

Peer Feedback Interactions in EFL Compositions: Written Feedback versus Oral Feedback*

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Suh, Jaesuk. (2005). Peer feedback interactions in EFL compositions: Written feedback versus oral feedback. *English Teaching*, 60(3), 91-116.

The aim of the paper was to investigate the effectiveness of two different types of peer feedback activities (i.e., peer review sessions and writing conferences) in process-oriented EFL compositions. To this end, a study was conducted in which subjects were six college students, and data were collected via questionnaire and journal writing. During the first half of semester, subjects engaged in peer review sessions in which they worked in pairs to exchange written feedback by responding to items on a peer-review sheet. For the rest of semester, subjects participated in writing conferences in which each subject received oral feedback by reading his/her draft aloud to the rest of course members, and gaining suggestions or comments on it. Drafts were revised on the basis of written feedback and oral feedback, respectively, and were scored analytically. Meanwhile, to determine subjects' perception of two differing types of peer feedback, data from questionnaire and journal writing were also analyzed. Among the findings, most important, though both types of peer feedback activities played a facilitative role in improving writing attitude and writing skill by triggering the changes in various parts of L2 writing processes, writing conferences were more effective in assuming such a role than peer review sessions. It was concluded that peer feedback activities, especially writing conferences would be an appropriate, effective tool to promote and enhance students' writing interest and writing ability in light of the very complicated nature of L2 writing which usually lowers motivation, and weakens confidence in writing in EFL compositions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Among many issues that L2 writing research brings to the forefront, the issue of feedback on written work has been attracting considerable attention over the last few

* This work was supported by Inha University Research Grant (INHA-31424).

The author is grateful for three anonymous reviewers' comments on the earlier version of this paper.

decades. A quick glance at the literature on L2 writing shows that studies on feedback have been conducted along three major lines of inquiry (Ferris, 1995): the value of peer evaluation, or teacher response (e.g., Chaudron, 1984; Muncie, 2000; Yoonhee Soh, 1999; Zamel, 1987), the effects of different types of feedback on text (e.g., Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Warden, 2000), and L2 writers' assessment of feedback given by peers or teacher (e.g., Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Sengupta, 1998; Shi, 1998; Stanley, 1996).

In spite of a plethora of studies on feedback on L2 text from various perspectives, there is still one important domain of feedback rarely touched in L2 writing research: the role of writing conference (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990, 1996). In process-oriented writing classes, writers usually have the possibility of gaining peer feedback in two different ways. That is, while writers focus on creating and conveying meaning, they share what they have written with peers in either peer review sessions or writing conferences. In a peer review session students usually work in pairs to read draft of fellow student's essay and give comments or suggestions for revision mostly by using a peer review sheet (Byrd, 2003; Mangelsdorf, 1992). Meanwhile, in a writing conference oral feedback is offered in such a way that an individual writer reads an initial draft aloud to the whole class members, and has a chance to receive feedback and to evaluate his/her own piece of writing. Thus one clear advantage of writing conferences lies in fostering the development of writing ability through interactions with other writers (Zamel, 1987, in Nunan, 1995). Another advantage of writing conferences is that since writing conferences serve the function of increasing audience awareness which helps to create reader-based composition rather than writer-based composition showing little consideration of shared meaning and context between writer and reader, they can become another useful source of feedback for subsequent revisions leading to the production of a good piece of writing (Flower, 1996).

Unlike the field of L1 writing in which there exists abundant evidence for the positive role played by writing conferences in improving writing fluency, research on their role in L2 writing has been underrepresented in the literature (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990, 1996). Instead, much discussion has centered on the value and effectiveness of conferences in L2 composition. According to Chamot and O'Malley (1994), when learners have an opportunity to verbalize ideas and get their meaning across in conferences during which they share what they compose with other students, their ability to use writing as a tool of communication is enhanced. Addressing several advantages of conferences, Sokmen (1988) stated that since teachers can figure out what students try to say in their essay through dynamic interaction with them during conferences, conferences are a better means of responding to student work than written comments. In the same vein, Zamel (1996) espoused for the usefulness of conferences in ESL writing, holding that "instead of limiting our responses to

written comments... that proceed in only one direction, we should set up collaborative sessions and conferences during which important discoveries can be made by both reader and writer” (p. 169). Probably Goldstein and Conrad (1996) were among the first to investigate the relationship between negotiation and revision of drafts in ESL writing conferences. They reported that subjects who made more negotiations of meaning with teacher in conferences than those who did not tended to revise drafts successfully. Similarly, Shi (1998) provided evidence for the facilitative role played by peer talk in ESL writing. In a study looking into the effects of differing types of prewriting discussions on ESL compositions, Shi showed that teacher-led discussion was useful in assisting writers in the conceptualization of thoughts through scaffolding while peer-led discussion motivated them to elaborate ideas more deeply, and incorporate rich, diverse vocabulary into their writing. Nelson and Carson (1998) were interested in the effectiveness of peer response groups in an ESL composition course taken by learners with Chinese and Spanish as L1 background, and examined their perception of peer comments given during peer response work. It was found that learners preferred negative comments on problems in their drafts, and liked teacher feedback better than peer comments.

Despite much claims and research evidence for the facilitative role of writing conferences in ESL compositions, few studies have been conducted on their effectiveness in EFL learning situations. Such a lack of empirical evidence seems to make one hesitate to answer questions like ‘Do writing conferences in EFL context make a contribution to the development of writing ability to the same extent to which they do in ESL context?’, ‘How effective and useful are writing conferences to EFL learners with a specific L1 background?’, or ‘Are there differences among different types of peer feedback interactions (e.g., conferences producing oral feedback versus peer review sessions offering written feedback) in the subsequent revision of drafts? The present study was guided by such lines of inquiry, and had an aim of determining the effectiveness of writing conferences in an EFL composition course. To be more specific, the paper addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Korean learners perceive the way of gaining oral feedback from writing conferences as compared to the way of gaining written feedback from peer review sessions as they engage in a process-based writing task?
2. Are there differences in various aspects of writing between final drafts revised through oral feedback obtained from writing conferences and final drafts revised through written feedback gained from peer review sessions?

