Empowering Chinese Students to Regain the "Voice" via Vygotsky's ZPD Integrated with the Socratic Seminar

ZHENGJIE LI DR.
Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, zhengjieli@usf.edu

INTRODUCTION

With the growth of the Chinese economy, the number of middle-class families has increased to 430 million (Babones, 2018). Accordingly, many middle-class families in China are able to support their children financially to study abroad. In previous decades, a majority of Chinese students who studied abroad enrolled in higher education in the United States, but increasingly in recent times Chinese students studying in the United States are of school-aged. For example, between 2013 and 2016, there was a 48% increase in the number of students arriving in the United States from China. Moreover, 40% of all international students enrolled in American high schools come from China (IIE, 2017).

Nonetheless, apart from adolescent behavioral issues (Cheung, 2022), many Chinese students in American high schools are confronted with challenges such as heavy reading loads, language barriers, and cultural differences, which has resulted in an increase in ESL/ESOL programs to help these students better adapt to mainstream academic classes at schools (Cheng & Yang, 2019). What is even more challenging is the anxiety associated with their English writing assignments from different classes (Liang & Turner, 2021). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) defined language anxiety as the fear or apprehension experienced by a learner who is expected to use a second or foreign language (L2). Horwitz et al. (1986) conceived foreign language anxiety (FLA) as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Central to L2 learning are the L2 writing skills that not only capitalize on socio-linguistic protocols, structural coherence, and idiomatic expressions, but require L2 learners to grapple with metalinguistic reasoning and logic. Moreover, Petzel and Wenzel (1993) asserted that the writing process is not merely a linguistic endeavor, but also a complex psycho-social activity. Yet, little research on English writing practices among Chinese students in American high schools has been conducted. Hence, the goal of our study was to examine a pedagogical approach for L2 writing which may provide insights for ESOL researchers and practitioners to better help international students in their academic English writing.

This study focused on the English language development of 23 students studying at an American high school in the southeast United States (heretofore addressed as HOPE – a private school, pseudonym). Despite the language support from the ESOL program at HOPE, according to the ESOL instructor Ann (pseudonym), many Chinese students have shared that they sometimes feel isolated in their class because of their limited English language proficiency. Feelings of isolation are compounded by a 'disconnectedness' between themselves and their teachers and other students at HOPE, made worse by the cognitive taxing nature of trying to navigate the linguistic complexities of understanding the subject matter of mainstream area courses and completing assignments. As such, improving English academic writing among the Chinese students at HOPE requires much attention from the ESOL program there. To address this pressing matter, effective pedagogical approaches need to be discussed, pursued, and systematically implemented in the ESOL program herein. To this end, I incorporated the sociocultural perspectives

1

embodied by the Socratic Seminar to empower the instructor, Ann, to elevate her Chinese students' English academic writing at HOPE. That is, this study situated language as a mediator of two discrete though interrelated fields of human activity: (a) language as it is *used* to facilitate communication and to create spaces for the maintenance of social relationships among members of any given knowledge community, and (b) language as a tool which *mediates* thought processes and regulates the conceptual, reasoning and reflective capabilities of speakers (or writers; Johnson, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). To capitalize on the mediation process, the Socratic Seminar was used to enable students to negotiate the rules of English writing.

I presented a collaborative learning community advocating critical thinking and reasoning skills (Boghossian, 2004; Lambright, 1995; Strong, 1996; Vlastos, 1971), as well as peer interaction optimized by collective scaffolding that allows learners to co-construct thinking and write collectively (Donato, 1988, 1994). According to Tredway (1995), the Socratic Seminar is "[a] technique that dates back to ancient times offers a tangible, engaging way for students to develop both ethics and critical thinking—actively and cooperatively" (p. 26). Finally, I adopted a microgenetic Vygotskyan approach, one in which moment-to-moment changes in the learners' behavior are noted and examined (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000), to analyze the interaction between the ESOL teacher, Ann, and one 9th-grade Chinese student, Vincent (pseudonym). In so doing, I was able to observe the way Ann, as a crucial mediator, presented both verbal scaffolding and written feedback for Vincent in the process of English writing. I hope that this pedagogical approach can be translated into best teaching practices for ESOL researchers and practitioners alike.

Research Questions

1. In what ways can verbal scaffolding, as implemented within the Socratic seminar, mediate the L2 English language development of a Chinese student?

2. What roles do verbal scaffolding and written feedback play in facilitating a student's writing revision process?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory allows us to understand that the human mind is developed via interactions with language and culture. Specifically, humans are mediated by symbolic tools that regulate their mental activities. That is to say, learning and development of the individual is highly connected with socially situated activities, which, in turn, are critical to cognitive development. From a Piagetian perspective, peer interaction is essential to break down learners' egocentric thinking and inform them to take responsibility for their own learning (Wadsworth, 1978). In contrast to Piagetian scholars, Vygotskian scholars touch more on the linguistic dimension of students' cognitive development and believe that among all the symbolic artifacts, language plays a pivotal role in the mental activities of the individual. For example, as explained by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), "linguistic activity, including speaking and writing, is an

2

indispensable component of such mental operations as voluntary memory, voluntary attention, planning, monitoring, the formation of intentions, rational thought, and learning" (p. 467). Hence, we examined how dialogic interactions between teacher(s) and students can contribute to students' English writing.

