MEESO

Modern English Education

http://dx.doi.org/10.18095/meeso.2018.19.2.01

How Do Tutors Give Feedback? Case Studies on Their Feedback and Perceptions*

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ARTICLE INFO

Received 15 March 2018
Revised 30 April 2018
Accepted 4 May 2018

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels:
Secondary/Tertiary

KEYWORD

writing tutor
written feedback
teacher feedback
작문 튜터
피드백
교사 피드백

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate written feedback given by writing tutors and their perceptions on feedback-giving experiences. So far, most studies on writing tutors have been concentrated on the analysis of their interactions with the tutees, in particular, their oral feedback, not their written one. However, their written feedback is worthwhile studying to see whether a tutor's written feedback contains characteristics that are distinguishable from that of teachers. For this purpose, in this study, 11 tutors' feedback was compared with a teacher's in error type, feedback type, and use of mitigation strategies. Also, in-depth interviews were conducted on the tutors to see how they prepared for and think of tutor feedback. This analysis of written feedback reveals that 1) tutors provided more feedback on word choice, subject-verb agreement, and contents while the teacher gave more feedback on evidence; 2) tutors used more direct-coded and indirect type of feedback than the teacher; and 3) tutors used more hedges than the teacher. The analysis of interviews reveals that these differences relate to their perceptions on their unique roles as tutors. This study implies that tutor feedback can successfully complement teacher feedback.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tutors—who teach students outside of the class—have actively engaged in the process of student writing in the United States. Their individualized one-on-one interaction with students has often been thought as one of their greatest advantages compared to teacher interactions. According to Harris (1995), students feel more comfortable with tutors and evaluate that a tutor's assistance enables them to become independent writers. Their positive attitudes towards tutors are based on the belief that the interaction with a tutor is more collaborative than the uni-directional interaction with a teacher. In addition, from a sociocultural perspective, a tutor can provide effective scaffolding to students by working within the zone of proximal development (Aljaareh & Lantolf, 1994; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Williams, 2004). That is, a tutor can make a student achieve a certain goal that s/he cannot obtain alone. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that the tutor-tutee interaction positively affects student writing. The more actively a tutor negotiates over the meaning with tutees, the more likely it is that the tutee can incorporate the tutor's feedback into their revision (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Williams, 2004).

To date, however, most studies on the role of a tutor in a tutee's writing have focused on analyzing their on-going interaction during the tutorial rather than the feedback itself. Such major focus on the interaction itself may closely

* This paper was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2017.

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relate to the fact that most studies on tutors' feedback in the second language area are focused on their roles during writing center visits. Because interactions at the writing center are based on oral conversations, they hardly give written feedback—it is difficult to get their written feedback because of the impermanent characteristic of writing center visits. Without understanding the characteristics of tutor's written feedback, which may converge with or diverge from teacher's written feedback in some aspects, however, neither can we grasp the whole picture of the roles of a tutor nor can we take advantage of a tutor's written feedback in teaching second language writers. In order to understand how a tutor gives written feedback, this study tries to answer the following questions by comparing tutor and teacher written feedback:

1) How does tutor's written feedback differ from the teacher's in error and feedback types?

2) Do tutors use more mitigating strategies than the teacher?

3) How do tutors perceive their feedback?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of tutoring has been widely adopted and extensively studied in the first language context (L1 context). Usually tutors work at writing centers and their roles are considered as "talking to writer," which distinguishes their roles from a teacher's role, that is, instructing students. North (1984) argues, "we[writing center tutors] are not here to serve, supplement, back up, complement, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any external curriculum (p. 440)." As he argues, tutor talks with tutees are very crucial to tutorials, which help tutees to solve their own problems and become independent writers. And thus tutors are instructed not to appropriate student writing and only to assist them in writing their own papers.

However, as the student population of ESL (English as a second language) students has increased, such role of tutors has been challenged. ESL students tend to see tutors as authoritative as teachers and expect them to fix their writing problems. Carter-Tod (1995) conducted a case study of four ESL students with their tutors for a semester. She pointed that most writing center tutors are not ready to help L2 learners since they have mostly been trained to native speaker tutees, not non-native tutees. The four ESL students tended to consider the writing center as a remedial class—a place where they have their errors fixed, but what they needed varied depending on their writing experience and personality, the tutor's approach and style, and the type of writing assignment they brought to the writing center.