II. METHODS

1. Participants

The subjects consisted of six Korean students enrolled at one university in the central part of Korea, which made the study small-scale and exploratory in nature. They were taking a course entitled 'Intermediate English Composition' at the time of the study. All the subjects were sophomores in early 20s, and a half of them were female. They majored in a variety of fields except English language & literature or English education, and self-rated English proficiency ranged from intermediate-mid to intermediate-high. They had been learning English for an average length of seven years while no one had been in any English-speaking countries before. In addition, none of the subjects had been exposed to the process approach to English writing, so they were not familiar with peer feedback interactions at all at the time of the study.

2. Instruments and Procedure

To find out answers to research question 1 (i.e., 'How do subjects perceive two types of feedback, written feedback from peer review sessions and oral feedback from writing conferences?'), two different data-gathering methods were used: questionnaire and journal writing. Questionnaire was designed to elicit data on subjects' perception of two different ways of getting feedback (i.e., written feedback and oral feedback) during their composition. It included nine items which were open-ended questions asking about subjects' feelings or thoughts about each type of feedback which they experienced in a writing task (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was administered on the last day of class. Journal writing was used to determine how subjects reacted to EFL writing instruction framed on the process approach which they have experienced over the course of one semester. Subjects were asked to write down everything that came into their mind during each one of the writing classes. Journal writing was done immediately after the end of an individual class in the belief that such an immediate retrospection can not only produce rich information by allowing informants to analyze or edit what they experience during a specific task, but offer quite accurate, reliable information as traces of acquired information are assumed to remain in short-term memory territory (Cohen, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1987). Journal writing was done in Korean, and transcribed in English for further analysis.

On the other hand, to answer research question 2 (i.e., 'Are there differences in various aspects of writing between final drafts revised through written feedback and final drafts revised through oral feedback?'), a comparison was made between two sets of final drafts in terms of five major aspects of writing. As for final drafts revised through written

feedback in peer review sessions, subjects gained feedback in such a way that they were asked to work in pairs, and give comments on partner's essay by using a peer review sheet (see Appendix B). After exchanging peer review sheet, students in each pair were given time to read through a review sheet, and to ask questions for clarification or explanation in relation to feedback given by a partner. In this way, students in peer review sessions had a chance to reach a better understanding of written feedback from a partner. Based on written feedback, individual students were instructed to revise a draft, then check for grammar including mechanics, and submit it for grade. As one way of minimizing the effect of what subjects had done during peer review sessions on the upcoming writing conference, after the completion of peer review sessions, a buffer task was conducted in which subjects were given instruction on guided writing for three weeks during which they practiced summarizing texts on a variety of topics with the guide of comprehension questions within a given text (Pritchard, 1990). Concerning final drafts revised through oral feedback, after a three week-long guided writing instruction, students were engaged in writing conferences. Despite several variations in writing conferences, following suggestions made by Genesee and Upshur (1996) who held that conferences "generally take the form of a conversation or discussion between teachers and students about school work, and can include individual students, several students, or even the whole class" (p. 108), this study employed conference in which all the subjects including an instructor sat in circle, and every one of them read its essay aloud, so that an individual writer had an opportunity to make his/her essay clear and comprehensible to the whole class through discussion and negotiation with other writers. Based on the resulting oral feedback, students made a subsequent revision of draft, and further worked on grammar and mechanics of a revised draft for submission. Three sets of final drafts which were written on various topics, and were revised on the basis of the two differing types of feedback were chosen for comparison to see if there existed any differences between them in various aspects of writing.

Throughout peer review sessions and conferences subjects were encouraged to be actively involved in peer feedback work. In conferences an instructor played the role of a guide to ensure that every subject made contributions, and a smooth turn-taking took place with no communication breakdown while in peer review sessions he went around to offer help when necessary. As stated earlier, subjects in the study were taking an EFL composition course framed on the process approach throughout the semester. Every time subjects wrote about a new topic, they passed through a pre-writing stage in which they pondered, and discussed a topic with one another for a following draft. Then each subject engaged in writing a first draft with a focus on meaning, not form, and made a revision of it according to either written feedback, or oral feedback. Before each type of peer feedback work, practice sessions were held in which subjects were given detailed explanation and instruction of what they should do in peer review sessions and conferences, respectively.

The writing class met once a week throughout the semester, and each class lasted for three hours.

3. Data Analysis

To determine subjects' perception of two different types of feedback given in the process-oriented writing instruction (i.e., research question 1), data were analyzed qualitatively in search of recurring themes or patterns which showed subjects' views or thoughts about each type of feedback during a writing task (Merriam, 1988). Written data from both questionnaire and journal writing were read with careful attention paid to content to identify a unit of information which constituted independent meaning relevant to the study question (Mangelsdorf, 1992). Each unit of information was compared with one another to group units of information together which had a similar concept or notion. Such a process led to the emergence of categories each of which was offered a suitable name reflecting the nature and character of a given category. Meanwhile, to find out the differences in the overall quality of text between final drafts revised via written feedback and final drafts revised via oral feedback (i.e., research question 2), an individual draft was scored analytically in terms of five aspects of writing (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, content, and organization) suggested by Cohen (1994) (see Appendix C). Three sets of final drafts revised via written feedback and oral feedback, respectively were compared to see any differences in the five aspects of writing with the help of a statistical technique of paired-samples t-test.

III. RESULTS

1. Perception of Two Types of Peer Feedback: Written and Oral Feedback

A content-analysis of data yielded four categories which represent subjects' views, feelings, and thoughts about written feedback gained from peer review sessions, or oral feedback gained from conferences. These categories include: Improvement of writing attitude and writing skill, Creation of favorable contexts for building relationships and social skills, Influence on different aspects of a writing task, and Changes caused by the use of peer feedback in the process-oriented writing instruction.