In this study, an ESOL teacher served as a mediator who provided both verbal scaffolding and written feedback for a Chinese student at HOPE, Vincent. The ESOL teacher guided him to improve his English writing through explicit pedagogical steps that followed Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) *Regulatory Scale* (strategically from implicit to explicit):

0. Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors, and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.

1. Construction of a "collaborative frame" prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.

2. Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.

3. Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in a segment (e.g., sentence, clause, line) – "Is there anything wrong in this sentence ?"

4. Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.

5. Tutor narrows down the location of the error (e.g., tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).

6. Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error (e.g., "There is something wrong with the tense marking here").

7. Tutor identifies the error ("You can't use an auxiliary here").

8. Tutor rejects learner's unsuccessful attempts at correcting the error.

9. Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (e.g., "It is not really past but something that is still going on").

10. Tutor provides the correct form.

11. Tutor provides some explanation for use of the correct form.

12. Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action. (p. 471).

3

As shown in the Regulatory Scale, Aljaafreh and Lantolf followed the *Mechanisms of Effective Help in the Zone of Proximal Development* (Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984), making the intervention graduated and contingent. First, graduated intervention refers to offering help that "normally starts at a highly strategic, or implicit, level and progressively becomes more specific, more concrete, until the appropriate level is reached as determined by the novice's response patterns to the help" (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 468). Second, contingent intervention underscores help that "should be offered only when it is needed, and withdrawn as soon as the novice shows signs of self-control and ability to function independently" (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 468). Both graduated and contingent interventions deal with a learning process in the ZPD, which explains how novices tend to shift from other-regulation to self-regulation when situated in a structured learning environment.

Using an example of learning how to perform a surgical operation via an apprenticeship model of training, we can see a novice surgeon making many errors and becoming perplexed with the appropriate procedure in a simulated surgical task, such as monitoring the depth of anesthesia, deforming soft tissue, performing tearing and cutting, executing penetration of soft tissue, tying a knot, etc., since the novice surgeon still stays in the cognitive stage where they only understand the mechanics of performing a surgical operation. However, the novice surgeon may gradually improve their surgical skills with a series of corrective help and immediate feedback from a surgeon coach. The more the novice surgeon corrects their surgical techniques while guided by the coach, the less intervention they get from the coach. Ultimately, the novice surgeon can align their surgical operation with the target structures required by the coach, thereby delivering a smooth performance with precision, efficiency, and speed. Similar to performing a surgical operation, writing is not biologically processed, but psychological processed, involving mental, cultural, and conscious intervention (Ratner, 2004).

Zone of Proximal Development

Many studies have acknowledged ZPD plays a positive role in the language learning process (i.e., Chaiklin, 2003; Del Rio & Alvarez, 2007; Del Rio & Potter, 2003; Donato, 1994; Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; Fernandez et al., 2001; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Guk & Kellogg, 2007; Haught & McCafferty, 2008; Holzman, 2002). Principally, Vygotsky's (1978) conceptualization of ZPD informs us there are two developmental levels in the learner: the actual development level determined by what the learner can do alone, and the potential level of development established by observing what the learner can do when assisted by an adult or a more capable peer. In other words, ZPD underscores the potential development that is determined by the guidance or support from more capable individuals.

In this study, we employed a microgenetic approach to study the observation of moment-to-moment changes in behavior (Vygotsky, 1978), to investigate and analyze the interaction between the ESOL teacher, Ann, and the 9th-grade Chinese student, Vincent. There are two types of interaction observed in this study. The ESOL teacher Ann conducted a Socratic Seminar and utilized scaffolding strategies associated with the ZPD

4

that enables "a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). Bruner (1978) explained scaffolding is also considered as a metaphor for a mother's verbal efforts to maintain conversation with a child and indirectly to promote language acquisition (as cited in Li, 2014, p. 24).

The first type of interaction integrates graduated and contingent interventions with Wood et al. (1976) hypothesis stating successful scaffolding is characterized by six actions on the tutor's part: (a) recruiting the tutee's attention, (b) reducing degrees of freedom in the task in order to make it manageable, (c) keeping direction in terms of the goals, (d) marking critical features, (e) controlling frustration, and (f) modeling solutions (as cited in de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). In this study, since Ann knew Vincent's English proficiency well, she could manage using her verbal feedback to guide Vincent to present clear questions and answers in the Socratic Seminar. The scaffolding offered by Ann was progressive from an implicit level to an explicit level; at the meantime, the verbal feedback was only offered when Vincent was not able to deliver an expected performance—presenting ambiguous questions and answers with grammatical errors. The scaffolding from Ann was aimed at mediating Vincent's higher forms of thinking and leading him to perform more effectively in the Socratic Seminar. Moreover, this type of interaction between Ann and Vincent is consistent with Bakhtin's (1986) sociocultural account of dialogic practices, which explain that knowledge is not an individual creation but rather is socially shared and emerges from cultural practice. Bakhtin referred to dialogue as a continuity of utterance, which includes a speaker, an active listener, and given boundaries, extending an invitation to think, to communicate, and to produce purposeful meanings (as cited in Kim & Jang, 2014, p. 207). This study describes how the ESOL teacher Ann is able to use dialogue dynamically and interactively in a Socratic Seminar to engage her students and make them produce meaningful utterances that can be applied to their academic English writing.

