The Role of Oral Interactions in Writing Development: A Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract

This ethnographic case study investigates the relationship between oral feedback exchange on one another's writing and learning to write. Oral feedback exchange is an often-used pedagogy in writing classes. Previous studies have shown the advantages of feedback in various aspects of writing development. However, the processes in which the oral discourse for the feedback exchange facilitates learning to write are yet to be explored. The study aims to identify oral discourse patterns of feedback exchange that would promote writing development. The participants were twelve graduate students who were enrolled in three different writing conference groups in the learning centre at an Australian university. Data were collected through non-participant observation, interviews, audio recordings of oral interactions during the conference and students' written drafts. Adopting a sociocultural approach, the transcripts of oral interactions are analysed for feedback strategies and types of responding to feedback in relation to students' thinking and writing processes. The findings suggest that not only how to give feedback but also how to respond to feedback would contribute to effective oral discourses in writing conferences. The study also discusses pedagogical implications the findings could offer for teaching and learning to write.

Introduction

The study investigates how oral interactions during group writing conferences mediate students' thinking and writing. Compared to the studies of written feedback, relatively few studies have investigated the impact of oral interactions on learning to write. Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1981) emphasizes social interactions for language development. Taking a view of writing as social practice (Tardy, 2009), I investigate oral discourses in writing

conferences and their relations to participants' writing. This is part of a larger study (Mochizuki, 2018) which investigates the role that oral interactions play in graduate students' genre knowledge development. This study focuses on oral discourses in group writing conferences, where people in the group give feedback on each member's writing. The study aims to contribute to pedagogies in writing classrooms for both teachers and students regarding how to utilize the oral feedback exchange effectively for writing development.

Human minds interact with the object of their interest in the environment not directly but through the mediation of tools and cultural artefacts. These tools include psychological tools, or signs, here most importantly language. Therefore, a learner learns language by using the language for social interactions. Based on sociocultural theory, the oral feedback exchange in writing classes is a site to offer these psychological tools for developing their writing. The process of this tool mediation entails two stages. The learner's development appears, first, through social interactions between people, as an inter-psychological category, and then appears within the learner as an intra-psychological category. In other words, what is experienced through social interactions is internalized in the learner's mind (Vygotsky, 1981). The implications of this understanding support a pedagogical view of a social approach to Second Language Acquisition (SLA): second language learning through the use of language for communication in a specific community (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

During oral interactions, the optimal conditions for development can be created by assistance, scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976), that suits the learner's particular developmental zone, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 2012), in which the learner can achieve what he or she cannot normally do without such assistance. In Vygotsky's original ideas, dialogic interaction was assumed to be between an adult (expert) and a child (learner) but more recently, peer interactions in L2 learning have also been studied as a site for the co-construction of a ZPD and the provision of scaffolding, and these studies reported that even

among peers, learning through scaffolding has occurred (e.g., Donato, 1994; Swain, 2000). The study, therefore, examines oral discourses in writing conferences focusing on how oral feedback on writing provided by others plays the role of scaffolding for a learner to learn to write.

To investigate how oral discourse serves as scaffolding, the learner's response to feedback during oral interactions also needs to be focused. When the writer is responding to given feedback, telling their thoughts about their own writing, they often mention their own thinking process, which could show us their development in the intra-psychological category. In sociocultural perspectives, private speech - speech addressed to the self - is considered a cognitive tool to regulate the speaker's own mental activity and internalize what was experienced in the intra-psychological category (Vygotsky, 2012; Swain et al., 2015). Attention has been paid, therefore, to learners' private speech to better understand their mental development during engagement in classroom dialogues. In collaborative dialogues in classrooms, some utterances and speech, although they are not overtly addressed to oneself, also function as private speech and serve as cognitive tools to mediate students' problem solving and the construction of new knowledge. The distinction between social and private speech is blurred (Swain et al., 2015) and speech utterances in collaborative interaction for problem solving have both social and private functions. In such contexts, speech uttered becomes a cognitive tool available for everyone involved (not only for a speaker him/herself) to mediate their own cognitive activity. This type of speech (both private and collaborative talk) is termed 'languaging', defining it as "[t]he process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language. Languaging organizes and controls (mediates) mental processes during the performance of cognitively complex tasks" (Swain et al., 2015, p. 149). The concept of languaging assists in the analysis of students' response to feedback. As students respond to given feedback, they are reflecting on their thinking and writing.

