

Negotiation of Meaning in Peer Revision Sessions in a College English Composition Classroom

Hoyeol Ryu

Hankyong National University

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Peer revision provides English writing learners with a collaborative learning experience in which they discuss problems in the text with their peers for its revision. It is assumed in the revision activity that successful negotiation of meaning among peers is critical for the successful revision of the text. For the purpose of examining how meaning is negotiated in peer revision sessions, this study was conducted for Korean college EFL writing learners. They were asked to revise their papers with the peers twice for each of their writing assignments. Their meaning-negotiation process in the class was recorded, transcribed and analyzed for the study, and five episodes, which clearly represent the negotiation process, were selected and presented in the study. Among the factors that influence the negotiation are their ability to provide and determine valid feedback for revision, the writer's authorship, and stances each student takes toward the peers identified as important factors influencing the interaction and the successful completion of the task. This study also identified the need for examining the interaction between the readers as an area for further research.

[teaching writing/peer revision/negotiation of meaning/
/ /]

I. INTRODUCTION

Peer revision is a socially constructed, collaborative learning activity in which students jointly negotiate and create meaning for the improvement of their texts. Ever since Emig's landmark study on twelfth graders' composing process (1971) and other important studies on the process of writing (Murray, 1978; Perl, 1979) came out and the era of the process approach to writing began, it has been one of the most popular instructional methods to teach students how to revise their texts in both the native and foreign language writing

classroom (Byrd, 2003). Among its advantages is the writer's increased awareness of audience considered the most critical one (Mendoça & Johnson, 1994; Tsui & Ng, 2000). That is, it gives the writer the advantage to talk to the reader sitting right in front of him or her, helping them make the text the reader-based one. Flower (1979) compared two types of prose: Reader-based and writer-based prose. She defined the writer-based prose "untransformed mode of expression" (p. 19) for communicative purposes, indicating its underdeveloped state to communicate with the reader. Thus, it puts the writer in a far more advantageous position in revising the text than those involved in other types of revision practice such as the teacher-directed revision or self-revision (Suzuki, 2008; Zhao, 2010).

Interactions in peer revision sessions reflect the authentic communication process for socially constructing knowledge. Fitzgerald (1992) viewed the goal of writing as achieving the reciprocity with the reader. According to her, revision occurs when the writer realizes the discrepancy between his or her intended meaning and the reader's understood meaning as well as the need to resolve the discrepancy. In peer revision, the writer is pushed to explore the reader's understood meaning, get his or her intended meaning understood by the reader, and negotiate the resolution of the discrepancy between the two meanings. The reader is also expected to perform the identical tasks to explore the writer's intended meaning, get his or her understood meaning understood by the writer, and negotiate the resolution of the discrepancy between the two meanings. This mutual aspect of the peer revision interaction provides students with opportunities to get involved in the process of authentic meaning negotiation. Further, their sense of being equal among themselves makes it a dynamic process. Unlike the interaction with the teacher which is usually one-directional and in which they are forced to be submissive to as well as to take full responsibility for understanding her speech, peer revision involves a two-way communication process in which they are not inhibited from participating in it, but encouraged to be actively involved in the meaning-negotiation process. As a consequence, its interaction becomes highly dynamic compared to the conventional interactions observed in most classrooms.

The revision interaction by EFL students is quite distinct from that by the native or second language writers. The first element contributing to this distinctiveness comes from their different levels of English proficiency (Steendam, Rijlaarsdam, Sercu, & Bergh, 2010). English proficiency affects not only their ability to write in English but their ability to provide valid feedback to the peers' papers, so their different English proficiency levels come into play in the way they negotiate meaning with their peers. In addition, their relative inexperience in learning English composition and participating in peer revision activities is another major contributing factor. American schools representing the culture of the Western educational system have longer tradition in practicing it in the classroom and have supported its practice theoretically firmly with the social constructivists' view of

learning (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988). However, although group activities have become more common in Korean classrooms, particularly in the elementary level, than ever before, compared to the classroom in the Western educational system, its practice is far less frequently observed in the country. These differences would make peer revision interactions in Korean context distinct from those in the native or ESL contexts and worth careful examination.

This study explores the way how Korean college students negotiated meaning in peer revision sessions situated in an intermediate English composition class for English-major sophomores. Particular attention is paid to the joint aspect of the interaction. More specifically, how they approach their peers in negotiating the meaning is at issue. In addition, what mechanisms come into play when they struggle to resolve the discrepancy is closely examined in the study. The students of this study are expected to offer quite distinctive answers to the problems. More specifically this study focuses on answering the following four questions:

1. What stances do students bring to the interaction with their peers?
2. What problems do they meet in negotiating meaning in the text?
3. How do they resolve the conflicts arising during the meaning negotiation process?
4. What facilitates their meaning negotiation process?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social Characteristics of Peer Revision

Peer revision is a collaborative learning activity in which facilitative communication skills are a necessary condition for effective learning to take place. In his study of collaborative learning, Bruffee (1984) stressed the importance of ability to communicate efficiently in learning as "To think well as individuals we must learn to think well collectively-that is, we must learn to converse well" (p. 640). The same rule is applied to peer revision. Unless students were equipped with adequate ability to communicate with the peers, they would be unlikely to draw on their peers' cooperation to identify the problems in the text as well as to find out their correct solutions. Another critical condition is that every participant in peer revision activities should not be inhibited from participating in and contributing equally to the process of meaning negotiation. Concerning this, Bruffee introduced the concept of "normal discourse" which refers to the discourse by those who share same paradigms and values on what constitute valid contributions to learning. Newkirk (1984) proposes that the teacher and students form two distinctive communities

and operate under different principles. In the study, students are also more tolerant of their colleagues' underdeveloped competence and aberrant behaviors than the teacher. This evidences that they are affectively tied together and regarded themselves as equals rather than try to see differences in them. In their explanation of how peer revision helps second language writing learners reach Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) report the efficacy of mutual scaffolding by peers with the equal writing competence instead of scaffolding by the teacher or superior peers. They further highlight the importance of being equals since it is a joint venture which requires them to "share a common perspective and an equal degree of commitment to the task" (p. 55).