1) Improvement of Writing Attitude and Writing Skill

Subjects in this category showed an overall agreement on the facilitative role played by

both written and oral feedback in the improvement of writing attitude and writing skill. Several students expressed dissatisfaction with their prior experience with L2 writing classes in which they had been forced to make a composition with little interest and motivation for writing, and showed their preference for the current writing instruction, particularly the way they were given feedback. One student described how the current writing course made her feel pleasant and interested in L2 writing and get a positive attitude toward L2 writing: “This course differed greatly from previous courses in a number of ways. Most important, the way I gain feedback from peers is entirely new, and fascinates me. We read and hear one essay at a time, and talk about what is good or what is bad. It’s just for me. I find myself waiting for the next writing class, which I had never felt in other writing classes.” Similarly, another student added that “Unlike my expectation, this writing course demands a lot. It requires collaborative work with class members rather than individual work most of the time especially when we work for feedback. Such an obligatory participation bugs me at the beginning of semester since I usually don’t talk much. Nevertheless, I come to enjoy listening to peer’s writing, and talking about it because this interaction stimulates me to try hard on my own writing constantly. I’m kind of surprised to see that writing can be done in such an easy way. I’m happy to find a positive side of L2 writing.” Still other students reported that the way of their being engaged in a task of L2 writing in this course had much effect on improving their writing skill. One student wrote that through the use of feedback from classmates she was in a better position to see how her text could sound more interesting, clearer, and more attractive than ever before, which indicated the increasing of writing proficiency.

Though students showed a great deal of similarities in recognizing the central role of feedback (both written and oral) in the improvement of writing attitude and writing skill within the process-based writing classes, they differed in the degree of importance given to each type of feedback. The majority of students found oral feedback gained from conferences more beneficial in developing writing ability and creating positive writing attitude than written feedback gained from peer review sessions. The following are examples showing this difference:

Unlike peer review sessions where I worked with only one partner, in conferences I was able to meet all the class members, get a chance to see how they go about their writing, and be familiar with a variety of expressions useful for my writing. I feel the more conference I have, the better I can write in English.

To me, conferences were much more helpful than peer review sessions in the increasing of my writing skill since conference participation not only made me

notice where I was wrong, but led me to know a lot of things needed for the production of a good piece of text by providing a variety of suggestions and ideas in some detail which [I guess] written feedback from peer review sessions was difficult to offer.

On the other hand, some students addressed a few problems of written feedback gained from peer review sessions. Among them, unclearly written responses were viewed as the most serious problem in peer review sessions. According to one student, "Since responses were written in general forms, often they were not clear and understandable. I had hard time figuring out what was exactly meant by some parts of the feedback on a peer review sheet. I asked for clarification or elaboration, but unfortunately there were some cases in which I was still unable to understand. I couldn't ask again." Another disadvantage involved the dominance of grammatical nature of feedback. Though students were advised to focus mainly on meaning in text rather than grammar during peer review sessions, they tended to offer grammar comments in many cases. Grammar-centered feedback is likely to impede the fulfillment of the role of writing as a message-transmitter for communication, and to become a barrier to a balanced attainment between form and meaning in writing skill which is essential in creating a good piece of text.

2) Creation of Favorable Contexts for Building Relationships and Social Skills

In general, students here perceived both peer review sessions and conferences as conducive to the establishment of a good relationship with course members and to the building of social skills. Various communicative processes involved in peer feedback interactions were dynamic and cooperative, and helped to develop a positive relationship among students. One student recalled that "L2 writing used to be done silently and individually. No interaction or discussion took place during writing. However, now we communicate with one another for seeking feedback, which not only reduces the burden of revision to a great extent, but fosters a friendly, encouraging atmosphere." Such learning circumstances during peer feedback interactions led students to get more familiar with each other, and accelerated closeness among them as another student indicated: "Unlike prior courses, this course provided me with sufficient time to tell and hear about other's writing as well as writing of my own. In doing so, some awkwardness or coldness among course members disappeared, and now I feel much more familiar with them than at the beginning of semester. In fact, a familiarity with members is of primary importance to reach a better understanding of what is going on during interactions which enables me to dig deeper in my writing." In addition to the facilitative role of both peer review sessions and conferences in generating positive relationships among class members, they were also

useful in helping students develop various social skills which are not only critical in gaining feedback in an effective, successful way, but fundamental for everyday language use out of the classroom. According to one student, "Feedback sessions really push me to develop skills needed for everyday life, and to practice them as I try to express my thoughts and opinions as clearly, logically, and persuasively as possible to others. I have been thinking that I need to be more sociable, and develop pro-social skills at all times. And the time for feedback in this class offers exactly what I want."

The creation of favorable contexts conducive to the development of positive relationships among course members and social skills seemed to be easier and more pronounced in conferences than in peer review sessions. Many students were quick to agree that peer review sessions which allowed an interaction with only one person tended to be limited in both quantity and quality of feedback, as compared to conferences which made it possible for an individual writer to get as much feedback as possible from all the class members through discussion and negotiation which resulted in more familiarity and better understanding of one another. As the following example made this point clear, "I had much trouble getting feedback from my partner partly because he did not appear to work hard and be serious about what we were doing. There were even some occasions when I couldn't get his responses or answers to my questions. But when conferences started, things got better. I was able to receive much more input to my writing in a way that I could understand, and to become familiar with classmates that I had not known well."

Meanwhile, there were some disadvantages of conferences raised by students. One disadvantage of interest involved a tendency of students to hesitate to speak out opinions and comments which were harsh, or made others feel embarrassed. Students seemed to be worried that negative feedback would hurt peer's emotion or feeling, and make him/her have a bad or wrong image of them, which later might have a negative effect on relationship. Such a concern also led students to exercise caution in using their language, and express feedback mainly in an indirect, roundabout manner. As a result, students behaved somewhat passively, and were not able to say what they wanted to say for feedback in a clear, straightforward way during conferences. As one student was explicit on this point, "Honestly speaking, sometimes I feel uncomfortable during conference since I have to give feedback which I think would bother peers. I don't want to be seen as an impudent, shameless person just by offering harsh feedback straightforwardly. So I wonder whether or not, I should go ahead and tell what is in mind." Another student addressed a similar point that she was reluctant to actively participate in conference due to the anxiety of disclosing writing ability of peers' as well as his/hers over the course of making suggestions or comments unfittingly."