The second type of interaction between Ann and Vincent is presented in a written format. The significance of teacher written feedback has been noted in many studies in the English as a second/foreign language context through the lens of Vygotsky's ZPD (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ware & Warschauer, 2006; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2001). With effective written feedback, students' writing conventions and habits are mediated in a particular reconstruction of English grammatical forms and structuring coherence, which will lead them to achieve a higher level of academic performance. For example, Ferris and Roberts (2001) reported that one group of ESL students from a U.S. university receiving corrective feedback tended to outperform the control group that had only self-corrected their writing. Using a Vygotskyan perspective, de Guerrero and Villamil (1994) pointed out how peer revision in the writing classroom might allow for interchangeability of roles and promote independent intellectual functioning.

Specifically, after each round of Socratic Seminar in the class, Vincent was expected to summarize his ideas and present them through writing a persuasive essay. Ann needed to scaffold the process of Vincent's revisions by presenting written feedback

5

in both the first draft and the second draft. Systematically, in Vincent's writing process, Ann, being the expert in writing, offered graduated written feedback to Vincent until he could thoroughly critique his own writing.

Socratic Seminar

From Confucius of the mysterious East to Socrates of the classic West, dialogues constitute the great teachings that have passed euphonious wisdom to generation after generation. Accounting for critical thinking and deductive reasoning, Socratic Seminar, which has individuals perform a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue, has been widely embraced by educators. Additionally, Socratic Seminar empowers students to think with reasoning and logic, co-construct meaning dialogically with openness and respect, and gain a deeper understanding of challenging concepts (Billings & Roberts, 2003). Socratic Seminar is also in line with constructivists who advocate critical thinking and taking responsibility for students' own learning in an interactive and dialogical environment.

More importantly, Socratic Seminar capitalizes on Vygotsky's ZPD as the seminar allows participants to contribute to the learning community through their dialogic work as well as individual expertise. In other words, as Putney and Broughton (2011) put it, "students who are working together on a shared text in an inquiry-based situation have the opportunity to construct knowledge that has potential for becoming both collective knowledge as well as individual knowledge" (p. 94; also see Edwards & Mercer, 1987; John-Steiner & Meehan, 2000; Mercer, 2000; Putney et al., 2000). From a linguistic perspective, Socratic Seminar provides more opportunities for language learners to decode the meaning of abstract concepts collectively, which is in accordance with Hung's (1999) assertion that "language is used in centers no one the isolated thinker manifesting thoughts, but on a dialogue in which the utterances react to each other and acquire meaning by mutual relation and conflict" (p. 195). Therefore, conducting Socratic Seminar in an ESOL class, on the one hand, will optimize the dialogic interactions that enable teachers to help students become cognizant of their reasoning and logic as well as allow students to receive critical ideas from both teachers and peers, which can ultimately enrich their English writing. On the other hand, as Hyland and Hyland (2006) asserted, teachers can implement dialogic interactions to help students understand "their strengths and weaknesses, develop their autonomy, [and] allow them to raise questions on their written feedback" (p. 5).

METHODOLOGY

A Case Study Research

In order to achieve evidence-informed results and obtain a holistic understanding of the results (Miles et al., 2014), I undertook a case study research as it allowed us to explore "a bounded system (a case)…over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports)" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). That is, a case study

6

research empowered us to deconstruct multiple data sources within a specific, focused context (studying the progress of Vincent's L2 writing) and integrate them into interpretive findings to inform researchers or educators in the second language writing field. More specifically, this case study is in line with Yin's (1984) exploratory case study, which is purported to inquire a phenomenon endowed with our research interest—herein, how dialogic scaffolding and written feedback couched within the Socratic Seminar can promote a Chinese student's L2 writing competence. To this end, adopting an exploratory case study approach helped me funnel multiple data sources into in-depth and multi-faceted findings.

Participants

The main participants in this study were the ESOL teacher, Ann, and one 9th-grade Chinese student, Vincent, who studied at HOPE. Vincent was the focal student who participated in both the Socratic Seminar section and the writing section in this study. Before being admitted to HOPE, all international students must meet two requirements from this school. They must achieve 50 plus (out of 120) on the TOEFL iBT test which measures the ability of international students to use and understand English at the university level, as well as pass an oral interview with the admission advisor at HOPE. During their first year at HOPE, all international students are required to take the ESOL program that offers academic English writing lessons and also participate in subject area tutoring sessions in literature, science, history, arts, and mathematics. Those who attend this ESOL program are the 9th-grade Chinese students; they are expected to enhance their overall English proficiency so they can adapt to the mainstream classes at HOPE and prepare for the TOEFL test prior to applying to universities in the United States.

