Dialogical Interaction in Cyber Joint Activity of Feedback and Revision: Inner Speech in Multiple-Draft Compositions

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a joint activity (adapted from Leont'ev, 1992) of dialogical interaction that occurs between an online teacher's inner speech of feedback and his students' inner speech of revision in a particular cyber context of teaching multiple draft compositions. The two major components of dialogical interaction are the so-called question-form comments in the teacher's written feedback and their subsequent learner revisions. The question-form comments were found to be both indirect and facilitative. The indirect language of question-form comments seemed to create a democratic atmosphere and direct learners' attention to the meaning making of the content. Whether self-regulated or other-regulated, question-form comments frequently led to learners' self-corrections and thus provided a great avenue to help the students to become more autonomous learners of second language writing.

Keywords: dialogical interaction, inner speech, multiple-draft compositions, cyber teaching.

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I. Introduction

According to Bakhtin (1984), life is dialogical by nature, and therefore, "to live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth" (p. 293). Dialogue, as a word, originates from two Greek roots: *dia* means through, and *logos* is word or meaning. The image dialogue presents is a river of meaning flowing through the participants (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991). Whereas some researchers such as Linell (1998) confine the meaning of dialogue to only the discourse of oral speech, other researchers would include written communication to be a legitimate form of dialogue (Burbules & Bruce, 2002).

Scholars of reader-response theories bring up the idea that a reader can have dialogue with a written text. As Rosenblatt (1978) argues, a reader should not be seen as a blank tape registering a ready-made message but he or she should be "integrally and actively involved in wrestling with all aspects of the literary work" to construct an understanding of it (cited in Totten, 1999, p. 3). As a writing teacher and a practitioner of reader response theory, Boyle (2000) often gets excited when she reads and dialogues with the writers in the margins of their works (Boyle, 2000). Spiegel (1998) concludes reader-response theories with four basic assumptions: 1) stance is important, 2) readers make meanings, 3) the meanings are personal but also grounded in reading text, and 4) multiple interpretations of text are possible.

In the pedagogy of writing, there is a dearth of research linking teacher response to learner revision (Ashwell, 2000). Ferris (1997) introduces an approach for making such connection. Without manipulating feedback types, Ferris classifies teacher's written commentary by length, the use of hedges, functional type and text specificity and rates student revisions according to whether the revisions are *minimal* or *substantive* as well as whether they

are *positive* or *negative*. It was found that "marginal requests for information, requests and summary comments on grammar appeared to lead to the most substantive revisions" (Ferris, 1997, p 330). Conrad and Goldstein (1999) investigate the relationship between written teacher comments and students' revisions for three ESL advanced learners. Their analysis suggests that students revise more successfully in response to declaratives rather than questions, and to direct rather than indirect language. When it comes to questions, they report that yes/no questions bring more success in terms of revisions than do WH questions.

With specific reference to the acquisition of English by learners from different L1 backgrounds, Kachru (1988) calls on teachers to emphasize that there is a repertoire of models and that localized innovations in use have pragmatic bases. English teachers should be aware of this variation and avoid cultural stereotypes when providing feedback on learner compositions. The curriculum of English as a global English should reflect the values and cultures of the learners who would preserve their identity by reflecting that identity in the local variety of English (Kirkpatrick, 2001). Moriarty (1998) argues that any concept of a global language must be the expression of local identity transacted around local need.

Phillipson (1996) considers non-native English speaking teachers to be potentially the ideal ESL teachers as well as good leaner models because they have gone through the process of acquiring English as a second language. They have first-hand experience in learning to use a second language, and their learning experience has sensitized them to the linguistic and cultural needs of L2 learners. In their discussions of a graduate TESOL seminar, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) suggest that non-native speaking teachers should be trained to be effective teachers regardless of their NNS status to shift the emphasis from who you are to what you know. They