3) Influence on Different Aspects of a Writing Task

As shown in the previous categories, in general, both written feedback from peer review sessions and oral feedback from conferences were most useful in that the two types of peer feedback stimulated a writer to go beyond self-imposed limits to see others' ideas and perspectives, which plays a crucial role in leading a writer to be aware of audience of his/her writing. As one student wrote, "My experience is that whereas I tried hard mostly to come up with grammatical expressions in the past compositions, this course helps me to learn that writing is basically a tool for communication, and transmits what I think to others. I know how to write for readers who would see my text." Such a reader-based writing has been assumed to be one of the important elements leading to a good piece of text.

Further in this category students thought that each type of feedback influenced different aspects of writing. Concerning written feedback, several students felt that they tended to talk much about grammar and vocabulary in text during peer review sessions though they admitted that peer review sessions also guided them in making text clear and meaningful through partner work. One student described, "I know I have problems with grammar in my writing, and my partner did just what I needed. He pointed at several ungrammatical sentences on the sheet, and we devoted much time to grammatical errors for our text. Unfortunately, his grammar comments were not quite helpful to me. I strongly feel the importance of grammar in English composition." On the other hand, as for oral feedback, most students noted that oral feedback from conferences worked more effectively on meaning-related aspects of writing (i.e., content and organization in text) though it also contained grammar-relevant comments. It may be that what differentiated oral feedback from written feedback was that the former enabled students to expose a wider variety of ideas and thoughts, and refine them in more detail than the latter through interactions with all the course members. As a result, it is highly likely that students would end up with text of a semantic unity in conferences rather than peer review sessions. Here is one student's response showing the beneficial effect of oral feedback on the meaning of text: "Though I feel uncomfortable reading my draft aloud in front of others during conference, I am willing to do so because it does me good a lot. Above all, during conference I learn to focus more on meaning of text by paying careful attention to what is read, not the form of language, which naturally leads me to assess how clearly and effectively the message of one's text is transmitted. In contrast, when reading my partner's text in peer feedback session, I relied mainly on language form because I had to understand what was written for comprehension through silent reading."

4) Changes Caused by the Use of Peer Feedback in Process-oriented Writing Instruction

Finally, students in the last category mentioned a variety of changes occurring during peer feedback interactions which they perceived as new, interesting, or unsatisfactory. First, the change which was most frequently addressed by students involved their first exposure to peer feedback practice in L2 writing. Nearly all the students gave one voice that no opportunity for peer feedback had been offered to them in prior English composition classes, so their experience with the current writing course was absolutely new, and aroused intense interest in L2 writing. As one student recalled, "I am excited about working with a partner in the peer review session. Searching for problems in a partner's draft is like poring over a picture and finding hidden objects in it. Time in this class just flies." Other students noted that peer response activity stimulated curiosity since it gave them a chance to hear what others wrote about and to know how they went about writing.

Second, another change that students saw as attractive or distasteful in peer feedback interactions involved the role of student and teacher. In typical, lockstep writing classes learners get passively involved in writing by being forced to write while teacher stands in the center of attention by choosing a writing topic and giving feedback on a final product. On the other hand, in the current process-based writing instruction students participated actively in a whole process of writing by taking the role of information giver, meaning-maker or consultant while instructor plays the role of guide or helper. So there is a definite need for students to adapt to this new role in order for peer feedback practice to take place effectively and successfully. Most students considered their new role either attractive or challenging as one student wrote: "Though I and my partner struggle to do peer feedback interactions, we are pleased to work together for revision. I receive opinions from my partner who read through my writing, and I do the same for her. Serving as a counselor or an advisor is good for both of us since it saves lots of time for revision, and promotes writing motivation." Another student added that acting as a feedback giver or receiver is a unique experience to me that I've never had before. It makes me creative and imaginative in constructing message and expressing it, and really helps me to be a skillful writer of L2." However, to a few students the new role which they should play of in peer response activity seemed to put some burden on them. One of them reported that "Since this is the first time for me to get involved in the feedback activity, I feel burdensome and ill at ease because I don't have much confidence in what I offer to others. Further I was often stressed and annoyed because there were times when what I intended to communicate was not transmitted properly, or resulted in misunderstandings."

The changes that occurred in peer feedback practice did not necessarily bring satisfaction and pleasure to all the subjects of the study. There were several students who felt that peer feedback interactions were unbeneficial or even unnecessary. Such a negative

attitude toward peer response involved both written feedback and oral feedback. The following three students showed what made them view peer feedback interactions from a negative perspective:

The feedback from my partner was not really helpful to me. Whereas I worked hard to read his draft for the preparation of feedback, there was little feedback from the partner who said that my writing was just good, and there was little need for revision. I don't see any positive, useful sides of peer feedback interactions. I feel I am doing an unprofitable business. I wish an instructor should have given us more help and more care for feedback to be effective and useful.

Most of us including me need to offer feedback in more clear, more elaborate ways. Also we need to be able to make criticisms about other's writing in a fair, objective manner, which I think would be difficult to learn overnight. Otherwise, I'm doubtful about the value of this peer feedback interaction.

There were times when I was not able to understand what was said or commented on my draft. In most cases, asking for repetition or clarification helped a lot, but in some cases, I still had difficulty of figuring out the exact intended meaning of feedback. On such occasions, I really didn't feel like asking again since I was afraid that other classmates would look at me with superior eyes, or underrate me simply because of my misunderstanding or incomprehensibility. I guess that other classmates experienced the same problem quite often.

