

A qualitative study of second language writers' response to and use of teacher and peer feedback – a proposal

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Abstract: With increasing evidence that peer feedback could be a viable complementary tool to teacher feedback in the L2 writing classroom, there arises the question as to how both types of feedback may be used judiciously in L2 writing instruction. This is a conceptual paper which proposes how a study may be set up to understand how an L2 writer responds to and decides whether to act on feedback (whether from teacher or peers) on his writing, so as to understand the whole issue of feedback on writing in a more holistic way, not just looking at student attitudes (Liu and Chai, 2009; Tsui and Ng, 2000), the nature of comments (Caulk, 1994) and whether changes in drafts could be traced to teacher or peer comments (Tsui and Ng, 2000; Yang et al, 2006). A multiple instrumental case study to understand the L2 writer's response to and use of feedback is proposed. The two key factors in the study of peer feedback identified in the literature - the L2 factor and the cultural factor (Hu & Lam, 2010) are put in focus in the set-up of the case study so they could be investigated in relation to contextual factors which affect the effectiveness of teacher feedback. This paper discusses how the multiple case study could be set up and the proposed method of data collection and analysis.

Key Words: peer and teacher feedback, L2 learner

Introduction

Writing teachers, not least Asian writing teachers, have the unenviable task of ploughing through reams of students' writing, not just for the purpose of awarding a grade, but also to give feedback which will help students to improve on their writing. Hours are often spent in the hope that our labour would amount to something of long-term value to students apart from the immediate need to assign a particular grade to their endeavours. However, we are often perplexed, if not discouraged, when students simply look at the grades awarded and disregard the feedback given or in the situation where no grades are required, we wonder what students have done with the feedback given when there is no perceptible improvement in their writing subsequently.

Hence, when an alternative form of feedback in the form of peer feedback appeared on the scene not too recently, we were more than happy to try it out with our students as it appeared to offer some relief from the burden of

providing timely enough feedback which can be of help to students in the process of writing. At least, with the help of peers, students can get more immediate and a greater amount of feedback on their writing compared with only teacher feedback which often comes rather too late, as the teacher, understandably, needs time to get through the sheer number of scripts, given the norm of large class sizes in the Asian context.

However, we soon discovered that our Asian ESL students, while receptive towards this novel way of receiving feedback from peers, seem to prefer teacher feedback most of the time. This is not surprising as it is commonly observed that Asians have a teacher-centred tradition in the classroom. This thinking is probably changing but it has not reached the point where peers are put on a par with teachers.

The research problem

Hence, as an ESL writing teacher, I am immensely interested in understanding how an L2 learner responds to and uses both teacher and peer feedback, given the

strengths and weaknesses of both types of feedback and the history of the relative lack of engagement with teacher feedback for various reasons, and the hesitant reception of peer feedback among ESL learners, in particular those from Asian backgrounds, despite the benefits of peer feedback that we read from literature on L1 learners.

Literature Review

Studies on Teacher Feedback

The main problem with teacher feedback is that it suffers from the multiple roles that the writing teacher plays and the subsequent 'confusion' that students might experience from receiving feedback from a source that is undecided in its stance/focus. As mentioned by Reid, the ESL teacher "plays several different roles, among them coach, judge, facilitator, evaluator, interested reader, and copy editor" (1993, p. 217, cited in Ferris 1995). Similarly, Muncie highlights the conflicting roles of "audience", "assistant", "consultant", "reader", "evaluator" that the teacher plays (2000, p. 48). As a result, students might be encouraged by praise or affirming comments at one point, and 'assaulted' by prescriptive advice about what to remove or add or what language errors to correct, at another, which may lead to teacher comments being ignored altogether. This explains why educators are faced with the perennial question as to whether teacher comments lead to student revisions, let alone successful revisions.

On the other hand, it has also been noted that, because of the role of the teacher as evaluator/judge, students also tend to accept teacher suggestions passively and blindly (when they do respond to them), incorporating them without question nor reflection (Zhao, 2010), which minimizes the chance of students learning from the recommendations and subsequent revisions and progressing towards being independent writers. It also raises the issue of text appropriation, the danger of the student relinquishing control and ownership of his text as he responds dutifully to the teacher's comments (Hyland, 2000). This issue is especially pertinent in many L2 classrooms which are teacher-centred and examination-oriented, and where students place a lot of premium on the teacher's evaluation.