In sociocultural theory, as mentioned above, oral interactions leading to a student's learning are the dialogic interactions (not one-directional instruction). Therefore, the effective oral scaffolding during oral interactions cannot be investigated just looking at the language for feedback in the oral discourse. Previous studies have pointed out scaffolding needs to be studied in relation to how a learner responds to scaffolding (e.g., Williams, 2004; Villamil & Guerreo, 1996).

A few studies have investigated discourse patterns of oral scaffolding/instruction around writing (Haneda, 2004; Unlu & Wharton, 2015). The discourse variation between students and the tutor/teacher depends on the students' revision goals, their language proficiency, the topic of the dialogue, and the teacher's pedagogical goals. The findings also suggest that the discursive features and teacher's scaffolding strategies contribute to the construction of meaning through dialogue. For example, Haneda's (2004) study suggests that the joint construction of meaning through dialogue depends on the distribution of roles, in other words, turn-taking, which involves a role shift between a tutor and a tutee. In the writing conference dialogues studied by Haneda (2004), the teacher was usually the primary knower, providing critical information to the student. This role however sometimes shifted and was handed over to the student. For instance, when the teacher elicited students' negotiation of his/her text intention, the student became the critical information giver, the primary knower. This shift is beneficial to creating opportunities for the joint construction of meaning (Haneda, 2004).

More studies are needed to illustrate beneficial oral scaffolding features in dialogic interactions at writing conferences in relation to a writer's response to it in different situations and contexts, such as with different social relations (e.g., group peer interactions) and students with different educational levels and in different disciplines. This study investigates PhD students' oral discourses in group writing conferences at an Australian university. Research questions I formulated include:

1. How does given feedback scaffold students' thinking and writing during writing conferences?

2. What role does the writer's responding to feedback during writing conferences play in their writing development?

Methodology

Research site and participants

This study is part of a larger study investigating genre learning of thesis writers through oral interactions in writing conferences. The research was conducted in the thesis writing support program at the learning centre at an Australian university. The program offers group writing conferences for graduate students. The participants were twelve students who were enrolled in three different writing conference groups, Groups A, B, and C. This program was not a mandatory course. Any graduate students, both native speakers and non-native speakers of English, who write theses can apply. Among the participants, one student, Richard, was a native speaker of English, the rest of the participants were multilingual international students. Each group consists of five students at most and a facilitator, who was an experienced staff in the learning centre. Facilitator A facilitated Group A. Facilitator B facilitated Groups B and C. The group met for two hours fortnightly, five times in a semester. The main activity of the conference was exchanging oral feedback on one another's writing.

Data collection and analysis

The study draws on an ethnographic case study approach. Data for the larger study were collected through non-participant observation, field notes, audio recordings of interviews with the students and the facilitators, and audio recordings of oral interactions during the conferences, and students' written drafts. For this study, the analysis was conducted based on the data triangulation of the recordings of oral interactions during the conferences, students' interview

accounts and their written drafts.

For the analysis of dialogic interactions, I examined the transcripts of oral interactions during the conferences focusing on feedback strategies (oral feedback given by those who read the writing being discussed), and response strategies (the student's response to given feedback on his/her writing). For feedback strategies, I chose to use Van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuzen's (2010) categorization of feedback. The purpose of the categorization of feedback was not to identify specific linguistic functions used but to illustrate and understand linguistic actions taken by a person in social interactions in contexts. Van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen's (2010) categorization of the means of scaffolding includes explaining, feeding back (the provision of the reader's thoughts on the writing they read), instructing, modelling, questioning (clarification and confirmation with the writer about his/her writing), and giving hints. For response strategies, to understand students' thinking process for writing, I focused on meaning-making attempts, as previous studies have shown that the negotiation of meaning between readers and a writer over the writer's intended meaning facilitates revising and writing after conferences. I also focused on the writer's intentions and motives behind the response to feedback.

