



University of
Southern
Queensland

**EXPLORING L2 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH
PEER FEEDBACK IN A SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
UNIVERSITY WRITING COURSE**

A Thesis submitted by

Alice Wrigglesworth, M.A.

For the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

2024

ABSTRACT

This study explores how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within a synchronous online writing course and how various aspects of engagement interact with each other. The distinctive setting, a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea, allowed for an examination of the influence of cultural backgrounds on students' engagement with peer feedback, as they navigate practices that may differ from their previous educational experiences. A significant contribution of the study is the development and application of an integrative, holistic theoretical framework incorporating four dimensions of student engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. By examining engagement through the lens of this framework, grounded in social constructivism theory, transactional distance theory, and student engagement theory, the study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping L2 students' experiences with online peer feedback. Findings reveal three distinct engagement profiles (independent, dependent, and minimal engagers) and identify a five-step recursive cognitive process (understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating) employed by independent engagers. The study highlights how peer feedback activities targeting higher-order thinking can promote cognitive engagement and self-directed learning skills. Cultural factors and social relationships significantly influenced L2 students' engagement, underscoring the need for culturally responsive pedagogical approaches in online L2 writing courses. The development of trust and supportive relationships within static peer groups led to a positive feedback loop enhancing engagement across all dimensions. Recommendations propose strategies for creating online environments effectively supporting L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, including fostering supportive peer groups, providing structured feedback training, designing higher-order cognitive activities, implementing differentiated instruction, leveraging technology for interaction, and considering cultural influences. The insights gained from this research can inform the design and implementation of effective peer feedback activities that foster student engagement, promote cognitive development, and support the growth of social relationships in diverse learning contexts.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I, Alice Wigglesworth, declare that the PhD Thesis entitled *Exploring L2 Student Engagement with Peer Feedback in a Synchronous Online University Writing Course* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date:

Endorsed by:

Dr. Sang-Soon Park

Principal Supervisor

Associate Professor Megan Kek

Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to my doctoral supervisors Dr. Sang-Soon Park and Associate Professor Megan Kek at the University of Southern Queensland, for their invaluable guidance and support.

I am grateful to my employer George Mason University Korea for their understanding and support as I strived to balance my studies and professional responsibilities.

This study would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of the Mason Korea first-year students who participated amidst the uncertainties of the Spring 2020 COVID-19 semester.

To my daughters, Hollie and Isabella. This doctoral marathon stretched on because I chose baking sessions over bibliographies and soccer games over scholarly journals. The trade-off was worth every moment.

My thanks go to my ex-husband, who generously offered his time to serve as a third reader. His capacity to provide unbiased and useful critiques was much appreciated.

Finally, I thank my friends, colleagues, and family for consistently encouraging me and inquiring about my progress.

This research has been made possible through the support of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT | i |
| CERTIFICATION OF THESIS..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES | ix |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | x |
| 1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Background to the research problem..... | 2 |
| 1.3 Research problem..... | 6 |
| 1.4 Aim Of The Research..... | 8 |
| 1.5 Theoretical foundation | 9 |
| 1.6 Research questions..... | 10 |
| 1.7 Significance of the study | 12 |
| 1.8 Design of the study | 15 |
| 1.9 Structure of the thesis | 18 |
| 1.10 Overview..... | 19 |
| 2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 21 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 21 |
| 2.2 Social constructivism | 22 |
| 2.2.1 Social constructivist pedagogy..... | 25 |
| 2.2.2 Summary..... | 29 |
| 2.3 Student engagement | 29 |
| 2.3.1 Dimensions of engagement | 31 |
| 2.3.2 Summary..... | 36 |
| 2.4 Transactional distance..... | 37 |
| 2.4.1 Dialogue..... | 41 |

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 2.4.2 | Structure | 42 |
| 2.4.3 | Learner autonomy | 43 |
| 2.4.4 | Research on synchronous online learning | 43 |
| 2.4.5 | Summary | 44 |
| 2.5 | Second-language writers..... | 46 |
| 2.5.1 | Differences between L1 and L2 writers..... | 46 |
| 2.5.2 | Linguistic differences | 47 |
| 2.5.3 | Cultural differences | 48 |
| 2.5.4 | Expectation differences | 51 |
| 2.5.5 | Summary | 52 |
| 2.6 | Process writing pedagogy..... | 53 |
| 2.6.1 | Stages of process writing | 55 |
| 2.6.2 | Principles of process writing | 57 |
| 2.6.3 | Research on process writing..... | 58 |
| 2.6.4 | Criticism of process writing | 61 |
| 2.6.5 | Summary | 62 |
| 2.7 | Peer feedback | 63 |
| 2.7.1 | Research on peer feedback..... | 67 |
| 2.7.2 | Summary | 77 |
| 2.8 | Overview: The research gaps | 79 |
| 3 | CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 81 |
| 3.1 | Introduction..... | 81 |
| 3.2 | Theoretical bases | 82 |
| 3.3 | Social constructivism | 83 |
| 3.3.1 | Student engagement | 84 |
| 3.3.2 | Transactional distance | 84 |
| 3.4 | Theoretical framework for analysis | 86 |
| 3.4.1 | Changes in transactional distance | 87 |
| 3.4.2 | Movement through the Zone of Proximal Development..... | 89 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 3.4.3 | Student engagement in online peer feedback activities..... | 90 |
| 3.5 | Meaningful variables and propositions | 97 |
| 3.5.1 | Propositions | 98 |
| 3.6 | Overview..... | 101 |
| 4 | CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY | 103 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 103 |
| 4.2 | Instructor–researcher worldview | 104 |
| 4.3 | Research approach | 105 |
| 4.4 | Research design | 106 |
| 4.5 | Context of the study..... | 108 |
| 4.5.1 | Participants | 109 |
| 4.5.2 | Sampling | 110 |
| 4.5.3 | Peer feedback activities | 114 |
| 4.6 | Quality of the study | 116 |
| 4.6.1 | Validity..... | 116 |
| 4.6.2 | Triangulation..... | 118 |
| 4.7 | Quantitative data collection and analysis | 119 |
| 4.7.1 | Questionnaire | 119 |
| 4.7.2 | Essays..... | 122 |
| 4.7.3 | Summary..... | 125 |
| 4.8 | Qualitative data collection and analysis..... | 126 |
| 4.8.1 | Reflection papers | 126 |
| 4.8.2 | Interviews | 128 |
| 4.8.3 | Summary..... | 130 |
| 4.9 | Data integration..... | 131 |
| 4.10 | Overview..... | 133 |
| 5 | CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS | 135 |
| 5.1 | Introduction..... | 135 |
| 5.2 | Quantitative results and analysis | 135 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 5.2.1 | Questionnaires | 136 |
| 5.2.2 | Essays..... | 140 |
| 5.2.3 | Summary | 142 |
| 5.3 | Qualitative results and analysis | 144 |
| 5.3.1 | Interviews | 145 |
| 5.3.2 | Reflection papers | 162 |
| 5.3.3 | Summary | 174 |
| 5.4 | Overview..... | 175 |
| 6 | CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION..... | 177 |
| 6.1 | Introduction..... | 177 |
| 6.2 | Discussion of integrated findings for each research strand | 177 |
| 6.2.1 | Research strand 1 | 177 |
| 6.2.2 | Research strand 2 | 180 |
| 6.2.3 | Research strand 3 | 183 |
| 6.2.4 | Research strand 4 | 189 |
| 6.3 | The influence of culture and language | 194 |
| 6.3.1 | Implications | 196 |
| 6.4 | Three types of engagers | 196 |
| 6.4.1 | Implications | 199 |
| 6.5 | Conclusion | 200 |
| 7 | CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION | 204 |
| 7.1 | Introduction..... | 204 |
| 7.2 | Addressing research problem and questions | 204 |
| 7.3 | Significance | 207 |
| 7.4 | Implications..... | 209 |
| 7.5 | Recommendations | 211 |
| 7.6 | Limitations | 212 |
| 7.7 | Further research..... | 214 |
| 7.8 | Conclusion | 216 |

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| REFERENCES | 219 |
| APPENDIX A..... | 256 |
| APPENDIX B..... | 259 |
| APPENDIX C | 261 |
| APPENDIX D | 268 |
| APPENDIX E..... | 273 |
| APPENDIX F..... | 274 |
| APPENDIX G | 275 |
| APPENDIX H | 281 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1.1 <i>Research Design</i> | 17 |
| Table 4.1 <i>Number of Participants</i> | 113 |
| Table 4.2 <i>Factor Analysis of the Peer Feedback Attitude Questionnaire</i> | 121 |
| Table 5.1 <i>Factor Means on Questionnaire Administrations</i> | 137 |
| Table 5.2 <i>T-tests Comparing Questionnaire Administrations on the Three Identified Factors</i> | 138 |
| Table 5.3 <i>Given Feedback and How Recipients Addressed Feedback</i> | 141 |
| Table 6.1 <i>Key Findings</i> | 201 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 2.1 <i>Dialogue and Structure Determine Transactional Distance</i> | 39 |
| Figure 2.2 <i>Autonomy and Transactional Distance</i> | 40 |
| Figure 2.3 <i>The Stages of Process Writing</i> | 57 |
| Figure 3.1 <i>Theoretical Framework</i> | 86 |
| Figure 4.1 <i>Questionnaire</i> | 120 |
| Figure 5.1 <i>Percentage of Participants Who Made Positive Mentions for Each Theme</i> | 164 |
| Figure 6.1 <i>Students' Cognitive Engagement with Peer Feedback</i> | 184 |
| Figure 6.2 <i>Engagement through the Feedback Process</i> | 196 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study explores how second language (L2) students engage with peer feedback activities in a synchronous online writing course, in the context of a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea. This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the background, research problem, aim of the research, theoretical foundation, research questions, significance of the study, and research design.

The chapter outlines the research problem, highlighting gaps in understanding of how L2 students engage with peer feedback in synchronous online learning environments. It presents the aim of the research and discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study, grounded in social constructivism, student engagement theory, and transactional distance theory. Four research questions guide the study, each corresponding to a dimension of engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. Additionally, eight propositions derived from the theoretical framework are presented in relation to these research questions.

The significance of the study is explored, emphasizing its contributions to understanding L2 student engagement with peer feedback in synchronous online writing courses, the influence of cultural backgrounds, and the potential of technology to enhance the peer feedback process. The study seeks to make a significant contribution to the literature on writing pedagogy for L2 students by examining the application of process-oriented writing instruction within a social-constructivist framework in online courses.

Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the mixed-methods research design, outlining the four data sources and research strands used to explore each research question and related propositions. A table summarizing the relationships between the research questions, propositions, research methodology, and data sources is presented.

1.2 Background to the research problem

Peer feedback is a fundamental part of the process writing approach (Emig, 1983; Flower & Hayes, 1981; van der Strap & Blair, 2018; Zamel, 1985). The literature in the field of writing pedagogy consistently affirms the benefits of the process approach to writing (Emig, 2003; Graves, 1994; Hyland, 2009; Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Perl, 1980; Seow, 2002; Zamel, 1982; Zhou, 2015) and the significance of feedback in the writing process (Ferris, 1995; Graham, 2018; Graham et al., 2015; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Keh, 1990; Wisniewski et al., 2020; Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Zheng & Yu, 2018; Zhou, 2020). However, the effective delivery of continuous and timely feedback remains a formidable challenge. While feedback on student writing is widely recognized as a fundamental component of writing courses by both instructors and students alike (Erkan, 2022; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013), the labour-intensive nature of delivering continuous and timely feedback, coupled with the demands of large class sizes, presents a significant challenge for writing instructors (van der Strap & Blair, 2018). The effective use of peer feedback can provide valuable insights into content and rhetorical concerns, improve cross-cultural communication, and promote a sense of togetherness among students (Hansen & Liu, 2005). Given these considerations, the need to provide personalized and constructive feedback while managing time constraints necessitates innovative approaches to pedagogy.

One widely adopted strategic response to this challenge is the integration of peer feedback, also known as student-to-student feedback, into writing instruction (van der Strap & Blair, 2018). Peer feedback is a practice where feedback is given by one student to another. In the context of a writing classroom, students exchange written texts, negotiate meaning and opinions, and provide suggestions for modifying compositions (Zhou, 2020).

While it is noteworthy that students often express a preference for instructor feedback over peer feedback (Peck, 2021; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhou, 2020), there are both practical and pedagogical advantages to employing peer feedback activities in writing classrooms. Practically speaking, peer feedback conserves instructors' time

(van der Strap & Blair, 2018) and enables a greater volume of feedback to be provided (Topping, 2018). Likewise, there is a body of research demonstrating the educational benefits to using peer feedback in writing classrooms (Peck, 2021; van der Strap & Blair, 2018), such as the development of critical thinking skills and improved quality of writing (Cho et al., 2006; Kennette & Frank, 2013; Lee, 2017; Peck, 2021; Rollinson, 2005; Topping, 2018).

Historically, much of the body of research on peer feedback took place in first language (L1) writing classrooms. L1, or first language, denotes the primary language used in a person's home during their upbringing and serves as their first language used for communication. While peer feedback initially found its roots in L1 writing classrooms, an emerging body of research has focused on the efficacy of peer feedback in second-language classrooms—classrooms where instruction is conducted in a language that is not the first or native language of the students. This interest in peer feedback reflects its potential to facilitate learning and promote the development of writing, as well as its alignment with several influential approaches to writing instruction, including social constructivism, process writing, and second-language learning (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). With this context in mind, second language (L2) students—individuals who are non-native speakers—are at the focus of the present study. Specifically, the participants in the study are domestic Korean students who speak Korean as their L1 and English as their L2.

The researcher's interest in exploring how writers engage with peer feedback activities in their L2 stems from her almost 20 years of teaching at universities in South Korea, in addition to stints in Kuwait and China. Adhering to established best practices in writing instruction, which emphasize breaking down long writing assignments into smaller components and providing students with feedback throughout the writing process (Bean, 2011; Kolb et al., 2013), the researcher, as an L2 university writing instructor, known as instructor–researcher from herewith, employs a process approach to writing. As part of this approach, she integrates peer feedback activities into her classes with the objective of enabling students to enhance their writing skills through reflection, collaboration, and the negotiation of

meaning (Kennette & Frank, 2013; Lee, 2017; Rollinson, 2005; Steffen, 2017). Despite her consistent use of peer feedback activities, the instructor–researcher recognizes a gap in her understanding, as reflected by the existing literature, of how students actually engage with these activities and the underlying processes they employ during the peer feedback process.

In 1788, Robert Burns coined the phrase, "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry". The year 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic prior to the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester, presented events that further emphasized the relevance of this statement. As the pandemic swept through South Korea in the weeks leading up to the university's spring semester, an abrupt transition to online learning became necessary. This sudden transition to online education challenged the digital preparedness of educators and learners (Fabrizz et al., 2021). For the instructor–researcher, this unexpected transition from face-to-face instruction to online instruction presented both challenges and opportunities. While it marked her first experience with online teaching, it also provided her an opportunity to explore the challenges and potential advantages of implementing peer feedback activities in an online setting.

The instructor–researcher chose to conduct the Spring 2020 course, and its related peer feedback activities used in the present study, through synchronous delivery. In synchronous classes, learning happens in real-time, with both students and instructors participating simultaneously from different locations (Wang et al., 2023). This approach closely resembles traditional classroom settings (Gou, 2020; McArthur, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). In synchronous online classes, participants use video conferencing tools, such as Zoom, to interact. In contrast, asynchronous classes do not require students to be present online or in-person at the same time. In this method, teaching materials like lectures, readings, and assignments are provided online, allowing students to access and complete them at their own pace and convenience within a set timeframe. Asynchronous classes provide a more flexible schedule, enabling students to access course materials at various times and locations. While both modalities have their advantages and disadvantages, with a

particular emphasis on engagement in mind, the instructor–researcher opted for synchronous delivery.

Synchronous instruction offers real-time interaction between students and instructors, fostering immediate engagement, active participation, and the opportunity for spontaneous discussions (Peck, 2021). This mode of learning can enhance a sense of classroom community, enabling students to feel more connected to their peers and instructors. Moreover, synchronous instruction often mimics the structure of traditional face-to-face classes, making it a familiar and effective mode of learning for many students. These attributes of synchronous instruction contribute to an engaging learning environment, making it the optimal option for facilitating peer feedback activities and other collaborative learning experiences in an online setting.

Despite the advantages of synchronous instruction, the abrupt transition to online learning due to the pandemic presented challenges. The instructor–researcher, like many educators worldwide, was thrust into this new environment with little time for extensive preparation or consideration of potential obstacles. While under normal circumstances, there might have been an opportunity to anticipate and plan for issues such as technological barriers, student engagement in a virtual setting, or the impact on classroom dynamics, the swift transition compelled a more adaptive approach.

The instructor–researcher navigated these challenges by utilising the interactive features of video conferencing platforms (Zoom’s breakout rooms and chat feature), the discussion board feature in the course’s LMS (Blackboard), and using the Korean mobile messaging application, KakaoTalk (similar to other chat apps, such as WhatsApp), to maintain student engagement and facilitate peer feedback activities. Additionally, regular check-ins and open communication channels were established to address any technical or pedagogical issues as they arose. This adaptive strategy allowed for the preservation of the course’s interactive and collaborative nature, albeit in a new digital format, while also providing valuable insights into the potential of synchronous online learning for future educational practices.

1.3 Research problem

The past decade has seen a notable surge in research about L2 students in university and college settings (e.g., Allen & Mills, 2016; Hyland, 2019; Min, 2016; Min, 2018; Yu et al., 2019; Yu & Hu, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2014; Zong et al., 2021a; Zong et al., 2021b). These studies have contributed to the understanding of L2 students and their experiences in higher education, providing insights into different aspects of their educational practices and the challenges they encounter. However, despite this increased focus, several areas within this field remain relatively underexplored, and gaps in knowledge persist (Yu et al., 2019; Yu & Hu, 2017).

One such underexplored area is the engagement of L2 students, who come from diverse backgrounds with varying cultural experiences, and their experience with peer feedback (Yu et al., 2019; Yu & Hu, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2014). While peer feedback has gained traction as a valuable pedagogical tool in L2 writing classrooms (Alnasser, 2018), existing research provides limited insights into how L2 students actively participate in the peer feedback process (Yu et al., 2019; Yu & Hu, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2014). Given the importance of student engagement in the effectiveness of peer feedback, understanding how L2 students interact with and respond to this process is essential. This understanding is particularly valuable for educators and institutions seeking to gain insights into how diverse backgrounds and experiences influence student engagement with peer feedback.

The relevance of this research extends beyond traditional educational settings, particularly in light of the growing internationalisation of higher education. This includes the increasing presence of international branch campuses and transnational education programs, which often introduce Western pedagogical practices into diverse cultural contexts (Paniagua et al., 2022). These developments further underscore the importance of understanding how L2 students engage with peer feedback within their own cultural environments.

Furthermore, advances in technology are continually changing traditional modes of delivery. Previous research has highlighted the significance of online peer

feedback and its impact on writing skills (Hsia et al., 2016). The existing literature underscores the importance of the online peer feedback process in improving student writing outcomes, allowing for more immediate and frequent feedback compared to that provided by instructors, leading to better-quality written work (Cui et al., 2021; Noroozi et al., 2023; Patchan et al., 2016; Zong et al., 2021a). This change has coincided with the growth of online learning, which includes both hybrid or blended courses and entirely online programs. These courses are found in universities that operate solely online as well as in traditional in-person universities, often referred to as brick-and-mortar institutions.

Within this changing educational environment, there is a notable gap in understanding how L2 students navigate and engage in peer feedback activities, especially in synchronous online learning environments. This gap is particularly notable in international contexts where Western pedagogical practices, including peer feedback, may not be as normalized or well-understood. In many countries, peer feedback is often less familiar and may not align with traditional educational norms, as is the case in South Korea (Brinegar, 2018). This cultural disconnect can significantly impact how L2 students engage with and respond to peer feedback activities.

The cultural expectations and educational backgrounds of L2 students may significantly influence their engagement with peer feedback processes. This is particularly relevant in contexts where Western pedagogical practices are introduced into different cultural settings, such as in the case of Korean students engaging with US-based educational approaches. The potential mismatch between these practices and local educational norms underscores the importance of considering cultural context in pedagogical design.

Given the increasing prevalence of technology-mediated education, there is a growing need to understand how digital instruments can be deployed to support peer feedback activities in online writing instruction for L2 students (Abassi et al., 2006; Peck, 2021). This understanding is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies that cater to the diverse needs of L2 students in various higher education

settings, particularly in international contexts where cultural factors play a significant role in shaping student engagement and learning outcomes.

Therefore, this study explores how Korean students, for whom English is their L2, engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously, and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other in this specific context.

1.4 Aim Of The Research

This study explores a process-oriented approach to writing instruction, focusing on the role of peer feedback within a synchronous online university writing class comprised of L2 students. In the context of a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea, the study seeks to explore how students' cultural backgrounds, in this context Korean, influence their engagement in peer feedback activities, as well as the various ways in which L2 students engage with these activities and how these different ways of engaging interrelate. While focusing on a synchronous online writing course with L2 students, its findings aim to provide valuable insights for educators and institutions seeking to enhance the peer feedback process across various instructional formats and student populations, including traditional in-person, asynchronous, and synchronous online environments.

Furthermore, this research acknowledges the growing importance of digital tools in education, particularly focusing on the less studied area of synchronous online learning (Peck, 2021). Although there has been extensive research on asynchronous online learning, the field of synchronous online learning, particularly in the realm of writing instruction, remains relatively unexplored (Peck, 2021). As technology reshapes education, understanding how students engage with peer feedback in synchronous online environments, notably in synchronous online writing courses, is essential.

1.5 Theoretical foundation

The theoretical perspective guiding the present study is informed by the integration of three theories: social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interactions and collaborative learning in the construction of knowledge (Adams, 2006; Palincsar, 1998). Student engagement theory examines the factors that contribute to students' active participation and motivation in the learning process. In the case of the present study, student engagement assumes four dimensions: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Philip & Duchesne, 2016). Transactional distance theory explores the impact of physical and psychological separation between students and between students and instructors in the online educational process (Moore, 1997). This composite theoretical perspective of the three provides a lens through which to explore and understand how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within a synchronous online writing course, and how these various ways of engaging interrelate. These three theories, namely social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance, collectively form the basis of the study's theoretical framework (presented in Chapter 3).

It is noted that the terms "conceptual framework" and "theoretical framework" are frequently used interchangeably, but they are not one and the same (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). While a conceptual framework emerges from the research question, providing a structure for its investigation, a theoretical framework often influences the research question, based on the theories' expectations regarding the phenomena under examination (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). As such, a theoretical framework provides the theoretical assumptions for the broader context of a study, serving as the foundational "lens" that shapes the overall perspective through which a study is constructed. These theoretical underpinnings not only align this instructor–researcher's work with the broader academic community but also guide the formulation of research questions, the selection of research methods, and the choice of appropriate methods of analysis. Therefore, this instructor–researcher utilises

these theoretical underpinnings to facilitate an examination of how these variables impact student engagement in online peer feedback activities.

The present study's theoretical framework helps structure the examination of how student engagement influences the construction of knowledge as seen through social constructivist principles in educational settings characterized by varying degrees of transactional distance. Based on this theoretical framework, the instructor–researcher employs both quantitative and qualitative data to explore student engagement in peer feedback activities and how they adapt and progress in response to variations in transactional distance. This theoretical framework guides the formulation of four research questions.

1.6 Research questions

The aim of this research study is to explore how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities in a synchronous online writing course and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. Shaped by the theoretical framework underpinning the study, the following four research questions were developed to guide the study:

- Research Question 1:
What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities?
- Research Question 2:
How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students' attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?
- Research Question 3:
How do students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process?
- Research Question 4:
What is the impact of the development of social relationships between peers on student engagement with online peer feedback activities?

