on the Teacher Feedback Sheet were two positive opinions and three suggestions about grammatical errors. They can be listed as follows:

- (1) Main idea is clearly stated.
- (2) Main idea is reinforced in the conclusion. I like your using a good example to support your argument.
- (3) Pay attention to word usages and forms.
- (4) Stick to the same verb tense when telling something.
- (5) A comma is not needed when "because..." is following the main clause.

Linda accepted the teacher feedback and revised her draft. The following are her third and final draft:

I think the wolf not only wants to have freedom also wants to have health, but he doesn't want to work. He is lazy, so I agree with the dog, because "there is no free lunch". Although the dog doesn't get free in his life, he works and eats regularly. He never worried about food but the wolf does. He is free but he always worried about food. I think he is not happy at all. To have healthy body is an important thing in our life. If we don't have healthy bodies, we should take more time to rest. We can't do anything with ourselves including freedom.

For example, Wang Yong-qing, Taiwanese called him "the god of managing". He earned lots of money and he had three wives and many children. He can't take out anything to heaven, because if he is dead he can't do anything about his work. To be healthy is more important. That is why I think if we have a strong body, it can do everything we want.

In my opinion, the dog made the better choice, because he is loyal, steady and sure of doing everything. He will not be hungry everyday. But I think someone will think the wolf made the better choice, because they think freedom is more important than health. They will say, if we have freedom we can do everything we like. There isn't having certain answers just about our think. (Linda's third draft)

I think the wolf wants to have <u>not only freedom but also health</u>, but he doesn't want to work. He is lazy, so I agree with the dog <u>because</u> "there is no free lunch." Although the dog doesn't get <u>freedom</u> in his life, he works and eats regularly. He never **worries** about food but the wolf does. He is free but he always **worries** about food. I think he is not happy at all. To have healthy body is an important thing in our life. If we don't have healthy bodies, we should take more time to rest. We can't do anything by ourselves including freedom.

For example, Wang Yong-qing, Taiwanese called him "the god of management." He earned lots of money and had three wives and many children. He can't *take anything with him* to heaven **because** when he is dead he can't do anything about his <u>fortune</u>. To be healthy is more important. That is why I think that if we have a strong body, we can do everything we want.

In my opinion, the dog made the better choice **because** he is loyal, steady and sure of doing everything. He will not be hungry everyday. But I think someone will think the wolf made the better choice **because** they think freedom is more important than health. They will say that if we have freedom, we can do everything we like. *There is no certain answer about our choice*. (Linda's final draft)

Linda revised some words to their appropriate forms and usages in a few sentences (the underlined words), paid attention to verb consistency in her narration (the boldfaced

words), deleted commas from the subordinate clause "because..." when it followed the main clauses (the boldfaced and underlined words), and changed three sentences to be more coherent and logical (the italicized and underlined sentences).

According to the criteria mentioned above, Linda's performance in the aspect of idea development can be ranked as low status of revision. In the aspect of organization of information as signs of enhanced quality (logic order and coherence), her revision can be ranked as moderate. In the aspect of improved grammar, her performance can be regarded as high because she incorporated all three error-type suggestions from the instructor into her final draft.

4 Julia's case

On the Teacher Feedback Sheet, the instructor gave Julia three positive opinions and one suggestion about idea development:

- (1) You did a good job in spite of having written a short essay.
- (2) Your argument is convincing and logically presented.
- (3) You have a good command of the English language.
- (4) Try to expand the content of your essay.

The instructor did not give Julia any suggestion in the aspect of improved grammar even though he marked a few errors on her draft. The following are Julia's third and final draft:

A wolf was sitting under a large tree and starving nearly to death. A dog whose job was to guard the sheep saw him while was taking a walk. The dog asked him what happened and invited the wolf to come to live with him in a ranch house. Then the wolf noticed the dog's coat was beautiful except the thin hair around his neck. The wolf asked him and finally learned that he was chained up at night. The wolf ran away because he didn't want to lose his freedom.

Without freedom, even fame, money, power or love can't be meaningful because man born to be free, not to be limited. For example, my cousin, who at first decided to be a solider due to the high salary, had regretted at the end of

being limited. Though she has to worry about her livelihood from now, she doesn't mind at all. Owing to the steady, smooth-going, easy and comfortable life, some of us, without doubt, decided to give up freedom. Far from being true, the action is just like a bird which chooses to abandon its wings and stay in the cage readily.

Thus, no matter how hard the situation we are in, do not let the enticement to stop you from being free. One top of that, remember, human turn out to be at liberty, not to be restrained. Footloose birds are the happiest. If I were the wolf in the story, I would make the same choice resolutely. (Julia's third draft)

A wolf was sitting under a large tree and starving nearly to death. A dog whose job was to guard the sheep saw him while **he** was taking a walk. The dog asked him what happened and invited the wolf to come to live with him in a ranch house. Then the wolf noticed the dog's coat was beautiful except the thin hair around his neck. The wolf asked him and finally learned that he was chained up at night. The wolf ran away because he didn't want to lose his freedom.

Without freedom, even fame, money, power or love can't be meaningful because man was born to be free, not to be limited. For example, my cousin, who at first decided to be a solider due to the high salary, had regretted at the end of being limited. Though she has to worry about her livelihood from now, she doesn't mind at all. Owing to the steady, smooth-going, easy and comfortable life, some of us, without doubt, decided to give up freedom. Far from being true, the action is just like a bird which chooses to abandon its wings and stay in the cage readily.

Thus, no matter how hard the situation we are in, do not let the enticement to stop you from being free. **On** top of that, remember, human **beings** turn out to be at liberty, not to be restrained. Footloose birds are the happiest. If I were the wolf in the story, I would make the same choice resolutely. (Julia's final draft)

Julia did not expand her essay but she revised a few marked errors. According to the above-mentioned criteria, Julia's performance in the aspects of idea development, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar can be ranked as low status of revision.

On the basis of the previous examples, some results can be summarized in Table 15.

Table 15
Student Writers' Incorporating Teacher Feedback into the Final Drafts

Descriptors	Status of Revision		sion	Student writers
	High	Moderat	e Low	_
Idea development	0	0	24/24	
Sufficiency				Not applicable
Organization of information as signs of enhanced quality	of 0	18/24	6/24	M: Mandy (H), Alison (H), Ava (H), Sharon (H), Jean (H), Aki (I), Ida (I), Linda (I), Sandra (I), Winnie (I), Audrey (L), Hank (L), Mico (L), Tom (L), Chu (L),
Improved grammar	15/24	8/24	1/24	Ching (L), Flora (L), Belinda (L) H: Alison (H), Eva (H), Ava (H), Jean (H), Aki (I), Ida (I), Ina (I), Linda (I), Sandra (I), Winnie (I), Chu (L), Mico (L), Belinda (L), Audrey (L), Hank (L) M: Mandy (H), Sharon (H), Lou (I), Lisa (I), Jessica (I), Tom (L), Ching (L), Flora (L) L: Julia (H)

From Table 15, several findings can be ascertained. First, the instructor gave more concern to feedback on form (grammar, punctuation, vocabulary) than on content (idea development and organization). In spite of the instructor's lower emphasis on logic order and coherence, the student writers improved these along with revising their sentences. Second, all students accepted the teacher's suggestions and marked hints to revise their grammatical errors to various degrees. Some students who made more errors revised more, while others who committed fewer mistakes corrected less. The status of revision in the aspect of improved grammar is closely related to how many errors a student writer makes.

Conclusion

In this section, two data sets—student interviews and students' drafts, the Teacher Feedback Sheet, and the marked hints—are used to examine the incorporation of teacher suggestions into students' final drafts. Several major findings are present. First, all students gave positive feedback to the modified teacher feedback because this activity drives them to think over their errors and encourages them to search for possible answers. This is a student-centered and process-oriented activity. The multiple interactions between students and their peers (discussing the marked hints and comments given by the instructor), students and the instructor (teacher-student conference), and students themselves (thinking, searching, and revising whatever they can on their own) create a long-lived memory about error treatment and writing skills. On the other hand, in traditional teacher feedback, the instructor deprives students of the opportunity to think over their errors by means of offering direct corrections to the students. The students are less likely to know why and where their essays are lacking, and only have a vague and short-lived memory of their errors. This is a teacher-centered and product-oriented activity. The students are demotivated to think over their errors and writing skills. For most students, the bottom line is the score given by their instructor. Without a series of interactions with peers, students themselves, and the instructor, traditional teacher feedback cannot help students to improve their writing competence as effectively.

Second, from the interviews, the students showed their concerns about the modified teacher feedback. They paid attention to either both the marked hints and teacher comments (on the Teacher Feedback Sheet), or only the teacher comments, or the marked hints alone. On the whole, the intermediate and low achievers were more concerned

about the marked hints (grammar, mechanical devices, and vocabulary) while the high achievers cared more about teacher comments (idea development, error types, and suggestions). This finding is similar to the outcome of the self-directed feedback. In other words, the high achievers were more inclined to show concern with content improvement while the intermediate and low achievers paid more attention to improvement of form.

Third, in the interviews, the students showed the strategies they employed to deal with the lack of clarity in the teacher's comments as shown on the Teacher Feedback. Sheet and their third drafts. These strategies can be divided into five types: (a) thinking or revising before discussing with peers and the instructor, (b) discussing with peers, then going to the teacher if peers' opinions are unhelpful, (c) going straight to the teacher, (d) revising first, then going to ask the teacher, and (e) consulting classmates only. The first finding is that most students depended on either peers or the teacher to clarify the puzzling instructor feedback. Only six students were exceptional. They thought over the mistakes of their essays, searched for possible answers, or revised whatever they could before consulting peers or the teacher. The second finding is that high achievers were more likely to go straight to the teacher, probably due to their negative opinions of peer feedback. On the contrary, low and intermediate writers were more likely to discuss with peers before going to ask the teacher.

Finally, from the students' drafts, the Teacher Feedback Sheet, and the marked hints, some findings can be drawn. First, the instructor paid more attention to form improvement than content revision. He gave only two suggestions about idea development to two students. However, he delivered a lot of positive feedback to all students to encourage them to better their writing performance. Next, all students revised

their grammatical errors based on the error types and the marked hints given by their instructor. The status of revision is closely related to the amount of errors made. Some students who had more errors revised more and, therefore, obtained a high status of revision, while others who committed only a few mistakes corrected less and, therefore, received a low status of revision.

Students' Views about Self-Directed, Peer, and Teacher Feedback

To examine student writers' general perceptions of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback, two data sets are used—student interviews and the revisions of their drafts.

This section is divided into four parts: (a) students' general opinions of the three types of feedback as a series of activities in a writing class, (b) students' opinions about the necessity and preference of feedback type, (c) a review of student revisions as shown on their drafts, and (d) conclusion.

Students' General Perceptions of the Three Types of Feedback

In the interviews, the student participants expressed their opinions about self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback implemented as a series of writing activities. Their views can be categorized into five different response types—activities perceived as tiring but beneficial, activities perceived as complementary to each other, students more concerned about peer and teacher feedback, students more attentive to peer feedback, and students reporting time management problems.

1. Tiring but beneficial

For certain students, the self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback carried out in the writing class were tiring but beneficial. Two statements from Chu and Aki exemplify this view:

- C: My perception? I think it was *very tiring* at the beginning because we had to keep on revising; however, once a cycle was completed, you would think *how fruitful it was*, and you would feel that you had *made a lot of improvement* in your writing even though the procedures were troublesome. (Chu, para.70; emphasis added)
- A: It was *very tiring, but beneficial*. It never occurred to me that I could have gained so much; a lot of valuable suggestions. In addition, *I learned a lot about my peers' views and their ways of grammatical usages*. (Aki, para. 154; emphasis added)

Both Chu and Aki held that the multiple interactive activities were tiring but beneficial for them to improve their writing competence. The long and complex procedures for each cycle made them feel tired due to the requirement of revision after each interactive activity. However, they learned a lot during the whole process, especially after having had a look at the portfolio for each cycle. Their statements represented those who shared the same perspective.

2. Complementary to each other

For several students, self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback had their own individual function and were complementary to each other. In other words, each played a distinct role to help the writer check elements composing a well-written essay. Both Julia and Eva demonstrated this viewpoint:

- E: Um, what the teacher gives in grammar feedback is more important because students tend to make mistakes in grammar. About peers, they usually offer examples on content. Different classmates give different ideas, while the teacher may give you just one. Take the text on the wolf and the dog, for example; the teacher may choose to side with the dog, but students will vary in their opinions. (Eva, para. 116; emphasis added)
- E: When you finish writing, you will usually check it over once, so it (self-directed feedback) is still necessary.
- H: Mm-hmm.
- E: Sometimes you type too fast or misspell words; then *you can take care of such unnecessary mistakes yourself*. (Eva, paras. 126-128; emphasis added)

 For Eva, self-directed feedback functioned to reduce observable errors such as typos; peer feedback provided more ideas and examples to enrich the essay; teacher feedback informed her of her grammatical errors. These three activities helped her to refine her essay and better her writing performance.

Julia expressed almost the same viewpoints:

- J: Self-directed feedback is very helpful. Because you could check again, no careless situation would happen. Therefore, *you can decrease the chances of making mistakes*. Then, the second one is...
- H: Peer.
- J: Peer feedback. From peer feedback, I could absorb many different ideas, and then I could, um, make my thoughts more diversified, instead of limiting to a single zone. I could write better articles then.

H: Uh-huh.

J: As for teacher feedback, the teacher would give you a direction to pursue, so that you wouldn't feel lost and didn't know how to revise. (Julia, paras. 84-88; emphasis added)

Self-directed feedback, to Julia, helped to lessen the careless mistakes; peer feedback expanded her horizons by catering diversified thoughts; and teacher feedback guided her to the right track of composing and revising. Each activity is different from the other in its function and objective. They are complementary to each other.

3. More concerned about peer and teacher feedback

The students regarding self-directed feedback as not helpful gave more attention to peer and teacher feedback. They maintained that no matter how hard they had tried, they could not find anything wrong in their essays due to their own blind spots. Two statements from Sharon and Winnie can be used to illustrate this view:

S: All of them? I didn't feel anything wrong when I checked what I had written for the Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback. However, I would realize where I had made mistakes after I got peer feedback. As for the errors my peers might have missed, I could have found them through the teacher feedback on which I depended most. (Sharon, para. 82; emphasis added)

Sharon's general perception of these three feedback activities was different from Julia's and Eva's. Self-directed feedback did not work as well as peer and teacher feedback which performed distinct functions respectively. Sharon's peers were capable of identifying errors she had missed, and the teacher could ferret out the mistakes her peers

had neglected. Therefore, only peer and teacher feedback exerted mutual influence on Sharon to refine her essay.