Microgenetic Approach

In order to understand and analyze the ongoing English development of Vincent in the Socratic Seminar as well as his progressive English writing facilitated by Ann's written feedback, we chose to employ the microgenetic approach (i.e., microgenetic method), which yields detailed data pertaining to "progress in understanding cognitive developmental change mechanism" (Siegler & Crowley, 1991, p. 606). According to Siegler and Crowley (1991), there are three key properties that define the microgenetic approach:

(a) Observations span the entire period from the beginning of the change to the time at which it reaches a relatively stable state.

(b) The density of observations is high relative to the rate of change of the phenomenon.

(c) Observed behavior is subjected to intensive trial-by-trial analysis, with the goal of inferring the processes that give rise to both quantitative and qualitative aspects of change. (p. 606)

7

Since Ann instantaneously presented verbal scaffolding and the Chinese students were able to adjust their language accordingly in the Socratic Seminar, this approach helped us illuminate the subtle changes of their ongoing dialogues as well as investigate the mechanisms of Ann's written feedback and Vincent's revised works. This type of "microgenetic" analysis, as Rogoff (1984, p. 55) referred to it, is crucial in understanding how psychological processes are formed (as cited in de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 54).

Instructional Procedure and Data Collection

This study took place on a Monday morning at HOPE in a writing class instructed by the ESOL teacher, Ann. Since Ann engaged in detailed discussions with us about the procedure and pedagogical approach for this research, Ann started the class without much explanation except to inform the students we would participate as observers. In the first section, Ann adopted the Socratic Seminar to lead all the Chinese students in a discussion of a popular topic from the TOEFL writing test, "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement : Teachers should have at least the same wages as lawyers and doctors. Use specific reasons and details to support your stance." After presenting the topic to all the students, Ann asked the Chinese students to choose a stance about whether teachers should obtain the same wages as lawyers and doctors. Then, students were expected to generate several relevant questions based on their own interpretation of this topic.

Next, Ann had all the students sit in a circle and introduced how they might participate in the seminar with respect and appropriate reasoning and logic. To align the seminar with the principles of presenting scaffolding in L2 contexts, Ann adopted two types of intervention: graduation (i.e., strategically offering help from implicit level to explicit level) and contingency (i.e., offering help only when needed) while guiding the students to make contributions with clear roles and responsibilities to this seminar (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). In the entire seminar, Ann served as a mediator to scaffold Vincent's participation, and I was able to observe their entire seminar that day. I audio recorded all the discussions in the seminar and later transcribed them.

Data Analysis

As Donato (1994) explained, "[a] microgenetic analysis allows us to observe directly how students help each other during the overt planning of L2 utterances and the outcome of these multiple forces of help as they come into contact, and interact, with each other" (p. 42). Since this study also involved data spawned from the seminar, while evaluating the data holistically, I referred to the qualitative data analysis to better capture the interrelationship between conventional content (i.e., dialogues) and summative content (i.e., essays; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I audio recorded all the discussions guided by the qualitative data collection protocols (Hatch, 2002), and I chose to utilize the microgenetic approach to investigate the effectiveness of Ann's verbal scaffolding in the seminar. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994)'s regulatory scale led Ann to present interventions in alignment with the protocols of ZPD. In the first section, Ann, serving as a mediator, conducted a Socratic Seminar about a popular topic from the TOEFL writing test. Ten

8

Chinese students including Vincent participated in this seminar and Ann only offered verbal scaffolding for Vincent in the seminar. As an observer, I remained silent and recorded the dialogic interactions between Ann and Vincent. In the second section of this study, I examined Ann's written feedback on Vincent's composition and explored how Ann's written feedback impacted Vincent's revised works. The main reason we selected Vincent was because he was the newest Chinese student and he attended HOPE for a month, which indicated the conventional Chinese teaching method might still dominate his ways of learning knowledge.

In the second section, Vincent was expected to transfer his ideas in the previous discussions to a five-paragraph persuasive essay of 400-500 words about the same topic, "whether teachers should have at least the same wages as doctors and lawyers." In this second section, I explored how Vincent might develop his writing skills by receiving written feedback on his first and second drafts from the mediator Ann. The essay was completed by Vincent at home and reviewed by Ann in a MSWord document. Park (2006) stated there are three types of teacher written feedback that are commonly used in L2 writing classrooms: (a) form-focused feedback, (b) content-based feedback and (c) integrated feedback. The first, form-focused feedback, presents guiding information about the revision of grammars and punctuation. The second, content-based feedback, deals with the quality of the content and the syntactic structures in students' composition. Mainly, teachers need to present written feedback to make students cohere all the content with sense and logic. Park believed that the third type of feedback, integrated feedback, combines grammar correction with content-related feedback.

