

Scaffolded Peer Feedback in EFL Writing Tutorials — A Case Study —

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Scaffolded Peer Feedback in EFL Writing Tutorials

—A Case Study—

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1. Introduction

Providing meaningful oral feedback on students' texts through face-to-face dialogue is a key element of writing tutorials (Wells, 1990). The provision of feedback provides an opportunity for the students to reflect on their own writing by communicating with a tutor. Through dialogue, students can develop a sense of how readers might view their writing while reflecting on their texts with the guidance of a tutor. Despite the potential advantages of providing oral feedback in tutorial sessions, actual situations of face-to-face dialogue during tutorials in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts have not yet been thoroughly examined. More specifically, there is a lack of research focusing on non-native English writing peer tutors. This paper, therefore, reports on a case study exploring the dialogue generated during writing tutorials with special attention paid to the variety and features of oral feedback uttered by a peer writing tutor in an EFL context.

The dialogic nature of oral feedback initiated by peer writing tutors is well supported by sociocultural theory informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978). He contended that learning and development occur through social interaction rather than in the individual mind (Swain et al., 2015). This notion has greatly impacted second language learning by shedding light on the importance of interaction and mediation in individual learning and development (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006).

Perhaps the most widely recognized concept associated with sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Swain et al., 2015). This construct refers to a metaphorical space in which more competent others can help learners achieve more than they might on their own without assistance (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Applying the ZPD to writing tutorials, writers can advance their writing skills by having assistance from tutors, and refine their text to a greater extent than they could have done on it only by themselves.

It must, however, be added that the success of writing tutorials depends largely on how peer writing tutors interact orally with the students. Scaffolding, another key concept associated with sociocultural theory, can play a central role in contributing to writers' progress as they work

within their ZPD in tutorial sessions. Wells (1998) argues that scaffolding requires one person with more expertise than those being helped, whose goal is to instruct, with the intention of those being helped to become more autonomous or self-regulating. In other words, through tutorials, peer writing tutors are helping their students to be able to do better on their own next time, and, hence, become more autonomous (Kohonen, 2010). Therefore, it is deemed to be crucial for peer writing tutors to understand the importance of the mechanisms of scaffolding through a peer tutor training program.

In EFL contexts like Japan, however, there are not many writing centers that establish systematized peer tutor training programs in university contexts; therefore, such training must start on a small-scale practice aimed at fostering the development of autonomous and self-regulating peer writing tutors. The researchers in this paper examined how scaffolded feedback occurred during the writing tutorials by analyzing the tutor and the tutee talk. The analysis points to implications for peer tutor training in the EFL context. Although the current study reports on the mechanism of tutorial sessions in Japan, the findings obtained from the study add to the body of literature that explores how scaffolded feedback is practiced during writing tutorials. The study also identifies concrete strategies for providing scaffolded feedback that can make writing tutorials more meaningful for both tutors and tutees.

2. Literature Review

Sociocultural theory offers a strong theoretical endorsement for a wide range of language learning activities both within and beyond the classroom (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Feedback, taking a broad view of sociocultural theory, is considered as contextualized practice (Goldsten, 2006). Peer feedback activities, which usually take place as collaborative work in writing classrooms, reflect the sociocultural principles of mediation and interaction (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006). In reality, however, peer feedback activities are often more concerned with sentence-level issues, resulting in less interaction between peers (Leki, 1990; Nelson & Murphy, 1992, 1993). As Hanjani and Li (2014) point out in a recent study on peer feedback activities, this is most likely due to the fact that textual-level issues such as content and organization are more cognitively demanding and require a higher level of expertise. On the other hand, sentence-level issues such as subject verb agreement do not require major discussions between peers as far as they know the target grammar structures. Therefore, peer feedback activities in classrooms might be limited to sentence-level issues since these exchanges are usually carried out between peers with a similar level of language proficiency.

On the other hand, writing tutorials, which take place outside of writing classrooms, are assumed to be practiced between proficient writers and less proficient writers. Weigle and Nelson (2004) consider that focusing on textual-level features rather than sentence-level issues can facilitate more dialogues between tutors and tutees through negotiation. Consequently, in writing tutorials, proficient writing tutors are expected to provide tutees with more meaningful feedback especially for textual-level issues.