point out that the issue is not to make NNSs like the NSs but to place more emphasis on the concerns related to ELT professionals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In this paper, the investigator proposes a model of dialogical interaction to represent the communication during the process of teacher's written feedback and learner revision in multiple draft compositions. The teacher and students in this online pedagogical context are all non-native speakers of English. Adapted from Leont'ev's (1992) structures of joint activity, the modified model in FIGURE 1 is a combination of his structure number 5 and 9, being proposed to represent the dialogical interaction under investigation. As FIGURE 1 shows, the first subject (S_1) is the teacher, and the second subject (S_2) is a learner. The first object (O_1) represents the teacher's inner speech when he is reading a draft of the learner. His inner dialogue then partially transforms into external speech via written feedback or comments. On the other hand, O_2 is the learner's inner speech as he or she reads the teacher's written feedback. The inner speech may then result in a revision which can occasionally be a response to the teacher's written feedback. Dialogical interaction occurs when the teacher's written feedback is directly responded in the learner's revision. O_3, the third object, is the written text of the multi-draft composition itself. These intertextual responses in terms of feedback and revision bond the connection between the teacher (S_1) and learner (S_2).
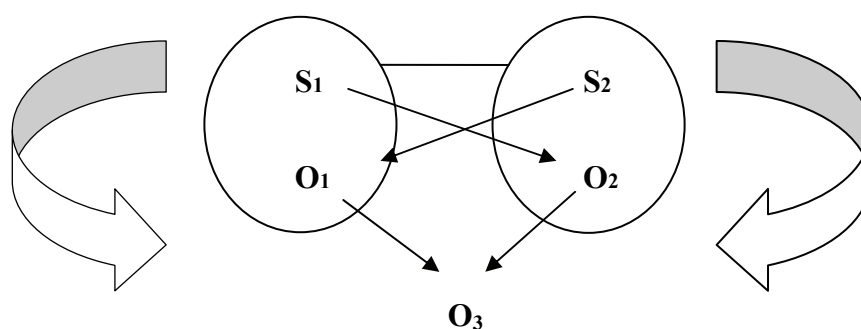

FIGURE 1: Joint Activity of Feedback and Revision in Multi-draft Compositions

II.　Methodology

1. Pedagogical Context

The online course of grammar and writing under investigation was offered on a website known as English for Internet or EFI (www.study.com), completely staffed by volunteer teachers to provide free online instruction for students from all over the world. EFI offered free classes in listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and some specialized courses in TOEFL, ESP, and Chat. The investigator had been a volunteer teacher for the cyber course of grammar and writing on EFI from the year of 2001 to 2002. The means of communication between the teacher and his students was email, an asynchronous CMC technology that allowed them to participate anytime and anywhere at their convenience.

2. Participants

The teacher and investigator in this study was an international PhD student of Applied Linguistics at a state university in the United States. His students were two international adult learners who participated in the course of grammar and writing on the EFI website. One of them was a Hungarian businessman who had enrolled in this cyber course for 42 weeks.

The other was a Thai homemaker who had enrolled for 39 weeks. The Hungarian was at the basic level, and Thai learner was at the intermediate level in a placement test of grammar and composition assessed by the EFI website.

3. Data Collection

The data in this study were the first and second drafts of 8 compositions from the two students, including the teacher's written feedback to the first drafts. A total of 113 comments were found in the teacher's written feedback, and 43 of them were in question form (38%). In order to perceive the response behavior of the students toward different comments, the investigator divided the question-form comments into four categories: request for information, request for revision, request for clarification and suggestion for revision.

4. Procedure

Discourse analytic techniques were used to examine the process of feedback and revision throughout the four categories of question-form comments. Some examples were investigated separately within each category and then followed with a general discussion. Each example included a question-form comment and the learner's revision in response to the comment in the subsequent draft. In short, the intertextual communication between the teacher and his students were scrutinized and dissected in the process of feedback and revision.

5. Data Presentation

The question-form comments under investigation were parts of the written commentary given on the multiple-draft compositions of the two students. To provide feedback on an electronic document, the teacher used blue-highlight to mark any problems in learner drafts. He inserted bold-faced comments below the blue-highlighted problems to guide the students' revisions. To revise the draft, the students were told to mark their revisions in green highlight and they needed to turn blue highlight into green whenever he or she modified a marked error or mistake. See Excerpt 1 for an illustration of this feedback marking system, with the subsequent revisions in a following draft. (Because the use of color fonts is not possible in this report, the blue-highlighted and green-highlighted texts that appear in the study have been replaced by italics and boldface, respectively. The tutor's comments are shown in uppercase to distinguish them from the boldface revisions.)