Ann, based on Park's review, presented written feedback for Vincent in both the first and second drafts, making Vincent aware of the parts that needed to be revised. The written feedback-revision process lasted for two days. Once the first draft was turned in to Ann in a MS Word document, she reviewed it carefully and provided feedback accordingly. Then, she sent the essay with initial written feedback back to Vincent and asked him to rewrite the same essay based on her written feedback. The second draft was also submitted to Ann and she continued to present written feedback on the essay, aiming to see how Vincent was able to perfect the quality of the essay based on the feedback. Finally, Ann left her final evaluation notes to encourage Vincent to further review his revised work and critique it with his acquired comprehensive composition knowledge in the class.

Findings

What follows are two episodes of the seminar involving the ESOL teacher, Ann, and her three Chinese students, Vincent, Taylor, and Alex:

Episode 1

1. V (Vincent): Teachers are so important like doctors and lawyers the same, right? Why teachers have so little money? Why?

9

2. A (Ann): You mean a teacher, as a profession, is as important as a doctor or a lawyer in our society, so a teacher should not only earn such little wage, right?

3. V: Yeah, I mean that. A teacher should earn as much as a doctor or a lawyer. Also, in China, many places don't have teachers, so high salary can have more teachers.

4. A: I think you mean in China, there are not enough teachers among some regional places, so perhaps offering a high salary will attract more people to become teachers, right?

5. V: Yeah, that's my point.

6. A: So do you think this situation is similar to the American society?

7. V: I don't know. But I know American doctors and lawyers are so rich, and all have big house.

8. A: You mean most doctors and lawyers in America can have a decent salary compared with other professions, so they can afford to purchase big houses, right?

9. V: That's right! Many doctors and lawyers in America can afford to purchase big houses. This is not fair!

10. Taylor (another Chinese student): I think it's fair as in order to be doctors or lawyers, you have to spend so much time and money in getting your degree, and...

In this episode, Vincent contributed to the seminar by pointing out the importance of the role of the teacher in society. As the mediator, Ann called Vincent's attention by illuminating the grammatical errors and completing his utterances with appropriate syntactic structure. Based on the transcript, we can see that the speaker, Vincent, was able to present his point to the audience, but his utterances lacked correct syntactic structure and grammar. For example, "like doctors and lawyers the same" (Line 1) denotes that there is a redundancy of describing similarities of different occupations in this sentence, so Ann utilized a prepositional phrase "as important as" to express that teachers also have a significant role in the society. With Ann's scaffolding, Vincent brought a similar prepositional phrase "as much as" in his following sentence (Line 3). Continuously, Vincent pointed out that the scarcity of teachers in China was quite noticeable, so high salaries might motivate more people to join the teaching profession. However, Vincent could only use "have" in his speaking (Line 3), which was revised by Ann, with "there are" to make the expression more appropriate. To further encourage Vincent to participate in the discussion, Ann asked Vincent a follow-up question about teachers' situations in American society (Line 6). Vincent comprehended the question but had a mistake with "house," denoting that he was not aware of the plural form sometimes when he was speaking English. What surprised me was that Vincent could imitate a phrase pattern, "afford to purchase" from the mediator, indicating that "imitation to the

10

intelligent and earnest imitator is never slavish, never mere repetition; it is, on the contrary, a means for further ends, a method of absorbing what is present in others and of making it over in forms peculiar to one's own temper and valuable to one's own genius" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 166). Obviously, the scaffolding from the mediator Ann was to promote Vincent' self-regulation and Ann's mediation allowed Vincent to trigger his metalinguistic ability, *imitation,* in the seminar. The progression of Vincent's internalization can be saliently found in Vincent's writing as well.

Episode 2

1. Alex: Doctors normally have to spend at least 9 years in college, and they even work so hard to pass one of the most difficult exams in the world. I think doctors deserve to earn that much money because they work so hard.

2. V (Vincent): Teachers also work very hard. That's why many famous people think their success is their teacher... For example, the famous scientist, Marie Curie, who got Nobel Prize twice...she is the only one who got Nobel Prize twice in the world. She thinks her success is her French teacher because she learned how to ... be careful in the science.

3. Ann: I think you would like to say that Marie Curie, one of the greatest scientists who was awarded with Nobel Prize twice, contributed her success to her French teacher as her French teacher showed her how to be prudent in study.

4. V: Yeah! It is very important to be prudent when doing experiments.

5. Alex: But this is not a good reason to say that teachers can earn as much as doctors and lawyers as doctors and lawyers have more pressure than teachers.

6. V: Teachers also have many pressure because teachers have to let students all pass tests, or they cannot work in the school.

7. Ann: I think you mean that teachers are also confronted with a lot of pressure as students' academic performances are positively correlated with teachers' teaching.

