

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: **A CASE STUDY ON A CROSS-CONTEXT  
ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE WRITING  
TUTORIAL:  
THE MEDIATED LEARNING PROCESS  
FOR U.S.-BASED TUTORS AND L2  
WRITERS IN TAIWAN**

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Giving students written feedback has been a common practice in L2 writing instruction. Written feedback has been widely studied in second language writing and acquisition research, yet many questions and disputes remain concerning its effectiveness (See Ferris, 2010). While most research on written feedback has adopted the cognitive psychological perspective focusing on its effectiveness (Hyland, 1998, 2000), this study aims at discovering the mediation, mutual growth and engagement between tutors and writers in an asynchronous online writing tutorial. In the tutorial, U.S.-based tutors (teacher candidates in a teacher education program) worked with L2 writers (graduate students) in Taiwan on their English academic writing course assignments (biography and summary). Data sources included written comments by the teacher candidates, writer's drafts, uptake documents,

interview transcripts, self-evaluations, and field observation notes. Oriented by speech act and Vygotskian theoretical framework and using discourse analysis, this qualitative case study identified 12 feedback acts under three categories (direct, indirect, and conversational Feedback Acts) among three focal dyads throughout the tutorial. Findings suggest that the three tutors used feedback acts strategically to guide the L2 writers, particularly using IFA and CFA as mediational tools to provide various metalinguistic explanations, give extended information, and ask thought-provoking questions to stimulate writers' thinking in the tutorial process along with the corrections, suggestions, or requests they made. As writers incorporated more than 70% of the feedback, they found the tutorial process beneficial for their revision and learning of English academic writing. Tutors also learned to accommodate writers' needs, providing feedback within their *zone of proximal development* and applying *concept-based instruction* and *dynamic assessment*. This study contributes to second language writing and learning research, revealing the complexity of tutor-writer interaction and feedback process and providing a window into how written feedback can foster communication and dialogues between tutors and writers. Close examination of discourse in the tutorial context offers insights into the mutual growth and engagement for the participating teacher candidates and L2 writers. This study also has implications for both L2 writing instructors and teacher educators who seek new ways to engage language learners and teacher candidates in their learning processes.

A CROSS-CONTEXT ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE WRITING TUTORIAL: THE  
MEDIATED LEARNING PROCESS FOR U.S.-BASED TUTORS AND L2  
WRITERS IN TAIWAN

By

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear father, Mr. Chin-Cheng Chen and mother, Ms. Su-Chu Chen. I would like to acknowledge their unconditionally love and support, without which I could not have completed the degree and the dissertation. This dedication also goes to my dear husband, Chun-Chuan Wu, my child, Nathan Wu, and all of my family who has always been there for me.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

With globalization and English as a lingua franca, many students in both non-English-speaking countries learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) contexts have perceived the importance of English as a global language. In particular, those who seek higher education degrees in both contexts are faced with an urgent need of mastering their English writing skills for academic and professional purposes (Matsuda, 2006). As becoming a proficient writer is a complex and ongoing process (Kroll, 1994), writing for academic and professional purposes “contains unusual, and sometimes puzzling, language structures, and the rhetorical needs” (Reid, 2006) to those who learn English as a second or foreign language. The situation can be even more challenging for EFL writers if they do not have access to professional help or learning resources. A great resource for these non-native English writers is written feedback to their writing from others (e.g., their instructors, writing center tutors, peers, or editing service). In recognition of the importance of written feedback to non-native English writers, a proliferation of research on the use of written feedback in second language (L2) writing has been conducted (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Hyland, 1998).

In fact, with the development of the learner-centered instruction, the pedagogical importance of feedback has been brought to the center by many L2 teachers and researchers in the North American L2 composition classes during the 1980s with the emergence of “writing as a process” (Hairston, 1982; Zamel, 1976) concept. The “process approach,” as introduced by Zamel (1976) to L2 writing researchers, views writing as a process of developing organizations

and meaning rather than as a pursuit of final products. What came along in terms of written feedback is the attention to the L2 teacher-student encounter around the text via commentary, multiple drafts and revisions during the process of writing instead of the end product itself. Meanwhile the concern in such feedback lies more in the construction and discovery of meaning than in the accuracy and control of language (Freedman, 1985).

In L2 writing classes, teacher feedback takes on various forms in terms of feedback delivery. The most common—and also the frequently-adopted one—is the written form, commonly known as teacher written feedback. A common practice of written corrective feedback involves an L2 student receiving either formal or informal written corrections on linguistic features, rhetorical use, and content of their writing tasks from his or her teacher (Ellis, 2009). Another form that has been recently advocated by many L2 writing educators, as opposed to the written commentary, takes on the form of oral communication between the teacher and student, and is known as conferencing. Such writing conferences are lauded by many L2 writing instructors “as a dialogue in which meaning and interpretation are constantly being negotiated by participants and as a method that provides both teaching and learning benefits” (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The other form of teacher feedback, feedback via Computer-mediated Communication (also known as CMC), is attributed to the development of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as many L2 writing instructors have noticed the convenience and advantages of using CMC technology to deliver feedback to and foster learning for L2 learners. The frequently-used CMC technology by L2 writing educators, for instance, include email (Bloch, 2002; Warschauer, 1995), threaded discussion forum on learning platforms (Yeh & Lo, 2009), synchronous text

messages (Warschauer, 1997), and online annotation systems (Yeh & Lo, 2009), encompassing both the synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication<sup>1</sup>.

While various forms of feedback have been applied by many L2 writing teachers in their L2 writing classrooms since 1980s, research on teacher written feedback did not gain much attention among L2 writing specialists and scholars until the 1990s, despite the exception of a few studies conducted in late 1980s (e.g., Radecki & Swales, 1988; Zamel, 1985; Ziv, 1984). There are still issues inherent to teacher written feedback remaining unanswered or inadequately researched (see Goldstein, 2001 for further discussions), particularly with the trend that most teacher written feedback research has attended to learners' reaction to teachers' written feedback. For instance, rather than helpful and enlightening, learners found teachers' feedback confusing (Arndt, 1993; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1995). Learners also admit that they would use teacher feedback without understanding the rationales of change or suggestions (Hyland, 1998, 2000). Sometimes even when they understand the feedback, they may find the act of revising difficult since they do not have adequate revising strategies (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Research also shows that learners may vary in terms of how successfully they are able to apply teachers' suggestions in their revisions (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997). There are even times when learners misconstrue teachers' feedback or think they understand the feedback but in fact they do not (Arndt, 1993). To solve the problems and help L2 writers, those who give feedback (e.g., L2 writing teachers) need to be well-prepared to give feedback and to guide learning for L2 writers, which is another prime issue that needs more research in this line of study (Lee, 2003, 2010, 2011, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Asynchronous mode of communication refers to the computer-mediated communication between two parties wherein they are not able to reply to each other's text or oral messages immediately, while in synchronous mode of communication both parties can communicate immediately by sending instant messages.



In addition to the issues unanswered in L2 writing research, my motivation to conduct the study on an asynchronous online writing tutorial (AOWT hereafter) for my dissertation also originates from my personal experience as an English language teacher teaching EFL in Taiwan three years ago. Looking back at my own teaching experience, I realized how much my teaching experience has shaped my conceptualization of learning and teaching L2 writing. After graduating from graduate school with a TESOL master degree, I was eager and excited to apply the innovative teaching methodologies to my first English academic writing class at a university in Taiwan. I made every effort to make my class a learner-centered one, using process-writing approach to teach my university students writing, and abandon grammar translations. However, to my surprise, I discovered that my EFL students did not benefit much from the teaching methods imported directly from the ESL contexts. They told me that they actually expected more structured instruction and explanations from teachers. How to reach the balance between meaning construction and feedback intervention has become an issue that puzzled me. The conflicts between what I learned in L2 writing theories and the reality in EFL classrooms made me realize that EFL writers should be guided using resources and methods that meet their needs and expectations. Since EFL students from some cultures are not comfortable arguing or negotiating for meaning with their teachers or tutors (Williams, 2004), it would be harder for the teacher/tutor to determine whether their feedback or advice is beneficial to the learners or not. I thus realized that all teachers should learn to communicate with the L2 writers while mediating their revising and learning process, and give advice that is the most meaningful to them.

My personal realization of the importance in communication between tutors and L2 writers has also been in line with the recent recall of L2 writing researchers. Ellis (2009) and many others conclude that teachers should “negotiate agreed goals” of written feedback with

writers, “adapt the specific strategies they use to the particular learner,” “move to a more explicit form” if the writer cannot self correct errors,” and “be sensitive to the ‘feedback’ they get from learners” (p. 14). In this sense, the idea of valuing writing and revising as an ongoing process highlights and legitimizes a more social-oriented approach to researching written feedback. Based on such understanding, the dissertation applies Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical framework to investigate how written feedback is used by tutors and L2 writers to facilitate the inherent ongoing learning process of writing and revising for both parties.

## **1.2 Statement of Problems**

In identifying the problems that need attention in this study, I address both the global issue (as relating to the general topic of written feedback in L2 writing research and pedagogy) and local issue (as relating to written feedback in a specific context) in written feedback research.

For the global issue, there is a noticeable gap in the social-oriented perspective in researching written feedback in L2 writing. The majority of the written feedback research takes on the cognitive individual psychology perspective, viewing the process of feedback giving and revising as mental processing (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al, 2008; Sheen, 2009). This type of research has centered on the efficacy of written feedback for L2 writers’ acquisition of certain linguistic forms, ignoring the inherent social nature of L2 writing and revising. Therefore, this line of written feedback research grounded in the cognitive/interactionist view of L2 learning may not be sufficient to capture the dynamics presented in the AOWT in this study. Even some research on written feedback adopt the sociocultural lens and demonstrate the social interaction in tutorials, most of them focus on the oral form of feedback (e.g., Ewert, 2009; Ferris, 2003; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990). As I argue that written feedback can also be practiced with a social-oriented approach, the cognitive psychological perspective may not be sufficient to study written

feedback, which normally occurs in natural settings such as an asynchronous online writing tutorial and L2 writing classrooms.

With respect to the local issue, most of the written feedback research has been conducted in the homogeneous context. Most of the time, the feedback giver is the L2 writer's ESL or EFL writing instructors or writing center tutors. Tutorial conducted across ESL and EFL contexts is comparatively rare. The advance of computer and Internet technology, however, makes the cross-context communication and asynchronous online tutorial available without being confined by physical time and space constraints. In an AOWT, both tutors and writers are believed to benefit and grow in the tutorial process.

To conclude, research on written feedback applying a sociocultural lens is not common. A design that connects both ESL and EFL context is even rare. This empirical study, therefore, is a sustained and systematic effort that bridges the gaps and contributes to the fields of L2 writing, L2 learning and pedagogy by examining the dynamics of an AOWT between U.S.-based tutors and EFL writers.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the dynamics of an AOWT between a group of U.S.-based tutors and L2 writers in Taiwan. Focusing particularly on the use of written feedback, this study seeks to understand how the tutors utilize the written feedback to mediate the revising and learning process of the L2 writers. With a further focus, this study explores the professional growth of the tutors in the AOWT as well as how their growth influences L2 writers' learning.

To put the idea into practice, I designed an asynchronous online tutorial activity. The tutorial was implemented CMC technology (i.e., an online discussion forum that allows threaded discussions and attachment uploading on a learning management system). In the AOWT,

students from Taiwan would obtain written feedback regarding their writing assignments from tutors who were ESOL teacher candidates in a U.S. teacher education program learning to teach English language learners literacy. Their interaction and the way tutors use the given written feedback to mediate their revising process are the foci in this study.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Two research questions guide this study. Each question has sub questions.

- 1) How are L2 writing and revising processes mediated through tutor-learner feedback in the AOWT?
  - a) What types of written feedback do tutors use through four rounds of feedback?
  - b) How do L2 writers incorporate different types of feedback acts in the text revision process?
  - c) How do L2 writers perceive their tutor's feedback acts in terms of their learning?
- 2) What do the tutors report about the influences on their learning to give feedback and interact with L2 writers in the AOWT?
  - a) How does each tutor's feedback change over time in terms of feedback acts?
  - b) How do tutors perceive their own feedback act patterns changing over time? Why?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The significance of the study is three-fold. On the theoretical level, the study contributes to the literature on written feedback in L2 writing by bringing a sociocultural lens, with an emphasis on the social interaction between tutors and L2 writers. This lens differs from the prevalent individual, cognitive and psychological perspectives dominant in the previous studies examining written feedback, which assumes a linear relationship between feedback and

subsequent revisions. In other words, research with such an psychological cognitive assumption mostly often intends to prove the cause and effect between certain types of written feedback (e.g., focused and unfocused feedback) and L2 writers' revisions on certain linguistic feature (e.g., articles) (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheenet al., 2009). Bringing a sociocultural lens that views human learning occurring in interpersonal social interaction, this study helps interested scholars and educators understand how written feedback can be used to mediate L2 writers' revisions and learning, and to facilitate interaction and meaning negotiation in the tutorial process.

On the policy level, this study highlights the importance of professional growth of teachers of English language learners. The findings of this study address both the quantity and quality of written feedback to understand how teacher candidates/tutors learn to give written feedback to language learners. The qualitative findings of this study sheds light on how L2 writing teachers could be better prepared for interacting with L2 writers and accommodating their needs. The process of tutor/teacher learning in this study has important implications for how ESOL teacher education courses can incorporate tutorials as a pre-practicum activity. This study also offers insights into preparing teachers for a globalized context by offering opportunities for U.S. ESOL teacher candidates to participate in international settings and to work with linguistically diverse students.

Third, this study has implications for L2 writing pedagogy. This study sheds light on how writing instructors/tutors use written feedback as a mediational tool to facilitate the learning of L2 writers. By closely analyzing feedback practices and the negotiation of meaning, this study provides a window into the potential learning opportunities written feedback and online tutorial bring to L2 writing classrooms. With regard to the innovative design that incorporates writers

and tutors from different educational contexts, this study demonstrates the possibility of cross-context tutorials, particularly connecting the ESL and EFL settings, which have been separate despite their great potential to inform each other.

## **1.6 Explanation of Key Terms**

*Adequate formal schooling (AFS) students*: AFS students refer to English language learners who arrive at the English-dominant educational context (like U.S. K-12 system) with adequate formal schooling in their own country. They may speak more than one language, and have learned English as a subject before they arrive. They may have solid content area knowledge and strong literacy skills, which can be transferred to their learning of English and content in a new educational context (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). The L2 writers in my study in many ways resemble this type of English language learners. Findings regarding the L2 writers provide implications for teachers of AFS students.

*Corrective Feedback*: Corrective feedback (often abbreviated as CF) in L2 writing research refers to written feedback on the linguistic errors L2 writers make. Whether the provision of corrective feedback improves L2 writers' accuracy in writing has been a growing interest in recent L2 writing research (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009).

*Direct vs. Indirect Corrective Feedback*: Direct corrective feedback is mostly defined as one that “provides some form of explicit correction of linguistic form or structure above or near the linguistic error”. Indirect corrective feedback refers to one “which indicates that in some way an error has been made but it does not provide a correction”. Two common ways of giving indirect corrective feedback are (1) “underlining or circling an error”; (2) “recording in the margin the number of errors in a given line” (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010, p. 209).

Error Correction: Error correction has been an interest for many researchers and theorists in second language acquisition. From different theoretical stances, error correction has been widely discussed in theories that evolved from the behaviorist perspective in early second language acquisition theory (e.g., Skinner, 1957), Krashen's monitor model (Krashen, 1985), cognitive-interactionist perspective (Long, 1981, 1983), to sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978). In L2 writing research, error correction has gained attention since Truscott's argument on the abandonment of error correction in 1996, and caused intense debate among L2 writing theorists and researchers. (Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Truscott, 1999, 2010; Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

Focused vs. Unfocused Feedback: Focused feedback refers to those that "focus on a single error type (e.g., errors in the use of the past simple tense)," while unfocused feedback "target more than one error type but will still restrict correction to a limited number of pre-selected types (e.g., simple past tense; articles; prepositions)" (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 356).

Mediated feedback: Since I conceptualize written feedback provided by the U.S.-based tutor to L2 writer in the online tutorial in my study as a mediating tool to help L2 writers revise their writing and develop their writing ability, I propose the name, and argue that mediated feedback encourages more negotiation of meaning and dyad communication (e.g., Foster & Ohta, 2005). My definition for mediated feedback is informed by Vygotskian SCT and its relevant theoretical constructs such as mediation, concept-based instruction, ZPD, and dynamic assessment (See Chapter 2 for a review). In the process, tutors used written feedback as a semiotic tool to encourage L2 writers' greater active participation.

Written feedback: Written feedback is mostly concerned with the comments made on the margin or the end of students' writing, corrections aiming at certain grammatical problems or language use, suggestions for revisions, and encouragement to students. In L2 writing research, written

feedback mostly refers to the comments, corrections, suggestions, and encouragement made by L2 writing teachers to L2 learners (Goldstein, 2005).

### **1.7 Delimitations of the Research**

The scope of the study centers on the U.S.-based tutors' use of written feedback to facilitate L2 writers' revising and learning process in the AOWT. Depending on the research focus, the past literature has researched on written feedback and written corrective feedback. The former refers to general comments, corrections, suggestions, and encouragement made by L2 writing teachers to L2 learners (Goldstein, 2005), while the latter refers only to corrections of linguistic forms in L2 learners' writing (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009). As this study focuses on how tutors use written feedback as a semiotic tool in the context of the AOWT, I do not limit myself to linguistic error corrections but broaden my scope to both types and all forms of written feedback (See Chapter 2 for detailed discussions for types and forms of written feedback that have been discussed in literature) occurring in the tutorial. This study does not attempt to address either the causal relationship between the written feedback and L2 writers' accuracy improvement or the effectiveness of written feedback. In terms of L2 writers' learning, the study refers to both the tutors' and writers' perception of learning and gains related to revising and L2 writing in this AOWT activity.

### **1.8 Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In chapter one, I have already stated the general background and rationale, statement of problems in L2 writing research, purpose and significance of the study, explanations of key terms, research questions, and delimitations of the



research. In chapter two, I will provide a comprehensive review of written feedback in L2 writing research, Vygotskian sociocultural theory, my pilot study, and emerging conceptual framework. In chapter three, I will introduce qualitative case study and discourse analysis as my methodology in this study. In chapter four, I will present findings regarding tutors' use of feedback, writers' feedback incorporation, and both parties' perceived growth in the AOWT. In chapter five, I will interpret the findings through the Vygotsky sociocultural theoretical framework as well as discuss the mutual growth and engagement between tutors and writers. In chapter six, I will discuss the implications for research and pedagogy, and make conclusions for this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review, Pilot Study, and Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will first review relevant literature, followed by an explanation of my pilot study and the emerging conceptual framework. In the literature review, I will first discuss the theoretical framework that I plan to apply in the research—Vygotskian sociocultural theory and review studies applying this theoretical lens. Next, I will review the relevant empirical studies on written feedback. The following section in this chapter is a brief report of my pilot study conducted in Spring 2011, in which primary findings will be presented. Finally, I will present and discuss the emerging conceptual framework.

### 2.2 Scope and Methodology for Selecting Literature

The scope and methodology for selecting reviewed articles first depend on the specific design of the AOWT. As introduced in Chapter one, the study aims to conduct an AOWT for a group of EFL writing learners in Taiwan via CMC technology, in which the Taiwanese students obtain written feedback regarding their writing assignments from a group of tutors who are ESOL in-service/pre-service teachers in the United States learning to teach English language learners writing. In terms of the time, space, and roles of participants, the study differs from traditional research on teacher written feedback (since the participating tutors are not the teachers of the EFL students, yet they may take on the position as teachers using their teacher's voice in the online tutorial or as peers reading through L2 writers' work). However, the potential challenges and issues occurring in the targeted setting resemble many of those in the research on teacher written feedback. Accordingly, this study reviews empirical studies majorly from teacher

written feedback research, which is considered a line of necessary and important studies that identify the key issues widely discussed in L2 writing written feedback research and the questions that have not been answered yet. It should be noted that the limitations of current written feedback research in second language writing was that the majority of feedback research focuses on feedback to tertiary-level students and lacks attention to feedback to children or young learners. Although there is a growing body of research examining written feedback for students in high school (Lee, 2004, 2007, 2008a, 2008b), my focus in this dissertation is written feedback for adult learners at the university level. Therefore, I will review the relevant literature mostly on adult ESL/EFL learners.

The second selection criterion is based on my conceptualization of the AOWT. My argument is that the act of feedback giving and interpretation of given feedback are fundamentally social and contextual. Coming from a sociocultural orientation, I conceptualize that learning occurs during the writing process through feedback givers' use of written feedback to scaffold for L2 writers' revisions and L2 writers' negotiation of meaning. In light of this conceptualization, I review Vygotskian sociocultural theory, discussing relevant theoretical concepts that provide explanatory power for my study. I will review L2 writing-related studies that use the sociocultural theoretical framework, and discuss how they inform my study.

### **2.3 Source I: Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory as a Lens in L2 Teaching and Learning**

The study of L2 learning and teaching has undergone a dramatic change in theory, methodology, research and foci since 1990s. Scholars have called for a reconceptualization for second language acquisition (SLA) theory that would take into account social and contextual examinations of L2 learning (Canagarajah, 2006; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Swain & Deters, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). One of the most frequently cited articles advocating the social turn of

research in SLA was written by Firth and Wagner (1997), who claimed that mainstream SLA theory had skewed our view of language learning toward an individual cognitive phenomenon, and favored more experiments and quantification in research methodology. Holding a social understanding of language learning, Firth and Wagner proposed a more “holistic approach to and outlook on language and language acquisition” (p. 296), arguing that researchers of L2 learning should overcome the prominent dualism in mainstream SLA—language learning versus language use.

Several scholars who advocated for a social turn in SLA (Block, 2003; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), in part drew from sociocultural theory of mind developed by Vygotsky (1978; 1986), who argued that human social beings who learn through participating in socially organized and regulated activities. In particular, Vygotsky (1986) claimed that the social environment is not just the context for, but the source of mental development. In other words, higher order human cognition is only formed from individuals participating in human social activities. It is noted that the social activities are mediated by cultural artifacts—either physical (e.g., paper and pencil) or symbolic (e.g., graphs, diagrams, figures, metaphors, language activity or communication). Without such mediation in this social activity, higher order cognition development is impossible. As Wertsch (2007) also noted, “a hallmark of human consciousness is that it is associated with the use of tools, especially ‘psychological tools’ or ‘signs’ (p, 178). Coming from a social constructivism stance and finding my view on L2 learning aligning with Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT), I conceptualize the implementation of AOWT in my study as a process where the L2 writers learn L2 writing and revision through participating in the social interactional processes of feedback negotiation with the tutors. In the following review on SCT, I will thus focus on the four important SCT theoretical concepts—*mediation*, *concept-*

*based Instruction, zone of proximal development (ZPD), and dynamic assessment*—that lend an explanatory power to my study. The four theoretical concepts are chosen for review since they are of great implication to my study. A more detailed explanation will be provided in the implication section in Chapter 6.

### **2.3.1 Mediation**

As a central concept that has been widely discussed in SCT (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Wertsch, 1985), *mediation* is associated with Vygotsky’s fundamental claim—humans’ higher mental activities are mediated by auxiliary means that are culturally constructed. According to Vygotsky (1999), “human development is the product of a broader system than just the system of a person’s individual functions, specifically, systems of social connections and relations, of collective forms of behavior and social cooperation” (p. 41). The auxiliary means are a consequence of humans participating in social and cultural activities in which cultural or physical artifacts (e.g., books, pens, paper, toys, playing), symbolic artifacts (e.g., psychological tools such as speech, charts, diagrams) and cultural concepts (e.g., self, person, identity, time, mind, goals) come into interacting with each other and the humans’ biological and psychological system. In Vygotsky’s view, human mind is seen as “a functional system in which the properties of the natural, or biologically specified, brain are organized into a higher, or culturally shaped, mind through the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 22). Such interaction between our cultural and biological innateness leads to the higher forms of mental functions, including memory, attention, rational thinking, learning, problem solving, and development.

According to Wertsch (2007), Vygotsky’s concept of mediation contains two perspectives: *implicit mediation* and *explicit mediation*. Wertsch explained that *implicit*

*mediation* is “less easily taken as objects of conscious reflection or manipulation” and not “artificially and intentionally introduced into ongoing action” (p. 180). Vygotsky (1987) argued that, even in *implicit mediation*, thinking and speaking maintain a dynamic and unstable relationship, which is in contrast to the view where thinking and speaking are viewed as two autonomous functions and processes (i.e., speaking is simply communication of one’s thinking). Socioculturalists argue that, “thinking and speaking form a dialectical unity in which they butt up against each other in ‘developmental struggle’ at the microgenetic level (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 8). In this sense, *implicit mediation* is seen heavily relying on linguistic signs. On the other hand, *explicit mediation* refers to the explicit and intentional instruction offered by someone else (e.g., teachers) in the course of an activity. A well-known study on *explicit mediation* was the Forbidden Colors Task research done by Leont’ev (1994). In this research, a group of children of different ages were required to answer their teacher’s questions and forbidden to use specific color terms (e.g., blue, red, yellow). A set of color cards that corresponds to the forbidden colors was given to the children to help them remember which colors were forbidden. Research found that the younger children were not able to use the color cards to assist them; they only found the cards more confusing, while the older ones were able to use the cards mediating their act of answering without uttering the forbidden colors. For Vygotsky and Leont’ev, this finding demonstrate that humans take time to develop the ability using the auxiliary means to mediate our thinking and such ability is internalized as we become adults.

In addition to *implicit* and *explicit mediation*, Vygotsky (1986) also pointed out another significant form of mediation—*mediation* through concepts. Lantolf (2011) elaborates this idea when he writes, “concepts are here understood as the meanings that cultures construct to make

sense of the world”; language concepts including “lexical, figurative (as in metaphor, metonymy, and other tropes), and grammatical meanings, such as tense, aspect, mood, voice, and anaphora” (p. 32). Based on Vygotskian sociocultural theory of mind, conceptual learning is vital for development, as “concepts emerge through dynamic interaction, shaping and transforming each other in interconnected systems” (Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, & Knouzi, 2010). In the case of the AOWT in this study, tutors may need to explain grammar concepts in the given written feedback using mediation strategies. In the following section, *concept-based instruction* will be introduced and research applying it will also be reviewed.

### **2.3.2 Concept-based Instruction**

As discussed earlier, cultural concepts can be used as a mediation tool to promote learning and development. In his writing, Vygotsky (1986) distinguished two types of concepts—*scientific concepts* vs. *spontaneous concepts*—both of which form and shape our mental activity though each shares distinctive origins and shows different influence on human’s cognitive functioning. In terms of origins, *scientific concepts* emerge via instruction while *spontaneous concepts* are from everyday experiences. Wertsch (2007) described *scientific concepts* as those formed and elicited through “the intentional introduction of signs ... designed and introduced by an external agent” such as a teacher or mediator. On the other hand, *spontaneous concepts* are “derived through observing entities and events as they appear to our sense”; sometimes described as “superficial,” “incomplete or even erroneous” (Lantolf, 2011), and “largely invisible to conscious inspection” (Lantolf & Johnso, 2007). In terms of the developing path, the two concepts vary with the former (scientific concepts) moving from abstraction toward more concreteness and the latter (spontaneous concept) beginning with everyday concrete and practical experiences to more abstract levels. Despite the distinctiveness,

*scientific* and *spontaneous concepts* are interdependent, as *scientific concepts* “restructure and raise spontaneous concepts to a higher level” (Vygotsky, 1987); *spontaneous concepts* “are the framework on which scientific concepts are built” (Lee, 2005). Since the distinction point between the two concepts are in the “absence of a system”(Vygotsky, 1986, p. 205), *scientific concepts* are conceptualized to be able to be generalized or applied to new contexts. However, this does not imply that *scientific concepts* follow a linear developmental path; rather, humans’ cognitive development takes a nonlinear, uneven, and dynamic path incorporating both concepts in its process (Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi, 2010; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Vygotsky, 1986).

Given the argument mentioned above that both concepts should be tapped into to promote learners’ development, it does not imply that a direct instruction of *scientific concepts* to learners is recommended. As Vygotsky (1987) noted, teachers using this approach only leads learning to mechanic memorization or verbalism without meaning cultivation and construction. Instead, Vygotsky (1986) argued that, even though *scientific concepts* or abstraction should be presented to students in instruction, they have to be introduced in a way that links to learners’ everyday experiences or spontaneous concepts. The extent to which teachers relate *scientific concepts* to *spontaneous concepts* is vital for concept development, and fosters the transformation from the social plane to the psychological one (Robbins, 2003). Therefore, effective instruction should allow both concepts to come into interaction and collaboration (Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi, 2010). Incorporating these theoretical positions, concept-based instruction has been introduced into L2 classrooms (e.g., Lapkin, Swain, & Knouzi, 2008; Swain, Lapkin, Knouz, Suzuki, & Brooks, 2009)--in which “systematic, explicit knowledge of the relevant features of the L2” (Lantolf, 2011, p. 38) are presented to L2 learners. Such



instructional approach was actually inspired by the pedagogical theorist, Piotr Gal'perin's systematic-theoretical instruction (STI), which aims to help L2 learners internalize *scientific concepts*. STI follows specific procedures, including “comparison with the L1 whenever feasible → materialization of the concept → communicative activities → verbalization → internalization” (Lantolf, 2011).

A study done by Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi (2010) examining the use of *concept-based instruction* and *mediation* is worth reviewing here, since it shows a good example of how *concept-based instruction* can be carried out in practical teaching, and should shed light on how *concept-based instruction* may be applied in my study. They explored the mediation process between *scientific* and *spontaneous concepts* of two French learners, Marnie and Michelle, revealing and discussing their use of *linguaging* in mediation. Based on the concept-based instruction approach, the authors designed procedures, including asking the two learners to talk about voice, giving cards to make them language the concept, testing their understanding of the concept and giving them a fill-in test on voice. Findings in this study show that both learners progressed from virtually no understanding of the voice concept to a developing understanding of it with the help of linguaging and mediating tools. For instance, they used their first language, English (i.e., spontaneous knowledge), to mediate their understanding of the voice concept in French (i.e., scientific concept). Their different performances illustrate the “uneven” and “unstable” (p. 106) path that *mediation* between their *spontaneous* and *scientific concepts* naturally takes. The authors also found the “discrepancy between production and comprehension (or production leading internalization)” (p. 106), as they could not explain and justify their written answers in the fill-in-blank test despite of which were correct.

The findings in Brooks and her colleagues' study correspond to the SCT theoretical principles of concept-based mediation. Swain (2006) also demonstrates that *languageing* is used, in particular mediating language learners' development of grammatical concept (e.g. voice in French in this study). A great implication of these findings for L2 education is that L2 instructors should apply multiple kinds of tests to assess L2 learners' learning, which is based on one of the findings that written assessment showed learners' past development while *languageing* (i.e., asking learners to explain their written answers in the stimulated recall interview) revealed direction for future instruction. Activities that can generate the mediating between *scientific* and *spontaneous concepts* should be encouraged; so do the dialogic mediation and content-related languageing with abstract grammatical concepts. For my study regarding the asynchronous online tutorial, a great implication from the discussion above is that tutors should be encouraged to provide written feedback which can lead to dynamic interaction between *spontaneous* and *scientific concepts* through *mediation*. Instead of listing grammatical rules in their feedback or providing direct corrections for grammatical errors, tutors should guide L2 writers talking about their own writing via strategic use of their written feedback.

### **2.3.3 Zone of Proximal Development**

The concept of *zone of proximal development* (*ZPD* hereafter) has gained great interests in educational literature. According to Vygotsky's argument (1978), *ZPD* captures the dynamic interactions between human beings and the surrounding environment and lead to development. An extension from this argument is the major attribute of the *ZPD* concept—appropriate assistance provided to learners when they are performing tasks that they cannot complete alone. An example illustrated in Vygotsky's work (1978) is his discovery that caregivers would tend to behave toward young children as if they are able to perform the social and cultural activities,

such as using language; even when children do not yet have such ability. With time, children may develop the language ability with the care giver's continuing guidance. Therefore, *ZPD* is described as the activity in which instruction and development "are interrelated from the child's very first day of life" (p. 84). The optimal *ZPD* is formed when adults, experts, or older peers can model for learners and give mediation, which is believed to be able to promote development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Nassaji & Swain, 2000).

What is important for the concept of *ZPD* is that one's individual performance may vary with his/her performance cooperating with others. Vygotsky discovered that even when two children show similar problem-solving abilities, their performance when a mediator's assistance is present would be different. Vygotsky concluded:

From the point of view of their independent activity they are equivalent, but from the point of view of their immediate potential development they are sharply different. That which the child turns out to be able to do with the help of an adult points us toward the zone of the child's proximal development. This means that with the help of this method, we can take stock not only of today's completed process of development, not only the cycles that are already concluded and done, not only the processes of maturation that are completed; we can also take stock of processes that are now in the state of coming into being, that are only ripening, or only developing. (Vygotsky, 1956, p. 447-448, cited in Wertsch, 1985, p. 68).

It is also important to note that in *ZPD*, "mediators do things with rather than for learners". In other words, *ZPD* helps learners "by achieving through collaborative mediation what is unachievable alone" (Lantolf, 2011, p. 29). Therefore, if mediators are able to aware or

discover the ability of the learner within his/her ZPD, they would be able to provide the optimal and the most beneficial assistance to the learner.

Since the concept of *ZPD* requires the instructor or mediator to give mediation within the learner's *ZPD*, they need to know the learner's current ability level. Vygotsky indicated the drawback of traditional assessment—only being able to measure one's fully-developed ability in the task that he/she can accomplish alone; neglecting one's processing ability and other functioning that he/she may have in cooperation with other's assistance. On the basis of this logic, *dynamic assessment* has become another important conceptual issue in the literature, which will be the next concept to be reviewed.

#### **2.3.4 Dynamic Assessment**

On the basis of his theoretical position regarding the role of mediation in the development of mind and the concern of *ZPD* in providing instruction to learners, Vygotsky's view on assessment is—"determining the actual level of development not only does not cover the whole picture of development, but very frequently encompasses only an insignificant part of it" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 200). The logic here is tapping into learners' current level to help with their future development, which can also be seen in Vygotsky's theory on instruction—useful instruction should be "oriented toward the future, not the past"; aiming not at learners' current capability but at their "upper threshold" in a way that can help them move toward their future abilities (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 189). It is in this regard that Vygotsky views one's abilities as "emergent, dynamic," and varied from others,' but not "innate". In other words, "abilities must not be considered stable traits that can be measured; rather they are the result of an individual's history of social interactions in the world" (Poehner, 2008, p. 14). Following these arguments, *dynamic assessment*, coined by Luria (1961), was introduced as "the systematic integration of

the ZPD into educational praxis as the dialectical unity of instruction and assessment” (Lantolf, 2011). As Lidz and Gindis (2003) stated, in *dynamic assessment*

[A]ssessment is not an isolated activity that is merely linked to intervention. Assessment, instruction, and remediation can be based on the same universal explanatory conceptualization of a child’s development (typical or atypical) and within this model are therefore inseparable (p, 100).

The inseparability of instruction and assessment indeed corresponds to the underlying principle of *dynamic assessment*, that is, effective instruction is not based on a single measurement of one’s ability completing a task individually, but on how the instructor playing the role of examiner at the same time aware of how learners react to the provided mediation/instruction.

Given the theoretical position on the inseparability of instruction and assessment, *dynamic assessment* informs educators of three important points about one’s learning and development. First, there is no uniform development and developmental process for all learners. Even learning the same linguistic feature, different learners may need different mediation. An obvious example was the two French learners, Marnie and Michelle, in Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi’s (2010) study. Marnie produced more explanations and utterances about the grammatical concept, and showed more conceptual development than Michelle in the immediate post-test on her understanding of French voice. It is noted that even the same learner may need varied mediation in learning different linguistic features (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). Next, each learner has his or her upper limit even with the negotiated mediation between learner and mediator (Lantolf, 2011). Last, the same level of development does not guarantee the same future development among different learners; therefore learners with different abilities need different instructional intervention (Antón, 2009).

In Poehner (2007, 2008), a *dynamic assessment* program designed for undergraduate learners of L2 French in an advanced oral communication course was described to reveal how the “transcendence” method helps learners with their oral ability development. In the “transcendence” teaching method, mediators “collaborate with learners on increasingly complex tasks” (p. 323). The French learners’ narrative production about the video clips shown to them was diagnosed so the mediator can give prompts that are based on their diagnosis of the learners’ current ability. Given the dialogic approach, “all mediator-learner interactions from the initial to final meeting attempted to co-create a *ZPD* through co-operation and negotiation” (Poehner, 2011).

### **2.3.5 Implications of SCT for the Proposed Study**

For the purpose and topic of this study—to investigate feedback practice and mediation process in the AOWT, I argue that the four SCT concepts—*mediation*, *concept-based instruction*, *ZPD*, and *dynamic assessment*—are applicable to my study. The AOWT is a social activity in nature wherein the U.S.-based tutors encountered the L2 writers on the online discussion forum. The function of message leaving for each other allows for communication between both sides. As they were encouraged to interact with each other during the process, it is hypothesized that the higher mental activity—the revising, re-writing, learning of L2 writing for L2 writers—would take place in their social interaction. The types, forms, and delivery of written feedback as well as the meaning negotiation in negotiated feedback are conceptualized as mediational artifacts that facilitate the mediation the tutor intends to make for the L2 writer.

Based on findings in my pilot study, *Concept-based instruction* may be applied in the tutorial process, since it is predictable that the tutors will need to provide instruction in their written feedback to L2 writers when needed. Most often cases may be providing explanations of

grammatical concepts in the feedback. In light of mediated feedback, tutors do not impose the abstract grammatical rules to learners; rather, may use examples or refer to specific content or meaning in their writing (i.e., spontaneous concepts) to help them understand the grammar (i.e., scientific concepts). The shuttling between *scientific* and *spontaneous concepts* is assumed to facilitate development, according to *concept-based instruction*.

The setting in my study also aligns with what is significant in *ZPD*—a novice (i.e., L2 writer) completes tasks with the assistance from an expert (i.e., tutors). If the mediated feedback from the tutors falls within the learners' *ZPD*, development in L2 writing may be facilitated. Moreover, *dynamic assessment* may come into play when the tutor gives written feedback that projects the L2 writers' future development. Tutors are also expected to learn assessing and instructing L2 writers simultaneously since they would learn to be sensitive of the information about the writer's needs, difficulties, and challenges from their interaction with the writers and observation of their revisions.

To more clearly understand how SCT is used as a theoretical lens in my study, I will review empirical studies in L2 writing using SCT theoretical positions in the next section.

### **2.3.6 L2 Writing Research Using Sociocultural Theory Framework**

While some studies that apply SCT as a theoretical lens have been briefly reviewed in the previous section, a more detailed examination of several studies in L2 writing further illuminate the possibilities that SCT brings for the researching, learning and teaching of L2 writing. In this section, four L2 writing studies using SCT theoretical concepts are chosen for a more detailed review, since they also research on the topic of feedback to L2 writers. Even though not all of the reviewed studies apply SCT concepts in a way that will be identical to my study, they serve as good models showing how SCT works as a theoretical framework in L2 writing research. I will

first explore research most closely tied to my topic, written feedback to L2 writers (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Nassaji & Swain, 2000) with their focus on the concept of *ZPD*. Even though the next two studies by de Guerrero and Villamil (2000) and Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) focus on peer revision activities, they address two important SCT concepts-- *scaffolding* and *mediation*. All four studies are significant to my study not only because they use SCT concepts as a theoretical lens of analysis but also they present how L2 learners learn in a SCT-concept-driven environment, which is similar to what the AOWT presents.

### ZPD

Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) examined the one-on-one interactions between three ESL learners and a tutor in writing tutorials. Unlike traditional interactionist/cognitive views on how corrective feedback facilitates acquisition of L2 linguistic features, this study aims to discover the developmental process of the ESL writers by studying their progress in their *ZPD*. While most traditional L2 writing research examines L2 writers' development by evaluating their writing products and the frequency of grammatical errors, Aljaafreh and Lantolf, broadening the traditional product-oriented view in L2 writing research, also observed if the ESL writers move away from reliance on the tutor, or other-regulation, to more independence in self-correcting their own errors, or self-regulation. The ESL learners were observed whether they show movement from level 1 (i.e., "The learner is not able to notice, or correct the error, even with intervention from the tutor) to level 5 (i.e., "The learner becomes more consistent in using the target structure correctly in all contexts"). In terms of the assistance the tutor provided, the authors developed a "regulatory scale" to determine if the tutor used implicit strategies (e.g., Level 0 indicates "Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial") or explicit strategies (e.g., Level 12 indicates "Tutor provides examples of



the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action”) to regulate the learners’ learning.

In a detailed analysis of the conversation between tutor and L2 learner, Aljaafreh and Lantolf show the degree of scaffolding provided by the tutor diminished gradually (i.e., the help provided becomes more implicit over time). They also found the L2 learners assumed increased control over the L2 in their writing, a sign of moving from other-regulation to self-regulation. What is compelling in these findings is that effective corrective feedback relies much on the mediation and the *ZPD* co-constructed and negotiated by the learner and tutor where the given corrective feedback becomes relevant, as “all types of feedback are potentially relevant for learning, but their relevance depends on where in the learner’s *ZPD* a particular property of the L2 is situated” (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 480).

Their findings are insightful for my study, particularly regarding the claim that “linguistic forms alone do not provide us with the full picture of a learner’s developmental level. It is essential to know the degree to which other-regulation, or mediation, impacts on the learner’s production of the particular forms” (p. 480). The findings also provide justification for the importance of tutor training in my study since they need the skill to determine appropriate feedback to give to L2 learners to best facilitate their learning.

As a follow-up study, Nassaji and Swain (2000) used the same regulatory scale developed by Aljaafreh and Lantolf to examine a tutor’s feedback on the writing of two Korean learners of English. This study aims to compare whether the corrective feedback provided within the learner’s *ZPD* is more effective than that randomly provided. The L2 learners were divided into two groups—the *ZPD* students and non-*ZPD* students. Their learning and understanding of the English articles was evaluated through a post-test and the subsequent tutorial sessions based

on two criteria—“the number of correct productions of articles in each composition” and “the number of correct productions of articles in the final student-specific, task-related cloze tests” (p. 39). A qualitative analysis of the tutorial transcription was also used to identify patterns of correction and learners’ use of articles.

Results show that providing feedback within the learners’ *ZPD* is more effective than that irrelevant to the learners’ *ZPD*, particularly in (1) helping them arrive at the correct form in feedback session, (2) using less explicit feedback to help them with their use of articles in subsequent sessions, and (3) helping them use the correct form of articles without assistance in the cloze post-test. What is worth noting is that, in the non-*ZPD* student group, there were cases when the randomly-given feedback was effective, as those were feedback with a good degree of explicitness.

Based on Vygotskian SCT, research on *ZPD* should not solely depend on a post-test to claim learners’ progress. Rather, the process of how their learning takes place and how their learning is transformed is more important than the final products. Nassaji and Swain’s study serves as a good example illustrating how the qualitative data from tutorial transcriptions really “showed a progressive trend” in learners’ performance. The evidence was that in the first composition, the non-*ZPD* students outperformed the *ZPD* students in correctly producing English articles, while by the third session, the *ZPD* students used more correct English articles. This informs my choice of using qualitative research method documenting the process of how L2 writers negotiate feedback and meaning with tutors.

Both studies serve as good examples of how to study corrective feedback utilizing SCT. Both of them drew upon SCT in language learning—“learning is not something an individual does alone, but is a collaborative endeavor necessarily involving other individuals” (Aljaafreh &

Lantolf, 1994); “knowledge is defined as social in nature and is constructed through a process of collaboration, interaction, and communication among learners in social settings and as the result of interaction within the ZPD” (Nassaji & Swain, 2000). As *ZPD* is one of the focal concepts in my study, the findings of the two studies are especially supportive for my stance on how mediated feedback can help L2 writers. In addition, the two studies also give me methodological implications concerning how to study the dynamic interaction between the tutor and L2 writer, as the dynamic character in the *ZPD* and feedback are captured in the hierarchy of the regulatory scale in both studies.

### Scaffolding and Mediation

Since the nature of interaction in a tutorial shares similar attributes with a peer revision activity and Vygotskian SCT is in use, the two studies conducted by de Guerrero and Villamil (2000) and Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) are reviewed here. In an effort to explore the social and cognitive dimension of peer interaction during revision, de Guerrero and Villamil conducted the study adopting a qualitative, interpretive perspective by using the “microgenetic” analysis to “observe the mechanisms by which strategies of revision take shape and develop in the interpsychological space created when L2 learners are working in their respective ZPDs” (p. 51). According to Wertsch (1985, as cited in Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 54), microgenesis is crucial in understanding how psychological processes are formed by conducting a “thorough minute analysis”. In this sense, this study presented a dyad’s (i.e., 2 male intermediate ESL college students forming a pair of “reader” and “writer”) interaction via analyzing their conversation transcriptions to examine the scaffolding mechanisms they provided for each other as well as the moment-to-moment changes that may represent their development of revision skills through mediated assistance.