Reflective of the study's theoretical framework and research questions, eight propositions rooted in the theories of social constructivism, student engagement, and

transactional distance are developed. These propositions are designed to understand the relationships between variables relevant to student engagement in the peer feedback in response to variations in transactional distance:

- Proposition 1:
Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.
- Proposition 2:
Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.
- Proposition 3:
Trust in students' ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.
- Proposition 4:
As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.
- Proposition 5:
As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance.
- Proposition 6:
Culture will influence students' attitudes toward engagement in the online peer feedback process.
- Proposition 7:
Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.
- Proposition 8:
Due to individual differences, students will achieve different levels of cognitive engagement.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study explores L2 students' engagement with peer feedback in an online writing course, focusing on the four dimensions of student engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. It examines the complex interplay between students' behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social interactions within a cross-cultural context as they engage in peer feedback activities within a technology-mediated learning environment. In this study, transactional distance is increased due to the synchronous learning environment in which learning takes place. By examining all four dimensions of student engagement, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of L2 students' experiences with peer feedback in a synchronous online learning environment.

The research takes place at a branch campus of a U.S. university in South Korea, offering a distinctive cultural context to examine how Korean cultural background influences students' engagement with peer feedback. This setting provides valuable insights into how L2 students adapt to and engage with peer feedback practices that may differ from their previous educational experiences within the Korean educational system. The educational environment at the branch campus diverges significantly from traditional Korean universities, which are typically characterized by Confucian educational principles. These principles often emphasize teacher-centred classrooms, focus on knowledge transfer from expert to novice, and prefer competition over collaboration among students. In contrast, the U.S.-based curriculum at the branch campus introduces more student-centred, collaborative approaches like peer feedback, presenting a notable shift for many Korean students. In Confucian cultures, including Korean culture, there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy, social harmony, collectivism, and respect for elders (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). By considering the role of culture in shaping students' perceptions, expectations, and behaviours related to peer feedback, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors that influence L2 students' engagement in online writing courses. The study explores how Korean L2 students navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the cross-cultural

context, and how they adapt to and engage with peer feedback practices in this educational environment.

Furthermore, this study explores how students engage in online peer feedback activities and how they adapt and progress in response to variations in transactional distance. As technology-mediated education becomes increasingly prevalent, it becomes increasingly necessary to understand how digital platforms and tools can be leveraged to facilitate meaningful peer interactions and support cognitive processes in online writing courses. By examining student engagement with online peer feedback activities through the lens of transactional distance theory, this research aims to provide insights into how students navigate and adapt to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by different levels of transactional distance in online learning environments. The study explores how variations in dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy influence students' engagement, cognitive processes, and sense of community in online peer feedback activities. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how technology can be effectively integrated into online writing pedagogy to promote student engagement and learning outcomes, while considering the impact of transactional distance on the learning experience.

The research is particularly relevant for educators and institutions seeking to improve instructional practices for peer feedback in writing classes. By providing a detailed analysis of L2 students' cognitive and social engagement with peer feedback, as well as their behavioural and emotional responses, the study offers practical insights and recommendations that can inform the design and implementation of effective peer feedback activities in online writing courses. The study's findings on the three distinct engagement profiles—independent, dependent, and minimal engagers—and the five-step recursive cognitive process employed by independent engagers, contribute to a deeper understanding of the diverse ways in which students approach and interact with online peer feedback activities. These insights can guide educators in tailoring their instructional strategies to cater to the specific needs and engagement patterns of different learner types.

Moreover, this study seeks to make a significant contribution to the literature on writing pedagogy for L2 students by examining the application of process-oriented writing instruction within a social-constructivist framework in online courses, with a specific focus on the cross-cultural context of a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea. By exploring how Korean L2 students engage in the iterative process of drafting, receiving feedback, and revising their work within a collaborative online environment, the study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of process-oriented approaches in promoting student engagement and writing development within cross-cultural contexts. Additionally, by situating the research within a social-constructivist framework, the study highlights the importance of social interactions and co-construction of knowledge in facilitating Korean L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, particularly in relation to the adaptation to different cultural expectations within the peer feedback process. The study takes into account the distinctive cultural dynamics and educational practices in South Korea, such as the emphasis on hierarchical relationships, the importance of maintaining harmony in social interactions, and collectivism. By considering these cultural factors, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Korean L2 students navigate the challenges and opportunities of online peer feedback, and how writing instructors can effectively support their engagement and learning outcomes within this specific cultural context.

Ultimately, this study aims to offer actionable recommendations for pedagogical strategies, course design, and institutional practices to improve peer feedback in online writing courses. By synthesizing the findings related to behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social, and cultural factors influencing L2 students' engagement, the study provides a roadmap for educators and institutions to create more engaging and effective online writing courses that prioritize peer feedback as a central component of the learning process. The recommendations derived from this research have the potential to transform the way peer feedback is approached in online writing instruction, leading to enhanced student engagement, improved writing

outcomes, and a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for L2 students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

1.8 Design of the study

The present study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other.

This study took place during the Spring 2020 semester (March to June) on a branch campus of an American university, George Mason University, in South Korea. As a result of the pandemic, the classes and peer feedback activities utilised in the study took place synchronously online through Zoom, a video conferencing platform. The study incorporated three distinct peer feedback activities, each activity serving as an integral step in the process of completing the respective major writing assignment. On assigned peer feedback days, the entire class session was exclusively devoted to the peer feedback activity, during which participants offered feedback on one group member's work. These activities occurred within breakout rooms, a function within the Zoom video conferencing platform where separate, smaller groups within the large class are created (Archibald et al., 2019). These small groups discussed a particular issue, with students collaborating with their designated static group members to provide feedback to a single peer. The peer feedback activity was carried out following clear guidance and instructions.

This study employs a mixed methods approach, with a slightly higher emphasis on qualitative (QUAL) data collection and analysis, while also incorporating quantitative (quan) methods. It aims to comprehensively examine how L2 students engage with peer feedback through a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches, centred around four research questions, each corresponding to a dimension of engagement: behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and social. The quantitative tools, including the questionnaire and the essays (peer feedback and revised essays), allowed for a statistical examination of engagement. The qualitative

analyses helped in enriching the understanding gained from the quantitative data. These data sources were selected and employed to explore and gain insights into the four research questions, each offering a unique perspective on how variations in transactional distance influence different aspects of student engagement with peer feedback. Consequently, the study was structured around four distinct research strands, each strand exploring one dimension of engagement exhibited by L2 students within an online peer feedback setting. These strands, which will be further elaborated in Chapter 6, are as follows:

Research Strand 1 aimed to answer Research Question 1 and address Propositions 4, 5, and 7. This strand focused on the behavioural dimension developed from the quantitative analysis of the essays (peer feedback and revised essays) and the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers and interviews, explored the behavioural dimension, centred on the observable actions of the students. This dimension involved examining the feedback students provided to their peers and, conversely, how they responded to the feedback they received. It sought to uncover patterns and behaviours that emerged during peer interactions, providing a deeper understanding of the active interaction between students in response to variations in transactional distance. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to explore this strand.

Research Strand 2 aimed to answer Research Question 2 and address Propositions 1, 2, and 3. This strand examined the emotional dimension focused on exploring the emotional dimension of peer feedback activities. This strand was developed based on the quantitative analysis of questionnaires and the qualitative analysis of reflection papers and interviews. The aim was to illuminate students' attitudes and emotional responses towards peer feedback activities, providing insights into how their feelings and perceptions influenced their engagement and experience with the peer feedback process. This strand uncovered the emotional dimensions of the students' experience, revealing how emotions shaped their engagement and responses within the context of online peer feedback. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to explore this strand.

Research Strand 3 aimed to answer Research Question 3 and address Propositions 4, 5, 7, and 8. This strand explored the cognitive dimension [derived from the quantitative analysis of essays derived from the quantitative analysis of essays (peer feedback and revised essays) and the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers and interviews, explored the cognitive dimension that students developed and employed while actively participating in online peer feedback activities. This strand aimed to understand the cognitive processes involved in student engagement and to explore the strategies students employed while offering feedback on their peers' work. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to explore this strand.

The final strand, Research Strand 4, aimed to answer Research Question 4 and address Propositions 1, 2, 3, and 6. This strand examined the social dimension explored the social dimension, focusing on the social interactions that developed among peers in an online learning environment. This strand drew insights from a quantitative questionnaire that observed changes over time and a qualitative analysis of reflection papers and interviews. This social dimension examined the relationships formed among students and how these interactions influenced their overall engagement with online peer feedback activities. The influence of peer interactions on student motivation and the quality of peer feedback were central components of this strand. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to explore this strand.

Table 1.1 illustrates the relationship between the study's research strands, research questions, propositions, dimensions of engagement, research methodology, and data sources.

Table 1.1

Research Design

| Research Strand | Research Question | Proposition | Dimension of Engagement | Method | Data Source |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | RQ1 | P4, P5, P7 | Behavioural | quan | Essays |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 2 | RQ2 | P1, P2, P3 | Emotional | quan | Questionnaires |

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|-----------|------|---------------------------------|
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 3 | RQ3 | P4, P5, P7, P8 | Cognitive | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Essays |
| 4 | RQ4 | P1, P2, P3, P6 | Social | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Questionnaires |

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This chapter, Chapter 1, introduces the study by presenting the background, research problem, aim, theoretical foundation, research questions, significance, and design of the study, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to the study's theoretical framework, including social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance. It also covers the literature related to the study's participants, such as L2 writers with Korean as an L1, the process writing approach, and peer feedback.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the study's theoretical framework. It discusses the instructor–researcher's perspective, foundational theories, factors influencing student engagement, proposed processes, and the study's eight propositions.

Chapter 4 explains the research methodology. This includes the research approach, methods for collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data, and how these data sets are integrated.

Chapter 5 reports on the study's quantitative results and analysis of the questionnaires and essays (peer feedback and revised essays), followed by the qualitative results and analysis of the interviews and reflection papers.

Chapter 6 presents the integrated findings for each of the four research strands. Discussion related the influence of culture and language on student engagement follows. Then three types of engagers are identified.

Chapter 7 concludes the study, informing how the study addressed the research problem and questions, the study's significance, implications, recommendations for educators and institutions on improving L2 students'

engagement with peer feedback in online writing courses, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

1.10 Overview

This chapter introduces a mixed-methods study that explores how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how students engage, interact, and respond to feedback. While the importance of peer feedback in educational settings is well-established, there is a need for further research on how L2 students engage with peer feedback in online learning environments. The increasing prevalence of online instruction highlights the necessity of understanding how students engage with peer feedback in this context.

The study aims to explore the influence of students' cultural backgrounds on their engagement in peer feedback activities, with a focus on the context of Korean culture. Additionally, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on the use of digital tools in education, particularly in the less-studied area of synchronous online learning.

The theoretical foundation of the study integrates social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance theories, which collectively form the basis for the study's theoretical framework. This framework guides the formulation of four research questions and eight propositions.

The research employs a mixed-methods design, with priority given to the qualitative data. The study was conducted during the Spring 2020 semester at a branch campus of a U.S. university in South Korea, with classes and peer feedback activities taking place synchronously online through Zoom. Data collection methods included questionnaires, essays (peer feedback and revised essays), reflection papers, and interviews.

Four research strands were developed to address four research questions and several propositions while exploring the behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of L2 student engagement with peer feedback in a synchronous online course at a branch campus of a U.S. university in South Korea. Each strand

utilised a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively examine how variations in transactional distance influence different aspects of student engagement in online peer feedback activities. The study aims to provide valuable insights for educators and institutions seeking to optimize the peer feedback process across various educational settings, including traditional in-person, asynchronous, and synchronous online environments.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The present study explores how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. Numerous studies have shown that peer feedback is beneficial, allowing students to enhance their knowledge and skills through both giving and receiving feedback (Huisman et al., 2018; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; van Popta et al., 2017; Wichmann et al., 2018; Wu & Schunn, 2020). The effective use of peer feedback can provide valuable insights into content and rhetorical concerns, improve cross-cultural communication, and promote a sense of togetherness among students (Hansen & Liu, 2005). While previous research has explored various aspects of peer feedback in the writing classroom, such as student perceptions (Bai & Hu, 2017), the influence of individual differences on L2 writing performance (Allen & Mills, 2016; Benson & DeKeyser, 2019; Shintani & Ellis, 2015; Wu et al., 2019), and the challenges and advantages linked to peer feedback (Zong et al., 2021a; Zong et al., 2021b), there has been relatively less focus on peer feedback within L2 university writing environments (Yu et al., 2019), particularly in the context of synchronous online writing courses. Moreover, understanding of how L2 students engage with the peer feedback process, and the various ways in which they engage with these activities and how these different ways of engaging interrelate, remains limited (Hu & Lam, 2010; Yu et al., 2019; Yu & Hu, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2014; Min, 2006). As technology continues to reshape traditional learning environments, it becomes increasingly necessary to understand how students engage with peer feedback activities within the context of online university writing classes (Peck, 2021), including synchronous online environments.

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the historical context, development, and theoretical framework of the present study. The initial emphasis of this review focuses on the literature relevant to the theoretical framework that forms the foundation for the study: social constructivism, student engagement, and

transactional distance. These theories provide the theoretical underpinnings for investigating the research questions and guiding the overall direction of the study. Subsequently, literature relevant to the participants of the study, L2 writers with Korean as an L1, the writing pedagogy employed in the course, process writing, and the central focus of the study, peer feedback, is reviewed.

2.2 Social constructivism

Social constructivism theory is a widely recognized learning theory that emphasizes the social nature of learning and knowledge construction (Akpan et al., 2020; Palincsar, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). According to the sociocultural perspective, individual cognition is the result of social interaction and specific cognitive structures and processes can be traced to social interactions (Palincsar, 1998). Advocates of social constructivist learning theory, exemplified by scholars such as Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), contend that learning and cognition are not solitary endeavours but are rather intricately linked to social interactions and the collaborative construction of knowledge (Palincsar, 1998). In the social constructivist view of learning, language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality (Palincsar, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning positions individual human subjects within social relationships and historical context (Anh & Marginson, 2013). Two primary themes in Vygotsky's seminal writings help clarify the interdependence between individual cognition and social process in the sociocultural view: higher mental functioning originates in the social world, and human cognition and action is mediated by tools and signs (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019).

At the core of the sociocultural view of learning is that all aspects of cognitive development are seen twice: first in the social world (i.e., interpsychological, between people) and later in the psychological world (i.e., intrapsychological, within the mind) (Silalahi, 2019). In the social world, through interacting with others, learners are exposed to new ideas and strategies. The products of these interactions are internalised as new learning (Adams, 2006; Silalahi, 2019). In the sociocultural

view, learning is the construction of knowledge which is best able to predict the socially agreed interpretation (Adams, 2006). Sociocultural constructivists view knowledge as first seen as a social phenomenon and later as an internal one (Adams, 2006; Silalahi, 2019). The second major theme in Vygotsky's writings elucidates how knowledge is constructed socially and then internalised. Vygotsky believed that all human action, both social and internal, is mediated by tools and signs: semiotics. These tools and signs include language, mathematics, works of art, concepts, and conventions. Among the diverse range of tools and signs employed in human cognition, Vygotsky regarded language as the primary one (Bodrova & Leong, 2024). Semiotics are the means by which knowledge is co-constructed in the social plane and then internalised to facilitate independent functioning in higher-order cognitive tasks (Lantolf et al., 2015). The use of semiotics also allows for the learner to benefit from the culturally obtained knowledge, in the form of artefacts, from past generations without reconstructing knowledge each time. Part of our cultural heritage are artefacts, the product of past knowledge construction. To benefit from this cultural heritage, the learner only needs to come to understand how to use the cultural artefact in future situations (Lantolf et al., 2015).

Vygotsky (1987) asserted that tools and signs go beyond being mere aids to human cognition; they play an essential role in mediating our interactions with the world (Jones, 2009; McLeod, 2014; Sawyer & Stetsenko, 2018). Our understanding of the world and our ability to engage with it hinge on the effective utilization of tools and signs. Among these tools, language takes centre stage as the primary means by which humans mediate their experiences in the world. Vygotsky emphasized the significance of language in transmitting cultural signs across generations and in upholding intellectual adaptability (Lantolf et al., 2015).

Vygotsky identified three distinct forms of speech: social speech, which involves external communication with others; private speech, commonly observed in children, which is directed inward for self-expression; and inner speech, a variant of private speech that becomes silent (Lantolf et al., 2015). Both private speech and inner speech fulfill a self-regulating function (Jones, 2009; McLeod, 2014).

Vygotsky (1987) outlined the concept that thought and speech are initially distinct systems but converge in the formation of inner speech, typically emerging around the age of three. This developmental phase sees thought and speech becoming interdependent: thoughts become verbal, and speech takes on a representational role. It is through inner speech that higher cognitive functioning occurs and develops.

Both private speech and inner speech are not mere coincidences during skill acquisition; they serve as vital tools in this developmental process (McLeod, 2014; Vygotsky, 1987). Multiple studies have demonstrated a correlation between children's use of private speech and their task performance (Lantolf et al., 2015). This speech occurs particularly during challenging moments, helping them articulate and guide their actions (Jones, 2009; McLeod, 2014).

Private and inner speech are related to the social environment. Children from environments with higher levels of social interaction develop private speech earlier and use it more, peaking between ages three and four. As children grow older, private speech tends to decrease while inner speech develops (Jones, 2009; Lantolf et al., 2015; McLeod, 2014). This shift from private to inner speech may be related to the internalization of cognitive processes as children mature, but the exact mechanisms of this transition are still subject to research and debate.

Social constructivists influenced by Vygotsky have emphasized the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. It is through social interaction with more competent others and peers that the individual can accomplish what was previously impossible for them. Through social interaction, individuals can advance beyond their current level of skill or knowledge through modelled behaviors of others and direct verbal instruction.

Private and inner speech are important aspects of cognitive development, and they may play a role in how individuals process and internalise information gained from social interactions. However, the precise relationship between these forms of speech and an individual's ability to improve their skills is complex and not necessarily a direct cause-and-effect relationship. These forms of speech may be

tools that individuals use as they work within what Vygotsky termed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area between what a learner can do without help and what they can do with guidance from a skilled partner (Lantolf et al., 2015).

2.2.1 Social constructivist pedagogy

Transforming social constructivist theory into effective pedagogical practice presented challenges. Adams (2006) outlined five guiding principles to help guide social constructivist pedagogy:

1. *Focus on learning not performance.* Pedagogy with a learning orientation sees the importance of keeping the student as the locus of control.

2. *Learners are active co-constructors of meaning and knowledge.* The student and another, often a teacher, engage in a process of co-construction of knowledge (Silcock, 2003).

3. *Teachers as learning guides not instructors.* The social constructivist-oriented teacher acts as a facilitator, providing students with opportunities to construct knowledge; they act as an organiser and source of information (Adams, 2006). Activities are student centred, context rich, and enable authentic experiences (Jonassen, 1994; Rice & Wilson, 1999).

4. *Learners should be engaged in tasks seen as ends in themselves.* Silcock (2003) nicely summed up this principle: “A ‘true’ education is exactly that where learners grasp what is worthwhile for its own sake rather than as means to other ends (such as passing tests or hitting learning targets)” (p. 50). The idea of *common knowledge*, connecting school activities to the learners’ broader world has been proposed as one way to provide learners with meaningful activities (Easen & Bolden, 2005). Research suggests that tasks which bridge the gap between school and the learner’s broader world are more likely to transfer to the student’s social world outside of school, thus becoming more meaningful for the learner (Bereiter, 1997).

5. *Assessment is an active process.* Social constructivists make a distinction between assessment of learning (summative assessment) and assessment for learning (formative assessment). The latter keeps with the social constructive

approach of focusing on the learning process rather than the outcome. Adams (2006) proposed three assessment issues for the social constructivist-oriented instructor.

As proposed by Adams (2006), the first of these principles is related to Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD—essentially the difference between what a learner can do independently and what can be achieved with the support of a knowledgeable other. From this perspective, assessment is viewed as a dynamic component of both teaching and learning. In the social interaction between a teacher and a learner, knowledge is co-constructed. During this process, teachers not only impart knowledge but also have the opportunity to evaluate where the learner stands within the ZPD and how they can be best guided (Adams, 2006). The second involves taking advantage of the conversational requirement of inter-psychological knowledge creation. Through *instructional conversations*, assessment can access the learner's implicit theories and perspectives. By gaining insight into what might otherwise remain hidden, the teacher can assess the learner's progress in comparison to earlier stages of the learning process (Adams, 2006). Finally, instead of employing traditional assessments that merely identify correctness or errors, the social constructivist educator engages in ongoing assessment of learning and teaching. This approach enables the instructor to steer the learning process in productive directions (Adams, 2006).

The discussion above aimed to clarify the theoretical and practical dimensions of social constructivism. Foremost, social constructivism is an epistemological theory explaining the intricate connections between teaching, learning, and knowledge creation. It is grounded in specific philosophical assumptions. Epistemologically, social constructivism regards knowledge as an intrapersonal construct intricately linked to its social context, assuming that understanding is actively built through social interaction and experiences. Ontologically, it posits that reality is subjective and socially constructed, with multiple valid interpretations coexisting. Axiologically, social constructivism values diverse perspectives, collaborative meaning-making, and the co-creation of knowledge between learners and educators. These

assumptions necessitate a reimagining of the teacher–student relationship and how knowledge is formed within educational contexts. By acknowledging these underlying philosophical stances, we can better understand how social constructivism shapes approaches to teaching and learning.

2.2.1.1 Research on social constructivist pedagogy applied to L2 writing

Research conducted in both traditional and online learning settings has demonstrated that peer interaction plays a significant role in enriching the learning experience, as it fosters the active construction of knowledge and the negotiation of meaning. The social constructivist movement triggered a transformation in the perspectives of educators and researchers regarding writing. It shifted the focus from viewing writing as an individually created product to recognizing it as a socially constructed process (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008). According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), one of constructivism's most substantial contributions to education lies in the shift from considering knowledge as a static product to understanding it as a dynamic process. They refer to this transition as moving from *knowledge telling to knowledge transforming*. This perspective is further supported by Paavola and Hakkarainen (2005), who emphasize the importance of social processes and collaborative activities in creating and developing new knowledge, representing a shift from the traditional view of learning as acquiring existing knowledge towards a more dynamic, collaborative, and creative process of knowledge transformation and creation.

Cotterall and Cohen (2003) demonstrated that, through scaffolding and a social constructivist approach, L2 writers are able to assume control over their writing. L2 writers taking ownership of their writing plays an important role in fostering critical thinking and transitioning from mere imitation to knowledge creation (McKinley, 2015). However, as mentioned previously, the ability to take ownership of the text is not universally practised.

In a study involving 23 adult L2 learners and utilizing a social constructivist approach, Storch (2005) found that learners who engaged in collaborative writing

produced texts that were more effective in meeting the task objectives and exhibited greater grammatical accuracy and complexity. She further argued that a social constructivist-informed approach played a critical role in the development of the collaborative stages of the writing process.

Abbasi et al. (2006) employed a social constructivist perspective in their examination of how five L2 graduate students perceived the development of their identities as writers. Their research found that adopting a social constructivist approach enabled the learners to better develop a sense of their identity as writers. This approach facilitated the expression of their individual perspectives and the creation of knowledge, rather than merely transmitting the ideas of others.

Hung and Hyun (2010) used a social constructivist lens to investigate seven East Asian doctoral students attending a large U.S. university as they attempted to move from an East Asian to a Western epistemological system. The authors found that the participants had difficulty working in the contextual framework of their new environment and needed added support early on. Consequently, Hung and Hyun (2010) proposed that further research utilizing a social constructivist approach was necessary to gain insights into how students could effectively navigate between different academic traditions.

McKinley (2015) used a social constructivist approach to examine the relationship between cultural practices, writer identity, critical thinking, and the influence of sociocultural values on academic discourse. His research revealed that adopting a social constructivist perspective for the analysis of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing allowed for a deeper understanding of this connection. He demonstrated how awareness of sociocultural norms within academic discourse shapes the processes of critical thinking. Furthermore, he emphasized that the development of critical thinking abilities is closely linked to a writer's identity aligning with the cultural norms of English academic writing. In addition, McKinley (2015) identified four key areas where the shift to a social constructivist-informed approach had an impact on L2 writers: ownership of writing, collaborative learning, identity construction, and intercultural learning experiences.

