

Does Tutor Feedback Make a Difference? Focusing on EFL Korean Student Writing*

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Cho, Sookyung. 2019. Does tutor feedback make a difference? Focusing on EFL Korean student writing. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 19–3, 432–451. The purpose of this study is to see how tutor feedback affects a student's writing. To date, studies on tutor feedback have focused on how tutor–student interactions affect student writing, and thus the effects of a tutor's written feedback have not been extensively studied. In order to fill this gap, this study keeps track of how tutors' written feedback affects student writing in accuracy, complexity, and fluency, by comparing and contrasting when they received written tutor feedback with when they did not. Also, this study aims to examine what types of tutor feedback are helpful to the students and how they perceive tutor feedback by analyzing the tutor feedback, the students' incorporation of it, and their questionnaires. The results reveal that when the students received tutor feedback, they produced more fluent writing, which could be explained by their tendency to incorporate the tutors' content-oriented feedback more than that grammar-oriented ones. Furthermore, most students evaluated tutor feedback positively and expressed that they would have liked to receive more tutor feedback. These findings suggest that tutor feedback should be utilized in a writing classroom, in particular, in the EFL context where students do not have many chances to receive written feedback.

Keywords: tutor feedback, feedback incorporation, second language writing

1. Introduction

Reportedly, tutors have played quite a different role from that of teachers. Some scholars consider them student peers rather than teachers (Harris 1986, North 1994, Plummer and Thonus 1999, Rafoth 2000, Shamoony and Burns 1999, Thonus 2001). In

*This work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2019.

the model of collaborative learning, tutors and tutees learn from each other, although tutors are usually more capable learners than their tutees. Derived from such different roles between tutors and teachers, students may respond differently to feedback given by tutors and given by teachers. Unfortunately, tutors' written feedback has not been studied as extensively as teachers' written feedback. Previous studies on tutors' written feedback have focused on either what kinds of feedback tutors give to their students (Glover and Brown 2006, Ivanič, Clark and Rimmershaw 2000, Lea and Street 2000) or what students think of tutor feedback (Orsmond and Merry 2001, Weaver 2006). Effects of tutors' written feedback on student writing have rarely been studied. Some scholars who wanted to see how tutor feedback can facilitate students' self-assessing skills have seen the effects of tutor feedback in the framework of formative assessment (McKevitt 2016, Nicol and MarFarlane-Dick 2006, Sadler 1989, Sendzuik 2010, Taras 2001, 2003). Although they did find positive effects of tutor feedback on students' performances, they did not examine exactly how the tutor feedback improved the students' performances. And thus, this study tries to examine how tutors' written feedback affects students by comparing and contrasting students' writings when they receive tutor feedback and when they do not. Additionally, by analyzing the tutor feedback and the students' reflections of them into their revisions as well as their responses to a questionnaire on tutor feedback, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Does tutor feedback make a difference in student writing? How does it affect student writing in terms of accuracy, complexity, and fluency?
- 2) What types of feedback do students receive from tutors? Do types of feedback affect students' incorporation of them in their revisions?
- 3) How do students perceive tutor feedback?

2. Tutor Feedback

To date, most studies on tutor feedback in the area of second language writing has focused on tutors' oral feedback, mostly in the type of tutor-tutee interactions that occur during tutorials. For example, Thonus (2004) adopted Schiffirin's interactional sociolinguistics framework and compared and contrasted writing tutors' talk with their native and non-native tutees. Based on the analysis of her four-year-long collection

of 20 writing tutors' talk with their 44 tutees, Thonus argued that tutor's talk with non-native tutees are usually longer and more direct than with their native tutees. On the other hand, Williams (2004)—in the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, which considers tutor talk as scaffolding to student learning—examined five videotaped-writing center sessions in order to see what kinds of changes in a student's revision were brought about by tutor-tutee interactions. As the result of the analysis, Williams found that when certain conditions were met—i.e., when tutor feedback was direct and when student actively participated in the interaction—students were more likely to uptake a tutor's suggestion.