Similarly, self-directed feedback, to Winnie, did not function well; only peer and teacher feedback mattered:

W: Um...my response? I think I followed the worksheet to check my [essay], but I feel it didn't work well because I couldn't find anything wrong with my essay, especially upon the time of finishing it not so long ago, yeah. (Winnie, para. 62; emphasis added)

W: Um...I think these activities are great. At the early stage, I felt puzzled about the purpose of doing them, but gradually I began to see the point, and finally I realized how effective they were. After having read my peers' essays, I had to think over them before I was able to give comments to my peers. In a similar way, I had to check all over the feedback given to me by others, instead of simply taking it as it was. In my opinion, you must check one more time over peer and teacher feedback so that you can digest them easily. (Winnie, para. 98; emphasis added)

Like Sharon, Winnie was more concerned about peer and teacher feedback, but her attention was oriented to the roles a student played in these two activities: a writer as well as a reader. As a reader, Winnie had to think carefully so that she was able to offer comments to her peers. As a writer, she needed to evaluate the comments from her peers and the instructor before selectively incorporating them into her revised drafts. The significance of Winnie's statement reveals two key points. First, thinking plays an essential role in writing tasks. Without deep, thorough, and recurrent thinking, a writer

has difficulties in digesting the feedback given by other people. Second, without discerning evaluation of varied suggestions for subsequent revision, an author cannot gradually develop writer autonomy—having an ownership to do what is considered appropriate for his/her essay.

4. More attentive to peer feedback

A few students were more attentive to peer feedback than to self-directed and teacher feedback. Broadly speaking, peer response activities (pre-writing discussion, oral and written feedback, and recording peer response sessions) take longer than self-directed and teacher feedback activities. The frequency of interaction among students in peer response activities is higher than in self-directed and teacher feedback activities. Some students can learn more from peers by raising their own awareness to what should be attended to in their essays. Mandy's opinion is typical of this view:

M: The general perception is... I can sit to read my peers' essays and then improve my writing skills or pay attention to the most frequent errors next time as well as what demands more of my attention, yeah. (Mandy, para. 138, emphasis added)

To Mandy, peers' works epitomized the elements of good or poor essays from which she could learn something, but, more than anything else, "because the ideas from peers are similar and the way of expression is easier to understand; I can find errors that are more distinct by this means" (Mandy, para. 144). To put it plainly, Mandy and her peers shared similar ideas and ways of expression. The gap between their language proficiencies was not large, so they could easily learn from each other. Unlike model texts by professional

writers, well-composed peers' essays were not an insurmountable goal for Mandy to reach.

5. Time management problem

A couple of students reported that they experienced a time management problem when recording the oral feedback in the peer response sessions:

I: We felt it was very ineffective, and couldn't finish in time. Even though other classmates were done, we were still not finished.

H: Mm.

I: Yeah. We need better time management. (Ina, Paras. 192-194; emphasis added) Ina's statement disclosed the fact that some students regarded the recording job as undesirable because many factors might have influenced the progress of this requirement, such as the familiarity in operating recording tools and sufficient power, the cooperation between group members in each team, and the preparation work (written feedback, peers' drafts, and organization of speech).

The above-mentioned findings are presented in Table 16.

Table 16
Students' General Perceptions of SF, PF, and TF

Type of Perception	Writers
Tiring yet fruitful	Lou (I), Lisa (I), Aki (I), Linda (I), Tom (L),
Complementary to each other	Chu (I), Audrey (L)
Complementary to each other	Julia (H), Alison (H), Eva (H), Jessica (I), Belinda (L)
More concerned about PF and	Ava (H), Sharon (H), Ida (I), Winnie (I),
TF	Hank (L), Ching (L), Mico (L)
More concerned about PF	Mandy (H), Jean (H), Flora (L)
Time management Problem	Sandra (I), Ina (I)

According to Table 16, seven students with intermediate and low levels of language proficiency felt that the multiple interaction activities were tiring but beneficial, but none of the high achievers complained about the heavy loading of this practice. Some from each proficiency level held that each type of feedback had its own function and that all the three feedback activities were complementary to each other. A few from each group paid more attention to peer and teacher feedback than self-directed feedback.

Students' Opinions about the Necessity and Preference of Feedback Type

Of all 24 student participants, 20 expressed that all the three types of feedback were indispensable activities for a large EFL writing class, and 4 students (Sandra (I), Ida (I), Hank (L), Flora(L)) preferred not to have self-directed feedback included in the whole process. In addition, the students gave different reasons for their order of preference regarding these three activities.

1. All three are necessary

Two statements from Linda and Audrey represent this viewpoint:

L: I think all of them are indispensable because they are activities with *the characteristics of continuity and coherence*. (Linda, para. 112: emphasis added)

To Linda, each activity was closely associated with the others. Self-directed feedback was followed by peer feedback, which in turn was followed by teacher feedback. They were a series of activities with a distinct function respectively and could offer different kinds of help to writers. They were all necessary for the writing process in terms of continuity and coherence.

Even though Audrey also held that all three feedback types were indispensable, she emphasized the difference in their importance:

A: I put more weight on peer and teacher feedback than on self-directed feedback. I think the self-directed feedback functions only as a kind of reference and inspection by reminding me where something was missing or needed to be expanded. It should not have proportions as large as those of peer and teacher feedback. (Audrey, para. 136; emphasis added)

Self-directed feedback, to Audrey, functioned to check what had been left out, or what needed to be expanded. Its importance was not equal to peer and teacher feedback.

2. Self-directed feedback is unnecessary

For Ida, Flora, Hank, and Sandra, the self-directed feedback activity did not work well, and they preferred not to include it in the whole process. The following statements from Hank and Ida can be used to illustrate this view:

HK: If you ask me for my opinion, *I would say that self-directed feedback is unnecessary. No matter how hard I read over my essay, I can't find any problem.* At best, I just double-check it and make a minor change in the same way that I usually do for my tests. I think that *teacher and peer feedback are more important.* (Hank, para. 83; emphasis added)

I: For me, yes. I think to get involved in that is *meaningless* ((laughing)).

H: What's your reason?

I: Self-directed feedback, I just feel that you won't find any problem when you correct your own writing. Because you get stuck in there, you can't find your problems easily. So, you need peers to point out some problems, and then

you'll suddenly realize where you should make changes. (Ida, paras. 116-118; emphasis added)

Both Hank and Ida did not think self-directed feedback was needed owing to the low effect of this activity. They could not detect anything wrong in their essays, even though they worked hard. It is interesting to note that all four students who preferred to leave out the self-directed feedback were intermediate and low achievers. This fact corresponds to these four students' negative opinions about self-directed feedback as shown in Table 3. It is also interesting to note that Hank, Ida, and Flora mainly depended on their peers to identify their errors and gave positive opinions to the peer feedback activity as shown in Table 10. However, Sandra insisted that peer and teacher feedback were indispensable for the writing class, but she did not think peer feedback was helpful because peers had failed to ferret out errors as shown in Table 10.

Another related issue is student writers' ranking of the importance of feedback types according to personal preference. There were six different responses to the question "If you were asked to arrange the importance of the three, what would be your preference?", and their ranks of preference can be listed as follows:

1. Teacher feedback > peer feedback > self-directed feedback

For 10 students, the order of preference was that teacher feedback was the number one, followed by peer feedback, and finally by self-directed feedback. The following two statements can represent this view:

E: Because *teacher feedback is more correct!*

H: Teacher feedback is more correct?

E: Yes. And peers give more different opinions.

- H: Mm.
- E: Then you can pick the better ones from them.
- H: Mm.
- E: While *self-directed feedback* is like building castles in the air.
- H: Uh-huh. So you...
- E: Have no resources.
- H: You mean there are some blind spots in self-directed feedback?
- E: Mm. (Eva, paras. 132-142; emphasis added)

For Eva, the teacher was more accurate than peers in grammar feedback while peers offered more ideas for content development. Self-directed feedback was unhelpful due to writers' blind spots. Her viewpoints indicated that some students put more weight on grammar improvement than on content revision in their writings.

Belinda shared the same order of preference:

B: Because I think highly of the answers and suggestions given by more competent and professional people. They can help me identify what mistakes I have made. Peer feedback is fine, but I am afraid what they give me might not be correct. They are just students. I am afraid that the level of the correctness of their feedback is not so high; therefore, I rank teacher feedback as the most important. Self-directed feedback is placed last because I don't feel anything wrong with my essay. In fact, there are a lot of mistakes, but I cannot ferret them out by myself. (Belinda, para. 127; emphasis added)

Belinda placed teacher feedback first because of teachers' professionalism and competence, put peer feedback second due to peers' ability to identify errors in spite of

their frequent incorrectness, and ranked self-directed feedback last owing to her inability to find errors. The significance of Belinda's statement is typical in the oriental culture—to take teachers as authoritative figures in knowledge transmission.

2. Teacher feedback > Self-directed feedback > peer feedback

Five students held that teacher feedback was the most important, then self-directed feedback, and finally peer feedback. Ching's statement can represent this view:

C: The self-directed feedback is placed second because *I will pay attention to every detail before I turn in my writing*. Some classmates spend most of their time on playing, and what they can do about spotting errors is almost the same as what I can do, so I put it in the final place.

H: Why do you rank the teacher feedback as number one?

C: I think the teacher can give us more constructive suggestions by saying that something is obviously wrong because of so and so. His suggestions are more useful. As for peer feedback, my peers can only tell me that there is something strange but fail to tell me what and why. Therefore, it only makes me more confused. (Ching, paras. 106-108; emphasis added)

For Ching, the difference between teacher feedback and peer feedback was that the teacher provided constructive and persuasive suggestions while the peers gave vague and unconvincing comments. As a result, she ranked peer feedback last. She placed self-directed feedback second because she would follow the worksheet to check every detail. Ching's statement disclosed the fact that some students did not work hard, and therefore could not provide their peers with constructive comments due to their insufficient language ability.

3. Peer feedback > Teacher feedback > self-directed feedback

As opposed to Ching's low opinion of peer feedback, five students placed it as number one, followed by teacher feedback, and finally self-directed feedback. The following statement from Ida can be used to illustrate this type of opinion:

I: Because if I think by myself I would just think I am right, so of course there are no problems. Then peers are...the teacher may give you one or two comments, but group members give two or three comments. Therefore, I collect all different comments and decide which ones to adopt. (Ida, para. 110; emphasis added)

Like certain students, Ida regarded self-directed feedback as ineffective to identify her errors. She put peer feedback in the first place because peers could offer more comments than the teacher. When comparing Ching's and Ida's opinions about peer feedback, it becomes obvious that Ching attributed a low effect to peer feedback due to peers' failure to identify errors while Ida regarded peer feedback as helpful due to the choice of comments she could select from. This finding is similar to the result in Table 10.

4. Self-directed feedback > Teacher feedback > Peer feedback

Julia maintained that a writer should assume responsibility to present comprehensible writings to the reader. As a result, the importance of self-directed feedback could not be overemphasized. Teachers were more knowledgeable in the field of composition, so she placed teacher feedback second. Peers broadened her vision by offering more information and examples for her to better her essays. The following statement from Julia represents this view:

J: Because teachers are more professional ((laughing)). Well, the most important one is self-directed feedback. Because you have to make your compositions right, make sure there isn't anything misleading the readers; you can then show them to others. You have to make them right before you show them to others. The third one, peer feedback, is about getting different opinions so that you can make your own articles better. (Julia, para. 94; emphasis added)

For Julia, self-directed feedback functioned to make writings clear and reduce misleading errors. The teacher was professional while peers provided more ideas to enrich her essay. The three types of feedback had different roles to play, and they were complementary to each other.

5. Peer feedback > Self-directed feedback > Teacher feedback

Winnie ranked the order of importance in terms of effectiveness for the process:

W: Um, I think I cannot find anything wrong with my essay if I do self-directed feedback right away. *If my peers read it first, then I will find many errors upon reading it again. Finally, I can give the revised draft to the teacher for feedback.* This way, I think *the process is more orderly.* (Winnie, para. 108; emphasis added)

Winnie's viewpoint was different from other peers' perspectives owing to her consideration of effectiveness of the three types of feedback when helping her to make revisions.

6. Self-directed feedback > Peer feedback > Teacher feedback

Mico arranged the importance of these three types of feedback in terms of their individual function:

M: From self-directed feedback, *I can check whether the problems between the current essay and those past ones are different or not*. From the different comments given by peers, *I can learn where I've improved if compared with what I did in my first essay*. As for teacher feedback, *the teacher is just doing the job of integration, to integrate your problems with peers' comments*. I think the teacher is basically to do something like this. (Mico, para. 96; emphasis added)

Mico focused her attention on making a comparison of the problems she had had and the comments given by her peers between the first and the second essays. She put teacher feedback at the final place because its major contribution was to give a holistic picture about the writers' strengths and weaknesses as shown in their essays.

On the basis of the above-mentioned preferences of feedback types, the results can be presented in Table 17.

Table 17
Student Participants' Preference for Feedback Type

Order of Preference	Writers		
$\overline{TF > PF > SF}$	Eva (H), Ina (I), Aki (I), Lisa (I), Jessica (I),		
	Linda (I), Audrey (L), Flora (L), Hank (L),		
	Belinda (L)		
TF > SF > PF	Jean (H), Sharon (H), Lou (I), Tom (L),		
	Ching (L)		
PF > TF > SF	Mandy (H), Ava (H), Ida (I), Chu (L), Sandra (I)		
SF > TF > PF	Alison (H), Julia (H)		
PF > SF > TF	Winnie (I)		
SF > PF > TF	Mico (L)		

From Table 17, one finds that 15 participants ranked teacher feedback as most important; 6 students placed peer feedback in the first place; and 3 participants put self-directed feedback as most important. Student participants' responses to these three types of feedback were quite diversified. To get an overall viewpoint from student participants' responses, the relationship between students' preferences for feedback types and their language proficiency can be calculated as show in Table 18.

Table 18

Relationship between Preference of Feedback Type and Language Proficiency

High achievers	Preference for	TF score	PF score	SF score
riigii aciiieveis	Feedback type	Tr score	rr score	SI SCOLE
	recomment type			
Mandy	$\overline{PF > TF > SF}$	2	3	1
Alison	SF > TF > PF	2	1	3
Eva	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Julia	SF > TF > PF	2	1	3
Ava	PF > TF > SF	2	3	1
Jean	TF > SF > PF	3	1	2
Sharon	TF > SF > PF	3	1	2
		_		
Total points		17	12	13
Intermediate achievers	Preference for	TF score	PF score	SF score
	feedback type			
Lou	$\overline{TF > SF > PF}$	3	1	2
Ina	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Aki	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Winnie	PF > SF > TF	1	3	2
Lisa	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Jessica	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Ida	PF > TF > SF	2	3	1
Linda	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Sandra	PF > TF > SF	2	3	1
Total points		23	20	11

Table 18 (continued)

Low achievers	Preference for feedback type	TF score	PF score	SF score
	recuback type			
Mico	$\overline{SF > PF > TF}$	1	2	3
Tom	TF > SF > PF	3	1	2
Chu	PF > TF > SF	2	3	1
Audrey	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Ching	TF > SF > PF	3	1	2
Flora	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Hank	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Belinda	TF > PF > SF	3	2	1
Total points		21	15	12

The order of importance can be scored as follows: The first place = 3 points; the second place = 2 points; the third place = 1 point

From Table 18, several findings can be drawn. First, teacher feedback received the highest overall scores as most important. This finding corroborated the positive opinions students expressed about the modified teacher feedback in Table 12, and the result that the students incorporated all the marked hints and error type suggestions given by the instructor into their final drafts as shown in Table 15. Second, more high achievers than not ranked self-directed feedback over peer feedback. This finding corresponds to (a) their having a higher percentage of positive opinions of self-directed feedback than intermediate and low achievers as shown in Table 3, (b) their having a lower percentage of positive opinions of peer feedback than intermediate and low achievers as shown in Table 10, and (c) their having incorporated fewer peer comments into their revised drafts as shown in Table 11. Third, all intermediate and most low writers ranked peer feedback over self-directed feedback. This finding is matched to the findings in Table 3, 10, and 11. In short, the rank of the importance of self-directed and peer feedback is likely related to the writers' language proficiency.