In keeping with the sociocultural principles of mediation and interaction, scaffolded feedback is considered a key element in sociocultural theory where learning is regarded as a social practice (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Examining the characteristics of scaffolded feedback provides information which could be useful in the formation of peer writing tutors. For example, in a child development study, Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) break down the act of scaffolding into six components : recruitment (enlisting the learners' interest in the task) ; reduction in degree of freedom (simplifying the task) ; direction management (keeping the learner motivated in pursuit of the goal) ; marking critical features (highlighting certain relevant features and pointing out discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution) ; frustration control (reducing stress and frustration during problem solving) ; and demonstration (modeling an idealized form of the act to be performed by completing the act or by explicating the learner's partial solution).

Second language (L2) writing empirical studies have also examined the features of scaffolded feedback analyzing dialogues which focused on sentence-level issues. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) explored the general characteristics of scaffolded feedback in relation to the ZDP. Through their research they identified the following features of scaffolding in the feedback process, which aims to help a novice writer become more self-regulated. They claim that scaffolding needs to be contingent (i.e., assistance is given only when needed and removed once the learner can function on their own), graduated (i.e., assistance is calibrated according to learners' ability and needs in relation to the task), and dialogic (i.e., assistance is embedded in a form of conversation in which tutor and learner are actively negotiating).

Villamil and Guerrero (2006) conducted a microgenetic analysis which examined the patterns of interaction of moment to moment changes in peer feedback activities. They found, as a chief mediation tool, that first language (L1) can facilitate the dialogues between pairs, fulfilling important roles such as exploring and expanding ideas for improving the partners' text. Through the microgenetic analysis, they characterized the self-regulated participants as displaying leadership, self-assurance, and willingness to share knowledge. Villamil and Guerrero also

acknowledged the joint interaction during the peer feedback activities paying attention to the word of “we” used by both participants. The peer feedback activities which they analyzed were mutually conceived rather than unidirectional and created a context of reciprocity.

Rogers (2004) elaborates on scaffolded feedback contending that a peer writing tutor engages the students’ attention, calibrates the task, motivates them, identifies relevant task features, controls for frustration, and demonstrates as needed. Exploring the mechanisms of scaffolded feedback, Weissberg (2006) emphasized the efficacy of oral scaffolding, calling attention to the highly individualized and negotiated means of delivery of oral feedback. In contrast to many of the previous studies in the English as a Second Language (ESL) context, he focused on an examination of textual-level issues rather than the sentence-level issues of students’ texts. Analyzing tutorial dialogues between a university writing instructor and nonnative speakers of English in graduate programs, Weissberg (2006) identified the following discourse functions which led to scaffolded feedback : asking questions, echoing phrases, completing or amplifying utterances, and establishing a personal link with the students. As an implication for writing tutor training, he claims that peer writing tutors may need assistance in developing mastery of the scaffolding mechanisms.

Weisberg’s study is helpful in that his coding can be applied to the examination of peer writing tutorials for undergraduate students in the EFL context. Yet, it is still questionable whether these categorizations can be applied to the current study since English is still used as a means of mediation in a majority of contexts in ESL. In EFL contexts, it is more natural to use their L1 between tutor and tutee who share same native language; therefore, analyzing the dialogues of writing tutorials carried out in the L1 is expected to provide detailed information for exploring the scaffolding feedback mechanisms in EFL contexts.

In EFL countries such as Japan in which writing centers are not yet widespread, students might not be used to meeting with peer writing tutors as they compose their papers (Sadoshima, 2013). As suggested by Weigle and Nelson (2004), the success of writing tutorials is attributed to various factors surrounding both tutors and tutees. Yu and Hu (2017) in their recent study also claim that a myriad of factors affect individual peer approaches to actual peer feedback activities in EFL writing classrooms. Their study conducted in a Chinese college writing classroom revealed that an array of contextual factors and peer feedback training affected students’ attitudes toward feedback on writing. Taking into account those influential factors in providing feedback, training peer writing tutors is definitely valuable as it can encourage tutors to be more responsible for the success of the tutorials.