Such focus on tutor-tutee interactions may be due not only to their importance in writing tutorials, but also to several practical matters. For instance, in the setting of a writing center, tutor feedback is more often given orally to the tutees than in a written form. At writing centers, tutors meet with tutees whom they are not quite familiar with during relatively short a time—e.g., 20 to 30 minutes—and provide their feedback on spot. And due to such nature of writing centers, it is hard to trace what kinds of feedback the tutors give to their tutees. Furthermore, because the students who visit the writing center are not necessarily required to submit their revisions, it is as difficult to trace down the effects of tutor feedback on student writing.

However, under the increasing influence of formative assessment, the effects of tutors' written feedback have often been studied in academic disciplines other than second language writing, such as in education (Glover and Brown 2006, Ivanič et al. 2000, Lea and Street 2000, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006). Through the analysis of tutors' written feedback or student perceptions of them, these scholars have found mismatches between tutors' and students' understanding of feedback. For example, Lea and Street (2000) conducted a case study on two UK universities, one traditional and one new university through semi-structured interviews with tutors and students, class observations, and analyses of student writing and tutor feedback. They found that, more often than not, tutors implicitly developed a clear view of academic writing through their long-time experiences of writing in their own disciplines, but they failed to explicitly describe what a successful writing is. As a result, Lea and Street found that the tutors' descriptions of good writing remained at the surface level using the words such as argument or organization, although their concepts of good writing was rather epistemological and ideological. This led to students' confusion and lack of understanding or inappropriate interpretations of tutor feedback. Weaver (2006) surveyed 44 students—who were studying Business or Art & Design at a UK

university—on their perceptions of tutors’ written comments and found that although most of them seemed to have positive views on tutor feedback, there were four characteristics of unhelpful feedback: too vague, lack of guidance, focus on the negative, and unrelated to assessment criteria. Orsmond and Merry (2011) also found a similar discrepancy between tutors’ and students’ understanding of feedback after conducting semi-structured interviews with both tutors and students. Based on this finding, Orsmond and Merry emphasized the importance of using feedback as a more-formative tool so that it can eventually enhance student learning, not just their particular work.

In the framework of formative assessment, which improves the learners’ self-assessing ability and helps them to learn independently in the end, incorporating tutor feedback into assessment procedure narrows the gap between tutors and students and thus enables the students to assess their own abilities by better understanding the task requirements and grading criteria (McKevitt 2016, Nicol and MarFarlane-Dick 2006, Sadler 1989, Sendzuik 2010, Taras 2001, 2003). For example, through her research on tutors and students, Taras (2001) emphasizes the importance of giving tutor feedback before the students receive their final grades in developing the students’ self-assessment ability. She argues that tutor feedback guides learners to internalize grading criteria and apply the same analytical lenses to their own work. In the similar vein, Sendzuik (2010) developed the so-called “Learning-Oriented Assessment Task” where students were involved in the activity of writing a 100-word summary after receiving tutor feedback on their history essays and found that this procedure helps the students better understand the grade descriptions and criteria, improving their self-assessing ability at the same time.

As seen here, the previous studies on the effects of tutor feedback—whether their focus is on oral or written feedback—are usually restricted to the situation when tutor feedback is given. That is, they have not seen how differently students would behave when they do not receive tutor feedback. There are very few studies that have examined the effect of tutor feedback by comparing and contrasting larger learning systems that do or do not incorporate tutor feedback (McKevitt 2016, Taras 2003). For example, McKevitt (2016) compared 35 third-year humanities students’ self-assessment results before and after they received tutor feedback and found that students were able to assess their works very similarly to how their tutors did after they received tutor feedback than before they did. Drawing upon these results, McKevitt suggests that guiding the students’ self-assessment processes by tutor

feedback plays an important role in motivating them. On the other hand, Taras (2003) compared SA (student self-assessment) and SSA (student self-assessment incorporating tutor feedback) conditions by examining three translation tasks completed by 17 English native speakers and 17 French native speakers and found that SA was likely to make students evaluate their works based on their input—such as time and efforts they invested in finishing their translation works from French to English, but that SSA tended to evaluate their works based on their own errors and mistakes. Even though these studies argued the positive effects of a tutor's written feedback, they did not examine exactly how tutors' written feedback positively affects a student's work. In order to delve into these issues in more detail, this study compares and contrasts students' writings when they receive tutor feedback and when they do not. Along with the examination of student writing in these two different conditions, this study examines the student's incorporation of the tutor feedback into their revisions as well as their perceptions of the tutor feedback so as to analyze the effects of tutor feedback on student writing more comprehensively.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Six tutors and 20 freshman students participated in this study. The six tutors were graduate students of English Linguistics or TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language)—three are from English Linguistics, and the other three are from TESOL. All of them took a graduate class "Seminar on Applied Linguistics I" with me and volunteered to tutor the students. The six tutors had long experiences of teaching writing, but for three of them it was the first time tutoring college-level students, while the other three tutors tutored college students in the previous semester.