A Review of Students' Revised Drafts

From Table 7, Students' Performance of Self-Directed Feedback as Shown on the Worksheets, one point can be reviewed. High achievers were more likely to pay attention to idea development while intermediate and low writers appeared to focus more on sufficiency and improved grammar. As a whole, low achievers invested more time and energy to engage in this activity than intermediate students, who in turn put more effort into it than high achievers. However, the degree of satisfaction they received is totally in opposition to their effort. Thus, intermediate and low achievers were more likely to regard self-directed feedback as not helpful as shown in Table 3.

From Table 11, Student Writers' Incorporating Peers' Comments into the Revised Drafts, two points are worthy of being pointed out. First, intermediate and low achievers were more likely than high achievers to incorporate peer comments in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar into their revisions. Therefore, student writers from these two language levels tended to feel more satisfied with the results of peer response activities than high achievers. Second, the high achievers did not obtain as many constructive suggestions from their peers as the intermediate and low writers, and this caused them to conceive of the peer response activities as not helpful.

From Table 15, Student Writers' Incorporating Teacher Feedback into the Final Drafts, two salient features are noted. First, the instructor gave more concern to grammatical feedback than content improvement. Second, all students incorporated the teacher's error type comments and marked hints into revising their drafts. This shows that student writers thought highly of their teacher's opinions about their essays. This fact is

in correspondence with their having positive opinions about the modified teacher feedback in Table 12.

Conclusion

In this section, three issues have been covered (a) students' general perceptions of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback as a series of activities implemented in the EFL large writing class, (b) their views about the necessity of these three types of feedback, and the order of importance based on personal preference, and (c) their actual performance as shown on the Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback, and their incorporating peer and teacher comments into their third and final drafts. The findings were that first, students' general perceptions of these three feedback activities include their regarding activities as tiring but beneficial and as complementary to each other, their giving more concern about peer and teacher feedback or more attention to peer feedback, and their reporting time management problems. The major finding is that high achievers are more likely to view each type of feedback as having an independent function. These feedback types are complementary to each other. By contrast, intermediate and low writers pay more attention to peer and teacher feedback than self-directed feedback because they feel that the latter is not very helpful.

Second, in the matter of necessity of these three feedback activities for a large EFL writing class, 20 student participants hold that all of them are indispensable whereas four students prefer not to include self-directed feedback because they cannot find any errors on their own. As for their preferred order of importance, six types can be found. The major finding is that all students ranked teacher feedback as the most important. However,

high achievers place self-directed feedback in front of peer feedback because peer comments are sometimes vague and unconstructive, and because they assume that it is a writer's responsibility to offer the reader a comprehensible composition.

Finally, from a review of students' revised drafts, the following findings can be drawn. First, intermediate and low achievers invest more time and energy in conducting self-directed feedback than high achievers, but the results they get are out of proportion to their effort. They show their dissatisfaction in the interview as presented in Table 3. By contrast, high achievers with good language proficiency are inclined to feel satisfied with the self-directed feedback activity. Next, intermediate and low writers incorporate more peer comments into their revisions in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar than high achievers. The intermediate and low achievers show a higher percentage of satisfaction with peer feedback than the high achievers. High achieving writers do not adopt many peer suggestions into their revisions, and they feel dissatisfied with the effectiveness of this activity. Finally, all students think highly of teacher comments and marked hints, and revise their drafts based on teacher feedback. The instructor did not give students as much content feedback as form improvement. He delivered many positive opinions on the Teacher Feedback Sheet to encourage student writers.

Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter is organized in terms of five research questions posed in Chapter One to address (1) students' responses to pre-writing discussion, (2) students' perceptions of self-directed feedback, (3) student writers' opinions about peer feedback (written and oral), (4) students' responses to teacher feedback, and (5) students' views about self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback.

In the matter of students' responses to pre-writing discussion, several findings can be presented. First, the language used in the discussion may influence students' participation and communication of ideas. The students expressed their subtle thinking much better in Chinese but might have lost an opportunity to practice the target language, English. When they were required to use English, they became passive participants or expressed their ideas incompletely. Second, less competent writers are more likely than high and intermediate achievers to view the pre-writing discussion as not helpful due to their lack of ability to digest and organize diversified opinions and knowledge given by peers to compose their essays. Finally, controversial and interesting topics are more capable of kindling students' interest and passion to become involved in the discussion and inspiring them to write on the topic.

There are three major findings with regard to self-directed feedback. First, high achievers offer more positive opinions about the self-directed feedback activity than intermediate and low writers. Second, the latter are more concerned with form revision while the former pay more attention to content revision. Third, low achievers invest more effort into conducting the self-directed feedback activity than intermediate writers, who

in turn are more engaged than high achievers. However, intermediate and low achievers feel less satisfied with this activity than high achievers.

As for students' perceptions of peer feedback, several major findings can be drawn. First, in the form feedback, students focus on surface instead of semantic errors. In the content feedback, student readers give suggestions related to logical argument, more detail to support writers' views, and recommendations to make the intended meanings clearer. In addition, about-task episodes and incorrect comments occur mainly in the form feedback sessions, whereas topic shift and unrelated comments occur mainly in the content feedback sessions. Second, intermediate and low achievers feel more satisfied with this activity than high achievers. The latter's dissatisfaction can be attributed to their failure to receive constructive feedback owing to their peers' limited language proficiency and the insufficient amount of practice. Third, low achievers are incapable of familiarizing themselves as quickly with the content and gist of peer response activities as the students with high and intermediate language proficiency. Finally, intermediate and low achievers incorporate more peer comments into their revisions than high achievers in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar.

With regard to students' responses to teacher feedback, the following findings are worthy of being mentioned. First, all students give positive feedback to the modified teacher feedback because this activity drives them to think through their errors and encourages them to search for possible corrections. By contrast, they consider the traditional teacher feedback as undesirable because, by offering direct corrections, the instructor may deprive students of the opportunity to think over their errors. Second,

intermediate and low achievers are more concerned about the marked hints while high achievers care more about teacher comments. Third, in dealing with the lack of clarity of the instructor's comments, high achievers are more likely to go straight to the teacher due to their low opinions of peer feedback. On the contrary, low and intermediate writers are more likely to discuss with peers before going to ask the teacher. Finally, the instructor gave more concern to feedback on form than on content. Most of the students thought highly of teacher feedback and revised their essays based on the teacher's suggestions.

Lastly, with respect to students' general perceptions of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback as a series of activities carried out in the large EFL writing class, the following findings can be drawn. First, high achievers are more likely to view each feedback type as independent yet complementary. By contrast, intermediate and low writers are more concerned about peer and teacher feedback than self-directed feedback due to the latter's low effect. Second, overall, students rank teacher feedback as the most important in their preference. However, high achievers place self-directed feedback in front of peer feedback, whereas intermediate and low achievers put peer feedback in the second place and self-directed feedback last. Third, low achieving writers invest more time and energy to conduct the self-directed feedback based on the worksheet provided by the instructor than intermediate writers, who in turn do more than high achievers (see Table 7). However, high achievers have more positive opinions about this activity than intermediate and low achievers (see Table 3). Most of the students adopt teacher feedback into their revisions. In addition, the instructor gives more concern to form feedback and encouragement than to content improvement.

In the following chapter, these findings will be compared with the results of other empirical studies and implications and recommendations will be made in terms of curriculum and instruction for large EFL writing classes and further studies on multiple interaction activities.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter includes a summary of the study, a discussion of the major findings, and recommendations for practice and additional research. In the summary section of the study, the research problem is restated, and the major methods used are reviewed. The major findings of each type of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher) are presented in terms of each research question. In the discussion section of the major findings, the relationship of the current study to prior related studies in Chapter 2 is explicated to show the similarities and differences between them and possible implications. In the recommendation section, suggestions from the perspectives of curriculum and instruction are given for classroom practice and future studies on multiple interaction activities.

Summary of the Study

As stated in Chapter 1, the primary purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students in a large multilevel EFL writing class after they had gone through two cycles of multiple interaction activities (self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback). The significance of the study is that large multilevel EFL writing classes are quite common in the private institutions of higher education in Taiwan. The major problems of a large multilevel writing class include (a) ineffective learning of low-achieving students, (b) complaints of high achievers about the low effect for improving their writing competence, and (c) inability of the class instructor to provide effective

feedback to students under time pressure and workload. The writing class in which the study was conducted can represent classes in other private colleges with similar situations in Taiwan.

As explained in Chapter 3, the study reported here was a case study of the perceptions and experiences of students in a large multilevel EFL writing class. As a case study, the research primarily employed a qualitative perspective, attempting to discern the meanings of each type of feedback activity to students. The population of this study consisted of 43 (39 female and 4 male) students with different English language proficiencies. The entire period of the research lasted for one semester (18 weeks). The writing class met two hours a week. Before the implementation of each type of feedback activity, the instructor explained and demonstrated how to engage in each activity and answered the students' questions. The instruments utilized to facilitate students' learning in each activity included one guideline and three worksheets for self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback. The methods to collect data employed in this study consisted of (1) interviews with 24 student participants, (2) audiotapes from 11 peer response sessions, (3) observations of classroom activities, and (4) examinations of student participants' drafts and feedback sheets. In order to analyze the data concerning the student interviews and peer response sessions, two code lists were developed based on the major and minor themes presented in the data as well as on related literature. The qualitative software, ATLAS.ti, was employed to conduct coding, axial coding, and categorizing as explained in Chapter 3. Evaluation criteria developed from associated empirical studies on students' writings were used to investigate the changes student participants had made after each type of feedback activity.

As shown in Chapter 4, some findings were obtained for each research question.

The following is a summary of each research question.

Research Question 1

How do EFL students react to pre-writing discussion sessions on generating ideas and organization?

Student participants' responses to this question in the interview revealed two findings. First, writers at the high and intermediate levels of writing competence were inclined to feel more satisfied with this activity than those at the low level. The less competent writers tended to complain that the pre-writing discussion was too discursive and did not come to any conclusions. This shows that the low achievers might have been incapable of organizing information for the following step of draft writing as effectively as their peers with good writing skills. Second, the assigned topic influenced the results of the discussion and the subsequent essay composition. A controversial and interesting topic within students' knowledge and experiences was easier for students to exchange their ideas and to write on. From classroom observation, the language issue cannot be neglected. Students at the stage of target language development had difficulties in using English to communicate subtle ideas and tended to keep silent or become passive. Had they been permitted to use their native language to express their thoughts, they might have lost the opportunity to practice the target language.

Research Question 2

What are EFL students' perceptions of self-directed feedback in the process of revision?

Student participants' general perceptions of self-directed feedback show that high achievers gave more positive opinions about this activity than intermediate and low

writers. As for their concerns with this activity, advanced writers were more likely to give their attention to content revision whereas the intermediate and low achievers tended to care more about form improvement, especially on the issues of verb tense and vocabulary. With regard to their suggestions, the less competent writers were inclined to give more suggestions either about asking the instructor for help or consulting peers or resources available than the competent writers, even though they felt dissatisfied with this activity. In respect of students' perception of self-directed feedback as shown on their worksheets, advanced writers performed more high status revision in the aspect of idea development while intermediate and low achievers performed more high status revision in the aspects of sufficiency and improved grammar. On the whole, the intermediate and low achievers invested more time on conducting self-directed feedback than the advanced writers; however, the results they obtained were out of proportion with their efforts.

Research Question 3

What do student writers think of written and oral feedback from peers in peer response sessions? How do they deal with peer comments in their subsequent revisions?

In the peer response sessions, the total number of peers' comments is 517, including 425 on-task episodes, 27 about-task, and 65 off-task. If on-task and about-task episodes are put together—as being helpful to the writers for error awareness and subsequent revision, and confidence-gaining in their writing skills through positive peer feedback—the effectiveness of peer response reaches 87.4%. When students' comments were categorized as on-task episodes, their attention mainly focused on three issues—form, content, and positive feedback. In the form feedback, they tended to give more surface error suggestions than textual changes to their peer writers. In the content feedback, they

mainly suggested logical argument, more examples and details to support the arguments, and making intended meanings clear. They also gave positive feedback to the writers. In addition, the about-task episodes mainly occurred in the form feedback sessions while the off-task episodes mostly took place in the content feedback sessions except the incorrect suggestions.

In the survey conducted in the middle of the semester, high and intermediate students had the same percentage of satisfaction with the peer response activities if compared to the end-semester interview whereas the low achievers increased their degree of satisfaction from 37.5% to 75%.

In the interviews, students showed different degrees of satisfaction with peer response activities. The low achievers were more likely to feel satisfied than the intermediate writers, who in turn tended to feel more positive than the high achievers. The reasons for intermediate and low achievers to feel satisfied with peer feedback were that they could get enough information from peers to revise their content. By contrast, many of the high achievers regarded peer feedback as unhelpful because their peers were incapable of identifying grammatical errors and offering constructive suggestions.

As for student writers' incorporation of peer comments into their revised drafts, the intermediate and low achievers were more likely to adopt peer comments into their revised drafts than the high achievers in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar. The students who incorporated more peer suggestions into their revisions were inclined to feel more satisfied with the peer response activities. On the contrary, those who took less peer feedback tended to view peer feedback as ineffective.

Research Question 4

How do EFL students respond to the teacher feedback on their revised drafts?

In the interview, when asked about their perceptions of the modified teacher feedback and the traditional one, all 24 student participants expressed that the former was more helpful than the latter because the modified teacher feedback gave them an opportunity to think over the problems in their essays while the traditional one deprived them of the opportunity to ponder over the errors they had made. Its higher frequency to interact with peers and the instructor for error treatments was the reason the modified teacher feedback was considered more beneficial than the traditional one.

Student writers had different concerns about the modified teacher feedback. High achievers were more likely to focus their attention on teacher comments (error types, suggestions, and content development) than the intermediate and low achievers. By contrast, intermediate and low achievers cared more about marked hints than high achievers.