Therefore, given the findings of these studies, one can conclude that studies conducted in EFL contexts, which provide prospective peer writing tutors with training and subsequently examine how these peer writing tutors deliver oral feedback, have the potential to make a valuable contribution to theoretical understanding as well as pedagogical practice. Furthermore, considering the current climate of promoting active learning in English language education in Japan, it is meaningful to explore how collaborative learning can be realized through peer writing tutors' scaffolded feedback on students' texts in an EFL context.

3. Study

3.1 Purpose of the Study

This paper reports on a case study designed to explore how peer writing tutors apply and deepen their knowledge and experience in tutorial sessions. To address this concern, the paper focuses on the following question : What changes can be seen in terms of scaffolded feedback between the two tutorial sessions? The examination of the interactions between a peer writing tutor and a peer writer in an EFL context will add to the current body of literature by providing insights into the characteristics of scaffolded feedback in an EFL setting. Through the exploration of these peer writing tutorials, this study also aims to provide some suggestions to inform the work of training peer writing tutors in EFL contexts.

3.2 Background of the Study

The study was carried out at a national university with about 10,000 undergraduate students in the eastern part of Japan. The university strongly encourages students to study abroad temporarily while they are undergraduates. However, in 2014 fewer than one hundred students actually went overseas to study through the university program. The university does not comprise a formal writing center to help students develop academic writing skills.

3.3 Peer Writing Tutor Training Program

The peer writing tutor training program was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Grant-in-Aid for Science Research (C). Through the grant, three peer writing tutors were hired after screening. The program consisted of three stages : reviewing the key elements of academic writing; acquiring the necessary skills to provide feedback on writing; and experiencing actual tutorials with students. The two tutorial sessions which will be reported in the case study in this paper formed the last stage of the

training program. In what follows we outline the first two stages (for a full description of the program, see Ootshi, 2015).

The first stage was dedicated to consolidating and reorganizing knowledge of academic writing and, more specifically, practicing argumentative essays utilizing Criterion. Criterion, which will be explained more in detail later, is an online essay writing tool. Although the three peer writing tutors had already received formal academic writing lessons in university, they had to submit writing assignments to Criterion and achieve the top score (6 point on a scale of 1~6) before they could participate in the study. All three were successful in doing this.

The second stage focused on acquiring the skills necessary to provide feedback on writing. This stage was further broken down into two parts : 1) learning how to provide feedback on both macro and micro level issues in the students' writing; and, 2) practicing providing feedback through roleplaying in pairs. In accordance with Ferris's (2006) suggestion regarding corrective feedback, in the first part of the second stage, the peer writing tutors were instructed to provide feedback on linguistic issues in a selective, focused, and clear way. Nonetheless, through oral feedback on the students' texts, the peer writing tutors were encouraged to comment on macro-level features such as organization and idea development.

In order to practice providing feedback in the later part of the second stage, the peer writing tutors engaged in mock one-on-one tutorial sessions. With one of them taking on the role of tutee, they experimented with the key features of scaffolded feedback, such as engaging the students' attention and calibrating the task. The role-playing activities became a preparation for the actual tutorial sessions in the last stage of the program.

3.4 Participants of the Study

In this paper we focus on one case and examine the relationship between a peer writing tutor, Kana, and her tutee, Ace. Kana, who was recruited by one of the Japanese authors of this paper, was a third-year student majoring in Law. She had a one-year experience as an exchange student at a university in the United States. When she applied for the peer writing tutorial training program, she submitted a writing sample in both Japanese and English outlining her purpose for participating in the program. According to Cumming (1989), writing expertise is a cognitive skill involving logical and analytical thinking and can be transferrable to other languages. The Japanese author in this paper, therefore, assessed her writing expertise by reviewing Kana's Japanese essay as well as the English essay. Based on an evaluation of the two writing samples, Kana's writing expertise was considered sufficient for her to become a peer

writing tutor. Based on an evaluation of the two writing samples, consequently, Kana was considered to be qualified as a peer writing tutor.