The major finding in this study is the “reader’s” role as a mediator “displaying several supportive behaviors that facilitated advancement through the task” (p. 64). For instance, the “reader” showed behaviors of “recruiting the writer’s interest,” “mark critical aspects or discrepancies in the writer’s text,” and “explicitly instructing or giving mini lessons to the writer on issues of grammar and mechanics” (p. 64). As both parties benefit from the interaction, the writers even demonstrate “gradual assumption of responsibility, his unfolding dis-inhibition to make or reject suggestions for change, and his adoption of a more active role as reviser by taking the initiative in revising and repairing trouble-sources on his own”. (p. 65).

Despite the context in a peer revision activity, this study has significant implications for my research as well. Specifically, the reader’s engaging and supportive behaviors offer opportunities for the writer to co-construct his/her *ZPD* during the revision process. In the same vein, the tutors in my study are conceptualized as readers in the tutorial; their frequent interaction with the L2 writers as well as the mediated feedback they provide are hypothesized to be influential for the L2 writers. With a focus on how L2 writers develop their revision and writing abilities with the help of the tutor’s negotiated feedback, this study reminds me of the importance of ensuring that the tutors are ready for such openness in the feedback giving process.

Villamil and de Guerrero’s (1996) study also uses SCT to investigate the social and cognitive activities in peer revision. Fifty-four Spanish speaking learners of English enrolled in an ESL class in Puerto Rico were recruited as participants and paired based on the quality of their first draft of the composition. Data collected include transcripts of 40 recorded dyadic interactions, their first drafts, revised revision, and written comments on the revision sheets. Using qualitative methodology, this study defined three focal areas for data analysis: (1) social-cognitive activities (i.e., “activities displayed during peer interaction which were thought to be

the basis for cognitive processes related to revision”), (2) mediating strategies (i.e., “semiotically encoded actions which facilitated the achievement of task goals, that is, revising the text”), and (3) significant aspects of social behavior (i.e., “salient behavioral issues that indicated how peers handled their mutual interaction regarding the text”) (p. 56).

Results show that the identified social-cognitive activities undertaken in peer revision serve as “precursors of the conscious, volitional processes that characterize individual writing activity”. In other words, the social-cognitive activities “constitute the social basis for the development of cognitive processes that are essential for revision” (p. 67). For example, “initial reading aloud” gives the writer a sense of audience; “dealing with troublesources” shows different learners deal with problems in writing differently; “composing” shows that learners were able to generate new text after peer revision; “discussing task procedures” illustrates how speaking serves as a cognitive tool for learners to engage in social activities. Results also reveal five mediating strategies used by learners: “employing symbols and external sources,” “using the L1,” “providing scaffolding,” “resorting to interlanguage knowledge,” and “vocalizing private speech”. According to the authors, “these strategies had the characteristic of being mediated in all cases by semiotic or linguistic tools” (p. 67). To conclude, the peer revision activity shows L2 learners’ collaboration in mutual scaffolding and assistance, which can be seen in the four social behaviors identified—“management of authorial control,” “affectivity,” “collaboration,” and “adopting reader/writer roles” (p. 51).

In the studies discussed above, it becomes clear that feedback giving and interpreting can be a highly social event where the feedback giver (e.g., tutor, writing teacher, peer) co-constructs the revising and re-writing process with the feedback receiver (e.g., L2 writer). What is more important to L2 learners is that the feedback given aligns with their *ZPD* has been proved to

facilitate development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Villamil and de Guerrero, 1996). In this regard, SCT is a plausible theoretical lens in my study on the AOWT.

To conclude, the four reviewed article demonstrate that writing tutorial is a highly social and cultural activity in which the interaction between tutors and L2 writers is significant to how the L2 writers learn to revise and to write in L2. However, the above discussion shows that not much of the feedback issue has been researched using sociocultural theory in L2 writing research. Thus my study fills in such a gap in second language writing research.

## **2.4 Source II: Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

This section reviews empirical studies on written feedback in L2 writing, mostly for adult learners. The practice of written feedback has been an ongoing contestable issue since its emergence in L2 writing research. As was explained in introduction, research on the effect of written feedback given by teachers has produced inconclusive and mixed results on L2 learners' reaction to teacher written feedback (See Goldstein, 2005 for detailed discussion).

Despite the incongruence of L2 learners' reaction and attitudes to L2 teachers' written feedback, there are many reasons why written feedback is worth of continuing practice and research. First, for example, advocates of process approaches to teaching and learning of L2 writing have continued to argue for appropriate teacher intervention and feedback at key points during the process (e.g., Goldstein, 2004; Hyland, 1998; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010), as the notion of process has been argued to include both the process and the formative products. L2 teachers have to seek a balance between error correction and written commentary by giving "indirect feedback" or using "hedges" with a hope to guide learners without risking appropriating their writing (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010). Research

focusing on language acquisition and awareness supports the practice of written feedback (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). Another body of research views writing as a social act involving writers and readers (an audience) (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), and teachers can act as one of the readers available to the L2 writers, in particular, a more “expert” reader. Such sense of audience matters especially when the interactive nature of reading and writing is considered (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Leki, 1993) during the feedback giving process.

Research about L2 writing feedback generally falls into the three categories—the nature, focus, and outcome of written feedback. In the following sections, I will first review the research that foregrounds the nature of written feedback. Next I will review research on the focus of written feedback. Finally I will review research on the outcome of the written feedback.

#### **2.4.1 The Nature of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

Research in 1980s and early 1990s provided a dismal picture of written feedback given by teachers in L2 writing classrooms. A list of adjectives given to describe the nature of teacher written commentary reflect its bad press, including “exercise in futility” (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981), “arbitrary, idiosyncratic” (Sommers, 1982), “overly directive, removing students’ rights to their own texts” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), and “short, careless, exhausted, or insensitive comments” (Connors & Lunsford, 1993). However, there has been research contending that teacher written commentary can serve many other important pedagogical functions for both L2 writing teachers and students (e.g., Ferris, 1995, 1997; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Ferris et al., 1997; Hyland, 1998, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

A representative study that researched the nature of written feedback in L2 writing was conducted by Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti (1997), who examined the pragmatic aims and

linguistic forms of the feedback. Their article was seminal because it provided one of the first rich descriptions of written feedback with strong pedagogical implications for L2 writing studies.

Ferris et al. (1997) conducted a discourse analytic study examining what teachers say in their commentary about their ESL students' L2 grammar and content as well as how they say it. In total, the authors analyzed 110 complete pairs of first and second drafts of the essay assignments written by 47 ESL students from a sheltered-ESL freshman composition course in a U.S. university. Data came from the marginal and end comments of their first three essay assignments.

Through constant comparative method of analysis, an original analysis model of teacher written commentary was developed, first based on "the teacher's goal(s) in writing the comments," and then "the linguistic forms of the comments". What follows are shown in the model: (1) In terms of "Aim or intent of the comment," there were "Directives" (including "Ask for information," "Make suggestion/request," "Give information"), "Grammar/Mechanics," and "Positive comments". (2) For "Linguistic features of the comment," there were "Syntactic form" (including "Question," "Statement/Exclamation," and "Imperative"), "Presence/Absence of hedges," and "Text-specific/Generic" (p. 163).

Ferris et al. found that, in general, there were more marginal comments than end comments. Of them, marginal comments were found to have more "Ask for information," "Questions," and more text-based comments, while end comments consisted of more positive comments, comments in statement forms, and were more summative in nature. The authors further found that different assignments, increased teacher sensitivity, and student ability level may all be determining factors explaining the reported differences in teacher written commentary. The authors found that comment variety reduced as semester progressed, which



may be due to “student improvement” and “greater shared knowledge”. Last, student ability level also comes into play, as “teachers take a more collegial, less directive stance when responding to stronger students, while focusing more on surface-level problems with weaker students” (p. 175).

This study is particularly compelling since the authors analyzed more than a hundred drafts produced by 47 students and commented by one writing teacher. Ensuring the consistency in the practice of feedback from the only writing teacher, this study reflects variety in the collection of L2 students’ writing problems in their writing samples. Furthermore, the development of their analysis model is useful not only for future research but also for L2 writing teachers to examine their comments more critically. The authors asserted in their conclusions that “description of teacher response to student writing must go well beyond simple discussions of whether a teacher should respond to ‘content’ or ‘form’”. Instead, teachers should first ensure that their intent is well expressed in their comments and understood by their students. It is also important to note students’ difficulties in understanding teachers’ comments due to their “inadequate pragmatic and linguistic knowledge,” lack of knowledge in “rhetorical and grammatical jargon used by the teacher,” or unfamiliarity with the “nature and function of indirect speech acts such as requests phrased as questions” (p. 175-176). All the points mentioned above reveal the importance of communication between the teacher and L2 students and the scaffolding provided to L2 students who are still struggling with the language. This study resonates with my proposed research in terms of the call for attention to the needs and challenges of the L2 writers.

Another study related to the nature of written feedback in teachers’ response to L2 writer’s writing is conducted by Ashwell (2000). The author compared four different patterns of teacher written feedback—“content-focused feedback on D1 (draft 1) followed by form-focused

feedback on D2,” “the reverse pattern,” “a pattern of mixed form and content feedback after both D1 and D2,” and “a control pattern of zero feedback”. Participants were 50 students enrolled in two writing classes at a Japanese university, and were required to write four assignments with three drafts. For data analysis, D1, D2, and D3 of the third assignment were selected.

Results of this study show that the first pattern (i.e., content feedback on D1 followed by form feedback on D2) is not superior to the reverse pattern. Whether the form and content feedback is separated or not did not make a difference in students’ performance of their revisions. Such results were in line with the conclusion made in Fathman and Whalley (1990) and Ferris (1997)—giving form and content feedback simultaneously does not affect students’ revisions. Another important result from Ashwell’s study is that form feedback helped improve writers’ accuracy while content feedback did not bring much positive influence on writers’ content. Ashwell interpreted this result as such—“the students in the present study were inexperienced EFL writers who, quite understandably, may have been more concerned about the linguistic code they were writing with than about content issues” (p. 244).

Ashwell’s study researched on the common patterns of written feedback that can be found in many L2 writing teachers’ response to L2 writers. The results from the comparison of the different commonly-seen patterns of written feedback imply that it is not the patterns that matter to L2 writers. However, the question regarding the determining factors for the written feedback to serve L2 writers better are still unanswered in this study. Ashwell offered a possible explanation, which may have been related to the gap in expectations of the teacher and students--the students did not understand what their teachers expect them to do even though different types of feedback was given. Such conclusion gives me an important implication for my design of the proposed study, that is, communication between feedback giver and receiver is the key to

successful revisions. The feedback giver should make the feedback receiver understand how the feedback is intended to affect their writing and why.

In conclusion, both studies researched on the nature of written feedback in L2 writing teachers' response to L2 writers. In Ferris et al.'s work, although the descriptions of teacher written commentary and the development of the analysis model are pedagogically and methodologically insightful, how students react to the comments are not clear in their work. If Ferris et al. would have conducted interviews with the students who received the comments and make revisions accordingly, the link between teachers' written commentary and L2 students' subsequent revisions and learning of L2 writing would be more convincing. In the second study, even though Ashwell proved that the form-focused feedback has a better effect in influencing L2 writers' revisions, he did not explain why content feedback and different patterns of feedback did not make a difference for L2 writers' revisions. My conceptualization of useful written feedback aligns with the possible explanation Ashwell provided in his conclusion, that is, feedback givers should communicate his intention of how and why he used different feedback to help the L2 writers. In the same vein, more recent research on written feedback (Ferris, 2009; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005) has advocated that corrections should be "contextualized within the recursive writing process, prioritized to focus on serious and frequent patterns of written error, and personalized to the specific needs of the individual student writer" (Ferris, 2010, p. 185). The issue of communication in the process of feedback giving warrants further research.

#### **2.4.2 The Focus of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

An increasing number of recent written feedback research has investigated the focus of the written feedback on certain linguistic features in L2 writing. A line of research has centered on the effectiveness of focused corrective feedback (often abbreviated as CF) to L2 writers with

respect to a single linguistic feature (e.g. English article use) (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009). Within this line of research, Ellis et al. (2008) distinguished “highly focused and “less focused” corrective feedback. The former refers to those that “focus on a single error type (e.g., errors in the use of the past simple tense) ,” while the latter “target more than one error type but will still restrict correction to a limited number of pre-selected types (e.g., simple past tense; articles; prepositions)” (p. 356). As the effectiveness of focused corrective feedback has been a focus in L2 writing research, two studies conducted by Ellis et al. (2008) and Sheen et al. (2009) comparing the focused and unfocused feedback are reviewed here.

The first study by Ellis et al. (2008) was conducted in an EFL context with 49 intermediate Japanese learners of English. Following Sheen (2007) and Bitchener (2008), this study examined learners’ acquisition of English indefinite and definite articles that express first and second mention, since the “obligatory occasions for this use of articles” are commonly seen in narratives, the article use is not a completely new feature for intermediate level learners, and it may cause difficulties to those whose L1 lacks such use. Using a quasi-experimental design, this study divided the learners into two treatment groups—focused group (i.e., direct written corrective feedback on articles only); unfocused group (i.e., direct written corrective feedback on articles and other error categories) and a control group.

Results show that all three groups represented improved level of accuracy in the immediate post-test, but the two treatment groups outperformed the control group in the delayed post-test. Such result reports that both focused and unfocused feedback are equally effective for the learning of articles. However, “the control’s group’s use of articles was inconsistent manifesting marked fluctuations in accuracy from one time to the next” (p. 364), although there

was a statistical significance from one test to another. In treatment groups, a general pattern of accuracy gain was found, indicating that “the CF may have helped the learners to enhance their metalinguistic understanding of the use of articles to express first mention and anaphoric reference” (p. 366). From the result that the unfocused group only demonstrated differences from the first and second post test whereas focused group continued improving to delayed post-test, this study suggests focused CF may be more effective in a long-term period.

The second study by Sheen et al. (2009) was conducted in an ESL context with 5 English native-speaking teachers and 80 intermediate level students in an ESL program in a U.S. college. This study is similar to Ellis et al. (2008) in employing a quasi-experimental design and aiming at English article use to examine the effectiveness of focused and unfocused CF. There were three treatment groups (i.e., direct focus CF, direct unfocused CF, writing practice) and one control group.

Results indicate that focused feedback is more effective than unfocused feedback, both when dealing with the target structure of English article and other grammatical features. In a short term, the focused group outperformed the unfocused group in the accurate use of articles; and in the long run, the focused group still outperformed the control group while unfocused group did not. For learners’ overall accuracy in the five grammatical targets, focused group, rather than unfocused group, had greater accuracy than the control group, meaning “... the results point to focused CF having a positive effect on the learning of not just articles but also a range of different grammatical features, ...” (p. 565). Possible explanations for this result claimed by authors include the consistent correction on the same feature (Han, 2002) and the systematic correction manner in focused group. The authors thus conclude that unfocused CF “is not beneficial in the learning context in which they occur” (p. 566).

Identical to other research on focused/unfocused CF in terms of findings (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Sheen, 2007), both studies conclude with a positive claim for the effectiveness of focused CF directed at certain linguistic feature in both EFL and ESL contexts. This line of research shows that (1) “focused written CF is effective in treating at least certain types of linguistic error” (English articles in these cases); (2) “a single treatment can have a longitudinal effect”; (3) “written CF is beneficial for low- and advanced-proficiency learners” (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), p. 60). One limitation for these studies is that it is still unclear how effective focused written CF is in coping with different linguistic features in addition to English articles. Another limitation lies in the extension of its effect on learners’ accuracy of the target linguistic forms. Although Sheen et al. (2009) claim the long-term effect in the use of focused feedback, their study was conducted in only a 10-week period.

As discussed above, albeit the positive effect shown in the use of focused written feedback, the two studies provided little information about how the focused written feedback is given. Even though the unfocused written feedback does not exhibit the effect as positive as its counterpart if the feedback giver makes several attempts using different delivery manners giving unfocused feedback, or combines them with other forms of feedback, there may be different effects for L2 learners. Making several attempts, feedback givers may be able to cultivate learners’ knowledge in the target linguistic feature and bring out their improvement in later stages of learning. In this way, unfocused feedback may be conceptualized as a different means in mediating learners’ learning rather than as a useless strategy for giving feedback.

### **2.4.3 The Outcome of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

A great deal of written feedback research has addressed the impact of teacher written commentary on L2 learning. Two major topics that have spawned a number of empirical studies

in this line of research are: (1) studies examining the effect of teacher written feedback on L2 students' revision (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Hyland, 1998; Silver & Lee, 2007; Treglia, 2009); (2) studies examining the effect of teacher written corrective feedback on L2 learners' language accuracy development (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). I will review relevant empirical studies to better understand how written feedback practice impacts the learning of L2 writing to inform my study.

#### **2.4.3.1 The Effect of Written Feedback on L2 Writers' Revisions**

The two studies reviewed below are particular of interest to me, and use different methodological approaches to investigate the effect of written feedback on L2 writers' revision.

Ferris (1997) conducted a quantitative study examining over 1,600 marginal and end comments written on 110 first drafts of papers produced by 47 advanced university ESL students. She further examined the revised drafts of each paper to probe into what characteristics of teacher commentary appear to influence students' revision and whether revisions influenced by teacher feedback lead to substantive and effective changes in their papers. The 47 student participants were enrolled in a sheltered ESL Freshman composition course at a large public university in California, most of who were permanent residents of the U.S. having attended local high schools or community colleges. In the composition course, the students were given four assignments of various task types (ranging from personal narrative, expository to persuasive), and required to write at least three drafts for each assignment. Through constant comparative method of analysis, Ferris developed an analytic model that allows her to observe the features of the teacher written feedback, including "Comment Length" (in number of words), "Comment Types" (according to their pragmatic intent and syntactic form), the use of hedges (e.g., *please*, *maybe*), and whether the feedback was text-specific or not. In terms of the examination of the

effect of the feedback on students' revisions, a subjective rating scale was developed, considering "the degree to which the student utilized each first-draft comment in the revision—by making no attempt, a minimal attempt, or a substantive attempt to address the comment—and whether the resulting change(s) improved the paper, had mixed effects, or had a negligible or negative effect on the revision" (p. 320-322).

Findings in this study showed that "marginal requests for information," "requests (regardless of syntactic form) ," and "summary comments on grammar" led to the most substantive revisions, whereas "questions" or "statements that provided information" demonstrated less influential power in students' revisions. Even though, in general, longer comments and text-specific comments were found to be linked more with students' revisions than the shorter and general ones, types of comments were the major influences. Such finding seems to correspond to Ferris et al. (1997) that teachers' intent or goal of giving feedback is important. With regard to the overall improvement in students' papers due to the revisions influenced by teacher written feedback, Ferris found that almost all changes were overwhelmingly positive to student improvement in their papers. In particular, longer and text-specific comments were found to be helpful for the ESL students. The only mixed effects for student improvement were found in the use of "questions" and "statements that provided information".

Based on the findings, Ferris provided implications for L2 writing instructors to help them make written commentary more effective and help L2 students process feedback more successfully. She reminded L2 writing instructors of careful use of certain types of commentary (e.g., questions and statements that give information to students), despite the frequent call for these commentary types to "stimulate students' thinking processes and to avoid appropriating



students' texts in many L1 writing literature" (Ferris, 1997; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). Additional guidance alongside these comment types to L2 students were recommended, such as "either by adding an explicit suggestion as to how the student should utilize the information or by explaining briefly, orally or in an endnote, that these comments are intended to inform the student's own reflections and need to be considered carefully" (p. 332). Regarding the role of grammar feedback, Ferris claimed the most successful manner that led to both substantive and effective revisions was that "teacher responded primarily to students' ideas but did provide some indication of the students' major patterns of error in endnotes, usually accompanied by some in-text underlining of sample errors" (p. 332). These pedagogical implications provided also give me good ideas for educating the tutors in my study.

Undoubtedly, Ferris' study shed lights not only on L2 writing instruction, but also on research on the topic of written feedback by developing an analytic model grounded in data and in a natural setting of an enlightened writing classroom. Her recommendation of the use of a "revise-and-resubmit letter" as well as her reminder of the effect of certain types of commentary again reflects the importance of the communication and interaction between the teacher and students, particularly in settings where the teacher and students come from diverse cultural, educational and linguistic background (e.g., my proposed study). This in a way supports my conceptualization of the act of feedback giving and receiving as a socially mediated activity.

With a different approach, Hyland (1998) conducted a case study using multiple qualitative data sources including class observation notes, interview transcripts, teacher think-aloud, and written texts to explore the same topic—the effect of teacher written feedback on L2 students' revisions. The participants in this study included six ESL students enrolled in the English Proficiency program course at a university in New Zealand taught by two ESL teachers.

In the usable “feedback points”—defined as “each written intervention that focused on a different aspect of the text” (p. 261) given by the two ESL teachers to the six students, only 6% to 14% of the feedback points were unused. Such result showed that the students valued the feedback their teachers gave them and would use it. Across the six student cases, their revisions were found to be associated with teacher written feedback in three ways—(1) “Revisions often closely followed the corrections or suggestions made by the feedback”; (2) “Feedback could act as an initial stimulus ... it could trigger a number of revisions which went beyond the issues addressed by the initial feedback” (also known as “revision episode”); (3) “A third response to feedback was to avoid the issues raised in the feedback by deleting the problematic feature without substituting anything else” (p. 264-265).

However, what makes Hyland’s piece unique is not the generalizations about how the ESL students respond to teacher written feedback. Instead, a more in-depth examination of two extreme cases in this study—Maho (from Japan, preparing for undergraduate study) and Samorn (from Thailand, preparing for graduate study)—reveals that the relationship between student revisions and teacher written feedback is not linear; but rather contextual factors with respect to individual’s ability, preference, and expectations come into play. For instance, though Samorn’s English ability was higher than Maho’s, Samorn received more grammar-related feedback than Maho did, which is opposite to what previous research has found (e.g., Ferris, 1997). In addition, Samorn relied more on teacher written feedback, revising accordingly, whereas Maho adopted the least teacher feedback. The reason found through the multiple data sources was that “Maho’s enthusiasm for self expression, her desire to communicate a message, and less priority for grammatical accuracy may have caused her to try to extensively revise her texts on her own,” while Samorn was “most concerned to get grammatical feedback and was very interested in

improving this aspect of her texts” (p. 272-273). Another reason specific to Maho in her rare adoption of teacher feedback was associated to her planning and revising strategies in writing. She viewed a first draft as “an extended brainstorm rather than a semi-finished product,” which seemed to be a different concept hold by her teacher. “For Maho it was part of the process, writing “to get started,” while for Joan (her teacher) it was a semi-finished and shaped product. These qualitative data reveals the importance of the feedback givers being aware of the writers’ real needs.

Compared to Ferris (1997), Hyland (1998)’s findings are even closer to my assumption—teacher written feedback and its effect on students’ revised text is not a linear relationship. In other words, generations about teacher written feedback and its effect are of value for novice L2 writing instructors, but “it may be the case that ‘good’ revision and ‘good’ feedback can only really be defined with reference to the individual writers, their problems, and their reasons for writing” (Hyland, 1998, p, 275). The importance of contextual factors including individual writers’ expectations for feedback, proficiency of target language, and goals for writing are certainly considered in my study. Although the need of a fuller dialogue between feedback and receivers was uncovered by the findings of the two studies, how the written feedback can be negotiated by the L2 learners and mediated by the tutors are not yet clear. This constitutes an important focus in my study.

#### **2.4.3.2 The Effect of Written Feedback on L2 Learners’ Improved Accuracy**

The question of whether written feedback plays a role in L2 acquisition has not gained much attention until the appearance of an article in the journal *Language Learning* written by Truscott (1996), who called for the abandonment of error correction in L2 students’ writing. The effects of written error correction was denied by Truscott—“correction is harmful than simply

ineffective” (p. 360). He argued that no single form of error correction will be able to help L2 learners with acquisition of any linguistic features or structures. One major reason in his argument is that error correction neglects the complex and gradual process of interlanguage development in acquiring certain linguistic features, no matter in syntax, morphology and lexis. Though sounding intuitively reasonable, not surprisingly, his argument has ignited intense debate among researchers (e.g., Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Truscott, 1999, 2010; Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

On the other hand, opponents to Truscott’s argument found the stark opposite evidence and claimed the benefits of error correction for L2 learners. For instance, Ferris (1999) contended that the research base for this error correction issue in L2 writing is far from complete and conclusive for Truscott to make his conclusion of suppressing grammar correction, and L2 learners’ strong desire for error feedback should not be quickly dismissed. In Ferris and Roberts (2001), they even pointed out the effect of various ways of giving error correction in written feedback. Their results show that appropriate uses of feedback without explicitly labeling them by error type are found to be useful to help L2 learners learn to self-edit their own errors in the future. Also a consistent system of marking and coding errors throughout a writing class, paired with mini-lessons to build students’ knowledge base about the error types being marked, may lead to more long-term improvement of students’ accuracy than simply highlighting errors.

Albeit calling for the abandonment of error correction, Truscott (1999) acknowledged that questions in many aspects of error correction remain unanswered, and should be given attention in terms of which methods, techniques, and approaches to error correction may foster short-term or long-term improvement. Therefore, in addition to the research on focused versus unfocused written corrective feedback discussed earlier in this paper, research on direct versus

indirect corrective feedback and their effect on improved accuracy has gained attention among written feedback researchers. I will next review in detail a recent study on direct feedback, which was conducted by Bitchener et al. (2005; 2010).

Using a quantitative method, Bitchener et al. aimed to investigate “whether the type of feedback (direct, explicit written feedback and student-researcher 5 minute individual conferences; direct, explicit written feedback only; no corrective feedback) given to 53 adult migrant students on three types of error (prepositions, the past simple tense, and the definite article) resulted in improved accuracy in new pieces of writing over a 12 week period” (p. 191). The definition of direct written feedback is “the form of full, explicit corrections above the underlined errors” (p. 196). Each participant was required to complete a 250 word writing task in four writing stages (Week 2, Week 4, Week 8, Week 12).

Results show that “the provision of full, explicit written feedback, together with individual conference feedback, resulted in significantly greater accuracy when past simple tense and the definite article were used in new pieces of writing” (p. 201). However, the same accuracy improvement was not seen in the use of prepositions, as it is not seen as “treatable” as past simple tense and definite article due to its idiosyncrasy. The study also found that “there is not a linear and upward pattern of improvement from one time to another,” as L2 learners may perform well on certain linguistic features on one occasion, but in another they fail to do so.

Bitchener et al.’s study rejects the major argument on the uselessness of error correction feedback in Truscott (1996) by proving the efficacy of direct written CF. Compared to other research on learners’ linguistic accuracy (e.g., Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen et al., 2009 on focused/unfocused feedback), the most compelling part of this study is the extended combination of written feedback with other forms of feedback (i.e., conferencing) on more than one linguistic

feature. Even though the direct explicit feedback did not work for improving learners' all linguistic features, it implies that different features requires varied acquiring time and process since they require learners' varied domains of knowledge (Ferris, 1999). This conclusion is related to one of the goals in my study—the tutors are encouraged to understand the needs and challenges of the L2 writers in different areas of their writing if they encounter difficulties in certain areas of language use in writing. A synthesis of the empirical studies reviewed is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 is a synthesis of the findings of the empirical studies reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as the implications that the analyzed studies hold for my study.

Table 1: Synthesis of Reviewed Empirical Studies and Implications for the proposed study

References	Findings and Contribution	Implications for My Proposed Study
Ferris et al. (1997)	The determining factors in the differences among teacher written commentary include different assignments, increased teacher sensitivity, and student ability level. With increasing teacher sensitivity, teachers are aware of students' improvement and greater shared knowledge with the students makes teachers give less commentary. Aware of the change of student ability level, teachers would give more collegial and less directive commentary.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This study shows that contextual factors play a role in determining the written feedback given by teachers, as long as teachers are sensitive of them. This implies the importance of communication and interaction between feedback giver and receiver.</li> <li>2. The analytic model for analyzing teacher commentary is very insightful for my study.</li> </ol>
Ashwell (2000)	The patterns of giving content and form feedback does not show a significant difference in affecting L2 writers' revisions. Nor does the separation of content and form feedback in different drafts. A possible explanation is the gap in expectations between the tutor and writer.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The study gives my research the implication that the pattern of the feedback is not a determining factor in helping L2 writers revise. How the tutor uses the written feedback based on his/her sensitivity of the L2 writers' needs is more important.</li> </ol>
Ferris (1997)	Longer and text-specific comments are found to be more helpful than short and text-irrelevant ones. Marginal requests for information and summary comments on grammar are found to lead to the most substantive revisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The analytic model for the analysis of teacher comments serves as a good example of protocol in analyzing the feedback data in my study.</li> <li>2. The usefulness of text-specific comments echoes my assumption</li> </ol>

References	Findings and Contribution	Implications for My Proposed Study
		that text-specific comments served as a kind of spontaneous concepts can help learners with higher mental activity (i.e., revision).
Hyland (1998)	Overall, L2 learners value the written feedback provided by their teachers; however, personal/contextual factors may come into play and cause a mismatch between teacher's intent of giving certain feedback and L2 learners' expectations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Again, the qualitative data from the two cases selected for detailed analysis reveals the importance of feedback givers being aware of the writer's real needs.</li> <li>2. The importance of contextual/personal factors supports my conceptualization and definition of negotiated feedback.</li> </ol>
Ellis et al. (2008)	Corrective feedback is proved to help improve L2 learners' linguistic accuracy in writing and enhance their metalinguistic understanding of the use of articles. Focused feedback is proved to have a long-term effect (10 week period in this study).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The effectiveness of corrective feedback is proved in a well-designed quasi-experimental study.</li> </ol>
Sheen et al. (2009)	Focused feedback is found to be more effective than unfocused feedback when dealing with not only a certain linguistic feature. Focused feedback is proved to be effective for L2 learners' overall accuracy in writing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The effectiveness of focused corrective feedback is proved in a well-designed quasi-experimental study</li> </ol>
Bitchener et al. (2005)	Corrective feedback is also effective in improving accuracy in writing for advanced level L2 learners. Direct, explicit feedback combined with individual conference talk results in significant accuracy improvement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of individual conference talk may play a significant supplemental role in helping L2 learners. This result reveals the importance of interaction and negotiation between feedback givers and receivers.</li> </ol>
Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994)	The help provided by the tutor becomes more implicit over time, and L2 learner show increasing control of their writing (from other-regulation to self-regulation).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective corrective feedback relies much on the mediation and the ZPD co-constructed and negotiated by the learner and tutor, which supports my conceptualization for negotiated feedback.</li> <li>2. The regulatory scale developed from data is very useful for future research investigating the topic of ZPD.</li> </ol>
Nassaji & Swain (2000)	Providing feedback within learners' ZPD is more effective than that falls outside of their ZPD in helping them with correct language use. Explicitness is another important factor in making written feedback effective.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This study is a good example showing how ZPD works in the written feedback to help L2 writers.</li> <li>2. This study is also a good example of written feedback research using mixed</li> </ol>

References	Findings and Contribution	Implications for My Proposed Study
		method.
de Guerrero & Villamil (2000)	Peers acting as a reader give the writer a sense of audience, recruit the writer's interest, mark critical aspects in writer's writing, and offer timely assistance.	1. This study demonstrates how timely assistance can come into play to help L2 writers, which conforms to the spirit of ZPD. 2. This study is also a good example using microgenesis as a research method to analyze the conversation between feedback giver and receiver.
Villamil & de Guerrero (1996)	Peer revision activity shows L2 learners' collaboration in mutual scaffolding and assistance. Peers demonstrate social behaviors, which illustrate peer revision is a social-cognitive activity.	1. Findings illustrate how mediation and ZPD works in the negotiation and interaction between feedback giver and receiver. 2. The analysis protocol for analyzing mediating strategies is insightful for my study.

## 2.5 Gaps and Future Research

Thus far, L2 writing research in the dominant paradigm has examined writing outcome (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al, 2008; Sheen, 2009 discussed in this review), yet these studies have not fully captured the opportunities for learning that occur during the writing feedback process. Their individual cognitive psychological view may not be sufficient to capture the dynamics presented in the AOWT. Despite their success in proving the effectiveness of written feedback (direct and focused feedback particularly) for L2 writers, their conclusions seem to conceptualize the path from feedback to L2 writers' revision as an input-outcome process, in which revisions with greater accuracy signify development (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012), or the ultimate success of learning L2 writing. However, I argue that such an input-outcome relationship cannot fully explain the complex and dynamic nature of feedback giving, writing and re-writing (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). A close examination of the recursive process



between given feedback (regardless of the types and forms) and goals (better revisions, learners' learning and development) where the feedback is negotiated should be able to shed light on the learning that happens between tutor and writer. For future research and this study, Vygotskian sociocultural theory serves as a more useful lens in discovering the social nature of the process of tutorial and revising. Though the past research on written feedback has demonstrated a positive relationship between certain feedback approaches (giving direct and focused feedback on certain linguistic features that are challenging to language learners), accuracy improvement, and language uptake (counting the grammatical errors in subsequent revisions), it is not clear concerning whether such a causal relationship holds true for learners of all age groups and backgrounds. Despite a focus on EFL adult learners, I believe the AOWT model proposed in this dissertation will possibly be useful and transferable for learners of other age groups (such as even children learners), as long as feedback givers (children's tutors or teachers) know how to respond to their needs in their written feedback. The idea of mediated feedback is believed to be applicable to learners of all other ages.

## **2.6 Source III: Pilot Study**

In Spring 2011, I conducted a pilot study with the same design of an AOWT between tutors from ESL context (United States) and L2 writers from EFL context (Taiwan) proposed in this study. This pilot study not only enhanced my knowledge of written feedback practice but also ensured the feasibility of the AOWT in a transnational setting. Primary findings also support the practicality and value of my dissertation study.

With the purpose (to examine the mediating and learning process in the AOWT), the pilot study was conducted with a group of U.S.-based tutors from a teacher education course learning to teach reading and writing and L2 writers from an English academic writing course in Taiwan.

The pilot study was conducted from March to May 2011, having the same time period as in my proposed study. The AOWT was on an E3 Learning Management System, which is a learning management system developed by the university the L2 writers attended in Taiwan. I used the same system in my dissertation study. The pilot study involved 25 L2 writers who were graduate students from different majors and disciplines in Taiwan, and 11 tutors who were ESOL teacher candidates in the United States. To have an in-depth understanding, I focused on three focal dyads in data analysis, collecting the given written feedback and writing drafts as well as observing and interviewing all of them in the pilot research.

Primary finding of the pilot study was that the tutors used various scaffolding techniques to help the students attend to linguistic and rhetorical aspects of their writing. These techniques included *Indicating Error*, *Giving Non-corrective Suggestions*, *Explaining*, *Asking for Clarifications*, *Giving Corrective Suggestions*, and *Giving Examples*. Interviews with the tutors revealed that the scaffolding techniques provided to students reflects the tutors' efforts in offering writing assistance based on the students' *ZPD*. For instance, tutors tended to give more corrective suggestions with regard to language use in the second draft compared to the first draft, when they felt that the non-corrective suggestions might not fall within the students' *ZPD*. Overall, the scaffolding not only helped the students revise their writing but also afforded the opportunities for the students to engage in metalinguistic discussions in contexts that are meaningful for them.

Here is an example of how a tutor, Kasey (pseudonym), mediated an L2 writer's revising process using different types of written feedback within the writer's *ZPD*. In her feedback for the L2 writer's first draft, Kasey did not correct his writing directly but explained why his writing needed to be revised and suggested to him what to do. However, in her feedback on the second

draft, Kasey not only corrected his writing but also gave instructions on grammar rules. The following example is from the writer's second assignment—summarizing a given article on language change. The excerpts from my pilot study are illustrated as follows:

### **Excerpt 1: Sample from Pilot Study**

#### **L2 writer's first draft:**

“Some of the language replace English, the dominant Internet language. There is some proof of obedience to it, a wish to change it.”

#### **Kasey's feedback to first draft:**

“This sentence sounds a little controversial. I see that you tried to paraphrase the sentence: “There is some evidence of resistance to it, a desire to change it”, but resistance is not the same as obedience. Please try to find more synonyms for this word. Furthermore, when paraphrasing, you also have to change the structure of a sentence, but not just replace some words with synonyms. Further, when summarizing an article, you need to present its (main/important) points, so that a person, who has not read the article, will be able to understand what it is about after reading your summary. This sentence does not present meaningful/important information. Rewrite it including more important information from the article.”

#### **L2 writer's second draft:**

“English becomes less than before. In many countries, people are trying to use non-English language in the Internet. That means people desire to change it.”

#### **Kasey's feedback to second draft:**

- (1) You can't say: “people become less than before”. I understand the meaning of this sentence and I think it's better to say like that: “There are fewer people whose native language is English” OR “Native English-speaking population is decreasing”.
- (2) “Are trying” – this is present continuous, please remember that it has TWO parts: the verb “to BE” + “any verb: doing/trying/running..etc.” OR just use “the present simple tense”: “people try/do/use/etc.”
- (3) Instead of saying “non-English language” which does not sound right, paraphrase it: “people use languages other than English”.

As seen in the feedback to the second draft, the tutors indicated all the errors, gave corrective suggestions, and provided examples, while the feedback for the writer's first draft contained

more non-corrective feedback and did not give concrete wordings or choice of language use in the written feedback.

In the class discussion after the tutors gave their feedback to the L2 writers' first draft of the summary assignment, Kasey said that "*I also think they don't really know techniques of paraphrasing. I had the same, or similar problem. The student tried to find a synonym...so I thought, it's actually not even a synonym.*" Her sharing in class to some degrees explained her conscious use of different techniques to give feedback in order to meet the writer's needs in different writing stages, or to give him responses within his ZPD. The non-corrective feedback left more freedom for the writer to revise his content on his own, while in the second draft, Kasey provided more concrete feedback as she felt that the L2 writer may lack the ability to paraphrase the original article.

The preliminary findings in the pilot study have implications for the research design and conceptual framework of my proposed study. For instance, in Kasey's case, I learned that if I could have used a stimulated recall technique in the interview by showing her the printed excerpts and transcription as a visual reminder, I could have conducted further triangulation to make a stronger claim regarding her awareness of the writers' ZPD. In pondering my conceptual framework, I realized that written feedback is not simply a responding tool for the tutors. Rather, it is a mediating tool used by the dyads with considerations of the writer's needs, challenges, and ZPD. In other words, the written feedback is given after gauging the writer's current level and needs are negotiated. Based on these preliminary findings, I construct the conceptual framework for my dissertation study after constantly revisiting the findings and the relevant literature. In next section, the emerging conceptual framework for my dissertation study will be presented and explained.

## 2.7 Emerging Conceptual Framework

The development of conceptual framework is essential to qualitative research. As Berg (2008) stated, “to ensure that everyone is working with the same definition and mental image, you will need to *conceptualize* and *operationalize* the term” (p. 26). Miles and Huberman (1984) refer to conceptual framework as a visual or written product that “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them (p.18)”.

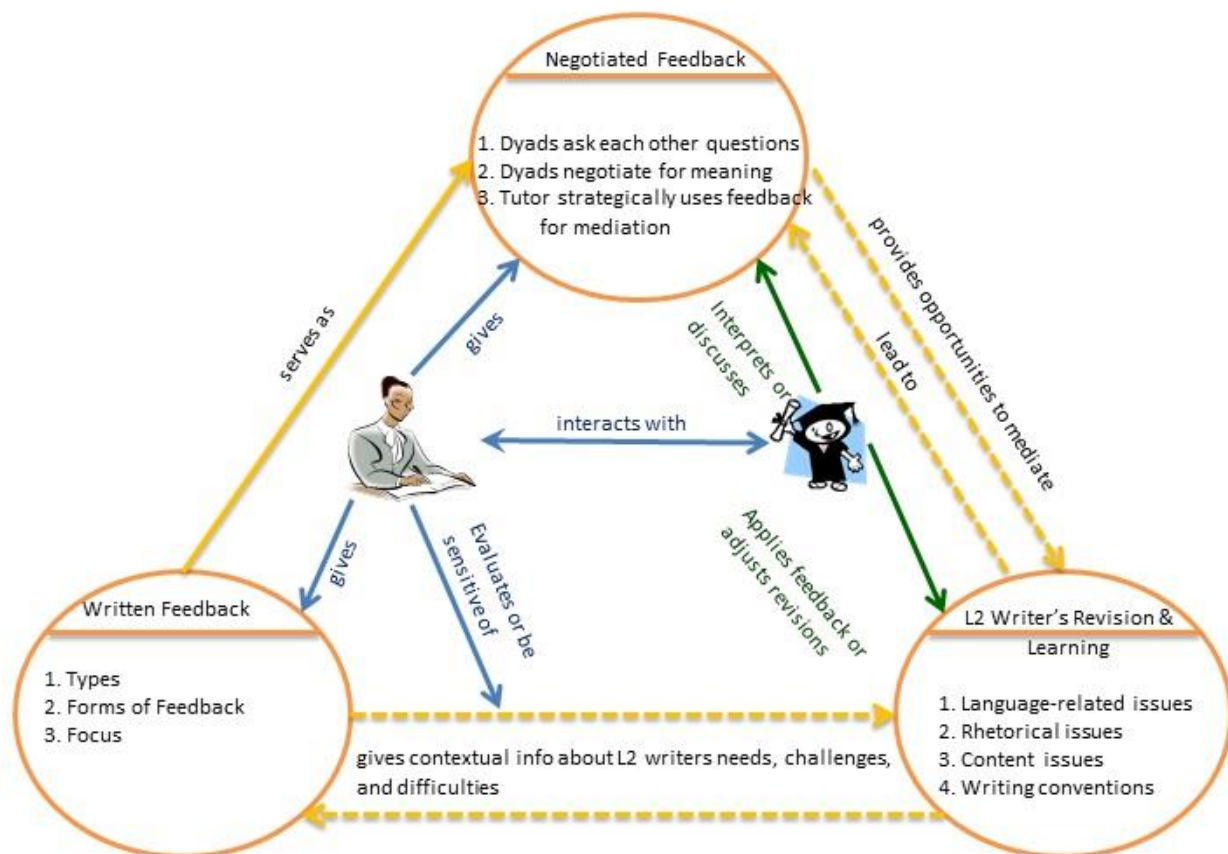
The conceptual framework for the proposed study (as shown in Figure 1) derives majorly from the three sources: literature review on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, empirical studies on written feedback in L2 writing, and my pilot study, combined with my personal learning and teaching experience mentioned in Introduction.

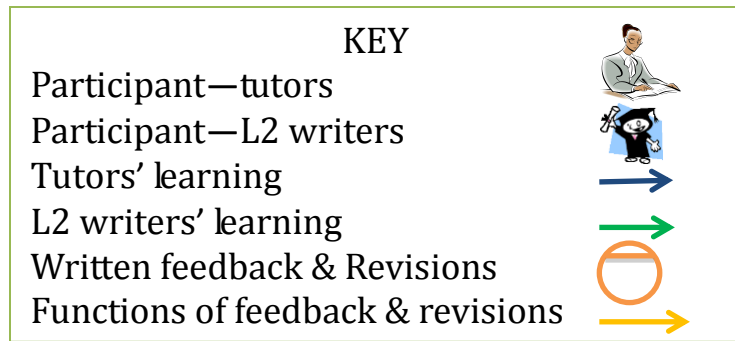
As stated in Introduction, my personal teaching experience reminds me of the potential communication barrier between the tutors and L2 writers due to their different expectations and cultural background. The Taiwanese students have been educated in and influenced by traditional Chinese culture, which taught them to obey authorities. Arguing or negotiating is not common between teachers or students, particularly when they perceive the role of feedback givers (the U.S.-based tutors in my case) as experts. The Taiwanese writers tended to accept most of the given feedback without questions and negotiation, leading the tutors to believe that the given feedback is effective and useful for the Taiwanese writers.

As I found the similar communication barrier between the Taiwanese writers and the U.S.-based tutors in my pilot study, I conceptualize a successful tutoring process as involving negotiation for meaning and for shared goals of the tutorial; needs and challenges of the writer. My pilot study also illustrates that L2 writers’ involvement in the tutorial process, to a large

extent, depends on how the tutor delivers written feedback (See source III: pilot study). The quantity of the given feedback is not necessary a determining factor for the L2 writer to benefit in the AOWT. My pilot study also shows that tutors need to learn how to mediate the learning of and interact with L2 writers. To these ends, I conceptualize the AOWT as involving the following three important components: negotiated feedback as a mediational tool, writers' improvement (e.g., revisions and other perceived gains), and tutor's learning (about feedback giving and tutorial).