2. A Comparison of Final Drafts Revised Through Two Types of Feedback

To determine the difference in the overall quality of text between final drafts revised via written feedback from peer review sessions and final drafts revised via oral feedback from conferences, two sets of final drafts were evaluated analytically, and compared in terms of five aspects of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, organization, and content. The summary of analytic scoring and the result of paired-samples t-test are given in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

TABLE 1
Analytic Scoring on Final Drafts in Five Aspects of Writing (raw scores)

	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanics	Organization	Content
DWF	20	27	28	24	23
DOF	26	29	30	28	29

Note: DWF = drafts revised via written feedback, DOF = drafts revised via oral feedback

TABLE 2
Summary for Paired-samples T-test

	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 DWF-DOF	-4.0	2.0	-4.472	4	.011*

Note: SD = standard deviation, * = statistically significant ($p < .05$)

A close look at Table 1 showed that there were clear differences between two sets of final drafts in the five aspects of writing. As seen in Table 2, according to the statistical analysis of paired-samples t-test, indeed, a statistically significant difference existed between final drafts revised via written feedback and final drafts revised via oral feedback in the overall quality of text. Hence, it can be said that oral feedback gained from writing conferences made a more significant contribution to the revision of final drafts, and thus the production of a good piece of writing than written feedback obtained from peer review sessions. To be more specific, first, as shown in Table 1, a notable difference can be seen between two sets of final drafts in the grammatical aspect of writing. As the following example illustrated, final texts revised through written feedback tended to contain more grammatical errors than final texts revised through oral feedback (Italicized parts show ungrammatical use of language):

- Final draft revised through oral feedback

One of the places which I like best, and want to visit often is my father's hometown, Young-Am located in the *south part* of our nation. Though I was born in Seoul, I spent most of childhood there. So I feel that Young-Am is my real hometown. It is close to Kwang-ju which is the capital of Cholla province, and five hours of car driving is needed from Seoul. It has one national park, and its name is Wol-chul mountain national park. Wol-chul means coming out the moon, and is the smallest national park in this country. But it *had* several beautiful small mountains in it. Whenever I see the mountain, I feel devotion and grace of nature. I also like Young-Am's traditional market place because it makes me feel warmth and tenderness of people in Young-Am. They speak with accent, and it is interesting and funny to me. So I like them very much. (Jung)

- Final draft revised through written feedback

My hometown is Pu-yo. Pu-yo is the province that *located the south of Korea*. It is *small town, citizen go out into the big city every year*. In the street there are *many tourist and foreign*. Because *Pu-yo is lost capital of Back-Jae*. So *there are many cultural properties*. Especially at the Mu-Byoung was found

golden incense burner that was the crystal of cultural property. *On June*, it has Baengma river Watermelon Festival. Because the Watermelon *are* a special product of this district, Pu-yo has a famous river, named by Baengma. Geographical features of Pu-yo *is* basin. *Because* in *the* summer is very hot and in *the* winter is very cold. *Since 1989*, I lived in *Pu-yo*. It is beautiful town even though it has a fault. I love Pu-yo. (Sohn)

As shown in the example, in contrast to the first text which has a few errors, and nonetheless, is quite easy to comprehend, the second text is full of many grammatical errors, not to mention a poor control of semantic relations among sentences across text. For instance, with a sentence 'It is small town, citizen go out into the big city every year' readers would have difficulty in figuring out exactly what a writer tried to say, barely guessing that though the city was a capital of an old dynasty 'Back-Jae', it has become a small city since many of the citizens have moved to a big city to look for a better life every year. Also the second text shows that the writer had problems of dealing with complex sentence structure starting with subordinating conjunctions like 'because', and 'since' as well as subject-verb agreement, tense, and article. It goes without saying that such a frequently occurring grammar type of errors would have interfering effects on both an effective, clear message transmission and an overall understanding of a given text.

Second, two sets of final drafts differed much from each other in content and organization of writing. As in the grammatical difference, final drafts revised through written feedback which suffered a weak semantic unity across sentences and a poor organization of text tended to result in more difficulty of comprehension than final drafts revised through oral feedback. The following example supports our belief that a failure of coherence is one of the serious barriers to the comprehension of text:

- Final draft revised through oral feedback

A travel to a foreign country gave me a chance to learn more about it in many ways. But it also made me feel unpleasant, and have bad experience. A few years ago, I took a back pack trip to Europe. When I arrived in Italia, I promised myself that I would meet my friend, Sam who is my high school friend, and lives in London now. She is also visiting Italia because her boyfriend is Italian, and lives at 'Cupra Maritta' which is a small town on the East coast. For meeting with my friend, I had to take a red express bus in Rome. But to me Italia had uncomfortable, inconvenient express bus system for foreigner tourists. Moreover, most of Italian can't speaks English well. So I can't understand their words in English, and can't find the bus easily. I didn't know what to do. I called my friend... (Bae)

- Final draft revised through written feedback

Last summer vacation, I met my older sister. Because we made appointment to travel to the Dong Hae city. At 19 o'clock we took a subway train and went to Chungrangri station. At 20 o'clock we stayed in the underground station. Suddenly the station was disturbed with people's voice. We went which was disturbed with people's voice. One foreigner was fall down the ground and in the side train was stopped. I think he bumped into the side of train. Anyone not come this happening. During a short time, my body also was not moved because I was embarrassed. But I started to move my body. At first, I walked up to a foreigner, I asked a foreigner. "Are you OK?" A moment he does not said and he said after short time. "I'm alright." in Korean language. So I mistook him for Korean. But his face is foreigner's face. Anyway I set a foreigner at ease... (Sohn)

A quick look at the example indicates that the first text was quite straightforward and easy to follow due to a clear statement of a main idea and a smooth connection of ideas by the adequate use of various cohesive devices despite minor grammatical errors whereas the second text was difficult to understand because of not only grammatical problems, but also poor coherence resulting from little use of transitions and unclear semantic relations among sentences in the text that have a detrimental effect on the understanding of the whole text. For instance, in the second text a topic sentence was not clearly specified, and thus gave readers the difficulty of capturing what the text would be about. Further cohesion linking directly to coherence was not achieved satisfactorily since cohesive devices were used improperly and inconsistently as can be seen in conjunctions such as 'because' and 'but', and in pronoun 'he.' On the other hand, the first text had a main idea stated fairly clearly at the beginning, and showed a skillful use of relative clauses and conjunctions such as 'but', 'moreover', and 'so' which leads to smooth and logical sequencing of adjacent sentences, and thus helps enhance the overall semantic unity in the text. As a result, it can be said that as compared to the first text, the second text is likely to result in reading problems causing misunderstandings or a failure of message transmission.