8. V: Yeah. Teachers have to make sure that all the students can perform well in the exams, so they face a lot of pressure.

9. T (Taylor): I agree! Both teachers and doctors face a lot of pressure, so we need to think about other factors...

In this episode, the mediator, Ann was still providing other-regulated scaffolding for Vincent, but only when necessary. After the initial interactions with other students and Ann, Vincent became more actively responsive in the seminar. To support his argument of teachers' deserving salaries as high as doctors and lawyers, he cited an example of

11

Marie Curie's praising her French teacher (Line 2). But he could not produce his utterances with organized and coherent structures. Thus, Ann continued to offer her help by restructuring Vincent's several simple sentences into a compound sentence (Line 3), making it clear that Marie Curie valued her French teacher a lot in her academic achievement. In the following discussions, Vincent seemed to be confused about words like "confronted with" and "correlated" (Line 7) perhaps because he was not familiar with these terms. Nonetheless, Vincent was able to use "face" to replace "confronted with," which makes me believe that Ann's mediation encouraged Vincent to seek clues in the context. In other words, mediation influenced Vincent psychologically and led him to go through psychological processes subconsciously. With the scaffolding from Ann, Vincent seemed to be aware of his oral production and learned how to regulate the task based on Ann's verbal feedback. To alter "many pressure" to "a lot of pressure" means that Vincent could correct his mistakes skillfully after immediate feedback from Ann, and even reconstruct his syntactic structure (Line 8). In this episode, Ann did not intervene when Vincent could present his ideas clearly and grammatically, which indicates that the scaffolding was contingent (the scaffolding was only offered when necessary). When Alex formulated his opinions (Line 1), he was also scaffolding the discussions for Vincent as Vincent reused Alex's phrase "work hard," the same process occurred when Taylor reproduced Vincent's phrase "face a lot of pressure." We think this type of effective imitation should be also encouraged in a mutual scaffolding among the Chinese students as "a symmetrical relationship between the peers is established with both showing signs of self- and other-regulation at different times" (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 60).

From Episode 1 and Episode 2, through scaffolding, Vincent was able to correct the grammatical mistakes and reconstruct the syntactic structures. The mediation from Ann also triggered Vincent's imitation metalinguistically and helped him embed the words and phrases in his sentences appropriately. However, because of Vincent's limited English proficiency, we were not able to see many self-corrections and Vincent tended to pause a lot when he could not retrieve the correct words in his mind. Objectively speaking, the scaffolding from the mediator Ann elevated Vincent's actual developmental level to a more potential level, helping Vincent obtain a self-awareness of self-regulation in the process of analyzing feedback and correcting errors.

Table 1 and Table 2 present Vincent's writing—the first and second drafts, respectively—after the seminar as well as Ann's written feedback in red and blue. I conducted an analysis based on the discourse in Table 1 and Table 2.

12

Table 1

First Draft with Written Feedback

Nowadays, with the fast development of society, the need of talented people in different professions cannot be met. Therefore, lots of employers try to use very high salary to attract talents. Normally, professions like lawyers, doctors, and business managers can get very high salary. However, some people think teacher also should get the same wage as lawyers. From my perspective, the latter statement is correct. I would like to support my idea as the following reasons.

First, teacher, one of the oldest jobs(What do you mean by "oldest jobs"?), is very vital for humans. The response (responsibility or obligation)of teacher is not only to teach people and help them better (to) understand the knowledge, but also let people know lots of skill and develop their quality (educate students to develop their characteristics?). Therefore, teacher is as important as lawyer, doctor, and business manager (the consistency of nouns). In the history, there were lots of examples could show how important teacher is. Marie Curie was one of the most famous physicist and chemist. She was the only person to win the Nobel Prize twice. But when she got the Nobel Prize, the first person in her mind was her French teacher. Because she learned how to do things carefully from her teacher. (You can combine these sentences into one compound sentence, try it!) She said If her teacher didn't help her became a careful (prudent) person, she could never get this achievement.

Second, the teacher is also a lack for many regions (many regions are also short of teachers?). High salary can make many young people want to become teachers in the future (Try to rewrite this sentence; you can combine them together). The scarcity of good teacher is as other talented people (I don't quite understand the meaning of this sentence.). For example, in China, a teacher needs to teach more than 100 students. In some other regions, a teacher may need to teach more students. Because of the scarcity of teacher, we(the government) need give more profits (compensation) to teacher and make more and more people want to be teacher.

Third, as we know, education is very important for society. And teacher is an important part of education. Therefore, in order to improve our education level, we need (to) make sure teacher get high wage as lawyers, doctors, and business managers. Society can benefit (be benefited)a lot from giving teacher high salary. High salary can stimulate teacher to work hard and attract many people to become teacher. Then, good teacher will cultivate abundant of talent people to develop our society.

For those reasons, teacher is as important as other jobs. Thus, teacher need get the same wage as high as lawyers, doctors, and business manager. (The conclusion is too short.)