The freshmen were enrolled in a low-level English writing course that I also taught, and they were placed in this particular class as the result of a placement test, which asked them to write about a given topic (What are your thoughts on the rising tide of multiculturalism in Korea?) within 360 words/ 2 or 3 paragraphs in an hour. The test results were graded by two English-speaking native professors of English writing. Also, a diagnostic test was conducted at the beginning of the semester, and the results indicated that their general proficiency was intermediate.

3.2 Data Collection

First, all the students' written drafts and tutors' written comments were collected. During the 16-week period, the freshmen wrote two major essays in said class—the former a compare and contrast essay in the 9th week, and the latter an argumentative essay in the 13th week. For each writing assignment, they submitted a first draft and resubmitted its revised draft two weeks later. Between the first draft and the final draft, the students had opportunities to receive tutor feedback. In order to control the ordering effects of receiving tutor feedback, I alternated the groups of students who received tutor feedback: that is, only half of the students—11 students for the first writing assignment and another 9 students for the second writing assignments—received tutor feedback while the second half of the students did not receive it.¹ When each cycle was over, their writing drafts, including first and last drafts, were collected for the analysis. As for the first writing assignment, one student was excluded from the data because she did not turn in her revised draft after receiving tutor feedback; in the second cycle, three students were excluded, for two of them did not respond to their tutors, and the other received tutor feedback, but failed to turn in her revised draft.

Each tutor gave their feedback twice to one or two students, which depended on their schedule. For the purpose of meeting with various students, the tutors were assigned to different students each time. Although they were taught how to give feedback in the graduate-level class, they were not given specific guidelines so that they could make decisions on how they would give feedback. They received their tutees' first draft and prepared written feedback beforehand. The tutors then gave their written feedback either face-to-face or via email depending on the tutees' preference: three tutors gave their feedback face-to-face, while the other three gave their feedback via email. The tutors who met with tutees face-to-face submitted a copy of their written feedback—a separate sheet of paper or a copy of the students' draft with their comments in the margin. On the other hand, the other tutors who contacted their tutees by email carbon-copied their feedback to me so that I was able to collect copies of their written feedback.

Lastly, in order to see how students perceived tutor feedback, all the students were required to answer an exit-questionnaire on tutor feedback at the end of the

¹ Students were not evenly distributed to each group due to each tutor's availability. Tutors with more time were assigned more tutees compared to other tutors with less time.

semester. The students answered the following questions in Korean: 1) Did tutor feedback help you to revise your writing? Why do you think so? 2) Did you have any difficulties in incorporating tutor feedback? If so, how did you overcome these difficulties? And 3) Do you have suggestions to the instructor for improving the practice of giving and receiving tutor feedback in the future?

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Analysis of student writing

Each of final drafts was analyzed in terms of its accuracy, complexity, and fluency, based on Storch (2005) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2007). Table 1 summarizes the measures used in this study. Storch (2005) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2007) recommended a ratio of error-free T-unit per T-unit or a ratio of error-free clause per clause (EFC/C) as measurements of accuracy in English learners' writing. In this study, EFC/C was used, considering the participants' low-level of writing abilities. A clause is defined as an independent or a dependent clause in this study, while errors include "syntactical errors (e.g., errors in word order, missing elements), morphology (e.g., verb tense, subject-verb agreement, errors in articles and prepositions, errors in word forms)" as referred to in Wigglesworth and Storch (2007, p. 464) as well as errors in lexis (word choice). However, errors in spelling and punctuation were excluded unless they obscured the meaning. All errors were identified by two native speakers of English and whenever a discrepancy occurred, they discussed until they reached an agreement.