Further, the fact that the writer becomes the reader in peer revision activities helps understand their nature as having the characteristic of authentic communication. Many studies point out the role of authentic readers played by peers as its critical advantage (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Cho & McArthur, 2010; Hu & Lam, 2010; Mittan, 1989). Unlike the conventional teacher-led writing class where the teacher plays the role of an evaluator rather than a reader of students' papers, peers become the real audience of the papers and communicate their ideas on the text without inhibition. This is possible since peer revision provides them with opportunities for meaningful communication as well as they are all equals who don't need to inhibit themselves from communicating with the peers. DiPardo and Freedman (1988) suggest two reasons why facilitative communication be possible in peer revision. The first reason they suggest is friendships students build through which they shape the language and value systems they share. They view their peers as possessing information which can contribute to their learning as much as their teachers. The second reason is the comfort level they feel in peer revision. Compared to the interaction with the teacher, their comfort level is high, and it could lead to building confidence, social skills, and motivation in communicating their ideas. As a consequence, they can comfortably assume the roles of both the writer and the reader while viewing peer revision as an opportunity to share their ideas and learn from the peers. Donato's (1994) concept of collective scaffolding is also well represented in peer revision. Since they know their response to their peer's writing is meaningful, they are not reluctant to help and to be helped by their peers.

2. Interaction in Peer Revision

To understand how students interact with their peers, it is important to note what stances they bring to peer revision activities since the stances virtually affect every aspect of the interaction. Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992) investigate students' different attitudes toward their peers and find out that they assume three different stances: Interpretive, prescriptive, and collaborative stance. According to their definition, the interpretive readers

tend to impose their interpretation of the text on the writer and rewrite it without the consideration of the writer. The prescriptive readers usually adhere to their preconceived idea of what an essay should be like and how communication in a peer revision session should proceed. They regard the review sessions as opportunities to transmit their knowledge on writing to the writer. On the contrary, collaborative readers try to see the text from the writer's eyes. They refrain themselves from pushing their opinions onto the writer and are open to the writer's explanation of the text. Lockhart and Ng (1995) extend Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger's framework and suggest four different reader stances: Authoritative, interpretive, probing, and collaborative stance. In the study, readers taking the authoritative stance have preconceived ideas on what an essay should be like and consider a peer revision session an opportunity to transmit their knowledge to the reader like the prescriptive reader in Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992). The interpretive readers take advantage of a peer revision session as an opportunity to present their personal reactions to the text. They further use their preferences of the text as criteria for evaluating and giving suggestions to the text. Unlike the authoritative and interpretive readers, the probing readers tend not to impose their pre-established ideas onto the writer's text, but to allow the writers opportunities to express their ideas. They usually seek for meaning in the text and ask the writer for clarifying the meaning of the text. Finally, the collaborative readers see the text as what is forming and regard their roles as helping the writer envision the ideas for the text. They also welcome the writer to express his or her point of view and look at peer revision sessions as a joint venture to create the better text together with the writer. Lockhart and Ng also report the unproductiveness of the authoritative and prescriptive stance and stressed the importance of training for helping students take more cooperative stances to the reader. They also observe that there are many occasions in which the readers display two or more stances depending upon the situation, suggesting the complexity and dynamics of peer revision interactions.

Along with the reader stances, language functions performed in peer revision interactions have drawn writing researchers' attention. Mendonça and Johnson (1994) identify that while students are interacting with their peers, they ask questions, provide explanations, give suggestions, repeat what they told or wrote, and point out problems. Lockhart and Ng (1995) propose more elaborated language functions performed during peer revision sessions and show how they are related to the different reader stances. For example, while the authoritative readers perform the functions of summarizing the essay, giving suggestion, and giving opinion more than those taking the other stances, the collaborative readers perform the functions of giving information and expressing the intent more than the authoritative and interpretive readers. In her study of the interaction between the native-speaking and ESL students, Zhu (2001) identifies the difference between the native and ESL students in their language functions. First, there is a great difference in the

number of occasions language functions are performed between the two groups. As writers, the native students perform more than twice as many language functions as the ESL students. There is even greater difference in the types of language functions performed between the groups. While the functions performed by the ESL students as readers are announcing, reacting, questioning, advising, and justifying, with announcing and questioning being the two major functions, the native students perform the full range of the functions, with reacting, advising, and advising being the major ones. Further, confirming, pointing, hedging, elaborating, and eliciting are performed exclusively by the native speakers. The authors conclude that the limited number and type of language functions performed by the ESL students put them in disadvantage since they are less able to explain their own papers effectively and unable to benefit from the review activities as much as anticipated from the beginning. The results implies the need for training students to become active participants in the activity as well as to fully utilize a variety of language functions to collect the benefits the activity brings to them.

Another important issue in understanding the nature of interactions in peer revision sessions is how cultural factors influence the participants' behaviors. For example, Carson and Nelson (1996) maintain that students from the collectivist culture such as China and Taiwan have difficulty in functioning adequately and gaining benefits from peer revision activities. According to them, Chinese culture is highly collective and its pedagogical practices tend to reflect the importance of the group. Therefore, Chinese students are likely to be reluctant to criticize other students' papers and disagree with their peers for fear that their criticism destroys the group harmony. They are also reluctant to claim authority over their texts. Their characteristics are clearly reflected in their interaction behaviors in the study. When they speak, they use indirection, particularly using question forms, and do not specify the problem clearly to soften their criticism. However, writing groups in the United States are intended to function for the benefit of individual writers rather than that of a group. In the same vein, Zhu (2001) compared interaction behaviors of the native college students with those of Chinese ESL students in peer revision activities. She finds that the ESL students are hesitant to participate in the activities, so they are often interrupted by the native speakers. Thus, their contribution as peer revisers becomes limited and they play minor roles in the interactions. However, our experiences and intuition as English teachers let us interpret this result as the ESL students' limited oral proficiency being the major factor for the results of Zhu's study. Indeed, Hu and Lam (2010) report that depending on whether the activity is conducted in a oral or written mode, the results might differ. In their study of adult Chinese students learning second language academic writing, when they provide written feedback, more than 75 percent of the students are able to provide valid suggestions to their peers' papers and incorporate their peers' suggestions into their writings successfully. They also voice their strong desire to include peer suggestions as one type of

feedback in addition to teacher feedback. Based on these results, Hu and Lam conclude that peer revision activities are perfectly compatible with Chinese cultural beliefs and practices.