EXCERPT 1: Feedback Technique in the Cyber Tutoring

Draft 1:

My wife and I spent our holiday in Croatia two years ago. We heard some advantegeous

information about Croatia: there are some National Parks with wonderful places

of interest, the Adriatic is clear and transparent. The war between Croatia and

Serbia finished, the country was safe.

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1:

My wife and I spent our holiday in Croatia two years ago. We heard some advantegeous

IS CROATIA NEAR HUNGARY?

information about Croatia: there are some National Parks with wonderful places

DID YOU VISIT THE PARKS? CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC?

of interest, the Adriatic is clear and transparent. The war between Croatia and

THE CONTENT CAN BE MORE RELATED.

Serbia finished, the country was safe.

GOOD NEWS!   SO, THE COUNTRY IS SAFE?

Draft 2:

My wife and I took our holiday in Croatia two years ago. In advance we had some information

about Croatia which made a good impression on us.

As you know, there are some National

Parks with wonderful places of interest in Croatia, for example the Plitvice Lakes which is a

system of lakes, or the Krka-Waterfalls where are some lakes with waterfalls. Croatia is

located on the seaside of the Adriatic.　The Adriatic is clear and transparent with rocky

ground. I think it is the clearest sea in Europe. There was a war between Croatia and Serbia

some years ago, but it finished, the life became safe in Croatia.

UPPERCASE BOLDFACE: Teacher comments

Italics: Teacher's blue-highlighted text.

Boldface: Learner's green-highlighted revisions

III. Results

Discourse analysis was used on question-form comments to look at the negotiation of meaning between the teacher and learners. The question-form comments are grouped into four sub-categories: requests for information, requests for revision, requests for clarification, and suggestions for revision. Table 1 shows the number of question-form comments and their subsequent revisions. The majority of the teacher's question-form comments (87%) were followed by revisions. In the sub-category *suggestions for revision*, in particular, all nine comments were followed by learner revisions.

TABLE1:Question-Form　Comments　&　Learner Revisions

COMMENT TYPE	N	REVISION	NO REVISION
Request for Information	6	4	2
Request for Revision	11	9	2
Request for Clarification	17	15	2
Suggestion for Revision	9	9	0
Total	43	37	6

1. Request for Information

EXAMPLE 1 is a question-form comment that belongs to the category of 'request for information'. The comment, a WH-question, points out the ambiguity of the learner's sentence, which fails to inform the reader what was brought back. In the student's revision, we can see that she adds 'the receipt', which is a direct response to the tutor's comment of a WH-question. In fact, the learner intended to mean 'brought the recipe back', but she misspelled recipe as receipt.

EXAMPLE 1:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1

Some people *brought back* to Chengdu to open hot pot restaurants, and

WHAT DID THEY BRING BACK?

became fashionable at once.

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

Some people **brought the receipt back** to Chengdu to open hot pot restaurants, and became fashionable at once.

Perhaps due to curiosity, the teacher asked the Hungarian learner a Yes/No question about the location of Croatia, where the learner and his wife had travelled (see EXAMPLE 2). The teacher then marked *holiday* as a problem because he was taught in high school to use plural form when the holidays were more than two days. In the learner's revision, he responded to the comment by including a piece of new information related to the location of Croatia near the middle of the paragraph. However, the learner retained the singular form of holiday, but changed the verb "spent" into "took" as a response to the teacher's marking.

EXAMPLE 2:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1

My wife and I spent our *holiday* in Croatia two years ago.

IS CROATIA NEAR HUNGARY?

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

My wife and I **took** our *holiday* in Croatia two years ago. **In advance we had** some *information* about Croatia **which made a good impression on us**.　**As you know,** *there are some National Parks with wonderful places of interest* **in Croatia, for example the Plitvice Lakes which is a system of lakes, or the Krka-Waterfalls where are some lakes with waterfalls. Croatia is located on the seaside of the Adriatic.**　*The Adriatic is clear and transparent* **with rocky ground. I think it is the clearest sea in Europe.　There was a** war between Croatia and Serbia **some years ago, but it** finished, **the life became** *safe* **in Croatia**.