Findings

The feedback strategies identified as scaffolding were feeding back and questioning. Responding to feedback played important role in dialogic interactions for writing development on both the inter-psychological and intra-psychological planes. In reporting the findings, I used pseudonyms for the individual names and replaced proper nouns with random letters such as XYZ or ABC. Especially for the students' written samples, I carefully replaced any identifying information with random letters, so that the original thesis content cannot be known.

Giving feedback and scaffolding

As the means of scaffolding (Van de Pol et al., 2010), feeding back (a type of feedback strategy that includes the provision of the reader's thoughts on the writing they read) and questioning (asking clarification and confirmation questions about the content) were central to the actions taken by those who gave feedback. They are crucial strategies in that they were likely to elicit the writer's contribution to dialogic interactions and provide more opportunities for both readers and a writer to engage in the joint construction of meaning of the text they are discussing.

Specifically, feeding back with detailed explanations of how readers understood the text fosters the writer's awareness of audience. It can shift the writer's perspective to the reader's point of view. The change in perspectives from the writer to the audience enables the writer to look at his/her writing with fresh eyes and realize problems the text may cause for readers in understanding his/her intended meanings. The following excerpt from oral interactions shows the dialogue that may have triggered the writer, Ellen's, change in perspectives.

1 Richard: There were a couple of things I didn't quite follow with what the actual content was saying. You said that it was about national identity, da, da, da, symbolise a new national identity. But then a little bit later you talked about erasing images of nationalism and breaking with undesirable national traditions (.…) I wasn't sure (.…) is that you were saying that it's not getting rid of national identities but replacing old undesirable ones with new, modern, national identities presumably. Is that what you're saying?

2 Ellen: Yeah. So make that...

3 Richard: Yeah. I just didn't follow that.

(Oral interaction, Group A Session 5, October 16, 2014)

In Turn 1, Richard detailed how he understood the text and made guesses about the intended meaning of the text. By listening to how Richard read the text, Ellen came to understand that the point she was intending to make was not clear. She agreed with Richard's guess about her intended meaning ("Yeah") and then began to state her intention to revise accordingly, saying "So make that …". (Turn 2). Here Ellen gained a new understanding of her piece of writing with fresh eyes, adopting the reader's perspectives. This understanding was later confirmed by the revisions she made to this part.

This interaction guided Ellen to revise her writing from the perspective of the audience. In her revised version below, her point became clearer. In her original version, right after introducing her topic ("to modernize host cities") in the first sentence, two other seemingly irrelevant topics were mentioned i.e., "a renewed national identity" and "erase the negative urban images of nationalism," which confused Richard's reading. She removed the irrelevant themes from the first paragraph and added a new sentence to underscore the topic she would like to argue for.

Ellen's writing discussed on October 16, 2014 (1st version)

In opposition to the post-war austerity in the organization of the previous ABC, the next Games were taken as an opportunity to modernize host cities through major urban transformation (XYZ, 2006), including investment in innovative sporting venues to symbolize a renewed national identity. As ABC (2010: 249) explains (…) "intended to help erase the negative urban images of nationalism and totalitarism [sic]." (…) The 1960 ABC in Rome reflect both tendencies of urban improvement and renovation of national identity…

Ellen's revised version

In opposition to the post-war austerity in the organization of the previous ABC, the next few Games were considered by organizers as an opportunity to modernize host cities through major urban transformation (XYZ, 2006). The ABC in Rome set the trend of this new phase with the sporting facilities strategically located in opposite side of the city and being linked by new large road system, the upgrade of the international airport, (…) among other urban improvements (ABC, 1999; XYZ, 2007).