Finally, peer revision training clearly influences students' behaviors to interact and negotiate meaning with their peers during the activity. There is general agreement among many researchers that training on peer revision brings positive results to revising the papers as well as to participating in the activities (Hu & Lam, 2010; Liou & Peng, 2009; McGroarty & Zhu, 2010; Min, 2005, 2006, 2008). Min (2005) regards students' inability to provide concrete, useful feedback as the main problem of peer revision activities. For a solution to the problem, he proposes a four-step procedure to review the text which includes clarifying the writer's intention, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making suggestions by giving specific examples. After providing students with training on the procedure, she gains the positive results which include producing more comments, focusing more on the global features of writing, improving skills to self-monitor their own papers, responding to their peer's with friendlier tones, and being cooperative with their peers. McGroarty and Zhu (2010) also report the positive effects of the training. In their study, after the training using group conferences with the instructor, students provide significantly more feedback, show higher levels of engagement in the activity, establish rapport among peers, and change their interaction pattern from the reader-reporting pattern, in which the readers dominate the discussion, to the reader-writer sharing pattern.

The reviewed studies in this section overall confirmed the positive effects of peer revision activities. Thanks to recent research interests in process-oriented writing and revision in EFL writing in Korea, we have observed a large number of peer revision studies come out in recent years, and most of them exclusively focus on reporting the positive effects of the activities. However, the problem of these studies is that, although they claim the positive effects, it is uncertain what features of the activities contribute to the results they obtained. The answer to the question can be sought with the close examination of how students really interact with their peers. In this light, this study is expected to answer many questions the previous peer revision studies failed to.

III. METHODS

1. Subjects

The subjects of this study are 18 college sophomores who enrolled in the Intermediate English Composition course offered during the fall of 2012 in a university near Seoul.

They were composed of English major students and those from other departments double-majoring in English. They were administered an English test during the first session to assess their grammatical and lexical knowledge necessary to write in English. The test questions were selected from the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (Corrigan et al., 1979) and consisted of 15 vocabulary questions and 15 grammar questions. Their scoring range was 11 to 25, and the mean score was 17.11. According to H. Ryu (1997), those who scored more than 43 out of 100 points could be regarded as being equipped with basic English skills for communicating through written English, so most of the students were considered ready for studying English composition skills at a paragraph level. Further, since their freshman curriculum was devoted to studying the liberal arts, none of them had studied English composition in depth before.

2. Procedures

The English composition course in which this study was conducted lasted 15 weeks, and there were two 75-minute sessions in each week. The instructor selected the coursebook focusing on building students' ability to write different types of paragraphs in English because the course was their first time to learn English composition in depth and the instructor believed that it was too early to ask them to write essays consisting of multiple paragraphs. Throughout the semester, the first 40 minutes were spent on studying the coursebook, and the rest was devoted to doing peer revision activities.

During the 15-week course, the students were assigned six English compositions each of which contained a single paragraph with 100 to 200 words. Each assignment was revised twice after being reviewed by the peers. The purpose of letting them revise twice was to help them realize that a single revision is short of producing a text that can be communicated with the reader clearly and effectively. Along with the peer feedback, the instructor provided feedback to their second draft. The reason for this was that there was fear that the instructor's early intervention might terminate their revision effort and that students were more dependent on the instructor's feedback than their peers' if his feedback was provided to every draft they produced. In the same vein, since the instructor's feedback was handed out to the students before the second peer revision, the instructor tried not to be rigorous in his comments, leaving room for the second peer revision and narrowing the focus of his comments on the writing problems to which they were expected to experience difficulties without the instructor's assistance.

Since none of the students in the class had experienced peer revision activities before, they were provided training on how to practice the activities effectively for the beginning few weeks. During the first session, after the English test, they were introduced to the concept of peer revision and provided some helpful tips for the activities. Then, the

students were asked to form groups each of which consisted of three or four students. They were told that because they were not allowed to change their group members thereafter, they should be careful in their selection of the members. After forming the groups, they were distributed a copy of the error code sheet (see Appendix 1), which was revised from Lee (2003) for the study, and the peer revision sheet (see Appendix 2). They were told that they needed to both mark errors directly on their peers' papers using the error codes and fill out the review sheet to help them revise the papers. The reason for asking the students to perform the two seemingly overlapping tasks was that their functions were different. While the review sheet was designed to make the students focus on the macro-level features of writing like content and organization, the error marking was designed to make them focus on the micro-level features like word use, and grammar. Next, the instructor explained the error codes on the code sheet and demonstrated how to mark errors using the codes and fill out the review sheet using a writing sample by a student who had enrolled in the same course in the previous year. Then, the students returned to their groups and practiced marking errors and filling out the review sheet themselves with the same sample used by the instructor. This training procedure was repeated throughout the semester using different writing samples showing different types of weaknesses to raise their awareness on various writing problems and build strategies to deal with them.

At the end of the session, the students were explained how their works would be assessed by the instructor. They were told that their grades would be determined solely based on their portfolios that they had to submit at the end of the course. They were explained what portfolio assessment is and what had to be included in the portfolio. They were instructed to keep all of their papers marked by the peers and the instructor, the review sheets filled out by the peers, and the final drafts in their portfolio. They were told that the instructor's attention would be paid to improvement made between drafts, the quality of the final drafts, and the extent to which they integrated their peer's valid suggestions into their subsequent drafts.