On the other hand, complexity was measured by the ratio of clauses per T-unit. Drawn upon Storch's (2005) definition of a T-unit, "an independent clause and all its attached or embedded dependent clauses" (171), run-on sentences were counted as 2 T-units, while a sentence fragment was counted as one T-unit. Finally, fluency was measured as the number of clauses. According to Storch (2005) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2007), the number of clauses or the number of T-units are often used as fluency measures, and this study adopted the number of clauses, considering the study participants' low level of writing. After all these three measures were calculated for each student's final text, a series of t-tests were conducted between the two conditions when student received tutor feedback and when they did not, to see whether tutor feedback makes a difference in their accuracy, complexity, and fluency.

Table 1. Measures for Accuracy, Complexity, and Fluency

Accuracy	Complexity	Fluency
The Number of Error-Free Clauses Divided by the Number of Clauses (EFC/C)	The Number of clauses divided by the number of T-units	The Number of Clauses per Text

3.3.2 Analysis of tutor feedback incorporation

In order to answer the second research question, what types of feedback students received from tutors and how they incorporated them into their revisions, first, each tutor's feedback was categorized depending on error types. I adopted the analyzing scheme of Ferris (2006) with slight modifications. Because the students were taught how to use outside sources in their writing class and were also required to use them in their writing, new categories such as "evidence," "voice," or "citation" were added as categories of error type to the framework of Ferris. On the other hand, the categories, such as "run-ons," "spellings," and "idioms" were removed because they were not found in the data. Table 2 shows each error type in detail. Once the classification of tutor feedback by error type was completed, each student's first and final drafts were compared and contrasted to see whether a particular feedback type was incorporated into their revisions or not. In some cases, it was not clear to decide whether tutor's feedback was incorporated because the students deleted the whole part or made changes that the tutors did not suggest. In order to solve this confusion, only the case when students took tutor feedback as exactly as their tutors suggested was counted as incorporation of feedback in this study. Once the analysis was completed, frequency was compared across feedback types. Later, the feedback categories were merged into grammar-oriented and content-oriented feedbacks and a two-way chi-square was performed in R (R Core Team, 2018) between these two different types of feedback to see whether feedback types affected a student's incorporation of them.

Table 2. Tutor Feedback by Error Type
(Adopted and Modified from Ferris, 2006)

	Error Type	Description	Example
Grammar-oriented Feedback	Word Choice	Wrong word choice	"take" to "do"
	Verb Tense	Verb tense	"called" to "call"
	Verb Form	Verb form	"has accepted" to "has been"

	Word Form	Word form	accepted
	Article	Article	"increase" to increasing
	Singular-plural	Singular-plural	"the" to "Ø"
	Pronoun	Pronouns	"opinion" to "opinions"
	Punctuation	Commas, periods, semicolons, and colons	"it" to "home schooling"
	Fragments	Incomplete sentences	“.” To “;”
	Sentence Structure	Includes missing and unnecessary words, phrase, and word order problems; teacher changed sentences to read more naturally	“There was no verb in this sentence.”
	Voice	Refers to register choices considered inappropriate for academic writing	“they are hard to make a living” to “they have difficulty making a living”
	S-V agreement	Subject-verb agreement	“Use academic vocabulary.”
	Adverb	Adverb	“I thinks” to I think”
	Preposition	Prepositions	“There is mixed point of view” to “There is also mixed point of view”
	Conjunction	Conjunctions	“the Korean race” to “from the Korean race”
	Citation	Comments on sources of outside materials used in the essay	“or cash” to “cash”
	Contents	Comments on topic and theme	“(Gerlind)” to “(Gerlind, 2001)”
Content-oriented Feedback	Off-topic	Comments on unity	“Any final remarks?”
	Clarification	Comments on unclear contents and terms	“Off-topic!”
	Elaboration	Asks for further explanations	“Not clear!”
	Coherence	Transitions from one to another sentences	“Please elaborate on this!”
	Organization	Comments on paragraph and essay structures	“It would be better to start the paragraph like this.”
	Repetition	Repeated words or contents	“organization (intro-body-conclusion)”
	Evidence	Request of more supporting details	“Lexical diversity”
			“Provide evidence.”