For these challenges, several scholars found that tutor talk becomes different when tutors work with ESL students from when they work with L1 students (Blau & Hall, 2002; Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999, 2004). For example, after comparing and contrasting tutorials with L1 and ESL students, Thonus (2004) concluded that tutor talk was more directive and involved less negotiation with ESL students; and during the tutorials with ESL students, tutors were more likely to take the floor and use fewer mitigation strategies with ESL tutees rather than with their English speaking counterparts. Similarly, Blau and Hall (2002) found a different pattern in tutor talk with ESL students from that with native students: tutors ask ESL students closed questions because of their lack of knowledge about discourse conventions in English, although the tutors were trained to ask Socratic questions, that is, open-ended questions so that the students can think of the solutions themselves. Faced with this mismatch between the tutors' beliefs and actual practices with ESL students, Blau and Hall (2002) pointed out that tutors seem to feel guilty for their interference in ESL student writing when they correct errors, but they advised that tutors could work as cultural informants, bridging two different cultures—that is, the American culture and the student's culture.

Although the role of tutors with ESL students has been studied relatively in a great deal, their roles have rarely been studied in the EFL (English as a foreign language) context. In the EFL context, not only are there very few cases where writing tutors are used along with a writing class, these tutors are more likely non-native teachers. Non-native tutors and tutees might have both advantages and disadvantages: they may have advantages because they share many things with each other; but also, they may have disadvantages because none of them are native speakers of English. S. Cho and S. Kim (2014, 2017) studied the talk of non-native tutors and tutees who share Korean as their first language. They found that tutors use direct translation from L2 to L1 or from L1 to L2 as a kind of scaffolding tool in order to facilitate their tutees' understandings. In particular, their use of L1 translation decreased as their students' proficiency levels grew.

As seen above, tutor-tutee talk has attracted major attention from writing scholars in both L1 and L2 context, but a tutor's written feedback has not attracted such an attention. There are a couple of studies that investigate effects of different types of oral feedback (Cumming & So, 1996; Williams, 2004). For example, Cumming and So (1996) investigated the effects of different tutoring sessions on tutor-tutee conversations: the usage of the mother tongue and the usage of thinking prompts, but, notwithstanding these differences, they found the consistent pattern of interaction, that is, identifying a problem, negotiating over it with the tutee, and arriving at the resolution. On the other hand, Williams (2004) examined the effects of tutor-tutee interaction on the students' revisions and found that students were more likely to incorporate tutor feedback into their revisions when they negotiated over the meaning with the tutor and when problems were more explicitly addressed by the tutor. Besides these studies on a tutor's oral feedback, however, there have been few studies that look at a tutor's written feedback itself. Because of its unique characteristics that distinguish tutor's role from teacher's, tutor's written

feedback may have differences from teacher's written feedback. So far, while teacher's written feedback has been studied extensively in terms of error type (Caulk, 1994; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990) and feedback format (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997), tutor's written feedback has rarely been examined, nor have they been compared with each other. As tutor-tutee talk is proven to diverge from teacher talk, their written feedback also needs to be examined to reveal the characteristics that distinguish themselves from teacher feedback. For this purpose, this study compares tutor feedback and teacher feedback and furthermore explores how tutors think of their roles as tutors as well as their feedback in the EFL context.

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Data Collection

The participants are 11 tutors who were enrolled in a graduate school at a university located in Seoul and 18 tutees who were taking an academic writing class at the same university. The tutors were taking the researcher's seminar course on writing feedback, which aimed to teach graduate students how to give feedback on writing. In order to provide the graduate students with the chance to put into practice what they learned in the class, the researcher offered them volunteering chances to serve as a writing tutor to an undergraduate writing class that was also taught by the researcher. Eleven graduate students volunteered to tutor undergraduate students, and they tutored one or two tutees twice, who wrote two writing assignments—one for their cause-and-effect essay, and another for their argumentative essay. Out of 11, five tutors tutored one student each time, and the other six tutored two students each time. Also, each time they tutored different students. Three tutors met with their tutees and gave their feedback face-to-face, but the other eight tutors only communicated with their tutees via email. In addition to this tutor feedback, the tutees received a teacher's feedback on the same drafts. All of their teacher and tutor written feedback—in total, the teacher gave 521 incidents of feedback, while the tutors gave 384—was collected, compared and contrasted.