In the next lesson, the students were provided a lesson on Lockhart and Ng's four reader stances (1995). During the lesson, the instructor discussed with them what stance would be the most helpful to the writer and how they needed to communicate with the peers. Then, the first assignment was given to the students, and they were asked to bring it to the next class with the additional copies for their peers. Since it was impossible to read the papers, mark errors in them, fill out the review sheets, and discuss how to revise them within 30 minutes, the students were told to mark errors on the peers' papers and to fill out the review sheets in their homes as an assignment and to bring their review work to the following class. After giving them the assignment, the instructor held another conference to exercise peer revision skills with a new writing sample. After the conference, the subject returned to their groups and reviewed the sample with the peers.

When the students brought their writing assignment to the class, their copies were distributed to their peers for the written review. After the distribution of the copies, another conference was held with a different writing sample, and they returned to their groups and exercised their peer revision skills with the peers. This conference was held throughout the semester except when they reviewed their peers' papers. In the following class, they distributed copies of the review assignment to their peers and discussed how to improve the papers. Although the discussion was basically based on the review done beforehand as the assignment, they were encouraged not to limit the scope of the discussion and discuss other related issues actively as well as in depth. After the first discussion, the writers collected their peers' written reviews and revised the first draft based on both the peers' written reviews and in-class discussion. In the next class, they brought the second draft and went through the same procedure as the first draft. But, they included the instructor's feedback in their discussion this time. Finally they were ready to produce the final draft. This peer revision and training procedure was repeated for the rest of the writing assignments. The following table shows how peer revision and training proceeded for each writing assignment.

TABLE 1
Cycle of Peer Revision and Training

1. writing assignment given peer review exercise conference	→	2. first draft completed first draft review assignment given peer review exercise conference
3. the first review assignment completed peer review of 1st draft assignment of 2nd draft	→	4. 2nd draft completed 2nd draft review assignment given peer review exercise conference
5. the second review assignment completed teacher feedback provided peer review of 2nd draft	→	6. completion of the final draft a new writing assignment given peer review exercise conference

3. Data Collection and Coding

The students' oral reviews were analyzed to examine how they managed to negotiate meaning during the peer revision sessions. For the purpose, once they were used to the revision activities after three weeks of practice, their oral interactions were recorded using audio-tape recorders. The reviews of both the first and second drafts of the third assignment, which asked the students to write about any serious wrongdoing they had ever involved in and lessons they had learned from it, by all six groups in the class were recorded, so there were 12 audio recording files each of which lasted from 15 to 20

minutes, with the total of about 200 minute recording time. The purpose of recording the interactions of all groups, instead of focusing on a limited number of groups, was to observe as diverse types of interaction arising during the revision as possible. With this way of collecting the data, it was expected that their diverse strategies to negotiate meaning could be unveiled. It should be also noted that their interactions were done in Korean to facilitate their interaction, but the transcription of the interactions was translated into English and the translated interactions were presented in the study.

After the recording was transcribed and analyzed, the researcher identified that there were 55 episodes which were defined as an incident of the discussion of a particular problem in the text. Among the identified episodes, five episodes will be presented in the next section because they representatively show how students negotiated meaning in their attempts to identify and solve problems they identified in the text. The five selected discussions were then analyzed by the coding scheme which was modified from that by Stanley (1992). Further, the presented episodes were collected from five different groups, so every group's discussion is presented in the study except for one group whose recording was not clear enough to transcribe for the study.

In Stanley's coding scheme, the reader is identified as displaying seven different verbal behaviors: Pointing, advising, collaborating, announcing, reacting, eliciting, and questioning. Pointing occurs when the reader points to a particular part of the text and responds to it. Advising refers to the reader's outline of a change or changes the writer should make. Collaborating refers to the reader's attempt to clarify unclear part of the text for the writer. Announcing occurs when the reader diagnoses the problem of the text. Reacting is an evaluative statement that neither points nor advises. Thus, reacting indicates the reader's evaluation that doesn't provide any specific evidence or suggestion to the evaluation. Eliciting refers to the reader's attempt to encourage the writer to participate in the discussion. And questioning implies the reader's disagreement with the writer or his or her challenge to the writer's explanation of the text or other related issues. There are also four different types of verbal behaviors performed by the writer in Stanley's coding scheme, but accepting/rejecting was added for the better analysis of the interactions in the study. Responding occurs when the writer answers the evaluator's question. Eliciting is the writer's request for the reader's advice on the problem or problems in the text. Announcing by the writer performs the same function as is performed by the reader. Finally, the writer performs clarifying which shows the writer's attempt to clarify the reader's understanding by elaborating on the text or describing his or her intentions to write a specific part of the text. And accepting/rejecting refers to the writer's accepting or rejecting the reader's feedback or suggestion for the problem in the text. Although there were some occasions where Stanley's coding scheme did not fit the data, it proved itself as quite a useful analytical instrument in most of the cases in the study. The coding scheme helps identify

the structure of the interactions presented in this study more systematically in relation to other similar studies. When more studies investigating peer revision interactions are conducted and their number becomes sufficient enough to make a generation about their unique pattern, we will be able to better understand their nature and help our students develop their English composition abilities more effectively.

IV. RESULTS

The five episodes presented in this section clearly show that meaning is jointly constructed by all participants in the peer revision process with equal membership. However, it should be noted that successful meaning negotiation was not easily achieved, but every participant was asked to cooperate with the peers and value their contributions to the process. In other words, the process was very susceptible even to a small damage. In the study, one of the damages influencing the outcome and structure of the interaction was authorship meaning the writer's attempt to control his or her own text. When the writer makes a strong claim for authorship, the group's meaning-negotiation effort is more likely to be in jeopardy. One of the episodes presented below shows that it is really the case.

1. First Episode: An Example of Collaborative Meaning Construction

The first dialogue shows how four students, the writer and her three peer reviewers, negotiated the meaning of confusing part in her first draft. Note that W in the transcript refers to the writer and R1, R2, and R3 to three different readers. Besides, what's in the text is marked using a double quotation mark and unidentified segments are marked with three successive dots.

R1: What do you mean after the sentence "I stole my mom's money and bought a game machine."?

W: I mentioned here. (She pointed to part of her writing.) I played the game first and came to buy the machine at last.