However, in Reid's view, this fear of appropriation in ESL classrooms, is 'largely a mythical fear' (1994, p. 275). She further argues that, in response to this fear, ESL teachers have deprived L2 learners of the help they need. This view is echoed by Hyland (2000) who asserts that "they [teachers] are confusing intervention with appropriation" (p. 35). Reid highlights ESL teachers' roles as "cultural informants and facilitators for creating the social discourse community in the ESL writing classroom" (1994, p. 275). In other words, she is saying

that, unlike the L1 writer, the L2 writer is more in need of specific guidance from the teacher, especially with regard to the rhetorical conventions and cultural values of the discourse community of the target language. This leads us to the question of how teacher feedback can be used judiciously – the teacher acting as a guide as to the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the discourse community that the L2 learner is seeking to be part of.

Despite these issues with teacher feedback, research shows that ESL learners "greatly value teacher written feedback and consistently rate it more highly than alternative forms such as peer and oral feedback" (Hyland, 1998, p. 257). Some studies which show this preference are Hu & Lam (2010), Saito (1994) (cited in Hyland, 1998) and Zhang (1995). This finding may be explained by the two factors mentioned in Hu & Lam (2010) termed 'the 'L2 factor' and 'the cultural factor'. The first explains such student preference from the perspective of the L2 learner in the process of mastering the target language and hence, clearly seeing the teacher as the authority in matters of language and therefore expecting and appreciating guidance from the teacher in this aspect. The latter explains it from the perspective of students coming from a culture which exalts the status of the teacher (most Asian cultures) and hence, students tend to defer to the teacher in most matters of judgment.

Studies on Peer Feedback

Peer response can be defined as the "use of learners as sources of information, as interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing" (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 1). The result of the peer response activity is peer feedback on one's writing, an alternative form of feedback from the traditional one of teacher feedback.

Over the years since peer feedback has been adopted by L2 writing teachers, the strengths of peer feedback have been acknowledged by various researchers. Some of them include:

- Peers act more like 'normal readers' (Caulk, 1994, p. 185) and enhances a sense of audience. A subject in Tsui and Ng's study acknowledged that "because he knew his peers would be his 'readers', he became more conscious of his audience when writing" (2000, p. 161).
- Peer comments and peer response sessions promote a sense of ownership of text (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006)

Because peers are seen as equals, students do not feel obliged to incorporate suggestions that they do not agree with. The data in Yang, Badger

& Yu's study suggest 'a stronger tendency for self-correction in the peer feedback group...The more they doubted the feedback, the more likely it was they would develop their own independent ideas they had for revision" (p. 192). Having control over one's writing is certainly crucial to the student's development as an independent writer.

- Peer response activities promote reflection and critical reading on the part of both the student-writer and student-reviewer (Berg, 1999; Mittan, 1989; Rollinson, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000). This promotes a greater awareness of the writer's own problems, which is a step towards being an independent writer.
- Peers tend to give a different kind of feedback from that of the teacher. As mentioned above, Caulk (1994) found that teacher feedback tended to be general while peer feedback was more specific. Also, having teachers and peers comment on the same problem gives students more than one perspective on it and may make it easier for him to understand the point. Hence, student and teacher comments combined might give a fuller picture of the problem/suggestion.
- Learners can receive social support from peers instead of feeling isolated as a writer (Jacobs, Curtis, Braine & Huang, 1998, p. 308).

Despite the great potential of peer feedback, it has been reported in the literature that L2 students still prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback (Hu & Lam, 2010; Liu & Chai, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Saito, 1994; Yang, Badger and Yu, 2006; Zhang, 1995). This may have stemmed from some reservations that both teachers and students have about the use of peer feedback. The reservations may be summarized in what Hu and Lam have termed 'the L2 factor' and 'the cultural factor' (Hu & Lam, 2010, p. 374). The first refers to "L2 learners' limited knowledge of the target language and its rhetorical conventions" as they are in the process of mastering the target language and do not have the implicit knowledge of the language like native speakers do (Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Villamil & Guerrero, 1998), while the latter refers to "a complex of cultural and social differences" between L1 and L2 learners, which may impede the productive use of peer response in L2 contexts. Such differences include those in sociolinguistic rules of communication (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996) and cultural beliefs about the different statuses of the teacher and students which will cause students to put more value on the teacher's feedback and distrust their peers' recommendations (Hu 2002, 2005a; Jacobs, 1987; Sengupta, 1998; Zhang, 1995).