In addition to this written feedback, a semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted after the tutoring experiences to see how the tutors reflect on their experiences and how they view their feedback. Out of the 11 tutors, eight tutors volunteered for this interview, and each interview lasted about 20 minutes in average. The interview mostly concerns how they prepared their feedback, what they focused on in their feedbacks, and how they thought of their tutoring experiences. The interviews were conducted in Korean drawn upon the assumptions that the participants will communicate more freely and comfortably in their first language, and each interview was audio-recorded for the analysis.[1]

2. Data Analysis

First, in order to see how tutor feedback differed from the teacher feedback, all of their written feedback (n = 521 for the teacher and n = 384 for the tutors) was analyzed in error type, feedback type, and use of mitigation strategies, which are often examined in teachers' written feedback. As for error type and feedback type, Ferris (2006) was adopted and modified for this study. Because the tutees were required to use outside sources to support their points of views, new categories such as "evidence," "voice," or "citation" were added to Ferris's framework of error type. Table 1 and 2 show categories of error type and of feedback type respectively with their examples.

TABLE 1
Error Type (Adopted and Modified From Ferris, 2006)

Error Type	Description	Example
Word Choice	Wrong word choice	"global" to "official"
Verb Tense	Verb tense	"were" to "had been"
Verb Form	Verb form	"is started" to "starts"
Word Form	Word form	"not" to "no"
Article	Article	"a" to "the"
Singular-plural	Singular-plural	"evidences" to "evidence"
Pronoun	Pronouns	"he" to "s/he"
Run-on	Comma splices	"Youtube helps creators ~, Youtube Korea could be ~." (run-on)
Punctuation	Commas, periods, semicolons, and colons	"." To ";"
Fragments	Incomplete sentences	"sentence fragment"
Spelling	Includes capital and small letters	"sympton" to "symptom"
Sentence Structure	Includes missing and unnecessary words, phrase, and word order problems; teacher changed sentences to read more naturally	"the problem of insomnia is that it can undermine~" to "the problem of insomnia can undermine ~"
Voice	Refers to register choices considered inappropriate for academic writing	"Too informal!"
S-V agreement	Subject-verb agreement	"were" to "was"
Adverb	Adverb	"he may (finally) quit school"
Preposition	Prepositions	"from" to "into"
Contents	Comments on topic and theme	"Any final remarks?"
Off-topic	Comments on unity	"Off-topic!"
Clarification	Comments on unclear contents and terms	"Not clear!"

[1] The interview quoted in this study was translated from Korean into English by the researcher.

Elaboration	Asks for further explanations	"Why in England?"
Coherence	Transitions from one to another sentences	"Do these sentences make a causal relationship?"
Organization	Comments on paragraph and essay structures	"You can combine these three paragraphs into your conclusion."
Conjunction	Conjunctions	"if" to "because"
Citation	Comments on sources of outside materials used in the essay	"(Sin)"
Repetition	Repeated words or contents	"Repeated words"
Evidence	Request of more supporting details	"Any evidence?"

TABLE 2
Feedback Type
(Adopted and Modified From Ferris, 2006)

Feedback Type	Description	Example
Direct	Indicate errors and correct them	"This shows the fact that ~"
Direct-coded	Indicate errors, correct them, and categorize them	"the insomnia (The is not used in front of the word insomnia.)"
Indirect	Indicate errors, but do not correct them	"(Kim, Y. H.)"
Indirect-coded	Indicate errors, categorize them, but do not correct them	"the professional enterprise are going to a café." (You need to match the subject with its appropriate verb form)"
Direct error location	Explain error location in margin	(in margin) Grammar! Third paragraph, line number 10
Direct error location-coded	Explain the location of errors and categorize them in margin	(in margin) Grammar! Third paragraph, line number 10. You should change the word.
Indirect error location	No explanation of error location in margin	(in margin) Grammar!
Indirect error location-coded	No explanation of error location, but categorization of the errors in margin	(in margin) Grammar! You should focus on the word choice.