2. Request for Revision

As shown in EXAMPLE 3, the teacher marked the phrase, *in oil* and gave a question-form comment that advised the Hungarian learner to make a self revision. The phrase, *in oil,* itself was ambiguous and redundant, and moreover, there was a lack of conjunction in the sentence. In the subsequent draft, the Hungarian deleted *in oil* and turned the first part of the sentence into an *if clause*. His self-revisions had not only solved the problems of ungrammaticality, but also made the sentence become more cohesive.

EXAMPLE 3:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1:

The paprika is given to *in oil* toasted onion, the dissolution of its

CAN YOU REVISE THIS SENTENCE?

taste- and colour materials is optimal.

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

If you give grounded paprika **to** toasted onion, the dissolution of taste- and colour materials **will be** optimal.

The entire sentence in EXAMPLE 4 was marked and accompanied with a question-form comment below. The comment requested the Hungarian learner to make a more specific account of the places to which he was interested in traveling. In the second draft, the learner supported the original sentence with some examples that accounted for the places he was interested in visiting. The specific details the learner provided in a way had responded directly to the teacher's question-form comment.

EXAMPLE 4:

Tutor Feedback in Draft 1:

... there are some National Parks with wonderful places of interest,

CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC?

Tutee Revision in Draft 2:

As you know, *there are some National Parks with wonderful places of interest* in **Croatia, for example the Plitvice Lakes which is a system of lakes, or the Krka-Waterfalls where are some lakes with waterfalls.**

3. Request for Clarification

In EXAMPLE 5, the teacher marked *cyber pirates* and inserted a question-form comment to inquire about its usage. The Hungarian leaner, in his revised draft, replaced *cyber pirates* with hackers and rephrased the word *broadcast* into 'spread' since it was also marked by the teacher. His correction of *cyber pirates* into hackers was a direct response to the teacher's comment and appeared to be an appropriate correction.

EXAMPLE 5:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1:

Cyber pirates can abuse weak points of Internet's safety system and some

IS CYBER PIRATE A RIGHT TERM?

people can *broadcast* their mental aberrations on the Net.

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

Hackers can abuse weak points of Internet's safety system and some people can **spread** their mental aberrations on the Net.

There is a lack of conjunction between the two clauses in EXAMPLE 6, and it is a common phenomenon for the Hungarian stduent to make this kind of mistakes on comma splice (see Chiu and Savignon, 2006). Without tackling the issue of comma splice, the teacher inquired about the phrase, *not more than some people*, which did not make much sense in itself. On the revised draft, the learner modified the marked problem into 'only a few people' and in this way, the revised sentence sounded more logical than the original one in draft 1.

EXAMPLE 6:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1:

It happened in winter, *not more than some people* were on the bank of river.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

It happened in winter, **only a few people** were on the bank of river.

4. Suggestion for Revision

In EXAMPLE 7, *the*, *floor* and *load* were all marked as errors, but the teacher only commented on the last error of *floor*. He must have figured out that *floor* was a misspelled word for 'flour', and therefore, pointed out the mistake in his question-from comment. In the subsequent draft, the learner adopted the teacher's feedback and replaced *floor* with 'flour'. In addition, the student corrected the other two marked errors as well, and both revisions were found to be appropriate corrections.

EXAMPLE 7:

Teacher Feedback in Draft 1:

The liaison is made from lard and the same quantity of fine *floor*. We toast the *floor* in hot

YOU MEAN FLOUR?

lard and then we *load* a few water for it and mix it flat.

Learner Revision in Draft 2:

Liaison is made from lard and the same quantity of fine **flour.** We toast the **flour** in hot lard and then we **add** a few water to them and mix it flat.

IV. Dicussion

According to Markova (1994), the meaning of a word in any particular context is a joint product which lies somewhere between the speaker and the listener. In this context of teaching multiple-draft compositions, the teacher tended not to make judgments but formed his comments into questions to deal with any language or content that looked problematic to him. The question-form comments enabled the teacher and the students to work together as they engaged in the co-construction of the written text. In other words, the meaning of words in the text of multiple-draft compositions lied somewhere between the teacher and students as a joint product.