2.2.2 Summary

This section outlines the theoretical framework of social constructivism, primarily based on Vygotsky's theories, and its application in L2 writing pedagogy. In L2 writing, the social constructivist approach has transformed the understanding of writing from an individual product to a socially constructed process. Studies demonstrate the effectiveness of peer interaction and collaborative writing in L2 learning, highlighting the transition from *knowledge telling* to *knowledge transforming*. Researchers have shown that a social constructivist approach aids in developing writer identity, critical thinking, and ownership of writing (McKinley, 2015; Storch, 2005).

However, gaps remain in understanding how students navigate between different learning experiences and cultures (Hung & Hyun, 2010). Consequently, there is a need for further research into the interplay of cultural practices, writer identity, and critical thinking within social constructivist frameworks in L2 writing.

2.3 Student engagement

Student engagement has garnered increasing attention in educational literature, acknowledged as crucial for successful learning (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Manwaring et al., 2017; Zhoc et al., 2019) and the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Boulton et al., 2018; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Empirical research consistently establishes a strong correlation between engagement and academic performance and achievement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Nguyen, 2017; Salamonson et al., 2009), as well as between engagement and student retention (Krause & Coates, 2008; Tight, 2020). Trowler and Trowler (2010) assert that the significance of student engagement is widely accepted and no longer a matter of debate. However, despite its recognized importance, the concept of engagement remains complex and subject to multiple theories and perspectives (Han & Hyland, 2015; Tian & Zhou, 2020).

The literature reflects that student engagement is multidimensional (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004). It is a meta-

construct that aligns diverse strands of research attempting to explain student success (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013) and has been likened to blind men describing an elephant, highlighting its multifaceted nature (Baron & Corbin, 2012; Eccles, 2016). While the importance of student engagement is widely unquestioned (Trowler & Trowler, 2010), its precise definition is still evolving (Zepke & Leach, 2010). A review of the literature reveals a lack of consensus on how to define and measure student engagement.

Researchers have provided various definitions for student engagement (Bond et al., 2020; Zenouzagh et al., 2023). This lack of consensus stems from diverse understandings (Zepke, 2018) and the diversity of research contexts and focuses (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Christenson et al., 2012). Fredricks et al. (2004) describe it as a "multi-dimensional construct of motivation that includes three interrelated components: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive" (p. 305), a definition supported by Abassi et al. (2006), who emphasize that these dimensions should be considered when examining student engagement. Similarly, Dincer et al. (2019) define it as students' active participation, involvement, and emotional connection in the learning process. Nguyen (2019) sees it as students' behaviour and their psychological connections with education. Reeve et al. (2004) focus on students' attention, interest, and self-confidence during learning. Sinatra et al. (2015) conceptualize it as the degree of involvement, connection, and integration in social and academic collegiate experiences.

Similarly, the research reveals a lack of consensus on how to measure student engagement (Han & Hyland, 2015; Zenouzagh et al., 2023; Zhoc et al., 2019). Although many studies use surveys or questionnaires to assess engagement (Zenouzagh et al., 2023), numerous researchers have developed rubrics and instruments for this purpose (Assunção et al., 2020; Dixon, 2015; Fredricks et al., 2011; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Kember & Leung, 2009; Maroco et al., 2016; Schindler et al., 2017). These instruments typically measure students' general engagement rather than engagement in specific subject areas (Abassi et al., 2006). Some of these instruments focus on only one or two dimensions of engagement

(Appleton et al., 2006; Kember & Leung, 2009), while others employ a twofold model that recognizes behavioural and emotional dimensions of engagement (van Uden et al., 2013). This twofold model reflects students' active participation in classroom activities and their sense of belonging to educational institutions. Many instruments rely on self-reported data through surveys and questionnaires (Kuh, 2003).

Other scholarship theorizes the construct of student engagement as comprising three separate but inter-reliant dimensions: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive (Ellis, 2010; Fredricks et al., 2004; Jung & Lee, 2018; Kahu, 2013; Luan et al., 2020). These dimensions are interconnected, together forming a single compound construct (Abassi et al., 2006). Fredricks et al. (2004) describe student engagement as a multidimensional construct that integrates these aspects in a meaningful way. Similarly, Zhang and Hyland (2018) view student engagement with peer feedback through a three-dimensional model that includes behavioural, affective, and cognitive dimensions.

Recent scholarship has identified four dimensions of student engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Philip & Duchesne, 2016). Notably, Philip and Duchesne (2016) developed a task engagement model for an L2 learning environment that includes these dimensions. Under this model, behavioural engagement is evidenced by persistence in task-related actions and on-task communication; emotional engagement is expressed through emotions like enthusiasm, interest, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, apprehension, and frustration; cognitive engagement involves sustained attention and mental processes; and social engagement refers to the level of interaction and reciprocal exchanges among students during tasks. For this study, student engagement is defined as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses these four dimensions (Philip & Duchesne, 2016). The theoretical framework for this study utilises these dimensions.

2.3.1 Dimensions of engagement

The theoretical framework detailed in Chapter 3 that underpins this study reflects four dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social.

2.3.1.1 Behavioural dimension

The first dimension of student engagement is behavioural engagement, which is the most widely held perspective of student engagement in the literature. In the learning environment, this dimension encompasses activities such as participating in interactions and communications and asking questions (Zenouzagh et al., 2023). The behavioural perspective emerged in the 1990s as a response to limitations in college ranking systems, aiming to develop tools for assessing higher education effectiveness (Kuh, 2009). This view considers engagement as a complex construct influenced by institutional practices and student behaviours, crucial for shaping satisfaction and achievement. Key components include the time spent on learning activities, both social and academic integration, and the quality of teaching practices (Kahu, 2013).

In writing pedagogy, behavioural engagement is evident through students' revising actions in response to the feedback and the strategies they use to improve the quality of writing (Han & Hyland, 2015; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Behavioural engagement with peer feedback manifests as students performing revisions triggered by peers or themselves, employing strategies to address peer feedback, improve texts, and inform future writing (Yu et al., 2019). Allen and Mills (2016) noted a significant difference in peer feedback uptake between students with varying English-language proficiency levels, observing that those with lower proficiency levels incorporated considerably less meaning-related feedback compared to their higher proficiency peers. Wu and Schunn (2021) found that students providing more feedback demonstrated better learning performance in subsequent writing assignments. Carless and Boud (2018) emphasize the importance of developing students' feedback literacy to enhance their engagement with feedback processes

2.3.1.2 Emotional dimension

Emotional engagement is the second dimension of student engagement. It refers to learners' emotional reactions during the learning process, such as feelings of interest, happiness, anxiety, and anger (Abassi et al., 2006; Soffer & Cohen, 2019). This dimension extends to the extent learners demonstrate genuine involvement in their education (Astin, 1984; Davis & Taylor, 2019; Schunk & Mullen, 2012) and their attitude toward their peers, classes, and institution (Zhang, 2020). Emotional engagement also highlights the impact of intrinsic motivation, often associated with more positive emotions like enjoyment, interest, and trust (Kahu, 2013).

Emotional engagement significantly influences the other dimensions of student engagement, shaped by students' subjective perceptions or attitudes during activities (Abassi et al., 2006). It correlates with educational outcomes such as academic achievement, persistence, satisfaction, and sense of community (Conrad & Openo, 2018; Filak & Sheldon, 2008; Hughes et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2008; Ladd & Dinella, 2009; Wang & Degol, 2014) and affects students' perspectives on educational settings, individuals, learning activities, and their involvement (Hiver et al., 2021). Linnenbrink-Garcia et al. (2016) propose a model that integrates emotional engagement with self-regulated learning, emphasizing the role of emotions in students' motivation and learning strategies.

In the context of peer feedback, emotional engagement involves students' emotional responses, which can influence their enthusiasm and interest (Kahu, 2013; Mahfoodh, 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Positive emotional engagement during this process is linked to improved writing performance (Latifi et al., 2021). Hu and Lam (2010) found that postgraduate Chinese students enrolled in L2 academic writing classes at a Singaporean university highly valued peer feedback as aligning with their cultural norms and noted a statistical association between feedback incorporation and improved writing skills in revised drafts. Zheng et al. (2020) highlight the importance of creating a supportive and collaborative environment to foster positive emotional engagement in peer feedback activities.

2.3.1.3 Cognitive dimension

Cognitive engagement is the third dimension of student engagement. It involves the mental efforts students exert to acquire complex knowledge or develop specific skills (Abassi et al., 2023; Zenouzagh et al., 2023) and their psychological investment in learning, understanding, and mastering skills (Kahu, 2013). This dimension typically involves a student's self-regulation and use of learning strategies, such as participating in interactions and communications and asking questions (Dincer et al., 2019; Zhang, 2020; Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Cognitive engagement also directly and positively influences academic achievement (Abassi et al., 2006) and is recognized for its strategic and deliberate application of effort to comprehend complex ideas (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020).

In writing pedagogy, cognitive engagement refers to how students address received feedback cognitively (Ellis, 2010). It includes the cognitive processes used to process peer feedback and generate revisions, as well as the metacognitive processes regulating the mental effort in processing this feedback (Yu et al., 2019). Tian and Zhou (2020) studied 125 secondary school students in the U.S., focusing on how learners implement feedback. They found that undergraduate students demonstrated enhanced critical thinking skills and improved learning performance in writing due to engaging with peer feedback.

2.3.1.4 Social dimension

Social engagement, the fourth and final dimension of student engagement, refers to the relationships that students develop with their peers, teachers, and the institution, encompassing a sense of belonging and connection (Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Chen et al. (2023) describe it as the social relationships among students, evident through mutual engagement and reciprocal communication. Philp and Duchesne (2016) note that during active social interactions, students listen to one another, draw from each other's expertise and ideas, and provide feedback. The National Research Council (2003) defines social engagement as involving a

student's sense of belonging at school, feelings of connectedness and acceptance with peers, quality interaction with faculty, and acceptance of the educational process.

Research on social engagement evolved from studies on its opposite, alienation, which often focused on institutional biases favouring dominant groups and how these practices alienate certain students (Mann, 2001; Thomas, 2002). Chapman (2003) found that disaffected students tend to exhibit boredom, depression, or anger in class, while Kim et al. (2020) observed such students as withdrawn and occasionally confrontational with teachers. Hu and Hui (2012) link social isolation and a lack of understanding of educational goals to students' ineffective functioning. This perspective of student engagement provides important insights as to why students may become engaged or alienated in higher education settings, with particular emphasis on non-traditional students. This perspective underscores the importance of understanding how university culture and student support structures influence engagement, particularly for non-traditional students (Kahu, 2013). Zepke (2018) argues for a holistic approach to student engagement that considers the social and cultural contexts in which learning takes place.

In the peer feedback process, social engagement involves the social dynamics between students, characterized by mutuality and reciprocity (Philip & Duchesne, 2016). Storch (2002) focused on measuring equality and mutuality in peer interactions in a language learning classroom to understand how students engage with tasks and each other's input. Yu and Lee (2016) highlight the importance of establishing trust and rapport among peers to facilitate effective feedback exchanges and social engagement. They argue that a supportive and collaborative learning environment encourages students to actively participate in peer feedback activities and fosters a sense of community.

Furthermore, Zhao (2018) investigated the role of social engagement in online peer feedback activities and found that students who actively participated in discussions and provided constructive feedback to their peers demonstrated higher levels of engagement and achieved better learning outcomes. The study emphasizes

the importance of designing peer feedback activities that promote social interaction and collaboration among students.

2.3.2 Summary

The literature underscores the importance of student engagement in successful learning and academic achievement, describing it as a meta-construct that aligns various research strands. Yet, its definition is elusive and multifaceted, covering behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. Despite a range of theoretical models, from dual-dimensional to comprehensive frameworks, significant gaps and challenges remain.

One notable gap is the lack of empirical studies that integrate all four dimensions—behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social—in diverse educational settings, particularly in the context of writing pedagogy and peer feedback. This suggests a need for comprehensive research to understand how these dimensions interact in different learning contexts. Philp and Duchesne's (2016) task engagement model for L2 learning environments provides a framework for examining these four dimensions in specific educational contexts.

Additionally, there is no consensus on how to measure student engagement. Most existing instruments and rubrics focus on general rather than subject-specific engagement and often cover only one or two dimensions. The predominance of self-reported data and surveys also raises concerns about the reliability and validity of these measures, pointing to a need for strong, multi-dimensional assessment tools.

However, operationalising student engagement remains challenging. Many studies in this field may be affected by methodological limitations such as short data collection periods risking novelty bias, lack of long-term follow-up, and potential positive reporting bias. Moreover, catering to classes with specific characteristics, such as L2 students, presents difficulties as individual students may find different aspects engaging or appealing, as evidenced by studies showing variations in peer feedback uptake based on language proficiency levels.

Recent research highlights the importance of considering emotional and social factors in peer feedback, as they can significantly influence students' engagement and learning experiences. Studies have shown that positive emotional engagement during peer feedback is linked to improved writing performance, and social engagement in online peer feedback activities correlates with better learning outcomes.

In sum, while the current literature on student engagement is extensive, it lacks a comprehensive integration of its dimensions, consensus on measurement techniques, and a deeper understanding of the roles of emotional and social engagement in learning processes. There is also a need for more comprehensive, replicable studies that address methodological limitations and consider the specific characteristics of student populations, such as shared L2 backgrounds. The present study aims to address some of these gaps by examining the interplay of the four dimensions of student engagement within the specific context of an online, multilingual writing classroom in South Korea, focusing on peer feedback processes. By adopting a multidimensional approach and considering the nuances of peer feedback in L2 writing, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive and contextualised understanding of student engagement and its impact on learning outcomes in writing pedagogy.

2.4 Transactional distance

Transactional distance is a key concept in the field of distance education, which Moore and Kearsley (2012) define as “teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies, as well as special institutional organization” (p. 2). This theory addresses the psychological or communicative space that separates instructors and students in the transaction between them, particularly in structured or planned learning situations (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The present study examines how distance is formed and crossed when students are separated by time and distance during online peer feedback activities in a synchronous online writing course.

Transactional distance theory provides a framework to understand and analyse the learning relationship between instructor and student in online learning environments, where substantial physical and/or temporal distances are involved.

Distance education, dating back to the 1880s with instruction delivered by mail, is currently in its fifth generation (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Initially termed 'correspondence study', the first generation of distance education evolved into what is now also known as online learning, web-based learning, e-learning, computer-assisted instruction, and Internet-based learning. These modalities utilise Internet platforms to deliver instruction electronically. The fifth generation, emerging in the late 1990s, leverages intelligent technologies for recording conversations and enabling reusability through automated response systems (Asaqli, 2020; Johnson, 2021; Tzafilkou et al., 2021).

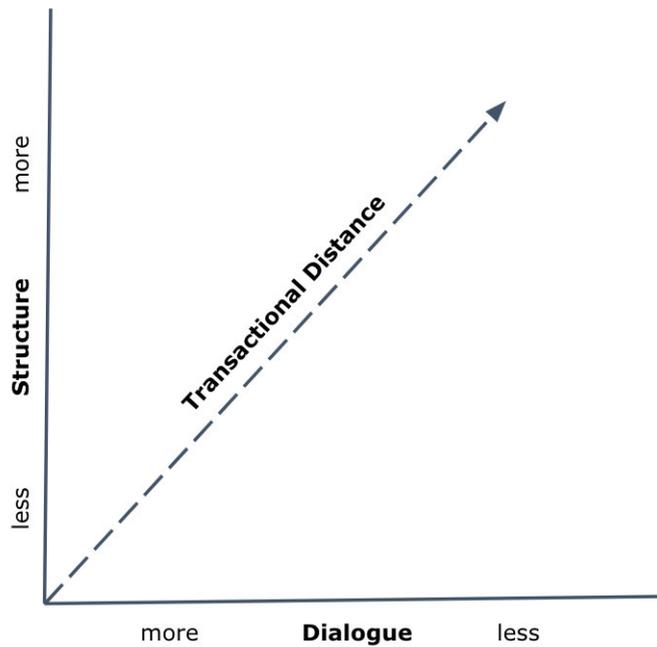
Scholarship in this field highlights the relationship between student engagement and retention, with an emerging interest in facilitating interaction to increase engagement (Peck, 2021). Although the field of online writing instruction predominantly utilises asynchronous instruction as its primary modality, there has been a growing interest among institutions and writing programs to investigate the potential benefits of utilizing synchronous modalities (Peck, 2021). This shift assumes that synchronous instruction offers increased immediacy, fostering a stronger sense of social presence between instructors and students (Mick & Middlebrook, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, prompting many instructors to adopt synchronous platforms like Zoom and Blackboard Ultra to maintain educational continuity and simulate face-to-face interaction (Peck, 2021).

The theory of transactional distance, first articulated by Moore (1972) and later refined, describes the communicative and psychological space between students and teachers in distance education. This space, influenced by the environment, individuals, and behavioural patterns, is where the transaction occurs, potentially leading to misunderstandings as well as opportunities for reflection and understanding (Moore, 1997; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Shearer & Park, 2019).

Central to this theory are the concepts of dialogue, structure, and autonomy. Transactional distance is influenced by the interaction among these elements; more dialogue and less structure reduce distance, while more structure and less dialogue increase it (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). For example, a course characterized by rigid organization may diminish the richness of interaction and the feeling of learner independence, consequently heightening students' perception of transactional distance. Nonetheless, Moore (1997) suggests that if the structure of a course falls below a certain level (although the precise threshold remains unspecified), it could paradoxically amplify the sense of transactional distance, mainly due to the risk of learner perplexity or discontent. Autonomy affects the necessary levels of dialogue and structure, shaping the educational experience (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Shearer & Park, 2019). As illustrated in Figure 2.1, this dynamic interplay determines the degree of transactional distance at any point in a course, emphasizing the crucial role of communication in reducing perceived distances in distance education.

Figure 2.1

Dialogue and Structure Determine Transactional Distance

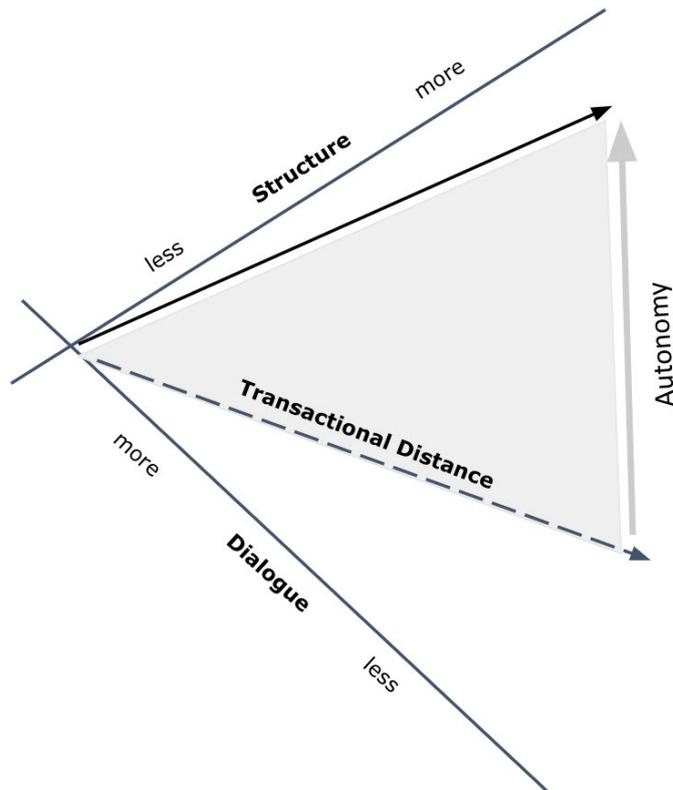


Note. Adapted from M. Moore & G. Kearsley (2012) in *Distance education: A systems view of online learning* (3rd ed.).

Similarly, Figure 2.2 depicts how transactional distance and the required levels of dialogue and structure are influenced by learner autonomy (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Shearer & Park, 2019).

Figure 2.2

Autonomy and Transactional Distance



Note. Adapted from EDEN (2006) as cited in L. M. Imakando (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on Student Learning at Blessings University of Excellence (BLUE).

The following sections detail the variables dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy, as they relate to the theory of transactional theory.

2.4.1 Dialogue

Dialogue is a key variable in the study of transactional distance theory. Moore (1997) preferred the term “dialogue” over “interaction” because it implies a more meaningful quality in the exchange: “Dialogue has a synergistic character, as each party in the exchange builds upon comments of the other. In dialogue, each party is a respectful and active listener; each is a contributor and builds on the contributions of the other party or parties” (p. 26). Dialogue describes interactions that are purposeful, constructive, and valued by each participant. The level of dialogue is

influenced by educational philosophy, course design, the personalities of the teacher and student, subject matter, and communication medium (Moore, 1997).

Historically, distance education utilised television, radio, videos, audio tapes, or traditional mail, which limited the type and amount of dialogue. Traditional mail facilitated teacher-to-student dialogue but was delayed and did not support student-to-student interaction. Other early communication technologies primarily supported one-way dialogue from teacher to student (Moore, 1997). However, as Internet communication evolved, course designers began incorporating synchronous dialogues among teachers and students, fostering knowledge creation in the constructivist tradition (Shearer & Park, 2019). Modern conferencing platforms like Zoom and Blackboard Ultra have expanded this to a multilateral dialogue that includes multiple students (Bornt, 2011).

2.4.2 Structure

Structure is the second variable in the study of the theory of transactional distance. As Moore (1993) explains, structure refers to the flexibility of a program's educational objectives, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods in meeting individual student needs. The level of structure is often dictated by the course delivery method. For instance, massive online open courses (MOOC) typically use pre-recorded videos due to the asynchronous nature of the course and large student numbers, resulting in a high level of structure with rigidly predetermined activities. Conversely, synchronous courses delivered over video conferencing, such as the courses used in the present study, tend to have a lower level of structure. Additionally, the level of structure can be influenced by course content and objectives. For example, courses designed to certify medical professionals often require a high level of structure to ensure specific information and procedures are conveyed accurately. In contrast to a course in literature or composition, where individual expression and knowledge creation is valued, inviting a low level of structure.

2.4.3 Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy is the third and final variable in the theory of transactional distance. Moore's (1972) definition of autonomy, derived from Carl Roger's (1902–1987) view of learner autonomy, emphasizes that “Learner autonomy is the extent to which in the teaching/learning relationship it is the student rather than the teacher who determines the goals, the learning experiences, and the evaluation decisions of the learning program” (Moore, 1997, p. 6). Moore (1972) described the autonomous learner as someone who seeks teacher guidance as needed for formulating problems, gathering information, and assessing progress, without relinquishing control over the learning process.

Moore (1997) also noted that autonomy varies among learners and across different courses. The level of transactional distance in a course can influence its appeal based on a student's autonomy level. Courses with low structure and high dialogue—indicating low transactional distance—may appeal more to students less confident in managing their own learning, as these settings allow for adjustments through dialogue with instructors. Conversely, more autonomous learners may prefer courses with high transactional distance, characterised by high structure and low dialogue, as they are comfortable seeking resources and making decisions independently (Moore, 1997).

2.4.4 Research on synchronous online learning

Synchronous online learning has become a common instructional approach and a focus of research in higher education, allowing geographically separated learners to interact with instructors and peers in real-time (Wang et al., 2023). This distinctive feature was quickly adopted by course instructors during the COVID-19 pandemic to emulate classroom experiences (Guo, 2020; McArthur, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). However, some research reflects engagement can be more challenging in synchronous settings than asynchronous learning environments, due to its lack of flexibility in time, pace, and duration (Park & Bonk, 2007). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation was seen to be further aggravated by increased stress and

anxiety brought about by pandemic-related measures (Kee, 2021), technical hindrances faced by learners (Bedenlier et al., 2020), and undue distractions from home environments (Baxter & Hainey, 2023).

Several studies have highlighted problems with engagement in synchronous online learning, commonly identifying lower engagement levels compared to physical classroom lessons (Fabriz et al., 2021; Serhan, 2020) and learners' preference for face-to-face learning when given a choice (Baxter & Hainey, 2023). As the pandemic made online learning the "de facto" mode of learning, maintaining a sustained level of engagement in synchronous online learning has become crucial (Baxter & Hainey, 2023; Kurt et al., 2022).