Ellen knew the power of the reader's point of view because she acknowledged that it was difficult for her as an author to judge if her writing was as clear to readers as to herself. In the interview, when I asked if she would continue seeking opportunities to receive feedback from colleagues, she said she would like to seek something like this because:

it's good to have comments.. cos sometimes when you are thinking, everything seems clear and put them on the paper, and your head is clear and you don't know if all the people, they gonna read and if it's as clear as.. (laugh)

(Ellen interview, September 17, 2014)

Knowing how others understood her writing was crucial for her to improve her writing, and detailed feeding back was the kind of feedback that matched what she needed.

Feeding back with a detailed reader's understanding of the text also serves to achieve intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1985), and thereby mediates a writer's thinking and writing. The intersubjectivity between a reader who gives feedback and the writer who receives it assists both to see the writing problem they are discussing in the same way. Through detailed feeding back, the reader is likely to draw the writer's attention to the reader's way of comprehending

text, which enables the joint creation of new meanings. This can become even more effective when intersubjectivity is checked step by step, such as sentence by sentence in writing. In the following excerpt, Facilitator B articulated her comprehension of each sentence, one after the other, with confirmation questions, a questioning strategy. This gradational intersubjectivity check invited Hadaf, the writer, to share the facilitator's understanding of a problem with the text and mediated Hadaf's thinking, leading to a new understanding of his own writing.

1 Facilitator B: Second paragraph, in Jordan, the statement about the number of male and female drivers. Second sentence, the sample of the present study is biased towards males. Third sentence, the low representation of females on roads might be due to the fact that Jordan is predominantly a male driving society. The first sentence is about Jordan, the second sentence is about your study, the third sentence is about your study with Jordan.

2 Hadaf: My study,

3 Facilitator B: Ah

4 Hadaf: No, no, about a fact we can say, or reality about Jordan, but not from a source. (…)

5 Facilitator B: First sentence is about Jordan, the second is about your study, third is about your study, and other possible reasons, this is still about your study.

6 Hadaf: No, I'm trying the [unclear] I'm trying to explain why are females underrepresented in this study.

7 Facilitator B: In yours?

8 Hadaf: Yes.

9 Facilitator B: OK. Won't sentence number three be correct of Jordan anyway? (…)

10 Hadaf: Yes, it's a fact about Jordan actually.

11 Facilitator B: I agree, the first sentence is a fact about Jordan, the third sentence is a fact about Jordan. So is the fourth one? Then I'm suggesting you say, the sample of the present study is also biased towards males and females. Final sentence, the low representation in the sample could be due to restrictions on communications. (…)

12 Hadaf: So you want me to defer the second sentence to be fourth or fifth?

13 Facilitator B: Yeah. (…) So first sentence generalising about Jordan, in Jordan there are this many people. Second sentence, the low representation of females. Third, other possible reasons could be because of that. Fourth, the sample of the present study is - you could even put here, is similarly biased towards male and females. (…)

<p style="text-align:center">(Oral interaction, Hadaf, Group B Session 2, October 28, 2014)</p>

Facilitator B articulated her understanding of each sentence in one of Hadaf's paragraphs (Turn 1). She, then, started asking confirmation questions for each sentence (Turns 1, 5, 7, and 9). By responding to these questions, Hadaf traced the Facilitator's line of thought about his writing and gained a new way of looking at his own writing by recognizing the problem. In Turn 11, Facilitator B articulated her understanding of each sentence for the third time, and then Hadaf cut in to suggest the revision, which Facilitator B had been implying (Turn 12). The detailed feeding back and confirmation questions assisted the attainment of intersubjectivity between the Facilitator and Hadaf.

Response to feedback and writing development

In response to given feedback, writers' articulation of their experiences, thoughts and perspectives about their own writing processes and intended meanings of the text played

important roles in mediating their thinking and writing. Their responses to feedback were mainly for the negotiation of meaning (the writer's explanation of what he/she intended to mean), defending and reflecting (the writer's reflective account of why he/she wrote what he/she did), and verbalizing understanding (the writer's reiteration of the suggestion given as well as his/her account of the revision plan based on his/her understanding of the given suggestion). These responding strategies both inter-psychologically (i.e., between people) and intra-psychologically (i.e., within an individual) mediated the writer's thinking and writing (for the analysis of response strategies, also see Mochizuki, 2016).