Despite these two major potential drawbacks, peer feedback continues to be widely used and researched

in the L2 writing classroom. More recent studies with Chinese learners (Hu & Lam, 2010; Liu & Chai, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006) have found that these L2 learners do see value in peer response even though they prefer teacher feedback and pay more attention to it in revising subsequent drafts of their writing. Their preference for and the greater impact of teacher feedback can be easily explained by the cultural factor mentioned above, as these learners come from a teacher-centred culture. However, it is interesting to note that, contrary to some skeptical opinions about students' receptiveness to peer feedback in L2 contexts voiced in the literature, they acknowledge the usefulness of peer feedback as well.

Hence, it is not surprising that some researchers have highlighted the complementary roles that teacher and peer feedback can play in the teaching of L2 writing. Findings from studies by Yang, Badger & Yu (2006) and, Tsui and Ng (2000) seem to reinforce the earlier claim by Villamil and DeGuerrero that "peer revision should be seen as an important complementary source of feedback in the ESL classroom" (1998, p.491). Caulk had also earlier concluded that his case study of teacher and peer feedback to student writing suggests that "each serves important and complementary functions in developing writing abilities" (1994, p. 187). Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate how an L2 learner responds to and uses both types of feedback so that one might arrive at what Zhang calls "a judicious use of a combination of feedback sources so that the affective disadvantage of peer feedback relative to teacher feedback may be addressed responsibly and effectively in the ESL writing class" (1995, p. 325).

In the light of the above literature review, the following research questions have been drawn up:

1. How do second language learners respond to and use peer and teacher feedback on their writing?
 - a. Are there differences in the way L2 writers respond to and use teacher and peer feedback? If so, in what ways do they differ?
 - b. Is there indeed a preference for teacher feedback as reported in the literature among second language learners? If so, does this preference translate to a greater use and effectiveness of teacher feedback?
2. What contextual factors are at play in L2 writers' use of teacher and peer feedback?

The proposed study

Why a case study?

While there have been some positive findings about the impact of peer feedback in the L2 context, previous

research has tended to focus on peer feedback per se, rather than how it stands *in relation* to the traditional form of teacher feedback. Studies which have compared teacher and peer feedback have also surfaced a preference for teacher feedback, especially among Asian students (Hu & Lam, 2010; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhang, 1995). Does this mean that though peer feedback is seen as acceptable by L2 students, it is less effective compared with teacher feedback? Clearly, it seems that peer feedback should not be understood in isolation. Any meaningful discussion of the use of feedback on writing in the writing classroom has to consider *both* types of feedback. This leads us, then, to the question of how a *holistic* view of how an L2 learner responds to and uses both teacher and peer feedback might be a more helpful approach in understanding the whole issue of feedback in the teaching and learning of L2 writing, rather than focusing on piecemeal aspects such as student attitudes (Liu & Chai, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000), the nature of comments (Caulk, 1994), and whether changes in drafts could be traced back to teacher or peer comments (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al, 2006), which past studies have tended to do.

Additionally, research designs employed so far are such that in most cases, either form of feedback was investigated on its own, with little connection with the other. There have been numerous studies focusing on teacher feedback alone, it being the more traditional form of feedback and a fair amount of knowledge regarding the characteristics and impact of various types of teacher feedback has been established (e.g., location and form of the feedback; Conrad and Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997b; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998 in Goldstein, 2004; Goldstein, 2004). On the other hand, studies on peer feedback have focused on issues like peer interaction, the impact of peer feedback on subsequent drafts and student attitudes towards this pedagogical tool (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998; Zhang, 1995). Finally, comparative studies which looked at both types of feedback (e.g., Caulk, 1994; Tsui and Ng, 2000; Zhao, 2010) have not managed to capture the larger *context* in which both types of feedback are received, one reason possibly being the fact that in most cases, only one type of feedback is offered at one point and hence, any comparison between the two is less than fair. In some cases, only one type of feedback is given, but students are asked about their opinion about the other type of feedback (Yang et al., 2006).

Hence, it seems that past research has tended to focus on students' attitudes and the impact of either form of feedback in terms of revisions made traced back to the feedback given, but little attention has been focused on understanding the L2 learner's *process* of responding to and deciding whether to act on the feedback given. As already hinted at in some research on teacher feedback

(e.g., Goldstein, 2004; Hyland, 2000), *contextual factors* play a huge role in influencing students' response to feedback given on their writing. Goldstein highlighted a host of contextual factors that can influence teacher commentary and student revision which includes teacher factors such as "attitudes towards particular students or the content of their texts" and student factors such as "reactions to teacher feedback, outside commitments, and investment in the course content" (Goldstein, 2006, p. 185 in Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). In other words, it is untenable to seek to understand either type of feedback without due consideration given to the *context* in which the feedback takes place.