Instructors who simply apply strategies from physical classrooms, such as using body language to engage students, often find these methods ineffective in a synchronous online learning environment due to small window sizes and the inability to see instructors and learners in full body view. Online instructors therefore need to apply additional strategies more suitable for synchronous online learning (Heilporn et al., 2021). Although studies on synchronous online learning strategies were conducted at the beginning of the pandemic, no promising results were observed, mainly because instructors and learners were not well-prepared to work in the face of COVID-19. Furthermore, many researchers of these studies were not practitioners (e.g., Chiu, 2021; Khlaif et al., 2021; Kurt et al., 2022) and relied on surveys or interviews with instructors and/or learners rather than applying engagement strategies themselves. Thus, while the use of synchronous online learning has become more prevalent, additional research related to synchronous online learning and engagement is needed.

2.4.5 Summary

The theory of transactional distance is a key concept in distance education, describing the psychological or communicative space between instructors and students (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Recent interest in synchronous online learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has underscored the relevance of this

theory, with platforms like Zoom and Blackboard Ultra facilitating online instruction as an alternative to traditional classrooms (Guo, 2020; McArthur, 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

Synchronous online learning presents distinct challenges, including fixed scheduling requirements (Park & Bonk, 2007), pandemic-related stress (Kee, 2021), technical issues (Bedenlier et al., 2020), and home environment distractions (Baxter & Hainey, 2023). While some studies suggest lower engagement in synchronous online versus physical classroom settings (Fabrizz et al., 2021; Serhan, 2020), these findings may not account for course design quality or teaching effectiveness. Although students in some studies report preferring face-to-face learning (Baxter & Hainey, 2023), this preference could reflect inadequate online course design rather than inherent limitations of the format.

Instructors need to employ strategies specifically tailored to synchronous online learning environments, as traditional classroom methods may prove ineffective (Heilporn et al., 2021). While some studies have investigated synchronous online learning strategies during the pandemic, results have been inconclusive, largely due to the unpreparedness of instructors and learners, as well as the reliance on surveys and interviews rather than the direct application of engagement strategies (Chiu, 2021; Khlaif et al., 2021; Kurt et al., 2022).

Transactional distance theory remains essential for understanding the dynamics of distance education, especially in online settings. Nonetheless, gaps persist in research on synchronous online learning and the facilitation of peer discussions in online classrooms. Addressing these gaps could enhance instructional strategies and online learning environments, promoting meaningful engagement and effective learning outcomes. Thus, despite the increased employment of synchronous online learning, additional research related to synchronous online learning and engagement is needed.

2.5 Second-language writers

Seminal research in the field of L2 writing pedagogy can be traced to the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Connor, 1996; Ferris, 1995; Ferris, 1997; Hyland, 2019; Leki, 1992; Long, 1983; Matsuda, 1997; Silva, 1992; Silva, 1993). Although much of the research and many methods informing L2 writing pedagogy originate from work with L1 writers, the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) writing has been recognized since the 1970s, with several theories developed to help educators understand L2 writing and learning (Hyland, 2019). Despite the prevalence of L2 writing, Silva (1993) noted, "There exists, at present, no coherent, comprehensive theory of L2 writing" (p. 668). Although the differences between L1 and L2 writers are generally acknowledged today, this sentiment remains largely true (Hyland, 2019).

The participants in this study are multilingual Korean students who speak Korean as their first language (L1) and English as their second language (L2).

2.5.1 Differences between L1 and L2 writers

While there are significant similarities between L1 and L2 writers, notable differences are highlighted by several researchers (Eckstein & Ferris, 2018; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014; Silva, 1993). Canale and Swain (1980) delineated four dimensions essential for writing competency relevant to both L1 and L2 writers: grammatical competence (understanding of grammar and lexicon), discourse competence (awareness of genre and rhetorical patterns), sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of language use across different contexts), and strategic competence (use of various communicative strategies). These competencies underscore the complex social and linguistic skills involved in writing, presenting L2 writers with challenges that often surpass those encountered by L1 writers.

These factors—linguistic differences, cultural variances, and different expectations—are essential to understanding the specific challenges faced by L2 writers. They not only have to navigate the complexities of acquiring new language

skills but also must adjust to different rhetorical, educational, and cultural environments, each demanding distinct approaches to writing and communication.

2.5.2 *Linguistic differences*

The most apparent difference between L1 and L2 writers is language proficiency. L2 writers with an Asian L1 are sometimes perceived as poor students because of their writing skills, despite often performing well on tests like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL; Carson et al., 1990; Connor, 1996). L1 writers have access to an extensive vocabulary and an intuitive understanding of syntax and grammar. While composing in an L1 may still pose challenges, L1 writers can generally convey exactly what they intend to say. In contrast, L2 writers are often simultaneously learning the language and how to write in it.

Research shows that L1 and L2 texts differ significantly in aspects like cohesion, organization, and discourse modes (Hinkel, 2011; Juzwik et al., 2006; Leki et al. 2008; Silva, 1993). L2 writers tend to produce texts that are weaker, shorter, and less complex than those of L1 students. They also exhibit fewer words, more frequent word repetition, and less lexical sophistication (Crossley & McNamara, 2009; Staples & Reppen, 2016). Additionally, L2 writers make more syntactic and lexical errors, including verb, preposition, article, and noun errors (Doolan & Miller, 2012). These linguistic challenges underscore the need for tailored educational strategies to support L2 writers effectively, yet many educational settings fall short of providing adequate support, leaving L2 students to navigate these challenges on their own (Ferris et al., 2015; Matsuda et al., 2013). This discrepancy in educational support highlights the urgent need for institutions to take proactive steps in recognizing and addressing the distinctive needs of L2 writers.

Eckstein and Ferris (2018) undertook a study evaluating the language needs of L2 students in a mixed First-Year Composition (FYC) program, utilizing a mixed-methods approach. Analysis of their empirical study revealed that L1 writers generally achieved higher holistic scores, which measure the effectiveness of language use, compared to L2 students. Specifically, L2 writers exhibited a higher

frequency of errors across various linguistic dimensions, including verbs, nouns, sentence structure, word choice, and word form, although they did not differ from L1 writers in syntactic complexity, lexical density, and lexical sophistication. The study also found differences in lexical variety, particularly in verb variation, where L2 students showed less variability compared to their L1 counterparts. Furthermore, L2 students were less likely to have received substantial or effective grammar instruction before college and were less likely to successfully transfer such instruction to their writing. These factors contributed to L2 students expressing lower confidence in their understanding and control of linguistic features compared to L1 students.

2.5.3 Cultural differences

In addition to linguistic differences, cultural differences significantly impact an L2 student's writing, particularly for students from culturally distinct backgrounds such as South Korea. In Confucian cultures, such as Korean culture, hierarchy, social harmony, collectivism and respect for elders are stressed (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). Similarly, students from these cultures may have a fear of losing face (Lee, 2008). Atkinson (2016) emphasizes that culture, despite being complex to consider, plays a salient role in L2 writing due to its influence on how individuals perceive and interact with the world. This complexity reflects the lack of consensus on a definition of culture within Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics, yet there is broad recognition of its importance in shaping writing practices (Atkinson, 2016).

Culture profoundly shapes perceptions, as Samovar et al. (2015) defined it as the process of interpreting one's surroundings to construct reality. This influence is particularly strong in high-context cultures such as South Korea, where communication relies heavily on shared cultural knowledge. This can affect how students engage with writing tasks, potentially complicating explicit communication and the negotiation of meaning critical for L2 acquisition (Bitchener, 2004). In high-context cultures, many nuances of communication are not explicitly stated but are

understood through a shared cultural framework. This impacts how students from such backgrounds, including Koreans, might perceive and write texts.

Recent studies, such as those by Rinnert and Kobayashi (2016) and Ene et al. (2019), have highlighted the importance of recognizing and utilizing the cultural and linguistic resources that L2 writers bring to the classroom. These resources are necessary for effective L2 text construction and can help in addressing the specific challenges posed by high-context cultural backgrounds. For example, in classrooms where explicit negotiation of meaning and critical engagement with texts are expected, instructors might need to adapt strategies to better align with the communicative styles and learning preferences of Korean students.

Furthermore, Hofstede's framework on cultural dimensions shows that countries like South Korea score high on uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2016). This indicates a societal preference for clear rules and structured learning environments, which can reflect in the educational settings where traditional teaching methods focus on memorization and recitation rather than on critical thinking and interactive learning.

Moreover, in Confucian cultures, in addition to being high context, the significance of hierarchy cannot be overemphasized. In the Korean educational context, there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy and respect for authority, which can significantly influence classroom dynamics and learning interactions (Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). Teachers are often viewed as the ultimate authority and primary source of knowledge, which can discourage student participation and questioning of information, as these behaviours have traditionally not been encouraged in Confucian-influenced educational systems (Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). Ng (2009) noted that a traditional goal of learning in Confucian-based education systems, such as Korea's, is not to improve existing knowledge but to pass it along. This perspective significantly influences how Korean students engage with L2 writing, where inserting their own voice or views may be viewed negatively.

Acknowledging these cultural factors is important in creating an effective learning environment for Korean L2 writers. By understanding the deep-rooted

cultural values and communication styles, educators can develop more tailored and effective teaching strategies that respect and integrate students' cultural backgrounds into L2 writing instruction. This approach not only enhances educational outcomes but also supports a more inclusive and adaptive educational practice.

One key aspect of understanding the influence of cultural factors on L2 writing is through the lens of contrastive rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric is the study of how the rhetorical structures of a person's L1 may influence their L2 writing. It examines differences and similarities in writing across cultures, exploring how cultural contexts shape what is considered logical, relevant, and well-organized writing (Connor, 2002; Hyland, 2003). This field views writing as culturally embedded, with various expectations for effectiveness differing by culture. Hyland (2003) summarized key rhetorical differences between L1 and L2 writing as organization, argumentation approaches, cohesion, audience knowledge estimates, objectivity, and style complexity. Additionally, linguistic and rhetorical conventions in the L1 can impede L2 writing development.

Contrastive rhetoric also explores culturally influenced views on the roles of the writer and the reader (Leki, 1991; Matsuda, 2015; Ostler, 2014; Sheldon, 2011). For example, while English-speaking cultures assign the writer the responsibility to clarify meaning explicitly, some East Asian cultures, like South Korea and Japan, place this responsibility on the reader, valuing hints and nuance over directness (Ryu, 2006). Such differences highlight how cultural contexts affect perceptions of clarity and politeness in writing.

Empirical research by Bhowmik and Chaudhuri (2021) underscores how cultural factors shape writing practices. They found that cultural expectations influence both writing structure and how writers consider their readers. For instance, while Korean writers expect readers to interpret the text's meaning themselves, Arabic writers typically favour a general style over detailed support.

Ene et al. (2019) contributed to this discourse by studying how four writers navigated the intersection of text, context, and culture, according to interactional

rhetoric theory. Their findings suggest that while multilingual writers are capable of traversing linguistic and cultural barriers, they also recognize these barriers' significance, particularly in academic settings. Their research revealed that translingual negotiations vary by the writers' academic discipline, cultural background, and multiliteracy level.

2.5.4 *Expectation differences*

The expectations of a student are heavily influenced by their culture, as culture provides a sense of what is possible or correct in educational settings. Although taken-for-granted by most of us, our culture provides a sense of what learning and writing are, and this idea or knowledge can differ from culture to culture. Cultural knowledge tends to fall along a continuum running from respecting and conserving knowledge to valuing creation and the extension of it (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991). Western educational systems tend to value and encourage the questioning and evaluation of existing knowledge. Writing tasks in classes based in social constructivist pedagogy ask learners to elaborate and refine existing knowledge in what has been termed knowledge transforming (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In contrast, many East Asian educational systems, including that of South Korea, value the conservation and reproduction of existing knowledge. This form of valuing and reproducing existing knowledge as knowledge telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987).

Beyond guiding how we view knowledge, culture also influences our expectations of what appropriate instruction consists of and the meaning and importance of learning. As much of what is done in the L2 writing classroom comes from research on L1 writers, as there remains no comprehensive theory of L2 writing (Silva, 1993), L1 teaching techniques may conflict with the L2 students' expectations. In the area of writing feedback, many writing instructors, influenced by social constructivist views, focus on the creation of meaning during the writing process and tend to respond to content; while many L2 writers come from a product-centred educational system and expect feedback on mechanics and grammar. Relevant to the present study, peer feedback has been criticised as being culturally inappropriate

for L2 writers from collectivist cultures. Carson and Nelson (1996) found that Chinese students were highly concerned with maintaining group harmony. These students were reluctant to identify problems, judging that “making negative comments on a peer’s draft leads to division, not cohesion, in a group” (p. 128). This led them to avoid criticism of peers as well as deflect when asked to engage in dialogue about peer feedback.

2.5.5 Summary

In the literature on L2 writing, particularly reflective of multilingual Korean students, there is a recognition of the challenges these students face due to differences in language, culture, and educational expectations. However, the field reveals significant gaps that need further exploration.

While the literature acknowledges cultural influences on L2 writing, such as varying rhetorical conventions and differing expectations, there is a dearth of in-depth studies exploring the impact of specific cultural backgrounds, especially from East Asian contexts like South Korea. This includes understanding how cultural norms and values shape writing styles, argumentation approaches, and perceptions of effective writing. Additionally, the literature suggests a mismatch between the Western pedagogical approach, which favours social constructivism, and the expectations of L2 writers from collectivist cultures. This is particularly evident in the context of peer feedback, where there is a need for culturally responsive feedback methods that align with the values and expectations of the writers.

Another area that remains underexplored is the transfer of writing skills and strategies from a student’s L1 to their L2. While it is noted that L2 writers can employ sophisticated strategies in their native language, the process and effectiveness of transferring these skills to L2 contexts are not well understood. Lastly, there is a gap in understanding how L2 learners’ cultural and educational backgrounds influence their expectations and how instructional practices can be adapted to meet these expectations, especially in the context of feedback on writing.

2.6 Process writing pedagogy

Process writing has been a prominent approach to teaching writing since the 1980s (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981; Flower, 1989; Graves, 1983; Graves, 1994; Hayes & Flower, 1981; Hayes & Flower, 1986). Process writing is a pedagogical approach that involves collaborative engagement between teachers and students in the process of creating a written text. Within this approach, students are given the opportunity to contemplate their writing, generate drafts, revise and edit their work, and, relevant to the present study, engage in feedback exchanges before producing the final version of the text (Hayes & Flower, 1986). This approach was a response to the product approach, a traditional method of teaching writing that emphasizes the final written product rather than the process of writing itself. The product approach was particularly popular in the 1960s and 1970s, when writing instruction in schools and universities focused heavily on grammar, syntax, and structure, with little attention paid to a writer's ideas, creativity, or individuality. The product approach assumes that writing is a linear process, and that good writing can be achieved through the application of rules and formulaic structures (Braddock et al., 1963).

Braddock et al.'s (1963) review of the literature on writing during the 1960s found that composition researchers focused on product, primarily looking at the efficacy of one method of teaching grammar over another, searching for the best pedagogical approach (Zamel, 1982). The pedagogical approaches considered primarily focused on usage, structure, or form, assuming instruction and practice of these features would improve student writing (Zamel, 1982). This emphasis on correctness and form was even more pronounced among teachers of EFL and English as a second language (ESL) and textbook writers in this field, with EFL/ESL teachers focused on minimising errors and textbooks largely composed of exercises designed to practice specific grammatical structures (Widdowson, 1978; Zamel, 1982).

Early research in the field of process writing dates began in the late 1960s (e.g., Emig, 1967; Emig, 1971; Murray, 1968; Rohman, 1965; Rohman & Wlecke, 1964; Zoellner, 1969). During this period, researchers and practitioners began to

question the wisdom of placing such a heavy emphasis on the finished product and began to attend to how writers actually write by examining and then teaching writing as a process. In his 1972 article, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product", Murray criticized writing instructors' tendency to focus attention on the finished essay or "product" while grading:

What is the process we [writing instructors] should teach? It is the process of discovery through language. It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language. It is the process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world. Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing, and glory in its unfinishedness. (Murray, 1972, p. 4)

Graves (1978, 1983), often referred to as the "father" of *The Writing Process*, defined this developing approach to writing instruction as an approach to writing instruction that emphasizes students' writing process, not the final product, with a focus on generating ideas, revising drafts, and refining the final product. Elaborating on this, Keh (1990) presented a working definition of this approach, as:

"a multiple-draft process which consists of: generating ideas (pre-writing); writing a first draft with an emphasis on content (to 'discover' meaning/author's ideas); second and third (and possibly more) drafts to revise ideas and the communication of those ideas. Reader feedback on the various drafts is what pushes the writer through the writing process on to the eventual end-product". (p. 294)

Whereas Keh's definition details the steps in the process, Tribble (1996) defined the process approach as an approach to teaching writing that emphasizes the individual writer's creativity and focuses on the development of good writing practices as opposed to the imitation of models. Overall, these definitions highlight the iterative and recursive nature of process writing, in which writers engage in multiple stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing in order to develop their ideas and refine their writing.

The process approach to writing was a departure from analysing students' final products to investigating their writing processes. While the product approach focuses on linguistic knowledge and the correctness of the final product, with attention focused on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982), the process approach values creativity, interest, and motivation in students while emphasizing the thinking process.

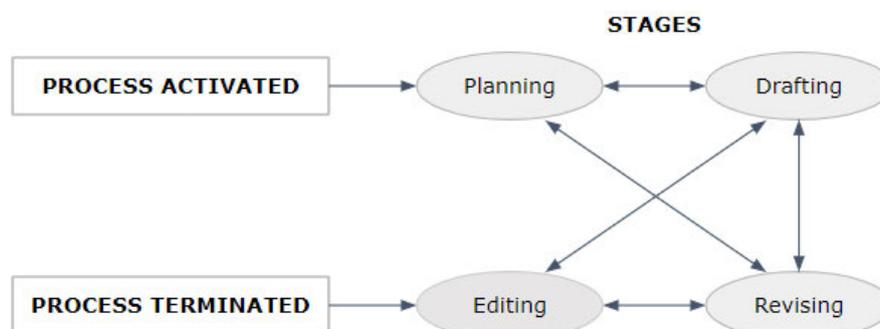
2.6.1 *Stages of process writing*

The recursive nature of the process approach to writing is the most consistent characteristic of this approach. Research on writing has shown that skilled writers move through the writing process in a recursive, non-linear fashion. The goal of this approach is not to ignore the product but rather to help the students recognize and focus on the various interactive, organic, and cyclical stages in the writing process (Hyland, 2009; Hyland, 2019; Seow, 2002). Although there is universal agreement in the field that this approach is a recursive process with multiple stages writers go through in the writing process, there remains a lack of agreement on the number of stages and the naming of each stage. Britton et al.'s (1975) early writing in the field introduced a three-step recursive approach: conception, incubation, and production. Similarly, although with steps of different names, Graves (1978, 1983) experience with teaching children writing and Zamel's (1982) work teaching L2 students at the university level resulted in a three-step recursive process comprising pre-writing, composition/writing, and post-writing/revising. Flower and Hayes (1981) established a three-step recursive framework: planning, writing, reviewing for L2 writing instructions that Hyland (2019) believes to be the most widely recognized and embraced model of writing processes among L2 writing instructors. Tribble's (1996) research on academic writing on university campuses and Harmer's (2002) framework related to L2 writing instruction comprised a recursive approach inclusive of an additional step: prewriting/planning, composing/drafting, revising, editing, and publishing/final version. Tompkins' (1994) approach for teaching college-level writing introduced five stages for describing the writing process: prewriting, drafting,

revising, editing, and sharing. Slightly different again, White and Arndt (1991) introduced a complex six-step non-linear recursive approach: generating ideas, structuring, drafting, focusing, evaluating, and reviewing. Seow's (2002) four-step recursive framework is used in the present study. As shown in Figure 2.3, Seow (2002) conceptualises the writing process as occurring in four stages with the following names: planning, drafting, editing, and revising.

Figure 2.3

The Stages of Process Writing



Note. Adapted from “The Writing Process and Process Writing” by A. Seow (2002) in *Language teaching: An anthology of current practice* by J. C. Richards and W. A. Renandya (Eds).

As described by Seow (2002), the planning stage of the writing process consists of any activity which prepares the writer to write; typically, it involves the gathering of information or the generating of ideas. Once the writer has gathered enough information or generated sufficient ideas, the drafting stage begins. During this stage, the writer focuses on fluency and the larger ideas, avoiding being preoccupied with surface-level issues, such as grammar or punctuation. Once the first draft is finished, the writer undertakes the revising stage. While revising, they examine the text to see how effectively it communicates the intended meaning. During this stage, the writer should seek and receive feedback. Typically, at this stage, the writer is encouraged to avoid checking for surface-level problems and instead focus on improving global content and organisation. For most writers, there is a recursive process between the drafting and revising stages, with the writer moving back and forth between these two stages multiple times. Once the writer is satisfied that the content and organisation convey the intended meaning, the writer begins to edit for surface-level problems.

2.6.2 Principles of process writing

The process-oriented approach to writing highlights the importance of students grasping the writing process before focusing on finer composition skills (Hyland, 2019). The teaching methods employed in process-oriented approaches differ significantly from traditional approaches, as they encompass more than simply studying grammar, analysing rhetorical models, or outlining ideas. The process involves not only the actual act of writing but also prewriting and rewriting, with all these stages being interdependent (Hyland, 2019; Zamel, 1982).

Although there remains no universally agreed upon number of steps, there are a number of underlying principles that are common to the process approach to writing (Cramer, 2001; Graham & Perin, 2007; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). The first agreed upon principle is that students engage in cycles of planning (setting goals, generating ideas, organizing ideas), putting a writing plan into action, and reviewing (evaluating, editing, revising). The second is students write for real audiences and purposes, with some of their projects spanning an extended period of time. The third of these principles is that emphasis is placed on students' ownership of their writing, as well as self-reflection and evaluation. The final agreed upon principle of process writing is collaborative writing instruction is provided through mini lessons, writing conferences, and teachable moments as students engage in cooperative writing activities, such as peer feedback.

2.6.3 *Research on process writing*

Foundational research conducted by scholars in the field of process writing remains the salient research in the field today. One of the earliest researchers in this field of process writing was composition scholar Emig (1967, 1971, 2003). A leading scholar in the field of composition, a field of writing at the college level in the U.S., Emig (1971) attempted to examine the act of writing, rather than the product, using a case study approach. Emig's research managed to overturn many assumptions held about how writers write. Rather than engaging in a linear process, it was Emig who found that writers exhibit a variety of complex behaviours in their composition

process. One of her most important findings was that writers undertake a continuing process of invention of what they want to say as they compose, rather than a linear process leading to a predetermined outcome. Following Emig's (1971) insights, writing came to be seen as a recursive process, where the student has an initial idea which is developed through writing and revising. This idea of "discovery" is the main feature of the writing process (Zamel, 1982).

During the 1980s and 1990s, several linguists and scholars went on to contribute to the research conversation on the process approach to writing (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981; Horowitz, 1986; Keh, 1990; Krashen, 1984; Miller, 1992; Silva, 1990). Following Emig's research, their research results demonstrated the theoretical and practical significance of the process approach to writing, finding that the process approach can increase student writers' interest, self-efficacy, and motivation to write.

With a new understanding of the act of writing as a recursive process of discovery (Lacina & Silva, 2010), researchers began to examine what differentiates successful writers from less successful writers. Composition researcher Perl extended this research path. Regarded for her influential work on the composing process, which emphasizes the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of writing, Perl (1980) found that all writers, skilled and unskilled, engage in "retrospective structuring", the process of examining the words on the page to see if they capture the intended meaning (p. 367). While all writers use retrospective structuring, unskilled writers are unable to move beyond their concern over correctness and form. That is, more advanced writers are able to anticipate the needs of a reader in what Perl (1980) termed "projective structuring" (p. 368). The skill of being able to project oneself into the role of a reader is something that most unskilled writers lack and is an important aspect of the writing process (Perl, 1980; Zamel, 1982).