The strategies that student participants used to deal with the lack of clarity of the teacher's comments included searching and thinking by the authors first, and then consulting peers and teachers. High achievers were more likely to ask the instructor directly than the intermediate and low achievers, who were inclined to discuss with peers before going to ask the instructor.

All student participants incorporated teacher feedback into their final drafts. Some students adopted more due to their having made more errors while others incorporated less owing to their having fewer errors. In addition, the instructor gave feedback predominantly on form (grammatical errors, mechanical devices, and vocabulary) and

only few suggestions related to content (idea development and organization).

Research Question 5

What do EFL students think of these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher)?

More high achievers were inclined to view all types of feedback as independent yet complementary to each other than intermediate and low achievers. Twenty students held that all three types of feedback were indispensable while four students with intermediate and low writing competence preferred to leave out self-directed feedback.

With regard to students' ranking the order of importance of these types of feedback based on personal preference, all students placed teacher feedback first. High achievers put self-directed feedback second and peer feedback last. Intermediate and low achievers ranked peer feedback over self-directed feedback.

In respect of a review of students' revised drafts, intermediate and low achievers made more efforts than high achievers to conduct self-directed feedback, but the results were out of proportion to their efforts. However, intermediate and low achievers incorporated more peer comments into their revised drafts than high achievers. All students highly valued teacher feedback and incorporated it into their final drafts.

Discussion

This section is organized into five parts according to the five research questions of this study. The major findings will be discussed and compared with prior related studies as mentioned in Chapter 2 if available. If related research studies are unavailable, explanations will be given for the findings.

Pre-Writing Discussion

There are three major findings in the research question about pre-writing discussion. First, low achievers might be incapable of organizing information for the following step of draft writing as effectively as their peers with good writing skills. This finding is similar to the result presented by de Guerreru & Villamil (1994) in which they maintained that the discussion initiated by students is not necessarily effective and efficient, especially in generating ideas for a topic. For low-achieving writers such as Mico and Ching (see Table 2), the discussion was discursive and reached no conclusion. Without the capacity to organize information for writing drafts, the low-achievers tended to view the pre-writing discussion as unhelpful. This indicates that less competent writers might lack enough skills to effectively absorb information from peers. The low efficiency of pre-writing discussions can be attributed to certain students' lack of good preparation for the topic discussed. Therefore, their opinions became superficial, desultory, and unspecific.

Second, the choice of topic matters for pre-writing discussion and the following step of composing an essay. Even though no specific empirical study has dwelled on this issue, an interesting and controversial topic is more conducive to attracting students' attention and getting them more actively involved in the discussion, especially a topic that is closely related to students' background knowledge and life experience. Without schemata, students might have difficulties in learning about a certain topic, not to mention their expressing personal perspectives effectively. This view is in line with Richard C. Anderson's (1984) schema theory, which viewed schema as organized knowledge of the world that facilitates a reader's comprehension, learning, and memory

of text information. This view also corresponds to what Ralph W. Tyler (1950) proposed, which is that an educational objective needs to take learners' experience and knowledge into consideration.

The third finding is about the language used in discussion. The students in this study were still incapable of using English to express their subtle ideas and were more likely to be passive and keep silent. This finding is in agreement with that of Bell (1991) in which he pointed out that L2 students have difficulties in mastering the target language to communicate their intended meanings. If students are permitted to communicate in their native language, they can convey their viewpoints more clearly and completely, but by doing so, they may lose an opportunity to practice their target language. The dilemma of using the target language or the native language for a two-way communication in pre-writing discussion as well as in peer response sessions is an issue worthy of being studied further.

Self-Directed Feedback

Four findings are related to the research question on self-directed feedback. First, high achievers gave more positive opinions about this activity than intermediate and low writers. This result is different from the findings of Zhang (1995) and Saito and Fujita (2004) who reported that all students ranked the importance of self-directed feedback in the three types of feedback last. However, the high achievers in this study placed it second (self-directed over peer feedback). Zhang did not conduct an empirical study but merely a survey to investigate students' perceptions of these three types of feedback, and the student participants in Saito and Fujita's study were freshman majoring in business

management. If compared with these two studies, the current research has focused on English majors with different levels of language proficiency and carried out an empirical study by combining three types of feedback as a series of writing activities. Perhaps, students at the same level of language proficiency are more likely to have the same view about this activity. Another possible explanation is that, in the Japanese culture, people value modesty as a kind of virtue, and this may lead students to rank self-directed feedback as the last if compared to teacher and peer feedback. A third explanation for the difference between the findings can be made by using Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Students' perceptions of their writing competence are closely associated with their actual writing performance. In other words, high achievers are more likely to have confidence in their own writing due to past experiences with writing performance accomplishments and the positive evaluative feedback from other people; therefore, they view self-directed feedback as more important than peer feedback.

Second, advanced writers in this study were more likely to pay attention to content revision while intermediate and low achievers were more concerned about form improvement, especially on the issues of verb tense and vocabulary. This finding varies somewhat from that obtained in Cresswell's (2000) study in which students with developing interlanguage focus on grammar items at the expense of content and organization development. His finding is probably true for intermediate and low writers but not applicable to the high achievers in the current study. The former paid more attention to grammar items and vocabulary whereas the latter put more weight on content development when conducting the self-directed feedback activity. This indicates that language proficiency and the writers' perceptions of their writing competence may

influence students' focus when they are conducting self-directed feedback activities.

High achievers with proficient grammar ability and writing skills have more confidence in the correctness of their grammar usages, so they rivet their attention on content development. On the other hand, student writers with less proficient grammar ability and vocabulary usage show little confidence in form performance and they are more likely to be concerned about form revision.

Third, the less competent writers gave more suggestions either about asking the instructor for help or consulting peers or resources available than the competent writers even though they feel dissatisfied with self-directed feedback. Asking for help or using resources available signals that the less competent writers are still incapable of effectively engaging in this activity on their own. The demand of this activity is far beyond their current ability to overcome the gap between the language proficiency needed and their actual writing competence. When they cannot complete the task by themselves, their only option is to ask the instructor or peers for help, or to use resources available.

The last finding from the students' Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback was that advanced writers perform more revisions in the aspect of idea development whereas intermediate and low achievers make more changes in the aspects of sufficiency and improved grammar. This finding is basically similar to the second finding mentioned above from student interviews. However, this finding also shows that intermediate and low achievers make more efforts in conducting self-directed feedback than high achievers, but they do not reap benefits in good proportion to their labors. This is the reason why these intermediate and low achievers are inclined to regard this activity as inefficient.

An interesting but inconclusive issue related to self-directed feedback is the application of the reading aloud technique to check fluency or errors, which is a practice often used in writing centers on U.S. campuses (Gillespie & Lerner, 2003) because reading aloud is a proofreading technique that combines visual and aural inputs together to check errors. Several interviewed students showed quite different opinions about its effectiveness. Some argued that it works while others held the opposite opinion. The following are two suggestions to check fluency by reading aloud:

Evelyn: I'd suggest she try *to read her composition aloud* when she has finished it next time. It will be more helpful" (Group 10, para. 60; emphasis added)

Linda: It will be a good way for her to read it aloud after having finished writing, because she'll know if her sentences are fluent or not, and if her essay is coherent or not. By doing so, her essay will be much better, better than what she has composed now, and become more fluent. (Group 9, para. 72; emphasis added)

However, for certain intermediate and low writers such as Sandra and Audrey, this suggestion did not work at all.

A: I read aloud to check fluency.

H: Read aloud to check fluency?

A: Yeah, I usually read my essay several times, and check its grammar, too.

H: Grammar?

A: Yes. However, *I still can't spot what went wrong*. (Audrey, paras. 88-92; emphasis added)

Sandra: I forgot which one, who said it is right if you don't feel anything strange when you read aloud your essay. *I read aloud, and I didn't feel*anything strange!" (Group 10, para 40; emphasis added)

On the other hand, the technique worked for high-achieving writers such as Alison:

A: Sentence structure, I think, is fine as long as the sentence I wrote reads well.

H: So you'd read aloud the sentences to yourself after you finish the writing?

A: Yes. (Alison, paras. 20-22; emphasis added)

It seems that it is more likely for high achievers than intermediate and low writers to successfully use reading aloud to check fluency or errors after having completed their drafts.

Roughly speaking, whether self-directed feedback is helpful to refine the drafts depends on the writers' language proficiency. This activity, to high-achievers, is conducive to making their drafts better because their writing competence enables them to engage in self-initiated revision based on the questions and items listed on the worksheet provided by the instructor. As a contrast, self-directed feedback is not all beneficial to intermediate learners. Some of them think that this activity helps to improve their drafts while others do not because they feel there is something wrong with their writings, but are incapable of revising them. To low-achievers, self-directed feedback is quite limited in its benefits. The opinions from Hank can be representative:

I would not have detected anything wrong with my essay when I was engaged in the activity. The stuff I would pay attention to was limited to verb tense and whether an "s" was needed or not. I didn't check my essay with regard to fluency." (Hank, para. 53)

In short, the effectiveness of self-directed feedback is a matter of continuum—from working well for the high achievers at one extreme through partially working well for the intermediate learners to low efficiency for the low achievers at another extreme. It is not a question of working or not but more a question of working with varying degrees for writers with different levels of learning proficiency. To put it plainly, advanced writers are able to perform revisions more effectively than intermediate learners, who in turn are able to reap more benefits than low-achievers, who gain less but still more than nothing from this activity. All of them obtain varying degrees of success from self-directed feedback if they follow the worksheet provided by the instructor.

Peer Feedback

There are four findings drawn from the peer response sessions. First, about 82.2% of the peer interactions can be labeled as on-task. If compared with the finding of 84% on-task episodes by de Guerrero and Villamil (1994), the result of this study is quite close in the matter of effectiveness of oral peer feedback. The significance of this percentage is that peer response is helpful to raise writers' awareness of the problems in their essays, to suggest possible solutions, and to gain confidence in personal writing performance.

Second, in the on-task episodes, students mainly placed their attention on form, content, and positive feedback. In the form feedback, they gave writers more suggestions on surface errors than on textual changes. In the content feedback, they suggested logical argument, more examples and details to support the main ideas, and enhanced clarity of intended meanings. In the positive feedback, they praised the writers' performance in their essays. This finding is somewhat different from Leki's (1990) results in which

students only focus their attention on the surface structure of their peers' work, neglecting idea development and organization. The percentage of form, content, and positive feedback in this study is 34.6%, 32.2%, and 19.3% respectively as shown in Chapter 4. These figures show that students pay their attention to aspects of content and positive feedback, and do not merely focus on surface structure. The reasonable explanation for this phenomenon is that the instructor of this study scheduled students to conduct oral peer feedback on content in one class period and on form in the following class period and reminded them of the sandwich feedback technique when offering comments to writers. However, the point, as Leki mentions, that students fail to offer semantic or textual change suggestions, is identical with the finding of this study. It is difficult for students to give "macro-text-based" (textual) suggestions (Connor & Asenavage, 1994, p. 262) to their peers with their developing interlanguage.

Third, the peer interactions labeled as about-task episodes mainly occur in the form feedback sessions. Feedback providers may identify errors but fail to give constructive suggestions, have an inkling of certain sentences lacking fluency but do not know how to explain it, or provide only partially correct suggestions. This shows that students' reading competence informs them of the problems in peers' works, but their syntactical competence and writing skills are inadequate to provide sound feedback. As a feedback provider, a student has to be a reader first to comprehend the messages present in peers' essays, then to be a reader-turned writer to suggest how to revise errors, to expand content, and to take care of organization. Certain students' feedback is labeled as about-task because they do not competently play the role of the reader-turned writer.

The last finding is that the off-task episodes are more likely to take place in the content feedback sessions, except for incorrect suggestions that occur in form feedback sessions. As stated in Chapter 4, students are inclined to shift topic or give unrelated comments in the content feedback sessions when fantasy strikes them. Certain students are taken away from the topic under discussion by their unbridled imagination. They do not realize that their extended talks are unhelpful for the writers to refine their drafts. As for incorrect suggestions in grammatical feedback, certain students, especially low achievers with insufficient grammar knowledge, may give improper or even misleading comments to writers.

In the interviews, students expressed their opinions about different issues. Before going to the major finding, several students' responses are worthy of being mentioned because they are related to the findings of other studies on peer feedback.

1. Peer feedback helps students build communication skills.

The following statement from Flora is concerned with one of the benefits obtained from giving comments to peers:

F: I've learned how to communicate my own opinions to others. Yes, I think, sometimes, we can do it really fluently in Chinese rather than in English.

However, after learning in this way, I think I am capable of using English to express myself much better.

H: Are you saying it improves your communication ability?

F: Mm-hmm. (Flora, paras. 53-55; emphasis added)

Similarly, in the mid-term survey, Belinda expressed that peer response sessions increased her communication skills (see p. 168). This finding is in agreement with the

result obtained by Forman and Cazden (1986) about peer interactions helping students build communication skills. For students, how to express their views logically and persuasively, how to negotiate with peers on textual meanings or come to a consensus on conflict issues, and how to make their comments acceptable are issues they can learn through peer interactions.

2. Peer comments enhance a sense of audience.

To Ava, peer comments offered an opportunity to reach more audiences, and this inspired her to revise her drafts only for the sake of her audiences:

A: In the matter of peer feedback, *I can add in some revision just for my classmates' responses*. *It's not related to the comments they give me on organization and grammatical errors*. It is only as a response to how they feel about my essay when they say I did a good job in this part. (Ava, para. 130)

This finding is similar to the outcome obtained by Tsui and Ng (2000) that one of the roles of peer comments is to enhance a sense of audience. It is not too far-fetched to say that peer response activities can help students foster audience awareness, because three peers in each group take it in turns to provide the writer with form and content feedback both in oral and written manner.

3. Peer response activity helps students foster a sense of the ownership of text.

As presented in Table 10, Ida stated that she selectively incorporated into her revised draft the peer comments she viewed as appropriate, which shows that this activity helped her realize she had the right to do whatever was proper to her text. This helped her to cultivate writer autonomy. This finding is in correspondence with that by Miao et al.

(2006) in which students accept peer feedback with certain reservations, and with that by Mendonca and Johnson (1994) in which students only selectively incorporate peer feedback into their revision.

4. Certain students prefer negative comments to positive ones.

To Linda, positive comments are not as helpful as negative ones:

L: I think they are great! However, I don't know why my peers usually tell me things like "Good job!" and "Well done!" in the peer response sessions. *I* would rather have them tell me where my essay went wrong so that it becomes easier for me to revise it, instead of them simply saying, "Well written," "No errors overall," because this way it doesn't help me to detect my errors. (Linda, para. 38; emphasis added)

This finding is identical to the result obtained by Nelson and Carson (1998) in which Chinese learners of English preferred negative comments that identified mistakes or errors in their drafts. The significance of Linda's statement is that in the long term, positive feedback may encourage writers to actively engage in writing in the future, while in the short term, it becomes difficult for writers to make revisions without peers' negative comments.