She was also interviewed in English by a native speaker of English, the other author of this paper. The interview was carried out after she turned in a short questionnaire, which aimed to clarify her purpose for wanting to be a peer writing tutor. In the interview Kana emphasized her willingness to share with her fellow students the knowledge and experience she had acquired during her time in the U.S. In addition, while she expressed her concern about her grammatical knowledge for improving the quality of her peers' writing, she felt the opportunity would be a good learning experience that would help her retain her English writing ability. She also manifested her friendly character, which seemed to be a necessary attribute for communicating smoothly with a tutee.

As for the peer tutee, Ace was a first-year Economics major participating in a special English program designed for students with an interest in studying abroad. At the time of the study, he was taking a preparation class for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Since IELTS has a writing test section, he had to develop his argumentative essay writing skills through the use of an online writing practice tool, Criterion, as a self-study component of the course. Ace, who planned to apply for an exchange program at a university in England, was looking to receive advice from peer writing tutors who he hoped would share their study abroad experiences through the writing tutorials, as well. It would have been, of course, ideal for Ace to have a tutor who had gone to study in England. However, this was not an issue that was considered when matching Ace with Kana as a peer tutor since the focus of the program was on improving argumentative writing skills, not varieties of English.

As will be reported in more detail in the following sections, the larger inquiry consisted of three peer tutorial groups. Kana and Ace were chosen as the focus of this single case study for three reasons. First, due to their demanding course workload and the resulting difficulties in coordinating their schedules, the other pairs were unable to complete all aspects of the training program. Second, because of background noise, segments of the recordings of the other pairs' tutorial sessions were inaudible. In addition to these practical reasons, affective factors were also taken into consideration. Kana was the most motivated of the three peer writing tutors and Ace was very keen to receive feedback from a proficient writer in the hope of improving his argumentative essays. For these reasons, Kana and Ace were selected as the focus of this single case study with the aim of presenting a detailed analysis of the scaffolded feedback offered in the peer writing tutor training program.

3.5 Procedures of the tutorial sessions

In keeping with the procedure followed by all the participants in the study, Kana and Ace met in two tutorial sessions. Each session, which lasted about forty minutes, was tape-recorded and later transcribed. One week before the tutorial with Ace, Kana had a training session with the researcher, which focused on Ace's first writing assignment. This training session took the form of a mock tutorial in which the other student writing tutors in the study also participated. Then, Kana had the first tutorial with Ace. During the week following the first tutorial, Ace wrote a different essay on Criterion. After receiving his second essay, Kana and the researcher met again and discussed Ace's second writing assignment. Kana then met Ace a second time in order to provide feedback on the second writing assignment. The prompts for the writing assignments were as follows :

The first tutorial : *Important Room*

What do you consider to be the most important room in a house? Why is this room more important to you than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

The second tutorial : *Stay in Hometown or Move*

After they complete their university studies, some students live in their hometowns. Others live in different towns or cities. Which do you think is better : living in your hometown or living in a different town or city? Give reasons for your answer.

Ace worked on these two prompts using Criterion without any time limitation. The essays were evaluated by the e-rater, an automated scoring engine, which uses a holistic scale. The evaluation criteria include grammar, usage, mechanics, style, organization and development. Ace's two scores on each assignment were the same : four out of six.

3.6 Description of data sources

For this case study, the following multiple sources of data were triangulated for analyses (a) transcriptions of the two tutorial sessions, (b) Kana's two reflection records, (c) pre and post interviews with Kana, and (d) Ace's interview data. Transcriptions of the two tutorial sessions were coded. The frequencies of the coded utterances were then calculated in order to determine which were the most prevalent. The data sources and analysis procedures are described below.

(a) Transcriptions of the two tutorial sessions

The two tutorial sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. The Japanese transcriptions of selected utterances from the two sessions were analyzed employing the grounded theory approach (GTA) of comparative analysis. In comparative analysis, constructs and concepts are compared with those in previous research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Drawing on the teacher/tutor feedback research reviewed in the previous section, Kana's utterances during the tutorial sessions were coded referring to Weissberg's categorization in scaffolding : asking questions, echoing phrases, completing or amplifying utterances, and establishing a personal link with the students (Weissberg, 2006). Since his categories are linked with topics and goals which result in scaffolding, they seemed to fit well with the aim of this study which was to explore scaffolding mechanisms in an EFL context. Nonetheless, taking into consideration that the peer writing tutorials were embedded in an EFL context, the labels and the definitions were modified as follows :

- (1) echoing phrases : echoing the points made by the tutee taking the form of summarization and repetition, serving as acknowledgement of the tutee's contribution;
- (2) asking questions : asking the tutee for further information, highlighting the points that he/she might want to clarify or develop;
- (3) completing or amplifying the points : completing or expanding the points made by the tutee for negotiating meaning together; and
- (4) personal affiliation : showing camaraderie and empathy to the tutee with a view to stimulating collaboration during the tutorial.