2.6.3.1 Research on L2 process writing

Although the field remains under examined, several researchers have studied the use of process writing with L2 students (e.g., Han & Hyland, 2019; Sasaki, 2000;

Zamel, 1982; Zhou, 2015). Zamel's (1982) study investigated the writing process of advanced L2 students, with the goal of learning how much they understand writing as the discovery of meaning and to what effect L2 factors affect this process. She found that skilled writers view writing as a process of exploring ideas and constructing meaning, and that pre-writing and revising occur continuously throughout the writing process, and that they spend a significant amount of time thinking about the outline of their essay and revising their writing to ensure clarity and coherence. Similarly, the results of Zamel's research suggested that both skilled and unskilled writers understand the recursive nature of writing and prioritise generating ideas before focusing on local grammatical errors. Additionally, in terms of the difference between L1 and L2 composition, Zamel found that language related difficulties do not seem to hinder the on-going writing process. She found that L2 students do not consider grammar or mechanical related difficulties significant concerns in writing. These students recognized generating and organizing ideas as major difficulties when writing both in L1 and L2 (Bae, 2011).

Sasaki (2000) studied the different writing processes between students with different levels of L2 writing proficiency, and the changes in their writing processes over time, at a university in Japan. The study found that L2 writers with higher English proficiency tend to write longer and more complex texts and spend more time in prewriting to create a detailed outline. In contrast, novice writers tend to write relatively short texts and struggle with generating ideas, often having a less global outline. Sasaki also noted that experts do not frequently stop to think while writing, indicating a higher level of fluency and automaticity in the writing process. They also use different strategies, such as making a global outline before writing and adjusting it as they go along, to ensure coherence and clarity in their writing. In contrast, novice writers often struggle with time constraints because they need to stop and translate their native language to English, slowing down the writing process. Sasaki concluded that the strategies used by expert writers cannot be developed over a short time and require sustained practice and experience. Sasaki's study highlighted the importance of pre-writing and planning in the writing process, as well as the need

for sustained practice to develop fluency and automaticity in writing. It also emphasized the challenges that novice writers face and the need for targeted instruction and support to help them develop their writing skills.

Liu and Carless (2006) conducted an extensive survey involving 1740 tertiary students and 400 academics in Hong Kong. They argue that the process of peer feedback engages students actively in learning, helps develop self-management and judgment, strengthens the capacity for self-assessment, helps develop subject knowledge, enables students to receive feedback faster and promotes social interaction. Furthermore, they suggest that acquiring the skill of providing peer feedback may have long-term benefits, as it prepares students for life beyond higher education by cultivating their ability to evaluate the quality and impact of their own work as well as the work of others.

More recently, Zhou's (2015) empirical research confirmed the efficacy of the process approach. Zhou is known for her research on the cognitive and linguistic processes involved in writing, particularly in the context of L2 learning. Her study aimed to explore the influence of the process approach on EFL student writing at a university in Sichuan Province, China. Zhou studied the efficacy of the process approach using an experimental group and a control group. Zhou concluded that non-English majors typically employ a traditional product approach, not the process approach, to accomplish their writing tasks, without interaction with their instructor and peers, as demonstrated by the control group, and the process approach has a positive influence on a non-English major's writing ability and is effective in improving their writing ability, as demonstrated by the higher scores achieved by the experimental group.

2.6.4 Criticism of process writing

Despite its prevalence, the process approach to writing is not without critics. Critics who challenge the process approach to writing argue that a process-oriented classroom provides insufficient instruction, and students with writing difficulties are unable to acquire the feedback or necessary input effectively (Baines et al., 1999;

White & Arndt, 1991), though these observations were based on traditional classroom settings. Despite their adherence and support of the process, White and Arndt (1991) concede that writers encounter numerous simultaneous challenges throughout the non-linear writing process, requiring them to make decisions at each stage, as certain processes occur concurrently and exert influence on one another. The approach is also criticised by other researchers in the field. Critics of process-oriented instruction argue for the need for scaffolding and increased instruction and feedback. Delpit (1988), Reyes (1992), and Valdés (1999) suggested that students, depending on their background, may be denied access to power if explicit features of writing are neglected. Critics also claim that this approach devotes too little time to teaching students strategies for carrying out basic writing processes, such as planning and revising (Graham & Sandmel, 2011).

2.6.5 Summary

Process writing pedagogy, a dominant approach since the 1980s, emphasizes the collaborative and iterative nature of creating written texts. This approach contrasts sharply with the traditional product approach, prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, which focused more on grammar, syntax, structure, and the final written product. The process approach developed in response values the writer's ideas, creativity, and individuality, viewing writing as a non-linear and recursive process. This shift in focus, from product to process, entailed a greater emphasis on drafting, revising, editing, and engaging in feedback exchanges.

Despite its widespread adoption, there are gaps in the research on process writing. Most studies focus on the benefits and strategies of the approach but pay less attention to the challenges and limitations faced by writers, especially those students with a different linguistic or cultural background. The research often assumes a universal applicability of the process approach, overlooking how different educational and cultural contexts might affect its efficacy. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that analyse the long-term impact of process writing pedagogy on students' overall writing skills and academic performance. Furthermore,

while the approach emphasizes student creativity and individual expression, the literature does not sufficiently address how educators can effectively balance these elements with the need to teach the formal aspects of writing, such as grammar and syntax. Addressing these gaps could lead to a more nuanced understanding of process writing pedagogy and its application in educational settings comprising students with different linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

2.7 Peer feedback

Feedback is a fundamental element of the process approach to writing (Brown, 2001; Brown & Lee, 2015; Keh, 1990), providing students with information about their strengths and weaknesses to improve performance (Ur, 1996). Feedback can be broadly defined as post-response information that informs students about their learning or performance to regulate the further learning process towards the desired outcome (Narciss, 2008; Narciss, 2012; Shute, 2008; van Popta et al., 2017). In a writing classroom context, feedback is "input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision" (Keh, 1990, p. 294).

Early investigators of teacher feedback practices were critical, finding them ineffective (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Zamel, 1985). These negative views came from examining an earlier period when teachers provided feedback only on the final product to justify a grade (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). However, as understanding of the writing process evolved, the instructional paradigm shifted to providing feedback at multiple points and highlighting a broader range of issues (Ferris, 1995; Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

The primary purpose of feedback is to assist students in optimizing their abilities during various writing process phases, increasing understanding of strengths and areas needing improvement, and identifying actionable steps to enhance performance (Burke & Pieterick, 2010). Feedback can be provided through comments, questions, and suggestions, which readers offer to writers to produce prose catering to the reader's perspective (Flower, 1979). Among various feedback

types, peer feedback has recently been increasingly used in L2 writing classrooms (Toegel & Conger, 2003).

Peer feedback is a process of sharing and receiving feedback on writing or other academic work between students in a classroom setting. Liu and Hansen (2002) defined peer feedback, also called "peer review" and "peer response", as:

Use of students as sources of information and interactants for each other is such a way that students assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing.

(p. 1)

Peer feedback involves students providing feedback to peers on aspects of their work, such as organization, coherence, and evidence use. It can take many forms, including written comments, oral feedback, or both. Peer feedback is often combined with teacher feedback, helping students get multiple perspectives and promoting a collaborative, interactive learning environment.

Various learning theories underpin peer feedback: process writing (Wahyuni, 2017), second-language acquisition (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013; Long & Porter, 1985; Mittan, 1989;), social constructivism (Topping, 1998; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006), the socio-cultural approach (Hu, 2019), social-interdependence theory (Cheng & Tsai, 2012; van Gennip et al., 2009), socio-cognitive perspective (Chong, 2021; Han & Hyland, 2019), activity theory (Yu, 2014; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012) and the socio-material approach (Gravett et al., 2020). These theories share the understanding that peer feedback is a social activity mediated by various factors that influence its processes and effects. Most relevant here are social constructivism, process writing, and second-language learning.

Feedback is a key driver in learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In process writing, feedback is as important as revising or editing (Wahyuni, 2017), facilitating opportunities for students "to discover and negotiate meaning, to explore effective ways of expressing meaning, to practice a wide range of language and writing skills, and to assume a more active role in the learning process" (Hu, 2005, p. 322).

Process writing recognizes that writers engage in discovery. By discussing and inquiring about feedback, students actively reflect on their learning and writing (Yang et al., 2006). When students communicate with peers about feedback and negotiate, they acquire more than just academic skills (Kennette & Frank, 2013; Lee, 2017; Rollinson, 2005). They develop critical thinking, analysis, debating, and questioning skills crucial for becoming proficient, discerning writers. Peer feedback is a structured learning process (van den Berg et al., 2006) in which students help each other identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing improvement while developing metacognitive and other skills (Topping, 2018). Giving beginning writers access to peer feedback from authentic readers can help foster the development of projective structuring—the process of composing and structuring ideas in a manner that effectively communicates the intended message to the audience (Perl, 1980).

Several studies suggest that the quality of the work under review significantly influences the learning outcomes of the reviewer (Alqassab et al., 2018; Patchan & Schunn, 2015; Tsivitanidou et al., 2018). This is because work quality determines the type and amount of feedback given (Dmoshinskaia et al., 2022). Lower quality work may necessitate identifying many problems and suggesting numerous improvements, while higher quality work may pose a challenge in finding even a single issue due to its overall excellence.

Peer feedback is integral to peer assessment, typically consisting of providing and receiving feedback. Studies show that providing feedback (i.e., reviewing) is generally more beneficial for learning than receiving feedback (Ion et al., 2019; Li & Grion, 2019; Phillips, 2016), as it requires more active cognitive engagement with the product and material.

When reviewing a peer's work, students engage in several cognitive activities. They must consider the important characteristics of the product, evaluate whether it lacks any of those characteristics, and think of ways to improve it based on their evaluation. These cognitive activities contribute to the learning benefits of providing peer feedback.

Peer feedback aligns with process writing due to its seamless integration with writing cycles, multiple drafts, extensive revision, and collaborative learning (Hu, 2005; Paulus, 1999). These factors enhance students' writing skills (Zeqiri, 2011) and foster motivation, transforming them into more engaged writers (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018; Hyland, 2019; Zhao, 2014). During "the interactive process of peer feedback, students play a dual role of writer and reviewer" (Wakabayashi, 2013, p. 177). This feedback is usually sought and given during drafting or revising.

Scholars argue that peer feedback allows students to take a more active role in learning (Mendoca & Johnson, 1994), evaluate their success and need for further work (Mittan, 1989), develop critical skills for revising their own writing (Leki, 1990a; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), receive more frequent and diverse feedback (Van der Strap & Blair, 2018), promote a community of writers (Corgan et al., 2004; van de Strap & Blair, 2018), and rethink ideas informed by audience reaction (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994).

Effectively used, peer feedback can produce a wealth of information on content and rhetorical concerns (van der Strap & Blair, 2018), improve cross-cultural communication, and foster group togetherness (Hansen & Liu, 2005). Peer feedback can confirm existing information, add new information, identify errors, and correct errors. Its most important characteristic may be its abundance, as there are more students than teachers, allowing faster and individualized feedback (Topping, 2018).

Social constructivism's emphasis on collaborative learning provides a theoretical basis for incorporating peer feedback activities (Bruffee, 1984a, 1984b), as an activity benefiting both giver and receiver (Vygotsky, 1978). Investigating revision processes and strategies of fifty-four Spanish-speaking EFL students in a Puerto Rican university, Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) found that participants engaged in a dynamic, dyadic, recursive process of writing and rewriting. Mediating strategies included using symbols and external resources like dictionaries, writing and grammar guides, and course materials. Social behaviour included high levels of collaboration and camaraderie. Participants showed empathy and concern for each other's feelings. Villamil and de Guerrero developed a framework for understanding the

socio-cognitive dimensions of peer feedback (Villamil & De Guerro, 2006; Villamil & De Guerro, 2019).

In an L2 context, second-language acquisition theories' emphasis on interaction supports the notion that peer feedback activities may be useful for L2 development (Long & Porter, 1985; Mittan, 1989). Research on peer feedback in L2 writing classrooms has reported various ways it improves students' writing (Hirose, 2009; Kamimura, 2006; Rollinson, 2005; Yang et al., 2006). Mendonca and Johnson's (1994) examination of negotiations between ESL students' peer feedback partners supports including peer feedback in L2 writing instruction. They studied twelve advanced ESL students in a U.S. graduate writing course, analysing conversations between peer feedback partners via audiotaped transcripts, changes made between drafts, and post-feedback interviews. They found that interactions could be categorized into five types of negotiations: questions, explanations, restatements, suggestions, and grammar corrections.

2.7.1 *Research on peer feedback*

This section overviews early research on peer feedback, which emphasized the benefits of peer feedback in writing classrooms, the challenges and complexities associated with incorporating peer feedback, and the empirical research that provides insights into its effectiveness. It also discusses the rise of online peer feedback and the criticisms associated with this pedagogical approach.

2.7.1.1 *Early research on peer feedback*

Early research in the field of peer feedback suggested that receiving peer feedback provides students with an authentic audience which allows them to view their writing in new ways (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Mittan, 1989) and gives writers the opportunity to receive more feedback on a variety of writing issues (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). The research from this period also suggests that students feel positive about peer feedback and believe it is helpful (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994). In addition to the body of research suggesting there are benefits to receiving peer

feedback, there is also a body of evidence which suggests that the process of commenting on peers' writing develops the reviewer's analytical thinking and improves subsequent writing (Cho & Cho, 2011; Cho & MacArthur, 2011; Ekşi, 2012; Leki, 1990b; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). The findings of this foundational research in the field hold largely true today.

Although supportive of peer feedback, early research in the field of peer feedback also demonstrated the potential complexity of incorporating peer feedback activities in the classroom. Nelson and Murphy's (1992) research highlighted this complexity, in addition to the importance, of the social makeup of peer feedback groups. In their study, the researchers videotaped a group of four L2 writing students, from four different countries, as they engaged in peer feedback activities. The group was videotaped once a week for six consecutive weeks. The results showed that the participants were on task for over three quarters of each session. Unfortunately, the analysis of the videotapes also showed how individual differences may undermine the peer feedback process. In this group of four students, one participant was unusually negative towards others in the group and dominated the sessions, causing other group members to become defensive and withdraw from the discussions.

2.7.1.2 Empirical research on L2 peer feedback

Research in the field of L2 peer feedback has increased during the last 20 years. Min (2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2016, 2018) has researched and published extensively on the importance of properly preparing students to participate in peer feedback activities. Min (2005) and Min (2006) examined the impact of trained responders' feedback on 18 sophomore EFL college students' revisions, both in terms of revision types and quality, in an EFL writing class at a university in Taiwan. Min (2005) reported that prior to completing the peer feedback activity, students were trained to generate more specific comments by clarifying writers' intentions, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making specific suggestions. Min (2005) and Min (2006) reported that extensive peer feedback

training significantly contributed to the increase in the number of comments on peers' writing and in the quality of the subsequent revised texts. Min (2005) found that students undertaking peer feedback coaching increased their skills, confidence, language acquisition, and metacognitive strategy. Min (2018) argued the relative benefits of receiving feedback over giving feedback.

Several studies have investigated the effects of providing versus receiving peer feedback. Wu and Schunn (2020) found that secondary school students who provided comments on their peers' writing drafts made more revisions to their own drafts and demonstrated more learning compared to those who only received feedback. This aligns with the notion that giving feedback requires more active cognitive engagement than receiving it (Ion et al., 2019; Li & Grion, 2019; Phillips, 2016). Huisman et al. (2018) compared the effects of giving and receiving peer feedback on undergraduate students' writing performance and found that both activities led to improved writing quality, with giving feedback having a slightly larger effect.

Min (2003) examined reasons why EFL writers fail to incorporate peer comments into their subsequent revisions. The researcher compared and contrasted six students' first and second drafts and interviewed each of the students. Min (2003) identified two main reasons for students' failure to incorporate peer feedback: a strong sense of text ownership by the student writer and vague feedback by the peer reviewer. Like her other research in the field of peer feedback, Min (2003) recommended properly preparing students for peer feedback activities with a four-step approach to coaching peer reviewers: clarifying the writer's intention, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making suggestions.

Like Min, Ruegg (2015a, 2015b, 2015c) has conducted several studies on the efficacy of feedback, although with mixed results. Ruegg (2015b) found that peer feedback often leads to more successful revision than teacher feedback. For her longitudinal study on the differences in uptake of peer and teacher feedback, she collected data from 64 students in four classes, using a control group and an experiment group. The results of this study showed that peer feedback was more

often non-specific, whereas teacher feedback was more specific and more likely to be adopted in subsequent drafts by the student writer. Interestingly, however, she found that teacher feedback was more likely to be misunderstood, leading to unsuccessful revisions, while peer feedback was more likely to lead to successful revisions.

In a second study, Ruegg (2015a) attempted to investigate the effectiveness of peer or teacher feedback on writing improvement. This study used a pretest–posttest design; students were given a posttest at the end of one year after receiving either peer or teacher feedback. While the results related to teacher feedback were favourable, no improvement was found for the peer feedback group. Although discouraging, the results of this study are not surprising; due to the potential language, complexity, and social issues with peer feedback, a combination of teacher feedback and peer feedback activities following training is recommended (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Zamel, 1982), as opposed to peer feedback only in lieu of teacher feedback.

In contrast, however, are the positive results of the empirical research conducted by Ekşi (2012) on the efficacy of peer feedback versus instructor feedback in an EFL process writing course. She collected data from 46 English majors over nine weeks at a state university in Ankara, Turkey, using a control group and an experimental group. The data was collected from peer responses to first drafts, revisions, and comments from the instructor on the last drafts and student reflections in journals. While the control group received instructor feedback on drafts of five writing assignments, before submitting their final drafts, the experimental group received training on effective peer feedback and received peer feedback on drafts of the same writing assignments, only receiving instructor feedback on their final drafts. The results of her study showed surprisingly similar improved results by both groups.

Zequiri (2011) explored the role of peer feedback in improving writing skills. The research involved 45 Albanian and Macedonian students and ten teachers from the South East European University in Tetovo, North Macedonia. Qualitative and

quantitative methods were used to collect data, including teacher and student questionnaires, as well as written samples of teacher and peer feedback. The findings suggested that peer feedback is more beneficial for students with higher proficiency in writing. Students who are better at writing gave more effective feedback and applied the feedback they received more successfully. Like Min (2005) and Min (2006), the study recommended that teachers teach students how to give peer feedback and encourage them to practice it more often. It was also concluded that students respond well to both teacher and peer feedback, which enhances their writing quality, especially in terms of content and organization, while also improving their critical thinking skills and strengthening student relationships.

Similarly, Elbelazi (2013) conducted a study focusing on the negotiation for meaning during peer feedback and its effect on L2 writing. The primary objective of the study was to assess whether social interaction and negotiation for meaning aids in learning and improving ESL writing. The findings indicated that with proper training, students can provide critical assistance to writers during the feedback process, emphasizing the value of negotiation for meaning in improving writing skills. Other studies, such as Min (2006), Min (2008), and Zeqiri (2011), have also reported similar positive outcomes related to peer training before negotiation. These studies underscore the importance of negotiation for meaning when providing feedback, while acknowledging the need for further exploration of factors like grammar in the context of negotiation for meaning.

Recent studies have further explored the role of negotiation and interaction in peer feedback. Sato and Lyster (2012) investigated the effects of peer interaction and corrective feedback on L2 development, finding that students who engaged in peer interaction and provided corrective feedback to each other showed greater gains in accuracy compared to those who only received feedback. The researchers emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful interaction and negotiation during peer feedback activities. Similarly, Zhao (2018) examined the impact of peer interaction on Chinese EFL learners' revision quality and found that students who participated in collaborative dialogue during peer feedback produced

higher quality revisions compared to those who engaged in individual revision. The study highlights the value of social interaction and negotiation in facilitating effective peer feedback and revision processes.

2.7.1.3 Online peer feedback

In recent years, the process of providing peer feedback has been increasingly facilitated online, especially following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when online courses became the primary means of delivering instruction (Alsuwaida, 2022; Cao et al., 2022; Rimmer, 2020). Previous research has highlighted the significance of online peer feedback and its impact on writing skills (Hsia et al., 2016). Utilizing technology-enhanced online peer feedback facilitates in-depth discussions and rationale, encouraging students to offer and receive high-quality feedback reciprocally (Jin et al., 2024). The existing literature underscores the essential role of the online peer feedback process in improving student writing outcomes (Cui et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2024; Noroozi et al., 2023; Patchan et al., 2016; Zong et al., 2021a).

Several researchers contend that peer feedback could be even more crucial in online learning environments than in traditional face-to-face settings (Lynch, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2007; van Popta et al., 2017). Feedback helps students remain engaged in online courses, as a lack of feedback can lead to a higher likelihood of disconnection compared to students in face-to-face courses (Ko & Rossen, 2001; van Popta et al., 2017). Insufficient feedback is the most frequently reported reason for students dropping out of online courses (Ertmer et al., 2007; van Popta et al., 2017). Ko and Rossen (2001) discovered that feedback stimulates students' online activity. However, to maintain a high level of feedback in online learning, instructors would need to be consistently available online (Dunlap, 2005; van Popta et al., 2017). The physical separation between teachers and students hinders the facilitation of discourse among participants (van Popta et al., 2017). Incorporating peer feedback in online learning can help provide the necessary feedback to enhance the quality of discourse (Ertmer et al., 2007) and, consequently, the quality

of learning. Corgan et al. (2004) found that using peer feedback in online learning fosters community building. When students offer feedback on their peers' work, they actively engage in a collaborative learning process, fostering a deeper understanding and respect for the diverse experiences and viewpoints of their fellow classmates.

Van Popta et al. (2017) explored providing online peer feedback as a learning activity in higher education, focusing on the benefits for the provider, the cognitive processes involved, and factors related to the process. Their results showed several learning benefits for the provider, such as developing higher-level learning skills, reflecting more critically, improving their own work, and making better evaluative judgements. Students use various cognitive processes when providing online peer feedback, including comparing and questioning ideas, evaluating, suggesting modifications, reflecting, planning, regulating their own thinking, and connecting to new knowledge. The realization of these benefits and the actual use of the cognitive processes are likely determined by context factors, such as instructional materials, and student factors, like previous education.

Peer feedback provides some obvious timesaving benefits for instructors in a writing course (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). However, there are many advantages to peer feedback that make incorporating peer feedback as an instructional strategy in a writing course highly interesting, even without taking into account workload (Peck, 2021; van der Strap & Blair, 2018). Liu and Hansen (2002) summarized the advantages of using peer feedback in L2 classrooms, maintaining that peer feedback not only improves audience awareness by creating a collaborative drafting process but also provides opportunities for L2 students to practice English in a meaningful context.

Online peer feedback and in-class peer feedback activities have similar pedagogical assumptions, such as writing is a process, writing is social, and writing is student-centred. However, there are also several differences. Three aspects of online peer feedback that set it apart from in-class peer feedback have been cited: interactivity, textuality, and anonymity (Breuch, 2004). Online peer feedback activities can allow for increased interactivity between peers, the writer, and the

reviewer(s) (Grabill & Hicks, 2005). Peer feedback in an online setting includes more directive comments than in a face-to-face setting, and these directive comments are more likely to lead to changes in final drafts (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Hewett, 2000).

Although textuality and the associated directive feedback may be beneficial for writers, studies have shown that reviewers are reluctant to give critical feedback (Clynes & Raftery, 2008; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Several studies have shown that the perceived anonymity of an asynchronous online environment may help students give more directive feedback (Zhao, 1998). Also, reviewers in an anonymous setting have been found to be able to provide more unbiased and useful feedback (Cho & Schunn, 2007).

There are several differences between asynchronous and synchronous peer feedback conferencing. Although both are electronic communications, asynchronous peer feedback is closer to textuality (text exchanges) whereas synchronous peer feedback is closer to orality (oral exchanges). Compared to asynchronous peer feedback activity, which has been observed to have reduced interactivity due to the lack of nonverbal cues and the delay of interaction (Braine, 2001; Liu & Sadler, 2003), synchronous or real-time peer conferencing invites quick exchanges and engagement (Honeycutt, 2001). In the case of the present study, although the course was delivered synchronously, students completed a guided written peer feedback activity.

While peer feedback is a bidirectional process, it is noteworthy that the majority of studies on peer feedback in online learning (e.g., Guardado & Shi, 2007; Smits et al., 2008) concentrate solely on the impact of peer feedback on the receiver's performance, disregarding the potential learning benefits for the provider. A limited number of studies have indicated possible differences in learning effects between receiving and providing written peer feedback in online learning. For example, van der Pol et al. (2008) found that the learning effects of providing online peer feedback can be experienced when students dedicate time and effort to actively constructing content-oriented responses. Narciss (2013) proposes that working in digital, collaborative learning environments necessitates empirical research on the

effects of peer feedback on both the provider and the receiver. Other researchers explore the advantages of offering more comprehensive feedback. Liu et al. (2001) conclude from their study on the effects of using a feedback format in an online peer assessment that providing online written peer feedback requires students to read, compare, or question ideas, suggest modifications, and reflect on how their own work compares to others.