5. Peer comments broaden writers' horizons.

To Julia, one of the benefits of peer comments was to enlarge her vision:

J: I think peer response is quite nice. One main point is that I can hear different opinions. What I missed, other people could point out. It helped to increase the different aspects of my thinking in writing. (Julia, para. 28; emphasis added)

This finding corresponds to the result obtained by Min (2005) in which she argues that, through peer comments, writers can broaden their horizons and refine their ideas by approaching a specific topic from multiple perspectives.

6. Student writers tend to have difficulties deciding whether their peers' comments are valid.

As presented in Table 10, some students such as Audrey and Jean were unsure of the correctness of their peers' comments. In other words, they were unsure of their peers' strengths as competent readers. This finding is in line with that by Leki (1990) and by Lockhart and Ng (1993) in which student writers do not trust their peers' response on their writings.

In spite of the above-mentioned findings being limited to certain individual students and not the major perceptions of the 24 participants, these opinions reflect some common themes found in peer interaction activities.

The major finding from student interviews is that low achievers feel more satisfied with peer response activities than intermediate writers, who in turn have more positive opinions than high achievers. This finding (see Table 10) is a statement mainly drawn from the perspective of writers as they receive comments given by their peers. However, if it is examined from the angle of the readers, it also implies that high achievers feel dissatisfied with peer feedback because their readers (intermediate and low writers) cannot provide them with constructive suggestions to revise their drafts. This view is different from Berg's finding (1999b) in which trained peer response helps the less competent writers to be capable feedback providers, "not influenced by the difference in level of writing proficiency" (p. 230), and Min's finding (2005) in which the training

helps the less competent writers gain confidence in viewing themselves as capable reviewers. All student writers in this study received the same training in playing the role of feedback providers, but it seems that the less competent learners were incapable of playing the role of reviewers as effectively as the competent ones, and this is related to the students' language proficiency and learning abilities. This argument gains additional support from the finding of the mid-term survey in which the low achievers spent more time familiarizing themselves with the procedure and gist of peer response. Their opinions about the peer response activity given in the mid-term survey were not nearly as positive as their opinions about it in the semester-end interviews. This fact indicates that low achievers may not learn at the same pace as their more competent peers.

The major finding of the mid-term survey is that high and intermediate writers appear to have the same sense of satisfaction with the peer interaction activity in the survey and in the end-semester interviews while low achievers increase their degree of satisfaction substantially. The significance of this finding is that low-achieving writers seem to have difficulties in learning new materials. Their problems in a large EFL writing class are multiple. First, they cannot organize messages from peers in the pre-writing discussion sessions as effectively as more competent learners. Many do not have sufficiently developed learning skills or reasoning abilities to help them absorb new information. Second, their language proficiency seems to hinder them from efficiently digesting new materials offered by peers and the instructor; therefore, they cannot reexternalize the newly learned knowledge in their revised drafts. Finally, they appear to need a longer time period to learn the new procedure and content of the classroom activities. The implication here is that low achievers do not have adequate competence in

language proficiency or in the cognitive domain (including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) as suggested by Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956).

The major finding from student writers' incorporation of peer comments into the revised drafts is that intermediate and low achievers are more likely than high achievers to adopt peer comments into their revisions in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar. This fact is reflected in the higher percentage of positive opinions the intermediate and low achievers give to the peer response activity (see Table 10). As stated in Chapter 4, the more constructive comments student writers receive, the more likely they are inclined to view a certain type of feedback as beneficial, and to offer a higher percentage of positive opinions. On the other hand, high achievers do not get enough concrete comments to revise content and form of their drafts due to their peers' insufficient writing competence and their insecurity related to the quality of their peers' feedback. This shows why high achievers evaluate peer feedback less positively than teacher feedback.

Teacher Feedback

In the interviews, the 24 student participants held that the modified teacher feedback was more beneficial for them than the traditional one to better their writing performance. The major reason is that the modified version provided them with an opportunity to think over their errors by themselves, to discuss with peers, and to consult with the instructor while the traditional one did not. The finding is in agreement with that

obtained by Miao et al. (2006) in which students incorporated more teacher feedback than peer feedback into their revision due to learners seeing teacher comments as more professional. Their finding is in line with Tsui and Ng's (2000) result about teachers' authorities. However, the effectiveness of the modified teacher feedback in this study can be explained from different perspectives. In addition to the belief students hold that teachers are "the holders of truth, wisdom, and knowledge" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 129), several factors are more essential to explain this phenomenon. First, in the modified teacher feedback of this study, the instructor only provided students with marked hints on their drafts without any direct corrections. On the Teacher Feedback Sheet, the instructor gave suggestions, error types, and positive feedback. Student writers were expected to think over the teacher feedback before consulting their peers or going to a teacher-student conference. The strength of this type of feedback is that the instructor offers error feedback (identifying errors) rather than error correction (the results of feedback on errors) (Long, 1977, as cite in Makino, 1993). That is to say, the teacher acts more as a facilitator than as an evaluator. Student writers have rights to revise their drafts based on what they think appropriate. Giving students more room to do revision work results in the fact that students learn more from this process than from limited answers given directly by the instructor. The statement by Ching, "[d]uring the period of seeking for answers, I will find something quite beyond what the direct answers from the teacher could have offered me" (para. 82) supports this argument.

Second, with the modified teacher feedback of this study, the instructor can avoid the accusation of appropriating student texts. Since he did not give student writers direct corrections, and, more important, did offer only limited error types, suggestions, and encouraging comments to students instead of delivering comprehensive criticism out of the intention of ideal text, these feedback elements made the learners view teacher feedback as more desirable. If, in this study, the students had been given direct corrections, as commonly practiced in the traditional style, the responses of the students would have been quite different from those obtained.

Third, in the process of seeking for answers, the writers tend to think more deeply and understand their errors more thoroughly from different perspectives—the writers', the peers', and the teacher's; therefore, the learning effect lasts longer than that acquired by looking at direct corrections. This argument echoes the perspective held by Leki (1992), "feedback on student writing also falls short of its goal when the changes suggested or requested in the feedback are too readily accepted by student writers" (p. 123). The feedback too readily taken by student writers is more likely to be direct correction rather than error feedback.

Finally, the teacher-student conference is an essential factor causing teacher feedback to be highly valued by student writers. Without this procedure, students would not be able to understand the instructor's comments, especially when the instructor's handwriting becomes nearly unintelligible under time pressure. Face-to-face communication between student and instructor can help to clarify what puzzles the writer as well as to confirm the results of the writer's self-reflection and peer consultation.

All the above factors explain more convincingly why modified teacher feedback gains huge, favorable support from student writers than the single belief in a teacher's professionalism. If the teacher's authority is the major factor that makes teacher feedback

ranked by learners as most important, one cannot but question why a teacher's direct corrections are out of favor with student writers.

In the interviews, students with different writing competence had different concerns about teacher feedback. High achievers were inclined to care more about teacher comments while intermediate and low achievers placed more weight on marked hints. This shows that high achievers with more grammatical competence are capable of attending primarily to the holistic view of their drafts. They made fewer mistakes in grammar, mechanical devices, and word usage than their peers, so their selective attention can be put on the big picture drawn out by their instructor to better their writing performance. On the contrary, low and intermediate writers have to take care of form problems first before handling content improvement. If the sentences are incomprehensible to the reader, of what significance is adding more details or examples? Therefore, the less competent writers might be more concerned about marked hints than the high achievers.

As for the strategies students adopt to deal with the unclearness of teacher comments, high achievers are more likely to go straight to the teacher than intermediate and low achievers, who will discuss with peers before consulting the teacher. This shows that high achievers do not trust their less competent peers to solve their confusion. It is also mirrored by the fact that they did perceive peer feedback as very beneficial in the interviews. By contrast, intermediate and low achievers' consultation with peers before the instructor indicates that they have more confidence in peers as competent readers, especially with regard to the suggestions given by high achievers. This is in line with their positive opinions about the peer response activity to help them improve their drafts.

The last finding in teacher feedback is that the instructor gives feedback predominantly on form and only few suggestions associated with content. The reason for the instructor to provide students with more grammatical feedback than content suggestion might be that sentence readability is the instructor's primary concern, especially for students at the stage of transfer from interlanguage to target language. It is interesting to note that student writers also show the same concern about grammatical feedback from their teacher in the study conducted by Miao et al. (2006) in which student writers were more likely to incorporate teacher feedback into their drafts for surface-level changes because they trusted the teacher more than their peers in the aspect of grammatical feedback. Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to say that in this study, the instructor's providing more form than content feedback was done to meet student writers' expectation of what should be in teacher feedback.

Participants' Responses to Three Types of Feedback as a Series of Writing Activities

In the interview, twenty students indicated that all three feedback activities were indispensable while four students with intermediate and low writing ability preferred not to include self-directed feedback in the writing activity. This implies that 20 of 24 (83.33%) students were in favor of all three types of feedback activities implemented in the writing class. This finding echoes the judicious suggestion made by Jacob et al. (1998) that it is necessary to combine the three types of feedback as a series of activities in an ESL writing class. More high achievers viewed each type of feedback as independent yet complementary to each other while certain intermediate and low achievers took self-directed feedback as undesirable due to its low efficiency. The issue of combining the

three types of feedback as a series of writing activities is worthy of further study, especially dealing with improving the effectiveness of self-directed feedback for less competent writers.

Another finding about students' ranking of the order of importance of these feedback types according to their preference is that many of the intermediate and low achievers placed teacher feedback first, peer feedback second, and self-directed feedback last. This finding is in agreement with the results of Zhang (1995) and Saito and Fujita (2004). However, most of the high achievers prioritized their preference as follows: teacher feedback, self-direct feedback, and peer feedback. This is different from the other three researchers' findings. In this study, high achievers such as Julia, Alison, Jean, and Sharon (see Table 17) felt more satisfied with self-directed feedback than peer comments because they believed it was the writer's responsibility to make the drafts comprehensible before presenting them to readers, and because they were capable of revising their drafts on their own by following the worksheet provided by the instructor. In general, the finding that many high achievers ranked self-directed over peer feedback in Table 18 reveals that students' perceptions of self-efficacy in performance accomplishment and social persuasion (other people's positive evaluative feedback) are the major factors that contributed to their confidence in conducting the self-directed feedback activity successfully. After all, actual writing performance (composing and revising drafts) is closely related to authors' writing skills and competence. Writing is a complex process that demands writers use almost all levels of cognitive domain including their knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of an assigned topic.

The last finding drawn from students' revised drafts is that intermediate and low

achievers make more effort to conduct self-directed feedback than high achievers, but the results they obtain are out of proportion with their labors. As for peer comments, high achievers do not incorporate as many peer comments as their classmates with intermediate and low writing abilities. Finally, all students value and incorporate teacher feedback into their final drafts. What has been revealed on students' revised drafts is in line with what the student participants reported about their perceptions of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in the interview.

In summary, revision, be it as self-directed, peer, or teacher feedback, is not a simple step for student writers to take. The argument of Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) can best summarize the situation: Revision is "a complex process carried out with varying degrees of success depending upon the writer's competence and the effectiveness of the instructions received" (p. 256).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendations for curriculum designers, classroom practitioners, and researchers.

Curriculum Designers

1. Writing course curricula should have characteristics such as continuity, gradualism, and connection. In every semester, the objectives of a writing course should be mapped out and should be closely connected with those of previous and/or following courses. Each course should have its own formative and summative assessments to evaluate students' learning, the results of which can be used to

- improve the curriculum of the following writing courses.
- 2. In order to accommodate the cultural differences in the concept of time, exact definitions of words and parts of speech, and ways of reasoning, writing course curricula should give special attention to verb tense, vocabulary, and Western verbal logic acquisition. In regard to verb tense, the Oriental circular time concept is different from the Western linear time concept. Additionally, regular and irregular verb forms and transitive and intransitive verbs are not utilized in the Chinese language and are, therefore, new to students studying English in Taiwan. With regard to vocabulary, definitions for word pairs such as "wish/hope," "chance/opportunity," and "happen/occur" in English-Chinese dictionaries are not clearly differentiated in meaning. Lastly, Western verbal logic acquisition is different from Chinese pictorial logic.
- 3. A teacher education program or workshop should involve instructions in utilizing multiple interaction activities and instructors who are interested in incorporating them in their writing classes. A workshop can cover topics such as various theories about self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback, the role of a teacher in a large multilevel EFL writing class, details of class rules to facilitate the activities, and discussion on and development of the skills needed to train students to be competent feedback providers.

Classroom Practitioners

1. When assigning a topic for writing activities, instructors should pay attention to students' background knowledge, life experience, and their interests.

- 2. Instructors should consider the advantages and disadvantages of the language used in pre-writing discussions and peer response sessions. To use students' first language facilitates their conveying their ideas more concretely and completely, but it also promotes a loss of opportunity to practice the target language. To require students to conduct the discussion in English tends to make them passive or silent. Movement from L1 to L2 is necessary, but how and when to accomplish that needs consideration of students' proficiencies and needs.
- 3. Before asking student writers to conduct a pre-writing discussion, classroom practitioners should give an in-depth presentation on the assigned topic, guide students to analyze the text from different angles, and inform them what websites can provide them with rich information for the pre-writing discussion.
- 4. To improve the efficiency of the pre-writing discussion, instructors should require students to prepare and organize their contributions beforehand.
- 5. Instructors should provide students with training in prosody, which is essential for them to be able to read their drafts aloud to check fluency or errors effectively.
- 6. Classroom practitioners should differentiate their feedback to take into consideration students' different levels of language proficiency. Advanced learners should be guided to make paragraphs coherent and apply rhetoric techniques to make sentences concise or varied in patterns. For intermediate writers, writing structure, concepts of semantics, diction, and even the use of punctuation symbols must be explained. Low achievers must be guided to know more about concepts of grammar (especially verb tense and word usages), sentence structure, and the organization of a passage. Students' progress in each type of feedback activity

- should be given close attention; this is especially important for those less competent learners who experience difficulties in learning new materials quickly and effectively.
- 7. In addition to instructing students how to conduct each type of feedback activity, training students to switch roles between author and reader will help students read their own drafts and peers' writings more effectively.
- 8. Instructors should offer their classes example sentences or paragraphs culled from some students' essays and should explicate the strengths and weaknesses presented in these illustrated passages. In addition, instructors should offer whole class feedback on the most frequent error types such as "Although... but...," "Because... so...," null subject, and topic-comment construction.
- 9. When providing teacher feedback, instructors should give more concern to content feedback than to suggestions about form.
- 10. Instructors should attend to the clarity of their own handwriting because it is often a source of students' confusion about an instructor's comments.
- 11. In order to maintain oversight of the many small groups utilized in the peer-feedback activities, the instructor in this study required each group to audio-record its discussions in those activities. Some students found this requirement annoying and intimidating for a variety of reasons, several related to the students' lack of appropriate preparation for the discussions. Students would be better served if instructors were to present them early on with time management and course work organization strategies, thus reducing their complaints and increasing the benefits they receive from the discussions.