(b) Kana's two reflection records

Kana kept self-reflection records after every training session with the researcher which aimed at improving her teaching skills. She mainly wrote about what she had learned in each session. Two self-reflection records, before and after the tutorial, were used in the analyses for obtaining supplementary information.

(c) Pre and post interviews with Kana

The semi-structured interviews with Kana were conducted in English by one of the authors. The first interview was carried out soon after the peer writing tutor training program started. The second interview was conducted after Kana finished the second tutorial. Among the questions asked, responses to the following were examined for the purposes of this study :

1. What is a peer tutor?
2. What qualities do you think necessary for being a good peer tutor?
3. How do you feel about the benefits from the tutorial experiences? (at the second interview only)

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

(d) Ace's interviews data

Ace was interviewed in Japanese as a means to reflect on the two tutorials with Kana. The interview was not structured and explored his experience in a casual conversation style. The interview was also audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to explore how Kana applies and deepens her knowledge and experience in tutorial sessions after peer writing tutor training, the transcriptions and interview data in this case study are triangulated for analyses. The following discussion examines Kana's development and focuses on the features of scaffolded feedback that can be found in the current case study.

As a first step, we identified instances of the four categories of scaffolded feedback found in the two tutorials. Figure 1 illustrates a comparison of the categorization for Kana's utterances in the first and second tutorials. All categories, as shown in the graph, were found in the both tutorials with completing or amplifying the points having the highest frequency of occurrence and echoing phrases, the least.

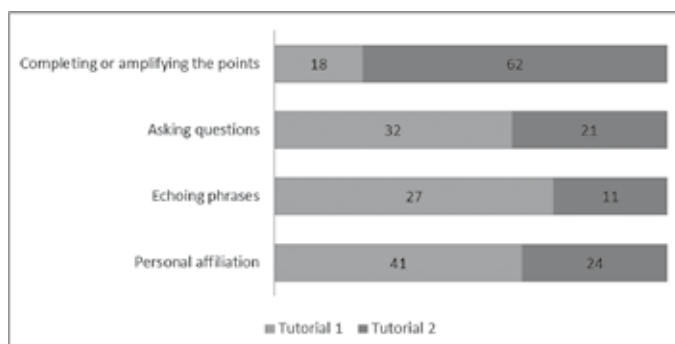


Figure 1 Frequency of coded features during the two tutorials

Notes. The numbers on the graph indicate the frequency of each code.

Noticeable change between Tutorial 1 and Tutorial 2 is evident in the frequencies of completing or amplifying the points. While completing or amplifying the points showed the lowest frequency among the four categories in Tutorial 1, it ranked the highest in Tutorial 2, overwhelming other categories. The frequencies of the other categories are all reduced in Tutorial 2, with personal affiliation being the most noticeable.

In order to prepare for the first tutorial with Ace, Kana met one of the authors in a tutor training session. In her reflection record, written after the training section with the author, Kana wrote, “...*would like to praise a lot during the tutorials;...would like to let the tutee talk; and ... would like to make a relaxed atmosphere. I'm an upperclassman not a teacher.*” From these comments, we can see that she considers “praise” to be very important for conducting the tutorial. Here is the excerpt from Tutorial 1 that exemplifies Kana’s personal affiliation in the dialogue.

Excerpt A : Kana (K) and Ace (A)

1. K : First of all, I found it very interesting.
2. A : Yes...
3. K : It's a very good story. Very unique.
4. K : It's not like that living room is a very good place to relax. Your point is not like that.
Very unique.
5. A : Yes.
6. K : So I thought that this is a very good story. I mean it's very strong content.
7. A : Yes.
8. K : Very nice.
9. A : Oh, thank you very much.
10. K : Then, if you want to make it even stronger, what can we do...