Van Popta et al. (2017) propose a process model for learning by providing online peer feedback from the provider's perspective, synthesizing current thinking on the possible learning benefits, cognitive functions, and elements for learning related to the process. The model suggests that when providing online peer feedback, students review their peers' work after making a product based on the same assignment. By being challenged to provide specific elements in their feedback (an evaluative judgement, a suggestion for improvement, and an explanation), they engage in reflective knowledge building. This process involves interacting with the content, comparing, taking different perspectives, monitoring, evaluating, and creating new knowledge.

Recent studies have further explored the cognitive processes involved in providing online peer feedback. Noroozi et al. (2016) investigated the effects of different types of online peer feedback (i.e., corrective, epistemic, and suggestive feedback) on students' learning outcomes and found that providing epistemic feedback, which involves questioning and elaborating on content, led to higher levels of knowledge construction compared to other types of feedback. The researchers emphasized the importance of encouraging students to engage in deep cognitive processing when providing online peer feedback. Similarly, Latifi et al. (2021) examined the relationship between the quality of peer feedback and students' learning outcomes in an online learning environment. The results showed that students who provided high-quality feedback, characterized by elaboration, justification, and suggestions for improvement, achieved better learning outcomes compared to those who provided low-quality feedback. The study highlights the

significance of promoting high-quality peer feedback to facilitate meaningful learning experiences in online settings.

2.7.1.4 Criticism of peer feedback

While peer feedback is often seen as beneficial, some experts have raised concerns about its effectiveness (Hamp-Lyons, 1991; Leki, 1990b; Liu & Hansen, 2002). Their worries focus on the broad and shallow nature of student feedback, the possibility that students may not appreciate getting feedback from their peers, and the chance of receiving incorrect feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). These issues point out that there's a difference between what peer feedback could do and what it actually does for student writing.

Looking closer, the success of online peer feedback in helping students write better is not always certain and much depends on how engaged students are (Cheng & Hou, 2015; Noroozi et al., 2016; van Popta et al., 2017). It has been noted that students might not use much of the peer feedback they receive to improve their work, with some only participating a little or not at all. Also, students who do not know much about the subject tend to not get much out of giving or getting feedback, leading to shallow thinking about the work (Latifi et al., 2021). Emotional obstacles, like not trusting peer feedback or not believing in their own abilities, can also block the flow of helpful criticism (Fan & Xu, 2020). These challenges show the need for students to be prepped ahead of time and actively involved in peer feedback to make it work.

Kaufman and Schunn (2011) investigated students' perceptions of peer assessment in higher education and found that some students had negative attitudes towards peer assessment, citing concerns about the reliability and validity of peer feedback. The researchers emphasized the importance of addressing students' concerns and providing adequate training to improve the quality of peer feedback. Similarly, Gielen et al. (2010) examined the effectiveness of peer feedback in a writing assignment and discovered that students often struggled to provide constructive and critical feedback to their peers. The study highlights the need for

explicit instruction and guidance to help students develop the necessary skills for providing meaningful feedback.

However, although the reliability and validity of peer feedback is a key concern for writing instructors who wish to incorporate peer feedback activities in their classrooms (Topping & Elhy, 1998), a majority of research findings on the reliability of peer feedback between students in colleges and universities found adequate reliability, with a minority finding it variable (Topping, 1998). Li et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of 58 studies on peer assessment and found an average effect size of 0.291 standard deviation unit increase in their performance, indicating that compared to no peer assessment, engaging in peer assessment led to a 0.291 standard deviation increase in performance. They also found that the most critical factor influencing the effect size was rater training; when students received training on how to provide peer feedback, the effect size was substantially larger than when no training was provided. Computer-mediated peer assessment was also found to be associated with greater learning gains compared to paper-based peer assessment.

Recent research has also explored strategies to mitigate the challenges associated with peer feedback. Cheng et al. (2015) investigated the effects of peer feedback training on the quality of feedback and students' perceptions in an online learning environment. The results showed that students who received training provided more constructive and specific feedback compared to those who did not receive training. The researchers suggest that incorporating peer feedback training can enhance the effectiveness of peer feedback activities. Additionally, Noroozi and Hatami (2019) examined the role of scripting in improving the quality of peer feedback in a computer-supported collaborative learning environment. The study found that providing students with a structured script to guide their feedback process led to more elaborated and justified feedback, as well as better learning outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of providing students with clear guidelines and support to facilitate effective peer feedback.

2.7.2 Summary

Peer feedback involves sharing and receiving feedback on academic work, typically writing, among students in a classroom setting. Research on peer feedback in writing classrooms highlights its significance as a valuable instructional strategy for improving students' writing skills. Early studies emphasized the benefits of peer feedback for both the receiver and the provider, such as viewing their writing from new perspectives, receiving feedback on various aspects of writing, and developing analytical thinking skills. However, these foundational studies also revealed the potential complexities and challenges of implementing peer feedback, including the impact of individual differences and group dynamics on the effectiveness of peer feedback activities.

In the last two decades, research on L2 peer feedback has increased significantly. Studies have emphasized the importance of peer feedback training in improving the quality and quantity of feedback provided by students. Researchers have also investigated the effects of providing versus receiving feedback, with some studies suggesting that providing feedback may lead to greater learning gains than receiving feedback alone. Additionally, the growing prominence of online peer feedback, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to research examining the distinctive aspects of online peer feedback compared to in-class feedback, such as increased interactivity, textuality, and anonymity.

A meta-analysis by Li et al. (2020) found that peer assessment had a positive effect on student performance, with an average effect size of 0.291 standard deviation unit increase in their performance. The study also highlighted the critical role of rater training in enhancing the effectiveness of peer feedback, with trained students providing more constructive and reliable feedback compared to untrained students. Moreover, computer-mediated peer assessment was found to be associated with greater learning gains compared to paper-based peer assessment.

Despite the benefits of peer feedback, the literature reveals several gaps that need further investigation. The challenges and limitations of implementing peer feedback in diverse educational settings, such as variability in feedback quality, cultural and linguistic differences, and the potential for overly lenient or harsh

feedback, require more in-depth research. Additionally, there is a scarcity of research on the impact of digital tools and virtual environments on the quality of peer feedback, as well as the long-term effects of peer feedback on student learning outcomes and its integration with other pedagogical methods.

Furthermore, researchers have called for more investigation into the affective and motivational aspects of peer feedback, as well as its role in fostering students' self-regulation skills. Exploring the distinct challenges and opportunities of implementing peer feedback in different subject areas beyond writing instruction is also an area that warrants further research.

Filling these research gaps could offer deeper insights into optimizing peer feedback and integrating it with evolving educational technologies to enhance student learning and engagement across diverse contexts. By addressing the challenges and limitations of peer feedback, exploring its long-term impacts, and investigating its application in various subject areas, future research can contribute to the development of more effective and inclusive peer feedback practices that support student learning and growth.

2.8 Overview: The research gaps

This literature review highlights the theoretical foundations and research gaps relevant to the present study on peer feedback in the context of a synchronous online writing course at a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea. The theories of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance are examined, as they form the theoretical framework for this study and provide a lens through which to understand the dynamics of peer feedback in online learning environments.

Despite the relevance of social constructivism in L2 writing pedagogy, there is a noticeable gap in research addressing how students use and create tools and artefacts in the social context of an online peer feedback process. The present study aims to address this gap by examining students' experiences navigating their

engagement in the online peer feedback process while socially engaged in knowledge creation.

While student engagement is recognized as a multi-dimensional construct, the literature lacks empirical studies integrating behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects in diverse educational settings. This study explores these dimensions in-depth, providing a more holistic view of student engagement with online peer feedback than currently seen in the existing literature. In particular, the underexplored cognitive and social dimensions of engagement are addressed.

Transactional distance theory is significant in distance education, but gaps exist in examining the impact of synchronous online platforms on dialogue and engagement. The current study aims to address the engagement gap and understand how students adapt to periods of high transactional distance.

In the context of Korean students writing in English, their L2, research gaps include the challenges arising from language and cultural differences and the impact of specific cultural backgrounds on social interactions, writing styles, and approaches. This study aims to explore how culture influences student engagement in peer feedback activities.

Process writing pedagogy emphasizes a collaborative and iterative approach to writing, but research gaps include the challenges faced by writers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the long-term impact on students' writing skills. This study aims to contribute to addressing these gaps by examining how cultural influences impact writing processes and outcomes.

Finally, peer feedback research highlights its importance in improving L2 writing skills, but gaps remain in understanding implementation challenges, the impact of digital tools on feedback quality, and the long-term effects on student learning outcomes. Similarly, there is a gap in understanding how students actually engage with peer feedback activities. This study aims to address this gap by examining students' actual engagement in peer feedback activities.

In the next chapter, the study's theoretical framework is discussed.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This study explores how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. The literature review in Chapter 2 covered research on L2 writers, process writing pedagogy, peer feedback, and the body of literature related to the study's theoretical framework, which includes social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance theories.

The study's theoretical framework served as the lens through which the present study was shaped, establishing the foundational theoretical assumptions for the broader context of the study. It situates the instructor–researcher's work within the context of existing scholarship, guides the development of the research questions, informs the selection of appropriate research methods, and provides a basis for choosing suitable analytical techniques to interpret the data. Furthermore, the theoretical framework allowed the study to go beyond simply describing the phenomenon and the variables related to student engagement in online peer feedback activities. It helped provide a more in-depth understanding of how these variables can affect student engagement with online peer feedback activities.

The theoretical framework presented in this current chapter connects this study to relevant theories and existing knowledge while identifying the role various variables may play in the phenomenon of interest: L2 student engagement in online peer feedback activities. In the sections that follow, how the theories of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance influenced assumptions during the planning and conducting of this study is explained. Additionally, the identification of potentially meaningful variables related to L2 student engagement with online peer feedback activities, as well as the choice of research methods and analysis, will be explained.

3.2 Theoretical bases

The theoretical framework of this study is built upon the integration of three key perspectives: social constructivism, student engagement theory, and transactional distance theory. These theoretical underpinnings situated the instructor–researcher’s thinking within the broader scholarly community and provided guidance for the formulation of research questions, selection of research methods, and adoption of appropriate methods of analysis. Table 1.1 illustrates the progression of this formulation, as well as the relationship between the study’s research strand, questions, and propositions, in relation to the dimensions of engagement, research methodology, and data sources.

Table 1.1

Research Design

| Research Strand | Research Question | Proposition | Dimension of Engagement | Method | Data Source |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | RQ1 | P4, P5, P7 | Behavioural | quan | Essays |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 2 | RQ2 | P1, P2, P3 | Emotional | quan | Questionnaires |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 3 | RQ3 | P4, P5, P7, P8 | Cognitive | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Essays |
| 4 | RQ4 | P1, P2, P3, P6 | Social | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Questionnaires |

(Table 1.1, repeated from page 15)

Furthermore, these theoretical perspectives facilitated a transition from mere description of the observed behaviours and to a comprehensive understanding of how these variables may impact student engagement with online peer feedback activities.

3.3 Social constructivism

Social constructivism, rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) work, posits that learning is inherently a social process that begins with social interactions and is then internalised as individual cognition (Akpan et al., 2020; Palincsar, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory emphasizes the significant influence of social interactions on students' learning.

Key elements of social constructivism, such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), artefacts, and tools, are essential to understanding how learning unfolds within a social context. The ZPD represents the difference between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance from a more knowledgeable individual. Artefacts and tools, including public and inner speech, play a vital role in the learning process. Public speech refers to external dialogues with others, while inner speech is the internal dialogue learners have with themselves to process information, solve problems, and make sense of the world.

The present study is guided by the foundational premise that learning is a social phenomenon, shaped and fostered by students' interactions and engagements with others. This study focuses on understanding L2 students' engagement with peer feedback in an online writing course, which is deeply intertwined with social constructivist principles.

One significant challenge encountered in this study was examining the social aspect of engagement with activities typically designed for individual execution. Although peer feedback activities are often viewed as individual tasks, they inherently involve social interactions between students. This study aims to explore how L2 students move through the ZPD and how their public interactions contribute to the internalization and creation of knowledge.

Grounded in the acknowledgment that learning is a social phenomenon, this research explores how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities in a synchronous online writing course.

3.3.1 Student engagement

Despite its significance for learner success, the concept of student engagement remains a topic of ongoing debate and ambiguity within the field. It is a multifaceted construct with intricate dimensions that encompass behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social aspects (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Philip & Duchesne, 2016). Recognizing the interconnectedness among these dimensions is essential. While traditionally they have been perceived as distinct entities, it is important to recognise that engagement within each dimension can significantly influence the other three. In particular, in the context of the present study, the social dimension of engagement is expected to influence each the behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

The intricacy of student engagement lies in the inherent interconnectedness among the behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social aspects. This interconnectedness adds layers of complexity to the conceptualization and measurement of engagement. Moreover, as these dimensions influence one another, it becomes challenging to isolate the effects of one dimension from the others. Consequently, understanding and examining student engagement requires a nuanced approach that takes into account the interplay between these four dimensions.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the evolving nature of technology and online learning environments has further complicated the understanding of student engagement. The shift toward online and blended learning modalities has introduced new variables and factors that impact how students engage with course materials, instructors, and peers. Thus, contemporary education necessitates an exploration of how these emerging factors interact with the traditional dimensions of student engagement. This examination forms an integral part of the study's exploration of how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within the context of a synchronous online university writing course at a university in South Korea.

3.3.2 Transactional distance

The theory of transactional distance, first articulated by Moore (1972) and later refined, describes the communicative and psychological space between students and teachers in distance education. Moore (1997) introduced the concept of transactional distance in the context of student–instructor interactions. In the present study, the same principles are applied, but with an extension to encompass student-to-student interactions, particularly in the context of peer feedback activities that foster a collaborative learning environment where learners actively co-construct knowledge.

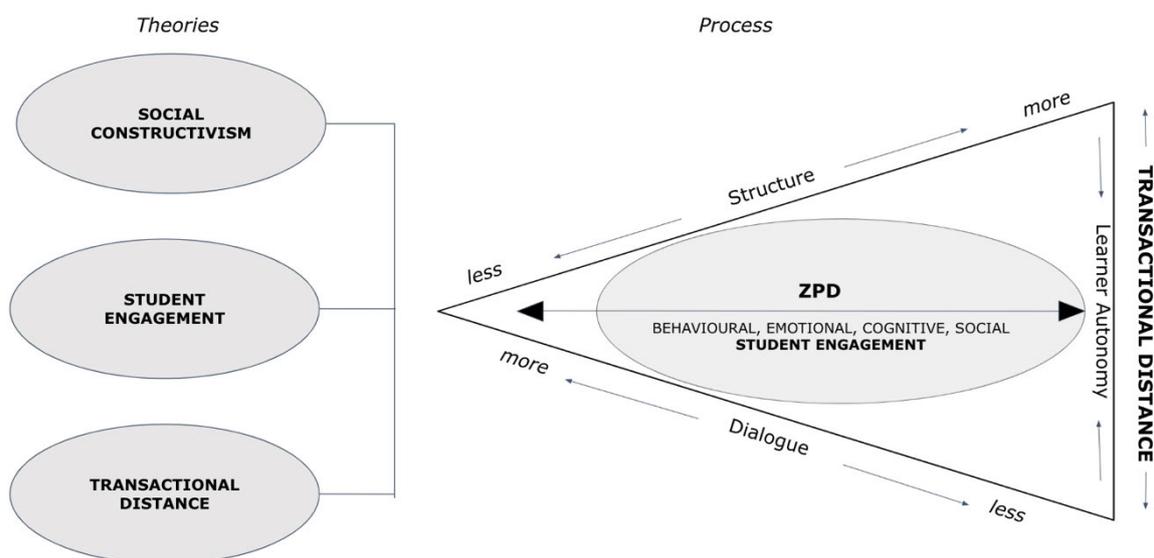
Central to the theory of transactional distance are the concepts of dialogue, structure, and autonomy (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Dialogue refers to purposeful, constructive, and mutually valued interactions between individuals. Structure encompasses the degree of flexibility in educational objectives, teaching strategies, and methods of evaluation. Autonomy, on the other hand, pertains to the extent to which students, rather than instructors, are engaged in determining their goals, shaping their learning experiences, and participating in decisions related to evaluation. It is the dynamic interplay of these three concepts—dialogue, structure, and autonomy—that gives rise to transactional distance.

The concept of transactional distance has evolved to reflect the broader array of interactions within contemporary learning environments. It is particularly relevant in online and digitally mediated education, where students and instructors may be separated not only by physical distance but also by differences in their perceptions of the learning structure and the degree of learner autonomy. This extension of the theory to peer interactions is a significant step, as it allows us to explore how transactional distance manifests in student-to-student engagement, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities facilitated through synchronous delivery.

3.4 Theoretical framework for analysis

As illustrated by Figure 3.1, this study employs a theoretical framework informed by the principles of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance.

Figure 3.1
Theoretical Framework



The primary goal of this study is to understand how L2 students engage with online peer feedback activities. Student engagement with online peer feedback is a complex activity that combines individual and social aspects, which can be particularly intricate when students are separated by physical distance and time. The course structure and characteristics of online peer feedback activities create two main longitudinal processes of interest: fluctuations in transactional distance within each activity and students' progression through the ZPD within and across activities. The following sections will analyse the expected impacts of these two longitudinal processes—changes in transactional distance and movement through the ZPD—to provide a deeper understanding of student engagement with online peer feedback activities.

3.4.1 Changes in transactional distance

This study involves online peer feedback activities that consist of two cycles, each containing two alternating phases: periods of high dialogue with low transactional distance, and periods of low dialogue with high transactional distance.

In the first cycle, participants meet with their previously established static groups in Zoom breakout rooms during the high-dialogue phase. Within these rooms, students determine who will provide feedback to whom. With peer pairings established, students are encouraged to ask clarifying questions related to the guided peer feedback activity and their peer's paper. Following this, students enter the low-dialogue phase, where they work individually on providing feedback to their peers. While students have to begin the peer feedback activity during the class time, completion can extend beyond the class meeting.

The second cycle begins the following class with another high-dialogue phase, where students are again sent to Zoom breakout rooms with their static group members. During this phase, they are tasked with discussing and negotiating any problems in understanding the received feedback from their peer. This second high-dialogue phase is followed by a low-dialogue phase, in which students work independently to revise their drafts based on the feedback received.

Throughout these cycles, the episodes of high dialogue correspond to periods of low transactional distance, as the increased interaction and communication among participants reduce the psychological and communication space between them. Conversely, the episodes of low dialogue, characterized by individual work on providing feedback and revising drafts, correspond to periods of high transactional distance, as the lack of interaction and communication increases the psychological and communication space between participants. During the high-dialogue phases, group discussions in breakout rooms foster increased interaction and communication among participants, reducing the psychological and communication space between them. In contrast, the low-dialogue phases, characterized by individual work on completing peer feedback activities and revising drafts, lead to increased psychological and communication space between participants due to the lack of interaction and communication.

As dialogue diminishes and transactional distance increases, learners may encounter situations where they feel the need for structure when none is explicitly provided. The introduction of high levels of transactional distance is expected to

prompt learners to develop divergent coping mechanisms. Learners with lower levels of autonomy might become frustrated by the lack of activity structure, leading them to address only superficial aspects of the online feedback activities. Conversely, learners with higher levels of autonomy may develop or create tools which allow them to impose structure on the activities.

To deepen the understanding of these processes, this study relies on artefacts and qualitative data. Student essays (peer feedback and revised essays) are scrutinized to assess the amount and types of feedback given and how effectively students address the feedback provided. The qualitative data, consisting of reflection papers and interviews, provides insights into the students' actions during their engagement with the online peer feedback activities. It is expected that students with lower levels of autonomy, who do not develop tools to impose structure on the tasks during high transactional distance periods, will provide feedback on fewer issues and may predominantly offer superficial feedback. Conversely, students with higher levels of autonomy are expected to devise creative tools that enable them to impose structure or maintain dialogue during high transactional distance periods, resulting in higher levels of both providing and addressing deeper-level issues.

3.4.2 *Movement through the Zone of Proximal Development*

As students navigate through the cycles of high and low transactional distance, they face challenges in bridging the gaps created by periods of reduced dialogue. During these periods, students are expected to develop innovative forms of dialogue or create tools to impose structure on their online peer feedback activities. Social constructivism and the concept of the ZPD provide a framework for understanding how students develop internal resources during the high-dialogue phases, which they can then utilise during the low-dialogue phases when working independently.

The ability of students to progress effectively through the ZPD is influenced by their levels of autonomy. Less autonomous students may struggle when faced with

limited dialogue and structure, while more autonomous students are expected to excel in developing internalised tools to cope with the challenges presented by high transactional distance. While all students are anticipated to rely on the provided texts and guidelines for structure, more autonomous students may engage in inner dialogue to reduce transactional distance and address deeper concerns related to their peers' writing. In contrast, less autonomous students may focus primarily on surface-level issues during the low-dialogue phases.

The movement through the ZPD is a dynamic process that is shaped by the students' interactions during the high-dialogue phases and their ability to internalise the feedback and tools developed during these periods. As students alternate between phases of high and low transactional distance, their progress through the ZPD is expected to be influenced by their autonomy levels and their ability to adapt to the challenges presented by the varying levels of dialogue and structure in the online peer feedback activities.

3.4.3 *Student engagement in online peer feedback activities*

By integrating the theoretical perspectives of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance, insightful predictions can be made about how students engage with online peer feedback activities. During the high-dialogue phases, students collaborate and construct meaning together. As they transition into periods of high transactional distance following these direct peer interactions, students may shift from social speech to inner speech, developing tools and strategies for future activities.

However, some students may encounter difficulties in initiating this transition due to insufficient social interaction during the high-dialogue phases. These students may require additional structure and support to progress through the ZPD effectively. The level of autonomy and the quality of social interactions during the high-dialogue phases are expected to play a significant role in determining how students navigate the challenges presented by the periods of high transactional distance.

Upon completing the online peer feedback activities, it is anticipated that a significant number of participants will successfully traverse the ZPD, demonstrating engagement in inner speech and the development of internalised tools. These students are likely to have benefited from the collaborative meaning-making during the high-dialogue phases and successfully adapted to the challenges of the low-dialogue phases.

On the other hand, some students may engage with the activities superficially, primarily due to limitations in their autonomy or the quality of their social interactions during the high-dialogue phases. These students may struggle to develop the necessary tools and strategies to navigate the periods of high transactional distance effectively, resulting in a less successful progression through the ZPD.

The interplay between social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance provides a framework for understanding the ways in which students engage with online peer feedback activities. In the context of the present study, it is also necessary to consider the distinct challenges L2 students on a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea may face. These students may encounter additional barriers in engaging with online peer feedback activities due to language proficiency limitations or culture. As a result, L2 Korean students may require additional support and culturally sensitive approaches to facilitate their successful progression through the ZPD and enhance their engagement with online peer feedback activities.

3.4.3.1 Behavioural dimension

The behavioural dimension of this study focuses on observable behaviours related to students' engagement in commenting on peer writing and responding to peer feedback. The success of peer feedback activities relies heavily on students' trust in their own ability to provide meaningful feedback and in their peers' capacity to offer valuable input.

Initially, certain aspects of Korean culture may lead students to have limited confidence in their own and their peers' ability to provide substantive feedback. This

lack of confidence can manifest in fewer instances of feedback and shallower engagement in the peer feedback process. However, as students become more accustomed to the peer feedback activities and gain experience in giving and receiving constructive criticism, their trust in their peers' feedback-giving abilities is expected to increase.

As trust grows, students are likely to demonstrate deeper engagement in the peer feedback process. This increased engagement can be observed through a higher frequency of feedback instances, more detailed and constructive comments, and active participation in discussions related to the feedback received. Students may also become more proactive in seeking clarification and negotiating meaning when responding to peer feedback, further demonstrating their behavioural engagement.