I think you have very precise viewpoints. The structure of your essay is very clear and well organized, and you also use consistent and persuasive evidences to support your thesis. I really like your "Marie Curie" example which perfectly lead back to the point you make that teacher help to build students' characters. I believe you can do better with the sentence structure; I highly encourage you to challenge compound sentences in your writing. Also, the conclusion is too short. I think you can use your third reason as part of the conclusion. Overall, good job!

To better understand Ann's written feedback and Vincent's revised works, I employed the InVivo coding method. Strauss (1987) asserted that InVivo codes are able to capture "behaviors or processes which will explain to the analyst how the basic

13

problem of the actors is resolved or processed" (p. 33). According to Charmaz (2006), InVivo coding "[helps] us to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself" (p. 55). Hence, I believe InVivo coding can be utilized to analyze students' original writing, which best represent their "real voices." In addition, by highlighting Vincent' original texts in the writing and Ann's written feedback, I was able to observe, document, and understand how change occurs in Vincent' revision process, which is in conjunction with the microgenetic approach capturing ongoing processes of change (See Table 1).

In the first draft, Ann utilized explicit written feedback as the intervention strategy and guided Vincent to revise his work by emphasizing the correct forms (in red) and the appropriate content (in blue). Table 1 shows Ann's initial feedback with her form correction and content appropriation regarding Vincent's writing. In the first paragraph, Vincent attempted to choose a stance between teachers deserving high wages and teachers not deserving high wages. Viewing the first draft, we can see that there are not many significant flaws in this paragraph. However, Ann does correct some forms (in red), including some adjectives, such as "talented" and "latter statement," one preposition going as "professions like," and one verb phrase written as "would like to." These types of errors belong to Park's (2006) form-focused feedback. The first supporting argument, unfortunately, contains errors in both forms and content. First of all, Vincent's writing flaws in the superlative degree of the adjective, "the oldest jobs" Then he was confused with the meaning between "response" and "responsibility." Secondly, Vincent seemed to be ambiguous in expressing teachers' main obligation, which might result from the influence of his L1 as he mechanically translated "发展他们的品质" in Chinese to "develop their quality" in English. That is to say, there was a negative transfer from his Chinese language, which hindered Vincent's L2 expression. Having bicultural awareness, Ann spotted this negative transfer and wrote feedback, suggesting that "发展他们的品质" be translated to "educate students to develop their characteristics," which complies with the semantic rules in English. Vincent continued to produce problematic sentences by illustrating an example of Marie Curie, a renowned figure in science. Vincent pointed out that, despite Marie Curie's stellar work in science, she gave a lot of credits of her success to her French teacher. This example was given in the seminar previously, and Vincent seemed to realize that he was still not able to combine simple sentences into a compound sentence accurately, regardless of the verbal scaffolding he received from Ann. Recognizing Vincent's potential, Ann altered the several sentences pertaining to Marie Curie's example to a compound one and expected to see Vincent revise this part in the second draft.

In the second supporting argument paragraph, Ann changed her strategy to present written feedback. Instead of underscoring the content, Ann had several questions in regards to the statements that Vincent made, expecting an awareness of self-correction from Vincent in the second draft. This is a crucial moment in examining the ZPD. In this way, Ann, complying with Vygotsky's formulation of the ZPD, provided opportunities for Vincent to advance his actual level to his potential level in academic English writing. Moreover, Ann left some autonomous space for Vincent, leading him to transit from other-regulation to self-regulation by having him think about other alternatives to the

14

words he could use in the essay. In the rest of this essay, Ann only made a few corrections and her scaffolding seemed very implicit and strategic as she believed that Vincent might obtain illumination from her previous feedback so he could be fully self-regulated to correct the errors himself. At the end of this essay, Ann, with her praise and suggestions, provided holistic evaluation notes to point out the major issues in this essay and encouraged Vincent to pay more attention to the grammatical errors and sentence structures while he was revising the essay.

Table 2

Second Draft with Written Feedback

Nowadays, with the fast development of society, the need of talented people in different professions cannot be met. Therefore, lots of employers try to use very high salary to attract talents. Professions like lawyers, doctors, and business managers can get very high salary. However, some people think teachers also should get the same wage as lawyers. From my perspective, the latter statement is correct. I would like to support my idea with the following reasons.

First, teacher, one of the oldest profession, is very vital for humans. The responsibility of teacher is not only to teach people and help them better to understand the knowledge, but also let people know lots of skills and develop their characteristics. Therefore, teacher is as important as lawyers, doctors, and business managers. In the history, there were lots of examples could show how important teacher is. Marie Curie was one of the most famous physicists and chemists and she was the only person who won the Nobel Prize twice. When she was awarded with the Nobel Prize, the first person in her mind was her French teacher, the one who educated Marie Curie to be a careful person. She said if her teacher didn't help her become a prudent person, she could never get this achievement.