In the dialogue above, Kana praises Ace’s work in almost all of the lines before reaching Line 10, in which she shifts to making instructional points. In accordance with Weissberg (2006) suggestion, this dialogue shows that Kana uses her utterances of personal affiliation as a springboard to making instructional points. Kana was well aware of what Ace was trying to say in his first essay.

At the same time, however, there seems to be no negotiation between Kana and Ace. The focus of Kana’s feedback in the tutorials was textual-level issues which necessitated more

negotiation between Kana and Ace than the feedback for sentence-level issues; however, Ace's utterances were limited to responses to Kana's questions. He hardly initiated any dialogue in Tutorial 1. This feature was not in accordance with the point made by Weigle and Nelson (2004). The content of feedback did not become an influential factor for stimulating interaction between the tutor and tutee in this study. Even though Kana wanted to have Ace express his ideas as she commented in the reflection record above, noteworthy utterances by Ace were hardly found. This might lead to the small frequency of echoing phrases in this study.

On the other hand, in the second tutorial, the frequency of personal affiliation utterances is decreased while comments completing or amplifying the points increase. Here is an excerpt of dialogue, which illustrates completing or amplifying the points.

Excerpt B : Kana (K) and Ace (A)

11. A : The prompt is asking if you are staying or moving out after graduating from university, isn't it?
12. K : That's right.
13. A : I wonder what if you are living alone now at university...
14. K : Oh, that's true.
15. A : I just wondered how I can think of it in that case. I thought that I didn't have to think about such specific cases, though...
16. K : I know what you mean. This prompt is asking you what you want to do "after" graduating from university. If you want to mention living alone thing...
17. A : Yes...
18. K : If people are already living alone, I guess that those people get used to moving out to a different town. They might be flexible to move into different places.

Contrary to the previous excerpt from Tutorial 1, Ace actively participated in the conversation with Kana in this dialogue. As well as taking a form of echoing phrases (Line 12 and 14) in this dialogue, Kana's comments expanded Ace's utterances (Line 16 and 18) while at the same time she listened carefully to his concerns and questions.

As noticed in the dialogue above, Ace was confused by the prompt for the second writing assignment. The prompt was designed to have the students write about their opinion concerning which is better : staying in one's hometown or moving out to a different city after graduating from university. The confusing point for Ace was that he had a good opportunity to go back to

his hometown after graduating from his university where he was currently living alone. This is in opposition to the prompt, which assumes that students will be going to university in their hometown. Ace cannot organize his ideas even though he tries hard to connect his experience living alone with the essay assignment.

Before the second tutorial, Kana made these follow-up comments in her reflection record :

I would like to praise his improvement in terms of logic and balanced proposition development. I would like to ask the reasons why he couldn't write specific examples for this prompt.

Her comments shifted from wishing to praise Ace to a desire to provide good instruction for his second essay. Unlike the situation in the first tutorial, she does not understand the points that Ace wants to make in support of his opinion. While Ace shows improvement in regard to the overall structure of the essay, which Kana focused on in the first tutorial, his second essay became weak in terms of idea development due to a lack of understanding of the prompt. Kana reflected on her second tutorial experience in the interview :

At the second tutorial, I asked him a lot. Because his writing was messed up. So I couldn't understand it first so then I thought that he wanted to go other places after graduation. But I couldn't find an answer for it from his writing. I thought that he was thinking like this but it was not. Maybe he wrote something but I took it differently. We had a misunderstanding over the text.

Therefore, Kana tried hard to listen to Ace's worries and thoughts about composing the essay, all the while carefully amplifying the points he made. Her utterances also might have become a link to making instructional points, hoping he would realize the points that readers might expect in reading his essay. Having this feedback from Kana, Ace actively shares his concerns and thoughts for constructing ideas through negotiating meaning with Kana. As seen in the study by Villamil and Guerrero (2006), it was also noticed that Kana and Ace mutually created the text together through active dialogue.