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework to Examine the AOWT





Next, I explain the components and their relationship in the conceptual framework and make conclusions about how the framework helps pursue and answer my research questions.

The process of AOWT is represented by the large triangle composed by the three yellow circles and yellow arrows. The bottom left circle represents various types and forms of written feedback with different focuses given by the tutors. The top circle shows that negotiated feedback includes meaning negotiation, question interchange, and strategic use of written feedback for mediation. The negotiated feedback is formed through the negotiation between the tutor and L2 writer with the attention to the writers' intended meanings, writing needs, potential challenges and each other's expectations for revisions. The negotiated feedback may or may not provide opportunities for L2 writers to revise the various aspects of their writing (e.g., language-related issues, rhetorical issues, content issues, other writing conventions), which is represented by a dotted yellow arrow. In return, the writers' revisions may or may not lead to more negotiated feedback, which is represented by another dotted yellow arrow. As an ongoing process, the tutorial does not end at the writers' first revision; rather, the tutor may generate another written feedback since the revisions may (or may not) give contextual information about the writers' needs, challenges, and difficulties, which is represented by the dotted yellow arrows at the bottom.

An example of mediated feedback can be seen in the following excerpt from my pilot study. A writer wrote, “*when he works at ITRI (Industrial Technology Research Institute) that he was taking his master’s degree supports by public expense*” in his first biodata draft. While his tutor found the writer’s verb tense problematic, the tutor did not cross out his verb choice and gave a direct correction. Rather, the tutor wrote, “*Do you still work at ITRI? If not, use past tense*” in her feedback. The tutor asked the question about the writer’s working situation not simply because she expected him to tell her about his job. The question works more as a scaffold to help the writer understand why the tutor suggests changing present tense to past tense. The tutor also revealed in her interview that she did hope her feedback could make the writer revisit his writing with more thinking rather than simply copy all the corrections directly. This common type of written feedback, asking questions, shows the dialogic and negotiating nature of the tutor’s comment, since “the meaning of feedback comments is not transmitted from the teacher [i.e., tutor in my study] to the student; rather meaning comes into being through interaction and dialogue (Nicol, 2010).

Inside the large triangle, the feedback giver and receiver—the U.S.-based tutors and L2 writers in Taiwan—are indicated using pictures. On the part of tutors (on the left), what they do in the AOWT process is indicated by the arrows that connect with them. They would give various types and forms of written feedback with various foci in L2 writing, interact with the L2 writers, and evaluate the contextual information regarding the L2 writers’ needs, challenges, and difficulties. The tutors’ learning and growth are conceptualized to potentially occur in what they do with the L2 writers in the process. They may learn to give various types and forms of written feedback, learn to generate negotiated feedback to L2 writers, and learn to be sensitive of the contextual information about the writers and to evaluate their revisions in their interaction with



the L2 writers they work with. Findings of this part can help answer the second research question regarding the tutors' perceived influences of their professional development.

On the part of L2 writers inside the large triangle (on the right), what they would experience is indicated by the arrows that connect with the picture of L2 writer. In the AOWT process, they need to interpret the negotiated feedback given by their tutors, and may apply the negotiated feedback or adjust their revisions accordingly.

The conceptual framework guides my design of the research and data analysis in the future. It also informs the way I apply Vygotskian sociocultural theory and answer the research questions. For a clearer illustration, Table 2 shows how the conceptual framework aligns with my research questions and the relevant theoretical concepts applied in this study.

Table 2: Connections between Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

Research Questions	Connections to the Conceptual Framework
<p>1. How are L2 writing and revising processes mediated through tutor-learner feedback in the AOWT?</p> <p>a) What types of written feedback do tutors use through four rounds of feedback?</p> <p>b) How do L2 writers incorporate different types of feedback acts in the text revision process?</p> <p>c) How do L2 writers perceive their tutor's feedback acts in terms of their learning?</p>	<p><u>RQ1</u>: The three yellow circles and the connecting yellow arrows form a triangle, which visualizes the process of how the tutors and L2 writers use written feedback (negotiated feedback in particular) to mediate the revising and learning process of writing.</p> <p><u>RQ 1a</u>: The left bottom yellow circle labeled as written feedback describes the types of written feedback used in the tutors' response.</p> <p><u>RQ 1b</u>: The yellow circle for negotiated feedback, the yellow circle for L2 writers' revisions, and their connecting arrows refer to the tutors' attempt for mediation, in which negotiated feedback is used as a mediational tool to help L2 writers revise. As the tutors may need to explain some concepts of grammar or writing, negotiated feedback may contain concept-based mediation. The bottom yellow dotted lines demonstrate how ZPD may be identified through tutors' evaluation of the writers' needs and challenges. The negotiated feedback may provide learning opportunities for L2 writers, while their revisions and responses may make their tutors generate different negotiated feedback to help further.</p> <p><u>RQ 1c</u>: The green arrows that connect with the picture of L2 writers shows L2 writers' learning in interpreting the negotiated feedback and application of negotiated feedback to their revisions and learning of L2 writing.</p>

<p>2. What do the tutors report about the influences on their learning to give feedback and interact with L2 writers in the AOWT?</p> <p>a) How does each tutor's feedback change over time in terms of feedback acts?</p> <p>b) How do tutors perceive their own feedback act patterns changing over time? Why?</p>	<p><u>RQ 2-2b:</u></p> <p>The blue arrows that connect with the picture of tutors indicate what tutors will experience in the AOWT process. Their growth is conceptualized to occur in giving various types of written feedback, generating negotiated feedback for mediation, evaluating the revisions, and reading the contextual information about L2 writers in the process of interaction with the L2 writers.</p>
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## 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the three sources for the emerging conceptual framework—literature review on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, empirical studies of written feedback research in L2 writing, and my pilot study. I have also explained the conceptual framework and discussed how it relates to my research questions and the applied theoretical concepts. I will design the research and analyze data based on the conceptual framework. In next chapter, the chosen methodology will be introduced and discussed.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### ***3.1 Introduction***

The purpose of this study is to examine how the pre/inservice ESOL teachers mediate the revising and learning process of L2 writers (based in Taiwan) via an asynchronous online writing tutorial. Focusing particularly on the transnational AOWT, the study seeks to understand the mutual growth and engagement between the participating teacher candidates and L2 writers through the mediation of feedback acts.

In this chapter, I discuss the methods and procedures used in this research. I first describe my role as a participant researcher and my relationship with the participants. The degree to which my simultaneous participation in the tutorial activity and research is a contributing factor to my choice of qualitative research for this study. This chapter provides my rationale for the choice of the case study method as a specific qualitative research methodology, and the use of discourse analysis as the guiding methodology. Then, I describe the research setting, research participants, sampling techniques, data collection, data management, and data analysis, as well as the issues of quality and verification.

### ***3.2 My Role as a Participant-Researcher***

Although I enter the research context primarily as a researcher, I took on the additional role of teaching assistant in the teacher education course the pre/inservice teachers took during the time of research. In this course, I introduced the AOWT to the participating teacher candidates, recruited research participants, and led class discussions as intervention for the participating teacher candidates. I collaborated with the instructor of the English academic writing course that the L2 writers took in Taiwan, Ms. Wei, pairing the participating teacher

candidates and L2 writers based on a survey of their needs, expectations, and preferences. I had virtual meetings with Ms. Wei in Taiwan to understand how the L2 writers participated in the activity and to discern their needs.

My dual roles as the teaching assistant in the teacher education context and the researcher in the research context have certain influences on the field observation and other data collection. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), I was a “participant as observer” (p. 143) when collecting data from the participating teacher candidates (tutors in this study). The advantages of being a “participant as observer” include my ability to observe and record descriptive data in the class discussions among tutors, record direct quotations of sentiment, and keep written notes. In the participant/observer continuum mentioned by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), my positioning is situated between the two extreme ends—the “complete observer” who “does not participate in activities at the setting” but “looks at the scene, literally or figuratively, through a one-way mirror,” and the one with “complete involvement at the site, with little discernible difference between the observer’s and the subject’s behaviors” (p. 91). My dual roles made me cautious of the blurring boundaries between serving as a researcher and participant observer. For example, I determined how I participated in the class discussions for the teacher candidates. I gave guidance or shared my opinions regarding how to give feedback when being asked but would be careful not to judge their decisions of how they wanted to interact with their tutees. Since “becoming a researcher means internalizing the research goal while collecting data in the field” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), I kept in mind the purpose of promoting the research goal—to encourage them to create two-way communications in tutorials but not interfering in what they actually do as tutors.

I was aware that such dual roles may also impose ethical problems in the research process. As the teaching assistant for the teacher education course, I was careful about how my

role would exert power on the participating teacher candidates' choice of participation, since they were taking the course during the time data was collected. Berg (2009) noted a commonly seen example of “coerced or manipulated” voluntary participation in college classrooms where the instructor asks all students in class to participate in a research project. In fear of an impact on their scores, most college students would take part in the research even though they may not be interested. Therefore, I clearly stated the research purpose when recruiting participants, and informed them of the choice of opting out from the research at any time (please see my IRB approved consent form in **Appendix H**).

Despite the potential ethical issues, I argue that my dual roles in the research helped me connect theory and practice. As a researcher, I enter the teaching and learning context of L2 writing with research questions and a theoretical framework. Rather than to “test” the framework, the purpose of the study is to seek understandings of the asynchronous online tutorial process and the participants' experience in light of the existing theoretical framework (i.e., Vygotskian sociocultural theory). In doing so, theory and practice can be connected to enhance both teaching and research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

### ***3.3 Rationale for Qualitative Methods***

As the research design process begins with the philosophical assumption that researchers undertake research in their choice of methodology (Creswell, 2007), my choice of a qualitative case study method is deeply rooted in my ontological and epistemological assumptions. In addition to stating my assumptions, in this section I briefly explain how they came into practice in my study.

As a qualitative researcher, I conceptualize reality as subjective and multiple. This conceptualization is also in line with what Merriam (1998) stated—qualitative researchers

assume that “reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” and “are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Similar to many qualitative researchers, I value the meanings co-constructed by the participants and myself as the researcher. Therefore, the experiences and beliefs the tutors and L2 writers bring in to the study is valued and all mold together the experience of the AOWT.

Concerning the epistemology, qualitative researchers would make attempts to lessen distance, or “objective separateness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988), p, 94) between themselves and that being researched. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers would conduct their research in the “field” where their participants live and work. As stated earlier, during the research period, I experienced the AOWT with the participating tutors by serving as their teaching assistant in the teacher education course they took, and observed the L2 writers’ development by having constant conference call discussions with their instructor in Taiwan. Positioning myself as an interpretivist, I resonate with the interpretive orientation to educational research identified by Merriam (1998)—“education is considered to be a process and school is a lived experience” (p. 4). My purpose of the inquiry is to understand the meaning of the process or experience, and how the meaning is generated and interpreted by my participants from diverse perspectives. Only through inductive research methods can the inquiry reach the understanding of the multiple realities that being researched resides in. To this end, I select case study approach as my methodology. My selection of research methodology will be explained in section 3.4.

In terms of axiological issues, qualitative researchers acknowledge that research is value-laden and biases are present in their studies. The axiological assumption characterizes my research design as well. To put it into practice in my study, I not only admit the value embedded

in my study, but also actively report the values and biases in the nature of my study. As stated explicitly in earlier sections, I conceptualize the AOWT as an ongoing process in which tutors use written feedback to mediate the L2 writers' revising and learning of L2 writing. Under such a conceptualization, I value the dyad interaction and meaning negotiation between feedback givers and receivers. To position myself in the study and make my positioning clearer, I will report my responsibilities and influences as a teaching assistant, and take into account my input to the tutors' feedback giving tactics. An explanation of how I prepared the participating teacher candidates is in section 3.8.1.

The last contributing factor for my choice of a qualitative method is my paradigm and theoretical framework (Sociocultural theory). As Creswell (2007) put it, "a paradigm or worldview is a 'basic set of beliefs that guide action'" (Guba, 1990, p. 17, as cited in Creswell, 2007). My research focus and design are inevitably influenced by my underlying theoretical view of learning (e.g., how the practice of feedback giving is conducted in pedagogical settings). In line with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, I envision the process of feedback giving to be recursive through interpersonal interaction, communication, and negotiation. In other words, the meaning of feedback is not equal to linear transmission to L2 writers, but come into the process through constant negotiation and dialogues between tutors and writers. My paradigm also aligns with social constructivism, which concerns that "individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things" and that "these meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Rather than asking questions regarding the effectiveness of written feedback, I focus on the question of how the AOWT looks like (i.e., research question 1 and 2). In answering the "how" research questions,



my study is not confined within certain predetermined variables and experimental procedures, but seeks to understand the naturally occurring situation (i.e., the participants' interaction and the online tutorial process) through the tutors and tutees' experiences and viewpoints. My goal of investigating the naturally occurring events also conforms to the spirit of social constructivism that "the questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20-21).

In conclusion, my theoretical assumptions naturally led me to the way I conceptualize the AOWT and design the research. In addition to my choice of the qualitative methodology, I explicate the specific choice of case study approach as a form of qualitative methodology in the next section.

### ***3.4 Case Study Approach***

As the case study approach has been commonly labeled as a form of qualitative research (e.g., Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), its design is extensively employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning associated with it. Merriam (1998) describes case studies as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single stance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 19). Creswell (2007) also stated that "case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (*cases*) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information ..., and reports a case *description* and case-based themes" (p. 73). In my design of the AOWT where the U.S.-based tutors gave written feedback to L2 writers in Taiwan, the two parties met and interacted on an online discussion forum during the semester when both of them were taking the designated courses (i.e., teacher education course for the U.S.-based tutors and

English academic writing course for the L2 writers in Taiwan). Such time and space conditions form a bounded system for both parties. Such study design also corresponds to one main purpose of case study approach identified by Yin (2003)—case study can describe an intervention and the context in which it occurred, as the designed AOWT served as a pedagogical intervention for both the tutor and writer. Moreover, according to my focus on the dyad interaction rather than simply the routine of feedback giving and paper revising, case study design serves as a better approach than others to help my study pursue “the interest in process rather than the outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Following the definitions and categorizations in Yin (2003), my study falls in the category of a “single-case design” with “embedded multiple units of analysis” (as shown in Yin, 2002, p.40, figure 1). Yin (2003) stated that a single-case study and a single experiment share analogies. Many of the elements (e.g., the types of feedback acts used by tutors and the dyad’s growth) in my design of the online tutorial can also justify a single experiment if my study embraces positivism and adopts a quasi-experimental design. However, in addition to my philosophical assumption in social constructivism and interpretivism, my study aligns with a single-case design due to the following two rationales—(1) “when the case represents an *extreme* case or a *unique* case,” and (2) “studying the same single case at two or more different points in time” (Yin, 2003, p. 41-42). First, as described earlier in Chapter 1, my study is a unique design that involves tutors from the ESL context as pre/in-service teachers and writers from the EFL one, which has been rarely seen in previous L2 writing research. Second, the time frame of the study last at least three months (from March to May, 2012), in which the tutors and writers experienced a back-and-forth feedback giving and paper revising process. Therefore, my examination of the

process of the online tutorial requires me to take a closer look at the different points of time (i.e., tutors' consecutive feedback and writers' multiple drafts) and related growth in different timeframes.

Under the single-case design, my study contains “embedded multiple units of analysis,” as I selected 3 pairs of dyads to be my focal cases for the case study “through sampling or cluster techniques” (Yin, 2003, p. 43). The embedded design is advantageous since the dyads of a tutor and a L2 writer makes logical subunits in the single case context (i.e., the AOWT), and allows a closer look at the specific phenomenon in these embedded units. While such embedded design allows for the examination of specific phenomenon, it also entails a potential pitfall that I, as the researcher may move further away from the larger unit of analysis. I was mindful of not neglecting the larger unit of analysis (i.e., how learning is expanded) and leaving my analysis of the specific dyad interaction out of context. A more detailed discussion regarding my sampling techniques of participants and my data analysis are in the rest sections

### ***3.5 Research Settings***

The research setting involved both virtual and physical settings. The main research setting was the AOWT, taking place on an E3 Learning Management System, which is a virtual learning environment and course management system developed and run by the university the L2 writers attended in Taiwan. The AOWT took place on its discussion forum. Similar to most learning management systems, the discussion forum features communication functions, including discussion thread creation, thread reply, and file attachment. Via the forum, the L2 writers in Taiwan was able to upload their academic writing assignments using the attachment function in the threads, while the U.S.-based tutors were able to download their work to read and comment on their writing, and later upload it back to the forum for the writers to retrieve. Both

parties were also able to leave messages to each other on the forum replying to the threads. As these steps did not take place at the same time and both parties did not meet simultaneously, this setting is an asynchronous mode of computer-mediated communication (also known as CMC) (Bloch, 2011). In addition to time difference, reasons why the discussion forum on the E3 Learning Management System was selected as a major setting involved the advantages that computer-mediated communication brings to second language learning, as accentuated in various L2 writing research: the computer-mediated interaction can promote learners' motivation and participation (Warschauer, 1996, 2002), give learners a sense of audience (Ware, 2004), and generate learning affordance (Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009).

The physical research setting was in the teacher education course the tutors took at the time of study in a mid-Atlantic university in the United States. The goal of the course was to improve the pre/in-service teachers' knowledge and ability to teach reading and writing to English language learners. The teacher candidates (tutors in this study) were required to familiarize themselves with current research on teaching English language learners and develop strategies particularly in teaching reading and writing. The course meeting was three hours on alternating Tuesdays as this course was hybrid, meaning it was conducted half online and half in a physical classroom. The AOWT was a required activity in this course, and ran over fourteen weeks during Spring 2012. As the teaching assistant and coordinator of the activity, I introduced to the participating teacher candidates the education backgrounds of the L2 writers, and their common challenges learning English as a foreign language in Taiwan. Before they started working with the L2 writers on their assignments (bi-data and summary), I introduced the instructions, grading criteria, and a sample writing of the assignments given by the L2 writers' instructor in Taiwan. After each round of feedback, I implemented interventions (class

discussions of selected feedback examples) with a goal of improving their feedback practice to meet the L2 writers' needs. In intervention 1 (during week 7-8), I led class discussions on a selection of feedback samples from past participants and their peers in this course. The feedback samples<sup>2</sup> were purposely selected because I believed they represented a more social and interpersonal approach in giving written feedback. Many participating teacher candidates were impressed by the selected feedback samples, and expressed their attempt to change their approach to a similar one after they discussed the pros and cons of such feedback practice. In intervention 2 and 3, I led class discussions on common issues related to written feedback, and teaching of second language writing, including process writing, effects of different types of feedback, and scaffolding. The participating teacher candidates were encouraged to relate the theoretical concepts about pedagogy to their practical work of giving written feedback in the AOWT. As the teaching assistant, I wanted to enhance motivation and encourage participation in the AOWT, meanwhile uniting theory and practice for the purpose of the teacher education course. In intervention 4, I asked the participating teacher candidates to reflect on their interaction with the L2 writers and their perceived growth throughout the AOWT. Table 3 lists the timeline of the intervention along with the documents used in the process of AOWT.

Another setting was the English academic writing class the L2 writers took in Taiwan. The instructor of the L2 writers, Ms. Wei, had taught this English academic writing course for two years until the time of study, and has always included tutorial as part of her course requirements for her students. The AOWT was part of the course requirements at the time of study. In the past, her students sought feedback to their writing by meeting with Writing Center tutors (who were Taiwanese teachers like Ms. Wei) at their school. In the Writing Center

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<sup>2</sup> The selected feedback samples were not meant to be models that the participating teacher candidates should have followed in the AOWT. Instead, the discussion I led encouraged them to express what they thought about such a social and interpersonal approach of giving feedback.

tutorials, the Taiwanese students brought their writing to the face-to-face tutorial conferencing to discuss their writing with the tutors. The students generally perceived the feedback from their Taiwanese tutors/teachers was more direct and like editing service, even though it was given in face-to-face conversation formats. In the course for the AOWT research, students were paired with one U.S.-based tutor and were required to submit the written feedback and their revisions along with their final products to show their growth in the process. Despite the asynchronous mode of communication, the Taiwanese students perceived great gain in the written feedback that was conversational and pertaining to their learning needs. Ms. Wei had also prepared the Taiwanese students to interact with the U.S.-based tutors by giving example questions or sentence patterns they could use in the uptake document (see Appendix J). At the end of the AOWT, the Taiwanese students filled out a survey regarding how they were satisfied with the AOWT and feedback received as well as a self-evaluation of what they learned in the process. As Ms. Wei revealed in the interview, she was very satisfied with the final products by her students and their progress in the process.

### ***3.6 Research Participants***

The participants included two populations (L2 writers and ESOL teacher candidates as tutors) from different contexts (EFL in Taiwan and ESL in the United States).

The first group of participants, U.S.-based tutors, was a group of ESOL teacher candidates teachers taking a teaching education course in a mid-Atlantic university in the United States. Some of them were in-service teachers in the United States teaching either in K-12 schools or community colleges; others were pre-service ESOL teachers taking the teacher education course to complete their teaching certification requirements. Some of the tutor

participants were English dominant speakers, while others may speak English as their additional language. However, most of them had background in teaching languages.

For the purpose of this study, I focus on three tutors whose feedback had the most telling examples of mediated feedback, and whose feedback approach represented diverse styles as well as their tutees. Martha, an English dominant, female graduate student in the TESOL M.Ed. program pursuing K-12 teacher certification, was a pre-service ESOL teacher. Though she did not have formal teaching experience, Martha used to work as a nurse in public schools and a hospital for 25 years, where she had chances teaching interns and medical students the medical procedures at work. According to her, these teaching moments inspired and influenced her tutorial approach. Nadia, an English dominant, female graduate student in the same TESOL M.Ed. program, was a certified inservice teacher with two-year experiences teaching first to eighth graders. Although she had experiences tutoring English language learners speaking and listening skills, this was her first time tutoring learner of English writing. Julio, an English dominant, male graduate student in the same TESOL M.Ed. program, was an inservice teacher at a public charter school teaching immigrant adult learners. From work, he had experience helping students one-on-one to ensure their progress of learning.

The second group of participants, L2 writers, were graduate students from various professional fields in a major university in Taiwan, whose major needs in English as a foreign language reside in reading and writing, as they need to obtain the latest knowledge in their professions from journals or readings written in English and to publish their professional work via English writing. While all the L2 writers were Chinese native-speaking learners of English, they were different in terms of their majors, status, and degree programs. Rey, a male graduate student in his forties, worked on his Ph.D. in engineering. He reported 30 years of English

learning experience. In addition to being a full-time doctoral student, he was also a part-time teacher in a local college. In the interview, Rey mentioned that his dual roles as a full-time student and part-time teacher made him reflect on how he learned in the tutorial process, and the approach his tutor used. His goal of English learning was to be able to communicate his profession of engineering in English, including publishing articles written in English. Jing, a male graduate student, was a business major pursuing his master's degree. He used to have various experiences working with tutors from Taiwan and from Europe on his English writing, and preferred a more social and personal approach. He suggested at the end of the AOWT that he would feel more comfortable consulting with his tutor if he could have established personal relationship with his tutor before the formal tutoring. His goal of English learning was to prepare him the language ability in business settings. Yee, a female graduate student, was also a business major pursuing her master's degree. Her goal of English language learning was to help her complete her thesis, and improve her communication ability in English.

Before the AOWT, the tutors and writers were paired based on their preferences and needs. Tutor Martha worked with writer Rey; tutor Nadia worked with writer Jing; tutor Julio worked with writer Yee.

### ***3.7 Sampling Techniques***

In this section I describe the sampling techniques I adopted in my study along with the selection criteria.

In my pilot study in Spring 2011, 25 L2 writers and 11 tutors participated in the AOWT activity. However, due to the nature and limit of case study, including all of the 36 participants would have been unrealistic and could have caused data collection to be unmanageable. Also to ensure the breadth and depth of the analysis (Murphy, 1980), the past case study did not include



all participants. Therefore in sampling participants in this study, I follow the conventions used in qualitative case study. As Creswell (2007) suggested in his discussion on qualitative case study, “the researcher chooses no more than four or five cases” (p. 76).

In this study, the number of total participants of the AOWT was 24 Taiwanese students paired with 6 U.S.-based tutors. After pairing, one U.S.-based tutor worked with 4 Taiwanese students at the same time. Concerning feasibility, I selected only three pairs, which made a total of 6 individuals being sampled from both the tutor and L2 writer groups as my focal participants.

Regarding my sampling techniques for participant selection, I used purposeful sampling technique (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). As the most frequently adopted sampling technique, purposeful sampling is a technique in which “particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 70). Two important goals of purposeful sampling are first, “achieving representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected,” and second, “to adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population...to ensure that the conclusions adequately represent the entire range of variation...” (p. 70). In my study, purposeful sampling allows me to see the common phenomenon occurring in the larger unit of the AOWT, and to uncover the differences among different dyads’ interaction. In the sixteen sampling strategies identified by Miles and Huberman (1994), the purposeful sampling that helps the researcher see the heterogeneity is called “maximum variation,” which “consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria” (p. 28). Since each dyad’s experience is unique in terms of the way they interacted and the way they co-constructed the tutorial experience under certain social and cultural contexts, the purposeful sampling did help me as a

researcher see the variance of how the tutors mediated the tutorial process and how the writers responded to their tutors in different manners.

The criteria for participant selection was their feedback act use and feedback change, since my research questions targeted at what and how tutors used feedback acts as well as tutor change and growth in the process. Using purposeful sampling, I looked for tutors who used the most variety of feedback acts as well as demonstrated changes of feedback act use in the four rounds of feedback. Martha was selected because she used the widest arrange of feedback acts, and increased her conversational feedback use as her feedback change; Nadia also used a wide range of feedback acts in the four rounds of feedback, and indicated her feedback change after the first teacher education course intervention; Julio demonstrated the most change from using the most direct feedback acts to increasing indirect and conversational feedback acts in his feedback and forum message to his tutee. Martha, Nadia, and Julio were all consistent in using mediated feedback and demonstrating similar changes to all of their tutees. The other 3 tutors who were not selected because they simply used track changes in the word document to cross out or add words, and did not give written commentaries or simply gave direct feedback acts. The other 3 tutors did not systematically show changes in their feedback practice in the four rounds of feedback. In conclusion, Martha, Nadia, and Julio were selected because they met the two criteria—a wide range of feedback act use and feedback change.

In terms of the selection of the three L2 writers, I picked one tutee out of the 4 Taiwanese students working with Martha, Nadia, and Julio based on the widest range of data available for data analysis—They were Rey, Jing, and Julio respectively. The other 3 tutees of Martha, Nadia, and Julio were not selected because there was missing and inconsistent data. For example, some

of them did not hand in their self-evaluation or final survey; some of them were not available for the final interview at the time of study.

Such purposeful sampling also has implications for tutor training, since the way they used feedback acts provides concrete examples of how mediated feedback can be applied by English language teachers or writing tutors when they are helping English language learners. The feedback change also illustrates the benefits of participation in the AOWT and using mediated feedback to the teachers/tutors. Tutors will be clear about what they will benefit from such discursive process of feedback practice. Tutors will also be better prepared to interact with students from similar backgrounds (intermediate and above level; with education background in Asia), since to give corrective feedback, tutors need to be aware of the related face-threatening issue involved in cross-cultural communication (Baker & Bricker, 2010; Chen, 2013; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Vásquez & Harvey, 2010). Tutors will have a better understanding how directness and indirectness may facilitate or hinder communication and learning in giving written feedback, particularly in an asynchronous context. I will discuss the pragmatic features of written feedback in section 5.2.

### ***3.8 Data Collection***

This study drew upon a qualitative case study approach to feedback practice and second language learning. Case studies in language education comprise an intensive investigation of patterns and sequences of growth and change among language learners within specific learning settings (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Mackey & Gass, 2005; McKay, 2006). Using this approach, my study aims to investigate in depth the cases of three tutors and their L2 writers interacting via the online tutorial. In order to display the complexities of these participants' learning processes in the social setting (i.e., AOWT), multiple sources of data were collected to make lines of

evidence converged and findings of this qualitative case study as robust as possible (Mackey & Gass, 2005; McKay, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Data collection in my study included participant-generated documents and texts, direct and participant observation in the field, and in-depth interviewing. In the following section, I describe how the data I collected and how I used them to answer my research questions.

### **3.8.1 Documents**

In this study, participants engaged in producing feedback and revisions via the AOWT. Documents related to their feedback production, negotiation, and interpretation were all collected to help understand the complexities in the tutorial process. Also, as Merriam (1998) described, documents in qualitative studies refer to “a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study” (p. 112). Therefore, in my study, various related documents were collected, including tutors’ written feedback inserted in L2 writers’ writings, L2 writers’ drafts, revisions, and final products, uptake documents filled out by L2 writers, and printed online discussion threads and other forms of dyad communication (e.g., email).

First, tutor’s written feedback in their responses to the L2 writers’ drafts helped answer my research question (1)—How are L2 writing and revising processes mediated through tutor-learner feedback in the AOWT? The collected written feedback was coded and analyzed (please see the section 3.10 for codes). Even though my purpose of coding is not to solely count on the frequency of each type of written feedback, a list of them helped my later steps of using Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical concepts to explain tutors’ attempts to mediate L2 writers’ revising and learning. For example, in my pilot study, I found “questions” were frequently used by some tutors. With a closer look at how the question worked for mediation, I discovered that the tutor used questions to help L2 writers understand the grammatical problems in their writing.

In this feedback example from my pilot study, a tutor wrote, “*the shift between past and present here is confusing. Are you currently an assistant research scientist at NTHC? If so, why do you say that you HAD worked at NCHC in the previous sentence?*” Apparently, the tutor was not asking where the L2 writer was actually working, but to point out his or her problematic use of tense. Finally, a track of the tutor’s written feedback in L2 writers’ consecutive drafts helped answer my research question (2) about the tutors’ learning and professional growth.

As for L2 writers’ drafts, revisions, and final products, they helped keep track of their growth and change in the tutorial process. To be concise, I was able to compare their multiple drafts to see if they revised their writing with the help of the received written feedback from their tutors. From their revisions, I was able to generate interview questions to ask them if they incorporated the given feedback and why. Even though this research does not intend to study the causal relationship between the given written feedback and L2 writers’ revisions/final products, their work helped understand how written feedback functioned as a tool helping L2 writers learn L2 writing (e.g., rhetorical functions, word choice, and grammar). In response to my research question (2), L2 writers’ drafts showed the influence from the tutor’s newly learned feedback-giving strategies.

Another important document associated with L2 writers’ work is the uptake document that they filled out as a response to tutors’ feedback. As explained by Mackey and Gass (2005), an uptake document is one way to elicit learners’ perspectives on what they learn in second language classrooms. According to Mackey and Gass, the uptake document is distributed at the beginning of the lesson, and learners are asked to mark or note the focus of the lesson. In my study, the uptake document was used as a source of data to help understand what L2 writers learned from the given written feedback or what the parts that still confused them were. In

serving a pedagogical purpose, the uptake document assisted L2 writers understanding the written feedback better when they revised their papers. The uptake document can be seen in **Appendix A**.

The last document was drawn from the printed messages from the online discussion threads and other forms of dyad communication (e.g., email). As the tutors and L2 writers left each other messages or communicated using the discussion forum, a copy of their conversations helped understand the depth of their interaction. One targeted data in the printed thread discussions was the questions the L2 writers left to the tutors, such as those that asked for clarification for the written feedback, and further questions about any language use. An example of printed message from the discussion thread excerpted from my pilot study is as follows:

## Excerpt 2: Sample Forum Message from Pilot Study

*Dear Tutor Jason (pseudonym),*

*I would like to appreciate your feedback. Your guidance of writing is very helpful for me. Two weeks ago, I post my curious questions of the first version draft, your feedback, in forum of summarization, and I transfer them to here.*

*First draft in BIODATA,*

*1. In annotation [J2], you suggest that modify "from" to "in". However, it would have two "in" in a sentence. Is it a strange speaking in English.*

*2. In annotation [J3], Using past tense "received" rather than present perfect tense "has received".*

*Actually, I want to emphasize on "already". Does "past tense" have meaning of "already"?*

*Otherwise, Is "past perfect tense" better?*

*3. In annotation [J4], to use sentence patterns, such as "while case 1, case 2" is a perfect situation which I want to express. However, I am curious in that would case 1 and case 2 never happen in the meanwhile? What is the difference between "while" and "when"?*

*4. In annotation [J7], it is correct "wrote a proposal". However, that proposal had finished and shutdown down. How do I express that situation.*

From the example, I am convinced that the text from the discussion threads provided rich information about the way tutors mediate L2 writers' revising and learning of L2 writing. This text served as an important source of data demonstrating their interaction and negotiation.

Other documents that were collected to support data analysis include the materials used in both tutors' and L2 writers' class, the worksheet used in both classes, the needs analysis and expectation sheet distributed to L2 writers in their first class (See **Appendix B**), and the self-

evaluation for writers (See [Appendix C](#)) and self-reflection for tutors (See [Appendix D](#)) forms distributed at the end of the tutorial activity.

To illustrate when and how the documents were used along with the instructional support during the period of AOWT activity, [Figure 2](#) provides a visual for the overall writing and tutorial process in AOWT. [Table 3](#) shows the specific timeline for the AOWT. As the teaching assistant in the ESOL teacher education course, I implemented all the instructional activities and prepared for all the relevant materials for the tutors. Meanwhile, the instructor of the L2 writers in Taiwan incorporated all the relevant materials and activities in her English academic writing class based on our discussions before and during AOWT.

Figure 2: A Visual for the Writing and Tutorial Process in the AOWT

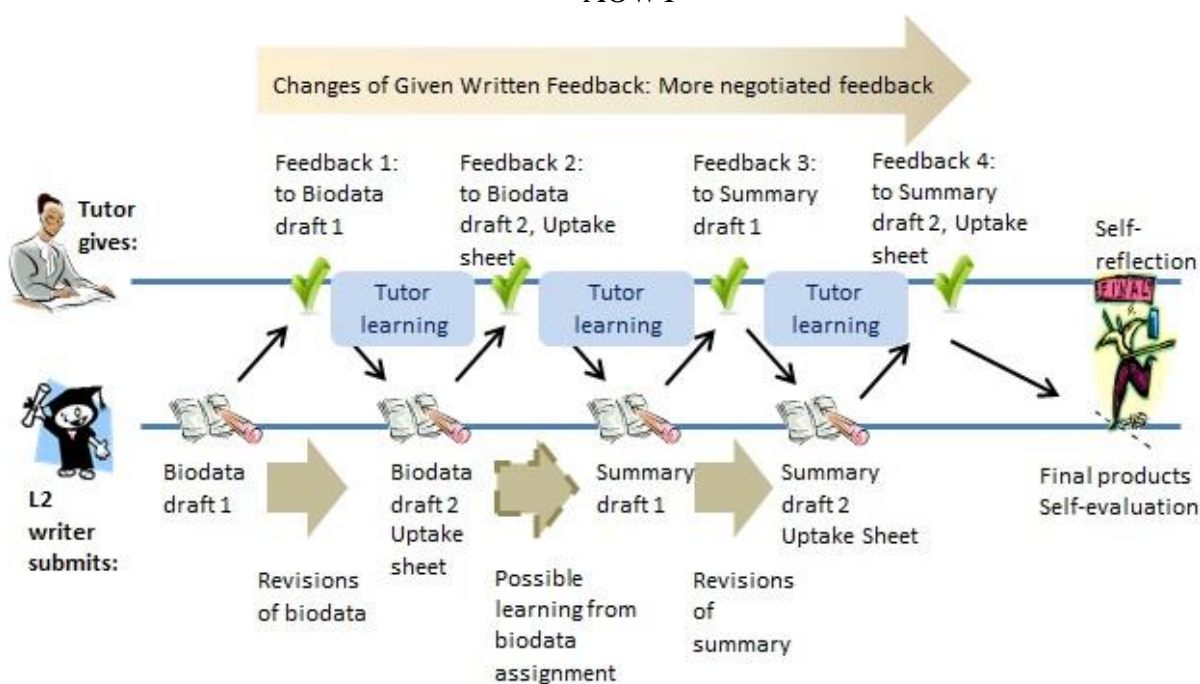




Table 3: Timeline for the AOWT and Instructional Support Documents

Week	Phases of AOWT	Instructional Support
1	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce the AOWT activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus—Explain the purpose of AOWT; Go through the details of AOWT (e.g., important dates and tutors' duties )</li> </ul>
2-4	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish background knowledge in feedback giving and online tutorial</li> <li>Establish background knowledge about EFL writers in Taiwan</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers (Week 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce AOWT</li> </ul> <p>*The L2 writers started school on Feb. 20, 2012</p>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PPT and handouts—introduce current education issues Taiwan and background of the tutorial/EFL writers</li> <li>Expectation Sheet—to understand how much tutors know about feedback giving and tutorial; to understand what tutors expect to gain in AOWT</li> <li>Form tutor-tutee pairs, gain access to the E3 system for all tutors, establish online forum and discussion threads</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers (Week 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus—Explain the purpose of AOWT; Go through the details of AOWT (e.g., important due dates and assignment requirements)</li> <li>Needs Analysis Form—to understand their experiences in English academic writing, their needs and expectations</li> </ul>
5-6	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce the biodata assignment to the tutors</li> <li>Ask tutors to welcome their own tutees</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PPT and handouts--introduce L2 writer's first assignment—biodata</li> <li>Discussion sheet—L2 writers' writing examples from pilot study; L2 writers' needs</li> </ul>

	<p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit biodata draft 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion thread—create threads for tutors to introduce themselves and welcome their tutees</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion thread—for tutees to upload their biodata draft 1 and leave messages to their tutors</li> </ul>
7-8	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give feedback to biodata draft 1</li> <li>• <b>Intervention 1:</b> Discuss given feedback and their first tutorial experience</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and submit biodata draft 2/uptake document on the forum</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion thread—for tutors to upload their feedback and leave messages</li> <li>• PPT and handouts—Feedback examples from pilot study, selected examples of writing issues from writers' biodata draft 1</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake document—for tutees to reflect on the given feedback, and generate questions for tutors</li> <li>• Example sentence patterns on the uptake document—to guide tutees how to ask tutors questions</li> </ul>
9-10	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give feedback to biodata draft 2</li> <li>• <b>Intervention 2:</b> Discuss given feedback and tutorial experience</li> <li>• Prepare for the summary assignment</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPT and handouts—discussion questions, selected examples of writing issues from writers' biodata draft 2; tutors learn to choose feedback appropriate for L2 writers' problems and needs</li> <li>• PPT and handouts--introduce L2 writer's second assignment—summary</li> </ul>

	<p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit summary draft 1 on the forum</li> </ul>	<p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion thread—for tutees to upload their biodata final products/summary draft 1 and leave messages</li> <li>• Uptake document</li> </ul>
11-12	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give feedback to summary draft 1</li> <li>• <b>Intervention 3:</b> Discuss given feedback and tutorial experience</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and submit summary draft 2/uptake document</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPT and handouts—discussions regarding the specific writing issues of L2 writers' summary assignment; discussions regarding how tutors apply what they have learned so far to help L2 writers; discussions on negotiated feedback</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptake document</li> </ul>
13-14	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give feedback to summary draft 2</li> <li>• <b>Intervention 4:</b> Discuss given feedback and tutorial experience</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit biodata/summary final products</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPT and handouts—discussions on their perceived performance in giving feedback; discussions on their overall experience interacting with the L2 writers</li> </ul> <p>For L2 Writers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
15-16	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap-up the AOWT activity</li> <li>• Reflect on the feedback</li> </ul>	<p>For Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reflection sheet—for tutors to reflect on the overall tutorial experience and their growth</li> </ul>

	practice and tutorial experience  For L2 Writers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap-up the AOWT activity</li> </ul>	For L2 Writers (Week 4):  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self- evaluation sheet—for writers to reflect on the overall tutorial experience and their learning</li> </ul>
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### 3.8.2 Direct and Participant Observation

The observation of class discussions in the teacher education course enriched my understanding of the teacher candidates' feedback practice in the tutorial. In addition to facilitating small group discussions, as the teaching assistant, I also led large group discussions in which the tutors shared their tutorial experiences and interaction with the L2 writers in Taiwan to class. Each class discussion did not exceed one hour. The class discussions regarding the AOWT began after the teacher candidates responded to the L2 writers' first drafts, followed by more discussions on how their tutees revised their papers. For data analysis purpose, I included field descriptions, direct quotes, and my observation notes.

In the teacher education course, I conducted direct and participant observation. When the tutors were in pair or groups, direct observation was applied, since my participation level was comparatively low. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted, "observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting" (p. 139). As a researcher, I observed their discussions about their experience working with the L2 writers, and took systematic notes and recordings of their discussions. The field notes—"detailed, nonjudgmental (as much as possible), concrete descriptions of what has been observed" (p. 139)—gave clues of how and why they interacted with L2 writers in ways observed in the written feedback documents and online discussion forum. In direct observation, I considered how

my role as a teaching assistant affected their behavior in discussions. As Merriam (1998) noted, “participants who know they are being observed will tend to behave in socially acceptable ways and present themselves in a favorable manner. Participants will regulate their behavior in reaction to even subtle forms of feedback from the researcher (p. 103).” I managed to make the teacher candidates not feel being judged or evaluated when they should be open to the discussions and feel free to share. Mackey and Gass (2005) also reminded language education researchers that “in classroom studies, it is necessary for researchers to both strive for objectivity and also be aware of the subjective elements in that effort ...” (p. 188).

When in large group discussions where I served as a discussion leader, I conducted participant observation. As its name suggests, “participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study—the researcher is both a participant (to a varying degree) and an observer (also to varying degrees)” (p. 140). The nature of my role as a teaching assistant in the teacher education course endowed me with chances of facilitating the tutors’ discussions. I encouraged them to interact more with the students and presented them with current written feedback research. In such participant observation, it is natural that the observing and recording of descriptive data simultaneously posed difficult for me, since I had to focus on leading the discussions and responded to their contributions. However, I placed digital recorders on the tables recording their discussions for later transcription. The recorder helped me record direct quotations of sentiment. The greatest advantage of participant observation was that I was able to better discern the subtleties of the participants’ emotions, attitudes, and feelings, which inspired my design of the individual interview questions and helped triangulation of the data collected.

I used an observation protocol to support my direct and participant observation. The use of observation protocol did not confine my observation but facilitated timely recording of significant discussions. My observation protocol is adapted from Wilson (1989). Please see the observation protocol I used in my study in **Appendix G**.

At the end of each observation, I spent some time writing down my reflections for later data analysis and pedagogical notes for the following lessons. If possible, I made connections to my other sources of data (e.g., interview and documents) to enhance my data triangulation.

### **3.8.3 In-depth Interviewing**

I interviewed my focal participants, three selected dyads. In total, I conducted in-depth interviews with six of them individually (i.e., 3 tutors and 3 L2 writers). I had face-to-face interviews with the U.S.-based tutors. However, due to location and time constraints, I only conducted virtual interviews via the software, Skype, with the L2 writers who were in Taiwan. All the interviews were conducted after the two writing assignments were completed by the L2 writers and the tutorial was over. Each interview last 30 minutes or more as needed. Since the L2 writers in Taiwan used English as their additional language, in order to lessen the intimidated and uncomfortable feeling, I conducted the interviews with them in their native language, Chinese, which is also my native language. The Chinese conversations were translated into English for data analysis. To ensure the quality, I invited my interviewees to review my translation to avoid misunderstandings. I also had peer review to back-translate all the transcriptions to ensure the interview content was accurately reflected.

In terms of the format of the interview, I adopted a semi-structured interview, or the topical/guided interview (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Such format of interviewing is defined as such: “the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but

otherwise respects the way the participant frames and structures the responses” (p. 144). As Merriam (1998) pointed out, the topical questions assume that “individual respondents define the world in unique ways” (p.74). With topical questions, I could solicit more of the participants’ viewpoints and experiences. The interview questions was guided by the interview protocols shown in **Appendix E** (for tutors) and **F** (for L2 writers).

It is worth noting that in the in-depth interviews, a common data collection technique named “stimulated recall” was used to elicit introspective data from the focal participants. According to Gass and Makey (2000), stimulated recall is used to prompt participants to recall their thinking while performing a task or participating in an event. The underlying assumption is that “some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself” (p. 17). As Mackey and Gass (2005) acknowledged, the major advantage of stimulated recall lies in revealing language learners’ interpretation of the learning event. I used this technique to help my participants retrieve their thinking during the AOWT. To do so, I first selected particular written feedback or revisions that I thought answering my research questions as an aural reminder, and then asked about their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions at the moment of giving and interpreting the specific feedback. If the reminder was from the participation data, I provided written transcriptions of class discussions to refresh my participants’ memory. Such introspective data elicitation technique has been used in writing tutorial research (e.g., DiPardo, 1994). My pilot study also proved the need of it for the current study (See Chapter 2 for details).