In light of the above discussion, it seems that the case study approach which emphasizes thick description incorporating various sources of data on the phenomenon as well as the context of each case, is eminently suited for arriving at a more in-depth understanding of the issue of feedback with L2 learners.

Why a multiple case study?

The "multiple instrumental case study" (Creswell, 2012) offers the possibility of "analytic generalizability" (Duff, 2008) to theoretical models more so than a single case study. The use of more than one case is a strong counterargument for critics of the case study method who point out the limitations of case studies in terms of the generalizability or rather the lack thereof of the findings of one idiosyncratic case/context. The intrinsically comparative nature of multiple case studies augments its instrumental value in throwing light on the phenomenon under investigation. Yin (2003) likens the strength of multiple cases to multiple experiments where there can be literal or theoretical replication. Having more than one case can allay the fears of the critical reader that the findings he reads about are peculiar to that particular context only.

Combined with the strength of a thick description that a case study method offers (drawing from multiple sources of data), and set in the context of the phenomenon, "case studies display a high degree of completeness, depth of analysis and readability and they are effective in generating new hypotheses, models, and understandings about the target phenomena" (Duff, 2008, cited in Dornyei, 2007, p. 155).

Given the two key factors in the study of feedback on L2 writing that have surfaced in the literature review (the L2 factor and the cultural factor), it seems that the multiple case study set-up is ideal for putting these two factors into focus for the investigation even as a qualitative approach is espoused in this study. These factors may be "operationalized" using purposive sampling, and in this case, criterion sampling specifically, that is, in the selection of cases (please refer to Figure 1).

Figure 1: Rationale for adopting the “multiple instrumental case study” (Creswell, 2012)

two key factors to focus on
(the L2 factor and the cultural factor)

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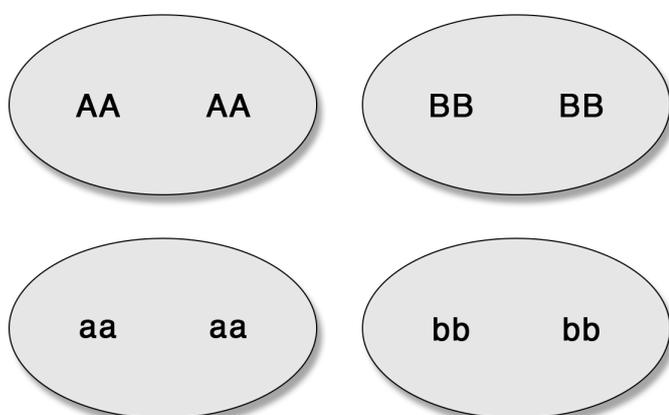
Purposive sampling taking into consideration
the two factors
(criterion sampling)



analytic generalization to a model

It is proposed that the multiple case study be set up in the following way: Each case comprises two subgroups which, in turn, are made up of a pair of students of the same proficiency level – either Advanced or Intermediate (i.e., the L2 factor). There will be four cases, two cases of the same proficiency level but with one case of two pairs declaring a preference for teacher feedback and the other, without such a preference. In other words, there are a total of sixteen participants, with four pairs of the same proficiency level in two cases distinguished by whether there is a preference for teacher feedback or not (i.e., the cultural factor). (Please refer to Figure 2 for a graphic presentation of how the cases are set up).

Figure 2: Set-up of the cases in this multiple case study



- AA – advanced level proficiency, with preference for teacher feedback
- aa – advanced level proficiency, without preference for teacher feedback

- BB – intermediate level proficiency, with preference for teacher feedback
- bb – intermediate level proficiency, without preference for teacher feedback

The reason for selecting these two levels is that it is reasonable to surmise that peer feedback cannot be productively done when the proficiency level of the student is so low (as in Elementary level) as to impede effective communication of ideas and the student’s grasp of the target language is not strong enough for meaningful feedback to be given. Two pairs of the same proficiency level are included in one case so as to increase the reliability of the findings. If the findings of these two pairs of students of the same proficiency level are similar to the other case with two pairs of students with the same proficiency level but are sufficiently different from the other four pairs with a different proficiency level, then there may be the possibility of “analytic generalization” (Duff, cited in Dornyei, 2007, p. 153), that is, generalizing to “theoretical models” rather than population. The two pairs of the same proficiency level in each of the two cases (AA, AA and aa, aa in Figure 2) are chosen for the purpose of “literal replication” and another four pairs of a different proficiency level (BB, BB and bb, bb in Figure 4.2) are chosen for the purpose of “theoretical replication” (Yin, 2003). In Yin’s words, “... the study should ... have at least two individual cases within each of the subgroups, so that the theoretical replications across subgroups are complemented by literal replications within each subgroup” (p. 52).