R1: With that money? But suddenly there is...

W: I repeated these things because I wasn't caught.

R2: So did you say you continued doing things?

W: I said I continued stealing money from my mother's wallet, not continued playing the games and buying the game machines.

R3: It was very confusing to me too.

W: If I want to say I continued stealing money, how about "one day" instead of

"suddenly"?

R2: You are right. It is much better now.

W: Really? I didn't expect "suddenly" causes a problem.

R1: Now I can understand.

R1 pointed to the part which she had difficulty in understanding. W answered back with referring to the part where she thought R1 could find an answer to her understanding problem. Then W explained what she originally had intended to express in the text. R1 responded to W's explanation that she still had a problem understanding the text. She said that there was an abrupt transition in the content that made her difficult to understand the text despite W's explanation. In response to R1's continued expression of her difficulty in understanding the text, W provided another explanation to her. After W's additional explanation, R2 joined the discussion between W and R1 by asking the question. His question was concerned with R1's difficulty and well articulated to help W deal with R1's problem. W answered R2's question with more elaboration. The sequence of R2's more concrete question and W's more elaborate answer provided a critical clue for R1 to grasp the meaning of what she had failed to understand. Regarding R2's question, there are two possible interpretations of the motive of R2's questioning. The first possibility is he simply asked the question because he also had a problem in understanding what R1 had failed to understand. The second interpretation is that although he understood the point, he asked the question for R1. In this case, it seemed that R2 correctly identified what caused R1 to have difficulty in understanding the part and raised the question which exactly scratched R1's itch. When how the rest of the dialogue progressed is considered, the second interpretation might be the case. After W's answer to R2's question, R3 joined the discussion with an empathetic remark with R1. His remark indicated he barely managed to understand what was discussing among the three students. Then, W suggested the change to clarify what R1 failed to understand. R2 evaluated the change highly positively. After W's acknowledgement that he produced the confusing text, R1 confirmed her complete understanding of the text. Although she explicitly expressed her understanding here, it seems reasonable to assume that her understanding began after R2's question because there was no further question from R1 as well as no further explanation from W. However, it is also obvious that R1 couldn't reach the complete understanding until W proposed the change for R1's clear understanding of the part.

This process of meaning negotiating began with R1's pointing, followed by W's responding, R1's questioning, W's clarifying, R2's announcing, W's clarifying, R3's reacting, W's eliciting, R2's reacting, W's clarifying, and R1's reacting. In the sequence, R2's joining the discussion by announcing the problem seems to play a critical role in solving the problem involved in meaning negotiation between W and R1. This dialogue

clearly shows how cooperative work manages to create meaning in peer revision activities. The party who broke the deadlock between W and R1 was R2. Although it was not obvious whether he understood the text clearly and raised the question for the purpose of helping R1, his contribution was resultantly critical in the meaning negotiation process. This dialogue also evidenced the superiority of group interactions to dyadic interactions. Without the contribution from R2 and R3, the negotiation of meaning between W and R1 would have been impossible and they would have suffered the breakdown of communication.

2. Second Episode: Importance of Collaborative Stances in Solving Tension

The second dialogue shows the discussion of a female student's second draft. It presents how the tension between the writer and one peer reader was resolved by another reader. It should be reminded that the students were asked to complete the written review of their peers' papers as an assignment before they further discussed them in the class.

R1: Look at the part in the middle. (He was pointing to the part in the paper he wanted to discuss) Once you call it a lesson, you should explain what lesson was given. There is inconsistency about what lesson you learned.

W: But there is only a verb tense error mark here. (He was referring to the review sheet R1 had given to her)

R2: Hmm, this is ...

W: I can't understand why it is wrong. Because of the previous part, I wrote "I spent my high school years carelessly" there.

R2: Oh, I see.

W: Could you explain why it is wrong? ...

R2: Ah, you're right. I just ... I just wrote "had broken" instead of "broke" here in my writing. (She is pointing out the sentence in her writing where "had broken" was written.)

W: Oh, I see what you mean. I made an error here.

R1 began the episode by pointing out the ambiguity in the text. In response to R1's comment, W answered back to R1, referring to R1's review sheet in which he only pointed out the incorrect verb tense use in the part they were discussing. R2 signaled her intention to join the conversation but didn't make further comment. After R2's brief intervention, W continued her turn. She expressed her discontent with R1's review and presented the reason for using the past tense at the part. Despite R1's attempt to discuss the content problem, the

focus of the discussion shifted to the incorrect verb tense use. Then R2 again intervened in the conversation. His remark can be interpreted as either an agreement with W concerning R1's review or the understanding of the issue at play. However, his next utterance clearly indicates that the second interpretation is the case. W seemed to mistakenly understand R2's remark as his agreement with her discontent and further asked R1 to offer an explanation on why the verb tense was incorrect. Following W's continued expression of the discontent, R2 successfully managed to solve the problem which was rather harshly discussed between W and R1. In solving the problem, he tried not to offend W with the empathic utterance and presented an example of the correct language to W's error. Suddenly W admitted her mistake because she seemed to finally realize her incorrect use of the verb tense.

The episode began with R1's pointing, which was followed by W's responding, R2's reacting, W's clarifying, R2's reacting, W's eliciting, R2's announcing, and W's accepting. What should be noted in the conversation is that two occasions of R2's acting were not really the reactions to other student's utterance. They were rather directed to R2 himself and unrelated to the conversation between W and R1 until his announcing at the last part of the dialogue. Another important point to note is the tension between W and R1. It reached the highest point with W's eliciting, and they failed to resolve it themselves. It might be possible that if only W and R1 had been involved in the discussion for the problem, its resolution would not have been possible in the situation. Like the first episode, the second episode shows the importance of the third party, R2, in mediating the conflict and ultimately leading to the negotiation of meaning. The last point worth discussion is the authorship of the text. The reason why W was resistant to R1's pointing out the problem might come from her claim of the authorship over the text. She clearly indicated that she owned the text and resisted R1's suggestion to change the incorrect verb tense. This type of the writer's behavior is also observed in Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) in which the behavior is defined as a struggle for maintaining authorial control against the reader's appropriation of the text. Although it is important to develop the authorship over one's own text, an overly strong claim for it often causes a problem in peer revision sessions as evidenced in this conversation. Strong claims for authorship tend to make the writer take aggressive, uncooperative stances toward the reader, which aggravate the situation and make peer revision sessions unproductive after all.