To conclude, my primary data collection ranges from participant-generated documents and texts, direct and participant observations, to in-depth interviewing.

### ***3.9 Data Management***

With the research, the data collected was voluminous, particularly for a case study that drew upon multiple data sources. Therefore, it is of great importance to use data management for easier retrieving and better organization of data.

Since the L2 writers had two writing assignments to work on during the tutorial event, I started from organizing the L2 writers' writings into two major files: (1) the biodata assignment file, and (2) the summary assignment. Inside the two assignment files, I had each writer's drafts with the corresponding feedback given by the tutors, organized based on the sequence of text generation. Each writing draft was accompanied with an uptake document filled out by the writer. I had other files for observation notes and reflections organized in a chronological order. After interviewing the participants, I organized the interview recording data and the corresponding transcriptions in files titled according to the interviewees' names.

I utilize Dedoose<sup>3</sup>, a qualitative data analysis and research software, to establish a database for data storage, management, and analysis. For interview and class discussion transcriptions, I also used Audacity<sup>4</sup>, a software that has digital audio editing and recording functions. The electronic and paper-based files were all stored in a password-protected computer and a locked cabinet in my office. All the documents were not examined until their courses were over and final grades were submitted.

### ***3.10 Data Analysis***

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.atlasti.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>



In this qualitative case study, I used discourse analysis as the guiding methodology to examine the feedback practice the tutors applied in response to the writing produced by L2 writers. My analysis corresponds to three traditions of discourse analysis that view “discourse as action”, or “saying something or writing something is a form of *doing* something” (Norris & Jones, 2005, p. 6). The first tradition that sees discourse as a social action, speech act theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), serves as the orienting theory that helps the construction and coding of my unit of analysis—feedback acts, since I conceptualize written feedback as acts that tutors took to help L2 writers revise the drafts and learn English. Following the concept in speech act theory that speakers use utterances to perform actions, I analyzed the written feedback by tutors in terms of the linguistic and material effect it brings about in the context of an asynchronous online writing tutorial. Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti (1997) explained that teacher written feedback contains directives consisting of “all specific acts whose function is to get the hearer to do something” (p. 337)

The second tradition that endorses the social action aspect of discourse is functional linguistic (Halliday, 1973) discourse analysis, which also provides a compelling basis to understand how tutors used written feedback to guide L2 writers in the process of revising and learning, given that “any use of language is motivated by a purpose, whether that purpose be a clear, pragmatic one (...), or less tangible, but equally important, interpersonal one (...)” (Eggins, 2004, p. 5). Functional discourse analysis’ focus on meaning making as the fundamental purpose of language provided a strong support for my belief that tutors used written feedback to make both *ideational* (or semantic) and *interpersonal* meanings (Eggins, 2004, p. 11) in the context of the asynchronous online writing tutorial. In other words, the written feedback tutors

used was to make clear their suggestion or corrections to the L2 writers, and to express their relationship with them (as peers).

The third tradition, borrowing, synthesizing, and expanding the previous two traditions, centers on the relationship between discourse and action, and was described as *mediated discourse analysis* (Scollon, 2001). Grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical framework of learning, I view written feedback as a cultural tool that tutors use to mediate their own and the L2 writers' action. The reasoning behind the mediated discourse analysis of written feedback is that "'meaning' does not so much reside in the discourse itself, but rather resides in the actions that people take with it" (Norris & Jones, 2005, p. 4). As Norris and Jones suggested that "the relationship between discourse and action is dynamic and contingent, located at a nexus of social practices, social identities and social goals" (p. 9), I approach written feedback through the actions it takes, rather than understanding it as a matter of effectiveness for revision and language acquisition. Thus in this study, I focus on the actions the tutors took in giving written feedback, and the role of the discourse in their actions represented in their written feedback.

Grounded in the three traditions in discourse analysis, I categorized and identified 12 feedback acts under 3 categories to understand how the tutor-learner feedback was used to mediate the revising and learning process. I stored and coded the written feedback data on Dedoose<sup>5</sup>. The twelve feedback acts under 3 feedback act categories were: (1) Direct Feedback Act (DFA): "Making corrections," "Making requests," "Making suggestions," (2) Indirect Feedback Act (IFA): "Asking questions," "Giving information," "Giving metalinguistic explanation," "Giving personal comments," (3) Conversational Feedback Act: "Apologizing," "Complimenting," "Promising," "Reminding," and "Wishing." Table 4 lists the definitions and examples of the twelve feedback acts.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.dedoose.com/](http://www.dedoose.com/)

Table 4: Definitions and Examples of Feedback Acts

Feedback Act Category	Feedback Act	Definition	Example
Direct Feedback Act	Making corrections	Explicitly correct errors in grammar, mechanics, or writing conventions	<i>article needed. "a" or "one of the"</i>
	Making requests	Make requests for revisions or for information about writing content	<i>Please tell me more about this..</i>
	Making suggestions	Make suggestions for word choice, grammar, or writing conventions, content, or writing style	<p><i>-I would say "an MS degree" or "his MS degree" instead of "the"</i>  <i>By the way—you would use "an" in this case instead of "a" ...</i></p> <p><i>- A lot of people spoke English in the past, speak it now, and will probably speak it in the future. So maybe you would rather say: There will always be a tendency for many people to speak English.</i></p>
Indirect Feedback Act	Asking questions	<p>-Ask writer to provide information known/unknown to tutor</p> <p>-Ask rhetorical questions to spur further thought</p>	<p><i>-When your airplane lands, you descend. When you go come down from the top of a mountain, you descend. When numbers, proportions, or populations go down, they "decrease." Do you think "descending" or "decreasing" works better here?</i></p>

			<p>-... <b>What exactly is decreasing?</b>  <i>“the number of the people” or  “the proportion of the people”  perhaps</i></p>
	Giving information	<p>-Give information about how tutor perceives writer’s writing or how English dominant speakers use the form</p> <p>-Give informative explanations regarding the previous suggestion</p> <p>-Give information about the original content of summary assignment</p>	<p>-... when you say “parts of people,” I think of body parts like legs and arms and heads...</p> <p>-If you include the estimated number of English speakers here, <b>it would give the reader a better picture of how much the language has spread.</b></p> <p>-I think sites that are in many languages—and—sites that are only in English.</p>
	Giving metalinguistic explanation	<p>-Give explanations and reasons for tutee’s problems or questions related to language form</p> <p>- Draw upon writer’s L1 to explain the differences between language and</p>	<p>“Some” in a general term that does not fit very well here. It’s not an exact amount that can be measured; since it can’t be measured you can’t tell if it’s decreasing. ...</p> <p>-...maybe in Chinese you say "in the University?", in the US we are students "at the University</p>

		perceived errors	"...
	Giving personal comments	<p>-Give personal responses to writer's content</p> <p>- Make humorous comments in response to content</p>	<p><i>Wow! This sounds really technical. I hope you can do something to stop air pollution. We need it!</i></p> <p><i>- Did you ever wonder if one reason English is such a necessary language may be that Americans, UNLIKE Chinese people, are not smart enough to learn other languages? I DO. But thank you for being polite enough to avoid that topic.</i></p>
Conversational Feedback Act	Apologizing	Make apologies to writer regarding his/her ability to help	<i>Sorry that i was not clear with this comment</i>
	Complimenting	Give compliments or positive comments to writer	<i>VERY GOOD: "at" is CORRECT; ...</i>
	Promising	Make promise to help further	<i>We will more specifically with another one of your assignments, perhaps.</i>
	Reminding	Give reminders regarding what writers should do in revising/writing	<i>Do not forget to cite your information here because this is directly from the reading passage</i>
	Wishing	Make wishes about the usefulness of the given comments	<i>I hope this gives you the idea.</i>

Given that “the goal of coding is not to produce counts of things, but to “fracture” the data and rearranging it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 79), my coding comprised three levels to best answer my research questions. First, I coded the feedback data—written commentaries that appeared in the inserted comments in word documents, the uptake documents, and forum messages to understand what written feedback tutors used. It should be noted that the purpose of this study is not to address the correctness and appropriateness of the given feedback; all the discourse that shows the action of the tutors was coded to understand how they used written feedback in mediation for the revision and learning purposes.

Next, I also coded the revisions made by L2 writers to understand how they incorporated the given feedback. The first two levels of coding in feedback acts and incorporation helped make sense of the effect of the written feedback. However, it should also be noted that the matter of feedback effectiveness are not the focus of this study (as stated earlier), the feedback incorporation served as an important indicator of potential learning of L2 writers. It is in fact my greater interest in examining those cases when the given feedback was only partially or not incorporated at all, as writers’ background factors (e.g., knowledge in target language, and education backgrounds) may account for writers’ acceptances of written feedback (Ferris, 2003, 2004; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Understanding individual background factors helped my analysis of written feedback beyond a routine practice and start noticing the moment-to-moment workings of mediation in response to writers’ individual needs. Using Dedoose, I coded the L2 writers’ revisions as (1) full incorporation, (2) partial incorporation, and (3) zero incorporation. Full incorporation refers to the situation where L2 writers applied the given

suggestion/correction, and made changes accordingly in the subsequent drafts. Partial incorporation occurred when L2 writers only partially accepted the suggestion, changing parts of their writing, or making changes that were not suggested by their tutors. Zero incorporation means L2 writers did not accept the suggestion/correction, and did not make any changes in the next draft.

The last level of coding regards the perception of the dyads. In order to understand in what areas of second language writing did the L2 writers perceive growth via feedback, codes for aspects of feedback were applied to indicate what the feedback intervention was about. The five aspects of feedback were “Content and organization,” “Fluency,” “Grammar,” “Lexical choice,” and “Writing convention.” Through constant comparative method and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I identified themes regarding the learning and growth perceived by the L2 writers and tutors. To examine the growth of L2 writers, I coded their learning in the aspects of (1) English language use, (2) L2 writing process, and (3) metalinguistic capacity in their multiple drafts, final product, self-evaluation, activity expectation sheet and interviews. To understand tutors’ growth, I coded their learning in the aspects of knowledge in (1) L2 writers, (2) online tutorial, (3) cross-cultural communication, (4) English grammar and academic writing in their self-reflections, activity expectation sheet, teacher education class discussions, and interviews. Meanwhile, I observed the changes from their 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> round of feedback. I revisited the data of feedback acts, and counted the frequency of their feedback acts and their feedback sequences in the four rounds of feedback in order to demonstrate their feedback changes. As I began to notice their major change after the 1<sup>st</sup> feedback (after their first-time teacher education course discussion of several feedback examples), I triangulated my examination of the feedback data regarding their changes by looking into other data sources (such as interviews, self-reflections,

and class discussions) to look for mutual influences of tutor learning and student learning. The stimulated recall method in interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000) helped locate the moments of learning and perceived growth in the process of AOWT. The way I connected data conforms to Maxwell (2005), who asserted that “the key feature of most qualitative coding is that it is grounded in the data ... developed in interaction with, and is tailored to the understanding of, the particular data being analyzed,” and that data analysis should “not focus primarily on relationships of similarity that can be used to sort data into categories independently of context but instead look for relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole” (p. 79). To probe further into learning and growth on dyad basis, I examined each dyad’s (embedded case) growth relating to their tutor-learner mediated feedback practice, aligning with a case study convention, named “time-series analytic technique” (Yin, 2003) to allow the trace of changes and growth that may occur in both L2 writers and tutors.

### ***3.11 Issues of Quality and Ethics***

Whether and how researchers address quality and trustworthiness has been regarded as an important issue in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). To ensure the rigor and quality of the study, I addressed the following four standards (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) proposed by Marshall & Rossman (2011) and apply the three strategies (i.e., member checks, clarifying for researchers’ biases, and triangulation) suggested by Merriam (1998).

The first standard is credibility, the goal of which is “to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was appropriately identified and described” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 251). It is thus important for qualitative researchers to first identify the subject, setting, and conditions of the inquiry so that the research design can be



made reasonable and plausible. Marshall and Rossman further stated that “within the parameters of that setting and population and the limitations of the theoretical framework and design, the research would be credible. A qualitative researcher should therefore adequately state those parameters, thereby placing boundaries around and limitations on the study” (p. 252). In my case study, I clarified the boundaries for the cases that I selected, which helped ensure the credibility. For instance, as the tutor-tutee interaction and meaning negotiation is one focal topic, the cases that I selected were able to show such interactional process during the tutorial. Another boundary that I set for my study concerns my research purpose. Coming from the social constructivism and aiming to investigate the complexities of the AOWT, I did not adopt a causal relationship research design to test or prove the L2 writers’ acquisition after feedback practice, so admit the limitation that I was not able to prove the efficacy of the online tutorial. I kept my research goal matching the boundaries of the setting and conditions of my qualitative study and the credibility for the study was thus established.

The second standard, “transferability,” is defined as “ways in which the study’s findings were useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 252). Even though qualitative studies generally do not embrace generalizability, Yin (2003) asserted the possibility of generalizability in case studies if it is “analytic generalization,” in which “a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study” (p. 32-33). Despite the unique settings, my study should have implications for those who conduct online tutorials for L2 writers, and those who are interested in applying sociocultural theory in L2 writing written feedback research. Mackey and Gass (2005) also stressed thick descriptions, which help other researchers determine the similarity of context, and thus make research more transferable. According to Davis (1995),

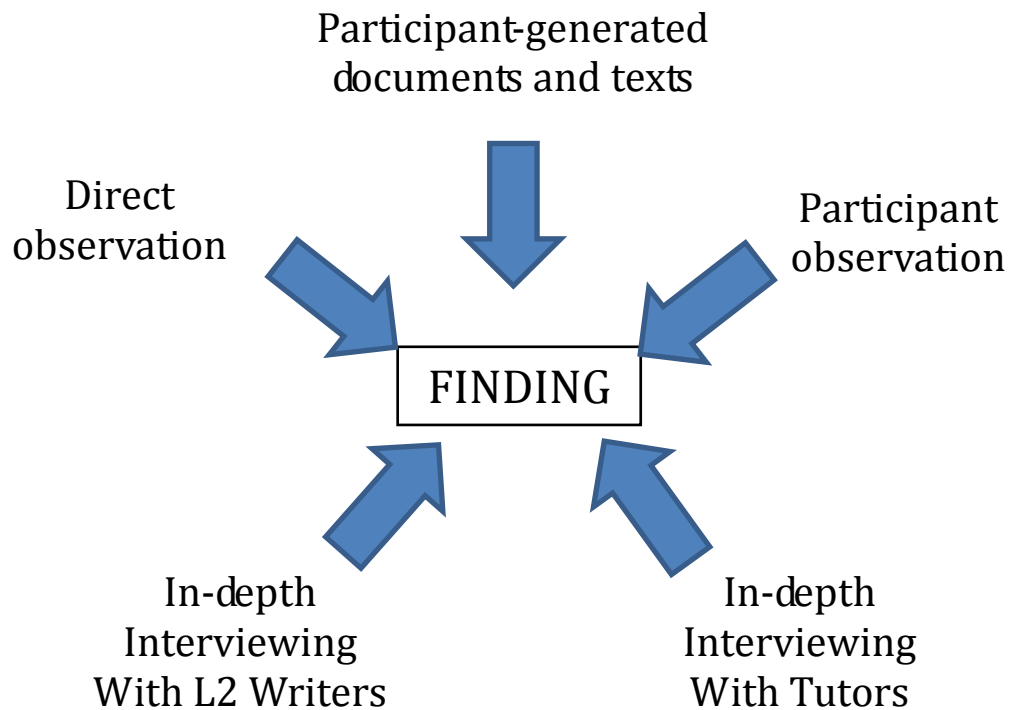
thick descriptions should contain “particular description” (representative examples from data), “general description” (information about the emerging patterns in data), and “interpretive commentary” (explanation of the phenomena researched and interpretation of the meanings in the findings with respect to previous research). With deep and thick descriptions, the policymakers or other researchers who share the same research interest can make the applications of AOWT to other similar settings or populations.

The third standard concerns “dependability,” defined as “the ways by which the researcher plans to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 253). Such a feature is unique to qualitative research since qualitative researchers believe that “the social world is always being constructed and the concept of replication is itself problematic” (p. 253). In my study, I made good use of field notes to observe any possible changes of the researched setting, participants, and the research plans. I also adopted the strategy of clarifying the researchers’ biases suggested by Merriam (1998), as subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated in qualitative studies.

The last standard refers to “confirmability,” which is “the ways in which qualitative researchers can parallel the traditional concept of objectivity” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 253). In other words, “confirmability” means that the researcher should be prepared to explain the logic and interpretative nature of qualitative inquiry. Once the argument and logic are transparent to other readers, the strength of the conclusions can be enhanced. Therefore, I made available full details of the data on which my claims and interpretations are based. In doing so, other researchers are able to examine the data and confirm, modify, or reject my interpretations and conclusions.

The last two strategies that helped my study reach quality were the use of triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is commonly referred to the use of “multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigate in order to arrive at the same research findings” (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Using multiple methods, the researcher can obtain multiple sources of evidence, which, according to Yin (2002), assures “the development of converging lines of inquiry” (p. 98). It is worth noted that convincing conclusions would not be less likely to be reached if the multiple sources of evidence is simply used but not triangulated. In Yin’s explanation, “when you have used multiple sources but not actually triangulated the data, you typically have analyzed each source of evidence separately and have compared the conclusions from the different analyses—but not triangulated the data” (p. 99). Therefore in my study, I made sure that the findings I reported were based on the constant cross-case comparison among my multiple sources of data—documents, direct and participant observation, and in-depth interviewing.

Figure 3: A Visual for the Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence in my Study



(Source: Adapted from Yin, 2003, p. 100)

The other strategy important for achieving quality of my research is member check. Merriam (1998) referred to member check as “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (p.204). I checked back with my participants as often as I could during and after data collection and analysis. By showing my interpretation of the collected documents, texts, interview transcriptions, and observation notes, I assured that the data were not misinterpreted or biased by my subjective judgment.

The issue of ethics was also highly valued in qualitative research. The first ethical issue that I took into account was power. As the teacher assistant and researcher simultaneously, I constantly reminded myself of the potential hazards to the trustworthiness of my data due to my dual roles. Creswell (2007) pointed out that power imbalance between the researcher and the

participants may “raise questions about whether good data can be collected” (p.122). Therefore I made it open to the tutors that my role as a researcher did not affect my responsibilities of being their teaching assistant. I explained explicitly that they were not evaluated based on my research purposes, but on the evaluation criteria set for the course objective in the course syllabus. It is equally important to let them know that they were not expected to provide information favorable to my research and deviating from their true feelings.

The other important ethical issue under extensive discussion in qualitative research is confidentiality and anonymity. As Berg (2008) pointed out, confidentiality and anonymity, though related, are different concepts. Berg defined confidentiality as “an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects’ identities” (p. 57). Anonymity is defined as such—“subjects remain nameless” (p. 57). In my study, my participants were from two learning contexts in two different countries—the United States and Taiwan. To protect the anonymity, I ensured that my written report (this dissertation) does not reveal the locations of the participants. Instead of revealing the L2 writers’ course number, course instructor, their departments and school names, I referred them to graduate students taking an English academic writing course in a major university in Taiwan. The same applied to the U.S.-based tutors—I referred them to teacher candidates taking a teacher education course in a mid-Atlantic university in the United States. As for anonymity, I made sure to use pseudonyms in my report when discussing their cases and experiences. The confidentiality and anonymity were further ensured with the electronic data secured in a password-protected computer and the hard copies were kept in a locked cabinet in my office.

### ***3.12 Conclusion***

In this Chapter, I have provided my conceptual framework, relevant literature review, research design, data collection and data analysis plans. In Chapter 4, I will present the findings about the feedback practice, dyads' learning and growth in the AOWT.

## Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4 includes the descriptive and qualitative analysis findings that address the following research questions. First, I describe the types and frequency of feedback acts given by tutors in the AOWT (RQ 1a). Next in section 4.2 I present L2 writers' incorporation of the FAs (RQ 1b). In section 4.3, I present findings on L2 writers' perceptions of the FAs (RQ 1c). In section 4.4 I present a cross-case comparison of tutors' feedback act use and L2 writers' incorporation of feedback, which when taken together, shows how tutors responded to different needs of the L2 writers. In section 4.5 I describe tutors' change in feedback patterns (RQ 2a and 2b), which I view as an indicator of their development of teacher candidates throughout the AOWT process. Although I view mediation as interwoven in the feedback interactions presented in Chapter 4; for purposes of analysis and clarity, I discuss the overarching questions (RQ1 and RQ2) about mediation and mutual learning among tutors and writers in Chapter 5. By drawing upon sociocultural theoretical concepts more specifically in Chapter 5, I will further interpret the findings presented in Chapter 4. Table 5 lists the findings presented in Chapter 4, and how they answer the research questions. Data sources that account for the findings are also listed.

Table 5: Summary of Findings and Data Sources to Answer Research Questions

<b>RQ1: How are L2 writing and revising processes mediated through tutor-learner feedback in the AOWT?</b>			
<b>RQ 1(a): What types of written feedback do tutors use through four rounds of feedback?</b>			
<p>Findings in section 4.1 and 4.4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tutors used 3 types of FAs interchangeably in their written feedback: DFA, IFA, CFA, commenting on the issues of lexicon, semantics, grammar, sentence structures, organization, content, writing conventions, and summarizing techniques.</li> <li>▪ DFA includes “Making corrections”, “Making requests”, and “Making suggestions.”</li> <li>▪ IFA includes “Asking questions”, “Giving information”, “Giving metalinguistic explanation”, and “Giving personal comments.”</li> <li>▪ CFA includes “Apologizing”, “Complementing”, “Reminding”, “Promising”, and “Wishing.”</li> <li>▪ The relationship among DFA, IFA, CFA reveals how tutors used FAs to mediate the process. Three feedback sequences of the FAs were found: (1) IFAs or CFAs preceded or followed DFAs; (2) CFAs were inserted between IFAs and DFAs; (3) IFAs and CFAs stood alone without DFAs adjacent.</li> <li>▪ IFAs and CFAs usually support, enhance, or substitute DFAs.</li> </ul>			<p>Data Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tutors’ written comments from the track changes extracted from the 4 rounds of feedback</li> <li>○ Interview with tutors and writers</li> <li>○ Self-reflections by tutors</li> <li>○ Expectation sheet &amp; Teacher education course worksheet</li> </ul>
Tutor Martha: Storyteller	Tutor Nadia: Tour Guide	Tutor Julio: Commander	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Martha used 29% DFA, 59% IFA, and 12% CFA.</li> <li>▪ Martha was like a storyteller,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nadia used 54% DFA, 39% IFA, and 7% CFA.</li> <li>▪ Nadia was like a responsible tour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Julio used 68% DFA, 32% IFA, and 0% CFA.</li> <li>▪ Julio was like a commander,</li> </ul>	



providing all the details, explanations, and examples in her IFAs to supplement, support, enhance, or substitute the DFAs. She sometimes inserted CFAs to make the feedback more social and collaborative.	guide, always indicating a direction to her suggestion/request for revision, though she used more DFAs than IFAs. The IFAs she used tailored to her tutees' needs.	giving more DFAs than IFAs and sounding more direct and authoritative. When using IFAs, he applied the most "Giving information" to give his tutees a sense of audience.	
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**RQ 1(b): How do L2 writers incorporate different types of FAs in the text revision process?**

<p>Findings in section 4.2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 77% of the suggestions were fully incorporated; 7% was partially incorporated; 16% was not incorporated at all.</li> <li>▪ L2 writers incorporated the most feedback on "grammar" and "writing convention", followed by "lexical choice", "fluency", and "content &amp; organization."</li> <li>▪ Feedback with only DFAs or less support of IFAs/CFAs was more likely to be incorporated, while those with IFAs and CFAs incurred negotiation for meaning and subsequent communication that encouraged greater participation of L2 writers.</li> <li>▪ Reasons for Partial and Zero incorporation may be: misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the discussed issue from both parties, L2 writers missing the importance of the feedback, L2 writers' preferences or confidence in what they wrote especially if it related to their profession in the biodata.</li> <li>▪ Full incorporation did not mean full understanding of the feedback and suggested language use.</li> <li>▪ Reason for Full incorporation most of the time may be: welcoming and</li> </ul>	<p>Data Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tutors' written comments</li> <li>○ L2 writers' drafts, revisions, and uptake document</li> <li>○ Forum messages</li> <li>○ Interviews</li> </ul>
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trusting suggestions made by English dominant speakers			
Writer Rey:	Writer Jing:	Writer Yee:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All the L2 writers incorporated more than 70% of the suggestions; less than 20% of the suggestions were partially or not incorporated.</li></ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rey was encouraged by Martha to understand and think independently about his choices of language use.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Jing followed most of Nadia’s feedback, except for a few cases related to his profession. His personal preference may account for his partial and zero incorporation in lexical choices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Yee followed most of the given feedback, but was found creatively negotiating for meaning in the uptake document where she drew a model of her research. Her partial or zero incorporation was related to her familiarity of the content.</li></ul>	
<b>RQ 1(c): How do L2 writers perceive their tutor’s FAs in terms of their learning?</b>			
Findings in section 4:			Data Sources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All L2 writers perceived growth in the 3 aspects: English language use at syntactic and lexical levels, L2 writing process, and metalinguistic capacity, though each perceived their most growth in one over the other aspects.</li><li>For English language use: Yee highly appreciated the feedback on grammar Julio provided, especially on the article use, lexical choices, and sentence connection. Rey learned the most in lexical logic from Martha</li><li>For L2 writing process: Both Jing and Yee realized the importance of</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Interview with writers</li><li>Uptake document</li><li>Writers’ self-evaluation</li></ul>

<p>communicating goals for the tutorial and expectation for feedback. Yee realized that the process of revising and writing matters more than the product.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For metalinguistic capacity: Rey perceived the most growth in his metalinguistic capacity. He learned to think beyond the definitions of the specific lexicon and began to think about generalizing this knowledge as an independent writer. Yee's metalinguistic awareness great as she noticed the problem from her direct translation from Chinese to English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forum messages</li> </ul>
<p><b>RQ2: What do the tutors report about the influences on their learning to give feedback and interact with L2 writers in the AOWT?</b></p>	
<p><b>RQ 2 (a): How does each tutor's feedback change overtime in terms of FAs?</b></p> <p><b>RQ 2 (b): How do tutors perceive their own FA patterns changing over time? Why?</b></p>	
<p>Findings in section 4.5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All tutors changed their feedback overtime and improved the quantity and quality of their FA use.</li> </ul> <p>Tutors increased their IFA and CFA use after the teacher education course intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutors started using more feedback sequence 1-3 after the teacher education course intervention.</li> </ul>	<p>Data Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutors' written comments in track changes, forum messages, and uptake document</li> <li>Interviews</li> </ul>

Tutor Martha	Tutor Nadia	Tutor Julio	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Martha recognized the value of IFAs, which supported her use of IFAs with evidence from her interaction.</li> <li>▪ Martha used more CFAs from the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback and in her forum message to Rey, since she reported learning how to better communicate with L2 writers in the cross-cultural setting.</li> <li>▪ Martha extensively used a wider range of feedback sequences from the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback, and learned to use IFA and CFA more strategically to facilitate writers' thinking.</li> <li>▪ Growth in other aspects:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nadia learned to use IFA and CFA as a supplement or substitute for DFA to enhance writers' understanding of her feedback and facilitate interaction with writers.</li> <li>▪ Nadia increased the use of DFA due to her developing belief in process writing and understanding of selective approach in giving feedback.</li> <li>▪ Nadia's increase use of IFA and CFA reflected the quality change of her feedback, leading to more feedback sequence 1 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback.</li> <li>▪ The teacher education program intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Julio demonstrated change more in quality of his feedback: his feedback sequences appeared in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback and drastically increased in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback.</li> <li>▪ His quality change corresponded to his approach change—from directive to non-directive approach.</li> <li>▪ Both the teacher education course program and his realization throughout the AOWT informed his quality change.</li> <li>▪ Growth in other aspects: online tutoring (differences between the roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Interview with tutors</li> <li>○ Self-reflections by tutors</li> <li>○ Expectation sheet &amp; Teacher education course worksheet</li> <li>○ Forum messages</li> </ul>

knowledge of L2 writers (the influence of Chinese culture in their language choices), online tutoring (how to use FAs to facilitate communication and independent thinking) and English grammar (learned about online resources to teach English grammar).	<p>influenced her change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growth in other aspects: knowledge in online tutoring (learned to practice theories learned in teacher education program), English grammar, and academic writing (know the challenges English learners have).</li> </ul>	and voice of tutors and teachers), L2 writers, English grammar and academic writing (learned specific grammar and know the challenges for English learners).	
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#### ***4.1 Types, Frequency, and Sequence of Feedback Acts by Tutors in the AOWT***

Section 1 answers **RQ 1(a): What types of written feedback do tutors use through four rounds of feedback?** In the AOWT, tutors were found to use a wide variety of feedback acts to help L2 writers with revision, in which IFAs slightly outnumbered DFAs. Of all the feedback acts (N=213), the three tutors used 81 DFAs (38%), 96 IFAs (45%), and 36 CFAs (17%). Table 6 shows the number and percentage of the feedback acts.

Table 6: Number and Percentage of All FAs in the AOWT

<b>FA</b>	<b>Number of FA</b>	<b>Percentage of FA</b>
<b>DFA</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>38%</b>
Making corrections	34	Percentage of DFA 42%

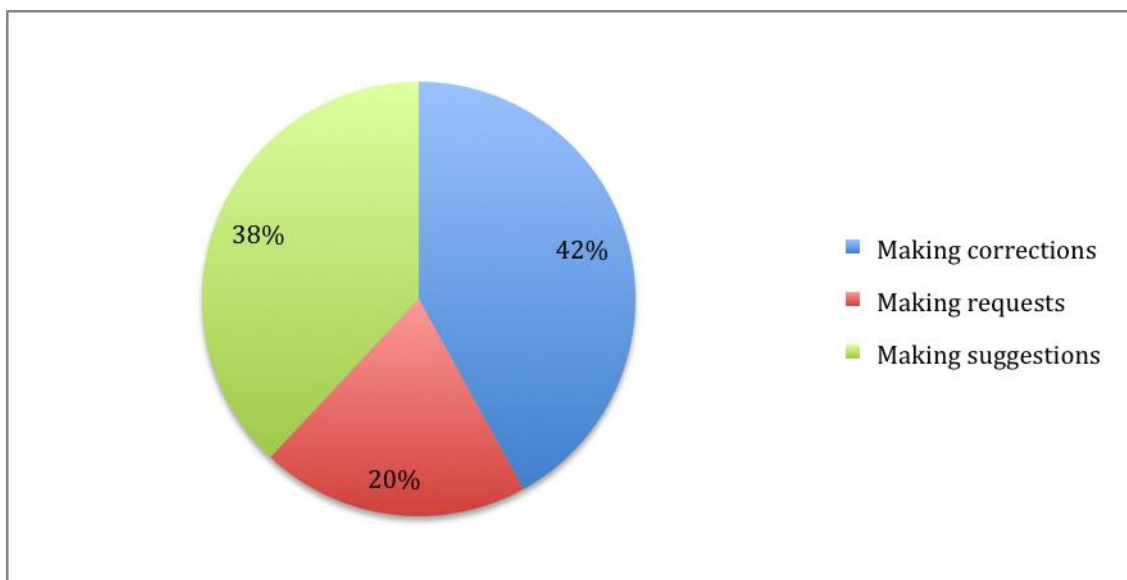
Making requests	16	20%
Making suggestions	31	38%
<b>IFA</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>45%</b>
Asking questions	20	Percentage of IFA
Giving information	31	21%
Giving metalinguistic explanation	28	32%
Giving personal comments	17	29%
		18%
<b>CFA</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17%</b>
Apologizing	5	Percentage of CFA
Complimenting	17	14%
Reminding	1	47%
Promising	10	3%
Wishing	3	27%
		8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note. The abbreviation of DFA, IFA, and CFA is used for Direct Feedback Act, Indirect Feedback Act, and Conversational Feedback Act.

#### 4.1.1 DFA

Since tutors were committed to making corrections, requests, and suggestions to help L2 writers with revision, DFA was extensively used in the AOWT. Of all the DFAs (N=88), two thirds of them were “Making corrections” (n=34, 42% of DFA) and “Making suggestions” (n=31, 38% of DFA), where tutors directly indicated errors or areas that need revisions or provided suggestions. “Making requests” (n=16, 20% of DFA) was occasionally presented when tutors requested for revisions or more information about writer’s intended meanings. Figure 4 shows the DFA use by the three tutors in the AOWT. I will describe a sampling of each type of DFA in the following.

Figure 4: Percentage of DFA by Tutors in the AOWT



Tutors were found to “make corrections” of the writers’ errors in grammar, mechanics, or writing conventions. Most of the time, they crossed out the words, rewrote or inserted the corrections via the track changes function in Microsoft Word. In the summary assignment, tutors corrected writers’ misunderstandings of the original passage. Examples of the DFA category “Making corrections” were the following: “*DO NOT cite!*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Julio) or “*this citation is not needed*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Nadia), and “*you do not want to use [it] but refer to what the article is talking about---English.*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio). The capitalization of the words “DO NOT” and the use of negation communicated a strong force of correction.

Tutors also made considerable suggestions to writers regarding grammar, word choices, writing conventions or even content. Examples are “*considering [sic] changing this article to ‘a’*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia), “*I would say ‘an MS degree’ or ‘his MS degree’ instead of ‘the’*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha), “*... so I suggest you use a verb form that gives that message—‘is going to be’ ‘will be’ ‘could be’ ‘might be’*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha), and “*(Hint: Maybe write about what makes Mandarin the new must-learn language: billions of people speak it, China is becoming important in the world economy, other countries want to have trade with China, or along those lines...)*” (Forum Message by Martha). The verbs (“considering” and “suggest”), modal verb (“I **would** say ...”) and adverb (“**maybe** write about ...”) explicitly conveyed the tutors’ intended message—suggesting writers to revise accordingly.

Though not performed as extensively as the former two DFAs, “Making requests” was occasionally used by tutors to request for revision. For example, Nadia made a series of requests to her tutee, Jing, for revision in grammar, sentence structure, and content across rounds of feedback. She put “*please make this a past tense verb*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Nadia), “*please end it at ‘word’*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Nadia), “*using this information, please rephrase this part of your*

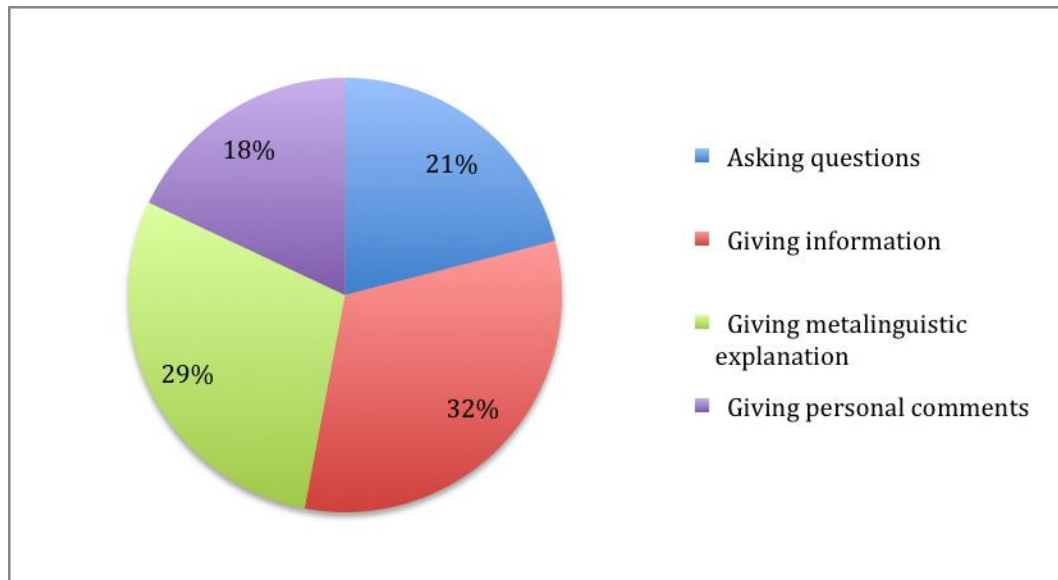


*sentence.*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Nadia), and “*try to include that different versions of English exist because of the many different countries and many different uses it encompasses.*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Nadia). Another use of the request by tutors was to ask for more information regarding what the writer intended to write, such as “*please tell me more about this so I can point you in the right direction.*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia). While the examples above were exclusively from the in-text feedback aiming at language use or error correction, the requests for revision in the forum messages were more general lacking specific indication of errors, such as “*there were few issues that I would like for you to take a look at*” (Forum Message by Julio). Despite the different purposes, all requests were in the form of imperative.

#### **4.1.2 IFA**

IFA was the most extensively used feedback act in the AOWT by the three tutors. Of all the IFAs (N=96), the most frequent category was “Giving information” (n=31, 32% of IFA). Other categories were “Giving metalinguistic explanation” (n=28, 29% of IFA), and “Asking questions” (n=20, 21% of IFA) and “Giving personal comments” (n=17, 18% of IFA) followed. Figure 2 shows the percentage of the subtypes (or categories) of IFA.

Figure 5: Percentage of CFA by Tutors in the AOWT



The act of “Giving information” allows tutors to give writers information about their perception of writers’ writing; to give informative explanations regarding the preceding or following suggestion/correction. Examples include “*when you used the article ‘the’ it makes it seem like there is only one B.S. degree in the world.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia); “*‘the’ is completely optional and does not take away from the meaning*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio). Nadia’s feedback on article use gave Jing information about how his audiences may perceive the meaning. Julio’s comment on article usage also gave Yee information, helping Yee understand why the article is optional in the context. Tutors may also give writers information related to how English dominant speakers use certain forms, as in the feedback given by Martha when she was explaining why she suggested using the word “staff” instead of writer’s choice “member”: “*We don't consider that we are a member of a place or a thing.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha).

Tutors also performed a wide range of “Giving metalinguistic explanations” for the corrections/suggestions they made across the rounds of feedback, mostly about writers’ problematic writing or language use. For example, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback to Rey where Martha explained the semantic differences between the words “member” and “staff” from English

dominant speakers' (or her own) viewpoint, she gave a lengthy explanation combined with lexical definitions.

*A club is made up of members, a staff is made up of members, an organization is made up of members, a group is made up of members, a band is made up of members, etc. They are all groups of individual people (the members.) A laboratory is a physical structure, a place, a building, a job location and is not a group of people. A group of people work there AT that place.*  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha)

In addition to lexical choices, tutors also provided metalinguistic explanations for the grammar that writers needed help with. Julio wrote “*normally, if the noun can exist alone, you do not need ‘the’*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio) to explain the grammar rule for the article “the”. In the summary assignment, which required reading comprehension and a good grasp of English grammar to accurately and concisely summarize the passage, Nadia provided a metalinguistic explanation describing the contextual background that made past tense verbs a better choice—“*consider using another past tense verb here because it is no longer spoken ...*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Nadia).

Among the “Giving metalinguistic explanation” feedback acts, examples were frequently given to support the explanations, particularly when the tutor tried to clarify the semantic differences among lexicon to the writers. For example, Martha gave various examples in different contexts and for different purposes in her feedback. The following example shows her feedback about lexical and semantic differences:

*When your airplane lands, you descend. When you go come down from the top of a mountain, you descend. When numbers, proportions, or populations go down, they “decrease.”*  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha)

Examples were also found in feedback acts where Martha explained what certain lexicon or collocations mean in English, as in:

*However, when you refer to language as strong, think about this: Strong language is when you speak harshly to your child when he does something wrong.*

*Strong language is when you are angry and you are arguing with someone. The United Nations issues sanctions against countries using strong language...*  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha)

Martha also made cross-linguistic comparisons to support her metalinguistic explanation for usage of prepositions. The excerpt read, “*maybe in Chinese you say "in the University?", in the US we are students 'at the University' ”* (1<sup>ST</sup> Feedback by Martha). Even for sentence structures, Martha wrote two examples for clarification: “*Such as: 'He was employed from 2011 until 2012.' or, 'From 2011 to 2012, he was employed as...' ”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha). In total, 9 cases of such supporting examples of DFA were found, all contributed by Martha.

Findings also showed that “Asking questions” was another frequently performed IFA by tutors. Tutors asked both display and referential questions. The display question in language instruction settings has been defined as “one designed to test whether the addressee has knowledge of a particular fact or can use a particular linguistic item correctly.” (Ellis, 1994, p. 700). One such example in the AOWT was from Martha, who was explaining the differences between the two prepositions “in” and “at”—“*for, example, can you tell the difference between: I am going to exercise IN the swimming pool AND I am going to exercise AT the swimming pool?*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha). Of course Martha knew the differences between “in” and “at”; her following explanation of the preposition grammar rules revealed that she was using the display question to elicit how much Rey understood the usage. Martha also used a display question for a fact she had known from reading Rey’s writing, that is, Rey was still wondering the differences between the two lexical forms, “communication” and “communicated”, as well as their grammatical functions. Thus, she asked, “*or were you wondering if "communication" could be both a noun and an adjective?*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Martha), and then provided immediate relevant answer. Sometimes tutors not only double checked the writers’ intended meaning but also asked

the display question in order to stimulate more thinking by tutees, as the example shows, “*it's going to be in the future right?..*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha). Not really requiring the tutee to answer the question, this feedback act gave the tutee a sense of audience and engaged him in the revising process. However, there were times when tutors asked referential questions, defined as “those to which the asker does not know the answer” (Nunan & Lamb, 1996, p. 88). The common use of referential questions by tutors was to confirm or clarify the writers’ intended meaning, as shown in the example: “*Do you mean immediate such as in right now?*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Julio). In order to better help the writer revise, tutors asked a referential question to request for more information about the content he/she wrote about. For example, Nadia asked for the name of the project Jing mentioned in his biodata—“*what is the name of the project?*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia).

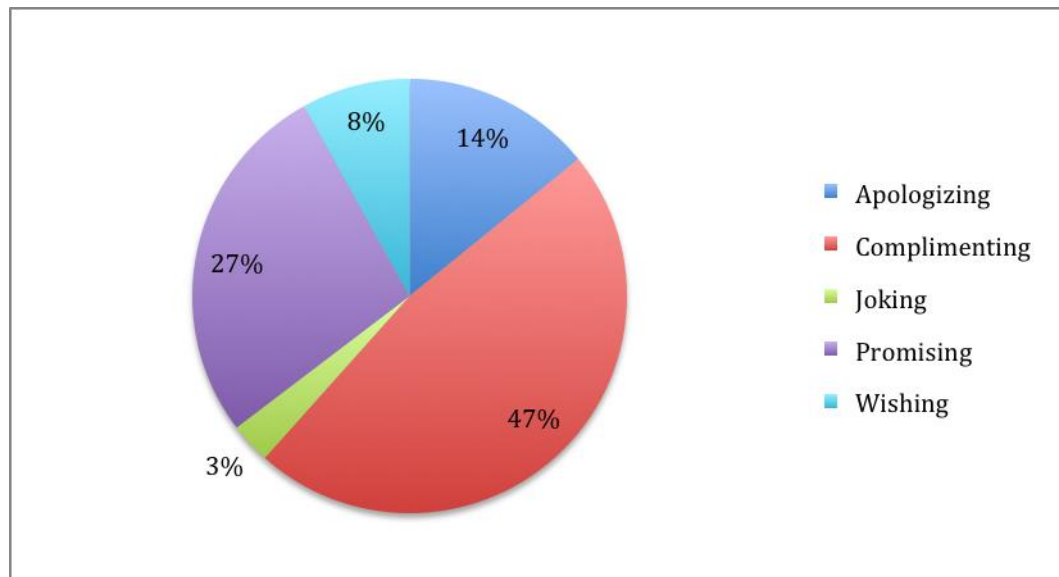
“Giving personal comments” was the next most frequent IFA after “Asking questions”. Instead of commenting on the problematic areas of the writers’ writing, tutors gave their personal points of view or comments on what the writers wrote. For example, Martha responded to Rey’s biodata in the forum messages by commenting on his research topic, writing “*it sounds like you recognize the importance of physical fitness;*” expressed interests in understanding more about his research, writing “*hi, Benny. I am looking forward to learning about all the interesting topics that you and the other students are writing about ...*” (Forum Message about Biodata by Martha). Martha also included the cross-cultural aspect, as she put: “*don't know how it is in China but we have an epidemic of out of shape Americans who can use some health promotion and sports medicine*” (Forum Message about Biodata by Martha). In addition to responding to content, tutors may show their empathy for the challenges writers were faced. Nadia wrote in her feedback when helping Jing to revise his summary assignment: “*I know it was a bit confusing*

when reading this part of the passage” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Nadia). The last exceptional case was a joke made by Martha, who responded to the summary content about the dominant role of English in the world, reading as: *“Did you ever wonder if one reason English is such a necessary language may be that Americans, UNLIKE Chinese people, are not smart enough to learn other languages? I DO. But thank you for being polite enough to avoid that topic.”* (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha).