The exchange between Kana and Ace in Tutorial 2 invites an exploration of the elements conducive to establishing a positive and productive peer writing tutor and tutee relationship. Wissberg (2006) argued that scaffolding usually happens when a tutor is not ready to provide quick solutions to the tutee or takes time for the tutee to realize the points that he wants to

make. This point is illustrated in this dialogue.

In addition to an analysis of the dialogue during the tutorials, we would also like to draw on comments Kana and Ace made during the interviews. In the interview before the tutorials, Kana was asked, “What is a peer writing tutor to you?” She replied,

A peer writing tutor encourages the students to write better. I'm trying to focus on good points such as good content and idea and then switch the parts need to fix. So a peer writing tutor should give praise and complements a lot.

When asked the same question again in the interview after the tutorials, she answered,

A peer writing tutor is not only providing feedback on the students' texts but also making them realize new ideas without pushing mine.

As Kana's responses suggest, she is primarily concerned with providing Ace emotional support. Emotional support is considered to be an important component of scaffolding for frustration control (Wood et al, 1976) and motivating the learners (Rogers, 2004) during the scaffolding process. In the first interview she wants to encourage the tutees to be the best writers they can be. However, in the second interview, there is a noticeable shift : Kana realizes the importance of negotiating meaning without taking ownership away from the writers. In each interview Kana was asked, “What qualities do you think necessary for being a good writing peer tutor?” In the first interview she said,

Probably, communication skills. Saying “this is wrong” is depressing to the students. I want to make them feel comfortable. Through communicating with each other, I want the students to trust me.

In the second interview, there is a shift in her thinking :

I think that writing skill is very important. If I'm not a good writer, I can't give them good feedback so the important thing is I should have confidence in my writing. Then, I can teach them how to make their writing better.

In the first interview, Kana emphasizes her concern about creating a positive communication climate with the potential to provide the tutee with emotional support. However, after the tutorial sessions, Kana's concern has shifted to a focus on the content and quality of the student's writing. Interestingly, she notes the importance of having confidence in her own skills as a writer. Kana recognizes that her ability to perform as a tutor is tied to her own development as a writer and her sense of self.

The last question in the second interview required Kana to reflect on the impact of the peer tutor experience on her sense of self. She was asked what benefits she could get through her peer writing tutor experiences. She replied,

I can learn how to write essays. I can think more critically. I sometimes I accept everything. Oh, this is good and this is fine. But I can't do that as a tutor. Sometimes I have to find out the weak points of the essay and I have to give advice for them. I think that this is good for me to foster my critical thinking.

In her response Kana highlights the development of her critical thinking skills. However, there is also evidence of a fundamental change in her sense of self. There is the suggestion that Kana has attained a new level of maturity through the experience. Kana realizes that she has a responsibility to the tutee to provide critical feedback even though this might create an emotionally challenging communication context. Once she establishes trust with Ace, she assumes a more assertive leadership role in the second tutorial. Kana's comments in the second interview support this assertion. This suggests a concomitant development in her metacognitive awareness along with her capacity to take charge and demonstrate leadership for guiding tutees.

From the analyses of multiple data sources in this study, we can see evidence of scaffolded feedback initiated by Kana. While her first tutorial is dedicated to building a relationship of trust with her tutee, in her second tutorial she shifts to her role as a peer writing tutor highlighting the necessity of improving the tutee's academic writing skills. Not only is Kana taking responsibility for helping Ace, she is also taking responsibility for her emotional response. Kana's comments in the second interview illustrate that she has recognized her need to take charge of the situation and provide critical feedback regardless of the emotional challenges that might present.

In this case study, scaffolded feedback is manifested in the form of comments which fulfil the functions of personal affiliation and completing or amplifying the points. It should be noted that

utterances aimed at completing or amplifying the points place demands on the tutee in that they require further communication and attention to writing skills.

To conclude the discussion, we would like to turn to the interview with Ace which was conducted in Japanese after he experienced the tutorial sessions with Kana. He was asked the following question : “Was Kana’s tutorial helpful to improve your academic writing skills? If so, what parts did you find helpful?” He responded as follows :

Kana’s advice helped me organize sentences within paragraph. Thanks to Kana’s advice, I became more conscious of including specific examples in my writing.