3. Third Episode: Facilitative Role of a Receptive Writer

The third episode presents how a male student's second draft was discussed with his peer readers. In the conversation the three readers were actively engaged in pointing out the problems and making suggestions to them. In contrast to the second episode, the writer was

more receptive to the peers' suggestions and decided to integrate them into revision.

R1: From here to there the meaning is the same. I think it's OK to delete that part.

It's so sudden, and ... is inconsistent. Or why don't you change the order of these sentences?

R2: Hmm. It's inconsistent to the main idea.

W: What should I do?

R2: You want to emphasize the point right? Then why did you write that way?

R3: I also want to change the first with the last.

R2: You mean it's better to change the order completely?

W: If we look at the text, it seems more natural to change the third sentence. If we do that at the same time, the sentences are going to be OK. Begin the sentence this way.

R1: It's going to be OK then.

R1 began the episode with pointing out the redundant part in the text. After pointing out the part, he suggested deleting the part. Then he brought up another problem in the text. To the second problem, he also made a suggestion to change the order of the sentences. Although two problems were pointed out by R1, the rest of the conversation proceeded with the exclusive focus on the second problem. R2 showed her agreement with R1's raising the second problem. R2's utterance made W realize that the second problem was rather serious and made W invite the peers for help. After W's appeal for assistance, R2 tried to clarify W's intention and pointed out the disagreement problem between his intention and the text. Although R2's clarifying of and pointing out the problem took an interrogative form and were directed to W, R3 intervened in the conversation. R3 also provided her suggestion regarding how to revise the text to make it consistent in meaning. Again instead of W, R2 responded to R3's suggestion with the question to clarify her suggestion. In response to his peers' pointing out the problems and suggestions for revision, W finally presented his own ways to revise the text. Finally the episode ended with R1's agreement with W's suggestion to revise the text.

The episode began with R1's pointing, followed by R2's another pointing, W's eliciting, R2's pointing, R3's advising, R2's questioning, W's accepting, and R1's collaborating. However, it should be noted that, unlike Stanley's original coding scheme that defines the questioning as implying the reader's challenge to the writer's explanation of the text and the related issues, R2's questioning was not directed to the writer but to R3. This deviation from Stanley's coding scheme seems inevitable since it is not practically possible to explain all variations of communicative behaviors in a single coding scheme. An important point to note in this episode is the writer's relinquishment of his authorship during the conversation.

There was R2's eliciting the writer's participation in the discourse, but R3 took the turn instead of W. The writer's attitude was more or less passive to the conversation, patiently listening to and writing down what his peers mentioned. Further, since his suggestion reflected most of theirs, it was instantly approved by R1. There is a condition to meet in order for the conversation like this one to occur: Peers' suggestions should sound valid to the writer. In the episode, unless the suggestions had sounded valid to the writer, he would not have involved himself in the conversation right after each suggestion.

Episode 4: Clash over the Writer's Authorship

The fourth conversation presents the discussion of a female student's first draft. It shows the case in which students' attempts to revise the text can end up with a failure. They searched for an accurate word for the meaning the writer wanted to express, but their efforts turned out to fail and the writer finally declared her intention to delay the discussion.

R1: I think it's better to use another word than this. Steal is a verb, but the dictionary said a different meaning.

R2: It's because it is originally used as a verb. So isn't "plan to" correct? Or how about changing it to "plan to steal"?

R1: By the way, it looks like a verb. It looks like the word is used as a verb. Then, why does "stealing" come out? I know what you are trying to say, but it sounds a little strange.

W: I tried to say 'I made a plan, but the plan to steal includes checking my mother's schedule, determining the time to execute the plan, and finding out where my mother usually put her purse.

R2: Or because you use "that" here, there is no verb here. Isn't it possible to originally say "search the"?

R1: Search?

R2: Anyway, I think it's awkward.

W: OK. I think I have to think about it again.

R1 started the conversation with pointing out the problem of using the incorrect word form. R2 provided an explanation of and suggestion to the problem R1 pointed out. In response to R2's additional explanation and suggestion, R1 rearticulated the problem and provided her impression to the incorrect word use being discussed. Then W clarified what she wanted to express in the part. R2 tried to clarify the writer's intention and suggested another option to solve the problem. R1 reacted to R2 with a little doubt to the suggestion. R2 withdrew her suggestion and admitted its inadequacy to solving the problem. After the

writer explicitly explained what she wanted to express and confirmed that a couple of suggestions did not work to improve her text, she finally declared her intention to quit the discussion.

The episode began with R1's pointing, which was followed by R2's collaboration, R1's announcing, W's clarifying, R2's collaborating, R1's reacting, and W's rejecting. This episode well shows the importance of the reader's ability to provide valid suggestions. Although the two readers consistently offered the suggestions to revise the text, it was decided of little use by the writer to quit the further discussion. R2's withdrawal of his suggestions decisively prompted the writer to determine the discontinuation. Another important point is the result of the interaction between the readers. R2's second last utterance prompted R1's instant response which could be interpreted to respond negatively to R2's suggestion. R1's negative response resulted in R2's voluntary withdrawal of the suggestion. The interaction between R1 and R2 seemed to critically influence the writer although she didn't participate in it at all.

Episode 5: Negotiation of the Authorship

The last episode presents how collaboratively a male student's second draft was reviewed with his peer reviewers. It shows how the writer's authorship was negotiated between the writer and the readers. The writer's authorship was respected by his peer reviewers, which lead to the writer's deletion of what he was attached to as well as to the collaborative solution of the problem

R1: What do you mean in the last sentence?

W: I really want to include "dug out," but there is no place to write it. So I put it there. I don't know whether it works or not.