#### 4.1.3 CFA

The percentage of CFA use (17%) shows that the tutors intended to make the feedback more conversational and the process more social and collaborative. CFA (N=36) had five sub-types, among which the most frequent ones were “Complimenting” (n=17, 47% of CFA), and “Promising” (n=10, 27% of CFA), followed by “Apologizing” (n=5, 14% of CFA). There were few cases of “Wishing” (n=3, 8% of CFA), and “Reminding” (n=1, 3% of CFA). Figure 6 presents the percentage of each CFA used by the AOWT tutors.

Figure 6: Percentage of CFA by Tutors in the AOWT



As the most frequent use of CFA, “Complimenting” was most often seen in the forum messages, which was like “end comments” (Ferris, 1997) commenting frequently on the overall quality of the writing. For example, Julio complimented on Yee’s summary, and Nadia praised Jing’s conciseness in his summary:

*It [is] great that you added some detail and cited when necessary..that was very good.”* (Forum Message by Julio)

*“I think you did an excellent job with the suggestions from the last feedback. you captured exactly what was needed to make your summary short and to the point but also including enough details to give the reader the basic idea of the development and global use of the English Language.*  
(Forum Message by Nadia)

In addition to complements on content and organization, Martha also complimented on the lexical use by Rey. The three examples in the entire AOWT were: “*VERY GOOD: "at" is CORRECT*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha), “*great transition word! and correctly used—good job!*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha), and “*first, let me say that your wording sounds GREAT like this.*” (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Martha).

“Promising” also appeared more in the forum messages than in the in-text feedback. Tutors made promises of offering help and giving advice. Martha wrote on the forum, “*hi, Benny, I will answer your questions soon*”, and “*if this comes up in one of your assignments, I'll know better how to advise you.*” (Forum Message by Martha). Nadia promised Jing of future advice on certain aspect of his writing, as the example shows: “*Please tell me more about this so I can point you in the right direction.*” (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia).

“Apologizing” appeared mostly when tutors apologized for the imperfect feedback, such as “*sorry that i was not clear with this comment.*” (Forum Message by Nadia) and “*sorry for the long explanation*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha). Though it may not be her fault, Martha apologized for her inability providing feedback appropriate for the context, such as: “*I'm not sure how to*

*advise you to say this because I'm not sure what you want to say. Sorry.*” (3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha).

“Wishing” was exclusively used by Martha, who wished her helpfulness of the given feedback by saying: *“I hope this gives you the idea.”* and *“I hope it helps.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha). The word “this” in the former example was about her teaching of how to use the preposition “until” to Rey, while “it” in the latter referred to the explanation about the lexical choices between “*member*” and “*staff*” in the second round of feedback for his biodata. Martha also made a wish for more questions from Rey by saying: *“I hope you will e-mail me if you have specific questions”* (Forum Message by Martha) to encourage interaction and participation of Rey.

“Reminding” was found once and was used by Nadia, who reminded Jing of the format in his writing. The example was: *“minor detail, but please be sure this single spaced.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia).

#### **4.1.4 Feedback Sequence for DFA, IFA, and CFA**

Data shows that DFA, IFA, and CFA are functionally inter-related as tutors mediated the revision and learning process for L2 writers. In the coding process, I realized that these feedback types were related in the order that they occurred in the text, the way that one often followed the other for both pragmatic and pedagogical functions. The emerging four sequences are: (1) IFAs or CFAs preceded or followed DFAs; (2) CFAs were inserted between IFAs and DFAs; (3) IFAs and CFAs stood alone without DFAs adjacent.

In the first sequential pattern both IFAs and CFAs could precede or follow DFAs, hedging to soften the DFA. Table 7 summarizes feedback sequence 1 and provides a corresponding example. I found that whether IFAs followed or preceded DFAs, they acted as



supplements to the DFAs, supporting the act of DFAs. Most DFAs in these cases were “Making suggestions”, which was supported and enhanced by the following or preceding metalinguistic explanations. As Table 7 shows (in the order of appearance in the text beginning from the left), tutors even performed more than one IFA to expound, illustrate, or define the given suggestions. Serving as the same mediational role, CFAs could precede DFAs as well.

Table 7: Summary of Feedback Sequence 1

DFAs		IFAs
	<b>DFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>
	[Making suggestions]	[Giving metalinguistic explanation]
	<i>Consider using another past tense verb here</i>	<i>because it is no longer spoken by the “low people”.</i>
		(3 <sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Nadia)
<b>DFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>
[Make suggestions]	[Make suggestions]	[Giving metalinguistic explanation]
<i>I would say "an MS degree" or "his MS degree" instead of "the"</i>	<i>By the way—you would use "an" in this case instead of "a"</i>	<i>because "an" is used before a vowel or a word that sounds like a vowel- "M.S." sounds like "em ess..." so use "an"</i>
		(1 <sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha)
IFAs		DFAs
	<b>IFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>
	[Giving	[Making

	metalinguistic explanation]	suggestions]
	<i>Since it started in the past and is still happening,</i>	<i>you would say "he has been studying.." "He studied" means it's over and done...past...</i>  (1 <sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha)
<b>IFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>
[Giving metalinguistic explanation]	[Giving metalinguistic explanation]	[Making suggestions]
<i>Momentous does mean "highly significant, crucial, very important, etc" but it usually has to do with an event or a decision that is important in terms of being historic, something happening for the first time that will be remembered in the future.</i>	<i>The day the Olympics opened in Beijing was a "momentous" occasion. When Bell invented the telephone it was a "momentous" event. When Barack Obama, an African American, decided to run for president, it was a "momentous" decision.</i>	<i>A better way to describe an important language in the future might be to say: "most important" or " most essential."</i>  (3 <sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha)

	<b>IFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>
	[Asking questions]	[Making suggestions]	[Making corrections]
	<i>What is the article trying to say about this in your own words.</i>	<i>You can say:  One example of the difficulty of English is its variety of meaning for specific words....</i>	<i>DO NOT cite!</i>  (4 <sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio)
<b>IFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>	<b>DFA</b>
[Asking questions]	[Giving metalinguistic explanation]	[Making suggestions]	[Making corrections]
<i>Are you a MEMBER OF a the BSI Laboratory STAFF AT NCTU?</i>	<i>In English, laboratories have employees ; staffs and groups have members.</i>	<i>You'd either say you are a member of the XYZ group, a member of the XYZ staff, or you could be employed by XYZ the laboratory...but you would probably not say you were a member of the laboratory</i>	<i>(Note: member OF not WITH)</i>  (1 <sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha)
<b>CFAs</b>		<b>DFAs</b>	
<b>CFA</b>		<b>DFA</b>	

[Complimenting]	[Making suggestions]
<i>I think your explanation here is great; short and to the point! Great work!.</i>	<i>Now you may want to brag a little on yourself here by including any accomplishments or special qualifications you have. Publications, seminars, etc.</i>
	(2 <sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia)

Feedback sequence 2 shows that CFAs may be inserted between IFAs and DFAs. Common orders in sequence 2 are listed in Table 8 with examples. As a pattern that contains the most variety of feedback acts, there was no predictability for where the CFAs could occur. Across the AOWT, CFAs were occasionally applied and inserted among the IFAs and DFAs, making the written feedback more interpersonal and approachable for L2 writers. As can be seen in the following, the acts of complimenting, promising, and reminding could appear in those addressing certain language or writing issues.

Table 8: Summary of Feedback Sequence 2

IFA	DFA	CFA	CFA
[Giving information]	[Making suggestions]	[Complimenting]	[Reminding]
<i>You talk about</i>	<i>so you should</i>	<i>You have chosen</i>	<i>just remember</i>

<i>“sites” IN many different languages”,</i>	<i>keep the same style to say “sites only IN English.”</i>	<i>a good way to say what you mean,</i>	<i>to be consistent.</i>  (4 <sup>th</sup> Feedback by Martha)
<b>IFA</b>	<b>CFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>	<b>CFA</b>
[Asking questions]	[Complimenting]	[Giving personal comments]	[Promising]
<i>Did you mean, in general, or in the biodata?</i>	<i>I think you did OK in the bio- data, since you did what everyone else did and you followed the example.</i>	<i>If you mean, in “general,” when you conclude a research paper, I agree it’s difficult.</i>	<i>We will [look] more specifically with another one of your assignments, perhaps.</i>  (2 <sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha)
<b>DFA</b>	<b>CFA</b>	<b>IFA</b>	
[Making requests]	[Promising]	[Asking questions]	
<i>Please tell me more about this</i>	<i>so I can point you in the right direction.</i>	<i>What is the name of the project?</i>  (1 <sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia)	

Feedback sequence 3 contains exclusively IFAs and CFAs, standing alone without DFAs adjacent to them. Table 9 lists the sequential orders in this pattern with examples. While no DFAs were present in this pattern, one or more of the IFAs or CFAs served as a substitute of the DFAs conveying the implied pragmatic meaning. The presence of sequence 3 indicates that the tutors used the IFA and CFA for the pragmatic (hedging) and pedagogical (mediation) purposes.

For example, the information and metalinguistic explanation regarding the lexical use of “promote” also functioned as grammar correction in this feedback. By telling Rey how English dominant speakers would say and what parts of speech the word is, Martha intended to correct Rey’s wrong usage in his writing. In the similar vein, Julio corrected Yee that there should not be citations in summaries by giving relevant information and asking her a question. The question could function as a way of hedging her intended DFA, “Making corrections”. The last example did not contain or imply any DFAs, but illustrate how IFA and CFA could stand alone. The questions that Martha asked and her apology not only indicated the problematic area of the writers’ writing but also mediated Rey’s learning by encouraging negotiation for meaning. In this case, the IFAs and CFAs simultaneously served as both the supplement and substitute for the DFA in correcting errors for both pragmatic and pedagogical purposes. (See Chapter 5 for detailed discussion)

Table 9: Summary of Feedback Sequence 3

IFA	IFA
[Giving information]	[Giving metalinguistic explanation]
<i>We would say that you are involved in Health Promotion.</i>	<i>(Promote is a verb)</i> (1 <sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha)
[Giving	[Asking

	information]	Question]
	<i>This statement is directly from the article...</i>	<i>How can you say this in your own words?</i>  (4 <sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio)
IFA	IFA	CFA
[Giving information]	[Asking questions]	[Apologizing]
<i>This isn't clear to me.</i>	<i>Do you mean “ English may not be used that often due to ...”? “The use of English is getting less common due to ...? “It is no longer as widespread as it once was due to ...”?</i>	<i>I'm not sure how to advise you to say this because I'm not sure what you want to say. Sorry.</i>  (3 <sup>rd</sup> Feedback by Martha)

In conclusion, I found that IFAs and CFAs served as supplements, supporting and enhancing the preceding or following DFAs. This is an important finding because this shows how the tutors used feedback acts as a mediational tool in the AOWT. Examples of such mediation largely occurred in all feedback sequences, in which IFAs and CFAs were close to DFAs. The additional function of IFAs and CFAs, in addition to supplements, was to serve as a substitute for DFAs, exclusively in feedback sequence 3. They could even serve as both the



supplement and substitute simultaneously in few exceptional cases. Again, when IFAs than CFAs served as the substitute, they signaled the meanings carried out by DFAs, as a way of hedging their intended DFA. The pragmatic and pedagogical functions of IFAs and CFAs will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5 through Vygotskian sociocultural theory.

In conclusion for research question 1(a), tutors used a total of twelve types of feedback acts across the four rounds of feedback in the AOWT to mediate the revision and learning process for the L2 writers. Strategically using a combination of the FAs, tutors commented on the issues of lexicon, semantics, grammar, sentence structures, organization, content, writing conventions, and summarizing techniques, meanwhile helping L2 writers to revise, to think further, and to learn new language use in the process. I found that the twelve feedback acts occurred in three categories: DFA, IFA, and CFA, and these categories generally occurred in 3 sequential patterns in the AOWT. While most DFAs were directly related to what the tutors expected the writers to correct or to do in revision, IFAs and some CFAs were largely found to support or enhance the use of DFAs. The IFAs and CFAs also substituted for DFAs occasionally. All these sequential orders further confirm the mediational role of the feedback acts.

#### ***4.2 L2 Writers' Overall Incorporation of the Written Feedback***

This section answers **RQ 1(b): How do writers incorporate different types of FAs in the text revision process?** As noted in Chapter 3, the frequency of writers' incorporation of the written feedback corresponded to the aspects of writing rather than the feedback acts. Because prior research has examined incorporation of revisions as an indicator of writers' growth (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), I analyzed writers' drafts to identify patterns of how writers attended to feedback. However, my conceptualization of "effectiveness" of written feedback in this study was "perceived growth and learning" from the written feedback and tutorial process. I argue that in order to more fully understand the learning process (rather than product) and what learning opportunities the mediated feedback generated, it is important to look more carefully to those suggested revisions that the writers did *not* incorporate. Those revisions at times involved negotiation for meaning or opportunities for the writers to generate evidence or logic for their language use. It was clear from their revisions and uptake document that the writers paid greater attention to the specific language issues that the tutors made salient. Regardless of the writers' incorporation of the tutors' specific feedback, I argue that this context and mediated feedback raised language awareness that could lead to learning opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed if not given the opportunity to interact with tutors. Looking into the reasons why the L2 writers did not fully incorporate the given feedback also shows the importance of noticing their contextual, personal, or interpersonal factors that may play a role in feedback incorporation.

Of all the given suggestions and corrections, there were 64 full incorporations (77%), 6 partial incorporations (7%) and 13 zero incorporation (16%). Figure 7 presents the percentage of the writers' written feedback incorporation across the AOWT.

Figure 7: Percentage of Feedback Incorporation by L2 Writers

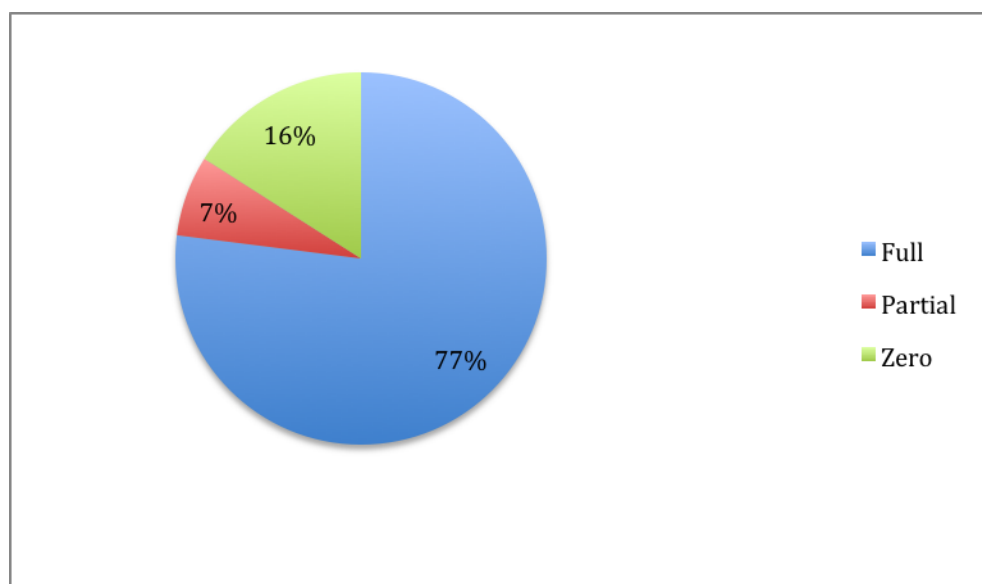


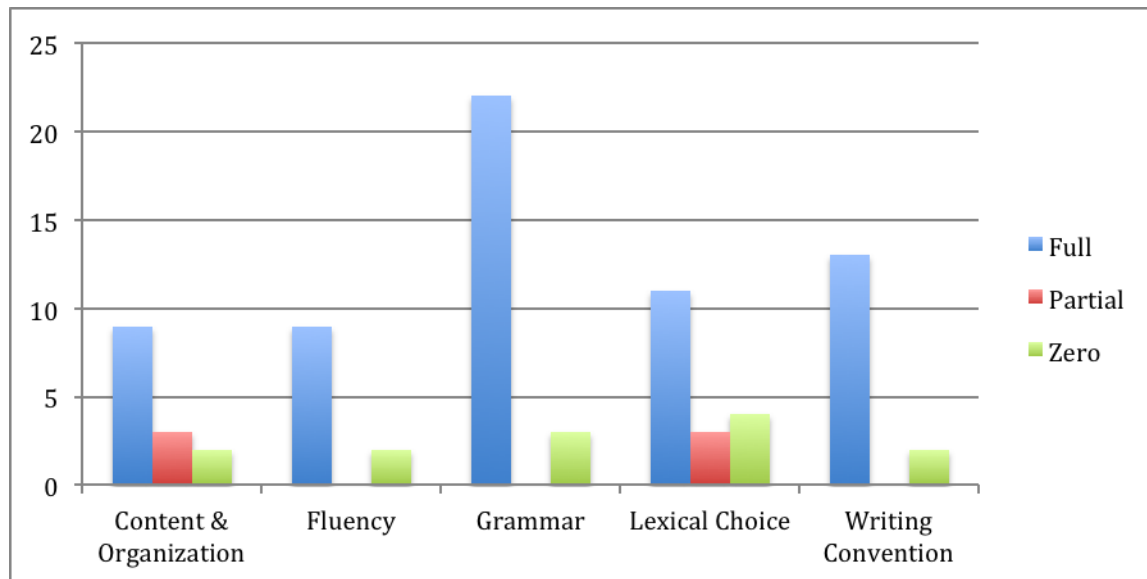
Table 10 illustrates the frequency of each type of incorporation relating to the five aspects of feedback: “Content and organization”, “Fluency”, “Grammar”, “Lexical choice”, and “Writing convention”.

Table 10: Frequency and Percentage of Feedback Incorporation and Feedback Aspects

	Full	Partial	Zero	Total
<b>Content &amp; Organization</b>	9	3	2	14
<b>Fluency</b>	9	0	2	11
<b>Grammar</b>	22	0	3	25
<b>Lexical Choice</b>	11	3	4	18
<b>Writing Convention</b>	13	0	2	15
	64	6	13	83

As Table 10 shows, of all the full incorporation, “Grammar” (n=22) and “Writing convention” (n=13) had the highest percentage, followed by “Lexical choice” (n=11), “Fluency”(n=9), and “Content and organization” (n=9). Although writers incorporated around two thirds of the written feedback, there were infrequent partial or zero incorporation of the given feedback. It is worth noting that the most cases of zero incorporation occurred in “Lexical choice” (n=4) and “Grammar” (n=3), followed by “Content and organization”, “Fluency” and “Writing convention” (both n=2). Writers sometimes just partially incorporated feedback in the aspects of “Lexical choice” (n=3), and “Content and organization” (n=3) with varying reasons. Summarizing the findings above, Figure 8 provides the breakout of each type of incorporation and aspects of feedback.

Figure 8: Frequency of Writers' Incorporation across Feedback Aspects



From the interview data, it is noted that personal or interpersonal factors determined the level of incorporation. The reasons for writers' partial or zero incorporation may vary from misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the commented topics from either party. Specifically, tutors could misunderstand what writers intended to convey, and writers could possibly miss the importance of the commented issues in English academic writing. One example of zero incorporation was found in the negotiation for meaning enacted by Yee in her uptake document, in which she drew a model to illustrate her intended meaning about her research project (See excerpt 12) since Julio misunderstood her use of “mediate” as “immediate”. The other two examples of zero incorporation, also from Yee’s drafts, show that she missed the important message Julio sent about summarizing—no citation. Not understanding how to revise based on the comments in excerpt 3, Yee chose to ignore the comments.

#### **Excerpt 3: 4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio to Yee’s Summary**

*In order to write a good summary, you want to ask yourself the question: What is the passage trying to say? It says...this, this, this, and that. When you begin citing from the article specific information, it is no longer a summary but a review of the article.*

Even with full incorporation, there were instances where writers did not understand why they were given corrections or suggestions in certain areas of their writing, or they made another mistake when revising though following the given feedback. In the example of discussing words “lab member” and “staff”, Rey applied what Martha suggested in describing his current position in his biodata, though he did not completely understand the lexical differences between the words “member” and “staff” as Martha explained. Rey had to raise more questions about Martha’s suggestion in his uptake document. In some cases of full incorporation, writers may revise in a wrong way, or use usage that misled readers. Jing represented such a case when he followed Nadia’s feedback revising the detailed in his summary.

Another evidence of personal factors influencing feedback incorporation was found linked to the content of the feedback. Particularly when the feedback regarded the content that pertained to their profession, it was more likely that they hesitated applying the feedback in their revisions or final drafts. More cases of such occurred in the biodata than in the summary assignment, as writers perceived more control and authority in their own achievements and professions. On the contrary, when the feedback content was about facts or knowledge unfamiliar to the writers, the tutee may view the tutors as authority, unhesitant to incorporate the corresponding feedback in their subsequent drafts. Many cases of this kind concerned the use of English grammar or appropriate lexical choices, as I observed the writers fully incorporate the written feedback on grammar or lexical choices without questions.

Overall, writers’ incorporation was influenced by the way tutors gave written feedback. Although direct corrections were largely accepted, especially when they did not come with metalinguistic explanations or additional information (i.e., DFA only, without any IFAs or CFAs), those corrections, particularly accompanied by verbalization or explanations, led to full

incorporation, and may incur more related questions on the writer's part in the uptake document or forum exchange. This finding suggests that more feedback incorporation does not necessarily imply more effective the written feedback was; instead, some partial or zero incorporation of feedback, which involved negotiation for meaning and ongoing conversation between dyads, generated more learning opportunities. By examining the reasons why the writers did not fully incorporate the given feedback, I discover that writers were encouraged to grow as independent writers (as they could make the linguistic decisions based on their expertise on their writing content) and learn beyond grammatical and lexical rules (as they realized the importance and usefulness of understanding how language works in contexts).

#### ***4.3 L2 writers' Perception of the Feedback Acts & Tutorial***

In this section I address research question **1(c): How do L2 writers perceive their tutor's Feedback Acts in terms of their learning?** When explaining their perceptions of their own learning as a result of their interaction with tutors via feedback, the writers generally mentioned three topics: (1) English language use, (2) L2 writing process, and (3) metalinguistic capacity.

English language use at the lexical and syntactical levels was the area where the three writers received the most assistance. Yee appreciated the assistance in grammar related to the lexical conventions of prepositions and articles that Julio provided throughout the tutorial. When being asked about her greatest gain in the beginning of the interview, Yee stated, "*I have more understandings about grammar, and know areas that need improvements ... mainly about the use of the article 'the', like when to use it.*" (Interview, May 26, 2012). Yee confirmed that she did not have a chance to learn about article usage in her English classes at school in Taiwan, so appreciated the explanation from her tutor's written feedback. In her end-of-semester self-

evaluation, she wrote, *“I learned how to use ‘the’. My tutor explained each of my use of ‘the’ in my summary.”* and *“my tutor clearly explained in the summary why ‘the’ describing the years ‘1300s’ need an ‘s’.”* Yee also learned from Julio about lexical choices and connections between sentences, as she described in the self-evaluation: *“though I don’t remember clearly, I still learned that some words need capitalization and their singular/plural forms.”* and *“my tutor reminded me to write more for readers to understand the meanings. For example, in my biodata, I wrote about the Book Award I used to win, and my tutor thought I could write about the reasons why I got the award.”* (Self-evaluation, May. 28, 2012). It is interesting that, in addition to learning about the grammar and lexical conventions, Yee mentioned learning more about English email writing style. She viewed highly her gain in email writing as she could imitate Julio’s responses in her correspondence with an English-speaking course instructor to whom she served as the teaching assistant. She stated,

- Vicky: *Because there were only two assignments, and I felt my other gain was in email writing. Since I had some email correspondence with my tutor, I would pay attention to those, like format or what’s a better way to end the email.*
- Researcher: *Did you tutor tell you how or you observed how he did those in his email?*
- Vicky: *I observed how he did these in his email.*
- Researcher: *Okay I see. Did you apply what you learned anywhere?*
- Vicky: *Yes, there was another course where I served as the TA for a foreign instructor this semester. I would pay attention to these uses when I communicated with him via email. ... So I should say I learned from both classes and applied what I learn in each to the other.*

(Interview, May 26, 2012)



Rey, on the other hand, considered his greatest gain of language use in English lexical logic. In the beginning of the interview, Rey revealed that he was benefited considerably by Martha's feedback in terms of the logic behind the lexical choices. Rey explained:

*I felt in some vocabulary or word use, foreigners' logic in choice of words is very different from Taiwanese'. Before the class, I felt that I didn't have that logic, but this time after the class, I realized the logic foreigners have is really different.*  
(Interview, Jun. 21, 2012)

When asked to give an example he encountered in the AOWT, Rey said, "*the examples are the prepositions like 'in', 'at', and 'on'. I was constantly confused, but Martha told me some general concepts, which made me think if I want to apply them in the way I learn English in Taiwan. How should I reconsider the use to avoid confusion?*" (Interview, Jun. 21, 2012). It seemed that Rey perceived his growth mainly from the metalinguistic explanations for the English lexicons, and could even think beyond the rigid grammatical rules that he used to learn from old-school classroom settings in Taiwan. Rey even compared his growth with his doctoral program peers to emphasize his gain, as he described,

*So I said she gave me great guidance in the lexical logic ... I did relate to a common problem, like many of my doctoral program colleagues, when they are writing papers, they just randomly changed the words with synonyms ..., but after she told me about the logic behind the words, I found this is not a good writing strategy. I started thinking whether I should consider how these words may be used differently.* (Interview, Jun. 21, 2012).

It is thus not surprising to see that he rated highly his improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and connections between sentences. In his uptake document for the summary assignment, Rey noted, "*I received some useful information to learn how to use precise words to write correct sentence.*" and "*it is very important that use suitable word to let reader clearly know what I mean.*" (Uptake document, Apr. 15, 2012). In terms of grammar, Rey appreciated Martha's assistance with his article use by leaving a message in the uptake document for the biodata assignment, which read,

*“I very appreciated Martha’s assistances. I have great harvests in writing of articles.”* (Uptake document, Mar. 26, 2012).

Jing also considered English language use as one of his great gains. In the interview, he particularly described his gain in English lexical use from Nadia’s feedback.

Jing: *Yes, I was benefitted a lot by her feedback. It seemed that it was the way we Taiwanese students use English words, extremely different from what native speakers think or use.*

Researcher: *Oh? What do you mean?*

Jing: *I meant they can be more precise, they would use the more precise words. However we just beat around the bush when describing something, not knowing how to change words to describe things.*

Researcher: *Did you have any “ah-uh” moments when you thought “I should have used this word. It’s much better”?*

Jing: *Yes, I did sometimes feel that way. I wrote this way, and she revised it, or sometimes her one sentence included all the meanings I meant.*

(Interview, May 25, 2012)

Another area where writers confirmed growth and development in the AOWT was related to L2 writing process. Though the tutors did not stress the concept of process writing to the L2 writers explicitly in the AOWT, they successfully demonstrated it to the writers by their constant guidance and wise feedback act use. The writers eventually learned that rather than the product, what matters is the process where communication and negotiation for meaning is key to their growth. For example, Yee reflected in her interview that she was not considered an active participant in the tutorial, and she would like to improve her communication skill if she could attend the tutorial again. She stated,

*One point was that I didn’t know how to express myself, so may not answer all the questions that the tutor meant to communicate. I think not being able to clearly express myself is one of my barriers, and the tutor didn’t know what I was writing about...Since I*

*am more passive in the process, I should have asked [my instructor] or other classmates how to express myself. If next time, I'll consider doing this.*

(Interview, May 26, 2012).

In addition to learning the importance of communication with the tutor, Yee's growth and awareness of writing as a process was revealed when she evaluated her own work. She explained, "*I would ask my classmates to review my work to ensure its quality, ...yes, before I submitted it to my tutor ... I would revise to the extent that I think it's satisfactory, and then submit it to the tutor, and then revise with tutor's feedback to get the second or third version.*" (Interview, May 26, 2012). Particularly in the summary assignment, which was commonly considered more difficult than the biodata, Yee felt the need of back and forth revisions. She confirmed the rewriting process for her summary assignment by saying "*this is right. Like this kind of assignment [summary], more rounds of revisions are needed. ... I think I need at least 3 to 4 rounds.*" (Interview, May 26, 2012). Her expressed need of learning to write a good summary was also in evidence in her forum message to Julio, illustrated below:

*Hello Julio,*

*Thanks for your advice in biodata!*

*And this is my first draft of summary (Textbook p. 140, Original Passage 2).*

*By this homework, we learn how to summarize a paragraph.*

*But, I met questions that what is a good summary? What should I do before writing a summary?*

*Could you give me some tips about this?*

*Best wishes!*

*Yee*

(Forum Message to Julio, Apr. 2, 2012)

Jing also acknowledged the importance of communication in the writing process. As described in section 2, Jing was once confused about the usefulness of the biodata assignment, as he was concerned that it did not help him as a business major by writing about research. Instead, he thought writing an autobiography or resume that aims at job hunting in business would be more in line with his personal goal at that time. He reflected that he should have made this

concern explicit to Nadia in the tutorial, so she would have known how to better help her. He stated, “*no, I didn’t explain this part [his personal goal] to her. I should have explained it clearly to Nadia. ... I should communicate with her before the tutorial.*” [Interview, May 25, 2012].

The last area that the writers perceived helpful was developing metalinguistic capacity in academic writing. Rey perceived the most growth in his metacognitive and metalinguistic abilities in L2 writing. He took the example of Martha’s feedback on teaching him how to use the English prepositions, and compared his English learning experience in Taiwan with this tutorial, in his interview:

Rey: *Yeah, the examples she gave did help me understand better. For example, “in the pool” differs from “at the pool”. This seemed to make the special concepts clearer.*

Researcher: *Is this different from your learning experience in Taiwan?*

Rey: *Yes. In Taiwan we memorize things. Like what Martha said, they have conventional usages, but students in Taiwan don’t have much information about these, and don’t read or write English that often. Therefore they tend to neglect this aspect.*

Researcher: *Do you mean the grammar books in Taiwan do not cover all these living examples?*

Rey: *Yeah, that’s right. With the grammar books in Taiwan, you can only memorize rules, but memorization doesn’t work all the time. I personally have encountered this problem. The grammar books did not teach me to think about language use, like in what situations what prepositions I should use.*

(Interview, Jun. 21, 2012)

When asked whether Martha’s guidance helped him become an independent thinker and writer, Rey firmly answered, “*yes, I think so. Because I will think [about my language use]. I wasn’t used to thinking, feeling this [grammar rule] was like this, but now I would think where I should use certain prepositions.*” and “*what’s good is that Martha led me thinking about the languages*

*usages I could use in my writing. I learn to think.*” Rey also related this growth to his role of being a teacher in his field in Taiwan, stating that *“because I am also a teacher. I would think this type of teaching method would be more likely to encourage students to think. ...”* (Interview, Jun. 21, 2012). The findings suggest that Rey not only learned about the English language use but also grew as an emerging independent L2 thinker and writer during the tutorial.

Although Jing did not explicitly indicate his growth in metacognitive or metalinguistic abilities, he perceived benefits of his communication with Nadia in the AOWT. Specifically he confirmed that he was more invested in the writing process by thinking about his own writing at another level, beyond simply copying whatever was corrected. In the interview, when asked about how he perceived the experience where he had to explain to Nadia what he meant or what he was confused about, Jing answered, *“but I felt this is a good thing, and good to my learning to write. ... need to explain what you write to make sense to others or native speakers, which made me gain more.”* (Interview, May, 25, 2012). The gain shows his ability to explain his own writing to readers and involved his growth in metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness.

Compared to Rey and Jing, Yee did not explicitly discuss her growth in independent thinking in the interview. However, she noticed a typical problem she tended to have as an L2 writer—direct translation from her L1 to L2 when writing. She self-reflects that *“actually sometimes when I am writing, I encounter a problem. I sometimes would directly translate the sentence in my mind, but I know foreigners don’t actually write this way.”* (Interview, May 26, 2012). Even though Yee did not refer this reflection as metalinguistic growth, her realization of such translation issues in her English writing suggests that she had developed the metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness discerning the differences between languages.

To conclude, Rey, Jing, and Yee all perceived gains in the aspects of English language use, process writing, and metalinguistic capacity. Each however displayed stronger perception in one aspect over the others. Rey emphasized his improvement in his metalinguistic understanding, resulted from Martha's guiding feedback filled with metalinguistic explanations and supporting examples. Jing realized the importance of communication in the revising and writing process, though regretting not able to make clear his personal goal to Nadia. Yee expressed that she learned the most in English language use and grammar, which was considerably helpful for her learning English academic writing.

#### ***4.4 Feedback Act Use and Incorporation by Cases of Dyads***

To examine each dyad's feedback act use and incorporation more thoroughly, section 4.4 presents the percentage of feedback act use and incorporation by dyad in order, followed by overall cross-case discussions.

##### **4.4.1 Tutor Martha & Writer Rey: A Storyteller & An Independent Thinker.**

Like a storyteller, Martha structured her written feedback with relevant and concrete details that guided and engaged the L2 writers. She provided explanations that were packed with a series of examples of the language use under discussion, helping the L2 writers understand how to use the language rather than remember her corrections as fixed rules. The examples Martha gave were grounded in everyday life situations that provide description, reasoning, and comparison for language use. Rey, a native Chinese-speaking, male graduate student working on his Ph.D, recognized his raised awareness from the mediating approach that Martha used in her feedback, and highly valued such an approach that encouraged independent thinking as a writer.

Figure 9 and 10 demonstrate the percentage of Martha's specific feedback act use and the frequency of Rey's feedback act incorporation relating to aspects of writing issues.

Figure 9: Percentage of Feedback Act Use by Martha

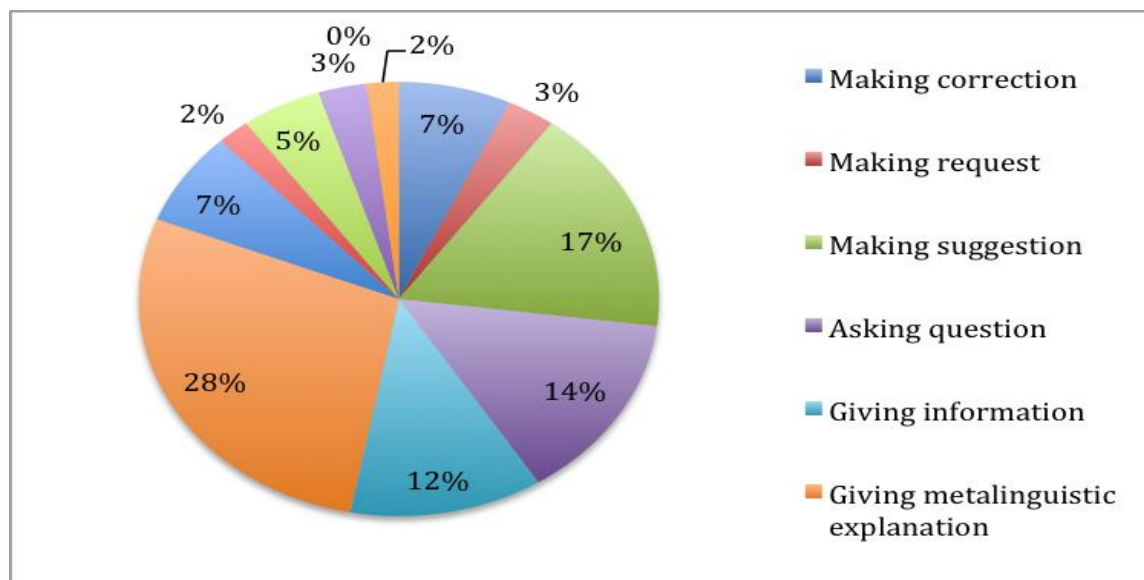


Figure 9 shows that Martha most often used the IFAs, “Giving metalinguistic explanations” (28%), “Asking questions” (14%), and “Giving information” (12%) along with the DFA, “Making suggestions” (17%). She interchangeably performed the DFAs, “Making corrections” (7%) and “Making requests” (3%) in helping Rey revise his writing. From closer discourse analysis, Martha’s written feedback was found to extensively contain IFAs following or preceding DFAs; occasionally insert CFAs in his comments or messages to Rey. In other words, her written feedback mostly involved feedback sequence 1 and sequence 2 (See section 4.1), in which the IFAs and CFAs served as the support to the DFAs in mediation of the revision process. Excerpt 4 illustrates how Martha used multiple IFAs to mediate the tutorial by scaffolding her explanation, suggestion and correction of language use.

#### Excerpt 4: 1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha to Rey’s Biodata

*Are you a MEMBER OF a the BSI Laboratory STAFF AT NCTU?* [IFA, ask a question]  
*In English, laboratories have employees; staffs and groups have members.* [IFA, explain semantic conventions]

*You'd either say you are a member of the XYZ group, a member of the XYZ staff, or you could be employed by XYZ the laboratory [IFA, offer examples]...*

*but you would probably not say you were a member of the laboratory (Note: member OF not WITH) [DFA, give corrections]*

In Excerpt 4, Martha wanted to distinguish the differences between the use of “laboratory”

versus “member of a staff or group”. Martha began by asking Rey a question, not only to

contextualize the following explanations, but also to make the meaning relevant to him. Martha

then explained semantic conventions and offered examples of usage of different lexicon. The

excerpt ends with the correction of the related preposition collocation. The question,

explanations and examples in IFAs supported the suggestions and correction in DFAs (as noted

in brackets in Excerpt 4).

Martha’s feedback was also known for the variety of feedback acts. In the later stage of the AOWT, Martha even indirectly performed the DFAs, applying multiple IFAs or CFAs.

Example of such is represented in feedback sequence 3, in which IFAs and CFAs stood alone without DFA adjacent (For specific examples, please refer to section 4.1).

Martha was like a storyteller, attempting to give all the details and vivid examples to Rey to help him understand each written feedback. In the interview with Martha, she affirmed her verbalizing feedback style, explaining how her feedback style was largely influenced by her personal learning style. Martha stated,

*I guess I tried to be a little more...like you said...saying a better word would be and say more like...let me tell you why this happened, more explain the rules behind things, but I still I still felt that they needed some guidance, and I always, one thing I try to keep the same is I learn best by examples. I don't learn a rule and not understand it unless somebody said 'Here's how it works, this this and this, and I would look at myself for a long time and said 'Oh you put that word over here now, you put the question mark at the end, you know? That's how I figure it out.*

(Interview, May 6, 2012)

Figure 10: Frequency of Feedback Incorporation by Rey



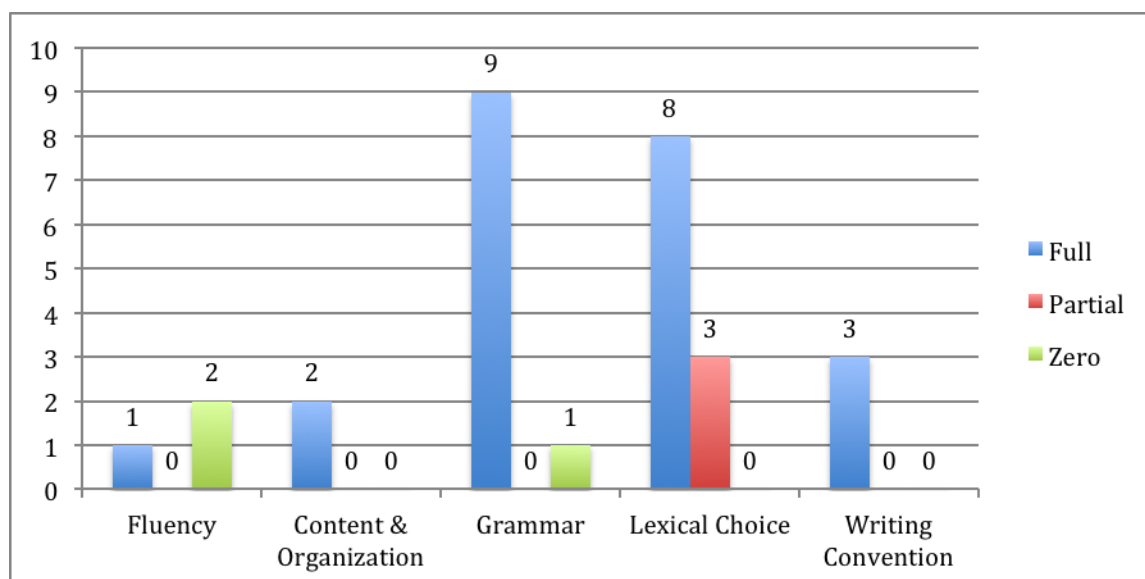


Figure 10 shows the frequency of Rey's feedback incorporation. Rey's full incorporation of Martha's written feedback was mostly seen in the aspects of grammar and lexical choice. It is noted that Rey occasionally applied partial feedback on lexical choices or did not apply the feedback on his grammar and fluency. As in his first draft of the summary assignment, Rey wrote "*English is still very important **communicated** tools in both developed and developing countries ...*", and Martha commented as in:

#### Excerpt 5: 1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Martha to Rey's Summary

*I think you want a word to modify tools(a noun), which means you need an adjective. The adjective form of communicated is "communication." i.e. communication tools*

This spurred Rey's further exploration of the lexical usage, stating his confusion in the uptake

document, "*if the word 'communicated' could be as adjective?*" Martha further explained that

both the forms of past particle and noun could serve as an adjective to modify nouns; however,

Rey eventually changed back to the past particle "communicated" in his final product, even

though he did revise it to the noun "communication" in his second draft.

#### Excerpt 6: 4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Martha to Rey's Summary

*First, let me say that your wording sounds GREAT like this. I definitely would NOT consider changing your wording here to "communicated."*

*But if you are interested—communication is one of the words that can be both a noun OR an adjective. 1)The teacher received a communication from the student. 2) The iPhone is a communication device. "Communicated" is best used as a verb: He communicated via e-mail.* In excerpt 6, Martha complimented Rey's wording and lexical choice, through which she sent a message of positive evaluation to Rey's writing. The CFA, "Complimenting", affirmed not only Rey's language use but also connected the knowledge of the lexicon that Martha wanted to introduce to him.

Rey was an independent thinker, knowing what he looked for in the tutorial process. Rey explained his incorporation of the given feedback in the interview as such:

*Oh I remember, there was an example, "communicated" and "communication", right? ... [Martha] said the past particle "communicated" can be used as an adjective, but suggested me using the noun "communication". I also looked it up in a dictionary, and found "communicated" can work, too. Because I checked and made sure it was okay, I decided to use it. ... it was personal preference.*  
(Interview, Jun. 21, 2012).

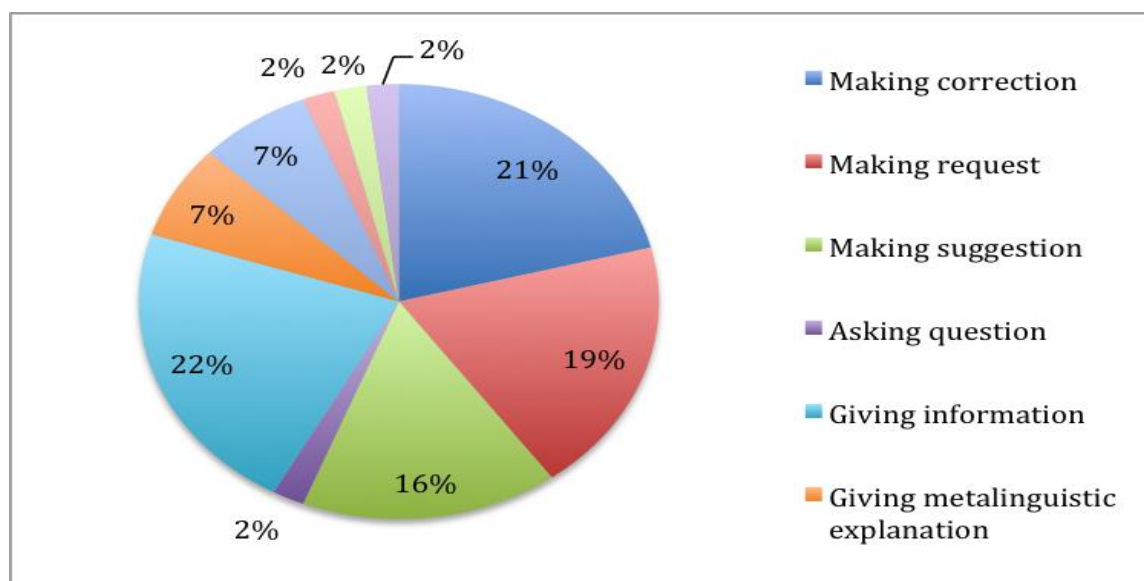
Rey confirmed that as long as the feedback made sense to him and he liked the suggested usage, after he consulted with the dictionary, he would fully incorporate it in his revision. He also expressed that it was probably because of his dual roles in his life as a part-time doctoral student and a full-time college teacher that made him constantly reflect on his own learning process. When asked about Martha's tutoring style, he commented, *"because I myself am a teacher, I would think whether the teaching method would stimulate students' thinking,"* disclosing how his reaction to the given feedback was influenced by his value in self-evaluation and independent thinking.