Finally, unlike the aforementioned aspects of writing such as grammar, content, and organization that caused differences between final texts revised through written feedback and final texts revised through oral feedback, relatively small differences were shown between the two sets of texts in the use of vocabulary and mechanics. That is, as seen in Table 1, the two sets of texts were similar to each other in both the range and choice of vocabulary and the control over spelling and punctuation irrespective of the type of feedback used for their revision. Here is an example showing an overall similarity between the two sets of texts in the use of vocabulary:

- Final draft revised through oral feedback

My worst experience happened on the lake. It was a most dangerous experience of all my life. When I was 14 years old, I got a chance to trip to the Thailand with my friends and cousin. It was my first oversea travel. The accident happened the last day of our trip. We visited a large farm which had many interesting things to do. Above all, most exciting thing for me was a riding a small boat. There was a very large lake in the farm. Every tourist who visited this farm could use a boat with no fee. I heard that the depth of the lake was over 10 meters. Each boat could take only 3 people because it was too small. We were all nine, so we ride each three boat. During the short time I was interested. But suddenly my friends came to my boat for fun and ride my boat together. So our boat had total six people. It was dangerous. The water flew into the boat more and more. We cried for help to rescuers. I thought that I was going to die and couldn't go back to home again! Fortunately, one rescue boat came to our boat. We were all safe... (Kim)

- Final draft revised through written feedback

It happened on a water-melon orchard about when I was seven years old. It was late in the noon in the summer. My friends and I were very hungry. One of my friends said "How about raid the water-melon orchard?", and we all said "Yes." So, we all run to there to eat it fully. In the spot, one of us watch the owner carefully and the other pick the water-melon very fast because we all didn't want to be caught. Finishing the job, we began to eat it together just like pig eat the food on the corner of the field. One of my friends toss the water-melon to the sky and the one thrown it to me. My two chicks are fully wet, mouth are full of water-melon and t-shirt was painted on a pink color. I was so full. The moment I was going to take a nap under the tree, we got a big trouble. A woman looks like the orchard's owner shouted aloud to us the time when we were sleeping... (Shin)

A comparison of the two drafts above shows that no big difference between them existed in the range and choice of vocabulary. Rather, notable differences between them lie in grammatical use of language, statement of main ideas, and appropriate use of transitions and cohesive devices which were pointed out earlier. Similarly, regarding the use of mechanics, no remarkable difference was noted between the two sets of final drafts. As seen in the examples presented so far, it can be said that as a rule, the two sets of final drafts did not differ much from each other in spelling and punctuation regardless of whether a given text was revised through written feedback or oral feedback despite the fact

that some of the final drafts (for example, the first draft presented earlier) revised via written feedback tended to include more errors in mechanics than final drafts revised via oral feedback.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of the study gave support to common findings of previous research on peer feedback in L2 writing in that peer feedback offered in either written or oral mode plays a facilitative role in the overall processes of L2 composition even though each type of peer feedback came with its own drawbacks. According to the findings of the study, both written feedback gained in peer review sessions and oral feedback gained in conferences were shown to have in common several features which had a positive or negative effect on processes involving EFL writing. First, two types of feedback were perceived as conducive to the improvement of writing attitude and writing skill. In light of typical, traditional EFL classrooms in which writing is supplementary to other language skills, and a final product is mainly stressed with little feedback available for revision, motivation for writing tends to be low, and developing writing ability would not be an easy task on the part of both students and teacher. In contrast, writing instruction used in this study which was process-oriented, and student-centered appeared to stimulate interest, and raise writing motivation. Such an affectively aroused mental state could make a considerable contribution to the creation of positive writing attitude, which in turn encouraged subjects to actively engage in an L2 writing task, and ultimately promote writing skill. Particularly, peer feedback activity including both peer review sessions and conferences in the writing instruction seemed to draw much attention from subjects, and play a key role in the improvement of their writing attitude and writing skill. Further, oral feedback was found to assume a more active role than written feedback in increasing writing ability, and generating a positive attitude toward L2 writing.

Second, both types of feedback were found to be beneficial to the promotion of positive relationship among course members, and to the building of social skills. This finding supported Lockhart and Ng's (1995, in Nelson & Carson, 1998) study which showed that peer feedback work contributed to the creation of collaborative atmosphere conducive to the generation of better relations among Chinese L2 writers. Despite unfamiliarity with peer feedback activity in this study, most subjects were fascinated, and enjoyed acting as a feedback giver and seeker during the activity. So such an enthusiastic, active involvement might have helped to create supportive, cooperative environment which naturally led to spring out friendly, trustful relationship among subjects. Similarly, an active participation in peer feedback activity assisted subjects in developing various social skills. In order for

subjects to make effective, meaningful revisions, they needed to listen to what was said carefully, and transmit what they thought in a logical, persuasive way during peer review sessions or conferences. Such communicative efforts made during peer feedback activity constitute an important part of social skills indispensable for everyday life. Another point to deserve to mention is the finding that the facilitative role of peer feedback in producing positive relationship among subjects, and increasing social skills was shown to be more pronounced in conferences than peer review sessions. One plausible explanation is that as compared to peer review sessions with limitations in the quantity and quality of input, conferences provided subjects with much opportunities and freedom to drive interaction in their own way through various communication processes such as discussion, negotiation, persuasion, repetition and elaboration, among others, which led subjects to not only become more familiar with one another, but build interactional, social skills in a natural way.