The theoretical replications are also made possible with the inclusion of the preference of feedback factor in setting up two of the cases as these two cases will be the same in terms of proficiency level but different only in terms of whether the participants prefer teacher feedback or not (AA, AA versus aa, aa; or BB, BB versus bb, bb). Hence, if these two cases with two pairs each yield different patterns in terms of the data, one can infer that preference of feedback may be an important factor influencing how the L2 writer responds to written feedback on his writing.

To reiterate, the cases in a multiple case study should be selected so that they replicate each other. When they are expected to yield similar results, then there is literal replication while theoretical replication takes place when contrasting results are predicted. As proficiency level and preference of feedback have been shown in the literature on peer feedback to be *key factors* in students’ attitude towards the use of peer feedback and also an important consideration in understanding students’ attitude towards peer feedback *in relation* to teacher feedback (see “the L2 factor” and “the cultural factor” in Hu & Lam, 2010, p. 374), they are suitable criteria to use in setting up the cases for theoretical replication.

Certainly, there may well be other factors that may surface in the investigation, given the qualitative approach that informs this study; however, some form of rigour is introduced through the incorporation of these two factors in setting up of these multiple cases so as to put a spotlight on what has been considered of importance in the literature, without ruling out the possibility of other factors (foreseen or not) surfacing in the data collection. This is possible through the method of data analysis to be adopted – that of grounded theory. Also, the different kinds of data to be collected ensure that the approach is sufficiently “open-ended” to allow for factors other than the two highlighted above, to surface.

To sum up, the choice of a multiple case study over a single case study stems from my desire to achieve some measure of theoretical generalizability from the findings. According to Yin, “Analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases...will be more powerful than those coming from a single case...alone.” Additionally, “the contexts of the two cases are likely to differ to some extent. If under these varied circumstances you still can arrive at common conclusions from both cases, they will have immeasurably expanded the external generalizability of your findings” (2003, p. 53). Duff (2008, p. 113), echoing Yin, concurs that “[having] two or more cases can help assuage concerns that cases are unique in unforeseen ways.” I believe, in my proposed project of four cases, I have a good chance of generating some theoretical model of how an L2 writer responds to and uses peer and teacher feedback on his writing.

Context and participants

The investigation will take place with a group of PRC learners, of a range of English proficiency. A culturally homogeneous group is selected as there is some evidence (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Leki, 1990b; Nelson and Carson, 2006) that peer feedback with L2 learners may be more effective when carried out in culturally homogeneous groups.

The intention to focus on Chinese learners stems from two reasons: first, Chinese learners, especially learners from China, form an increasingly significant proportion of ESL learners of English in the world today (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996); second, they come from a culture which clearly accords a high status to teachers. It would be significant to investigate how peer feedback can still be productively used together with the more traditional practice of teacher feedback with these learners. If findings about the use of peer feedback *in relation* to teacher feedback with such learners are positive, then the prospect of combining both teacher and peer feedback in second language writing instruction with L2 learners with cultural backgrounds which put a premium on the teacher’s input, will hold much promise.

The students should be enrolled in a course that provides writing instruction, the classroom context of which should allow for a process-oriented approach to the teaching of writing. The investigation will take place over the course of a semester, to allow for room for some training in peer response and multiple drafting with opportunities for teacher and peer response to drafts in between, to take place. A minimum of two writing - and - revision cycles (from which data will be gathered) should be available. This is meant to increase both the richness and trustworthiness of the data, as according to Dornyei (2007), “case studies are often at least partially longitudinal in nature” (p. 152) because of the detailed information that the researcher seeks to gather about the case. Hence, a minimum period of one semester of engagement is necessary.