#### **4.4.2 Tutor Nadia & Writer Jing: A Tour Guide & A Loyal Follower**

Nadia was like a tour guide, giving Jing directions of revisions. She tended to give an explanation either before or after her suggestion or correction. The explanation she provided mostly contained information regarding how she as a reader perceived Jing's writing. Her

explanation not only gave Jing a sense of audience but also grounded her suggestion/correction in logical reasoning. To give Jing a clear direction for revision, Nadia usually performed DFAs with certain verbs of requests (such as “*consider changing*”, “*consider using*”, and “*try to include*”). Jing, a male graduate student and a business major, was like a loyal follower, taking the majority of the suggestions.

Figure 11: Percentage of Feedback Act Use by Nadia



According to Figure 11, Nadia performed more DFAs than IFAs—“Making corrections” (21%), “Making requests” (19%), and “Making suggestions” (16%) were among the most frequent feedback acts. The IFA, “Giving information”, ranked the second most frequent use. Nadia was like a responsible tour guide, always indicating a clear direction to the revision with rich information. Even though DFAs outnumbered IFAs in her feedback, Nadia was found to provide information from the viewpoints of a reader and English dominant speaker. Excerpt 7 and 8 display Nadia’s guiding style:

#### Excerpt 7: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia to Jing’s Biodata

*Consider changing this article to ‘a’ because the way you are using “the” here makes it seem like you are the only one in the world to research this topic.*

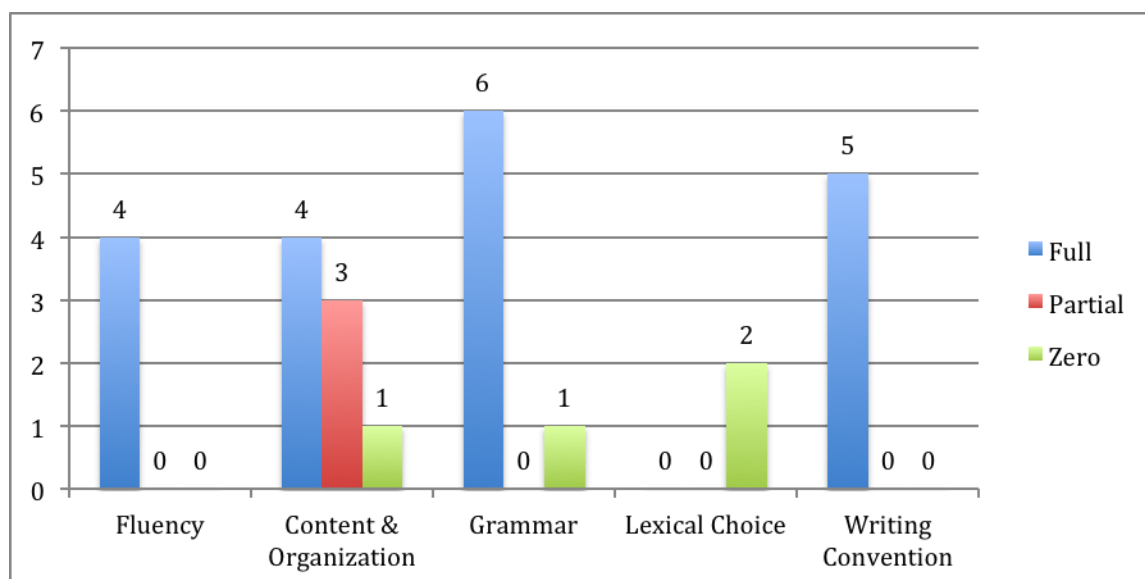
### **Excerpt 8: 1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia to Jing's Summary**

*English is complicated first because of the many different rules mentioned in the first part of the second paragraph. Try to include that different versions of English exist because of the many different countries and many different uses it encompasses.*

In excerpt 7, Nadia first suggested the article Jing should use by providing her interpretation of his writing, explaining to Jing how readers perceived his writing. In excerpt 8, Nadia first provided information related to the original article's intended meaning, and then along with the additional information related to the suggestion, she gave Jing a clear suggestion regarding what he should write about. Either for language use or content, Nadia would not miss the related information when giving out the direct suggestion or correction. Excerpt 7 and 8 also illustrate that Nadia's written feedback consistently conforms to feedback sequence 1 (See section 4.1), in which IFAs contained relevant information preceding or following DFAs. The presence of feedback sequence 1 suggests the way she used the IFA as a mediational tool to make sense of the DFA.

Nadia described her feedback style in the interview, emphasizing her effort in making the problematic areas clear to the writer and explicating what these errors were about. She stated, "...but just pinpointing exactly where they made the mistake and just telling them giving them the idea what the mistake they deal with ...Is it is it a noun? Is it a verb? Is it is it a missing preposition or whatever? ...” Nadia's self description of her feedback indicates her guiding style throughout the AOWT.

Figure 12: Frequency of FA Incorporation by Jing



With Nadia's clear direction and rich information, Jing accepted most of the feedback on fluency, grammar, content, and writing convention. However, it is worth noting that Jing sometimes only partially or did not incorporate the feedback on content for his summary assignment. In Jing's second draft of summary, he wrote "*for example, you can hear English in pop songs in Tokyo or an Icelandic sings in it in Bjork.*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia). Nadia corrected his misunderstanding of the original passage and asked him to revise accordingly, as shown in excerpt 9:

#### Excerpt 9: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback to Jing's Summary

*I know it was a bit confusing when reading this part of the passage, but they were trying to convey that the **name** of the singer is Bjork who is also from Iceland. Using this information, please rephrase this part of your sentence.*

Jing did not understand Nadia's comment here, and revised in a wrong way. His incorrect summary of the given information can be seen in his final product: "*for example, you can hear English in pop songs in Tokyo or an Icelandic singer sings in it.*" As Jing only replaced the name "Bjork" with the pronoun "it", he seemed to understand that Nadia pointed out his errors but could not understand the instruction in her feedback. His incomprehension of Nadia's comment

impeded a successful revision. The finding corresponded with the interview data where Jing perceived his inability comprehending Nadia's feedback due to his low English proficiency and prevented him from understanding Nadia's "native speaker usage". Jing stated:

*I felt that sometimes, I felt, however sometimes their usage is somewhat different from ours, and I don't quite understand her explanation to the question. ...I sometimes felt the English we learned is simple, and she is a native speaker. I didn't quite get what she meant or her responses. I sometimes had to ask my instructor to confirm my guess of what my tutor meant. I couldn't get what she meant quickly ...*

(Interview, May 25, 2012)

An example showing Jing's zero incorporation of given feedback can be seen in his biodata. In the second draft of his biodata, Jing wrote about the project he has recently focused on, on which Nadia comment as in excerpt 10:

**Excerpt 10: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback to Jing's Biodata**

*I think your explanation here is great; short and to the point! Great work! Now you may want to brag a little on yourself here by including any accomplishments or special qualifications you have. Publications, seminars, etc.*

Jing did not incorporate the comment on his project. It seemed that Jing hesitated because he knew what he wanted to convey and confident about what to include in his own biodata. The nature of the writing assignment seemed to affect his decision of taking the given feedback or not and his confidence in the writing content, as Jing recalled in the interview:

*She did reply to me saying I should add some details [in my biodata], I think she replied to me like that...because she asked me what my research was about. Since I major in business, I don't think research is the most important thing for me, and I don't think that is an important point. To me, I think maybe writing an autobiography or a resume would be more helpful for me.*

(Interview, May 25, 2012)

Despite the occasional skip of the suggestions due to personal reasons, Jing seemed to be satisfied with all of the feedback and suggestions, accepting them in all aspects. Jing was like a loyal follower, trying his best making the changes as guided. In the interview, he explained that "yeah, it's like an inclination, feeling that native speakers should know better how to write these, so it's easy that I completely took what was suggested...Perhaps 80% of the feedback was

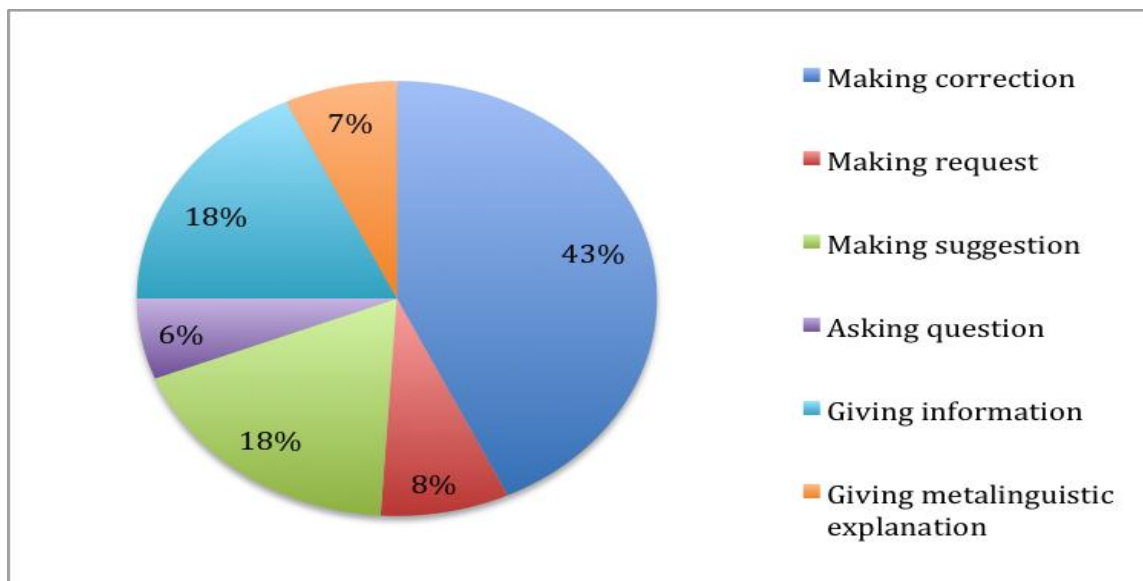
*accepted, and for 20% of them, like in the summary, I double checked with my teacher ...”*

(Interview, May 25, 2012). Jing mentioned three times in the interview that he would always trust the feedback from English dominant speakers.

#### **4.4.3 Tutor Julio & Writer Yee: A Commander & A Negotiator.**

Julio sounded the most directive in his feedback among the tutors. Like a commander, he tended to make direct requests to Yee with a few criticisms of her writing. Though sometimes asking Yee questions in his feedback, Julio used imperatives more often than the other two tutors, making him sound more authoritative. Yee, a female graduate student and major in business, was a negotiator. Using graphs, she creatively negotiated for meaning when she found that Julio misunderstood her intended meaning in her writing.

Figure 13: Percentage of Feedback Act Use by Julio



As Figure 13 shows, Julio performed the act of “Making corrections” (43%) way more than the other acts. He also performed quite a number of “Making suggestions” (18%) and “Giving information” (18%). Like a commander who always gives orders, Julio gave more DFAs, occasionally applying IFAs. The IFA Julio used the most was “Giving information”,

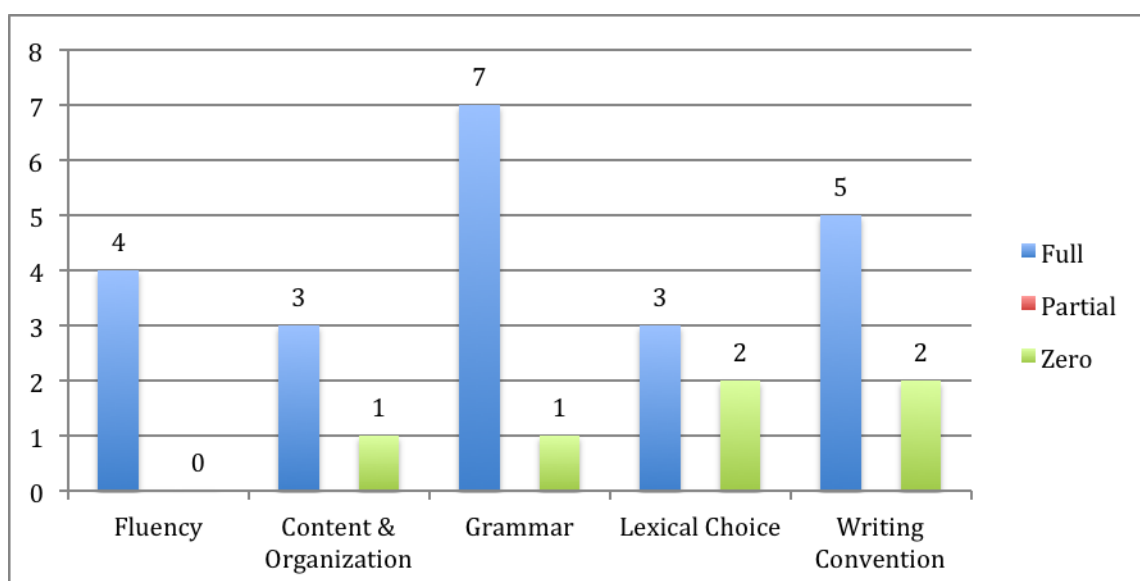
which was mostly used to give Yee a sense of audience from his English dominant speaker's point of view. For example, in excerpt 11, Julio not only explained the rule for describing years in English, but also informed Yee of the common use by American English writers. Even in the last sentence where he intended to give Yee a suggested use, Julio went from English dominant speaker's viewpoint by using the plural pronoun "we".

### Excerpt 11: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Julio

*Whenever stating years, English uses "the" because you are talking about THE (YEAR(S)IN) 1300. Americans like to shorten things, therefore, the "s" in years was added to the number and "years in" was omitted. So, we say the 1300's.*

Other examples that show Julio's typical commanding style include "try not to begin a sentence with but; you can use 'Although' or 'on the other hand' or 'in contrast'" (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Julio) and a short command: "take out!" (4<sup>th</sup> Feedback by Julio) asking Yee to take out the citation in her summary. In the interview, Julio acknowledged his directive feedback style, as he said "because I tend to be, tend to be uh xxx direct. Just tend to be direct. ... Well just me, just being direct. Let me see what this is wrong." (Interview, May 2, 2012).

Figure 14: Frequency of FA Incorporation by Yee



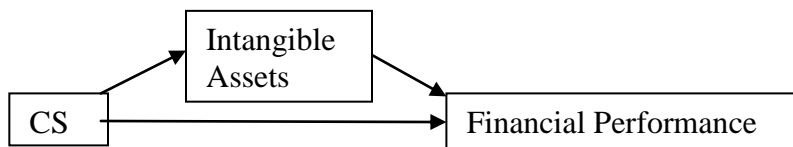


As to Yee's incorporation, Figure 14 revealed that Yee incorporated completely most of the written feedback by Julio. There was no partial incorporation, but a few zero incorporation on content, grammar, lexical choice, and writing convention. The skip of some given feedback tended to occur when Yee had no idea how to revise based on the suggestion or did not sense the importance of the feedback, particularly in the content and conventions of the summary genre. For instance, in the second draft of Yee's summary, Julio commented on her citation of the original passage: "*this statement is directly from the article...How can you say this in your own words?*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Julio). It seemed that Yee did not understand the significance of the citation problem in academic writing, so she kept the problematic statement in her final product, leading to Zero incorporation. When asking about her incorporation, Yee recalled that she had been hesitant about the feedback on grammar rather than other areas, saying in the interview: "*yeah, it seemed that we had those moments when I was not sure about his feedback...and don't think the grammar I used was wrong.*" (Interview, May 26, 2012). Her focus on grammar impeded attention to the feedback to other aspects of her writing that should be equally important in English academic writing.

Another case of zero incorporation from Yee occurred when Julio misunderstood what Yee intended to express in her biodata. It was probably due to the fact that Julio did not share Yee's profession, Julio gave the comment that misrepresented Yee's ideas in her biodata. In the first draft of her biodata, Yee wrote about her research project: "*she not only discusses the direct effect but tests the mediate effect by intangible asset.*" (1<sup>st</sup> Draft of Yee's Biodata). Julio then commented: "*do you mean immediate such as in right now?*" (1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Julio). Yee felt she should have made sense to Julio regarding what intended to mean, thus drawing a model of her research and providing explanations in the uptake document, shown in excerpt 12:

### Excerpt 12: Yee's Response in Uptake Document for Biodata

*About the last annotation, the means of the word "mediate" is not "immediate".  
I want to describe my research model showed as following:*



*I rewrite that sentence, could you give some suggestions about this?*

As Julio admitted his lack of knowledge in Yee's profession in the forum message (See excerpt 13), he also confirmed to Yee that her original sentence should work fine and offered her an option she can choose to skip.

### Excerpt 13: Forum Message by Julio on 4/3/2012

*I took a look at your Uptake form and I saw the model...I'm not familiar with the model terminology but overall, the sentence you had was completely fine. I did though, offer a suggestion and you can choose to take it or not. I believe that the suggestion is what you are trying to say with the model picture you sent me.*

Yee also recalled the negotiation in the interview, explaining the reason why she used the graphs to communicate her meanings to Julio was her insufficient English proficiency. Yee stated:

*One point is that I didn't know how to express myself, so maybe I didn't answer his questions in our communication. I might not be very good at explaining what I want to do*  
...  
(Interview, May 26, 2012).

Yee further admitted that with the graph illustration, she hoped to clarify her meaning for Julio so he could better help her compose what she meant to say. Yee's negotiation not only explained the reasons behind her zero incorporation but also demonstrated writer's active participation in the tutorial process would lead to more satisfaction on both parties.

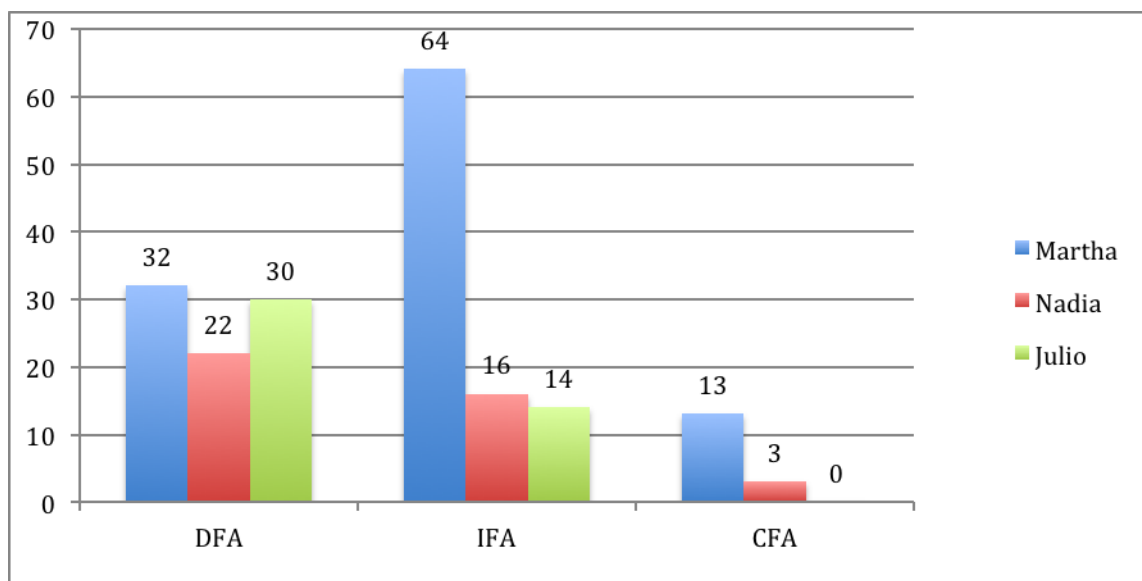
#### 4.4.4 Cross-case Comparison among Dyads

Table 11 and Figure 15 reveals the use of DFA, IFA, and CFA by Martha, Nadia, and Julio in the tutorial process to show the cross-case comparison.

Table 11: Frequency and Percentage of Feedback Act Use by Tutors in the AOWT

	DFA	IFA	CFA	Total FA
<b>Martha</b>	32 (29%)	64 (59%)	13 (12%)	109 (100%)
<b>Nadia</b>	22 (54%)	16 (39%)	3 (7%)	41 (100%)
<b>Julio</b>	30 (68%)	14 (32%)	0 (0%)	44 (100%)

Figure 15: Feedback Act Use by Tutors in the AOWT



The feedback act use further revealed different styles of the three tutors in mediating the revising process in the AOWT. Feedback acts by Martha outnumbered those by Nadia and Julio. Martha performed a total of 109 feedback acts, far more than Nadia's (41 feedback acts) and Julio's (44 feedback acts). The data explains the length of Martha's feedback, which is often much longer than those by Nadia and Julio. Martha also gave the most IFAs (64) and CFAs (13) in the tutorial, while Nadia and Julio performed similar amount of IFAs and CFAs. Martha's preference for IFA use could be seen in the percentage: 59% of her written feedback contained

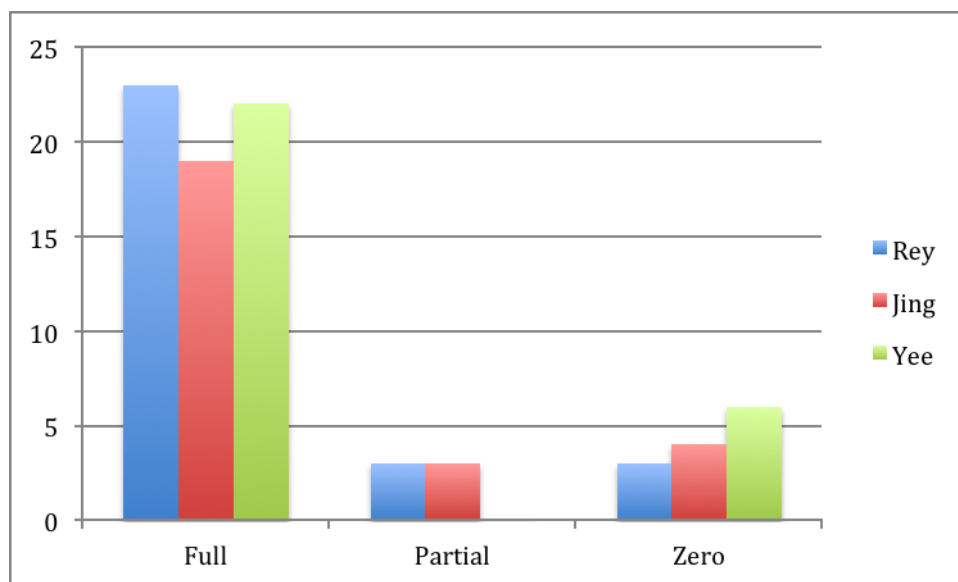
IFAs, even more than the DFAs (29% of her feedback). She also gave many more CFAs compared to Nadia and Julio. Twelve percent of her written feedback included CFAs. The only commonality among the tutors was that they gave the similar amount of DFAs, which conforms to the finding noted earlier that all the three tutors committed to making corrections, requests, and suggestions in the AOWT.

Following the cross-case comparison in feedback act use by tutors, the following compares the feedback act incorporation by writers throughout the tutorial process. Table 12 and Figure 16 illustrate the frequency of incorporation by Rey, Jing, and Yee relating to the feedback from their tutors, Martha, Nadia, and Julio. The data about incorporation shows how the L2 writers used the feedback from their tutors.

Table 12: Frequency and Percentage of Feedback Incorporation by Writers in the AOWT

	<b>Full</b>	<b>Partial</b>	<b>Zero</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Rey</b>	23 (80%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	29 (100%)
<b>Jing</b>	19 (73%)	3 (12%)	4 (15%)	26 (100%)
<b>Yee</b>	22 (79%)	0 (0%)	6 (21%)	28 (100%)

Figure 16: Feedback Incorporation by Writers in the AOWT



As section 4.2 presented, all the three writers incorporated most of the given written feedback, which can be seen in the full incorporation with the percentages higher than 70%. One possible reason may be their trust of the suggestions given by their tutors who they perceived as “English native speakers”, which was explicitly expressed in the interviews by Jing. For example, when asked about his experience consulting with teachers/tutors in Taiwan, Jing revealed that he would always prefer to obtain feedback from English dominant teachers/tutors, even after he accepted all of the feedback from his Taiwanese teachers/tutors. He commented: “*actually I would take most of the feedback from my Taiwanese teacher/tutor, but I would give my revisions to [English] native speakers ... The last review would be done by native speakers.*” (Interview, May 25, 2012).

The three writers differ when they partially or did not incorporate the written feedback. Note that though Rey fully incorporated 80% of the time, the highest percentage of full incorporation among the writers, Rey still demonstrated 3 cases of partial and zero incorporation

respectively. As Martha was good at using a wide variety of feedback acts to mediate the revising process and to open a space for negotiation, particularly by IFAs and CFAs, Rey was thus encouraged to think independently and negotiate for meaning. As Rey commented on Martha's feedback, he said: "*I really like that she guided me well in the thinking behind language logic.*" (Interview, Jun. 21, 2012). On the contrast, Julio sounded more authoritatively with less IFAs and CFAs, possibly creating much less negotiation opportunities for Yee. This may be related to the fact that Yee had the highest percentage of zero incorporation.

Table 12 and Figure 16 shows that partial incorporation was quite frequent in Rey's and Jing's cases (10% and 12% respectively). It is worth noting that the partial incorporation occurred quite often in the biodata assignment. Jing exclusively had partial incorporation when Nadia commented on the content of his biodata, particularly on the research he was conducting. This again aligns with the finding in Section 4.2 that writers' incorporation is also related to the feedback content. Having more familiarity with the biodata content, Jing may feel hesitant to apply the feedback given by one not sharing the knowledge of what he was writing about. In the case of Rey, personal preference accounted for a major reason for his partial incorporation. As described earlier (in Section 4.2), with Martha's permission to be flexible, Rey chose his original use of the past participle form, "communicated", to describe how English language can be a communication tool. Rey confirmed in the interview: "*she did tell me both are fine, but I personally preferred 'communicated', so I still used it.*" (Interview, Jun. 21, 2012).

To conclude, Rey, Jing, and Yee all welcomed and trusted most of the feedback given by their tutors, which was reflected in the highest percentage falling in full incorporation of "Grammar" and "Writing convention". However, "Grammar" and "Lexical choice" constituted the most parts for partial and zero incorporation among writers, which seemed to be somewhat

contradictory particularly for “Grammar”. Interpreting data from interviews, I hypothesize three reasons for less incorporation in their writing. First, all the three tutors committed to making corrections or suggestions to the writer’s language use, leading to skewed attention to the grammatical and lexical issues in their writing. Next, when the lexical and grammatical issues were related to the content of their writing, the L2 writers may opt to believe that their choice was more appropriate for their profession or chose their personal preferences. This finding is important because how the L2 writers perceived the given feedback in helping them express themselves is important for understanding whether the given feedback is “appropriate” for them. Last, they did not completely understand the feedback; incorrectly made the revision and ignored the feedback completely, leading to partial or zero incorporation. In addition to the possible reasons for partial and zero incorporation, one possible important factor may be the change of tutors’ feedback style and delivery method, which will be discussed in section 4.5.

#### ***4.5 Tutors’ Change in Feedback Practices***

In this section I discuss findings addressing **RQ 2 (a): How does each tutor’s feedback change overtime in terms of FAs?** and **RQ 2 (b): How do tutors perceive their own FA patterns changing over time? Why?** I observed the three tutors’ growth and professional development by analyzing changes in their feedback, and drawing upon data from their interviews, self-reflections, and teacher education class discussions. Overall, the three tutors showed changes in their feedback act use. Data shows that the quantity of IFA and CFA increased after their 1<sup>st</sup> feedback to the writers. Such changes occurred particularly after an intervention<sup>6</sup> in the teacher education course where the AOWT was implemented. I also

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<sup>6</sup> The intervention implemented refer to the class discussions where they discussed several feedback examples in the tutorial and where they were introduced the sociocultural concepts of language learning by the researcher who was the teaching assistant.

observed changes in the sequential order of feedback acts, which shows that tutors became more sensitive of the ways to communicate their feedback (e.g. asking questions, and initiating dialogue), while also offering opportunities for more participation, negotiation and expanded learning. I will show how tutors changed their feedback in different ways in response to their writers.

#### 4.5.1 Tutor Martha's Change

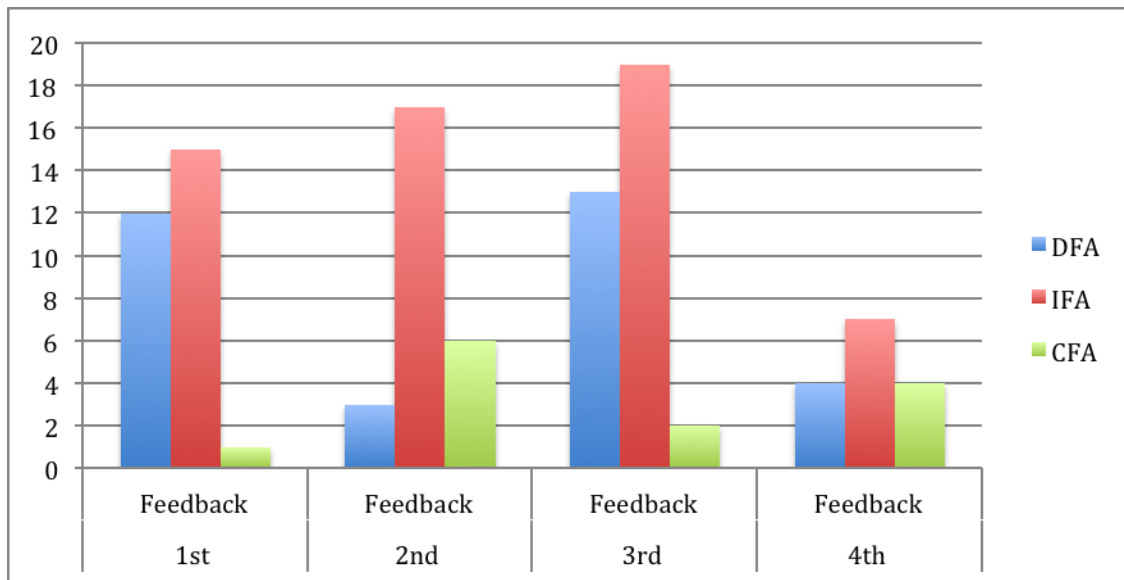
Martha constantly used a wide range of IFAs to mediate the process. Within her feedback, despite the most variety of feedback acts, Martha consistently performed the IFAs throughout the rounds of feedback to support her DFAs and to facilitate writers' understanding (See cross-case comparison in section 4.5.4). Table 13 shows that Martha gave 15, 17, and 19 of the IFAs from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback. The only drop of the IFA percentage was in her 4<sup>th</sup> feedback, where Martha was satisfied with Rey's revision, thus making fewer suggestions. Figure 17 shows the frequency change of Martha's IFA and CFA use across the four rounds, demonstrating her consistent IFA and increasing CFA in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback.

Table 13: Frequency of Martha's Feedback Acts in the AOWT

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total
	Feedb ack	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	
<b>D F A</b>	12	3	13	4	32
<b>IF A</b>	15	17	19	7	58
<b>C F</b>	1	6	2	4	13



Figure 17: Frequency Change of Martha's Feedback Acts in the AOWT



Martha's reflection in the interview on her feedback style confirmed the descriptive finding, as she said, *"I guess I tried to be a little more, like you said, saying a better word would be and say more like, let me tell you why this happened, more explain the rules behind things, but I still I still felt that they needed some guidance ..., and I always, one thing I try to keep the same is I learn best by example ... I don't learn a rule and not understand it unless somebody said 'Here's how it works, this this and this, and I would look at it myself for a long time and said 'Oh you put that word over here now, you put the question mark at the end, you know? ... That's how I would figure it out'".* Martha explained that her own learning style affected her teaching: *"I think that would just automatically be my style... Yeah, it's the way I learn and I think a lot of people learn that way."* (Interview, May 6, 2014). Her rationale for IFA use was also found in the expectation sheet she filled in before the launch of the AOWT—*"if I notice patterns of writing that needs correction, I will make suggestions + rationale."* (Tutors' Expectation Sheet, Feb. 21, 2012).

Despite her status as a pre-service ESOL teacher without any formal teaching experience, Martha was able to form theories and philosophy in the AOWT that may inform her future teaching. In the interview, she shared a story from her father, who was a physician in a hospital and had to teach many doctors and she explained that he strategically asked residency doctors to repeat the procedures he explained as a way of checking for their understanding. Martha explained that she adopted a similar approach in tutoring. She explained her approach in the interview, *“I think I would take the same approach, saying you know, ‘I would suggest this. You know what I mean? Yes. Okay, tell me then. How are you going to rephrase it?’”* (Interview, May 6, 2014).

The obvious change of Martha lies in her increasing use of CFA. Martha’s use of CFA considerably increased in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback (n=6, compared to n=1 in the 1<sup>st</sup> feedback); the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback and 4<sup>th</sup> feedback also manifested emerging CFAs (n=2 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback and n=4 in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback). This increase of CFAs was actually found to be related to Martha’s growing sense of how to better communicate with L2 writers during online tutoring. Martha reflected on her feedback use when she said in the interview that she attempted to sound more polite and conversational in her written feedback particularly due to the nature of the asynchronous mode of communication. Martha’s explanation of how she dealt with the potential communication problem on the AOWT manifested her growth in developing the ability to make sense of her asynchronous written feedback to her tutees, as she said, *“right. I really, I would not want to be abrupt, or have someone perceive it as rude, which can happen on the Internet situation. ... Because you read it at whatever mood you’re feeling at the time. You think, ‘God, she’s a bitch!’ (Both laughed loudly). You know, or you think, ‘Isn’t she nice!’ You know? And especially young people, tend just like to jump at a wrong conclusion with email or something that goes around ‘How dare she tell that to me?’ and somebody else might read it and say ‘What’s the*

*problem?’ You know? So I don’t know how they are going to interpret it and I want to make sure they understand that I go overboard to make it clear, and I try to do it in a nice and friendly way, and not a way that will anger them or hurt their feelings or something.”* (Interview, May 6, 2014). Another source of evidence regarding her perceived growth was the self reflection conducted after the teacher education course intervention, in which Martha confirmed her learning about communication with L2 writers. She wrote, *“one thing I found difficult about the feedback process was having to put it in writing—in an email, in a tactful way, because I didn’t want to hurt someone’s feelings or make them angry. If this were being done in person, I would know the personality of the writer better and I would know how gentle or harsh to be in the criticism. Also, I would know if they appreciate a sense of humor so I would know if I could joke around a little bit. Sometimes, depending on your mood or attitude, when you read comments about your work you can read into it and make interpretations that were not intended. I didn’t want to say anything that could be taken in a wrong way.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012).

The increase of CFAs may have been further related to Martha’s developing sense of cross-cultural communication with her tutees during the AOWT. When asked the question “What did you learn about cross-cultural communication in the AOWT?” in the 2<sup>nd</sup> self-reflection at the end of AOWT, Martha even expanded her understanding of the communication problem from the nature of asynchronous tutorial to her tutees’ culture, self-reflecting as such: *“Sometimes they don’t really understand the first time, and it is necessary to make suggestions again in a different way until they ‘get it’; because of their culture, they may be too polite to say that they don’t understand, thinking it reflects on the teacher’s ability’ meanwhile, I’d like to find out if they really understand (or just being ‘polite’) so that I know if I should move forward or go over the same material again.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 17, 2012). Martha’s concerns about

writer's understanding were again manifested in her forum message to Rey, in which she attempted to make explicit her rationale of the written feedback and check for his understanding.

To this end, Martha extensively used CFAs, as can be seen in excerpt 14:

**Excerpt 14: Forum Message by Martha on 3/19/2012**

*I have attached a draft with my comments. I'm, not sure you will understand everything I am trying to say, because I may not have been completely clear [CFA - Apologizing]. I hope you will e-mail me if you have specific questions [CFA - Wishing]. I tried to give you some ideas that you can use, instead of just doing the corrections for you [IFA – Giving information]. After you have revised your biodata, I'll check it again if you want [CFA - Promising].*

To conclude, the change in feedback acts observed over four rounds of feedback demonstrated her growing awareness of how to better respond to Rey's writing and how to communicate ideas though use of IFAs and CFAs in her feedback. I argue that Martha's experiences and raised awareness of online cross-cultural communication with English language learners contribute to her knowledge base as a future ESOL teacher particularly related to the asynchronous written context.

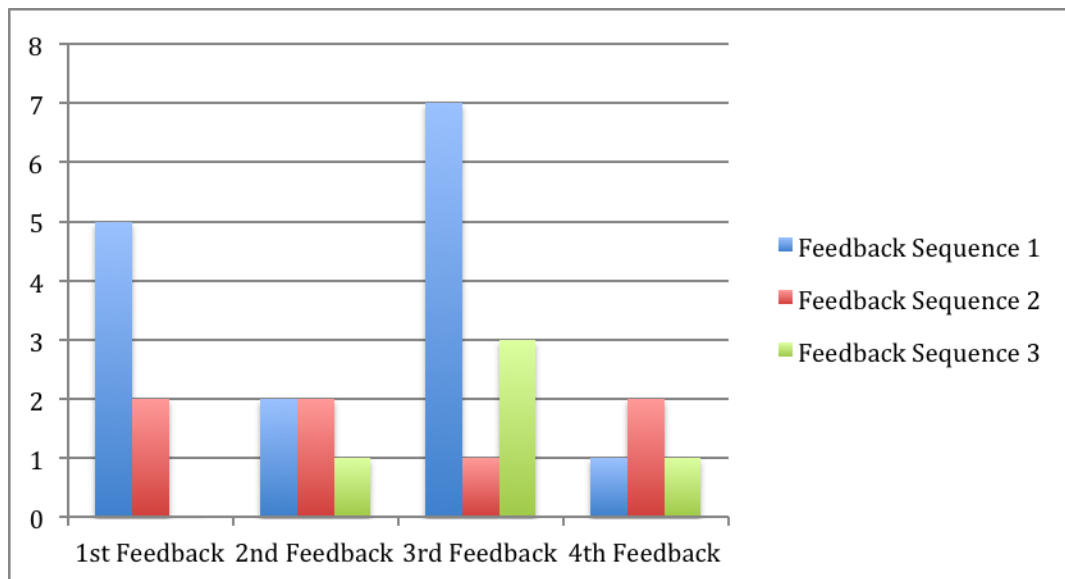
As described in section 4.1.4, there were three feedback sequences found among the three tutors' feedback in the AOWT: (1) IFAs or CFAs preceded or followed DFAs; (2) CFAs were inserted between IFAs and DFAs; (3) IFAs and CFAs stood alone without DFAs adjacent to them. The presence of the three sequences indicates the changes in Martha's feedback approach. Figure 18 demonstrates her change of feedback sequence in her 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback.

Table 14: Frequency of Feedback Sequence in Martha's Feedback Acts in the AOWT

1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-------

	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	
<b>Feedback Sequence 1</b>	5	2	7	1	15
<b>Feedback Sequence 2</b>	2	2	1	2	7
<b>Feedback Sequence 3</b>	0	1	3	1	5
<b>Total</b>	7	5	11	4	27

Figure 18: Frequency of Each Feedback Sequence in Martha's Feedback Acts



Sequence 3 ranked the highest in terms of percentage throughout the feedback rounds. This suggests that Martha learned to use the IFAs and CFAs more strategically to meet Rey's needs, performing the acts of suggestion and correction making without using DFAs, since sequence 3

contains only the IFAs and CFAs, substituting the DFAs to perform the acts of making suggestions/corrections. Meanwhile, the IFAs could provide relevant explanation in the feedback to facilitate understanding, as Martha also emphasized tutee's understanding of her feedback. The delicate change of her strategic use of IFAs was again demonstrated in the way that she used sequence 1 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback (n=7), more than her 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback (n=5 and n=2 respectively). Martha also learned to use sequence 3 to facilitate Rey's thinking about lexical differences. An example of her use of sequence 3 can be seen in excerpt 15, in which the last IFA served not only as a question but also as a suggestion of lexical use to Rey:

**Excerpt 15: 3<sup>rd</sup> Feedback to Rey's Summary**

*When your airplane lands, you descend.* [IFA – Giving metalinguistic explanation] *When you go come down from the top of a mountain, you descend.* [IFA – Giving metalinguistic explanation]. *When numbers, proportions, or populations go down, they “decrease”* [IFA – Giving metalinguistic explanation]. *Do you think “descending” or “decreasing” works better here?* [IFA – Asking question – with the pragmatic meaning of making suggestions]

As Martha explained in the interview, the strategic use of IFAs were meant to help her tutee understand the lexical differences (between “decrease” and “descent”) that may have been important to their writing and learning English language. She stated, “*if it's something that, it's so trivial, you know, you probably made a typo here, you need to write this instead or something that, you know, it's probably that would never come up again in your life, just, you know, correct it, say this word instead. But otherwise, I always try to say ‘That's not quite the right word for that. That word means this and that and you might want to think about some other words that fits better there.’*” (Interview, May 6, 2012). Martha's strategic use of feedback acts also corresponds to what she said in the teacher education course intervention, where the tutors were asked to explain their understanding of process writing. Martha commented on the process approach in teaching writing, and acknowledged mutual growth and development between her

and her tutee in the tutorial process—“*process rather than product, occurs as you do it, not after, also it’s a process to teach students in Taiwan (and tutors) learned how to write/instruct in the course of revision; ...*” (Teacher Education Course Worksheet, Apr. 10, 2012).

In addition to feedback change, Martha also reflected on her learning about L2 writers, online tutoring, and English grammar. As she was preparing to teach ESOL in the U.S., Martha showed enthusiasm learning about English language learners from various backgrounds. When answering the question about what she expected to learn before the launch of the AOWT, Martha put, “*I hope to recognize common writing patterns in Chinese students that don’t fit the style of English so that when I am an ESOL teacher I can anticipate the problems students will have.*” (Expectation Sheet, Feb. 21, 2012). In the interview after the conclusion of AOWT in response to the question (Did you gain anything from participating in this online writing tutorial?), Martha expressed a greater understanding of L2 writing patterns and raised cultural awareness, when she suggested that Rey’s word choice reflected Chinese cultural norms. Martha explained, “*things like, you know, I think it’s kinda like a cultural thing of you feeling that you are a member of... part of .... You know in China, everybody is one big, you know, for the country all together. And here is more individualism where .... I am not part of the University of Maryland, I am me, you know. ... And I think that influences the way they think about how they are involved in the writing activity.*” (Interview, May 6, 2012).

Martha also explained that the online tutoring experience, offered an important learning experience because it was one of her first teaching interactions with “real English language learners” which gave her concrete understanding of potential language learner problems. As she stated, “*because as a beginning teacher, I don’t have a class, you know, I don’t (Researcher: Oh yeah you mentioned that) have any students, so it’s very good to have real students that I can*

*really interact with and understand their problems instead of these hypothetical things.”*

(Interview, May 6, 2012). As Martha understood the AOWT as a “real teaching activity” and was reflective of the challenges and constraints of online learning, she said, *“I think sometimes it’s easier face-to-face because you can judge a person’s reaction. Even though a Chinese person, no offense, like they say, ‘Yes, teacher. Yes, teacher. I understand, teacher’, and then you turn to say, ‘Tell me.’ They say, ‘I don’t know, teacher.’”* (Interview, May 6, 2012). Martha also showed increased attention to learning and awareness of the challenges of mediating this learning by teaching online in her final reflection assignment. *“It is difficult to judge someone’s learning because of not being there in person to see how they react.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 17, 2012). In the quote below (from her interview), Martha demonstrated her developing knowledge as a language teacher (Teaching Works, 2013). She was able to (1) diagnose her student’s problem, (2) consider his potential for further development, (3) critically reflect on her teaching/feedback, and (4) considered bringing in sources beyond the teacher to increase learning opportunities. *“...He has the problem with that [article use]. He should go, go further, you know? I could only do so much, repeat and reiterate the same thing over and over, and I don’t like it. Maybe he would learn it from more than one source, and he might say ‘I guess she’s right!’”* (Interview, May 6, 2012).