Inter-psychological benefits of response to feedback. Meaningful social interaction, the prerequisite for human mind development as in Vygotsky (1981), is facilitated by the writer's response to given feedback during writing conferences, namely the negotiation of meaning, defending and reflecting, and verbalizing understanding. Response to given feedback, explaining the process and the content of his/her writing helps fill the gap between the writer's intended meaning and the readers' understanding of the text, thereby keeping the discussion flowing and relevant to the writer.

The following excerpt illustrates the inter-psychological benefit of a writer's response. In this excerpt, Ellen's (the writer) negotiation of meaning helped the discussion stay meaningful for her:

Richard: So then I guess my question is - maybe it's because this is taken out of context but you seem to be suggesting these three particular ABC or these four particular ABC were of interest to this issue of national identity and what have you?

Ellen: No. It's kind of historical background to the ABC with trying to bring a specific focus to the ABC venue and how they (…)

(Oral interaction, Group A Session 5, October 16, 2014)

Richard tried to confirm whether his understanding of the theme of this section was right, but actually, his guess was wrong. Ellen explained her intentions, avoided the potential discrepancy in understanding between the reader and the writer, and managed to keep the discussion on track.

The next excerpt also illustrates how the writer's response to feedback made the dialogic interaction meaningful and relevant to the writer through establishing intersubjectivity. Notably, the attainment of intersubjectivity can also be initiated by the writer through response to feedback. Ellen, the writer, responded to feedback from two readers - Richard and Facilitator A - by negotiating meaning, explaining the intended meaning of her text to them. By so doing she brought the readers' focus in line with her thoughts, evoking feedback from them which was relevant and meaningful for her way of understanding the issue that they were discussing. Both readers pointed out that Ellen's choice of the word, "implicit" would not represent what they perceived she intended to mean.

1 Facilitator A: Yeah. Would be rather implicit - that's a bit too hedged, would be rather.

2 Ellen: [Sentiments] would be rather implicit, yeah.

3 Facilitator A: Ah, implicit. I mean, I don't think you can get away from nationalism in modern ABC [laughs]…

4 Richard: I wouldn't call it implicit either; it's very explicit [laughs]

5 Facilitator A: No, it's explicit. (….)

6 Ellen: Mm. Yeah. I think what I was trying to do here is to show that, in the charter, it's more about the humanistic nature of the ABC than the nationalistic. But then the - when I've read - a host country, it's hosting is more the nation than the humanistic values of the ABC.

7 Richard: But then you said - you did talk about the fact that de Coubertin did

have a nationalistic - because he talked about a modern athlete honours his country, his race and his flag.

8 Ellen: Yeah.

9 Richard: So there is some latent nationalism (…)

10 Ellen: [Laughs] Yeah, okay.

(Oral interactions, Group A Session 3, September 11, 2014)

In Turn 6, Ellen negotiated the meaning, elaborating what she meant by "implicit" in her writing. Her response evoked further counterargument from Richard (Turn 7), which linked to the content that Ellen had just stated. This linkage may have helped Ellen to understand the problem with her own writing from her perspective. Richard's counterargument made her reconsider her choice of words with a reference to what she had intended to mean and how it had been read by the two readers. The discussion on this issue ended with Ellen's brief expressions of alignment (Turn 10). It is not clear how she understood Richard and the facilitator's critique, but in her revision, she replaced the word, "implicit" with "evident" and added more explanation, stating clearly what was implicit and what was explicit. Her new way of understanding became possible because of her response to feedback in Turn 7, which called for intersubjectivity and realized meaningful social interaction.

  Intra-psychological benefits of responding feedback. Responding to feedback also helps learners' development on the intra-psychological plane by mediating their thinking and writing. The negotiation of meaning, defending and reflecting, and verbalizing understanding function as languaging (Swain et al., 2015), helping writers to clarify their own thoughts, gain a new understanding of some rhetorical concepts/conventions in thesis writing, and regulate their actions in appropriating what they have understood in their subsequent writing. The following two examples illustrate how writers' responses to feedback mediated the process of

thinking.