3.3.3 Analysis of questionnaire

Finally, students' answers to the questions on the exit questionnaire were analyzed using a procedure of thematic analysis recommended by Leki (2006). Their answers were coded line by line, and later grouped into similar topics in order to identify recurring patterns and themes in their answers; as a result, two major themes—"tutor feedback is helpful" and "I want more tutor feedback"—appeared.² Once these themes were found, the students' answers to the questionnaire were read again to check whether these themes were congruent with what students actually meant in their answers.

4. Results

4.1 Effect of Tutor Feedback on Student Writing

As mentioned in the above, in order to answer the first research question, that is, whether tutor feedback affects a student's writing, the students' revised versions—whether they received tutor feedback or they did not—were analyzed in terms of accuracy, complexity, and fluency. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Tutor and Non-Tutor Feedback Groups

	Accuracy		Complexity		Fluency	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Tutor Feedback (<i>n</i> = 16)	0.73	0.13	1.78	0.69	85.13	20.20
Non-Tutor Feedback (<i>n</i> = 20)	0.67	0.15	2.04	0.37	70.30	22.17

As seen in Table 3, the group that received tutor feedback showed higher scores in accuracy and fluency while the group that did not receive tutor feedback showed higher complexity scores. A series of *t*-tests show that only fluency scores were

² Due to a lack of meaningful responses pertaining to the second question, I did not include it in this discussion.

significantly different among the two groups ($t = 2.0952$, $df = 33.374$, $p = 0.02191$). That is, when the students received tutor feedback, they were likely to write more fluently than when they did not.

4.2 Incorporation of Tutor Feedback by Error Types

Why does this difference occur between these two groups? In order to explore this issue further, tutor feedback was categorized depending on the error type that each feedback deals with, and later the number of incorporated feedback was counted through the comparison of students' first and final drafts. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Tutor Feedback by Error Type

Error Type	Not Incorporated	Incorporated	Total
Sentence Structure	39	14	53
Contents	26	24	50
Clarification	32	7	39
Word Choice	25	7	32
Off-Topic	12	19	31
Evidence	16	9	25
Punctuation	13	7	20
Pronoun	11	1	12
Preposition	9	1	10
Elaboration	3	6	9
Conjunction	4	4	8
Article	7	0	7
Adverb	5	1	6
Citation	5	1	6
Organization	3	3	6
Plural	4	1	5
Capital	4	1	5
Subject-Verb Agreement	4	0	4
Repetition	4	0	4
Word Form	3	0	3
Voice	2	1	3
Verb Tense	2	0	2
Verb Form	2	0	2
Coherence	2	0	2
Fragment	1	0	1

Note. The shaded ones are content-oriented feedback while the others are grammar-oriented feedback.

Even though more grammar-oriented feedback was given in sum, Table 4 shows that contents, clarification, off-topic, evidence, which are all content-oriented, were some of the most frequently given types of feedback. This content-oriented feedback might have led to more fluent writing when students received tutor feedback than when they did not, as seen in Student A's example.

<p>1st Draft Technology has impacted almost every aspect of our lives, even in education./ Online education has grown significantly over the past few years (Erstad)./ On the other hand, while online learning is spreading widely,/ learning in the traditional classroom setting/ still plays a major role in society's education system./ Online education has similarities but significant differences with traditional education./ Students should consider their learning styles and situation/ when choosing between online and traditional education./</p> <p>Tutor Feedback It would be better to explain why you want to compare and contrast online education and traditional education. This explanation will justify why it is worth writing about this topic and make your readers more interested in your writing.</p> <p>Revised Draft Technology has impacted almost every aspect of our lives, even in education./ Online education has grown significantly over the past few years (Erstad)./ On the other hand, while online learning is spreading widely,/ learning in the traditional classroom setting/ still plays a major role in society's education system./ Online education has similarities but significant differences <i>from offline education./ Online and offline education differ mainly in the aspects of flexibility, self-discipline, and social interaction./ Therefore, understanding these differences/ can help student make the right choice./</i></p> <p>A slash (/) demarcates a clause. Italics indicate the revised part from the first draft.</p>

Figure 1. Student A's 1st Draft versus Revised Draft

Figure 1 demonstrates that after receiving tutor feedback on her contents, Student A added explanations on why she compared and contrasted online and offline education in this particular essay, citing that she wanted to help students understand the differences between online and offline education so that they could make the right choice. As the result of this revision, the number of clauses (/) has increased from 7 in the first draft to 9 in the revised draft.