The last area in which Martha perceived an opportunity for learning was her improved explanation (or metalinguistic knowledge) of English grammar. Responding to the question that asked what she knew about English she wrote, *“I believe I am quite proficient with Standard American English grammar even though I don’t know the names for all the tenses and moods and voices and parts of speech.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 17, 2012). With the experience on the AOWT, Martha explored websites that contain English grammar lessons and explained how



these resources offered her meta-language to articulate her knowledge of English grammar.

*“There are tons of web-sites where I can look up the name of verb forms or parts of speech.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 17, 2012). In the interview, she further explained how she expanded her knowledge of English grammar beyond her intuition of knowing how to use the language. *“They [L2 writers] learned a lot of rule things. This is the rule to this and this is the rule to that, and I learned, I had to go stuff of ‘Oh when do you use “have been” and when do you use “I’ve been” you know or whatever. And I have to look things up and learn the real technical, you know, oh you wanna use the past participle thing. I know what those things are called, I know how to say it, you know? So I had to look up the rules behind why ... That reminded me if they might, could have been just Google it. One wanted to learn about ‘at’ and ‘a’ and ‘the’. There are thousands of videos on Youtube, you know, so many things to teach these.”* (Interview, May 6, 2012).

#### 4.5.2 Tutor Nadia’s Change

Table 15: Frequency of Nadia's Feedback Act in the AOWT

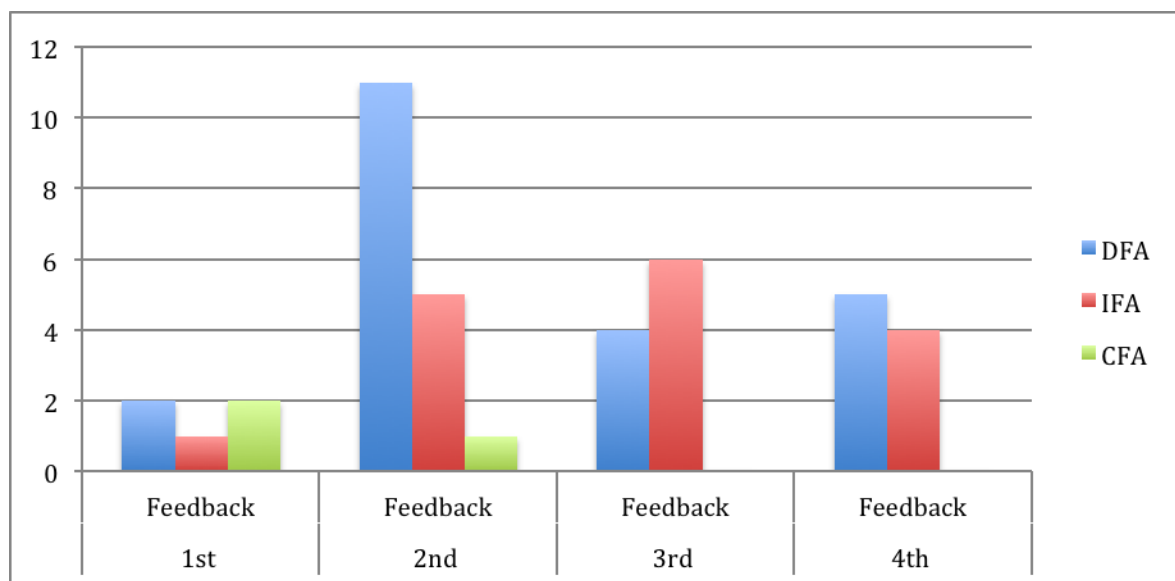
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total
	Feedb ack	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	
<b>D F A</b>	2	11	4	5	22
<b>IF A</b>	1	5	6	4	16
<b>C F A</b>	2	1	0	0	3

Table 15 presents the frequency of Nadia's feedback acts, in which Nadia demonstrated great change in the use of DFA and IFA. A great increase in the amount of IFA was found in Nadia's 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback (n=1 in the 1<sup>st</sup> feedback, and n=5 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback); her 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> feedback rounds also showed high usage of IFA (n=6 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback and n=4 in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback). Figure 20 illustrates the increase of IFA in her 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback, which indicates Nadia learned to use IFA as a mediational and communication tool, particularly after the teacher education course intervention. An example can be seen in excerpt 7: *"Consider changing this article to 'a' [DFA – Making suggestions] because the way you are using 'the' here makes it seem like you are the only one in the world to research this topic."* [IFA – Giving information]. The IFA gave information regarding how Nadia perceived Jing's article use in this sentence, hedging and supplementing her DFA "Making suggestions" to Jing. This finding exactly corresponds to what Nadia reflected on her own feedback in the AOWT in her reflection. *"Feedback needs to be clear. It's not enough just to say what is wrong, but an explanation of 'why' is also needed."* (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012). In the interview, Nadia confirmed her change in feedback over time when she said, *"yes, I tried to give more explanations than the first time, than the first time I gave feedback."* She also acknowledged her feedback change and the influence by the intervention in her teacher education course. She said, *"I think after the first time you shared some of the comments and you also gave us examples of different ways we could comment and things that would be helpful, like explaining to them what it might look like from the reader's perspective. I found that too like when it would give sense back to the uptake document until what's helpful for them. One or two of them commented on how they appreciated that me telling them what the other, like another reader would perceive what they would read it, like they have a better understanding. Besides this being right or wrong, they have an*

*understanding of why, so I want to say from the first feedback I probably change thereafter.”*

(Interview, May 8, 2012). Her 1<sup>st</sup> self-reflection in her teacher education also read, *“I have to resist the urge at times to just give the correct phrase.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012). At the end of the AOWT, she demonstrated learning to attend to L2 writers’ understanding. In her final self-reflection, she put, *“it is important to be clear and provide explanations to your responses, otherwise you risk being misunderstood.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 17, 2012).

Figure 19: Frequency Change of Nadia's Feedback Acts in the AOWT



Another interesting change in Nadia’s written feedback was the increase of DFA, which was found to be influenced by her developing belief in process writing. As Table 15 shows, the use of DFAs increased. There was 2 DFAs in the 1<sup>st</sup> feedback, increasing to 11 DFAs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback; from 4 DFAs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback to 5 DFAs in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback. The increase indicates that Nadia purposefully made more suggestions and corrections to the revisions in his second drafts. Such trend is clearly illustrated in Figure 19. The trend was actually reflective of the selective approach she intended to use. In the interview, Nadia explained her rationale of the selective approach in different rounds of feedback as such: *“so I would say in the first round of*

*feedback I would keep it open to suggestions and then in the second ones if things have not changed, I would say, I would still keep my suggestions. I would give them examples of ‘You might want to say’ ...blahblablabla...’* She also revealed that her approach was influenced by the forming concept of process writing. She said, *“I learned that writing is definitely a process, you know, like ...in... for, okay so for one that I don’t know what the assignment was or which they did it, but, so when I was reading their summary or it was either their summary or the biodata, even though I saw like a lot of mistakes, I knew that there would no way of me tackle all of them in the first feedback, so I mainly focused on the main things that need to be changed, and then, then, and then if they need all the corrections we can go back because I feel like it would be way too overwhelming.”* (Interview, May 8, 2012). From practicing the selective approach in various rounds of feedback, Nadia also learned the fact in tutoring L2 writers that *“it is an ongoing task that may take more than one or two rounds of feedback and correction,”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 24, 2012) as she put in her 2<sup>nd</sup> self-reflection at the end of the AOWT.

In addition to the increase of IFAs and DFAs, Nadia also used CFAs more frequently in her forum message to Jing. Especially after the teacher education course intervention where tutors observed a more social and dialogic approach of conducting tutorial through discussing a few examples of feedback, Nadia changed the way she interacted with Jing, and started using more CFAs in the forum messages. Though the descriptive findings in Table 15 do not illustrate the change in forum messages, the following excerpt does.

**Excerpt 16: Forum message by Nadia on 4/9/2012**

*Good Afternoon Jing!*

*I am so happy that you were able to understand my explanations [IFA – Giving personal comments]. This is also a learning experience for me because i have to be able to give clear feedback in a way that is understandable to the person reading it. [IFA – Giving personal comments]*

*I think you did a great job on your summary. It was to the point [CFA - Complimenting] because you took out the things your felt for most important in the passage [IFA – Giving information].*

*one thing i would like for you to work on in including more information on the countries that use English and what they may use it for. [DFA – Making requests]*

*I do hope that the feedback is clear and helpful. [CFA - Wishing] please email me on my personal email if you have any questions about it. Nadia's email address. [CFA - Promising]*

*Have a wonderful week and i am looking forward to your updated summary.*

*All the best, [CFA – Wishing]*

*Nadia*

In the message, Nadia not only concluded and reminded Jing of her major feedback to his summary content, but also included personal comments (e.g., cheering for Jing's improved understanding of her feedback, acknowledgment of her own learning, compliment of Jing's improved writing, and message ending etiquette). In the interview, Nadia confirmed that her interaction with her tutees changed to a more personal type of conversations during the process. She said, *"yeah, I tried to, there was one student, again I don't know which one, but I asked, it was right after ... you know, how things are going, whether it worked, do they have a holiday similar to Easter...Right he told me about the two holidays he had. I wanna to go back and ask what, what did the two holidays mean, like what's the history behind it, but ran out of the time [Nadia laughed]."* (Interview, May 8, 2012).

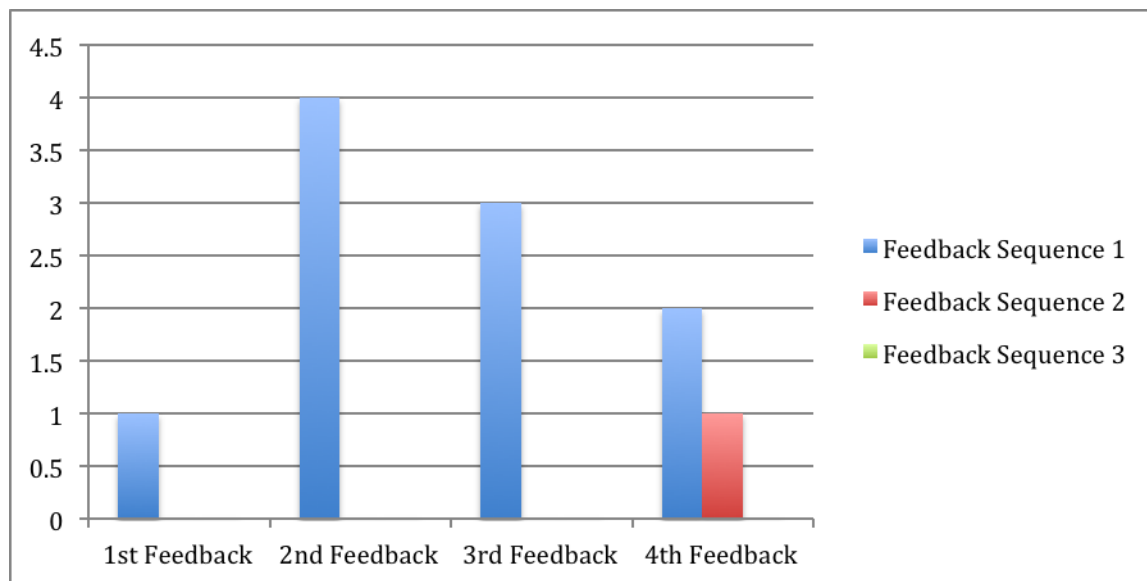
In addition to her increasing use of IFA and DFA, Nadia started extensively applying feedback sequence 1 starting from 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback. Table 16 provides a breakdown by feedback sequence in the four rounds of Nadia's feedback. An obvious change can be seen in the increase of sequence 1 (the 1<sup>st</sup> feedback had 1 case of the sequence 1; 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> feedback had 4, 3, and 2 cases respectively). In the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback, there was one case of sequence 2. As sequence 1 features the use of IFAs as a supplement to the preceding or following DFAs, the increase of sequence 1 suggests that Nadia learned to use IFAs as a mediational tool. Figure 20 also illustrates her sequential pattern change.

Table 16: Frequency of Feedback Sequence in Nadia's Feedback Acts in the AOWT

1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total
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	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	Feedb ack	
<b>Feedback Sequence 1</b>	1	4	3	2	10
<b>Feedback Sequence 2</b>	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Feedback Sequence 3</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	1	4	3	3	11

Figure 20: Sequence in Nadia's Feedback Acts



Nadia also expressed her learning during the online tutoring in terms of two areas: (1) English grammar and (2) academic writing. In terms of online tutoring, Nadia recognized her learning through “practice” and participation, and acknowledged the need for continuing professional growth by saying “*um...I thought I was, I’ve enjoyed doing it. Um, ... I think it’s definitely a, a, an area that I would need to grow in, but it’s really, really rare that we get the*

*practice now because all of us will have to use what we learned, um... [Researcher: in this class?] Right, in this class and also with the activity like, with the tutoring activity.” (Interview, May 8, 2012). Before the launch of the AOWT, Nadia expressed her expectation of her learning as such: “I expect that I will learn hw [how] to put in practice the different theories I have been exposed to. I expect that I will get stuck at some point and need help. I expect to build on my experience as a teacher and foundation as an ESL/EFL teacher.” (Expectation Sheet, Feb. 21, 2012). From the findings presented above regarding her FA use and change, it is evident that Nadia demonstrated growth in practicing theories (such as process writing) she learned in her teacher education courses. Her manipulation of the FAs explained how she learned to practice the selective approach of giving feedback and to use teaching practice derived from the concept of process writing. As she reflected her own performance, she stated, “thus far I have learned that students really do value feedback. It is not important to nitpick on every little thing but on the most important items that would hinder someone’s understanding of the writing.” Her reflection showed that she learned how to use the selective approach (e.g., focus on summary content in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback and grammar in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback) efficiently and meaningfully to Jing. Her growth was also manifested in her reflection regarding what she could have improved in the process. She wrote, “I would like to be more efficient in my feedback for draft 2 identifying explained errors the first time around.” (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012). At the end of the AOWT, she acknowledged mutual growth for her and her tutees. She put, “I knew that It was extremely beneficial to both parties involved. Feedback for both tutor and tutee on teaching and learning respectively.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 24, 2012). Nadia also demonstrated her developing understanding of her Taiwanese tutees’ needs in English learning and writing, as she*

wrote, “*they are still very eager to learn and are “rules driven” appreciate feedback and are very respectful.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 24, 2012).

In terms of English grammar and academic writing, Nadia realized and acknowledged the challenges in teaching and learning English grammar despite the fact that she spoke it as her dominant language. She put, “*it is still a complex thing and it can’t ALL be learned but it is important to be aware of the common features to avoid misunderstandings.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 24, 2012). She however expressed more confidence in her knowledge about English academic writing style after the AOWT. She wrote, “*word choice is important when writing in an academic settings. I guess more formal words are needed to replace the informal ones.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 24, 2012). Her self-reflection and efforts in guiding Jing to attend to the nuts and bolts of English academic writing all led to her teacher learning.

To conclude, the quantity and quality change of Nadia’s feedback act suggests her opportunities for learning how to better teacher writing to L2 learners. Nadia learned to use a more social, personal, and dialogic approach to interact with her tutees, which was seen in the increase of IFAs and CFAs in her feedback and forum messages as well as more feedback sequence 1. She reported that the AOWT allowed her to observe, discover, and unite theory and practice. Her developing knowledge was demonstrated in her increasing use of DFAs in the second round of feedback to each assignment. In the end, Nadia learned to identify the needs and challenges particular for Taiwanese L2 writers in the aspects of English grammar and academic writing.

#### 4.5.3 Tutor Julio’s Change

Table 17: Frequency of Julio's Feedback Acts in the AOWT

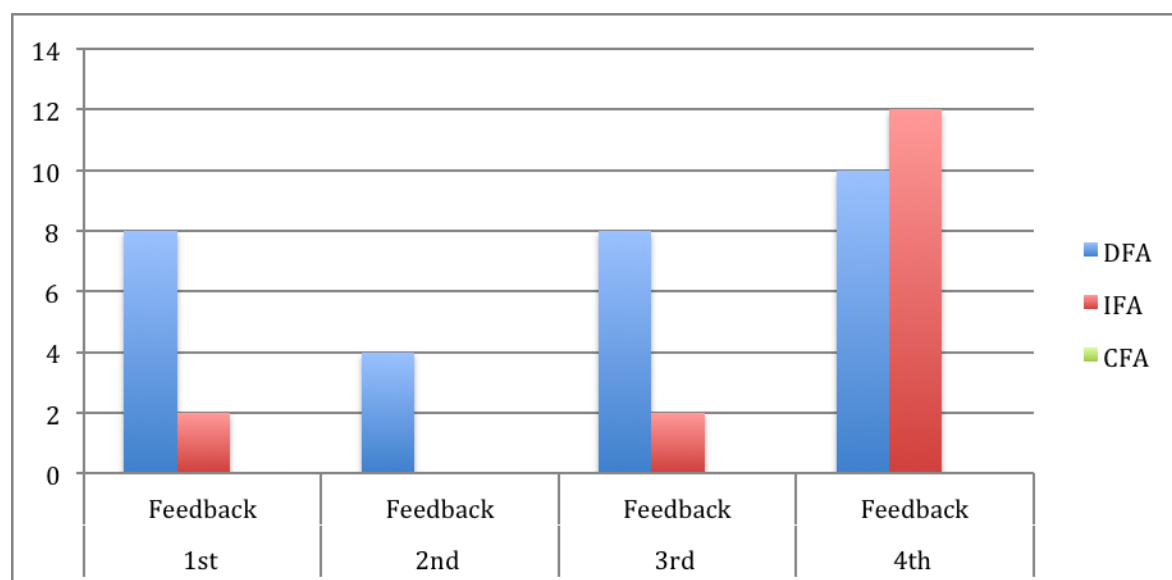
1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Total
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-------



	Feedb ack	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	Feedba ck	
<b>D F A</b>	8	4	8	10	30
<b>IF A</b>	2	0	2	12	16
<b>C F A</b>	0	0	0	0	0

Although Julio sounded the most direct and authoritative among the tutors, he demonstrated drastic change in his IFA use, particularly after the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback, as there was 12 cases of IFA in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback (compared to 2 cases in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback; 0 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback). Figure 21 showcases the apparent change in his IFA use.

Figure 21: Frequency Change of Julio's Feedback Acts in the AOWT



It is worth noting that the change in Julio's feedback lies more in the feedback sequential pattern. Table 18s clearly shows that the sequential patterns appear first in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback (from

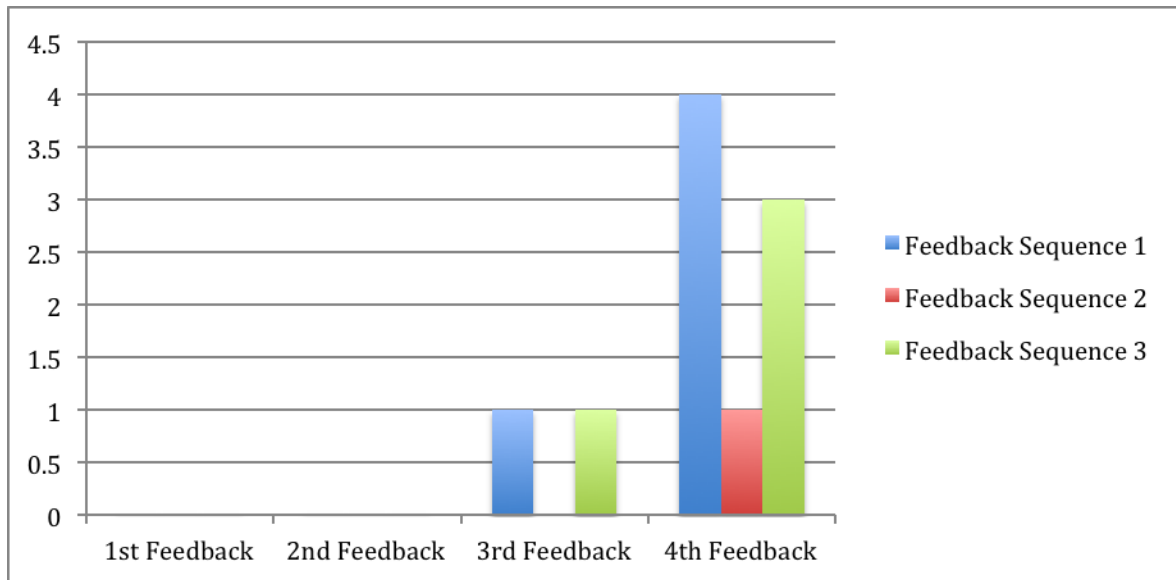
0 in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> feedback to 1 case of sequence 1 and sequence 3 respectively in the 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback); drastically increase in the 4<sup>th</sup> feedback (4 cases of sequence 1, 1 case of sequence 2; 3 cases of sequence 3). Figure 22 show the dramatic change in his sequential patterns.

Table 18: Frequency of Feedback Sequence in Julio's Feedback Acts in the AOWT

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Feedb ack</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Feedb ack</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Feedb ack</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Feedb ack</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Feedback Sequence 1</b>	0 <sup>7</sup>	0	1	4	5
<b>Feedback Sequence 2</b>	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Feedback Sequence 3</b>	0	0	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)

Figure 22: Frequency of Each Feedback Sequence in Julio's Feedback Sequence

<sup>7</sup> Julio directly corrected Yee's writing using track changes in the first two rounds of feedback, resulting in 0% of feedback sequences. He did not provide any written comments.



Julio confirmed his feedback change from more directive approach to more indirect, personal and dialogic approach on the AOWT. Julio recalled the direct approach he initially used, saying in the interview: *“because I tend to be, tend to be uh xxx direct. Just tend to be direct. ... Well just me, just being direct. Let me see what is wrong.”* He recalled that not until the very later stage of the tutorial did he sense the need to change his feedback approach. He confirmed in the interview the drastic change, admitting the use of IFAs that enriched his feedback with more guidance and explanations. He stated, *“so I didn’t want to, I definitely want them to realize that I didn’t want them to have the tutees feel like uh I was telling them this is wrong, and this is what you need to change, and so, and so I feel like I should be more, um, welcoming what their, what they perceived to be, you know, English, something kind of go from there, and gives this kind of HINT to them, try to get on the same page.”* In addition to avoiding the direct feedback that may send a negative message to tutees regarding their ability and writing, Julio further explained his rationale to be avoiding changing his tutees’ writing and empowering them as independent English writers. He said, *“...okay maybe I shouldn’t be this direct, and I should try to help them understand it, so maybe through dialogues, through more questioning. They may be able to understand what I meant. Because one of the things that I realized was, and this is something that I think is very important, too. You know, this is this student’s idea, and so this is how he brought it out. He brought it out for me to go just ‘Take this out and change it’. I feel like ...I feel like making them feel they are incorrect. [Researcher: Oh that made them feel like you are expert?] Experts, tell them that their writing, their expressions, and they are wrong, and that’s*

*not what I meant. That's another reason that I thought changing it to more dialogues."* Julio also revealed that the change of his feedback approach was intended to stimulate more thinking of tutees. He gave an example in the interview about how he guided tutees to think about their summary before revising it. He said, "[Julio read his comments to himself] *I thought I used more dialogues* [silence] *For example here I said 'What you were trying to tell me is this,' and so, almost I suggest, she um should think about what it is they were trying to tell me, instead of telling [her] 'This is not correct. Change it.'*" (Interview, May 2, 2012).

Triangulation of data sources suggests that Julio's feedback change was partly informed and shaped by what he learned in his teacher education courses as well as shaped by his interaction with his tutees. As for his learning in the teacher education program, multiple sources enlightened his tutoring approach. When asked whether the small group discussions and observation of other tutors' feedback led to his feedback change, Julio responded, "*oh they always did.*" though he was not completely sure about the alignment between his change and his Taiwanese tutees' expectation. In the following excerpt from the interview Julio's explained his change in feedback:

Julio: *Well when you showed us that [other tutors' feedback examples], I began to understand, you know, how I, what my, what's the word? My uh, I guess my, the way that I speak, um it's supposed to be the way I speak to tutee. Oh you know I did think about changing it.*

Researcher: *Change to what?*

Julio: *Change to more like this.*

Researcher: *Oh more like dialogues, more like conversations.*

Julio: *But then on the other hand, um the Taiwan students, if that's*

[dialogue-like feedback] *what they are expecting.*

(Interview, May 2, 2012)

Julio explained that another reason for changing his feedback was in response to what he had learned from one of his teacher education course instructors, who had emphasized the self-esteem of language learners. Julio stated, “*Throughout the whole program, I came to a realization. I think Dr. Rosy [pseudonyms] helped me understand this, um, ‘Do not try to bring down the student’s self-esteem by pointing out errors but try to reinforce um what they know through what they already have.’*”

(Interview, May 2, 2012).

In addition, Julio revealed that his feedback change also resulted from his realization of the nature of communication and interaction online. This finding shows that his participation and interaction with the learner contributes and leads to the moment of conceptual change. He commented on the change of his feedback due to the ongoing dynamics between him and his tutee: “*Yeah, well, at this point, this is where, this is where I felt like I was actually understood tutoring better, and I understand what I was trying to do ... [be]cause at this point this is where felt like I was more personal with the student xxx and so that’s why I am saying why after this, I wish I was more so I could um ...*” Julio also commented on the factor of his continuing interaction with the tutee: “*Yeah. I felt that this is where like, ‘Okay, you know, I’m gonna talk to Aaron today, and tell him this is,’ you know. When I got to this point, this is where I felt, okay, I feel comfortable to tell you this way, and I feel you’re comfortable to understand it.*” Julio’s growing awareness of the importance of tutor-tutee interaction and relationship can also be seen in his 2<sup>nd</sup> self-reflection where he commented on his learning regarding the cross-cultural communication with the

Taiwanese L2 writers: *“I learned that I need to be a little more responsive when working with specific cultures because some cultures expect to be told every detail.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 23, 2012).

Concluding the interwoven influence between his learning in the teacher education program and interaction with his tutee on the AOWT, Julio appreciated the use of uptake document, which he considered a useful tool to facilitate ongoing interaction. He commented in the interview: *“Oh yeah, I always thought this [the uptake document] was very nice. It was very interesting to use this uptake document because um, like I said before. I didn’t know, I didn’t know whether the student understood, whether the student didn’t understand what it ... um, it made them more confused or became clear, uh, and with this, uh, I felt like I assume it’s actually through another form not me giving feedback directly, but another form was telling me, okay, ‘I think I still don’t understand this. Could you further elaborate?’ and I used this as a tool, especially when I was giving them feedback for the second draft.”* [Interview, May 2, 2012] Julio further explained the usefulness of uptake document in his communication with Yee. Without the uptake document, he could not have realized Yee’s confusion about article usage, as they could not communicate immediately and simultaneously on the AOWT (due to time difference). In the quote, Julio confirmed that the uptake document became the main space where dialogue occurred: *“When I read that in the uptake document, I was like ‘Okay, let me respond to this and give her some kind of guidance on how to use this term.’ I don’t know if it is linguistically correct but linguistically it sounds correct ... on where she used ‘the’ and where not she used ‘the’, and so that’s why I think this was helpful for me to*

*guide my feedback on the second, on the second draft.” Though regretting the lack of interaction initially, Julio eventually demonstrated his developing awareness of the importance of interaction with tutees as he reflected in the interview: “Yeah, I think toward the end, honestly, toward the end of this whole experience I really started realizing how I could make this much better for the tutee. um, and I didn’t really think of the advantages of the forum and leaving messages and replying. What I think was, tutees were very eager to know what I said, so they would probably check back, um earlier before, before anything could do, and so really, then I realized I should, you know, I should just send the message xxx. I always said in my message in my forum ‘Do you have any questions? Email me.’ Then I realized they didn’t have it.” (Interview, May 2, 2012).*

In addition to his development in terms of giving feedback, Julio perceived the AOWT a valuable experience for him as an inservice English language teacher. He expressed learning more about aspects of online tutoring, L2 writers, English grammar and academic writing. In terms of online tutoring, Julio learned about the different nature between tutoring and teaching. His 1<sup>st</sup> self-reflection read, *“I have learned to focus my attention on a specific student rather than addressing a whole class. Therefore, I feel that my teacher voice is completely different from my tutor ‘voice’. One example has to do with the way that I might explain a certain piece of information.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012). In the interview, Julio further explained his realization of the different kinds of teaching/learning interactions, as a peer tutor in the AOWT. He said, *“so when I’m in my class, um obviously I use my teacher voice. Uh and even though, um... how do I say, uh for example, ‘So today*



*class, we are going to learn about this.’ Okay then I felt, when I was in my teacher voice, something that I’m expecting everyone in the class, everyone in the same level. When I was doing the tutoring, I felt like uh, felt like, I felt like the tutee was right here, and I didn’t have to be like, I didn’t have to be like uh ... Yeah. Not teacher’s voice, cause there’s something I always feel, I always feel that tutoring is more like, more, we’re at the same level.” (Interview, May 2, 2012).*

Julio also demonstrated growth in his understanding of L2 writers. His 2<sup>nd</sup> self-reflection read, *“I have a learned a lot more on the way to tutor L2 writers since there is a slight difference in approach when tutoring any learners.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 23, 2012). Working with L2 writers from Taiwan, he learned that they may *“expect to be corrected on regular basis and expect teachers/tutors to provide all the answers.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 23, 2012). He also explained *“I have a certain confidence in knowing that my tutees might understand any linguistic jargon that I might use. For example, when referring to syntax there are certain things I would say to my tutees that I wouldn’t necessarily say to my students. Clauses, noun phrases, or different tenses.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Self-reflection, Apr. 10, 2012). In the interview Julio also compared the Taiwanese writers and his own students he taught at the community college, and he demonstrated his developing awareness of the diversity among different L2 writers, who might be very different despite their common goal of learning English.

Julio: *Well, my understanding was um, because going into teaching and working where I work now, I have completely different expectations, so I try not to rely on expectations, um because um going into the teaching field where I’m teaching now, um I was expecting a group of students to understand linguistic jargons, and to understand what I’m saying, and it was*

*completely the opposite. Because I work with the immigrant community, and many of them don't have schooling, and so many of them don't understand ....*

Researcher: *The jargons?*

Julio: *Yes!*

Researcher: *And you found the Taiwanese students understand more jargons? Is that what you mean?*

Julio: *YES YES YES. Because when we started the program, and you know, you, you told us this is a group of students who are at the university level and had this much experience studying English writing, so I didn't want to assume that they knew, but I felt like, okay this group yes, they know more.*

(Interview, May 2, 2012)

With his growing understanding of his tutees and his changing tutoring approach, Julio met the goal he set at the beginning of the AOWT—*“I will see what needs and questions the Taiwanese students have and we will work from that information”* (Tutors' Expectation Sheet, Feb. 21, 2012). His realization and change in the tutoring process manifest his professional growth as an L2 writing tutor and teacher.

As for English grammar, Julio was generally confident in his grammar knowledge due to his linguistic background. However, he still acknowledged his own learning of specific English grammar in the AOWT. His 2<sup>nd</sup> self-reflection read, *“one aspect of the English language that I learned has to do with the use of ‘the’ in the English language. I learned a few more aspects of the English language that I did not know before.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 23, 2012). He also became more aware of the nuances of writing for academic purposes. He commented that *“academic writing can be a difficult task to undertake and requires a lot of patience.”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Self-reflection, May 23, 2012).

To conclude, Julio's feedback changed from a directive to a more indirect and dialogic approach in tutoring. He started using more IFAs and feedback sequence 3 from his 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback, as he attempted to avoid changing his tutees' writing, to stimulate their thinking, and to empower them as independent English writers. Julio explained that these conceptual changes were informed by his teacher education courses and ongoing interaction with his tutees in the AOWT. His interactions and explanations in AOWT allowed him to reflect on his grammatical knowledge and allowed him to acquire more meta-language to explain to English grammar to language learners. His realization of the differences between the nature of tutoring and of teaching also led to his feedback change. In the end, Julio perceived the importance of differentiation for individual learners as he learned to attend to the specific needs of his Taiwanese L2 writers.

#### **4.5.4 Cross-case Comparison of Tutors' Growth and Development**

Martha, Nadia, and Julio all perceived the AOWT a great practicum for them to work with English language learners. I have made the case that the changes in their feedback patterns over time is positively linked to their growth and professional development as ESOL teacher candidates. Martha, manifested change in both the quantity and quality of her feedback act use, as she started applying more CFAs in her forum message to Rey and more sequence 1 and 3 from her 3<sup>rd</sup> feedback. Nadia began applying more IFAs in her feedback to supplement the use of DFAs (resulting to more feedback sequence 1) and more CFAs in her forum message to interact with Jing. Julio, though not displaying much change until his 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> feedback, show the most drastic change in his feedback patterns compared to Martha and Nadia. In

contrast to the directive approach at the beginning, Julio began applying more IFAs to guide Yee in revising, but also changed the way he used feedback acts by demonstrating feedback sequence 3 in his 4<sup>th</sup> feedback. Julio also started using more CFAs in the forum messages to interact with Yee.

Despite the different kinds of change in feedback sequences, I made the case that their changes across the AOWT indicate their professional growth. For example, I observed Martha's growth in terms of increasing CFAs I observed Nadia's growth in terms of increasing DFAs and IFAs, and Julio's growth in terms of feedback sequence 3. These findings are important because they shed light on the development of teacher understanding over the AOWT, and make contributions to the literature on the importance of engaging preservice teachers in opportunities to enact practice in their teacher education experiences (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; Peercy, 2014) by demonstrating their behavioral and conceptual changes in the delivery of the feedback practice. Finally, each of the tutors' change in their feedback was positively perceived by the three writers, as they all acknowledged the positive influence on their learning of the English language and academic writing. While Jing and Yee welcomed their tutors' changing feedback style, Rey highly valued the social and guiding feedback he received from Martha.

This chapter has presented my findings to research question 2(a) and 2(b). In the next chapter, I will interpret these findings to discuss how the feedback changes afforded learning opportunities using the Vygotskian sociocultural lens.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings presented in Chapter 4 using a SCT lens. Drawing from sociocultural theory, I have found the following concepts to be helpful to illuminate my findings in opportunities for learning: *ZPD*, *dynamic assessment*, *concept-based instruction*, *linguaging*, and *interpersonal to intrapersonal plane* to explain second language learning. Chapter 5 will also discuss the professional development of the tutors as ESOL teacher candidates.

### ***5.1 Mediated Feedback: Scaffolding within ZPD using Dynamic Assessment, Concept-based Instruction, and Linguaging***

Interpreting tutors' feedback practice and L2 writers' incorporation of this feedback within a sociocultural theoretical framework, I conceptualize feedback acts as a semiotic tool that tutors used to mediate the revising and learning process. Tutors tried to apply feedback acts within the writers' *ZPD* based on what they knew about the L2 writers. Tutors were observed using *dynamic assessment* and adjusted the feedback acts to ensure appropriateness and usefulness of the given feedback. The tutors' mediated feedback practices not only afforded expanded learning opportunities for the L2 writers, but also offered opportunities for tutors to learn more about teaching English language learners.

#### **5.1.1 IFA as a Mediational Tool**

Findings suggest that IFAs were extensively performed as a mediational tool, constantly supporting, explaining, enhancing, or substituting DFAs. Among the three tutors, Martha was the most skillful in performing a wide variety of IFAs for

mediation. Martha's IFA use illuminates how such feedback can expand L2 writers' learning opportunities in the AOWT. As Martha analyzed the problems in Rey's writing and became aware of the relationship between his culture and language choices (e.g., the choices between "member" and "staff" in lab; the prepositions "at" and "in"; the forms "communicated" and "communication") (See excerpt 5), she used what sociocultural theorists termed as *dynamic assessment* (Luria, 1961) to give feedback within Rey's *ZPD* (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Lindz and Gindis (2003), *dynamic assessment* conceptualizes instruction and assessment occurring simultaneously and mediation fostering development in dyadic interaction. Attention to learners' responses to the mediation prompts helped the tutor understand better how to guide writers and the learning will proceed (Valsiner, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Martha's feedback targeted Rey's current ability in understanding semantic differences, and also aimed at his "upper threshold" that helped him move toward his future abilities as an independent writer (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 189). In excerpt 4, Marsha began by using an IFA (i.e., asking Rey a question) as a mediational tool to distinguish the differences between the words "member" and "staff" and to teach Rey the conventional use of them in English, followed by another IFA explaining the lexical differences between "employees in labs" and "staffs have members" (i.e., giving a metalinguistic explanation). The IFAs not only contextualized the following DFA (i.e., making suggestions), but also functioned as scaffolding to allow learning in Rey's *ZPD*. Martha's strategic use of feedback acts spurred Rey's further thinking and encouraged Rey to negotiate for meaning, making him reformulate his thoughts in his uptake document. In one uptake

document, Rey responded to the question: “*What are the parts that you are still unclear about?*” See excerpt 17 below:

#### **Excerpt 17: Rey’s Response in Uptake Document for Biodata**

*1.(For MKS3) As you mentioned, “I would probably not say you were a member of the laboratory “.The staffs and groups have members. However, why laboratory cannot be regard as a group or staffs? I have been studying some researchers in this laboratory. Please kindly advise your opinion. Thanks.*

His question and request for clarity gave clues to Martha that her previous feedback needed to be elaborated. Consequently, she responded to him in the uptake document based on her *dynamic assessment* by providing answers with more turns of IFAs and lengthy metalinguistic explanations along with elaborated definitions and examples (e.g., “*individual in a collection of similar people*”, “*club*” and “*staff*”) to clarify the semantic meanings the words “member”, “staff”, and “lab” imply. To illustrate how English speakers distinguish these words, Martha even gave information regarding how Americans understand these semantic differences. Her constant use of the first person deictic pronoun “we” referring to her and the American perspective (e.g., “*We don’t consider that we are a member of a place or a thing.*”) illustrates that she intended to make explicit the lexical differences through the deixis use. Martha also used underlines to highlight the contrasting lexical uses. See excerpt 18 for details:

#### **Excerpt 18: Marsha’s answer in Rey’s uptake document**

*Tough question! I think it is probably a cultural way of looking at things.* [IFA – Giving personal comments]

***We think that*** when ***we*** are a “member,” ***we*** are one individual in a collection of similar people. [IFA – Giving information]

*A club is made up of members, a staff is made up of members, an organization is made up of members, a group is made up of members, a band is made up of members, etc. They are all groups of individual people (the members.) A laboratory is a physical structure, a place, a building, a job location and is not a group of people. A group of people work there AT that place. .)* [IFA – Giving metalinguistic explanation]

***We don't consider** that **we** are a member of a place or a thing. Rather than saying **we** are a "member of a laboratory" (thing/place), **most Americans would think** of saying "**We** work **AT** the laboratory" (**We** work at the place) or, if **we** are going to use the word "member," **we** say the type of group we are a member of... "**We** work as members of the Laboratory Staff." (**We** are a member of the group that works at the laboratory.)* [IFA – Giving information]  
*Sorry for the long explanation, I hope it helps!* [CFA – Apologizing & Wishing]

Supporting her explanation with cultural references and concrete definitions of words, Martha's IFAs functioned as scaffolding that was appropriate for Rey's ZPD indicated by his question in the uptake document (See excerpt 15). Corresponding to her awareness of the cultural influence on Rey's lexical understanding and choices as she expressed in the interview, the multiple turns of IFAs and elaborated examples further suggest her use of *dynamic assessment* in providing the mediated feedback.

Nadia and Julio used IFAs to mediate the revising process with their tutees. In Julio's 1<sup>st</sup> feedback to Yee's summary, Julio corrected Yee's writing "*English can trace its history back to 1300s; ...*" by inserting the article "the" directly in her draft without further explanations. Yee was perplexed about the correction and the article use, asking the following in the uptake document (See excerpt 19):

**Excerpt 19: Yee's Response in Uptake Document for Summary**

*In line 2, you added "the" before 1300s, what is the function of "the" here? And line 5, you delete two "the", why they can not be used there? The question is what kind of conditions I should use "the", when I should not?*

Realizing his correction did not make sense to her, Julio used IFAs to scaffold for her understanding of the specific use related to time. Excerpt 11 shows that Julio first used the IFA ("Giving metalinguistic explanation") to explain how the article works in referring to a period of time, followed by another one ("Giving information").

Similar to Martha, Julio grounded his explanation in the cultural and linguistic conventions that Americans favor (e.g., "*Americans like to shorten things*"). Through



the first person deictic pronoun “we,” Julio concluded the suggestion with the IFA (“So, we say *the 1300’s*”), highlighting the suggested use. The mediated feedback not only helped Yee revise her writing within her ZPD, but also expanded her knowledge as an English language user by helping her understand the cultural and linguistic logic behind the language use.

Nadia also learned to use IFAs as a mediational tool to enhance learning opportunities with her tutees. In her 1<sup>st</sup> feedback to Jing’s biodata, Nadia made a request:

**Excerpt 20: 1<sup>st</sup> Feedback by Nadia to Jing’s Biodata**

*Please tell me more about this [project] so I can point you in the right direction. What is the name of the project?*

As Jing revealed in the interview, he was confused about the comment. He wanted to seek help from Nadia to write a more concise sentence, as he put in the uptake document:

**Excerpt 21: Jing’s Response in the Uptake Document for Biodata**

*As you said I need more explanations here, I would like to write more, but it’s kind of hard to explain in the short sentences. Can I write more to explain my project? For example, I will write: In specific, this project is discussing about the influence on board diversity. The more diverse backgrounds in companies’ boards, the less financial risks companies take.*

Nadia, did not want to change Jing’s writing in her 1<sup>st</sup> feedback; instead used an IFA (“Asking questions”) to prompt more thinking about what to include in his biodata.

Without giving direct corrections, Nadia’s IFA use affords opportunities for dynamic assessment and feedback within ZPD. The examples above show how tutors mediated the revising process within writers’ ZPD based on their *dynamic assessment* of writers’ current and future capacity.

The discussion above revealed that tutors usually used IFAs directly before or directly after DFAs to mediate or make sense of the given suggestions and corrections to writers. To ensure the IFAs fell within writers' *ZPD* and to further attend to writers' learning, tutors often used what has been called *concept-based instruction* (*CBI*) (Lantolf, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986, 1987). For example, in line with *CBI*, which distinguishes between *spontaneous* and *scientific concepts* and asserts that both should be tapped into in effective instruction (Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi, 2010), Martha gave examples in *spontaneous concepts* containing everyday, practical experiences to help Rey understand the *scientific concepts* (e.g., semantic differences of prepositions and vocabularies) that could be generalized or applied to new contexts in his future writing. For instance, to help Rey understand the prepositional concepts "at" and "in", Martha used the examples of "exercise **IN** the swimming pool" and "exercise **AT** the swimming pool", articulating the semantic differences between the two prepositions. See excerpt 22 below.

**Excerpt 22: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Martha to Rey's Biodata**

*It is difficult to say without knowing more about the exact situation. For, example, can you tell the difference between: I am going to exercise **IN** the swimming pool AND I am going to exercise **AT** the swimming pool? **IN**= maybe water aerobics, **AT**= maybe lying beside the pool doing "crunches."*  
*This is not the case 100% of the time but when I think of someone saying "I'm going to work out **in** the gym" I think of someone who has a gym **IN** their building or home. "I'm going to leave my couch and go **IN** the gym to lift weights..." If someone said "I'm going to work out **at** the gym" it sometimes means the gym is farther away in another building. "I'm leaving this place in order to work out **AT** the gym." The person might have to walk or drive there instead of just going in another room. If this comes up in one of your assignments, I'll know better how to advise you.*

Martha first asked a question to raise Rey's awareness of the lexical distinctions between "in" and "at". Then she gave definitions, followed by examples explaining exceptional uses. What was most valuable for Rey were the metalinguistic

explanations using everyday concrete examples to help make sense of the abstract concepts of English prepositions. The way Martha used IFAs (i.e., “Giving metalinguistic explanation” and “Giving information”) to explain how the two prepositions imply different connotations in terms of space and distance exactly corresponds to what Swain (2006) termed as *linguaging*, which is conceptualized as a practice in which learners use language (speaking and writing) to focus attention, solve problems and articulate one’s thoughts about using language (Swain and Deters, 2007). Rey’s confirmation of his learning about the prepositions in the interview suggests that the *linguaging* helped Rey move from the specific to generalized levels of understanding English prepositional use. This finding also confirms what Swain has argued: “in the context of L2 learning, *linguaging* or verbalizing objectifies thought and language and renders them ‘available for scrutiny’ (Swain, 2000, p. 104). In other words, through engaging in collaborative activities using speaking or writing as a regulatory tool, human beings develop their cognitive ability (e.g., language learning) (e.g. Brooks & Swain, 2009; Lapkin, Swain, & Knouzi, 2008; Swain, 2006, 2010; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005). Rey’s question to Martha regarding the prepositional use in the uptake document further corresponds to the sociocultural argument that human’s cognitive development takes a nonlinear, uneven, and dynamic path incorporating concepts (Brooks, Swain, Lapkin, and Knouzi, 2010; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Vygotsky, 1986). Other examples of *linguaging* were also seen in Nadia’s feedback to Jing explaining the article use when Jing described his degree and research topic in the biodata. Please see excerpt 7 (See section 4.4.2) and excerpt 23 below.