The analysis of mitigation strategies was based on Hyland and Hyland (2006). Table 3 shows its detailed categories with examples. Error and feedback types were first coded by the researcher and coded again by another rater who has been teaching and researching second language writing for a couple of years. Whenever their coding results did not correspond with each other, they resolved the conflicts by discussion to figure out a more appropriate category.

Finally, the audio-recorded interviews with tutors were transcribed line by line and analyzed based on Leki (2006). First, they were coded line by line and these codes were grouped into bigger categories for the purpose of identifying emerging themes or topics out of the interview data. Once the themes were identified, the transcripts were read against these themes to see whether they were congruent with the interview data or not.

TABLE 3
Use of Mitigation Strategies
(Adopted and Modified From Hyland & Hyland, 2006)

Mitigation Strategies	Description	Example
Paired comments	Combining criticism with praise	"Your topic is very interesting, but it is too broad and abstract."
Hedged comments	Using modal verbs, imprecise quantifiers, usuality devices	"I'm quite concerned that some of your sentences are based on your own assumptions."
Personal attribution	Teacher response as ordinary reader rather than expert.	"I'm curious how you knew about older generation's nostalgia for imperialism."
Interrogative form	Expressing doubt or uncertainty in an interrogative form	"Is this sentence necessary?"

IV. RESULTS

1. Analysis of Written Feedback

1) Error Type

As shown in Table 4, error type analysis between tutor and teacher feedback reveals that, in most cases—except for five categories such as verb form, word form, singular-plural, spelling, and evidence, tutors gave more feedback than the teacher.[2] In spelling, both the teacher and tutors pointed out the same number of errors in average, but in the other four categories—verb form, word form, singular-plural, and evidence, the teacher gave more feedback than the tutors. In order to see whether these differences are statistically significant, a series of *t*-tests were conducted. Table 4 shows that only in the four categories—word choice, subject-verb agreement, contents, and evidence, the difference between tutors and the teacher was statistically significant. In other words, it seems that tutors gave more feedback on word choice, subject-verb agreement, and contents, while the teacher gave more feedback on evidence. Although these results should be cautiously taken into account—because a series of *t*-tests were conducted on the same data, it is probable that the tutors placed more emphasis on contents and word choice, while the teacher is more concerned about the extent to which the student writers supported their points of view.

[2] Out of the 26 error categories shown in Table 2, the four categories, such as run-on, fragment, adverb, and repetition, were omitted from the analysis because either one of the parties never gave those kinds of feedback. While the tutors did not give feedback on run-on and fragment, the teacher gave no feedback on adverb and repetition.

TABLE 4

Frequency of Error Type Category by Tutor and Teacher

Error Type	Tutor		Teacher		*t*	*df*	*p*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Word Choice	3.83	2.94	2.36	1.73	-2.15	47	0.04*
Verb Tense	2.09	2.47	1.27	0.47	-1.08	20	0.29
Verb Form	1.33	0.50	1.81	0.91	1.45	23	0.16
Word Form	1.50	0.58	1.82	0.98	0.60	13	0.56
Article	3.33	2.85	1.50	0.58	-1.16	39	0.25
Singular-plural	1.60	0.74	2.13	1.25	1.48	36	0.15
Pronoun	2.50	2.03	2.25	1.59	-0.40	32	0.69
Punctuation	3.92	4.82	2.50	1.57	-1.23	31	0.23
Spelling	1.67	0.87	1.67	0.41	-1.31	13	0.21
Sentence Structure	4.69	4.12	4.06	2.59	-0.72	59	0.47
Voice	1.73	0.89	1.67	1.66	-0.13	22	0.90
S-V agreement	2.00	0.95	1.17	0.38	-3.35	28	0.00*
Preposition	2.47	1.85	2.17	1.85	-0.48	36	0.64
Contents	2.61	1.53	1.50	1.53	-2.69	37	0.01*
Evidence	1.15	0.38	2.09	1.53	2.23	34	0.03*
Off-topic	2.47	2.53	1.20	0.45	-1.09	18	0.29
Clarification	2.40	1.55	1.88	1.11	-1.24	39	0.22
Elaboration	2.83	1.72	2.81	1.86	-0.05	42	0.96
Coherence	1.91	1.45	1.11	0.33	-1.61	18	0.12
Organization	1.56	0.89	1.00	0.00	-1.24	18	0.23
Conjunction	2.78	1.70	1.95	1.28	-1.71	36	0.10
Citation	3.25	2.19	1.93	1.07	-1.92	20	0.07
Total	27.73	17.79	27.09	11.39	-0.17	64	0.86