In order to see whether students actually incorporated more content-oriented feedback into their revisions than grammar-oriented feedback, as in the case of Student A, a two-way chi-square test with Yates's Correction for Continuity was conducted. Table 5 shows the two-by-two table that was used for this test. The

result shows that the difference between grammar and content is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05 ($\chi^2 = 17.149$, $df = 1$, $p = .00$); that is, students incorporated content-oriented feedback, such as contents, clarification, off-topic, evidence, elaboration, organization, and coherence, significantly more than their feedback on grammatical mistakes.

Table 5. Chi-Square Table for Error Type

	Not	Incorporated	Incorporated	Sum
Grammar		144	39	183
Content		94	68	162
Sum		238	107	345

4.3 Student Perceptions on Tutor Feedback

The analysis of questionnaires conducted on all the students uncovers the following themes: 1) tutor feedback is helpful; and 2) I want more tutor feedback.

4.3.1 "Tutor feedback is helpful"

All the study participants evaluated tutor feedback quite positively. They perceived that tutor feedback is helpful in the aspect of contents as well as grammar. There were 15 occasions when the participants mentioned that tutor feedback helped their grammar, such as sentence structure, word choice, awkward expressions, or grammar mistakes. On the other hand, in 20 occasions the participants stated that tutor feedback helped them develop the contents of their writings by mentioning "logical flow," "essay organizations," or "ideas." Interestingly, out of these 20 occasions, four of them were related to writing academic essays in general, beyond this particular essay they were working on.

[Tutor feedback] enables me to better understand *how to write an academic essay in general*. [It was] good.³

(Excerpt from Student B)

³ I translated the excerpts from Korean into English for this study. The italics indicate my own emphasis.

I liked tutor feedback because she advised me how to solve problems in my essay one-on-one She also taught me *tips on how to write an academic essay* as well as on my own essay.

(Excerpt from Student C)

Regarding the question, whether tutor feedback was helpful when they revised their own essays, Student B answered that he viewed tutor feedback quite helpful because of feedback on how to write essays in general, not just on the particular essay he received tutor feedback on. Student C also mentioned that she liked tutor feedback because of the tips on how to write an academic essay in general.

Additionally, two of the participants evaluated tutor feedback helpful because of the additional explanations on their feedbacks.

Tutor feedback was helpful. She not only let me know problems and their solutions in my essay, but also made *memos at the end of each paragraph*, which facilitates my understanding of her comments.

(Excerpt from Student D)

The tutor feedback was the most helpful because she indicated where to fix, but at the same time *she explained why I have to fix that part, how to fix it, and how make the expression sound natural*.

(Excerpt from Student E)

Student D received feedback from the tutor Yuna, who provided explanations on why she made that kind of suggestion whenever she made a correction on the student essay. It seems that Student D valued this feedback style because it helped her understand the tutor feedback better. Student E's tutor, Su-Young also tended to explain why she gave a particular feedback to her student, and Student E evaluated her feedback most helpful because of the explanation.

4.3.2 "I want more tutor feedback"

As to the question, which asked them to make suggestions for the future use of tutor feedback in a writing class, 11 students answered that they want more tutor feedback in the future. The majority—seven participants out of 11—hoped that they

would receive tutor feedback more often, as Student F and G state in the following:

I wish I had tutor feedback whenever I wrote an essay. It would be great especially for the students who wrote an essay for the first time like me.

(Excerpt from Student F)

I think *the more I meet with tutors*, the better the quality of my essay will be.

(Excerpt from Student G)

Student F and G were relatively weaker writers in the class. As Student F said, it was the first time for her to attempt to write an academic essay in English. It seems that EFL writers—in particular, weak writers like Student F and G—want to receive tutor feedback more frequently.

On the other hand, students also seem to seek a closer relationship with their tutors through a longer period of time or face-to-face interaction. Three of the participants mentioned that longer interactions or relationships would be helpful for improving their writing ability, whereas four participants mentioned that they would seek for face-to-face interactions.