12. Implementing the multiple interaction activities in writing classes for more than one semester will greatly extend the benefits of these activities.

Researchers

- The population of this study included 43 students. Future research might examine the
 perceptions and experiences of instructors after or during the implementation of
 multiple interaction activities in large multilevel EFL writing classes in the private
 colleges of Taiwan.
- 2. Future investigation might include quantitative studies to examine issues such as the amount of revision students make in each type of feedback in the aspects of idea development, sufficiency, organization of information as signs of enhanced quality, and improved grammar.
- 3. Student participants showed their concerns about problems with group members and suggested the possibility of forming groups by the students themselves. Therefore, future research is needed to compare the advantages and disadvantages of teacher-assigned heterogeneous groups and self-forming groups for self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities in large writing classes.
- 4. Recording is another issue that students were very much concerned about. They complained that recording in the peer response sessions made them nervous and forgetful in the moment of exchange of ideas. In a large writing class, one instructor cannot attend to every group at the same time. Recording groups' conversation serves both to give the instructor knowledge of the discussion and to keep the group more on task. Consequently, future research to explore the possibility of conducting peer

- response sessions either without recording or with other means of apprehending the discussion is recommended.
- 5. The time period of this study lasted for only one semester. Therefore, a longitudinal study is recommended to examine the changes in students' perceptions and experiences about the implementation of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback in large multilevel ESL/EFL writing classes.
- 6. Reading aloud is a proofreading technique used to check fluency and errors in this study. For some students, it worked well while for others it did not. Most of the studies on prosody have been conducted in reading classes. A study conducted to evaluate the effect of reading aloud to check fluency and errors in writing courses, after a well-designed student training in prosody has been completed, would be beneficial.
- 7. The unequal number of male and female students in this study is a limitation so that the issue of gender difference in responding to each type of feedback was not pursued. A future study conducted to explore the influence of gender on students' perceptions and experiences of multiple interaction activities is recommended.
- 8. In this study, the students' unanimous support of modified teacher feedback was attributed to factors other than the common belief in a teacher's authority. Further investigation to understand more fully the reasons students favor modified teacher feedback over traditional teacher feedback would be useful.
- 9. The delimitation of this study is constrained to one large multilevel EFL writing class with 43 students in one private university. The findings of the research cannot be generalized to other cases. Therefore, a multiple-case study on writing classes from

various universities is needed to duplicate the procedures of this study to explore the perceptions and experiences of students after the implementation of multiple interaction activities in large writing classes. Generally speaking, cross-case analysis can enhance generalizability and deepen understanding and explanation of the topic under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Contributions of the Study

This study was based on Engestrom's (1987) activity system model that reflects a broader range of philosophical orientations to large EFL writing studies than other theories as stated in Chapter 2. The researcher attempted to extend existing studies on self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback conducted by Carson & Nelson (1994, 1996), Jacobs et al. (1998), Leki (1990), Lockhart & Ng (1993), Makino (1993), Mendonca & Johnson (1994), Miao et al. (2006), Min (2005), Saito & Fujita (2004), and Zhang (1995). In this research, the setting and participants were different from the above-mentioned studies because the setting was a large multilevel EFL writing class. In addition, the theoretical foundation and procedure of this study were different when compared to the previous studies. For instance, the activity theory can provide an alternative perspective to the current engineering-computational-metaphor-dominant view (Thorne, 2000) of second language acquisition (input, intake, output, and uptake are terms from information processing). The activity theory has much to offer in this study. First, in terms of the element of subject, student participants assumed different roles in self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback—writer, reader, tutor, tutee, critic (Forman & Cazden, 1986), partner, audience, and speaker. By switching roles, students obtained different benefits. For

example, in the self-directed feedback activity, Julia and Sharon were able to check their drafts by means of the worksheet provided by their instructor. With the help of this worksheet, both of them, as writers, were able to pay more attention to reader expectation (see p. 119). Mandy was unable to detect her own errors but realized that she had made the same errors as her peers did when she switched her role from a writer to a reader (see p. 122). In the peer response activities, students like Flora and Belinda were able to increase their communication skills when playing the role of feedback provider (see p. 268). The interaction among peers was conducive to enlarging vision for Julia (see p.176), to creating synergy for Hank (see p.177), to cultivating writer autonomy for Ida (see p.178), and to cultivating friendship between Ava and her peers (see p. 168). In the teacher feedback activity, the role of the instructor was more like that of a facilitator than an evaluator. The instructor was supposed to give error feedback instead of error correction and he did that. In the teacher-student conference, the relationship between the instructor and student was that of tutor and tutee. All of these features contributed to making the modified teacher feedback in this study the students' favorite activity (see p. 206). Second, in terms of mediating artifacts, communication via emails (Thorne, 2004) probably is not as effective as face-to-face meetings to clarify unclear points, to confirm information, and to negotiate possible alterations to textual meanings. The opportunities of face-to-face interaction between and among students in pre-writing discussions and peer response sessions (see Pamela's view, p. 154) and between the instructor and students in the teacher-student conference (see Lisa's statement, pp. 214) increased students' learning. In addition, instruments such as the summary guideline and four feedback worksheets were helpful for students to conduct the multiple interaction

activities (e.g., see the statements of Eva, Jessica, and Chu, pp. 120-121). Third, rules set up by students and the instructor in the first class of the semester were helpful for carrying out different types of activities. Belinda's complaint related to one nonparticipative member of her group was a rare case in this study (see pp. 181). In addition, rules related to regular and dialogic interaction requiring multiple drafts and revisions instead of only one draft and revision, were beneficial to improve students' writing abilities. Fourth, the division of labor included students' doing their share of work as a team. For example, in recording peer response sessions, one student had to bring recording instruments; another student edited the voice files, and a third managed to control the time. Besides, each group member had to give and take feedback from others as a reader and as a writer. Fifth, along with the changes in artifacts, rules, and division of labor, the outcomes could be furthered to include "near peer role models for writers," "identity shift for reviewers," "construction of ZPD," and "demonstrated progress in L2" (Thorne, 2004, p. 64). Six, in terms of the element of community, the relationship among students and between the instructor and students was more likely to become horizontal instead of hierarchical due to the feasibility of switching roles as situations changed. In summary, the interaction among the elements of the activity theory model offered a broad vision for this study to approach the issue of multiple interaction activities. This research contributes to writing studies literature in Taiwan, especially for writing classes in the private institutions of higher education. It will be an important reference for potential researchers in this line of study. The findings of this research can be used as reference for future development in writing studies curricula and classroom practice in the private colleges of Taiwan.

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Appendix A
Schedule for Multiple Interaction Activities

Date	Week	Activities to be completed	Key points to be communicated
9/15 / 9/19	1	 Introduce the concept of peer response to the students, and make it a regular part in the writing classroom activities. Work with students to set up whole-class rules for peer response¹. Discuss the formation of prewriting brainstorming group (8 students per group) and peer feedback group (4 students per group). Teacher-student conference can be held in the instructor's office hours every week. 	Reasons for the implementation of peer response include the following advantages: 1. Helps student writers do what they cannot do yet for themselves, and that is to detect incongruities in their texts [ZPD]. 2. Provides learning and affective benefits. 3. Experienced writers also rely on peer reviews. 4. Teach students about academic writing. 5. Peer discussion sessions help to clarify ideas and find text alternatives to unclear aspects of their writing. 6. Serve as a model for how to read text through the eyes of someone else
9/22 / 9/26	2	 Model for students how to interact with peer in the pre-writing sessions. Model for students how to give constructive feedback. Hold teacher-student conference to clarify any confusion. 	 Invention skills: listing, mapping, tree diagram, circle diagrams, double-entry listing, heuristics (Who does what, how, and why?), and matrices (one axis lists questions or criteria to be applied to the items on the other axis) (Meyer & Smith, 1987, pp. 47-65). Social skills: Be polite and considerate; target at specific trouble spots rather than at writers² (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Response skills: A four-step procedure for peer response (clarifying writers' intentions, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making suggestions by giving specific examples) (Min, 2005).
9/29 / 10/3	3	 Provide students with guidelines and worksheets for self, peer, and teacher feedback. Explain the necessity for three types of feedback to make a better writer. 	 See the appendices C, D, E, and F. Self-directed feedback helps to foster self-regulated writers; peer feedback cultivates audience awareness and ability to detect the incongruity between intended meaning and understood meaning; teacher feedback provides macro-text-based changes.

10/6 / 10/9	4	Assign a reading text or ask students to search and find an article related to personal experience.	Following the guideline to read and outline the main idea (see Appendix C).
10/13 / 10/17	5	 Pre-writing peer brain-storming session Group presentation of the conclusion of discussion. 	 Each group with eight members to discuss the content, organization, and language structure of the article. One peer takes charge of taking notes and making an oral presentation for the group.
10/20 / 10/24	6	 Complete the first draft at home. Work on self-directed feedback (Appendix D) as an in-class activity, and revise the first draft, then turn it (second draft) in to the group leader for distribution. 	Writers should be accountable for their drafts and self-directed feedback.
10/27 / 10/31	7	 With the written comments done at home, students come to the classroom, starting oral comments in turn. The writers need to clarify and explain the points questioned, or discuss how to make them understandable. A short debriefing session on how to improve peer interaction is held. 	 The focus is on idea development and organization. Issues for consideration on content and organization are provided and feedback-providers are required to give feedback by reference to peer feedback sheet (see Appendix E) Peer discussion should be on-task or about-task rather than off-task. Communicate the concept that content feedback is not influenced by a difference in writing proficiency; even the low-proficiency-level EFL students can contribute constructive comments.
11/3 / 11/7	8	 Writers revise their essays by incorporating or rejecting peer comments. Peer readers complete the written comments on grammar, diction, and mechanical devices before going to class for the peer response session. 	 Writers fill in a revision feedback sheet to state why changes are made or not made (see Appendix G) Peer respondents can use Appendix E to provide written feedback on grammatical and mechanic errors. Attention should first be paid to errors that obscure meanings.

11/10 / 11/14	9	 Writers revise their papers by weighing peer comments against personal knowledge to decide whether to adopt feedback or not. Turn in the revised draft for teacher feedback. 	 Writers fill in a revision feedback sheet to state why changes are made or not made. Teacher comments focus on meaning changes or what have been missed in self-directed, and peer feedback by reference to teacher feedback sheet (see Appendix F).
11/17 / 11/21	10	 Writers revise their papers based on teacher comments, and then turn in the final draft. A short debriefing session is held on how to improve writing activities. 	1. A teacher should not entertain the ideal text for the assignment by giving too many comments. Avoid overburdening students by focusing on only three or four concerns in a given set of comments (Connors & Glenn, 1995).
11/24 / 11/28	11	 Assign a second text or ask students to find an article in which they feel interested. Students carefully read the selected text, and write a response to it. 	1. All the procedures done in the first writing cycle from Week 4 to Week 10 will be repeated from Week 11 to Week 17 for the second writing cycle.
12/1 / 12/5	12		
12/8 / 12/12	13	 Audiotape the peer response talk Classroom observation 	
12/15 / 12/19	14	1. Interview the student participants	
12/22 / 12/26	15	Audiotape the peer response talk Classroom observation	
12/29 / 1/2	16	1. Interview the student participants	
1/5 / 1/9	17	 Audiotape the peer response talk Classroom observation 	

1/12	18	1. Collect student participants'	
/		multiple drafts and all	
1/16		response sheets	
		2. Interview student	
		participants	

1. Work with students on the following issues: Engaged time, focus on (idea development, organization first, grammar, mechanical devices, and style later on), the order of commenting and turn-taking, language use (English only, or code-switching), percentage to be figured into the final grade, completion of written comments before coming to oral feedback in peer response sessions, informant for absentees, ways to deal with excessive absence and lack of preparation of individual group members, reflection section, circulation of drafts, a group leader, and the roles of participants (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 70). (Rules can be changed across time and tasks).

2. Useful sentences for peer response activities

What EFL students might say	What might be more appropriate (euphemism)
This wrong	Is this right? I am not sure if this is right. I wonder whether this is what you had in mind. I am afraid I don't understand what you meant. Could you explain to us what you wanted to say here?
I don't understand this paper.	What do you mean? What is your main idea? I'm afraid that I did not quite understand this paper because It seems that you've spent a lot of time working on this paper, but could you give us a brief summary of it?
How could you say that?	What do you mean here? Your point is well made, but there is a lack of evidence to convince me. This idea is interesting, but I could not find any discussion in your paper to support this idea.
I don't like this paper	I am a little confused about this paper. I am not sure I agree with your ideas. Although some points are well made, I guess your way of thinking is different from mine.
Please change this word/ expression/sentence because it makes no sense here.	I thought this word meant
	here.

How could you write this	Can you tell me where your thesis statement is?	
paper without a thesis	I'm afraid that I cannot find your thesis statement.	
statement?	Your thesis statement is not clear to me.	
	Could you help me locate your thesis statement in the	
	paper?	
You could have done a better	This is good but you need to	
job.	I like your paper but you can	
	I can see your effort here, but I am sure you can find	
	many ways to improve your paper, such as	
This paper is perfect.	Very good. You could	
	This is good but if you want you can	
	Well done. But this paper could be better if you	
	Nice job. I believe you can still work on	

(Adopted from *Peer response in second language writing classroom*, by Liu & Hansen, pp. 141-142)

3. Use Appendix E to provide peer feedback by considering the following issues

Content	Rhetoric/organization
Theme, purpose, and readersh Enough? Well-developed? Cla Consistent? Redundant? More clarification needed? Main ide presented? The strengths and the	points—Topic sentence? Conclusion? Clear organization? Cohesion? Ideas connected? What do you like best of the paper? What
weaknesses	

(Adapted from *Peer response in second language writing classroom*, by Liu & Hansen, p. 119)

Appendix B
Students' Level of Language Proficiency

Level of	Student's	Descriptors					
language proficiency	name	WG (Fall	WG (Spring	WG (Fall	English Proficiency	SEWC	Years of learning
	Mandy	2007) 85	2008) 93	2008) 89	Test GEPT (1)	Good	English 10
	Julia	87	89	88	` ′		10
	Alison	82	91	90	GEPT (2) None	So-so So-so	10
High							
	Jean	86	89	86	GEPT (1)	Good	8
	Ava	89	86	87	TOEIC	So-so	7
	Sharon	91	85	87	GEPT (1)	So-so	10
	Eva	87	90	85	GEPT (1)	Good	11
	Sandra	82	81	84	TOEIC	So-so	7
	Ida	85	88	83	GEPT (1)	So-so	8
T . 1' .	Lou	78	79	86	TOEIC	Good	7
Intermediate	Winnie	88	84	82	TOEIC	So-so	7
	Ina	92	84	76	GEPT (1)	So-so	15
	Lisa	86	86	81	GEPT (1)	So-so	9
	Aki	84	82	82	None	Poor	7
	Jessica	78	82	80	None	So-so	10
	Linda	79	85	79	GEPT (1)	So-so	9
	Hank	68	76	78	GEPT (1)	So-so	10
	Flora	71	80	79	None	So-so	12
	Tom	76	87	76	GEPT (1)	So-so	10
Low	Chu	66	83	76	None	Good	9
	Audrey	78	79	80	TOEIC	So-so	11
	Ching	80	80	78	GEPT (1)	Poor	11
	Mico	75	80	78	TOEIC	So-so	7
	Belinda	80	76	78	GEPT (1)	So-so	8

WG refers to writing grade. SEWC stands for self-evaluation on writing competence.