* < .05

2) Feedback Type

Table 5 summarizes the analysis of tutors' and the teacher's use of feedback type in their written feedback. Because there were no cases of using direct location, indirect location, and indirect location-coded, their comparisons between tutor and teacher were omitted here. On one hand, the descriptive statistics between the tutors and the teacher uncovers that, except for direct-coded and indirect feedback types, the tutors gave similar amount of feedback compared to that of the teacher. On the other hand, the tutors used direct-coded and indirect types of feedback more frequently than the teacher. The *t*-test results show that these differences are statistically significant. That is, tutors used more indirect form of feedback than the teacher, and when they gave direct feedback, they had a tendency of explaining the mistakes the students made by categorizing their error types.

3) Use of Mitigation Strategies

The analysis of tutors' and teacher's use of mitigation strategies is demonstrated in Table 6. The descriptive statistics show that the tutors used all four mitigation strategies more frequently than the teacher. In particular, according to the *t*-values, as shown in Table 6, out of these differences, the difference in their use of hedged comments was statistically significant. That is, the tutors were more likely to use hedges than the teacher, although in general they used more mitigation strategies than the teacher.

TABLE 5

Frequency of Feedback Type Category by Tutor and Teacher

Feedback Type	Tutor		Teacher		*t*	*df*	*p*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Direct	16.49	16.44	16.97	9.83	0.15	58	0.88
Direct-coded	4.47	3.53	1.63	0.92	-2.23	25	0.04*
Indirect	6.61	7.51	2.75	1.57	-2.45	35	0.02*
Indirect-coded	9.86	6.03	7.70	3.34	-1.78	60	0.08
Direct error location-coded	1.33	0.58	1.00	NA	-0.50	2	0.67
Total	27.88	17.86	27.12	11.39	-0.21	64	0.84

* < .05

TABLE 6

Frequency of Feedback Type Category by Tutor and Teacher

Mitigation Type	Tutor		Teacher		*t*	*df*	*p*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Paired comments	1.31	0.60	1.18	0.39	-0.91	47	0.37
Hedged comments	5.68	3.59	4.06	1.82	-2.27	59	0.03*
Personal attribution	1.44	1.01	1.38	0.62	-0.21	23	0.83
Interrogative form	3.29	2.73	2.43	1.62	-1.34	43	0.19
Total	7.55	5.82	7.97	2.67	0.38	64	0.71

* < .05

2. Tutor Reflections on Their Feedback

The analysis of interview data was conducted around the themes: how they prepared their feedback, what type of feedback they gave, and how they thought their feedback were different from the teacher's feedback.

1) Identification of Tutee Needs

It seems that the tutors tried to adjust their feedback to their tutees' needs while preparing their feedback. More than half of the tutors said that they prepared their feedback as requested by their tutees. Out of eight, three of the tutors prepared their feedback as they liked, but five tutors tried to figure out what kind of feedback the students wanted from them as follows:

> First, I contacted my tutees by email and asked what they wanted me to focus on in my feedback, but unfortunately,

> I didn't receive any response from them. So I focused on factors that I believed to be important in academic writing. (Excerpt from Tutor 3)

Because Tutor 3 did not hear from her tutee unfortunately, she could not incorporate tutee's needs into her tutor feedback. On the other hand, the other four tutors received responses from their tutees and then tailored feedback to them.

> I contacted the tutees and asked what kind of feedback they wanted from me. In the first tutorial session, both of my tutees said they wanted comments, but in the second tutorial, both tutees wanted feedback on their grammar as well as their contents. Both of the times, the tutees asked for the same kind of feedback, so I prepared my feedback based on their requests. (Excerpt from Tutor 4)

> I thought I had to ask the tutees about what kind of feedback they wanted, so I did. Also, I asked them to tell me about what writing assignments they were assigned to in their classes. Because I needed to know how they understand their writing assignments, I asked them about it. Then I tailored my feedback to their needs. (Excerpt from Tutor 6)

> After reading the tutees' writings, I sent them an email to ask for the extent to which they wanted to receive my feedback and the features they wanted my feedback on. The first male tutee wanted feedbacks on everything, including grammar because he was neither a native speaker of English, nor did he study in English speaking countries. He hoped that his writing reads smoothly. So in his case, I felt free to give my feedback. (Excerpt from Tutor 8)

As tutors are often reported to provide individualized help to tutees during their talk, these tutors' conscious efforts to ask about tutees' needs and adjust their written feedback to the needs may insinuate that tutors have a tendency to customize their feedback to student needs even in their written form as well as in tutor-tutee talk.