Over time, as students continue to engage in peer feedback activities and develop their skills in providing and responding to feedback, their behavioural engagement is expected to become more consistent and effective, ultimately contributing to improved writing outcomes.

This study will utilise multiple data sources to examine students' behavioural engagement with online peer feedback activities. The primary data sources for assessing behavioural engagement will be the students' essays and the feedback they provide to their peers. To examine the behavioural dimension, the peer feedback and revised essays will be analysed to determine the extent to which participants revise their work based on the peer feedback they receive. This analysis will focus on two specific written behaviours: the feedback given to peers and the revisions made in response to the feedback received from peers.

Qualitative data will come from reflection papers and interviews. The reflection papers will allow students to share their thoughts, experiences, and behaviours related to their engagement in the peer feedback activities. The interviews will provide an opportunity for the instructor–researcher to ask targeted questions and gather more detailed information about students' attitudes and their perception of their behavioural engagement.

By combining the analysis of the essays and peer feedback with the qualitative insights from the reflection papers and interviews, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these L2 students engage behaviourally with the online peer feedback activities. The analysis of all these data sources will contribute to a more thorough assessment of students' observable behaviours and their perceptions of their own engagement in the peer feedback process.

3.4.3.2 *Emotional dimension*

The emotional aspect of engagement in the online peer feedback process can be delineated into three components: interest, value, and affect. Through this theoretical lens, students' emotional engagement may initially manifest at a lower level but is likely to ameliorate with prolonged exposure. In the context of the present study, several cultural factors may initially lead to lower levels of emotional engagement among students participating in peer feedback activities. As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural differences can have a significant impact on the writing of L2 students, especially those from culturally distinct backgrounds such as South Korea. In Confucian cultures, including Korean culture, there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy, social harmony, collectivism, and respect for elders (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). These cultural values and challenges may make it difficult for students to engage emotionally when critiquing their peers' writing.

For example, the emphasis on hierarchy and respect for elders in Korean culture may lead students to feel uncomfortable providing critical feedback to their peers, as they may perceive their peers as having a higher status or more knowledge. Additionally, the focus on social harmony and collectivism may cause students to hesitate when offering constructive criticism, as they may fear disrupting the group dynamic or causing offense. As a result, these cultural factors can create barriers that prevent students from fully engaging emotionally in the peer feedback process.

However, as students work together in static groups throughout the semester, they are expected to develop social relationships and trust with their peers. These

strengthened social bonds are anticipated to gradually increase students' emotional engagement in the peer feedback process, as they become more comfortable sharing their thoughts and critiquing each other's work constructively.

To assess emotional engagement, both quantitative and qualitative data will be analysed. The initial source of data will be a series of three questionnaires administered at different stages of the study. These questionnaires will gather numerical data on students' feelings, attitudes, and emotional responses related to their participation in the online peer feedback activities. Specifically, the questionnaires will explore how participants feel about giving feedback on peer writing, receiving feedback on their writing from their peers, and their perceptions of the helpfulness of peer feedback.

Complementing the quantitative data from the questionnaires, additional qualitative data will be obtained through reflection papers and interviews. The reflection papers will provide students with an opportunity to express their emotions, thoughts, and experiences related to their engagement in the online peer feedback activities in their own words. The interviews will allow the instructor–researcher to delve deeper into students' emotional experiences and gather detailed accounts of their feelings and attitudes towards the peer feedback activities.

By integrating the primary quantitative findings from the questionnaires, which will help explain participants' emotions regarding giving and receiving feedback, as well as their views on the helpfulness of peer feedback, with the qualitative insights gained from the reflection papers and interviews, this study aims to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of these L2 students' emotional engagement with the online peer feedback activities. The combination of both data types will enable a thorough exploration of students' attitudes towards the peer feedback process, their perceived value of the peer feedback activities, and the factors influencing their emotional engagement throughout the process.

3.4.3.3 *Cognitive dimension*

The cognitive dimension of student engagement with the peer feedback process can be deconstructed into three subcomponents: awareness of feedback, cognitive operations, and meta-cognitive operations (Han & Hyland, 2015). As previously elaborated on, the peer feedback process in which the students will be involved comprises two distinct phases: periods of high dialogue with low transactional distance, and periods of low dialogue with high transactional distance. High dialogue phases facilitate negotiation and heightened awareness, which can lead to increased cognitive engagement among students.

Initially, Korean students may experience challenges in fully engaging cognitively with the peer feedback activities due to their cultural background. The emphasis on hierarchy, group harmony, and collectivism may lead students to hesitate when questioning or critically evaluating their peers' work (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). This reluctance can result in a lower level of cognitive engagement, as students may not actively process and internalise the feedback they receive or provide.

However, as students become more familiar with the peer feedback process and develop trust in their peers, their cognitive engagement is expected to increase. During periods of high dialogue, students will have the opportunity to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and engage in deeper discussions about the feedback they receive. These interactions can foster a greater awareness of feedback and encourage students to actively process and apply the suggestions they receive.

As the peer feedback process transitions into periods of low dialogue and high transactional distance, students will need to employ high levels of autonomy to make the most of the experience. More autonomous students are expected to develop and utilise cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to navigate the challenges of high transactional distance effectively. These strategies may include self-monitoring, goal-setting, and self-reflection, which can enhance their cognitive engagement with the peer feedback activities.

To assess cognitive engagement, qualitative data in the form of reflection papers and interviews will be collected. These data sources will provide insights into students' cognitive processes, their awareness of feedback, and the strategies they employ to navigate the peer feedback process. By analysing these qualitative data, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how L2 Korean students approach and navigate the cognitive aspects of the peer feedback process and how their cognitive engagement evolves over time.

3.4.3.4 Social dimension

The social dimension of student engagement refers to the relationships that students develop with their peers, teachers, and the institution, encompassing a sense of belonging and connection (Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Social interactions and trust are particularly important for instilling confidence in the online peer feedback process, especially for Korean L2 students who may be influenced by their cultural values and norms.

In Korean culture, social harmony and group cohesion are highly valued (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). This emphasis on maintaining harmonious relationships may initially lead students to be cautious when providing critical feedback to their peers, as they may fear disrupting the group dynamic or damaging social bonds. As a result, students' social engagement in the peer feedback process may be limited at first, as they navigate the tension between providing constructive feedback and maintaining social harmony.

However, as students work together in static groups throughout the semester, they are expected to develop stronger social relationships and trust with their peers. This increased familiarity and trust can create a more supportive and comfortable environment for students to engage socially in the peer feedback process. As students feel more connected to their peers and the learning community, they may become more willing to share their ideas, offer constructive feedback, and engage in meaningful discussions.

The development of trust and social bonds can also influence students' perceptions of the value and credibility of the feedback they receive. As trust grows, students may be more likely to view their peers as reliable sources of feedback and be more receptive to their suggestions. This increased trust can foster a greater sense of belonging and encourage students to actively participate in the social aspects of the peer feedback process.

Initially, quantitative data from questionnaires will be used to assess social engagement and identify changes over time. Then, qualitative data from reflection papers and interviews will explain the reasons behind these changes.

The reflection papers will offer qualitative insights into students' experiences of developing trust, navigating social relationships, and engaging socially in the peer feedback process. The interviews will provide an opportunity for the instructor–researcher to explore these themes in greater depth and gather detailed accounts of students' social engagement.

By analysing the qualitative data from the reflection papers and interviews, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how L2 Korean students' social engagement evolves throughout the peer feedback process and how their cultural background and the development of trust influence their attitudes towards and utilization of online peer feedback activities.

3.5 Meaningful variables and propositions

From this synthesis of theoretical perspectives, nine integral variables emerge, shaping the exploration of how students engage with online peer feedback. These variables are drawn from the three theories underpinning the study's theoretical framework: social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance. (1) Artefacts and (2) tools, such as public and inner speech, represent the tangible outputs and cognitive strategies students employ, as outlined in social constructivism. Student engagement theory contributes four dimensions: (3) behavioural engagement, (4) emotional engagement, (5) cognitive engagement, and (6) social engagement, which encompass the spectrum of actions, feelings, thought

processes, and relationships within the learning environment. The theory of transactional distance provides three central variables: (7) dialogue, (8) structure, and (9) autonomy, reflecting the communicative dynamics, the scaffolding provided by the educational design, and the students' self-directed learning capabilities.

Each of these nine variables plays a significant role in understanding and analysing how students engage with online peer feedback activities. By considering the interplay between these variables, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence student engagement in online learning environments.

These variables do not exist in isolation but are a consequence of the engagement process itself, varying with the group's dynamics and individual differences. The main goal of the study is to collect and analyse data on these variables to decode how students navigate and adapt to online peer feedback activities. A particular focus of the study is on how student engagement evolves with the shifts in transactional distance and as learners advance through their respective ZPD.

3.5.1 Propositions

The nine identified variables are intrinsically linked to a set of eight propositions—concise statements that define what the study will explore—rooted in the theories of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance. These propositions are designed to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how L2 students engage with online peer feedback activities.

The propositions stem from the interplay of artefacts, tools, engagement dimensions, and transactional distance elements within the online peer feedback environment. The relationships between these variables and the propositions are symbiotic; as the study unfolds, the data collected on each variable will test and refine the corresponding propositions. For example, the analysis of artefacts and the use of tools—both reflective of social constructivism—will help to verify the propositions related to the cognitive operations and autonomy of students. Similarly,

the degrees of behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement are expected to provide insights into how students' attitudes, trust, and interaction patterns align with the study's predictions. The dialogue, structure, and autonomy, fundamental to the concept of transactional distance, relate to the examination of the propositions concerning the reliance on feedback mechanisms and the development of independent learning strategies.

Following are the propositions and their connections to the variables:

- Proposition 1:

Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.

This proposition is connected to the variables of behavioural engagement (frequency and quality of participation) and emotional engagement (students' feelings towards the feedback process). It suggests that as students spend more time engaging with online peer feedback activities, their attitude towards the process will improve, leading to more active participation and positive emotions.

- Proposition 2: Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.

This proposition is connected to social engagement (development of trust within the group) and dialogue (quality of communication that builds trust). It posits that as students spend more time working together in their online peer feedback groups, they will develop a stronger sense of trust in the feedback they receive from their peers, facilitated by the quality of communication and social interactions within the group.

- Proposition 3: Trust in students' ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.

This proposition relates to behavioural engagement (active participation in giving feedback) and cognitive engagement (understanding the value of feedback). It suggests that as students gain more experience in providing feedback and actively

participate in the process, they will develop a greater understanding of the value of feedback and trust in their own ability to offer meaningful input to their peers.

- Proposition 4: As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.

This proposition is tied to structure (how the feedback activities are organized) and autonomy (students' ability to work independently). It proposes that when faced with increased transactional distance, students will depend on the structure and organization of the peer feedback activities to help bridge the communication and psychological gap, while also exercising their autonomy to navigate the distance effectively.

- Proposition 5: As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance.

This proposition pertains to cognitive engagement (strategies for understanding) and tools (use of public and inner speech). It suggests that as transactional distance increases, students will actively develop and employ various behavioural and cognitive strategies, such as using public and inner speech, to help them bridge the communication gap and maintain engagement with the peer feedback process.

- Proposition 6: Culture will influence students' attitudes toward engagement in the online peer feedback process.

This proposition is associated with emotional engagement (cultural factors affecting emotions) and social engagement (interaction within a cultural context). It recognizes that students' cultural backgrounds will play a significant role in shaping their attitudes and emotions towards engaging in online peer feedback, as well as their social interactions within the group.

- Proposition 7: Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.

This proposition is linked to artefacts (quality of feedback in student work), cognitive engagement (processing and application of feedback), and transactional distance (due to lack of structure). It suggests that when faced with non-specific or

vague feedback, students will struggle to process and apply the feedback effectively due to the increased transactional distance and lack of clear structure.

- Proposition 8: Due to individual differences, students will achieve different levels of cognitive engagement.

This proposition is related to tools (differences in the use and development of cognitive strategies) and autonomy (individual capacity for self-directed learning). It acknowledges that individual differences among students, such as their ability to develop and utilise cognitive strategies and their capacity for autonomous learning, will result in varying levels of cognitive engagement with the online peer feedback activities.

Each proposition represents an avenue for exploring how the identified variables manifest in the learning process, ultimately shaping how L2 students experience peer feedback in a synchronous online writing course.

3.6 Overview

The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter provides a foundation for examining how L2 students engage with peer feedback in an online writing course. It draws upon the principles of social constructivism, the concept of student engagement, and transactional distance theory. These theories not only shape the formulation of the study's research questions but also guide the selection of research methodologies and inform the choice of analysis techniques. Within this framework, nine significant variables are identified, each playing a role in how students engage with online peer feedback activities. These variables are linked to the core principles of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance, offering a lens through which student engagement with peer feedback can be examined.

The framework has led to the development of eight propositions that explore the nuances of how L2 students engage with online peer feedback activities. These propositions integrate the theoretical underpinnings to provide a deeper

understanding of how students engage with the peer feedback process in the context of an online writing course.

Chapter 4 will explore the study's research methodology. It will outline the research approach taken, the context of the study, and elaborate on the procedures for data collection and analysis, as well as the integration of the data. To gain a deeper understanding of the identified variables, both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected. The chapter concludes by explaining the data integration process.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to explore how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. The instructor–researcher utilised four sources of data to explore students' engagement with peer feedback activities.

Chapter 2 provided a thorough literature review of relevant literature related to the theoretical framework, encompassing social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance, as well as L2 writing, process writing, and peer feedback. Chapter 3 then elaborated on the theoretical framework that underpins this study, setting the stage for the empirical investigation.

The current chapter extends this work by detailing the research methodology and data analysis procedures for a holistic analysis of student engagement encompassing four dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. Data for this study were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and course artefacts, including peer feedback, essays (peer feedback and revised essays) and reflection papers. Qualitative techniques were employed for the data collection and analysis of interviews and reflection papers, while quantitative techniques were relied on for the data collection and analysis of the questionnaire and essays (peer feedback and revised essays).

The chapter begins by outlining the instructor–researcher's worldview, research approach, and research design. It then provides context about the study setting and the peer fe

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edback activity in which participants engaged, followed by a discussion of quality considerations relevant to the study. Next, it details the quantitative data collection and analysis methods employed, specifically the questionnaire used to explore the emotional dimension and the numerical coding of essays (peer feedback and revised essays) aimed at examining the behavioural dimension of engagement. Additionally, the chapter outlines the qualitative techniques, such as the analysis of reflection papers and interviews, which offered insights into the cognitive and social dimensions of engagement, for which qualitative data helps explain it all, and provided additional information on the emotional and behavioural dimensions.

The chapter explains how the design and analytical approach of each data source were intended to deepen the instructor–researcher's understanding of the four research questions and relevant propositions, connecting the theoretical foundations established in previous chapters with the study's methodology. Finally, the data integration process is explained. The data sources were integrated to develop four research strands, which were used to explore the four dimensions of student engagement.

4.2 Instructor–researcher worldview

The philosophy of teaching held by the instructor–researcher of this study has developed through a combination of years of classroom teaching, continued studies, and professional development. The instructor–researcher's general view of learning is a blend of social constructivist and pragmatic principles. From this position, the role as a writing instructor is perceived as that of a facilitator in creating an environment that enables and stimulates students to pursue their interests and critically examine their world.

As mentioned earlier, learning is perceived as a social phenomenon that emerges when individuals interact around shared objectives and construct knowledge within the given social context. To elaborate on the implementation of the social constructivist framework, the instructor–researcher draws upon the concepts of transformative learning, as proposed by Mezirow (2008, 2018) and Rogers (2021), as well as critical pedagogy, as proposed by Freire (1970, 1998, 2018, 2021). From this perspective, learning occurs when people engage in meaningful tasks, both in and out of the classroom, and reflect on these experiences as a way to challenge or confirm previously held beliefs or knowledge.

In the capacity of an instructor, the instructor–researcher perceives her role as that of facilitating the social construction of knowledge. To achieve this, a safe and supportive setting is provided to students, encouraging their active engagement in meaningful activities relevant to their lives. Students are prompted to reflect on their experiences, encompassing both course-related activities and aspects of life outside the classroom, within the social context of the classroom or online. During this reflection, beliefs and taken-for-granted knowledge are challenged.

While acknowledging the necessity for students to acquire content, the instructor–researcher generally rejects the traditional notion that the primary objective of education lies in the mere transfer of knowledge, which aligns with the banking view of education (Freire, 2018). The instructor–researcher's hope is for students to depart from the course equipped with improved critical thinking skills and a better understanding of their learning processes. Success is gauged by the extent to which students are better positioned to take advantage of their future learning opportunities upon completing the course.

4.3 Research approach

The research problem's complexity, as described in Chapter 1, necessitated the adoption of a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This approach was particularly suitable due to the need to examine relationships between

variables (described in Chapter 3), which is well-suited to a quantitative approach, and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena, warranting a qualitative perspective (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

In this study, quantitative data was collected to assess the emotional and behavioural aspects of student engagement with peer feedback. This included using questionnaires to measure student attitudes towards peer feedback (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011) and employing frequency counts to analyse the types of feedback given and their utilisation in student rewrites and positive mentions of themes over time (Nelson & Schunn, 2009). The cognitive dimension, which focuses on the strategies and constructions students develop while engaging in peer feedback, was explored through qualitative data gathered from reflection papers and interviews.

The social dimension of student engagement with online peer feedback is not well understood, particularly in the context of L2 students, and the complexity of social interactions argues for a qualitative approach as being most appropriate to examine this aspect of engagement (Yin, 2014). The collection and examination of the reflection papers and interviews aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the social dimension.

Examining the four research strands, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social, was necessary to gain a holistic understanding of student engagement in peer feedback activities (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Neither a quantitative nor a qualitative approach alone would have been adequate in expanding understanding of this complex undertaking. While a similar amount of quantitative and qualitative data was collected, a mixed-methods approach giving priority to qualitative (QUAL) data over the quantitative (quan) data was the most appropriate research design for this study (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

4.4 Research design

This study adopted a quasi-mixed design, collecting qualitative and quantitative data with minimal integration between the two types (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Quantitative methods were primarily employed to assess the

behavioural and emotional dimensions and changes over time, while qualitative methods were primarily used to explore the cognitive and social dimensions. However, the qualitative data also provided insights into the underlying factors influencing all four dimensions of engagement, offering a deeper understanding of what shaped students' behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement.

Specifically, a Likert-style questionnaire served as a quantitative method to explore the emotional dimension (Magalhães et al., 2023). Frequency counts of essays (peer feedback and revised student essays) were utilised as quantitative methods to examine the behavioural dimension.

Conversely, the analysis of reflection papers and interviews primarily focused on exploring the cognitive and social dimensions of engagement. However, the qualitative data also provided insights into the underlying factors influencing all four dimensions of engagement, offering a deeper understanding of what shaped students' behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement.

While the data collection methods were initially separated, the analysis process involved integration across dimensions. The qualitative analysis of reflection papers and interviews was combined with the quantitative data from questionnaires and essays. This integration allowed a more comprehensive understanding across all four dimensions.

Aligning with the parallel-mixed design subtype, qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently to address the research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This integration facilitated a holistic exploration of student engagement with peer feedback.

The aim of this study was to gain a holistic understanding of L2 students' experiences when engaged in online peer feedback activities. Engagement in these activities was conceptualized as a meta-construct encompassing four dimensions: emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Han & Hyland, 2015; Mulia, 2020; Philip & Duchesne, 2016; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

As depicted in Table 1.1, each data source was used to help answer one or more research questions and examine one or more propositions and a dimension of engagement, as detailed in previous chapters.

Table 1.1

Research Design

| Research Strand | Research Question | Proposition | Dimension of Engagement | Method | Data Source |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | RQ1 | P4, P5, P7 | Behavioural | quan | Essays |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 2 | RQ2 | P1, P2, P3 | Emotional | quan | Questionnaires |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| 3 | RQ3 | P4, P5, P7, P8 | Cognitive | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Essays |
| 4 | RQ4 | P1, P2, P3, P6 | Social | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews |
| | | | | quan | Questionnaires |

(Table 1.1, repeated from pages 15 and 76)

4.5 Context of the study

The present study took place at George Mason University Korea (Mason Korea). Mason Korea is a branch campus of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, United States. It is one of four international universities and three research institutes on the Incheon Global Campus (IGC). Established in 2014 as a joint national project by the Korean government and Incheon Metropolitan City, the IGC is in Songdo International City, a sustainably designed city in Incheon Province, South Korea, southwest of the country's capital, Seoul (George Mason University Korea, 2024). The other three international universities on the IGC are The University of Utah Asia Campus, Ghent University Global Campus, and The State University of New York Korea; the three research institutes are Global Startup Campus, Bio Support Center, and Stanford Center.

Mason Korea students spend their first three years studying in Songdo, Korea, and their final year studying in Fairfax, Virginia, United States. As of June

2024, Mason Korea has approximately 900 students representing more than 20 countries (George Mason University Korea, 2024). The current international student ratio is 15 percent (George Mason University Korea, 2024). Admissions to Mason Korea are reviewed by an admissions committee comprising Mason Fairfax and Mason Korea staff. All Mason applicants must demonstrate English proficiency for admission consideration, regardless of citizenship. English proficiency may be demonstrated by an exam (IELTS 6.5, TOEFL 80, or equivalent) or a waiver for English proficiency (George Mason University Korea, 2024).

The participants in the present study were Mason Korea students enrolled in a section of a first-year English composition course: ENGH 101 Composition (3 credits) or ENGH 100 Composition for Multilingual Writers (4 credits). Each of these courses fulfills the Mason Core first-year writing requirement. At Mason Korea, both ENGH 100 and ENGH 101 follow the same coordinated curriculum. Students self-select which course to take, however, ENGH 100 is recommended for multilingual students, as this course has 52.5 contact hours per semester, compared to the 37.5 contact hours in ENGH 101, allowing instructors to present material at a pace suited to L2 students. Each of these courses introduces students to the recursive, iterative nature of writing by developing reading, writing, and research strategies for a range of audiences, genres, and purposes.

The instructor–researcher of the present study has been teaching English language and writing at the university level since 2004. Although primarily in Korea, she has also taught in Kuwait and China. Prior to settling in academia, she worked as a content developer and editor in educational publishing in both Australia and Korea. Currently a Ph.D. candidate researching how L2 students engage with peer feedback in the writing classroom, she holds a B.A. in Journalism and Government Studies, an M.A. in Creative Writing, and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics. She has been employed as a Term Assistant Professor in the English Department at Mason Korea since August 2017.

4.5.1 Participants

All participants in this study were students at Mason Korea who were enrolled in either a section of ENGH 101 or one of two sections of ENGH 100 taught by the instructor–researcher. Participants in the two sections of ENGH 100 were all Korean nationals with English as a L2. Participants enrolled in ENGH 101 were all Korean nationals with English as a L2, however, this class also comprised non-Korean students with English as an L1 (5 students) who ultimately were not participants in the study.

4.5.2 Sampling

The research objectives of this study guided the instructor–researcher's decisions regarding sampling methodology. In quantitative research, where generalization to a broader population is often desired, probability sampling is typically the preferred approach (Gall et al., 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Trochim, 2006). Conversely, qualitative research aims to gain in-depth insights into specific issues, favouring purposeful sampling to select participants who can provide rich, relevant information (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Although this study has two quantitative data sources and two qualitative data sources, the main aim of the study is to understand the phenomena and, to a lesser extent, to examine the relationships between variables. As this study was not attempting to generalise to a broader population, the main criteria for inclusion in the study was that the participants had lived the experience of interest: engaging in online peer feedback activities. Purposeful sampling is designed to be used when participants must have a specific quality of experience (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). To recruit participants who had participated in online peer feedback, the instructor–researcher used a convenience–purposeful sampling strategy to recruit participants from her ENGH 100 and ENGH 101 courses. The instructor–researcher invited students from each of her classes to voluntarily participate in the study.

Drawing from a convenient pool of volunteers runs the risk of having a biased sample (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Although this pool of volunteers is limited to

students who chose to take instructor–researcher’s courses, there is no reason to suspect that they are significantly different from the general population of Mason Korea students. This is particularly the case, as most students taking these courses are first-year students with little prior knowledge of instructors; the courses are required “Mason Core” courses; only one section of ENGH 101 was offered during the semester of study; students have limited options, due to scheduling conflicts. Considering these factors, the instructor–researcher assessed there was no significant danger of having a bias sample at the outset of the study.