Third, each type of peer feedback was shown to have influence on different aspects of L2 writing. Written feedback from peer review sessions tended to center on grammar-related aspects of language more often than oral feedback from conferences which involved meaning-related aspects of language such as content and organization in text. It is interesting to search for reasons for this difference since subjects were encouraged to work on meaning rather than form in both peer review sessions and conferences. Also it should be pointed out that subjects in conferences were often advised not to offer grammar-oriented feedback when they were observed to do so by an instructor whereas it was not easy to monitor each pair of subjects engaging in peer review sessions all the time though actually they were found to offer much grammar-related comments. So there is high possibility that without such an instructor's intervention, oral feedback gained from conferences also would have been grammar-oriented to a considerable extent. One primary reason for grammar-centeredness in written feedback (maybe, oral feedback too) seems to lie in a view of writing proficiency as equivalent to the ability to make only grammatically correct sentences in EFL compositions in this country by giving priority to the checking of grammaticality of sentences in text with the ignorance of meaning (Eonyoung Park, 2004). It is needless to say that such a view was greatly affected by an over-reliance of EFL instruction in Korea on grammar teaching based on the Grammar-Translation Method for more than thirty years despite a recent strong emphasis on the attainment of communicative ability by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (Li, 1998). Another reason for the domination of grammar comments in peer feedback can be a general tendency of language learners to be more sensitive or harsher on grammar-related errors than target language speakers (James, 1977; McCretton & Rider, 1993 in James, 1998). Available research evidence shows that overall, non-native speakers tended to perceive grammar type of errors as more serious than lexical, pragmatic errors while the

opposite is true to native speakers who viewed errors inhibiting communication as serious (Politzer, 1978 in Omaggio, 2001; Porte, 1999; Tanaka & Kawade, 1982). As Eonyoung Park (2004) suggested, one way of drawing students' attention to meaning of text is through instruction which stresses writing for communication, and a need for them to become aware of the importance of meaning-creation and meaning-transmission in writing.

Forth, subjects experienced some dramatic changes in writing environment, and their role in L2 writing during peer feedback interactions. One notable change involves the way subjects received feedback on text. Since they had been accustomed to teacher feedback, or had received no feedback at all, it is clear that the process of giving and taking feedback from peers during peer feedback work could be quite innovative and new to subjects. Indeed, most subjects perceived their experience with peer feedback work as fresh and interesting. They also noted that peer feedback practice offering either written or oral feedback brought about a great learner-role change in writing. The role taken by subjects in most previous EFL writing classes was far from active or initiative. By contrast, in the student-centered writing instruction used in the present study subjects assumed a leading role in an overall process of L2 writing including gaining feedback from peers. Such a role change might have a positive effect on the production of a good, polished piece of text since through seeking and offering feedback, subjects were able to make themselves sensitive to audience, and their writing could be more reader-centered, and more message-oriented for communicative purposes. For some subjects, however, the new role change was felt as challenging, burdensome, or difficult to adjust to. They were concerned about effectiveness and appropriateness of their feedback, and expressed the difficulty of having an effective feedback exchange. One clear reason for the lack of self-confidence in feedback lies in subjects' first exposure to peer feedback work, and more carefully planned practice sessions prior to peer feedback activity would be one good solution to the problem.

Finally, as for a comparison of final drafts revised via written feedback with final drafts revised via oral feedback, the latter was found to have higher scores on such aspects of writing as grammar, content and organization than the former with the other two aspects of writing (i.e., vocabulary and mechanics) showing similarities between two sets of final drafts. Thus overall, oral feedback gained from writing conferences had a more beneficial effect on the production of a high-quality text than written feedback gained from peer review sessions. The finding that writing conferences were more useful and more helpful in the production of text in terms of the aspects of writing like content and organization is understandable if one thinks that subjects in writing conferences were more likely to get a variety of feedback from all class members through discussion and negotiation in a clear, understandable manner than they were in peer review sessions where interaction occurred only with one partner, and as a result, would be limited in both quantity and quality of

feedback. Similarly, in the case of grammatical aspect of writing, both writing conferences and peer review sessions are believed to have made an equal contribution to the correct use of language in final drafts in light of the fact that subjects tended to offer grammar feedback often in both peer review sessions and conferences on the one hand, and that most EFL classes in this country have relied mainly on grammar-based instruction on the other. Accordingly, it can be easily expected that there should be little difference in scoring on grammatical aspect of writing between the two sets of final drafts. But such was not the case. That is, the finding that final drafts revised through written feedback received lower scoring than final drafts revised through oral feedback is rather surprising. One possible explanation would be that writing conferences could offer a much larger amount of feedback on grammaticality or well-formedness of sentences in text to a given writer than peer review sessions simply because he/she in conferences could receive input from all the course members. Thus there is high possibility that oral feedback gained from conferences led subjects to use more accurate language in their final drafts than written feedback. Another explanation is that despite a heavy focus on grammar learning, subjects might not have been given enough opportunity to practice what they learn in grammar-oriented instruction through writing. So it is likely that a mere grammar learning in a teacher-initiated classroom without sufficient practice for communicative purposes, or a simple, brief exchange of grammar comments with peers during partner work particularly in peer review sessions does not necessarily guarantee accurate use of language in writing. One implication is that in relation to feedback on grammatical aspect of writing in peer feedback interactions, time should be allotted for teacher to treat grammar-related errors either at the end of interactions, or before submission of a final product. It is not desirable to leave grammar-checking in charge of writers by themselves.

V. CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of two different types of peer feedback in L2 writing as they were perceived by Korean learners in an EFL writing course, and were compared with each other in terms of five major aspects of writing proficiency. The results of the study suggested that while written feedback and oral feedback had several characteristics in common, overall, the latter played a more critical role in L2 writing than the former. Both types of peer feedback had a facilitating effect on raising interest and motivation for writing through triggering desirable changes in writing environment and learner role in writing. From this it follows that a writing task built upon peer feedback interactions would be beneficial to learners in EFL context, particularly Korean students who had been used to traditional, lockstep classrooms which do not play

any powerful role in promoting writing motivation and writing ability. Another finding to be considered is that in light of the fact that writing is a reader-based, communicative tool, and that Korean students mostly engage in product-oriented, writer-based compositions, EFL teachers are strongly encouraged to make more frequent use of writing conferences than peer review sessions as one major way of giving feedback to their students in composition classes since conferences were shown to be better than peer review sessions in providing an opportunity for students to be exposed to a variety of different readers' perspectives through discussion and negotiation, and hence to be sensitive to audience, which is indispensable in becoming proficient writers.