### **Excerpt 23: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feedback by Nadia to Jing's Biodata**

*When you used the article "the" it makes it seem like there is only one B.S. degree in the world. Consider using "a"*

Excerpt 7 and 23 show that Nadia unpacked the meanings implied by the articles "a" and "the" in Jing's writing, which can be implicit and abstract for English language learners who come from a linguistic background that does not have such distinction (e.g., Chinese does not have functional equivalents of definite and indefinite articles). The challenges Chinese learners of English encounter in English article use have been demonstrated by their "marked tendency to omit articles" and their unpredictably varied use of it (Robertson, 2000). As a Chinese learner of English, Jing benefited from Nadia's explanation, or verbalization, of the different meanings his sentences implied with and without the article use.

The L2 writers consistently confirmed growth and expanded learning brought by the mediated feedback. As Rey confirmed at the end of the tutorial, he highly valued his learning of the logic behind the definitions and rules of the lexicons, which further inspired him to do more thinking as a language user and English writer. Jing also preferred feedback without direct corrections or answers, and Yee agreed that both direct and indirect corrections worked well for her. Feedback with further metalinguistic explanations fostered negotiation for meaning or engaged L2 writers in discussions that were conducive to language learning (e.g., Both Rey and Jing confirmed in the interview that the IFAs improved their knowledge and understanding of English language use). Overall, the mediated feedback and discursive process of revising and writing indeed expanded learning opportunities for the L2 writers. The positive findings in this study correspond to what Schwieter (2010) has argued—contextualized feedback debriefing and scaffolding within the

writers' *ZPD* helps second language learning and writing effectively. Corroborating prior studies using a sociocultural theoretical framework, findings in this study reveal ways that mediated feedback can open new learning opportunities (e.g., Donato & Lantolf, 1990; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Martin-Beltrán, 2009, 2010; Swain, 2000, 2006; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; van Lier, 2000).

### **5.1.2 CFA as a Mediation Tool**

Vygotskian sociocultural theorists contend that human beings' higher order mental activity is transformed and shaped through interacting with socially mediated and constructed materials, regulations, or others. Lantolf (2009) explained such "convergence of thinking with culturally created mediational artifacts" to be "linguistically organized" (e.g., in conversations) and takes place "in the *internalization*, or the reconstruction on the inner, psychological plane, of socially mediated external forms of goal-directed activity" (p. 13). As the feedback acts in this study functioned as tools to mediate the learning processes of revising and writing for L2 writers, the use of CFA enhanced the conversational orientation of the written feedback. The back-and-forth feedback facilitated L2 writers' *internalization* of the knowledge and skills of language use and English academic writing as they were encouraged to participate in ongoing conversations throughout the AOWT. The AOWT essentially constituted a goal-directed activity in which learning and growth occurred in the convergence of the interpersonal and intrapersonal planes. My conceptualization of feedback acts aligns with what Block (2003) asserted regarding language in second language learning contexts; that is, "language is not just linguistic competence or linguistic competence + conversation skills put to use to exchange

information” but “is about social problems” (p. 89). As the tutors performed the CFAs in a way similar to regular daily face-to-face oral conversations (e.g., apologizing and wishing are common in our daily conversation with others), the written feedback further served social and interpersonal purposes which essentially foster an intrapersonal activity such as learning.

Martha’s use of CFA is evidence of CFA as a mediational tool that is representative of the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes of human learning. For example, Martha increased her use of CFAs in the forum message to Rey, in a way encouraging him to actively participate in the revising process and engaging him in the metalinguistic conversations. Shaping her feedback to be more approachable, the CFAs (like “Complimenting”, “Apologizing”, “Wishing”, “Promising”) encouraged conversation, as she complimented his language use, apologized for the lack of clarity in her feedback, wished for usefulness of her feedback, and promised more assistance in the areas where more guidance was requested. The social and collaborative approach used by Martha attested to the dialogic orientation written feedback could entail. As Rey was encouraged to participate in the metalinguistic conversations, he asked clarification questions in the uptake document regarding the lexical choices (e.g., “member” and “staff”, “at” and “in”, “communication” and “communicated”). The back-and-forth conversations on the English lexical uses were deemed conducive to language learning.

### ***5.2 Pragmatic Features Enhancing the Social Nature of Written Feedback***

Some prior second language writing research has critiqued the use of hedging or indirectness in written feedback, contending that hedging would impede language

learners from understanding the given feedback (Holtgraves, 1999; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2009). Hyland and Hyland (2001) have argued that language learners need explicit and direct feedback due to their underdeveloped pragmatic competency, since the pragmatic force of hedging can be culturally bound and invisible to language learners (Hyland, 1998). Learners' lack of understanding of the pragmatic purpose of hedging in teacher's feedback may lead to misunderstanding of what is suggested or failure to achieve anticipated revisions (Baker & Bricker, 2010; Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2009). Findings in this study, however, found that pragmatic features (i.e., hedging and indirect speech acts) underpinned within the social and collaborative context shared by the online tutors and L2 writers did not obstruct the clarity of the feedback. The L2 writers confirmed in the interview that they understood most of the given feedback. Prior research has shown that giving feedback is a face-threatening act (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Stewart, 2004), thus hedging can serve the pragmatic function of protecting face of both the Speakers (tutors) and the Hearers (L2 writers). Additionally, the pragmatic features play an important pedagogical role by contextualizing the given suggestions and corrections, and by fostering negotiation for meaning and communication between dyads.

In this study, tutors extensively used hedging in DFA and IFA. Through discourse analysis, the hedging in DFA was found to serve its pragmatic function, mitigating the level of face-threatening force the DFA entailed. Similar to what Stewart (2004) has found, tutors in this study endeavored to protect the faces of both through the conventional indirectness and hedging criticisms, since hedging entails an epistemic and affective function (Hyland, 1998). As Stewart claimed, the use of

hedging “reduces the Speaker’s commitment to the proposition” (i.e., the negative comments such as criticisms) (p. 107).

Martha was the most skillful user of hedging in her DFA and IFA in the AOWT. Her DFAs were frequently couched in modal verbs and adverbs (e.g., “*you would probably not say you were a member of the laboratory*”), and certain verbs (“*I suggest you use a verb form that gives that message*”; “**Consider** using another past tense verb here”). Martha’s reflection of her feedback practice in the interview confirmed that the nature of asynchronous online communication further contributed to her use of hedging in DFAs, as she had to consider how to give feedback “in a tactful way” (See interview transcription on p. 52-53 in Chapter 4). Nadia and Julio also began using more hedging after they converted to a more dialogic feedback approach. Julio specifically commented in the interview that he “shouldn’t be such direct” (See Chapter 4 section 4.5.3). Tutors at times made compliments before hedging direct feedback. These findings in hedging DFAs were in line with what Hyland and Hyland (2001) found in their study—teachers mitigated the criticisms and suggestions to students, and used praises to tone down the negative force in written feedback.

Grounded in sociocultural theoretical framework, this study further finds hedging serves pedagogical functions particularly in the IFA. The hedging in IFA naturally derived from the teaching discourse in the feedback genre preceding or following the corrections or suggestions, particularly when the tutor attempted to use the IFA to supplement or justify the preceding or following DFA. In other words, hedging in IFA mainly enhances the role of IFA as a mediational tool. This finding



aligns with the Nurmukhamedov and Kim's (2009) study, in which they found hedging comments were associated with substantive and effective revisions due to the fact that hedging comments often involved concrete adjacent advice. Findings from the discourse analysis in this study show that hedging feedback acts do not necessarily obstruct clarity to language learners, as long as they are appropriately couched in contexts that make sense to them (e.g., Martha gave the examples of "swimming in" and "swimming at the pool"). In other words, if tutors could use hedging feedback acts in contexts where *concept-based instruction* helps make sense of the linguistic or writing issues to language learners, the mediated feedback can expand learning opportunities beyond error correction or editing. The tutorial is mediated not only for the purpose of producing better writing products but also for that of preparing more autonomous and independent writers. Martha's feedback on prepositions ("in" and "at") and related metacognitive explanations prepares Rey for future writing challenges.

The last pragmatic feature, indirect speech act, occasionally appeared for both pragmatic and pedagogical functions. I identified this function when IFA substituted DFA, as the feedback sequence 3 (IFAs and CFAs stood alone without DFAs adjacent) shows in section 4.1.4. The most telling example is excerpt 15 (See Chapter 4 section 4.5.1), in which Martha used the IFA ("Asking questions") at the end of the feedback without giving direct answers or correction. The question encouraged Rey to conduct more metacognitive thinking, and simultaneously functioned as *dynamic assessment* to assess Rey's understanding of the lexicons. Due to the contextualized mediated feedback acts preceding the question, Rey eventually picked the

semantically appropriate lexicon for his writing. In a way, the IFA, “Asking questions”, completely substituted a DFA that performed the act of requesting for revision; in another way, it affords more learning opportunities for Rey as he learned to be an independent thinker and writer in the process. Similar to what Hyland and Hyland (2001) found, teachers may use “personal attribution” (“Giving personal comments” in this study) and “interrogative syntax” (“Asking questions” in this study) to achieve both pragmatic and pedagogical goals. The personal opinion may infuse new insights for writers, and afford writers the opportunity to reflect on their own weaknesses in writing; while the interrogatives in feedback spurs further thinking and gives a sense of audience to Rey. My finding corroborates prior research that has shown that indirect speech acts in written feedback entails more learning opportunities by helping L2 writers discover their own errors (Ferris, 2007; Riley and Mackiewicz, 2003).

While recent research on teacher written feedback strongly suggests certain types of feedback, such as feedback in the form of imperatives (e.g., Sugita, 2006) and feedback focusing on specific forms (e.g., Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009), this study certainly does not imply certain feedback acts are more effective than others. My study contributes to previous studies such as Hyland and Hyland (2001), who concluded that written feedback is a combination of teachers’ various acts to seek to “enhance their [student-teacher] relationship, minimize the threat of judgment, and mitigate the full force of their criticisms and suggestions” (p. 207).

### ***5.3 The Reciprocal Nature of Mediated Feedback and Second Language Teacher Learning***

The former discussions have extensively discussed the learning and growth of L2 writers through the sociocultural lens. Findings in this study reveal the learning and growth of the participating L2 writers in English language use, L2 writing process, and metalinguistic capacity. These findings further correspond with prior research that have argued “feedback must allow students to act on the feedback for future tasks (i.e., it should help students to improve future performances) (Boud, 2000; Busse, 2013; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004) in addition to error correction and editing. While the shared goal between tutors and L2 writers at the beginning of the AOWT was to produce better writing products, the tutors made various attempts through feedback acts preparing L2 writers to confront future challenges in English academic writing. The mediated feedback in this study exactly corresponds to the concept of “dynamic written feedback” by Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, and Wolfersberger (2010)—“feedback reflects what the individual learner needs most as demonstrated by what the learner produces,” and “tasks and feedback are manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant for both the learner and teacher” (p. 452). With such feedback that is dynamic and pertaining to the needs of writers, L2 writers are able to grow as an independent learners and writers.

In addition to the focus on L2 writers’ growth and learning, this study also emphasizes the perceived professional growth of the tutors as teacher candidates in a teacher education program in the United States at the time of study. Findings have shown the reciprocal nature of learning through mediated feedback in this AOWT. For the participating teacher candidates, they perceived growth in their knowledge of

L2 writers, asynchronous online tutoring, cross-cultural communication, as well as English grammar and academic writing. Participating in the AOWT and serving as online tutors not only helped expand their knowledge base but also afforded them a valuable opportunity to reflect on how they learn to teach.

The AOWT provided a space for growth in “teacher knowledge” (Ball, 2000) and “teacher learning” (Kennedy, 1991), which are key to teacher professional development (Freeman, 2002). For instance, the three tutors all perceived that it is important for ESOL teachers to have “linguistic knowledge” (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000), especially after they found themselves lacking available knowledge and resources to provide L2 writers when they asked questions about English lexicons, writing conventions, and grammar in the uptake document. Nadia and Julio revealed in the interview that they learned about how challenging the English grammar was for L2 writers. The tutors’ realization of the importance of “linguistic knowledge” aligns with the argument made by Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) that language teachers should be prepared with an explicit understanding of the functions of oral and written language, rhetorical structures, phonology, syntax, and the lexicon of English, as well as tactics of making use of students’ prior linguistic knowledge.

In terms of “teacher learning”, all the tutors reflected on the theories they learned in the teacher education program, and discussed how they implemented the theories and applied their teaching philosophy in the AOWT. For instance, Martha believed learning from examples is one of the best ways for learning a language, so she used plenty of IFAs (“Giving information” and “Giving metalinguistic explanation”) in her *languageing* of how English works. She applied *concept-based*

*instruction*, providing *spontaneous concepts* with everyday concrete examples to explicate *abstract concepts* in English grammar in her written feedback. Nadia, who changed her feedback practice to a more social and dialogic approach after her 2<sup>nd</sup> round of feedback, started giving more DFAs to Jing to correct or suggest revisions. Nadia explained in the interview that it was during her feedback change when she physically made sense of “process writing”, a pedagogical concept and method she learned in her other teacher education courses. When in the ESOL reading and writing teacher education course where the AOWT was implemented, Nadia could provide examples of how she used “process writing” to help Jing deal with his writing issues in the group discussions when her colleagues were discussing “how writing is a process rather than for products”.

In the AOWT, the participating teacher candidates revisited their existing “pedagogical knowledge”, which was explicated by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004) that language teachers should have their own repertoire of instructional strategies to provide effective teaching of content and language to English language learners. The AOWT provided them a window for reflection on how they learned to teach. For the teacher candidates, the AOWT served as practice-based teacher education (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Lampert & Graziani, 2009; Peercy, 2014) pre-practicum activity. This line of research has documented the relationship between classroom teaching and student learning in practice-based teacher education, and further argued that it can help novice teachers to learn to teach. The following will discuss how the AOWT made a good case for practice-based teacher education pre-practicum activity in three aspects.

First, the AOWT introduced and made visible the characteristics, needs, and challenges of English language learners to the participating teacher candidates. In this study, the participating L2 writers were graduate students who demonstrated strong knowledge in their own fields (e.g., engineering and business) but lacked adequate language to communicate their profession. Their feedback on the first assignment showed that they are in need of basic skills for English academic writing (e.g., reading comprehension, summarizing skills, understanding of the notion of plagiarism, and other writing skills). This group of L2 writers resembled many of the characteristics of English language learners in the K-12 schools who have adequate formal education before arriving at the U.S. (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999)—whose “knowledge and skills they had gained in their previous schooling transferred to their learning in English” (Freeman & Freeman, 2009, p. 16). Like those ESOL students who had former schooling, the participating L2 writers were clear about their own academic goals, had strong literacy in one or more languages (Chinese as their native language), and could transfer their literacy knowledge to English language learning. The AOWT provided a chance for the participating teacher candidates to work with this type of English language learners, and to learn about their characteristics, needs, and challenges in a real-world context rather than on teacher education textbooks. For example, Julio was surprised to learn that the L2 writers had much knowledge in English grammar, and could cite from the grammar rules and terminologies they learned in their prior schooling; however, could not transfer the grammar knowledge into their writing. Martha was also aware of the knowledge and experiences the L2 writers brought from prior schooling, so she

introduced English grammar websites that provided more examples of language use to Rey, believing he will develop such English dominant speaker's intuition after the extensive exposure to language use examples. Martha greatly appreciated the chance of interacting and learning about real English language learners in her pre-practicum stage of professional development.

The second aspect in the benefits of the AOWT as the practice-based teacher education pre-practicum activity was the AOWT grounded teacher education in a sociocultural context that was meaningful to the teacher candidates. Johnson (2006) has called attention for second language teacher education to the concept of "praxis" (Freire, 1970), asserting that teacher education should create "opportunities for L2 teachers to make sense of those theories in their professional lives and the settings where they work" and should "capture[s] how theory and practice inform one another and how this transformative process informs teachers' work" (p. 240). Different from teacher education in the past that emphasized teachers as the conduit of knowledge and teaching, transmitting theory into practice, current teacher education began its focus on the sociocultural context wherein teacher education takes place. The sociocultural conceptualization includes the idea that "teachers [also] become active users and producers of theory in their own right, for their own means, and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts" (Johnson, 2006, p. 240). The AOWT constituted an immediate context that was meaningful to the participating teacher candidates in many ways, including discovering, reflecting, and forming their own teaching philosophy that fits the immediate context of AOWT. They had a chance to conduct reflection on how their prior learning and living experiences shaped their

practice in teaching English language learners. They experimented various feedback methods and styles, attempting to enact the best practice for their tutees. For instance, Nadia's realization of "process-writing" and her increasing use of DFAs show that the theory was not simply codified from textbook but emerged out of the social and transformative process of reconceptualizing her own practice. Martha had a chance to practice her own teaching philosophy and living experiences as a hospital nurse by applying a wide range of vivid examples to explain language to Rey. Julio could distinguish the different roles he took as a classroom teacher and online tutor, modifying his teaching tones to be compatible for the delicate sociocultural context of the AOWT. That is, in one aspect, he seemed to hold power over the L2 writer as a native English speaker; in another aspect, he realized his peer-level role as an online tutor but not the instructor of the L2 writer. His drastic change in his feedback practice from a directive to non-direct approach as well as the increasing use of IFAs and CFAs further corroborated their professional development in the sociocultural context the AOWT affords. With the pedagogical attempts in the AOWT, their professional development is "self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning" (Johnson, 2006, p. 243). Narrowing the discussion to the work of written feedback, Lee (2013) also called attention from the viewpoint of writing teacher education to the idea that "the teaching of writing has to be conceived as a sociocultural practice that is best understood and studied in its specific context" since "decontextualized pedagogical strategies without regard for sociocultural forces are unlikely to reap success for teaching and learning" (p. 435-436). This qualitative case study on the AOWT undoubtedly corresponds to the call by illustrating the mutual growth and



engagement for both the participating teacher candidates and L2 writers in a sociocultural context of teaching and learning.

Finally, the AOWT enhanced ESOL teacher education in specific areas of language teaching (ESOL reading and writing in this study). Research in second language writing has revealed that language learners appreciate and welcome the teacher written feedback that acknowledge their writing, provide specific suggestions and choices (Treglia, 2008), and giving students written feedback has been regarded as an important instructional practice for language teachers. When L2 writers receive the individualized assistance for their writing and revising, the feedback giver may “experience a model of best practice in teaching writing” (Isaacs & Kolba, 2009). Therefore, some teacher educators have included feedback practice in their teacher education curriculum, particularly for second language writing teacher education (Dempsey, PytlikZillig, Bruning, 2009; Ferris, 2007; Lee, 2010, 2013).

The AOWT implemented in the ESOL teacher education course harnesses opportunities for pre-service teacher learning about the core issues in second language literacy teaching and learning. As Ferris (2007) indicated based on the past research on teacher written feedback, there are myriads of issues significant in feedback practice, including but not limited to the following: (1) Teachers should find a balance between intervention and appropriation when giving feedback to L2 writers; (2) Teachers should be sensitive to the issue of selectivity and prioritization of types of errors (i.e., to work on content-focused or form-focused errors) (Guénette, 2012); (3) Teachers should tailor their feedback to students’ needs and progress in writing, if there are rounds of drafts and feedback (i.e., process-writing) (Guénette,

2012); (4) Teachers should balance the encouragement, compliments, and criticism in their feedback, making the feedback practice an ongoing conversation (Guénette, 2012). In the AOWT, Nadia and Julio determined the focus in Jing's and Yee's summary assignment prioritized content rather than grammar correction, since summarizing is a culturally defined academic skill (e.g., no citation or quotation summary in North American academic contexts). Martha prioritized the language use errors that would obstruct meaning to readers (e.g., lexical choices), providing several choices for Rey to choose from to avoid appropriation of his biodata. The variety of IFA use by the three tutors indicate that they attempted to tailor to the writers' needs; the uptake document gave tutors information regarding their progress and effectiveness of the feedback. The pragmatic features and CFA use in their feedback fostered communication and negotiation for meaning, making the feedback dialogic and open for conversations. Conforming to what Lee (2010) advocated, such practice-based second language writing teacher education promotes teacher learning, as the AOWT makes a case for how tutorial between ESOL teacher candidates and L2 writers serves as the embodiment of uniting theory and practice.

Writing is a socially situated process, and each writer is an idiosyncratic individual who has his or her own voice (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007), identity (Canagarajah, 2002), and goal in writing. Feedback and tutorial practice offer opportunities to recognize writer's unique needs, challenges, and progress in the process of learning second language writing. The AOWT in this study provides a space for mutual growth and engagement for the participating teacher candidates as online tutors and L2 writers. L2 writers grow as an independent writer and language

user through the mediation and scaffolding tailored for them. The teacher candidates have developed a deeper understanding of how the sociocultural context defines instructional practice through experimenting varied feedback approach and interacting with L2 writers in the process. The implementation of the AOWT provides confirming evidence that second language writing teacher education promotes teacher learning (Lee, 2010).

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### ***6.1 Implications for Research***

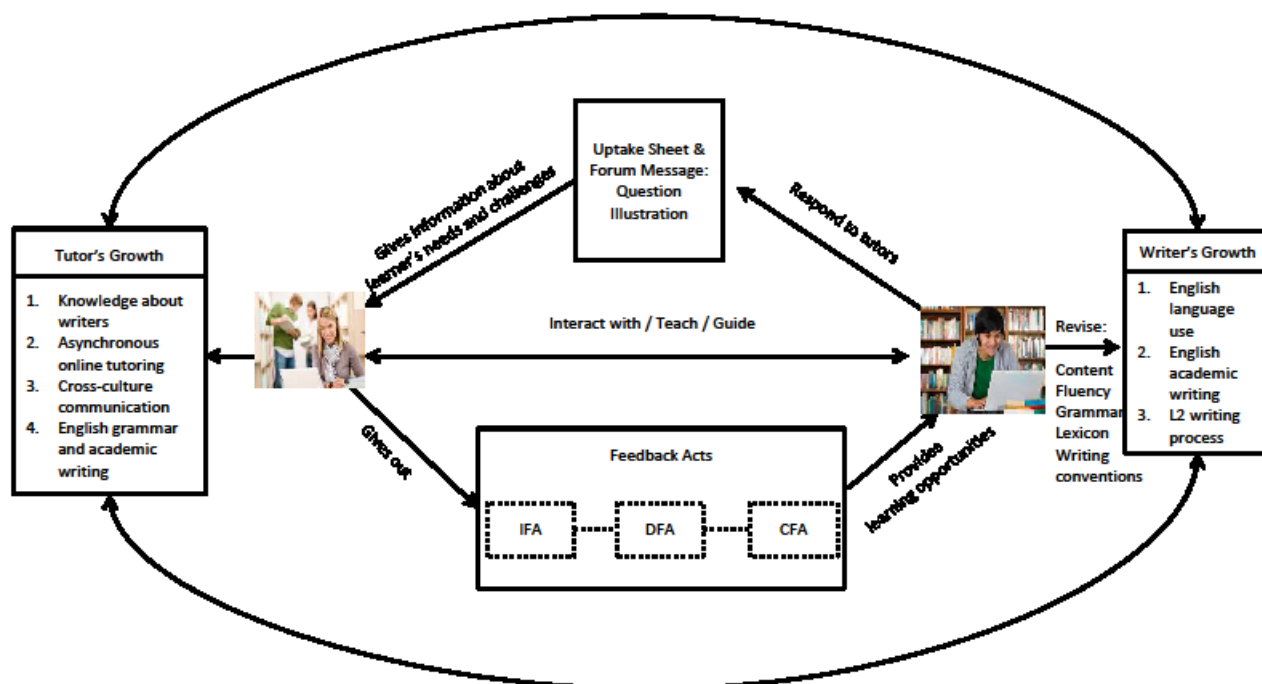
This study adds to the body of research on written feedback for second language writers, which before this study had not focused on mutual growth and engagement between the tutors and writers. This study's fine-grained analysis of the AOWT (that included interaction, communication, and negotiation for meaning between the L2 writers and online tutors) sheds light on how teachers/tutors can mediate the revising and learning process of second language writing. My findings demonstrate that the strategic use of feedback acts by tutors facilitates language learning throughout the process of revising and editing. Tutor and writers' increasing levels of engagement and participation throughout the AOWT offer more opportunities of discussions about writing and language use. My study contributes to the reconceptualization of written feedback as mediated feedback, which differs from the view of written feedback as error correction in the past literature (e.g., Bitchener, 2008, 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, 2010; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, 2009; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008), instead involving a discursive process of writing and communicating with others that may afford more opportunities for second language learning.

Grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1987) and guided by speech act theory (Austin, 1962) in data analysis, this study offers a new perspective for understanding written feedback among tutors to L2 writers. I conceptualize written feedback not as a fixed practice, but as acts that teachers/tutors take in the mediation of the writing, revising and learning process of L2 writers. The

AOWT constituted a fluid and dynamic process of writing and revising, in which the tutors and writers used the feedback acts as a mediational tool to better understand this process. Tutors used feedback acts as socially constructed artifacts in their interactions with L2 writers to facilitate teaching and learning. In this study I conceptualized written feedback not as the conduit of information and knowledge; rather, the medium for and of mediation of learning. L2 writers were not perceived to be passive receivers of information transmitted from the tutors, but rather, their increasingly active participation allowed for the feedback to be negotiated, mediated and dynamic. Supporting such conceptualization, my findings also suggest that the unique relationship between tutors and writers was formed, shaped, situated, and constantly changed as they continually interacted as peers in the AOWT rather than as experts/novices. They were both experts in their own fields and both were learning and growing in the AOWT process. By shedding light on the ways that tutors shifted their feedback in response to writers' needs and their changing relationship, this study also contributes to our understanding of how tutors or teachers develop their understanding of feedback as a teaching/learning tool.

Following the reconceptualization of written feedback as mediated feedback, I contribute to the research in second language writing by presenting a conceptual model that illuminates the discursive process of writing, revising, tutoring, and interacting and the possibilities for growth among both tutors and L2 writers. (See Figure 26).

Figure 23: A Conceptual Model of Mediated Feedback and Asynchronous Tutorial



The figure shows that the tutor strategically uses FAs in the forms of DFA, IFA, and CFA and the dotted boxes and lines for the FAs refer to shifting nature of use and order in response to writers' needs. Tutors may vary the presence and pattern of the FAs in order to constitute appropriate scaffolding that falls within the *ZPD* of the writers. This strategic choice of feedback is reflective of their use of *dynamic assessment* and *concept-based instruction* through *verbalization*, or *languageing*. The writers may respond to tutors by asking questions in the uptake documents or on the

discussion forum, which all give additional information regarding the writer's concurrent needs, challenges, and progress. In the process of mediation and communication, both the writers and tutors generate opportunities for learning. The outer arrows that connect the growth of L2 writers and online tutors indicate the concurrent development in language learning and language teacher learning. This conceptual model makes visible how giving written feedback can be a discursive process and echoes the claim that learning and teaching writing is a socially situated process (Casanave, 2012).

To conclude based on the proposed model, my study defines mediated feedback as: feedback taking place in a discursive process, in which feedback givers (tutors/teachers) strategically use various feedback acts to help revising and to respond to students' needs, and feedback receivers (students/peer writers) respond to the feedback givers by asking for clarification and elaboration of the given feedback or asking about certain issues of language use in writing. Feedback givers and receivers interact with each other by having conversations regarding the revising and learning process or life in general. Their interaction and feedback receivers' response serve as the basis of the next round of feedback. Within the cycle, both the feedback givers and receivers are expected to learn and grow simultaneously during the process.

## ***6.2 Educational Implications***

The need for second language writing teachers to be prepared to effectively give written feedback to L2 writers has been well-documented. For example, a meta-analysis on corrective written feedback conducted by Russell and Spada (2006)

concluded that teacher written feedback is beneficial for language learning overall. However, teachers have much to learn about giving written feedback in a way that may support L2 learning.

### **6.2.1 Implications for Teachers of English Language Writers**

Though the contexts of EFL and ESL present different educational issues and challenges, English language writing teachers in both contexts should benefit from this study. As EFL writing teachers in many Asian countries often report that what the second language writing research asserts to be effective for English language writers (such as process writing and peer review) are often deemed ineffective and time-consuming under a test-driven curriculum (Lee, 2013). Such incompatibility between second language writing research and their realistic teaching practice presents challenges in the EFL instructional context. However, this study has implications for EFL writing teachers by showing that written feedback serves multiple functions. In addition to the commonly recognized function of editing and revising for better products, written feedback that attends to the needs, challenges, and progress of language learners can be effective for the learning process. More specifically, it is important that EFL teachers know how to conduct *dynamic assessment*, that is, constantly diagnosing what students' know as they write and supporting students with feedback that pushes their learning to their next level of proximal development. As a mediational tool, multiple rounds of written feedback raise awareness of students' struggles/needs and allow teachers to try different approaches to address the issues. Teachers can use what they learn from tutoring or one-on-one feedback in their regular writing class. Process writing and feedback



practices that are tied to what language learners are concurrently learning in class could strengthen learning and instruction in both contexts.

For ESL teachers who work with English learners, it is important to understand the educational, cultural, and linguistic background of their learners. Teachers may gain this knowledge, in part, through the feedback process. With knowledge in about student background and prior learning experiences, teachers will be able to provide feedback that is more meaningful to them. Teachers of L2 writers will also be able to interpret the errors made by their students from aspects in their linguistic, cultural, and educational experiences and build upon these experiences to offer opportunities for mutual learning and growth.

In terms of transferability, my study and the model of mediated feedback may be able to apply to learners of other age groups in both EFL and ESL contexts as long as the feedback giver (tutors/teachers) know how to respond to students' needs and give written feedback to help them move toward another level of learning. For learners of different age groups or proficiency levels, teachers/tutors may use different means of communication (In this study, the L2 writers had the ability to use written language to communicate their needs so the uptake document was used), such as using pictures to encourage communication at the interpersonal and presentational levels, or using multiliteracies (Cole & Pullen, 2010). To perform feedback acts, teachers/tutors could use the everyday language that their students could relate to implement *concept-based instruction* or *linguaging*. To conclude, the idea of discursive process in the AOWT should be applicable to a wide range of teaching settings for learners of different age groups/background. However, the caveat for the

AOWT transferring to other teaching settings or for different age groups is the limited application of all the elements in the model.

This study also adds to the discussed implications for second language specialists (e.g. Dempsey, PytlikZillig, & Bruning, 2009; Lee, 2010, 2011, 2013). First, written feedback should be understood as more than an instructional practice; it should be reconceptualized as a mediational tool that facilitates ongoing learning in the discursive writing and revising process. Such reconceptualization frames both the teachers and L2 writers as active participants in the tutorial negotiating for meaning and co-constructing literacy goals beyond editing and error correction. Peer-like relationships between tutors and students in the tutorial process promotes self-editing and language learning (Thonus, 2002). Second, teachers are encouraged to attend to the pedagogical functions their written feedback entails. Prior research on corrective feedback has promoted the *explicitness* of the feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), I add that the explicit suggestions should attend to the *ZPD* (diagnosed through *dynamic assessment*) and supported by *concept-based instruction*. Finally, findings in this study suggest that teachers and student may learn more if they are encouraged to turn written feedback into ongoing conversations.

### **6.2.2 Implications for ESOL Teacher Educators**

With the increase of English language learners in schools around the world, working with teachers to meet their needs presents challenges and opportunities for ongoing teacher learning (Haworth, 2008; Miller, 2011; Rumberger & Gándara, 2005; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). The AOWT presents opportunities for teacher candidates to interact with English language learners as a pre-practicum activity in

their teacher education program. Implementing such an activity that enacts core practices (Ball & Forzani, 2009) capitalizes on the potential of using the tutorial as a site for uniting theory and practice. There is a small but growing body of work that suggests that teacher education could include more core practices to enhance teacher learning, more research is needed to understand the dynamics of core practices in English language teacher education program (Glisan & Donato, 2012; Hlas & Hlas, 2012; Peercy, 2014).

My study contributes to the body of work that examines teacher education programs by revealing the potential learning affordances of online writing tutorials for preservice teachers. As discussed in the findings above, the AOWT allowed teachers to transform their feedback practices to meet the needs of English language learners. Findings from this study confirmed that opportunities such as this AOWT can serve as a valuable practice-based teacher education activity, since the participating teacher candidates learn to create mediational spaces (Vygotsky, 1978) for language learning and their own professional development. When preservice teachers serve as a dialogic partner in the tutorial, they create a space to work with English language learners collaboratively, and learn to help English language learners make sense of their writing through feedback act use and other available learning resources. Their hands-on experiences with feedback may compel teacher candidates to attend to different needs and challenges of English language learners that may otherwise go unexamined. As teacher education seeks better ways to engage teachers in ongoing learning, this study has implications for how and why tutoring and university-school collaboration can be applied within teacher education programs.

The transnational setting of the AOWT also inspires ESOL teacher educators to seek new ways to engage teacher candidates in ongoing professional development, meanwhile broadening their horizons and expanding their world view through cross-cultural communication with English language learners outside the U.S.

### ***6.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research***

Given the limited scope of this study in terms of length of study and number of participants, I did not intend to make sweeping generalizations for all written feedback and asynchronous online writing tutorials. Instead by engaging in a closer examination of three ESOL teacher candidates who were paired with three English language learners participating in an asynchronous online writing tutorial, this study sheds light on some important issues and ideas that may help teachers and teacher educators to better meet the needs of English language learners and future language teachers.

Since one significant finding regards the reciprocal nature of mediated feedback, more research is needed to understand how teacher learning and student learning impact each other. Particularly with the confirming evidence of feedback change among tutors and perceived growth by the L2 writers, I argue that teacher learning appears to have a positive impact on student learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002), and that teaching and learning should not be seen separately. Therefore future research could offer more evidence for the positive impact from teacher learning to student learning, if there were more access to more data sources from the L2 writers (writing samples over time, observations of English academic writing class, or class discussions). Future research should also examine

how or whether students can transfer what they learn in the AOWT to their future writing. Future studies with longitudinal observations are needed to learn more about how the mediated feedback impacts future L2 writing and learning opportunities.

In the process of data collection and analysis, the role, status, and identity of the participating teacher candidates emerged as an interesting topic for future research. The interview data show that the L2 writers trusted their U.S.-based tutors, and tended to accept most of the suggestions made by the tutors. The tutors maintained their authoritative role by giving many suggestions, corrections, and micro-teaching in their feedback to gain trust from the writers. The L2 writers were not aware of the status of the U.S.-based tutors—as preservice teachers or junior inservice teachers, and never questioned the given feedback, even though the tutors expressed their uncertainty about the feedback they gave, and about their ability in explaining grammar. Since the AOWT is a great way to engage the participating teacher candidates in an authentic teaching context and to form a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with other teacher candidates, future studies are needed to understand how preservice language teachers form or transfer their professional identity as language and L2 writing teacher in pre-practicum activities, and how their identity transformation impacts teaching and learning of second language writing.

Finally, future research is needed to further explore the incorporation of technology and its influence on second language teaching and learning. The AOWT has implications for future research using online tutorials for English language learners, as data analysis suggested that the forum messages examined in this study

contained more general comments and conversations, while in-text feedback was more specific to certain language or writing issues. These preliminary findings suggest that the nature of different forms of technology may impact how teachers mediate the revising and learning process. Future research is needed to learn more about how different forms of technology affords or constrains the use of mediated feedback.

In conclusion, my findings imply that written feedback, even given in an asynchronous context, can be dialogic and mediational, facilitating ongoing conversations and encouraging active participation from L2 writers. My observations demonstrate that such mediated feedback entails reciprocal growth and learning opportunities for both writers and tutors. It is my hope that this study will inspire future teachers of language learners to explore potential learning opportunities that online writing tutorials may hold, and have implications for teacher educators considering using writing tutorial as part of second language teacher preparation. If second language teachers are inspired to use written feedback practice in a way that affords expanded learning opportunities, my study has been a success.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Uptake Document

Name:

ID:

Assignment:

Draft #:

Date:

<b>1. What are the new to you in the feedback and comments you received?</b>
<b>2. What are the parts that you are still unclear about?</b>
<b>3. What parts of the paragraph do you need more help with?</b>
<b>4. Other questions to your tutor:</b>
<b>5. Other requests to your tutor:</b>

## **Appendix B: Needs Analysis for L2 Writers**

Name:

ID:

Department:

Name of Advisor:

Research Interests:

### **Needs Analysis in English Academic Writing**

1. What are your English writing experiences? Try to describe them. What kind of difficulties have you met with?
2. What are your expectations for the English academic writing course? What do you expect to learn?



### Appendix C: Self-Evaluation Sheet for L2 Writers

Name:

ID:

Assignment:

Date:

	Please list your improvements and what you learned from the tutorial.
About grammar	
About vocabulary	
About sentence structure	
About organization of content	
About rhetoric	
About writing conventions (e.g., spelling, mechanics)	

## Appendix D: Self-Reflection Sheet for Tutors

Name:

Assignment:

Date:

	Please reflect what you have learned in the tutorial in giving feedback about...
Grammar	
Vocabulary	
Sentence structure	
Content	
Organization	
Rhetorical issues	
Writing conventions (e.g., spelling, mechanics)	

## **Appendix E: Interview Protocol for Tutors**

1. Would you please describe your experience of giving feedback to and interacting with the EFL students in Taiwan? What is your general impression for the international online writing tutorial?
2. Why did you choose to participate in this international online writing tutorial?
3. What were your expectations for participating in this online writing workshop? Were they different from what you have actually experienced?
4. What kinds of feedback did you give to your students? How did you decide what feedback to give, and how, and when?
5. Here is an example feedback you gave to the writer (Show the interviewee the printed excerpts as a visual reminder). Why did you give this feedback and what were you thinking?
6. Did you try to use different feedback? How did you decide what types of feedback to give and how to give them?
7. Do you think the EFL students benefit from your feedback and/or interaction with them?
8. Did you gain anything from participating in this online writing tutorial?
9. Do you have any comments or suggestions for this international online writing tutorial?

## **Appendix F: Interview Protocol for L2 Writers**

1. Would you please describe your experience of receiving feedback from and interacting with the tutors in the U.S.? What is your general impression for the international online writing tutorial?
2. What were your expectations for participating in this online writing tutorial? Were they different from what you have actually experienced?
3. What kinds of feedback did you receive on your assignment?
4. Here is an example of your revision and the given feedback (Show the interviewee the printed excerpts as a visual reminder). What did you think about the feedback? Did you apply it to your other writings?
5. Do you learn anything from the feedback given to you in the two writing assignments? If yes, can you explain and give examples. If no, can you explain why?
6. Did you adopt all the suggestions/corrections given to you? If yes, why? If no, why?
7. Did you have questions for your partner regarding the feedback given to you? Did you try to explain your intended meaning? If yes, what happened after the negotiation?
8. Do you have any comments or suggestions for this international online writing tutorial?

## Appendix G: Observation Protocol

<b>Observational Notes:</b> A summary of chronological events (“Who, What, Where, How”), which may include some quotes from participants and observation of their behavior.
<b>Theoretical Notes:</b> A brief analysis of observation, interpretations of events and situations that lead to theoretical discussions
<b>Methodological Notes:</b> Reflections of research process data collection
<b>Personal Notes:</b> Notes of feelings, hunches, and perceptions that occurred during data collection

## Appendix H: Approved IRB Form

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>An Asynchronous Online Interaction between the EFL Learners in Taiwan and the Pre/In-Service ESOL Teachers in U.S.</b>
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by <b>Pei-Jie Chen</b> under the supervision of <b>Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán</b> at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are enrolled in a course of English academic writing. The purpose of this research project is to understand online interaction and its influence on learning English academic writing.
<b>Procedures</b>	Researchers will read your writing posted on the online discussion forum, your writing assignments as well as feedback given and subsequent revisions. You may be asked to participate in one or two audio-recorded interviews or focus groups scheduled at your convenience (approx 30 minutes per interview). Example interview questions may include: Describe your experiences participating in the online discussion activities related to your writing assignments in the English academic writing course. What do you think about the experiences of interacting with the U.S. ESOL teachers/EFL learners in Taiwan in your second language writing learning/teaching process? Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw without penalty at any time.
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project; however you may feel anxious about the recordings or interviews and the collection of your assignments as well as postings. To clear up any doubts and to ease any anxiety, you are encouraged to ask the researcher questions throughout the duration of the study. All conversations will remain confidential. You will be allowed to review and revise your interview transcripts if you so wish.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	The benefits to you include learning from and interacting with English speakers in the U.S. Your participation also helps teachers understand the pros and cons of the implementation of such asynchronous online writing workshop for English language learners. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how English language learners learn English academic writing.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	All data collected will be confidential and will be protected storing data in a secure location such as: locked office, locked cabinet, and a password protected computer. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. We will never use

	<p>your real name, instead you will be assigned a pseudonyms. Your information may only be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. This research project involves making audiotapes of you in the interview. The reason why the interviews will be audio taped is for the convenience of future data analysis. We hope to triangulate what the participants share in the interview regarding their asynchronous online interaction with the actual online postings. The interview audio-taping data will only be accessed by the research team, stored in locked file cabinets or in a password protected computer. All data will be destroyed ten years after the completion of the study.</p> <p>____ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.</p> <p>____ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study</p>
<b>Medical Treatment</b>	<p>The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.</p>
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator, <b>Dr. Melinda Martin-Beltrán</b> at:</p> <p>2211 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742</p> <p>Office phone: (301)405-4432, <a href="mailto:memb@umd.edu">mail to: memb@umd.edu</a>.</p> <p>or the Co-Investigator, <b>Pei-Jie Chen</b> at:</p> <p>Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Maryland, College Park, 20740</p> <p>(email) <a href="mailto:jennyi1219@gmail.com">jennyi1219@gmail.com</a>; (telephone) 240-460-4483</p>
<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a></b>  <b>Telephone: 301-405-0678</b> </p>

	This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME OF SUBJECT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b>	
	<b>SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	



## Appendix I: Transcription Convention

Square brackets]	Non-verbal actions, comments and context
<i>italics</i>	all text (and translations of speech) that was originally spoken by participants
Elipsis (...)	indicate pauses.
‘single quote’	participants indicate written language
?	rising intonation (indicating question)
!	exclamatory intonation
<u>underline</u>	word emphasized by speaker
xx	unintelligible words
<b>Bold type</b>	highlighted for analytical purposes

## Appendix J: Sentence Patterns for L2 Writers to Respond in Uptake Documents

If you do not know how to ask your tutor questions, the following may give you some ideas:

- ***About Grammar/Word Choice/Sentence Structure:***

1. I am not sure about the \_\_\_\_\_ you suggested here, would you please explain more?
2. I would like to know more about why \_\_\_\_\_ is suggested here.
3. What is the difference between the suggested use of \_\_\_\_\_ and my use of \_\_\_\_\_?
4. If I use \_\_\_\_\_ here, would it be acceptable/would it make sense to you?
5. I don't think I understand what you suggest me doing here, do you mind giving me  
more guidance/explanations/hints?
6. As suggested in your feedback, I am thinking to revise this part/sentence into  
\_\_\_\_\_. Does it make sense to you?
7. What I tried to convey is \_\_\_\_\_, do you have other suggestions for me?

- ***About Content & Organization:***

1. As you said I need more explanations here/you don't understand here, I would like to  
know what part(s) cause(s) confusion to you/what part(s) do(es) not make sense to you  
and why?
2. What other details would you suggest me adding/deleting here?
3. If I have no ideas about how to elaborate/explain my main ideas here, what would you  
suggest me doing?
4. Do you think the way I end/conclude the paragraph makes sense to you/make the  
paragraph stand out?
5. Do you think the way I organize this paragraph/the supporting details is logical?
6. If I would like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, how would you suggest me  
organizing them?

7. I rewrote/revised this part/paragraph in my 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, do you have other suggestions regarding my new organization/content?

- ***About Coherence & Unity:***

1. Do you think my paragraph shows coherence and unity?
2. What good connecting uses would you suggest to help improve the coherence/unity here?
3. If I talk about \_\_\_\_\_ here, do you think this will make my paragraph/this part less cohesive?
4. As a reader, did you find any parts of my writing are loosely connected? Please give me some guidance about how I can improve this.

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