2) Use of Indirect Feedback and Mitigation Strategies

The tutors considered students' emotions when they gave feedback, which was seen in their preference of indirect type of feedback and their use of mitigation strategies. Three tutors, Tutor 1, Tutor 3, and Tutor 7 explicitly mentioned that they preferred indirect feedback. In the case of Tutor 7, instead of directly correcting errors in a student's writing, she rather asked questions such as "how would you say that in English?" or "what would you use, singular or plural?" and then presented the corrections at the bottom. But she advised the tutees that they should think of solutions for themselves first before checking the correct answer. On the other hand, six tutors—Tutor 1, Tutor 3, Tutor 5, Tutor 6, Tutor 7, Tutor 8)—explicitly mentioned that they tried to use mitigation strategies lest their feedback should hurt feelings of tutees.

> I did my best to use mitigations strategies. Instead of saying "it is not correct," I explained why it is wrong and used modal verbs a lot. … When I gave feedback, I asked the tutees to think about solutions, made suggestions, and encouraged them by saying that you will write far better, so think about your writing. (Excerpt from Tutor 8)

In particular, Tutor 3, when pointing out what could be considered as plagiarism, provided lengthy explanations to the tutee so that she would not hurt the tutee's feelings. During the interview, she said, "My feedback gets lengthy because the tutee might be hurt by my feedback or because the tutee might not trust my feedback." As they gave more indirect type of feedback and use more hedges in the analysis of written feedback, their interviews confirm their preference of these types of feedback in order to consider tutees' emotions and feelings.

3) Lack of Confidence as a Tutor

The tutors' preferred usage of indirect feedback as well as of hedged comments may originate from their reflections on their unique role as a tutor. Most tutors seemed very cautious in giving feedback because of their lack of confidence and security as a tutor. In particular, those who did not have experiences of giving feedback to students mentioned that they did not feel competent in giving writing feedback themselves. Interestingly, out of these three, Tutor 4 and Tutor 7 sought for additional help before giving their own feedback: Tutor 4 asked one of her friends to give feedback on her tutees' essays and prepared her feedback only on the areas overlapped with her friend's. In the case of Tutor 7, she hired a native speaker who has been working as a professional editor.

> I can give feedback on contents, but I was not sure of English expressions because I'm not a native speaker. So I definitely asked for help from a native speaker, not just a native speaker, but a professional editor. (Excerpt from Tutor 7)

Once she received feedback from native speakers, she only selected the feedback that she thought the tutee needed.

Even those who had relatively longer and greater experiences of teaching writing and giving feedback talked about their lack of security as tutors. Tutor 6 and Tutor 3 had taught writing as secondary teachers and have given feedback to a large number of students. However, giving feedback as a tutor seemed like a new experience, which made them more cautious in preparing and giving feedback. Tutor 3 said, "I never tutored before, so I was not sure about my role as a tutor and the extent to which I should intervene in their writing. And thus I felt more cautious." Similarly, Tutor 6 referred to her difficulties as a tutor, which can be distinguishable from the role of a teacher as follows:

> When I was a teacher, I felt free to give feedback. I was so

> sure about my feedback, so I gave feedback like "correct it" or "it's wrong." But as a tutor, I wasn't so sure whether my feedback was correct or not. Of course it is related to the fact that my tutees are college students, not high school students. (Excerpt from Tutor 6)

Their insecurity as tutors can be confirmed by the fact that it took more time and effort for them to prepare feedbacks as tutors than it did when they were teachers. Both Tutor 3 and Tutor 6 went through the procedure of reviewing and editing their feedback before sending it to their tutees by email.