Regarding the weaknesses of the study, first of all, the small number of subjects would limit the generalizability of the findings of the study. Second, as each type of peer feedback activity was conducted for a relatively short period of time (i.e., about less than two months for each peer feedback activity), insufficient time assigned to each activity would have a negative effect on the overall findings of the study. Third, the order of using the type of peer feedback work might influence the results of the study. That is, since subjects were not acquainted with peer feedback work at all at the beginning of the study, and peer review sessions were conducted ahead of conferences, the resulting written feedback gained from peer review sessions might not be what it is supposed to be in terms of both quantity and quality of feedback as compared to oral feedback obtained from conferences in which subjects got warmed up sufficiently, and became better accustomed to peer feedback work as the class went on. Forth, if interactions among subjects during every session of peer feedback activity were recorded, the resulting discourse would help to make the overall findings of the study more valid and more reliable by providing valuable insights into the workings of two differing types of peer feedback activity. Finally, since no attempt was made to gather information on subjects' writing ability before the study, it was hard to know whether or not, subjects constituted a homogeneous group in relation to writing ability. Such a lack of information seems to make it difficult to place one type of peer feedback above the other in a definite, assertive way.

Despite these problems, the study has some implications for EFL composition classrooms. Above all, since the study showed the facilitative role of both written feedback and oral feedback in creating positive writing attitude, a frequent use of each type of feedback in process-based writing instruction is recommended. Meanwhile, in light of the problems with the study, one may think that it would be haste or strong to conclude that oral feedback proved to be better than written feedback in promoting writing ability. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the finding that oral feedback was more effective in raising writing interest and motivation, and encouraging interactions with all the participants throughout conferences, teachers are likely to show their preference for oral feedback over written feedback without much hesitation. However, since it is clear that the

choice of type of peer feedback is influenced by various factors surrounding specific teaching situations, it can not be an easy task for teachers in any case. For instance, students' language competence which can play an important role in a successful implementation of peer feedback work can be a decisive factor to determine the type of peer feedback activity. Learners at beginning level would take advantage of a workshop-style conference in which they get feedback carefully adjusted to their target language proficiency through teacher's help or guide while learners at advanced level would benefit from peer review sessions in which they have no difficulty exchanging written responses to each other's writing by giving and seeking feedback on the basis of their sufficient language resource. Whatever type of peer feedback activity is selected, the first thing to be considered for the effective, successful conduct of the activity is that sufficient practice sessions should be held in order for students to know what they are supposed to do during a given type of peer feedback activity. In doing so, students are expected to actively participate in interactions during either peer review sessions or conferences, develop positive writing attitude, and build confidence in L2 writing, which hopefully would lead them to become proficient L2 writers.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Your level of English Proficiency:

Beginning-high _

Intermediate-low _

Intermediate-mid _

Intermediate-high _

Advanced _

1. Do you feel the process approach is helpful in improving your writing skill?

2. Do you feel peer review is helpful in improving writing skill? Why?/ Why not?
3. Do you feel conferences are helpful in improving writing skill? Why?/ Why not?
4. Which of the two, written comments or oral comments, do you like most?
Why do you think so?
5. Which of the two, peer review or conference, do you get feedback most?
6. Did you understand all the feedback from peer review?
What did you do when you didn't understand feedback from peer review?
7. Do you think conference improves your writing skill? Yes, or No?
Please explain why?
8. Do you want instructor to join conference along with students? Why or Why not?
9. Do you think you have enjoyed this writing class during the semester?
Please briefly explain why?

APPENDIX B

Sample Peer-Review Sheet (Adapted from Mangelsdorf, 1992)

Read your partner's draft carefully before responding to the following questions. Make your comments as specific as possible so that your partner can understand them.

1. Is the purpose of this draft easy or difficult to figure out (Circle one.)
Difficult Somewhat difficult Fairly easy Very easy
2. How well did this draft keep your attention until the end? That is, how interesting is the draft? Rate the interest level of the draft on a scale from 1 to 5. (1 = Boring, 5 = Fascinating)
1 2 3 4 5
3. How could the draft keep your attention more effectively or how could you make the draft more interesting? Please write your suggestions or comments as specifically as possible.
4. How is this draft organized? That is, how do you rate the organization of this draft?
(1 = Needs much improvement, 5 = Outstanding)
1 2 3 4 5
5. How could you improve the organization of the draft? Please write your suggestions or comments as specifically as possible.
6. Which parts of the draft should be clarified, deleted, or expanded? For instance, are examples or supportive ideas needed more? Are there parts which are not related to the topic? Are there parts that need more explanations? Please write your suggestions or comments as specifically as possible.

APPENDIX C

A sample of analytic scoring sheet (Cohen, 1994, p. 328-329)

Content:

- 5_ excellent: main ideas stated clearly and accurately, change of opinion very clear
- 4_ good: main ideas stated fairly clearly and accurately, change of opinion relatively clear
- 3_ average: main ideas somewhat unclear or inaccurate, change of opinion statement somewhat

weak

2_ poor: main ideas not clear or accurate, change of opinion statement weak

1_ very poor: main ideas not at all clear or accurate, change of opinion statement very weak

Organization:

5_ excellent: well organized and perfectly coherent

4_ good: fairly well organized and generally coherent

3_ average: loosely organized but main ideas clear, logical but incomplete sequencing

2_ poor: ideas disconnected, lacks logical sequencing

1_ very poor: no organization, incoherent

Vocabulary:

5_ excellent: very effective choice of words and use of idioms and word forms

4_ good: effective choice of words and use of idioms and word forms

3_ average: adequate choice of words but some misuse of vocabulary, idioms, and word forms

2_ poor: limited range, confused use of words, idioms, and word forms

1_ very poor: very limited range, very poor knowledge of words, idioms, and word forms

Grammar:

5_ excellent: no errors, full control of complex structure

4_ good: almost no errors, good control of structure

3_ average: some errors, fair control of structure

2_ poor: many errors, poor control of structure

1_ very poor: dominated by errors, no control of structure

Mechanics:

5_ excellent: mastery of spelling and punctuation

4_ good: few errors in spelling and punctuation

3_ average: fair number of spelling and punctuation errors

2_ poor: frequent errors in spelling and punctuation

1_ very poor: no control over spelling and punctuation

Applicable levels: secondary and college level

Key words: process approach to writing, peer feedback

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Received in May, 2005

Reviewed in June, 2005

Revised version received in August, 2005