Appendix C

Guideline for Summarizing Information

1. Read the entire original.

When summarizing someone else's work, grasp the total picture before picking up your pencil or working on the keyboard.

2. Reread and underline.

Identify the issue or need that led to the article or text. Focus on the main ideas: thesis statement, topic sentences, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

3. Pare down your underlined material.

Omit lengthy background, examples, technical details, explanations, or anything not essential to the overall meaning. In abstracting the writing of others, avoid quotations; if you must quote some crucial word or phrase directly, use quotation marks.

4. Rewrite in your own words.

Even if the first draft is too long, include everything that seems essential for this version to stand alone; you can trim later. If a direct quotation is absolutely necessary, be sure to place quotation marks around the author's own words.

5. Edit for conciseness.

Once your draft contains everything readers need, find ways to trim the word count.

- a. Cross out all needless words--but keep sentences clear and grammatical.
- b. Cross out needless prefaces.
- c. Combine related ideas and rephrase to emphasize important connections.
- d. Use numerals for numbers, except to begin a sentence.

6. Check your version against the original.

Verify the version's accuracy and completeness. Add no personal comments.

7. Rewrite your edited version.

In the final draft, strive for readability and conciseness. Respect any stipulated word limit.

8. Document your source.

Cite the full source below any abstract not accompanied by its original.

(Adapted from *The Writing Process*, 7th edition, by John M. Lannon, pp. 356-357)

Appendix D

Worksheet for Self-Directed Feedback

There are three sections to this assignment. In the first, you will assess the structural and logical characteristics of your essay. In the second, you will reflect on the grammatical accuracy of the paper. In the third, you will summarize the results of your analysis.

It is important for you to read the paper carefully and thoroughly in order to answer the following questions. Thus, you should begin the analysis at least 24 hours after having finished writing the composition. Additionally, you should take a break of at least 2 hours between the first two sections of this assignment.

After you have completed this assignment, you should make whatever corrections you feel are necessary to your composition. You will hand in your summary to the instructor along with your preliminary composition. (Remember also that you will hand a copy of the preliminary composition to your group members.)

I. Content analysis

- 1. What is the topic or purpose of your composition? Is it stated clearly in the first paragraph?
- 2. Does this composition seem to be well organized? Does it have a clear beginning and end?
- 3. Have you included enough details to support your argument? Any details you would leave out?
- 4. Do you think you would find this composition interesting as a reader?
- 5. Does the title reflect the content of the composition?
- 6. What do you like best about this composition?

II. Form analysis

- 1. Carefully check the gender and number of all nouns used in the composition. Make sure they agree with their articles and adjectives.
- 2. Carefully identify all verbs and their corresponding subjects in the composition. Make sure they agree in number and person.
- 3. If you have used articles, double-check to make sure you are using them correctly.
- 4. If there is any vocabulary you are unsure of, try to verify your usage using two different sources (for example, a dictionary, your instructor)

III. Summary

Briefly summarize in five to seven sentences any changes you made to the composition based on the questions in I and II. Hand in this typed summary to your instructor.

(Adopted from "Teaching composition in the college level foreign language class: Insights and activities from socio-cultural theory" by Roebuck, 2001, pp. 213-214)

Appendix E

Peer Feedback Sheet

Dra	aft written by Feedback provided by Date: mposition:
You you wri	ur purpose in answering these questions is to provide an honest & helpful response to ur partner's or group member's draft. You should also suggest ways to make his/her iting better. Before beginning your review, be sure to read the composition carefully. er that, respond to the following questions. BE SPECIFIC. BE CONSTRUCTIVE.
	what do you think is best or worst about the ideas in this essay? Be specific. Give your own comments (vocabulary, cohesive/linked ideas, clear/easy to follow, convincing, effective reasoning, well-developed ideas, attention-grabbing introduction, strong conclusion, intriguing style, well-supported topic sentences, understandable transitions, etc.)
2.	Of the proofs, reasons, or arguments given to support the writer's opinion, which one/ones is/are irrelevant or illogical to the topic? Point it/them out and explain your reasons and, if you can, suggest improvements.
3.	What part(s) should be developed more? Mark these with a letter D . Explain why you
4.	think this should be developed more and make some suggestions. What part(s) is/are confusing? Mark these with a letter C in the draft. Explain why you think it/they is/are confusing and make some suggestions for improvement.
	ganization Does the first paragraph include an introduction expressing the writer's position or statement of opinion? Yes No If yes, underline the sentence(s). If no, should the writer explicitly express his/her
6.	topic in the revision? Yes No Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? Yes No Point out the paragraphs without topic sentences. Paragraph,,
7.	Should topic sentences be added to these paragraphs? Yes No Is there a conclusion in the final paragraph? Yes No
	ammar, Vocabulary & Mechanics Use the following correction codes to point out the errors. Mark the codes in the draft
V S Ar Pro Co	Preposition incorrectly used Pronoun incorrectly used Conjunction incorrectly used
NE	Noun ending (plural or possessive) missing or unnecessary

WW Wrong word/wrong word form

WO Wrong word order

Subject and verb do not agree SV

Missing word

SS Sentence structure: incorrect structure, sentence fragments

P Punctuation wrong

 \mathbf{CL} Capital letter needed/not needed

Paragraph indentation

|-Run-on line

(Adapted from "A comparative study of peer and teacher feedback in a Chinese EFL writing class" by Miao et al., 2006, p. 196)

Appendix F

Teacher Feedback Sheet

Topic:	Writer's name:	Date:
I. Content		Feedback
 Main idea or thesis staten stated. Major points are well sup details. Audience and purpose ar The arguments or examp and logical. 	oported with re considered.	
II. Organization		
 There is a clear introduction conclusion to the essay. Connectives are approprial. The body paragraphs includes sentences directly tied to Ideas are logically presents. The main idea is reinforce conclusion. 	ately used. ude topic the main idea. ted.	
III. Language Use		
 There is good choice of vo There is a variety of phras patterns. 	e and sentence	
IV. Grammar and Mechan	nics	
 Spelling, capitalization, ar are correct. Different tenses are correct. Articles, pronouns, prepost agreement, etc are appropriate appropriate and are correct. 	etly used. itions, clauses,	
V. Other comments		

(Adapted from "Enhancing students' engagement and motivation in writing: The case of primary students in Hong Kong" by Lo, J. & Hyland, F., 2007, p. 236)

Appendix G

Feedback Revision Sheet

Comment	Who gave the	Yes—I will	No—I will not	Why?
received	comment?	revise the paper	use this comment	
			in revision	
		comment		
1.				
2.				
4.				
3.				
4.				
7.				
5.				
6.				
0.				
7.				

(Adapted from *Peer response in second language writing classroom*, by Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 153)

Appendix H

Observational Protocol

Time of	observation:	
Date:		
Place:		
Subject:		
Grand to	ur observation	
	Length of Activity: 50	Minutes
Descripti	ive Notes	Reflective Notes
Space		
Actor		
Activity		
Object		
Act		
Event		
Time		
Goal		
Feelings		

Appendix I

Interview Protocol for Students

Research topic: A Case Study of How a Large Multilevel EFL Writing Class Experiences and Perceives Multiple Interaction Activities

Time of Interview:

Date: Place:

Interviewer: Hsien-Chuan Lin

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee: The purpose of this research study is to examine the experiences and perceptions of students after a series of self-directed, peer, and teacher feedback activities have been implemented in a large EFL writing class. The participant will be one student interviewed by the researcher. The audiotape and the transcript will be used only for this research and educational purpose with only a coded name shown on either of them. The interview is scheduled to last for about 50 minutes.

Questions:

- 1. Please tell me something about your writing experience in English.
 - a. What do you think of your writing skills?
 - b. What is your goal for a writing class such as this one?
 - c. What do you do to improve your writing competence outside the writing class?
 - d. What kinds of resources do you have that are helpful to improve your writing?
- 2. What do you think of peer response activities in general?
 - a. What is your opinion about the pre-writing discussion?
 - b. How do you feel about your peers' comments? Did you use them in your revision or not?
 - c. How do you describe your experience in peer response negotiation to clarify the text meanings (intended meaning and perceived meaning)?
 - d. Did you reap benefits from giving comments (written and oral) to others? If so, what were the benefits? If not, why not?
- 3. How did you respond to the self-directed feedback activity by means of the worksheet provided by the instructor?
 - a. What are your major concerns about self-directed feedback?
 - b. What can be done to improve the activity of self-directed feedback on the first draft?
- 4. How do you see the modified teacher feedback in this activity as compared with the traditional one?
 - a. What concerns do you have as a writer in terms of modified teacher feedback?
 - b. How did you deal with the teacher's comments if you were not sure of the teacher's intentions?
- 5. What would you like to share with me about your perception of these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher)? Would you rather receive feedback from all these three types, or any two, or only one of them? Why?

(Adapted from *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*, by J. W. Creswell, 1998, p. 127)

 ${\bf Appendix} \ {\bf J}$ ${\bf Research} \ {\bf Questions} \ {\bf and} \ {\bf Data} \ {\bf Collecting} \ {\bf Methods}$

Research Questions	Data Collection Method
How do EFL students react to pre-writing sessions on generating ideas and organization?	Interviewing related participants and observing their discussion in groups
What are EFL students' perceptions of self-directed feedback in the process of revision?	Interviews with student participants in the case study class and analysis of their self-directed feedback worksheets
What do student writers think of written and oral feedback from peers in peer response sessions? How do they deal with peer comments in their subsequent revisions?	Observing and analyzing students' performance in peer response sessions, examining the mid-term survey and student participant interviews, and evaluating their revised drafts based on peer feedback
How do EFL students respond to the teacher feedback on their revised drafts?	Interviewing student participants and reviewing their text changes as a result of teacher comments
What do EFL students think of these three types of feedback (self-directed, peer, and teacher)?	Interviewing student participants and examining their revised texts

 $\label{eq:Appendix K} Appendix \ K$ Code List for Student Interviews in Multiple Interaction Activities

Research questions	Major themes	Minor themes
Student's writing		College: schoolwork or assignments
	Formal education (WE-FED)	Junior high school: practice for taking GEPT
Experience (WE)		Junior high school: short paragraphs, or some writings
	Informal advantion (WE IEED)	Write emails or blogs
	Informal education (WE-IFED)	Go to cram schools for writing skills
	A.L. (WIG ADEO)	With basic writing skills
	Adequate (WS-ADEQ)	Doing fine
		Read aloud to check
Individual		Grammar
writing skills (WS)		Forget to apply the acquired skills
(₩۵)	Weak (WS-WEAK)	Poor if compared with peers
		Mechanical translation
		Vocabulary
		Sentence structure
	Clear (WG-CLEAR)	Homework
		Improve writing skills
		Comprehensible to readers
		Learn different genres
Individual writing goal		Mastery of grammar and sentences
(WG)		Essay-writing tests
		Mastery of organization and ideas
		Transform knowledge into actual writing ability
	None (WG-NONE)	No goal
Efforts for	Reading (EWC-READ)	Stories, newspapers, children's books, books for tests, texts for composition, and magazines Review works composed before
writing competence		Extra texts on the same topic
(EWC)	Writing	Write emails or blogs
	(EWC-WRIT)	Extra practice for summary and response

		Prepare essay-writing tests	
		Practice writing up things	
	Interdisciplinary application (EWC-APPL)	Writing skills applied to other subjects (conversation class, Western Literature, and so on)	
	No extra effort (EWC-NONE)	Nothing done for improving writing	
		English news	
	Public (RES-PUBL)	Resources on the Internet	
	I uone (RES-I OBE)	Facilities at SAC (Self-Access Center) Books from library	
Resources		Magazines like Studio Classroom	
available (RES)	D: (DEC DDW)	Peers, relatives, teachers, dictionaries, or reference books	
	Private (RES-PRIV)	Take writing classes overseas in summer	
		Cram schools	
	None (RES-NONE)	No resources used	
	Content (PR-CONT)	Broad vision for content development	
		Peers' comments against writer's ideas	
	T' (DD TH (H)	Nervous about timed activities	
	Time (PR-TIME)	Time-consuming	
	Example (PR-EXAMP)	Need writing examples from teacher	
	Language proficiency (PR-LANG/PROF)	Unable to give constructive feedback	
Peer response		Grammatical errors	
activities (PR)		Tiring but fruitful	
	Beneficial (PR-BENEF)	Get synergy from activity	
		Learn from peers' writings	
		Helpful to know errors	
	Recording (PR-REC)	Chitchat if no recording	
	Autonomy (PR-AUTON)	Evaluate before taking peers' comments	
	Member's problem (PR-MEMB)	Member's passive attitude toward activities	
Dro_writing		Broad vision and knowledge	
Pre-writing discussion (PWD)	Raising awareness (PWD-AWAR)	Understand topic better and develop more ideas	
, ,		Comprehensible message	

	Meaning negotiation (PWD-MEAN)	Increased comprehension	
		Time-consuming	
		Ideas lack depth	
	Inefficient (PWD-INEF)	Too many people with limited time	
		Unequal in turn-taking	
		No specific goal to reach	
	Topic influence (PWD-TOPIC)	Topic influences efficiency of PWD	
		Judge before adopting for revision	
		Expect explanations to comments	
	Evaluating peers' comments	Take feedback providers into consideration	
	(PC-SIZUP)	Double-check dubious comments	
Peers' comments in		Take form feedback but reserved to accept content feedback	
revision (PC)		Take content feedback	
	Focus of attention (PC-FOCUS)	Grammar, content, and coherence	
	Recording (PC-REC)	Chitchat if no recording	
	Comprehensible change (PC-CHAN)	Take peers' comments to make writing understandable	
	Writer's blind spots (PC-BLIND)	Detect something wrong or missed	
	Unhelpful for revision	Pick up items from Peer Feedback Worksheet	
	(PC-UNHE)	Identify errors but fail to give suggestions	
		Blindly follow others' opinions	
		Scarce feedback	
	Comprehend before explanation (MN-COMP/EXPLN)	Check one's writing against comments	
		Comprehend feedback; then explain	
	Exchanging viewpoints (MN-EXCH/VIEW)	Explain intended meanings in Chinese or different way, with an outline or examples	
Meaning		Explain for agreement on meanings	
negotiation		Accept different views and values	
(MN)		Reception-oriented revision	
	No misinterpretation (MN-NONE)	Meaning negotiation is unneeded	