It was good for me to have *face-to-face interaction with my tutor*. A friend of mine who communicated with his tutor by email told me that the interaction was quite formal. I wish that would be improved in the future.

(Excerpt from Student H)

If I worked with my tutor *for a longer period of time*, it would be more helpful.

(Excerpt from Student I)

Student H met with his tutor and received feedback from him face-to-face. He evaluated this face-to-face interaction more positively than his friend's interaction with his tutor via email. Based on his own positive interaction with his tutor, Student H suggested that tutors give their feedback to their tutees face-to-face in the future. On the other hand, Student I suggested that longer interactions with the tutor would be helpful. In this study, Student I had only one chance to receive tutor feedback, and she felt that she needed to receive tutor feedback for a longer time.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The comparison and contrast of student writing under the two different conditions, when they received feedback and when they did not, show that those that received feedback produced better writing in terms of fluency than those that did not, although there was not found any statistically significant difference between them in accuracy nor complexity. This result confirms the positive effects of tutor feedback that previous studies have found in the framework of formative assessment (McKevitt 2016, Sendzuik 2000, Taras 2003). Drawing upon such positive effect of tutor feedback on student performance, they suggested that tutor feedback might facilitate students' understanding of assessment procedure such as grade descriptions, criteria, policy and that, as a result, they could self-assess their writing as their tutors would. On the other hand, this study explores how tutor feedback helps student writing by suggesting that tutor feedback, in particular, content-oriented tutor feedback led students to write more fluently, although not necessarily more accurately or complexly. The analysis of tutor feedback and its incorporation rate in student revisions shows that students actually incorporated more content-oriented tutor feedback than grammar-oriented feedback. Tutors' feedback that asked the students to elaborate on or clarify a certain point, in particular, seems to make the students write more elaborately in their revisions, which increases fluency of their revised drafts in turn. Students' preference of tutors' content-oriented feedback over grammar-oriented one may relate to the degree of authority they place on tutors compared to their teachers. According to my observation, students were receptive of the teacher's feedback regardless of the type, whereas they tended to be less receptive towards their tutor's grammar-oriented feedback.

Even so, the analysis of questionnaires shows that all students expressed an appreciation for tutor feedback; such appreciation is in accordance with these previous literature (Orsmond and Merry 2001, Weaver 2006). The participants of this study evaluated tutor feedback helpful in the aspect of content-development as well as grammar correction. In spite of this positive evaluations student have had on tutor feedback, Orsmond and Merry (2001) and Weaver (2006) have also warned about the problems tutor feedback might have; that is, tutors and students do not necessarily share the same understanding of tutor feedback, so students may have difficulties understanding tutor feedback. Some of this study's participants mentioned tutors' additional explanations on their feedback and intimate relationship with their tutors as

the benefits of tutor feedback, which may provide a solution to the problem these scholars pointed out. The students mentioned that the tutors' explanations coming along with the corrections of problems helped them to understand tutor comments better. Furthermore, it is revealed that the majority of the participants sought more tutor feedback—whether it means a longer period of time or more frequent meetings with tutors. A more intimate relationship with tutors, coming from longer and frequent meetings, may help students communicate better with their tutors, which may increase the possibility of reducing incongruity between tutors and students.

The current study is limited in that the number of participants is small and that the chances of receiving feedback are restricted to only one time. Inclusion of a wider variety of participants, such as in its size, ethnic backgrounds, and mother tongues in future studies will provide more insight on how tutor feedback can be utilized in a larger context in a more systematic way. Also, because the participants of this study wrote two different types of essays, it is possible that the type affected the results. Despite these limitations, however, this study implies that tutor feedback has a great potential in a writing class, in particular, in the EFL context, where students hardly have a chance to receive feedback on their writing other than from their teachers. Drawn upon this study's participants' agreement that they are eager to receive more tutor feedback, the use of tutors in an EFL writing classroom can provide students with more opportunities to receive feedback from more various sources in addition to their teachers, and moreover, tutor feedback can compensate what the writing teachers cannot provide in a large-scale writing class by providing one-on-one interaction with the students and focusing more on the content of student writing.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary

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*Does tutor feedback make a difference?
Focusing on EFL Korean student writing*

Received: July 31, 2019

Revised: September 10, 2019

Accepted: September 19, 2019