The following excerpt illustrates how defending and reflecting mediate thinking and writing. As Ellen verbalized her line of thought to defend what she had written, the relationship between her own thoughts and the feedback just given to her became clearer to Ellen. Here, it was suggested to Ellen that she should make the "revitalization discourse" stand out in her writing. As she was explaining her line of thought when she wrote this part (Turn 3), she made sense of the feedback given and agreed with the suggestion (Turn 5).

1 Facilitator A:	This revitalisation discourse is pervasive in the utopian ideals of…
2 Richard:	I think the other thing is you…
3 Ellen:	Like there is, in the paragraph just before this one, I go and talk about to understand sustainable ABC, it is important to understand the context of megaprojects as well as the idea of revitalisation associated with them.
4 Richard:	Okay.
5 Ellen:	But then I read that I need to probably bring that up…
6 Facilitator A:	Bring it up because it kept hitting me…

(Oral interactions, Ellen 4-20, September 25, 2014)

After the discussion, she revised her writing by adding a new paragraph to explain "the urban revitalization" and by giving an example.

The other example illustrates the mediation of verbalizing understanding. The excerpt below shows the verbalization of Ellen's revision plan acting as languaging. Facilitator A pointed out a section which confused her and suggested that Ellen should add more explanation about "the ancient past." At first, Ellen was not sure about the problem raised (Turn 4), and

then Richard joined the discussion (Turn 7). Richard and the facilitator co-constructed scaffolding until Ellen was finally convinced and verbalized her understanding of what she should do.

1 Facilitator A: My problem with that one was you've got the Games and the renovation of national identity, redoing it. I kind of got that but is it - Rome intended to capitalise on its ancient past besides using this and this? So the ancient past was the most important part of the sentence and then you don't talk about it.

2 Ellen: I don't talk about it. Yeah. Okay.

3 Facilitator A: So what we're getting is the fascist past but we're not getting the ancient past. So if you say the ancient past besides this and this, the besides bit just to the side. But that's what you're talking about.

4 Ellen: Mm-hmm.

5 Facilitator A: So [unclear]. Besides capitalising on its ancient past, it also wanted to use existing and modern facilities because the fascist facilities were modern. So that was where I got confused, I was waiting for...

6 Ellen: For something or...

7 Richard: Or have the modern facilities built for the ABC- were they post-fascism? (….)

8 Ellen: Yeah. I think I should restructure probably this sentence and say the way that Rome aimed to build this new identity and to be a strong identity in the globalising world is to mix the ancient with the fascist with new facilities as well but neutralise the negative.

<p style="text-align: right">(Oral interaction, Group A Session 5, October 16, 2014)</p>

Ellen's verbalization of a revision plan may have helped her in gaining a rhetorical concept, namely, argumentation. While listening to comments given and briefly responding to them (Turns 2 to 7), Ellen was probably trying to understand the problem raised with her writing and how to solve it. Her mental processing then may have included making sense of the feedback given with a reference to her intended meaning of this part of her writing and her understanding of a rhetorical concept, here, argumentation. In Turn 8, she articulated her revision plan, which acted as languaging. By articulating how to solve the problem raised by the readers, she was applying her understanding of the rhetorical concept, argumentation. Her verbalization helped organize and control these mental processes and functioned as languaging. In her revision, Ellen added some examples of "the ancient past" to make the argument clearer, as suggested by the readers.