He was then asked, “What did you think about this tutorial experience in terms of having feedback on your writing assignments from Kana?” He answered :

She was just like a real teacher for me.

Ace was also asked whether he would prefer to have advice aimed at improving his academic writing skills from a student as opposed to a teacher. He said :

I want to learn from somebody who is good at writing and knowledge; but I might feel inferior if he or she is in the same year. Upperclassmen might be better in that sense.

While Ace’s prime concern seems to be getting good advice from a more knowledgeable other, cultural constraints enter into the picture. Given the acceptability in Japanese society of receiving guidance and even direction from a sempai (usually an older individual who is expected to be more experienced and, hence, wiser), Ace would be more comfortableable working with a peer writing tutor who is in fact a bit older.

Scaffolded feedback must be realized between a capable peer writing tutor and a less capable peer within his or her zone of proximal development. At the same time, however, age difference should also be taken into account in an EFL context in which seniority is a determining factor of hierarchical relationships between students. In a view of sociocultural theory, feedback has to be examined considering social and contextual factors (Goldsten, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; and Yu & Hu, 2017). Age difference, therefore, is considered as an influential factor for the success of scaffolded feedback in an EFL context.

5. Conclusions and Implications

This case study used multiple data sources to explore how a peer writing tutor provides scaffolded feedback to a student in an EFL context after receiving training. An examination of the scaffolded feedback provided in the tutorials revealed that the bulk of the comments fell into four broad categories : echoing phrases, asking questions, completing or amplifying the points, personal affiliation. This finding points to three salient implications.

First and foremost, whether educators are providing feedback themselves or training peer writing tutors to do this, careful attention needs to be paid to these four categories of comments. Second, feelings and emotions are key features of the tutor-tutee relationship. The data in this study emphasize the importance of creating a relationship based on trust. Kana achieved this primarily through personal affiliation, more specifically by providing praise. Praise established a positive emotional climate in which Kana could gain Ace's trust. This in turn encouraged him to share his opinions with Kana in the second tutorial.

Third, building the confidence of both the tutor and tutee is paramount to successful tutorials. Kana built Ace's confidence by initially providing both affirmative and positive comments, offering her views as a reader rather than making suggestions. On the other hand, Kana as a tutor, gained confidence as she developed her communication, metacognitive and critical thinking skills through the training program and the actual experience of participating in the tutorials. Therefore, training programs should strive to foster peer tutors' confidence by providing opportunities for them to develop these skills.

Finally, it should be noted that when matching peer writing tutors with tutees, the difference in age should be taken into account in EFL contexts. While the literature has not examined the ZPD from the perspective of seniority, university students in Japan would generally tend to be conscious of age difference especially in one-on-one tutorials. Even if the students were to receive helpful suggestions during the tutorials, they might feel inferior to their tutors in contexts where they were of the same age. In order to protect students' self-esteem, senior students should serve as peer writing tutors. This harkens back to the point made earlier : in the tutor-tutee relationship feelings and emotions are of prime importance. Perhaps, this is the most important contribution that this study makes to the literature : the recognition of the key role completing or amplifying the points and personal affiliation play in creating a positive communication climate essential to the success of peer tutor writing tutorials.

As for the limitations of the inquiry, this case study focused on a single pair which was composed of a friendly tutor and a motivated tutee. Future research might consider comparing

tutors and tutees with different characteristics. An analysis of their interaction could provide further insights into the core features of scaffolded feedback in an EFL context. Furthermore, the feedback features identified in the current study in an EFL context might not be applicable to ESL contexts.

Clearly, recognizing the key features of scaffolded feedback is important for improving tutor training programs in both EFL and ESL settings. As Weissberg (2006) discussed, tutorial training is a good opportunity for tutors to develop the skills and strategies required for negotiating meaning with tutees. Peer writing tutors can practice those communication skills paying attention to the key features of scaffolded feedback through activities such as a mock tutorial lesson. The outcomes of this study, therefore, contribute to improving tutor training programs by suggesting ways in which writing tutorials might be made more meaningful for both tutors and tutees. Overall, this case study adds to the body of literature exploring how peers might provide effective scaffolded feedback in an EFL context.

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