Data collection

In line with the holistic nature of inquiry that the case study approach affords, the researcher will focus on the following aspects of the phenomenon of responding to feedback on one’s writing, in gathering data:

- The features of the feedback given
- How the participant processes/understands and responds to the feedback given
- The mental and social aspects of processing feedback
- The changes made in the revised drafts as documents of decisions made in response to feedback given

The sources of data which will enable the researcher to capture the above are:

- A semi-structured questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews
- Retrospective interviews (based on feedback sheets by teachers and peers; first and revised drafts)
- Documents in the form of first and revised drafts, feedback sheets by teachers and peers

Stimulated recall / retrospective interviews (Gass & Mackay, 2000) will be the key methodology used in investigating in-depth the subjects’ response to and use of peer and teacher feedback. This method is chosen as it is “the least reactive of all the introspective techniques, because the targeted thought processes are not affected by the procedure in any way” (Dornyei, 2007, citing in Ericsson, 2002). Brown and Rodgers (2002) also highlight that “If the process is quite deliberate..., then these may be language use tasks which are deliberate enough and conscious enough for reporting the steps of mental processing to be realistic.” Learners’ response to and use of peer and teacher feedback may be considered one example of such language use tasks.

Ideally, participants will be interviewed within 48 hours after they have responded to the feedback given and made changes to their first drafts. At the interview, interviewees would be shown the initial and final written products as stimuli, and asked about their responses to the feedback they received on the first drafts of their writing, including their reactions (acceptance / rejection), their decisions about whether to use the feedback in their second drafts and the reasons behind those decisions and the changes they made.

A **semi-structured questionnaire** will be conducted at the beginning of the semester with the entire class of students from which the potential subjects of the study are taken, before peer and teacher feedback activities are carried out. This serves a two-fold purpose – to sieve out suitable subjects for the two cases of the project, and to arrive at a profile of the group from which the sample is taken, so as to set the investigation in context. Respondents who hold negative views towards peer feedback will not be suitable subjects for the case study as one would expect from them, a skeptical attitude which militates against any active engagement with peer feedback. This scenario would then render the comparison between peer and teacher feedback invalid.

Semi-standardized interviews (Berg, 2004, p. 79) will be conducted with the eight participants at the beginning and end of the study to investigate attitudes towards and experience of peer and teacher feedback. These interviews are different from the retrospective interviews mentioned above and serve a different purpose. Interviewees will not be questioned about specific decisions in their revision process, but rather more general questions exploring their experience of and attitude/opinions about the use and potential of both teacher and peer feedback in the teaching and learning of writing and even their views about learning and writing in an L2, will be posed. The interviews at the end of the study are meant to see if respondents have changed in their views after one semester's experience of having both teacher and peer feedback on their writing. They should also allow the researcher to gather a fuller picture of the context of the study.

The **examination of drafts** is meant to answer the following questions: What changes are made from draft one to draft two in each writing-revision cycle? How are the changes made (i.e., the source of the change)? Is there any improvement? What changes are facilitated by peer feedback and what changes by teacher feedback? Some of the data may be subjected to statistical analysis so as to establish statistically significant relationships, if any, between factors. Some form of "data triangulation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) is possible with the examination of drafts, as information regarding participants' response to peer and teacher feedback

garnered at the interviews may be corroborated by the actual changes made on the drafts.

Data Analysis

The proposed method of data analysis is Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as the researcher plans to adopt the systematic coding system with the three phases – open coding, axial coding and selective coding, in an attempt to arrive at some theory as an outcome of the case study. According to Dornyei (2007, p. 258), these (systematic coding and theory building) are two criteria for calling one's study 'grounded theory'. This method is chosen as it provides tools for an in-depth analysis of the thick description that a case study offers in terms of data. In Charmaz's words, "the focused inquiry of grounded theory, with its progressive inductive analysis, moves the work theoretically and covers more empirical observations than other approaches" (cited in Dornyei, 2007, p. 262).

Conclusion

Finding answers to the research questions set out in this proposal will definitely enlighten the L2 writing teacher as to how best to combine both types of feedback on writing in the L2 writing classroom. It will also throw more light on some questions of perennial concern to both writing teachers and L2 acquisition researchers such as: Does feedback play a role in writing development? What is the best way of giving feedback? What factors affect student responses to feedback? How shall the apparent affective advantage of peer feedback with L2 learners be accounted for in L2 writing instruction? Finally, finding the answers to these questions with a particular group of L2 learners, such as Chinese learners who form an increasingly large proportion of L2 learners in English, not just in their own country but also in tertiary institutions worldwide, will surely yield considerable practical benefits for all involved in teaching this group of learners.

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