Second, a high salary can affect many young people to choose teaching as their career considering some regions where there is a scarcity of teaching recourse. For example, in China, one teacher needs to teach more than 100 students. In some other regions, a teacher may need to teach more students. Because of the scarcity of teacher, the government should provide more compensation to teachers in order to attract more and more people of becoming teacher.

Overall, as we know, education is very important to society, as well as teacher is an important part of education. Therefore, in order to improve our education level, we need to make sure teachers get high wages as lawyers, doctors, and business managers. Society will be benefited a lot from offering teacher high salary. High salary can stimulate teachers to work hard and attract many people to become teachers. Besides, good teachers will cultivate abundant of talented people to develop our society. Thus, teachers need to get the same wages as lawyers, doctors, and business managers.

In Vincent's second draft of the essay (see Table 2), there were a lot of improvements regarding the sentence structure and grammar, and Vincent was gradually moving from other-regulation towards self-regulation with the help of Ann's written feedback. I noticed that there was a reduction in the amount of inappropriate sentence structures and grammatical errors, which means that the mediation from Ann's written feedback triggered Vincent's psychological processes as he was able to reconstruct the essay consciously. However, probably due to his carelessness, he made many errors (see Table 2) in the single-plural form (e.g., teachers, wages, managers), consistency of verb tenses (*become*), adjectives (*talented*), and prepositions (*with, to*) This might indicate that

15

Chinese students were not accustomed to conducting persuasive essays, which can provide opportunities for learners to practice producing coherent discourses in the L2 with appropriate syntax. Judging from a more coherent discourse in Vincent's second draft, we could definitely see Vincent's psycho-linguistic endeavor in the revision process as well as a greater independence to present his arguments.

In addition to pointing out the grammatical errors, Ann provided extensive feedback in Vincent's compound sentences. With Ann's assistance in his first draft, Vincent managed to produce a syntactically acceptable compound sentence, but he forgot to put a definite noun before "high salary" and misused "that" to lead an adverbial clause—regions where there is a scarcity of teaching recourse. This denotes that, in both the first and second drafts, there was a reflection of Vincent's weaknesses in the control of the attributes pertaining to language features and syntactic structures, but he demonstrated a sense of responsiveness to Ann's verbal scaffolding and written feedback and reproduced the jointly-constructed discourse in the seminar. More importantly, having seen Ann's written feedback and evaluation notes with praise and encouragement in the first draft, Vincent adopted an active role in the revision process and made fewer errors in the second draft, which shows signs of microgenetic changes as well as validates the concept of Vygotsky's ZPD.

CONCLUSION

Overall, adopting a microgenetic approach in this study allows us to observe, document, and understand the interaction between the ESOL teacher Ann and one 9th-grade Chinese student, Vincent. First, the findings show that both verbal scaffolding and written feedback in L2 contexts can serve as important mediated tools and are highly connected with Vygotsky's notion of ZPD, which leads the Chinese student to a more developed English writing within a short period of time. In other words, an L2 teacher, as an important mediator, through both dialogic interactions and written-feedback, is able to make L2 learners more self-regulated in the process of academic writing. However, the L2 teacher is expected to help L2 learners minimize the negative transfers from their L1 that might counterproductively dominate L2 learners' grammar and syntactic structure in the oral interactions as well as the writing process.

Second, the Socratic Seminar, in alignment with a sociocultural account for learning, provides a dialogic and interactive environment for the Chinese students to develop their critical thinking and be actively responsive in presenting interesting ideas, co-constructing knowledge, and forming arguments that can be applied to their academic English writing. In addition, the Socratic Seminar develops community and collaborative learning, allowing a ZPD space for the ESOL teacher to offer graduated and contingent interventions for the Chinese students to know how to regulate their thinking developmentally from an explicit level to an implicit level, according to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994).

Last, Vincent's writing progress in the first and second drafts confirms the positive effects of ZPD in L2 writing contexts. Vincent learned to internalize the

16

feedback offered in three types: (a) form-focused feedback, (b) content-based feedback, and (c) integrated feedback (Park, 2006). Progressing to a greater independence with Ann's praise and encouragement, in the second draft, Vincent was able to interpret the feedback effectively and revised his essay accordingly. Therefore, it can be concluded that written feedback can be more effective when it is delivered with praise and encouragement rather than suggestions by themselves. These findings suggest that the pedagogical approach guided by Vygotsky's ZPD integrated with the Socratic Seminar can be applied to L2 writing contexts, and it can help, in particular, Chinese students studying in the ESOL classrooms in the United States to attain a higher level of academic English writing, notwithstanding that there should be a pragmatic account for individual differences of the Chinese students.

Limitations

Given the nature of this exploratory case study, I acknowledge two limitations. First, there is only one focal student, meaning that Vincent's adaptive learning ability and educational background may have spawned the positive outcomes of his English academic writing. In addition, if situated in a heterogeneous learning environment, Vincent might take different strategies to interact with their peers and the instructor and perceive the written feedback with different attitudes, which would modify the results of this study. Thus, I encourage readers to interpret the findings with caution.

17

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