		Avoid the same errors in future	
		Increase grammar knowledge	
		Learn from peers' strengths and weaknesses	
	Awareness raising (BGC-AWAR/RAIS)	Learn different writing skills	
Benefits from		Reader-oriented writing	
giving comments		Inspire new ideas	
(BGC)	Other gains (BGC-GAIN)	Improve communication ability	
		Writing reflects character	
G 16 11 1	THE CALCELL MELTIN	Help identify errors	
Self-directed feedback	Helpful (SFA-HELP)	Help check necessary items	
activity (SFA)		Cherished writing experience	
	Low efficiency (SFA-LOW/	Unhelpful due to blind spots	
	EFECT)	Make limited revisions	
		Worksheet limits ways of thinking	
Concerns	Grammar (SFC-GRAM)	Grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary	
about self-directed feedback	Content (SFC-CONT)	Organization, idea development, and conclusion echoes topic	
(SFC)	Logic (SFC-LOG)	Fluency of writing	
	Need teacher feedback (SFC-TF)	Ineffective self-feedback	
	Read drafts aloud (SFI-READ/LOUD)	Check-up for errors	
	Consultation (SFI-ADVIS)	High-achievers and teacher	
		Resources on the Internet	
Calf dimental		Reference books	
Self-directed feedback improvement	Worksheet (SFI-WOKSHT)	Carefully follow worksheet to check drafts	
(SFI)	Improve language proficiency (SFI-LANG/PROF)	Teacher offers example sentences and similar texts	
		Teacher lectures on the texts first	
		Follow teacher's mode	
	Postpone SF activity (SFI-POSTP)	Don't engage in SF activity right after finishing drafts	
	Need peer feedback (SFI-PF/NEED)	Lack of self-confidence	
	None (SFI-NONE)	No suggestion	
		Drive to think over errors	

		Awareness raising	
		Become actively involved in learning	
	Helpful (MTF-HELP)	Marked hints in grammar	
Response to modified teacher		Comments on writer's strengths and weaknesses	
feedback (MTF) &		Impressive	
traditional		No motivation to think over errors	
teacher feedback		Unable to know why	
(TTF)	Unhelpful (TTF-UNHE)	Limit answers to few	
		Direct corrections look messy	
		Writers don't care about corrections	
		Vague impression	
_	Marked hints (MTFC-HINT)	Marked errors	
Concerns about		Idea development	
modified		Grammar issues	
teacher feedback	Comments (MTFC-COM)	Comprehensive comments	
(MTFC)		Check personal weaknesses	
		Positive feedback and encouragement	
	Readable (MTFC-READABLE)	Essays comprehensible to the teacher	
	Consult teacher (TIU-ASK/TEAC)	Ask teacher to explain	
Unsure of teacher's intentions	Clarify with peers (TIU-CLAR/PEER)	Discuss TF with peers	
(TIU)	Re-read before asking (TIU-REREAD)	Read and check again before asking	
	Search (TIU-SEARCH)	Search for answers before asking	
	Self-directed feedback (3FP-SF)		
	Peer feedback (3FP-PF)	Fail to identify errors	
		Most helpful for broad views	
		Impressed with interaction	
		Some peers with limited writing skills	
		Peers provide vague suggestions	
Perception of	Teacher feedback (3FP-TF)	Offer substantial help	
three types of		Important for grammar feedback	
feedback (3FP)		Give direction for revision	
(SFY)		Tiring but beneficial	
		Take different proportion of time	

	General perception (3FP-GEN)	Like all revision activities		
		Interesting as an instructional method		
		SF useless whereas PF and TF helpful		
		PF is time-consuming		
		Time-management		
		Interactive		
	All indispensable (3FN-NEED)	All of them helpful		
		All needed with different proportion of weight		
		Complementary to each other		
	Why (3FN-WHY)	Continuum of revisions		
	(SIIV WIII)	Gain momentum from each activity		
		More remarkable		
	Self-directed feedback deleted (3FN-D/SF)	Self-proofreading unhelpful due to blind spots		
Necessity of three types of		SF, TF, then PF		
feedback	Order of importance	SF, PF, then TF		
(3FN)	(3FN-ORDER)	TF, PF, then SF		
		TF, SF, then PF		
		PF, TF, then SF		
		PF, SF, then TF		
		Teacher is professional and		
	Reason of importance (3FN-RESN)	experienced Peers offer broad vision and		
		suggestions		
		SF helps to be better writers		
		Wrong comments from peers		
		Less self-confidence in SF		
		Reader-oriented writing for peers		
		SF for contrast, PF for comparison, TF for integration		
	Time (FA-TIME)	Activities done in a rush		
	Recording (FA-REC)	Recording undesirable		
Feedback on	Grouping (FA-GROUP)	Self-forming group		
three types of activities (FA)	Practice (FA-PRACT)	More practice		
,	Proper topic (FA-TOPIC)	Give texts with proper topic		
	Written conclusion (FA-WR/CON)	Replace recording with written conclusions		
	Positive feedback (FA-POSIT)	Continue all activities for the following semesters		

Appendix L

Code List for Peer Response Sessions

Feedback	Response	Type of Response	
Effectiveness	Relatedness		
		Clarification	
		Request for explanation (CLAR-RQ/EXP)	
		Comprehension check (CLAR-CHN/CHK)	
Constructive		Confirmation or Explanation	
Feedback (CON/F)	On Task (ON/T)	Unclear point (EXP-UNC/PONT)	
		Opinion (EXP-OPIN)	
		Content (EXP-CONT)	
		Restatement or repetition (RESTATE)	
		Suggestion (SUGST)	
		Grammar correction (GRAM/COR)	
		Repair	
		Self-repair (REP-SR)	
		Other-repair(REP-OR)	
		Point out problem without feasible	
Partially helpful		suggestions (NO/FEAS/SUGST)	
Feedback	About Task (AB/T)	Beat about the bush (NOT/TO/PONT)	
(PART/HELP/F)		Partially correct comment	
		(PART/COR/COM)	
		Incorrect comment (WRNG/COM)	
Misleading	Off Task (OFF/T)	Topic shift (TOP/SHIFT)	
Feedback (MIS/F)		Unrelated comment (UNR/COM)	

Appendix M Evaluation Criteria for the Feedback Effect on Students' Revised Drafts

Topic:	Writer's name:

Feedback Type	Descriptors	Stat	us of Revis	ion
		high	moderate	low
	Idea development			
	(a) Summary of the target text			
	(b) Opinions for or against the issue with			
	supporting details			
	(c) A persuasive conclusion			
	Sufficiency			
	(a) Well-defined thesis			
	(b) Synthesized ideas			
Self-directed	Organization of information as signs of			
Feedback	enhanced quality			
	(a) Direct expression of viewpoints			
	(b) Logic order			
	(c) Paragraph coherence and transitions			
	(d) Restatement of main ideas in conclusion			
	Improved grammar			
	(a) Global errors: verb tense, sentence			
	structure, word order, and adjective and			
	noun clause			
	(b) Local errors: subject-verb agreement,			
	article use, word form, and preposition			
	Idea development			
	(a) Summary of the target text			
	(b) Opinions for or against the issue with			
	supporting details			
	(c) A persuasive conclusion			
Peer Feedback	Sufficiency			
	(a) Well-defined thesis			
	(b) Synthesized ideas			

	Organization of information as signs of
	enhanced quality
	(a) Direct expression of viewpoints
	(b) Logic order
	(c) Paragraph coherence and transitions
	(d) Restatement of main ideas in conclusion
	Improved grammar
	(a) Global errors: verb tense, sentence
	structure, word order, and adjective and
	noun clause
	(b) Local errors: subject-verb agreement,
	article use, word form, and preposition
	Idea development
	(a) Summary of the target text
	(b) Opinions for or against the issue with
	supporting details
	(c) A persuasive conclusion
	Sufficiency
	(a) Well-defined thesis
Teacher	(b) Synthesized ideas
Feedback	Organization of information as signs of
	enhanced quality
	(a) Direct expression of viewpoints
	(b) Logic order
	(c) Paragraph coherence and transitions
	(d) Restatement of main ideas in conclusion
	Improved grammar
	(a) Global errors: verb tense, sentence
	structure, word order, and adjective and
	noun clause
	(b) Local errors: subject-verb agreement,
	article use, word form, and preposition

Appendix N

Wandering Home

Every morning for weeks this spring I was awakened at five by the gentle, persistent cooing of a dove. Such a soft, lovely song, yet each day it was able to penetrate my dreams and lure me from my bed onto the balcony. I would search through treetops for a glimpse of her until the damp chill sent me back indoors, and then finally one day I spotted her. She had built a nest on the trellis right over my door, wedged in amid a looping tangle of wisteria. I didn't dare go out onto the balcony again, for fear of disturbing her. Several days later the cooing stopped, and I suppose she became serious about laying and hatching her eggs, or why else would she sit so still and silent in her new home?

Nesting. Why do we do it, why does it matter? Why do we care so much? This has been on my mind lately, because I recently met a real wanderer, someone who is defiantly, dogmatically, devotedly nomadic. He isn't selfishly drifting; homeless by choice, he has spent the past 20 years living all over the world, doing good. Home for him is a provisional thing. I was so struck by the marked contrast to the way my friends and I have hunkered down, sent out roots, gathered treasure, gotten anchored. Maybe got stuck, who knows? I have always thought of making a home as one of those basic desires, but why should it be?

It is too easy to say home is where the heart is, where your loved ones sleep. Your loved ones can go with you, wherever you roam, and your loved ones can just as well be scattered to all corners of the world. We grow up (most of us) and ruthlessly leave behind the first homes of our childhood. And we often leave with the thought that the home we make for ourselves will be markedly different from the one made by our parents.

Some of us end up finding home in the town where we were raised. Some of us have ancestral homes, where generations of the family have been raised—places dear enough to draw everyone back. Some of us simply choose a place, or, if we are lucky, we feel the place chooses us. For some of us, a home is as large as a country—"I'm at home in France," one friend will say, or "I felt like I had come home when I got to Ireland"— and for others, a home is as small as the four walls of a room. Some of us move restlessly from house to house; others are restless within the house, rearranging the furniture, circling toward some approximation of beauty, serenity. And then some of us are so settled that our bodies creak to leave the sofa.

Maybe home is one of those subjects over which much of the world is divided: those who care about it passionately and those who don't give it a second thought. Maybe some of us are the fixed points of the compass; we're home, so others can twirl in circles around the globe. Some of us need the foundation of a home because our thoughts, dreams, emotions are constantly wheeling, wandering. And for some of us, there is the great adventure of making a home—you know, that thing about the world in a grain of sand or, dare I say, a smear of paint, a dab of plaster, the twinkle of a chandelier, the gleam of that old pearwood commode. The adamant wanderer finally confessed to having a warehouse full of stuff collected over the years, so even a nomad isn't immune to fantasies of home, however delayed the gratification of making one might turn out to be.

As for the dove: after a few quiet weeks, I noticed on the ground beneath her nest what I first took to be a bright curl of Styrofoam and of course turned out to be the fragment of an eggshell. One down. One untimely flight, one tiny lost soul. But still the dove sits, home for the time being.

Source: From *The Least You Should Know about English Writing Skills* by Paige Wilson and Teresa F. Glazier, pp. 248-250)

Appendix O

The Dog and the Wolf

(A Fable)

From *Learning about Law*, published by the Ohio State Bar Association

Once there was a wolf who was nearly dead with hunger. He was very thin, so thin that the outline of his bones could be seen clearly beneath his thinning coat of hair. With hardly enough energy to walk, the wolf had little hope of finding food. As he lay beneath a large tree, a dog out for a walk noticed him. Seeing how thin and hungry-looking the wolf was, the dog felt sorry for him and said, "You are in terrible shape! You look as if you haven't eaten for many days."

"You're right," said the wolf. "I haven't eaten because you and your friends are doing such a good job of guarding the sheep. Now I am so weak that I have little hope of finding food. I think I shall surely die."

"Then why not join us?" asked the dog. "I work regularly and I eat regularly. You could do the same. I will arrange it. You can help me and the other dogs guard the sheep. In that way, we won't have to worry about your stealing the sheep any more and you won't have to worry about going hungry any more. It's a good deal for both of us."

The wolf thought it over for a few minutes and then decided that the dog was right. So they went off together toward the ranch house where the dog lived. But, as they were walking, the wolf noticed that the hair on a certain part of the dog's neck was very thin. He was curious about this, for the dog had such a beautiful coat everywhere else. Finally, he asked the dog about it.

"Oh, don't worry about that," said the dog. "It's the place where the collar rubs on my neck when my master chains me up at night."

"Chained up!" cried the wolf. "Do you mean that you are chained up at night? If I come to live with you, will I be chained up at night too?"

"That's right," answered the dog. "But, you'll get used to it soon enough. I hardly think about it anymore."

"But, if I am chained up, then I won't be able to walk when I want to take a walk or to run where I want to run," the wolf said. "If I come to live with you, I won't be free any more." After saying this, the wolf turned and began to run away.

The dog called after the wolf, saying, "Wait! Come back! I may not be able to do everything I want to do, but I'm healthy, well-fed, and I have a warm place to sleep. You are too worried about keeping alive to enjoy life. I'm more free than you are."

Question: Who made the better choice, the dog or the wolf?

Source: L. L Blanton & L. Lee (Eds.) (1995), *The Multicultural Workshop*. Book 2 (pp. 84-89). New York: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Appendix P

Reprint Permission from Dr. Engestrom

Subject: May I use one figure you created in my dissertation?

From: Hsien Lin <hsienlin6@gmail.com>

Date: 2009/8/19

To: yrjo.engestrom@helsinki.fi

Dear Professor Engestrom:

I am a Ph.D student in Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA. I intend to employ the figure of Extended Activity Model (1987) developed by you as my theoretical foundation to investigate the experiences and perceptions of a large multilevel EFL writing class after implementing the multiple interaction activities. I am wondering if I may get your permission to use your figure in my dissertation.

Attached are the abstract of my dissertation and the figure developed by you. If any more information is needed, please let me know and I will do as you request. Thank you.

Hsien-Chuan Lin

From: Yrjö Engeström < yrjo.engestrom@helsinki.fi>

Date: 2009/8/20

To: Hsien Lin <hsienlin6@gmail.com>

Dear Hsien-Chuan, you have my permission to use the figure.

Sincerely,

Yrjö Engeström

Professor

Hsien Lin kirjoitti 20.8.2009 kello 5.42:

<Abstract.doc>

VITA

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University

Hsien-Chuan Lin

408 S. Poplar St. Apt# 7 Carbondale, IL 62901

hclin@siu.edu

Education:

Tamkang University, Taiwan B.A. English, 1985

University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, U.S. M.A. English, 1990

Honors/Awards:

Recipient of the 2007 Southern Illinois University Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa/Robert& Avis McDaniel Scholarship for Graduate Studies

Recipient of the 2007 Audrey Tomera Memorial Scholarship

Dissertation Title:

A Case Study of How a Large Multilevel EFL Writing Class Experiences and Perceives Multiple Interaction Activities

Major Professor: Dr. Lynn C. Smith