Discussion and conclusion

In the language used in giving feedback, feeding back (the provision of the reader's thoughts on the writing they read) and questioning (asking clarification and confirmation questions about the content) were the most commonly used strategies and tended to involve the negotiation of meaning regarding a writer's intended meaning. They were also likely to lead to the establishment of intersubjectivity and involve both readers and a writer's thinking in joint efforts for the creation of new understandings for a piece of writing they were discussing. These joint thinking efforts often involved the writer's reflection on their own writing and thus raised awareness of the reader's point of view as has been noted in previous studies (e.g., Aitchison, 2009; Li & Vandermensbrugghe, 2011). The awareness of the reader's points of view may shift the conception of writing activity from being a seemingly individual, solo activity to becoming a more intersubjective communication activity, requiring interaction with other people's voices while writing. The activity of writing may come to involve a dialogue with the reader in the

writer's mind, namely, the anticipation of a response from the reader. In Aitchison (2010), during prolonged writing conferences, the participants became familiarized with other members' points of views and learned to predict the questions group members would ask. Aitchison argued that these internalized voices helped shape the participants' text while writing.

The study shows that a writer's response to feedback has a role to play both on the inter-psychological plane and the intra-psychological plane. Those responses include negotiating meaning, defending and reflecting on one's writing, verbalizing understanding of feedback or making a revision plan. On the inter-psychological plane, the response to feedback helps keep meaningful social interactions going. Social interactions are a prerequisite for human mind development, however, not all experiences on the inter-psychological plane can be internalized on the intra-psychological plane. Social interactions should be meaningful and relevant to a person in terms of his/her needs and motives (Vygotsky, 1981). Social interactions are more likely to become "meaningful" to a writer if he/she is involved in oral interaction for the joint construction of meaning for his/her own writing, in other words, if intersubjectivity is established during oral interactions. The response to feedback helps establish intersubjectivity and avoid misunderstanding between readers and a writer about the text and one another's intentions. Notably, another significant role for a writer's response on the inter-psychological plane is providing others with information about his/her ZPD (Poehner & Infante, 2017). By knowing how the writer understood the issue in his/her response, the facilitator and those who give feedback may adjust the suggestions they would give to the writer accordingly.

A writer's response to feedback is also intra-psychologically beneficial inasmuch as it acts as languaging (Swain et al, 2015), helping to clarify the writer's thoughts about his/her own writing and assisting cognitive functions to apply rhetorical concepts related to thesis writing. By so doing, the writer possibly develops self-regulation in subsequent writing. While previous studies have examined the discourse of oral feedback in L2 classrooms or writing conferences,

more focus has usually been placed on the provision of feedback, such as what kind of feedback, and how to give feedback, however, what this study argues is that feedback on writing is not solely created by the feedback giver and passed down to a receiver, but rather the meaning of feedback is co-constructed between those who speak. The focus should be, therefore, not only on the provision but also on the co-construction of feedback through oral interactions. As in the mediator-learner interactions demonstrated in Poehner and Infante's (2017) study about mediated development, the mediator's language is shaped by the learner's response that shows his/her understanding, and, in turn, the learner's language is also shaped by the language the mediator adopts. The study has shown that the same applies to the oral interactions between the readers and the writer in writing conferences. Both readers and a writer tried to establish intersubjectivity, so that the meaning of feedback was co-constructed. The study points to a learner's potential to manage his/her own learning by responding to feedback and calls for more attention to learners' language as advocated in previous studies (e.g., Knouzi et al., 2010).

Pedagogical implications of this study concern how to maximize the benefit of oral feedback exchange in writing conferences for writing development in terms of both giving feedback and responding feedback. When the teacher or students give feedback, giving detailed explanations of how they understood the text would be effective in establishing intersubjectivity with the writer. Asking the writer clarification and confirmation questions about the content would also promote a shared understanding of the process of improving writing. For responding feedback, students may need some training to be able to express what they thought about the given feedback, reflecting on their own writing processes, including how to defend what they wrote and verbalize their understanding of given feedback. By learning how to respond to feedback, students can make better use of oral feedback sessions for their own writing development.

The findings of this study may not be generalised to different contexts because they are

drawn from a case study of a small number of graduate students, twelve students, in writing conference groups. Moreover, the focused context was limited to the context of oral interactions in writing conferences for graduate students in the learning centre at an Australian university. Having said that, the thorough examinations of the oral discourses for feedback exchange on one another writing offer implications to developing pedagogies to maximize the benefit of oral interactions to writing development. The study casts light on a new conceptualization of oral interactions in writing classes.

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