The question-form comments of 'request for information' in Examples 1&2 were both reacted to in the leaner revisions. The teacher's feedback method seemed to reflect that his treatment focused on the meaning making of the text as well as the grammatical form. His content feedback was provided explicitly through question-form comments, whereas his form feedback was marked implicitly on the text. This feedback strategy had effectively directed the tutee's revision more toward content than form. Instead of an authority figure, the teacher acted upon a role of facilitator who expressed his inner speech in a less direct language via question-form comments.

In the category of 'request for revision', the two question-form comments were both directives the purpose of which was to call for an action. Nevertheless, the quality of directness was so much

reduced when the directives were put into question form. Although the teacher did not quite comment on the ambiguity of the sentence in EXAMPLE 3, the learner somehow could revise accordingly, and his self-revisions appeared to become more comprehensible and meaningful. In EXAMPLE 4, the learner also reacted to the teacher's comment by adding new information on places he was interested to visit. Different from cross-outs and direct language, the indirect nature of question-form comments seemed to possess a democratic feature that allowed a more equal relationship for the teacher and students. Question-form comments thus not only facilitated revisions but also created a democratic environment in which dialogical interaction could occur from the process of feedback and revision in the cyber teaching of multiple-draft compositions.

In response to the teacher's comment in EXAMPLE 5, the Hungarian learner changed the phrase, *cyber pirates* into a more professional terminology 'hackers'. With respect to EXAMPLE 6, the learner modified the marked problem, *not more than some people* into 'only a few people', which sounded more logical in English language. The two revisions were both considered to be self-regulated since the teacher's comments were implicit, not providing any specific clues to the learner. Although the feedback was implicit, the Hungarian learner, a L2 beginning writer, was able to self-regulate his revisions productively.

In EXAMPLE 7, the learner's revision of 'flour' was other-regulated because the replacement of 'flour' for *floor* was hinted in the teacher's comment. Nonetheless, the language of the question-form comment is still indirect despite the correct usage was somehow provided. According to Chiu & Savignon (2006), the question-form comments of suggestion for revision were found to facilitate learner's self-corrections effectively, and all of them in the eight compositions were followed with revisions. The

feature of indirectness in question-form comments not only placed emphasis on enhancing learner's capacity to make self-correction but also avoided appropriation of learner text so that the learners could maintain the ownership of their writing.

V.Conclusion

This study presents an activity model of dialogical interaction, which occurs in a particular cyber context of teaching multiple-draft compositions. The two major components in dialogical interaction are question-form comments of the teacher and their subsequent learner revisions. In this model, question-form comment is represented as a reflection of the teacher's inner speech while reading a composition draft. Learner revisions reflect the students' inner speech in reaction to the teacher's feedback. The teacher's inner speech of feedback and the students' inner speech of revision therefore establish a collaborative relationship of dialogical interaction.

The characteristics of question-form comments are indirect, democratic, meaning-making, and facilitative. The indirectness of question-form comments seems to create a democratic atmosphere through which an equal relationship between the teacher and students could be built. Question-form comments are often found to direct learners' attention to the meaning making of the content because they tend to give priority to meaning rather than accuracy in the early stage of drafting. In fact, the indirect quality of question-form comments could further engage the learners in autonomous learning in that question-form comments, whether other-regulated or self-regulated, emphasize learners' self-corrections. Further research is recommended to investigate the link between dialogical interaction and the development of learner autonomy for independent EFL writers.

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網路寫作教學的對話式互動:探索批改英文作文的內在言語

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摘要

　　本篇論文呈現網路寫作教學師生內在言語的一種對話互動形式。本文的對話互動主要是介於一種所謂的問話體的評語以及學生對其作出的修改回應。文中發現，問話體的評語既婉轉又能促進學生作出適當的修改。問話體評語的間接語氣不但營造出一種民主的氣氛，且能將學生的注意力引導至文章的內容或意義上。不管是自我導向或是他人導向，問話體的評語經常能夠促使學生自動作出修改，進而幫助學生成為更獨立的寫作學習者。

關鍵字：對話式互動、內在言語、多稿作文、網路寫作教學。

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