R2: So do you mean we have to obey our parents?

W: I went through difficult times. I thank them. They, so ... They always stand by me. Just look at that part. I just ... How can I revise it?

R2: You have a lot to work on if you decide to change it.

W: A lot of work?

R3: How about summarizing the conclusion into a single sentence?

R1: Let's see ...

R2: I don't know.

R1: I think you need to delete "dig out" first?

W: ...

R2: You said you're uncomfortable to delete it.

W: Well, it's not a big deal at all.

R1 started the episode with a question that signaled his failure to understand the last sentence. W responded to R1's question with the possible reason for the misunderstanding as well as his concern about the incorrect use of the expression. R2 tried to clarify W's intended meaning with a question. W explicated his intended meaning which was not present in the text and the reason for putting the discussed expression in the part. He finally ended her turn with an appeal for assistance. R2 responded to W with his evaluation of the needed revision. W responded back to R2 with surprise. R3 finally made a suggestion on how to revise the text. R1 reserved his evaluation on R3's suggestion, but R2 responded rather negatively to R1. Finally, R1 raised the issue which was shared among the readers, but not explicitly stated to the writer, deleting the expression "dig out". W was hesitant to the suggestion because he was so attached to it. R2 also showed her concern about the writer's emotional suffering by deleting the expression. However, W finally agreed to delete the expression to clarify the meaning of the text.

The episode began with R1's pointing and were sequenced with W's responding, R2's pointing or announcing, W's clarifying, R2's reacting, W's eliciting, R3's advising, R1 and R2's reacting, R1's advising, W's responding, R2's reacting, and W's accepting in order. This episode well shows how the readers respected the writer's authorship. Prior (1995) well documented how authorship becomes a subtle issue even in the uneven power relationship of a graduate student and her academic advisor. Surprisingly, the readers in the episode seemed to well understand the value of the authorship to the writer, so they tried not to infringe on it until at the last part of the conversation where they saw the deadlock of the communication unless the writer had withdrawn her authorship. The writer seemed to understand and appreciate their efforts not to invade his authorship. This episode well shows an example of the constructive meaning negotiation process among students with supportive, collaborative stances.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study is intended to explore how meaning is negotiated among EFL college students in peer revision sessions. The students were English-major sophomores enrolling in the intermediate English composition course and had little experience to learn English composition formally before the course. They were given six writing assignments each of which was reviewed twice by the peers. Further, they were assessed based on their portfolios which was the collection of their papers and the reviews by the instructor and peers. They were instructed on how to revise the text and participate in peer revision activities effectively throughout the course. The students' discussions were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed to explore how they negotiate meaning in the revision

interactions.

The identified interaction patterns vary with each group's discussion. Although the episode always began with the reader's pointing in Stanley's coding scheme (1992), the pattern of the rest of the conversation varied greatly. First, the reader's initiation could be responded by either the writer or another reader. This study identifies that once the writer failed to reply to the initiation, it tended to be difficult for them to participate in the discussion later. There are three occasions where the writer participated in the discussion actively and two occasions where the writer was a passive discussant. There are two occasions which clearly show the participants' collaborative meaning negotiation for the successful revision and two failures where they ended up with no solution to the problem they discussed. Therefore, this study clearly shows that, depending upon the problem they discuss and the stances they take toward other participants, the result of the discussion can vary. Further, although there is no statistical value, due to the limited number of episodes presented in the study, the number of each function in the coding scheme shows an interesting picture of the interactions. Of 29 functions performed by the readers, there were 9 reactings, 8 pointings, 3 collaborating and announcing each, and 2 advisings and questionings each. For the writer's functions, out of the total 16 functions, there were 6 clarifying, 5 accepting/rejecting, 3 responding, and 2 eliciting. Considering eliciting function was performed twice by the writer and none by the reader, these results clearly indicated that the readers were less eager to invite the writer to the discussion. The same phenomenon could be observed in the writer's behaviors. These results could be interpreted as the students' lack of discourse competence to invite the writer or the reader to the conversation.

The answers to the four questions raised in the introduction part can be found in the episodes presented in the preceding part. First, the students generally approached the interaction task with active, collaborative stances. In all episodes, they were not reluctant to help their peers produce clear, persuasive texts. Furthermore, they created atmospheres in which they were encouraged to actively participate in the interactions. Indeed, they were all successful for reaching a solution to the problem at issue except for the fourth episode. However, the fourth episode in which authorship became an issue should not be regarded as a proof that they took aggressive stances to their peers. On the contrary, since authorship is a very subtle issue, extreme caution is needed to interpret what caused them to fail in reaching the solution. More studies are needed to understand how to deal with authorship as well as how to resolve the tension involving it in the future.

Two apparent problems emerged in the students' negotiation of meaning in the text. The first problem is the lack of ability to clearly articulate the problem and suggestion. This problem was observed in every episode except for the third one. Because their comments were rather vague and lacked concreteness, it was not easy for their peers to understand the

comments correctly at first listening. They had to repeat what they had mentioned previously or explore other ways to get their messages understood by their peers. Although it is a natural communication process that one has to continually explore the way to get meaning across to his or her conversation partner, the excessive occurrence of such incidents makes them annoyed and lose their concentration on the task at hand. One of the biggest factors contributing to this problem can be found in their lack of composition and English abilities. The evidence of this problem can be found in the second, third, and fourth episode. An important thing to note is that all of those who are involved in the interaction should have the equal level of English and composition abilities in order to make it progress smoothly. The helpful comments will be helpful only when can the peers identify they are helpful.

When tension between two students arises, they should be assisted by another student to resolve it successfully. The first and second episodes clearly show the importance of the third party in peer revision activities. That is, when tension between two students is mounting, it is more likely that they are unable to control it by themselves. Further, it is well demonstrated in the episodes that students' friendly attitudes toward their peers contribute to their successful task completion. There was no incident in which the students felt uncomfortable about the peers and their comments in the study. In this light, friendly atmospheres in which everyone is welcomed to participate in the interaction without anxiety seem one of the most critical conditions in peer revision activities. The students in this study were allowed to form a group with those with whom they were familiar for the purpose.