> First I just read the essay, and then I gave feedback on each paragraph. Finally, after reading my feedback, I deleted the ones that looked unnecessary or revised the ones that needed revision. In this way, I went through three steps in preparing my tutor feedback. (Excerpt from Tutor 3)

> It took me 30 to 40 minutes to give feedback on one essay at first. I read it again the next day. Because my tutees were advanced-level students, I double-checked if my comments were correct or not. When I read my feedback again, I deleted the unnecessary and added what I wanted the writer to add to his/her essay after reading the other tutees' writing. (Excerpt from Tutor 6)

As witnessed in their interviews, Tutor 3 and 6 read their feedback several times even when they finished writing it in order to double-check if their feedback is appropriate as a tutor. The procedure of editing written feedback was rarely performed when they used to give feedback to their high school students as a teacher.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The comparison of tutor feedback with teacher feedback reveals that overall, tutors gave more feedback than the teacher, although the difference was not statistically significant. In particular, tutors were more likely to give feedback on word choice, subject-verb agreement, and contents—which is quite distinguishable from the pattern of teacher feedback found in Ferris et al. (1997) where only a small number of feedback is focused on grammar and mechanics. On the other hand, in this study, the teacher was mostly concentrated on evidence, that is, how successfully and effectively the students supported their points of views. This feature of tutor feedback is substantiated by the analysis of their interview data. Before preparing their feedback, the tutors said that they first identified their tutees' needs and then tailored their feedback to them. When the tutors asked for their tutees' needs, none of them wanted feedback solely on grammar. They wanted feedback on both grammar and contents, and some of them just wanted feedback on contents. As a result, out of the eight tutors who participated in the interview, four—Tutor 1, Tutor 3, Tutor 5, Tutor 6—said they focused on contents in preparing their tutor feedback, and the other four—Tutor 2, Tutor 4, Tutor 7, Tutor 8—said that they dealt with both grammar and contents in student writing. As seen here, because all the tutors paid attention to contents in their tutor feedback, it might be natural that they made more content-related comments than the teacher did.

Secondly, in terms of feedback type and the use of mitigation strategies, the tutors gave more direct-coded and indirect types of feedback and more hedges than the teacher, which is quite distinguishable from the findings of studies on teacher feedback (Ferris, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Ferris found that teachers are more likely to provide direct feedback without explanations, but in this study, many tutors preferred direct-coded, that is they corrected student errors and also explained why they are errors. This finding might be related to what they reflected on about their experiences of giving tutor feedback during the interview. As seen in the analysis of interview data, most tutors were very cautious in giving feedback. Especially, those who did not have many experience in giving feedback to students' English writing did not feel confident of giving feedback as a tutor, so they sought for additional help from native speakers or friends. Even those who had relatively longer experiences of teaching writing, and giving written feedback were not certain about the extent to which they could intervene in the process of tutees' writing and thus felt insecure about their role as tutors. Although some tutors communicated actively with their tutees via email or face-to-face, the majority did not receive any response from their tutees and they often showed concerns that tutees ignored their feedback or did not trust it. Such uncertainty that the tutors felt—because of their lack of confidence or of security, may lead to using more direct-coded or indirect types of feedback, and eventually using more mitigation strategies. Whereas the teacher rarely used direct-coded feedback, that is, correcting errors with explanations of the errors, tutors did so in order to justify their corrections by explaining why they are errors.

This study is limited in that only a small number of tutors and teachers participated. In this study, 11 tutors' written feedback was compared with one teacher's feedback, but in order to probe differences between tutors and teachers more extensively, more teachers, students, and tutors of diverse backgrounds situated in various settings should participate in similar types of studies. This diversity will enrich the understanding of differences between tutors and teachers in EFL contexts like Korea. Also, this study did not take into account tutees' perceptions on tutor and teacher feedback. Their reflections on these two different types of feedback will provide a broader picture of tutor feedback by informing how tutees respond to and perceive it. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study implies that tutors can be advantageous to students by complementing teacher feedback, for they place emphasis on areas other than teachers have focus on—such as word choice and contents in this study. Also, because of their unique status as tutors who are both a student and a teacher, they may understand tutees better and help them more efficiently. Eventually they can work as "a liaison between

the teacher and the student," as one of the participants in this study Tutor 8 mentioned in his interview.

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