Finally, the students' active participation and collaborative stances helped them facilitate the interaction process. Regardless of their different levels of composition and English abilities, all of them were eager to point out the problems in and make suggestions to improve their peers' texts in all episodes. As peer revision activities are based on the idea of mutual collaboration, active participation is the most crucial prerequisite. Without active participation, the idea of peer revision simply cannot stand. In turn, students' collaborative stances to their peers are the most critical condition to draw their active participation in the activities. When they are uncomfortable about the participation due to the peers' uncooperative attitudes, they are more likely to refrain themselves from participating in the activities even with the sufficient competence to make a substantial contribution to the activities.

The first point that needs discussion from this study is that the meaning negotiation process can vary depending upon students' ability to provide and identify valid suggestions. There are many studies which reported students' doubts on the validity of their peers' suggestion (Lee & Schallert, 2008; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Zhang, 1995; Zhao, 2010). As the writer gave up her further effort to negotiate meaning with her peers after hearing

the reader's voluntary withdrawal of the suggestion in the fourth episode, the reader's ability to provide valid suggestions would affect the writer as to whether he or she accepts the suggestion as well as how he or she interacts with the readers. Since students' ability to provide valid suggestions is limited, the teacher's role to provide valid suggestions which can compensate the student's inability becomes important in the situation. The teacher should be aware of the difficulties her students are expected to experience during peer revision sessions and provide necessary feedback for them to deal with the problems that may occur in the meaning-negotiation process. In other words, the teacher needs to scaffold her students' peer revision activities.

The issue of authorship was observed in two occasions in the study. Authorship is an important quality for students to develop their writing skills and become independent writers who can think and write critically. However, the excessive claim of authorship often causes tension between the writer and the readers as evidenced in the second episode. There should be the readers' effort to respect the writer's authorship as observed in the fifth episode. Authorship is closely related with stances students take in peer revision sessions. As Lockhart and Ng (1995) suggested that the authoritative stance should be more likely to bring negative effect to peer revision, an overly strong claim of authorship may bring the same effect to it. Indeed, the excessive claim of authorship might be another form of the authoritative stance. However, this study presented how it can be valued and protected by peers. The writer has a legitimate right to claim it to create and communicate his or her intended meaning with the reader in his or her own ways. In order to develop students' sense of authorship, not only does the writer try to establish it, but the readers should value it in the revision session. Therefore, there should be collaboration among all of those involved in the revision activity to establish the authorship. This may be in line with the positive effect of collaborative stances on the interaction as well as the improvement of the text.

Finally, students should be trained on taking the collaborative stance during the sessions. Min (2008) documented the positive results of peer revision training on helping students take more collaborative stances. Although attitudes toward others are a personal trait, training on how to become a collaborative reader surely pays off with the more facilitative interactions as well as the improved text.

This study identifies an area for further research. As Stanley's coding scheme which focuses only on the interaction between the writer and the reader manifests, there are few studies investigating the interaction between the readers. However, the interaction between the readers is as important as that between the writer and the reader as this study demonstrates clearly. The interaction between the readers becomes more important when the writer is not invited to the discussion or he or she is shy or reluctant to participate in it. Further, as it was proven in this study that a triadic group brought more positive effects on

the interaction than a dyadic group, forming a group with more than three students seems more desired for the activity. Then, there are two or more readers in a group whose interactions become at least as dynamic and complicated as those between the writer and the reader. However, there have been few experimental studies which solely investigate the interaction between the readers. Furthermore, studies focusing on how many readers can lead to the successful interaction and revision need to be conducted in order to maximize the effect of peer revision sessions.

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APPENDIX 1

Codes for Marking Errors

Error Type	Error Codes
<u>Discourse</u>	
topic sentence	nts (no topic sentence)
sentence order	so (wrong sentence order)
irrelevant sentence	is (irrelevant sentence)
redundant sentence	rs (redundant sentence)
no meaning connection	ncs (no connection to the surrounding sentences)
connective	cn (no connective or incorrect connective)
missing information mi	mi (additional information needed)

conclusion	nc (no conclusion)
<u>Sentence</u>	
sentence structure	ss (wrong sentence structure)
missing sentence part	mp (missing sentence part)
fragmented sentence	fs (fragmented sentence)
run-on sentence	ro (run-on sentence)
<u>Word & Expression</u>	
word use	wu (wrong word)
expression	ex (wrong expression)
missing word	mw (a word is missing)
redundant word	rw (redundant word)
redundant part	rp (redundant sentence part)
<u>Grammar</u>	
verb	vb (wrong verb)
word form	wf (wrong word form)
tense	vt (wrong verb tense)
article	au (wrong article)
agreement	ag (wrong subject-verb agreement)
preposition	pr (wrong preposition)
part of speech	ps (wrong part of speech)
pronoun	pn (wrong pronoun)
<u>Mechanics</u>	
spelling	spl (wrong spelling)
punctuation	pnc (wrong punctuation)
capitalization	cp (wrong capitalization)

APPENDIX 2
Peer Revision Sheet

Reader's name:

Writer's name:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Is there a topic sentence in every paragraph? | Yes | No |
| 2. Is there the writer's clear point in the writing? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 3. Is the topic sentence well supported by other sentences? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 4. Are sentences connected to each other meaningfully? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 5. Is the story in the writing new and interesting to you? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 6. Is there any difficulty in following the story in the writing? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 7. Is there any missing information that should be included in the writing? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 8. Are there any irrelevant sentences in the writing? If any, what is it? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 9. Are there any inappropriate word uses in the writing? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |
| 10. Are all grammars used correctly in the writing? | Yes | No |
| Comment | | |

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: Foreign Languages

Applicable Levels: Tertiary/Secondary

Hoyeol Ryu

Department of English, Hankyong National University

Joongang-ro 327, Anseong, Gyeonggi Province, 456-749, Korea

Tel: (031) 670-5312

Email: hoyeol@hknu.ac.kr

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