4.5.2.1 Participant recruitment

Participants were recruited from two sections of ENGH 100 and one section of ENGH 100; all three courses were taught by the instructor–researcher. Participants who completed all three administrations of the Peer Feedback Attitude Questionnaire were included in the study.

4.5.2.2 Sample size

As this study employed a mixed-methods research design, both quantitative and qualitative research sample size guidelines were considered in determining an adequate sample size. For quantitative research, a larger sample size is generally preferable, as more participant scores of the measured variables make the data more representative of the target population (Gall et al., 2007). However, determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research can be more flexible, allowing the researcher to adjust the sample size as data is collected and analysed (Gall et al., 2007).

In qualitative research, the focus is on the information obtained from each participant rather than the number of participants (Sandelowski, 1995; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). One way to maximize the information-to-participant ratio is through saturation, where the researcher gathers information until no new insights emerge from including additional participants (Creswell, 2012; Sandelowski, 1995; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

For this study, all volunteer participants who completed all three administrations of the Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire were included, resulting in an initial sample of 29 participants. The instructor–researcher considered this an adequate number for the quantitative component but remained open to including more participants if saturation was not reached during the qualitative analysis.

At the end of the analysis, the instructor–researcher felt confident that saturation had been achieved. While the study began with 29 participant volunteers, the number included in the data analysis varied by data type: 29 sets of questionnaires, 29 sets of reflection papers, 22 sets of essays with feedback, and 12 interviews. All 29 original volunteers completed the questionnaires and submitted reflection papers, which were included in the final analysis. Seven participants did not have a complete essay set (peer feedback and revised essay), so those incomplete essay sets were excluded from the final analysis.

As indicated by Table 4.1, during the interview phase of the study, the instructor–researcher recruited 12 volunteers from the original 29. She used fewer participants in this phase to allow for a more in-depth interaction. The instructor–researcher followed qualitative research guidance: having too many participants may overwhelm the researcher’s ability to engage with each participant in a meaningful way, and thus undermine the quality of the interviews and the analysis (Creswell, 2012; Sandelowski, 1995). Although the instructor–researcher entertained the possibility of conducting additional interviews, once she completed the scheduled interviews, it was clear she had reached a state of saturation; she was obtaining no new information from the final interviews and was unlikely to do so by conducting additional interviews.

Table 4.1*Number of Participants*

| Data source | Method | Description | Sample Size |
|-------------------|--------|--|-------------|
| Questionnaires | quan | All 29 volunteer participants completed the Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire at three separate intervals during the study. | 29 |
| Essays | quan | Participants submitted essays for analysis, while the peer feedback they received was previously submitted by their peers. If either the essay or the corresponding peer feedback was missing, the set was considered incomplete and excluded from the final analysis. There were 22 complete essay sets, each coded to provide quantitative data. | 22 |
| Reflection papers | QUAL | All 29 participants submitted three reflection papers. These were analysed using frequency counts of the emergent themes to obtain qualitative insights. | 29 |
| Interviews | QUAL | From the 22 participants who submitted essays (and received peer feedback), 12 were recruited to be interviewed. This allowed for in-depth interaction to achieve saturation. Additional interviews were possible but not needed. | 12 |

4.5.3 Peer feedback activities

During the Spring 2020 university semester, the courses used in the present study met for synchronous online sessions through Zoom, twice a week. ENGH 100 sections lasted for 1 hour and 45 minutes per meeting, while the ENGH 101 section lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes per meeting. Students were required to have their cameras on during these sessions to increase participation and engagement. The peer feedback activities took place on three occasions during the semester, following the initial drafts of the courses' three major assignments: Analytical Summary, Researched Argument Essay, and Persuasive Letter.

Throughout the semester, students worked in static groups of 4–5. These groups were randomly formulated by the instructor in the second week of the semester. The instructor–researcher employs static groups in her courses to enhance comfort and promote collaboration. Over the course of an entire semester, students develop relationships and trust within their designated groups. The peer feedback sessions for these assignments took place during weeks 5, 11, and 15 of the semester.

On designated peer feedback days, the entire class meeting was devoted to this activity. Students were assigned to review the work of one group member. To be eligible to participate in and to receive credit for the peer feedback activity, students were required to attend the Zoom session on time and have submitted a first draft of the major assignment meeting the minimum requirements before the start of the class. These drafts had to be posted to the appropriate discussion forum as per the provided instructions, the night before the class.

Before starting the peer feedback activity, students were tasked with completing a questionnaire about their attitude towards peer feedback (Appendix A); consent forms had been completed by participants in the weeks prior (Appendix B). Once participants had completed the questionnaire, the instructor–researcher guided the class through the peer feedback activity, explaining its objectives, goals, and instructions. The primary aim of the peer feedback activity was for students to offer comprehensive, constructive, actionable feedback to a peer while reflecting on ways

to improve their own work and fostering a collaborative environment for sharing ideas and writing strategies. Once the instructor–researcher felt confident that the students understood how to proceed, students were sent to their designated Zoom breakout rooms, each corresponding to their group number, and remained there until 10 minutes before the scheduled finish time for the class. At that point, the instructor–researcher closed the breakout rooms and brought everyone back to the main room.

Within their breakout rooms, students determined who would provide feedback to whom, ensuring that partners rotated for each of the three peer feedback activities during the semester to encourage multiple perspectives. After settling on the pairing, students confirmed their choices with the instructor–researcher. Students were able to do this, as the instructor–researcher was moving between breakout rooms for the duration of the class.

With peer pairings established, students were tasked with locating and downloading their peer's paper from the “Discussion Board” in the course's learning management system (LMS), Blackboard. They were instructed to download both their peer's paper and the peer feedback activity form (Appendix C) as Microsoft Word files and save them on their computers. In addition, while in breakout rooms, students we encouraged to ask clarifying questions related to the guided peer feedback activity and their peer's paper.

Each of the three peer feedback activities were closely aligned with the grading rubric for the related assignment. Students were required to annotate their peer's paper using highlights and optional "comment bubble" annotations, responding to questions and providing advice on the peer feedback document. Each student completed the peer feedback activity for one group member. They were informed beforehand that their performance as readers/reviewers would be assessed based on the comprehensiveness, constructiveness, and actionability of their feedback. While students had to begin the peer feedback activity during the class time, completion could extend beyond the class meeting. The completed peer

feedback activity was due to the “Discussion Board” in the course's Blackboard as a reply to their peer's thread by the end of the day (11:59 pm).

Students were instructed to offer encouraging, constructive, and actionable comments to their peers. Each peer feedback activity was graded on the criteria of comprehensiveness, constructiveness, and actionability. Feedback and grades were provided by the instructor–researcher, distinguishing between exemplary and less effective efforts, such as: “Well done! You provided your peer with comprehensive, constructive, actionable feedback! 25/25” and “Although your review was comprehensive, you failed to provide your peer with any constructive, actionable feedback. Be sure to check in about how you can provide more helpful feedback to your peer before the next peer feedback activity. 15/25”.

4.6 Quality of the study

The instructor–researcher worked to inspire confidence in the results of the present mixed-methods study by following recommended quantitative and qualitative research practices throughout the study. Quantitative research is most frequently judged in terms of reliability, validity (internal and external), and objectivity (Gall, 2007). While these cornerstones of quantitative research do not transfer neatly to qualitative research, the instructor–researcher drew on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) proposed “trustworthiness”, with four components: dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability, as the criteria for judging the quality of the study’s qualitative research. Similarly, the instructor–researcher aspires to a “nod” of confidence, as described by van Manen (1990). While discussing phenomenological research, van Manen (1990) argued that trustworthiness lies in the quality of the phenomenological description; this sense of confidence has been referred to as the “phenomenological nod”, a sense that the reader can identify with the experiences being described. Although this study was not a phenomenological one, that same sense of a “nod” of recognition may be a sign of the trustworthiness of the study.

4.6.1 Validity

The instructor–researcher also employed validation strategies, as suggested by Creswell (2013), to promote the quality of the study. Creswell (2013) suggests eight possible “validation” strategies to promote the quality of qualitative research: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer feedback or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich-thick description, and external audits. Creswell (2012) acknowledges using all of these validation strategies may be impractical; he recommends using at least two of these validation strategies. As such, the instructor–researcher used five of Creswell’s (2012) eight proposed validation strategies to ensure the quality of the study: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, member checking, and rich-thick description, and clarifying researcher bias.

4.6.1.1 Prolonged engagement and persistent observation

The instructor–researcher engaged with the participants and their writing for the full 16-week semester, spanning February to June 2020. During this period, she met with the participants twice per week, synchronously via Zoom, meeting with students in her two ENGH 100 sections for 1 hour and 45 minutes per meeting and students in her and ENGH 101 section for 1 hour and 15 minutes per meeting. Beyond class meetings, the instructor–researcher engaged with the participants the following ways: by reading, grading, and providing feedback on their written work; any time they attended her twice-weekly scheduled “office hours” via Zoom; by responding to questions they sent via email; for 30 minutes during Week 11 of the semester via Zoom for a required 1:1 individual conference to discuss their research writing progress.

The instructor–researcher’s engagement with the participants continued through the data analysis and writing processes. During an approximately six-month period after the end of the course, she was immersed in transcribing, reading, and re-reading the audio recordings of the interviews. For both the interviews and the reflection papers, she was focused on the participants’ words and thoughts as she conducted the qualitative analysis.

4.6.2 *Triangulation*

The quantitative data, questionnaire, and course artefacts allowed the instructor–researcher to triangulate the qualitative data, interviews, and reflection papers. The analysis of the course artefacts, frequency counts of feedback and responses to feedback, were particularly useful as a way to check if what was conveyed in the reflection papers and interviews was accurate. In addition, following all interviews and the reading of the reflection papers, the instructor–researcher spent some time reflecting on what she had heard or read, making sure she understood what the participant was telling her, and that she would be able to refer back to these reflection papers and interviews at a later date.

4.6.2.1 *Member checking*

Throughout the interview and analysis process, the instructor–researcher engaged in a process of member checking. During each interview, she engaged in a process of reflective listening (Candela, 2019), as a way to restate and clarify the participant’s meaning. As related above, following each interview, and reading of the participant’s reflection papers, the instructor–researcher spent some time clarifying her understanding of the material the participant related to her. Finally, as the instructor–researcher analysed the data, she kept in contact with the participants and checked with them as needed to see that they agreed with her interpretations.

4.6.2.2 *Rich-thick description and clarifying my bias*

The writing of a qualitative description and clarifying my bias naturally flow together. The writing of phenomenological descriptions requires the instructor–researcher to become aware and then “bracket” their biases (Moustakas, 1994). Although this is not a phenomenological study, the instructor–researcher followed Moustakas’ (1994) method of bracketing any presuppositions regarding the phenomenon and to write a rich-thick description. The process of clarifying her

biases began before the start of the study and continued throughout the gathering of data, analysis of data, and the writing of this dissertation.

4.7 Quantitative data collection and analysis

Two types of quantitative data were collected and analysed in this study: The Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire and essays, comprising peer feedback and revised essays.

4.7.1 Questionnaire

The Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire was designed to measure the participants favourable or unfavourable attitude on several dimensions toward participating in online peer feedback activities.

4.7.1.1 Questionnaire development and composition

The Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire was designed to understand participants' attitudes towards giving and receiving feedback. The questionnaire consisted of twenty Likert style questions on a five-point scale, from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Informed by fifteen years of guiding students in the practice of providing peer feedback, the individual questionnaire items were developed to examine five conceptual areas which the instructor–researcher believes to be important for students' engagement with peer feedback. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the initial conceptual areas which comprised the twenty questionnaire items were 1. Comfort giving feedback, 2. Comfort giving negative feedback, 3. Comfort receiving feedback, 4. Incorporation of received feedback on subsequent drafts, and 5. Perception of helpfulness of the peer feedback process.

Figure 4.1

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Copy and paste this check mark (✓) to answer each question. If you are unsure, leave a blank or select 'Neutral.'

| | | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neutral | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----|---|----------------|---------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 2 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates positive feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 3 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to organization. | | | | | |
| 4 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to grammar. | | | | | |
| 5 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to material covered in our class. | | | | | |
| 6 | I enjoy giving my classmates positive feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 7 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates negative feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 8 | I avoid giving my classmates negative feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 9 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 10 | I value receiving positive feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 11 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to organization. | | | | | |
| 12 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to grammar. | | | | | |
| 13 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to material covered in our class. | | | | | |
| 14 | I feel comfortable receiving negative feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 15 | I value receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 16 | I incorporate peer feedback related to organization into my writing. | | | | | |
| 17 | I incorporate peer feedback related to grammar into my writing. | | | | | |
| 18 | I incorporate peer feedback related to material covered in our class into my writing. | | | | | |
| 19 | The peer feedback process (i.e., giving feedback to classmates and receiving feedback from classmates) helps me to improve my next draft. | | | | | |
| 20 | The peer feedback process (i.e., giving feedback to classmates and receiving feedback from classmates) improves my knowledge of writing. | | | | | |

The Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire was administered online to all volunteer participants on three occasions, prior to each of the peer feedback activities. After the third administration, 29 participants had fully completed the questionnaire at all three intervals. These 29 participants with complete questionnaire data were included in the analysis pertaining to this quantitative component of the study.

4.7.1.2 Questionnaire analysis

Using SPSS and following the steps outlined in Pallant (2020), an exploratory factor analysis with a Monte Carlo analysis was conducted on the results of the third administration of the Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire. The factor analysis identified three significant factors: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process.

Using these three factors, the instructor–researcher ran Cronbach’s Alpha on the results from the third administration of the questionnaire.

As illustrated in Table 4.2, the results of the third administration of the questionnaire show a meaningful relationship for all three identified factors.

Table 4.2

Factor Analysis of the Peer Feedback Attitude Questionnaire

| | |
|---|-------|
| Comfort giving feedback, reliability | 0.878 |
| Comfort receiving feedback, reliability | 0.934 |
| Helpfulness of the peer feedback process, reliability | 0.931 |

Having identified the three factors which contribute to participants’ attitude toward peer feedback, the instructor–researcher wanted to see if there were significant differences between the factor means on the three administrations of the questionnaire: evidence that participants’ attitudes changed with increased exposure to online peer feedback activities. Using SPSS she ran paired t-tests on all possible

combinations between the significant factors identified in the factor analysis and questionnaire administrations.

4.7.1.3 Application

The analysis of the questionnaire data informed the research question dealing with the emotional dimension, Research Question 2: How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students' attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?

The results of the factor analysis transformed this general question to a three-pronged question: How do participants feel about giving feedback on peer writing, receiving feedback on their writing from their peers, and the helpfulness of peer feedback? The data collection and analysis used for this data source informed as to the specific attitudes and perceptions of students regarding the peer feedback process. In conjunction with the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers and interviews, this quantitative data added depth to understanding how students' attitudes evolved and the potential factors influencing these changes. In addition to gaining an understanding of how the students felt about these three factors, the three administrations, at different points in the semester, of the questionnaire examined the longitudinal nature of Proposition 1: Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.

4.7.2 Essays

Throughout the semester, participants engaged in three peer feedback activities. However, numerical coding was conducted solely on the second peer feedback activity and the revised essays that incorporated feedback from that particular activity. This focus was chosen because the second peer feedback assignment and activity were the most extensive and substantial among the three.

The numerical coding served two purposes. First, it allowed for the analysis of the types of feedback provided by participants during the second peer feedback

activity. Second, it enabled the examination of how participants utilised the feedback they received to revise their essays after completing this peer feedback activity. By focusing the numerical coding efforts on the second, most major peer feedback assignment, a thorough analysis could be conducted on both the feedback given as well as how that feedback was applied in revising the essays.

4.7.2.1 *Essay development and composition*

Participants were required to write a 1500-word researched argument essay in response to a self-composed research question. The essay needed to synthesize credible source material and include the participants' own analysis of this information.

As part of an in-class activity, participants were assigned to provide feedback on one static group member's essay using the Researched Argument Essay Peer Feedback Activity (Appendix C). This guided peer feedback activity was designed with three main objectives. First, it aimed to encourage students to provide critical and constructive feedback to their peers. Second, it sought to prompt students to reflect on ways to improve their own essays. Finally, it aimed to facilitate the sharing of new ideas and strategies for writing among students.

The Researched Argument Essay Peer Feedback Activity instructed students to annotate a peer's paper using highlights and optional comment bubble annotations, answer guiding questions, and provide advice. The questions in the peer feedback activity were derived from the rubric for the Researched Argument Essay Assignment Sheet (Appendix D). Students were informed that their performance as reviewers would be assessed based on the comprehensiveness, constructiveness, and actionability of their feedback.

After completing the peer feedback activity, students were required to revise their essays. Numerical coding of the participant peer feedback activities and essays was conducted to examine the types of feedback participants provided and how they responded to the feedback they received.

4.7.2.2 Essay analysis

The analysis of participants' feedback and their uptake of that feedback in revising their essays began by coding the given feedback as either specific or non-specific. Specific feedback referred to instances where a peer identified a particular issue (e.g., an APA style error). Non-specific feedback referred to general problems or suggestions raised by peers (e.g., provide more supporting evidence).

After coding the given feedback into specific or non-specific categories, participants' responses to the feedback in their revised drafts were numerically coded: 0 = feedback not addressed, 1 = feedback superficially addressed, 3 = feedback adequately addressed.

It is important to note that there was further attrition for this analysis due to some participants not completing all portions of the assignment. Ultimately, 22 participants were included in this analysis of the feedback provided and uptake in their revised essays.

4.7.2.3 Application

The quantitative analysis of the peer feedback and revised essays is used to answer the research question associated with the behavioural dimension, Research Question 1: What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities? As the methodology suggests, this question is referring to written behaviours: given feedback on peer writing and responses to received peer feedback.

The data collection and analysis used for this data source will inform as to what rates students give specific and non-specific feedback and to what extent students incorporate received feedback in subsequent drafts. This issue is addressed by Proposition 4: As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance, Proposition 5: As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance, and Proposition 7: Due to

transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.

4.7.3 Summary

The study involved the collection and analysis of two types of quantitative data: the Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire and numerical coding of participant essays.

The Peer Feedback Attitude questionnaire was developed to gauge participants' favourable or unfavourable attitudes toward online peer feedback activities. Consisting of twenty Likert-style questions on a five-point scale, it aimed to explore five key areas related to student engagement with peer feedback, including comfort levels in giving and receiving feedback, the incorporation of feedback into subsequent drafts, and the perception of the feedback process's helpfulness. This questionnaire was administered three times during the study.

The questionnaire results were analysed using exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha. Three significant factors emerged: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and the helpfulness of the peer feedback process. These factors were further examined to understand how participants' attitudes changed with increased exposure to online peer feedback activities. The analysis of the questionnaire data addressed the research question concerning the emotional dimension of learner attitudes toward peer feedback and examined the longitudinal nature of prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities.

Concurrently, the numerical coding of participant essays aimed to explore the types of feedback given and how participants responded to the feedback. Students wrote a 1500-word researched argument essay, provided feedback to a classmate's essay, and then revised their own essays. The coding process classified feedback as specific or non-specific and assessed the adequacy of participants' responses to the received feedback.

This section dealt exclusively with quantitative data. The results and analysis of the qualitative data will be presented in the following section.

4.8 Qualitative data collection and analysis

Two types of qualitative data were collected and analysed as part of this study: 29 sets of three reflection papers and 12 interviews.

4.8.1 Reflection papers

Following all three online peer feedback activities, participants were asked to write a brief reflection paper using the following prompt (Appendix F):

Write a one-paragraph reflection of the peer feedback process. Consider the following questions as you reflect. Include details and/or explanations in your paragraph where appropriate:

- How comfortable and/or confident did you feel about participating in this peer feedback? Why?
- To what extent did you incorporate feedback/changes suggested by your peer reviewer before submitting the final draft of your assignment?
- To what extent did the “process” of reviewing another student’s paper influence changes you made to your own paper before submitting the final draft.

The instructor–researcher completed the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers following the steps outlined below, adapted from Seidman (2019):

Step 1. Read each reflection paper several times, identifying meaningful units. Each meaningful unit was placed in the left-hand column of a table with three columns.

Step 2. After identifying the meaningful units and placing them in the table, wrote a word or phrase which summed up the meaning or essence of the meaningful unit.

Step 3. Read through the words and phrases she used to sum up the meaningful units, looking for meaningful units which could be eliminated because they did not contribute to the purpose of the study.

Step 4. Repeat the process as above. This time she used the highlight function to identify meaningful units which could be combined to form themes, using like colours for like potential themes.

Step 5. Continued this process for each reflection paper until she had themes which she felt were mutually exclusive as well as comprehensive of the thoughts and feelings expressed in the reflection papers.

Step 6. Once the salient themes were identified, frequency of the identified themes were counted:

- These frequency counts allowed the instructor–researcher to examine how prevalent each theme was at each stage of the course.
- Descriptive statistics were then generated to get a “picture” of the themes.

The themes for the three sets of reflection papers were analysed together. Later these sets were treated as separate instances for statistical analysis.

4.8.1.1 Application

The reflection papers are the primary source of data for the research questions dealing with the cognitive and social dimensions, Research Question 3: How do students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process? and Research Question 4: What is the impact of the development of social relationships between peers on student engagement with online peer feedback activities? The qualitative themes derived from the analysis of the reflection papers served to add depth of understanding to all four research questions and eight propositions. One notable advantage of the reflection papers was their completion by a more diverse range of students, mitigating the potential bias that could be associated with those who volunteered for interviews. Moreover, the reflection papers provided students with greater autonomy to write about what they liked.

In the final phase of reflection paper analysis, a quantitative approach was employed to examine the frequency counts of the identified themes. This allowed the instructor–researcher to examine how student engagement may have evolved over time, providing a longitudinal perspective. The longitudinal aspect is especially

pertinent to the social dimension, as it can offer valuable insights into the formation and development of social connections among students as the semester progressed.

4.8.2 Interviews

The analysis of interviews was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of students' attitudes toward and engagement with peer feedback. These interviews served to fill in gaps left by other data sources.

4.8.2.1 Interview structure and process

The instructor–researcher interviewed twelve participant volunteers over Zoom during Week 15 of the 16-week semester. Each interview lasted between nine and fifteen minutes and was recorded. The interviews were semi-structured (Appendix E). As shown below, there were five set prompts:

- Tell me about your peer feedback experience this semester.
- How comfortable did you feel providing peer feedback to your classmate's work? Why?
- How confident did you feel about the feedback you received from your peer reviewer? Why?
- Tell me about the types of changes you made to your draft following the peer feedback process.
- Tell me about the peer feedback process compared to the process of receiving feedback from your instructor.

The volunteer participants were encouraged to respond to each prompt fully. When the instructor–researcher came across a response which she found interesting, contradictory with other data, or ambiguous, she asked follow-up questions until she was satisfied that she had a full understanding of the participant's meaning.

The instructor–researcher completed the analysis of the twelve interviews following similar steps as outlined for the reflection papers, adapted from Seidman (2019):

Step 1. Listened to the interviews several times to familiarise herself with the content. During this stage, she listened carefully to the audio recordings, making sure she understood the participants' meaning.

Step 2. Transcribed the interviews. In many ways, this step was a continuation of the previous step. While transcribing the interviews, the researcher had to listen carefully to small chunks of each interview. This forced her to process the interviews in a deliberate way.

Step 3. Read the interviews several times, identifying meaningful units. Each meaningful unit was placed in the left-hand column of a table with three columns. Looking at the interviews in written form, allowed her to parse the interviews into meaningful units. By this time, she had a good understanding of the interviews, but the process of identifying the meaningful units forced her to slow down and reread the interviews multiple times.

Step 4. After identifying the meaningful units and placing them in the table, wrote a word or phrase which she felt summed up the meaning or essence of the meaningful unit. These words or phrases were the first attempt at identifying the themes in each interview.

Step 5. Read through the words and phrases she used to sum up the meaningful units, looking for meaningful units which could be eliminated because they did not contribute to the purpose of the study.

Step 6. Once the meaningful units which did not contribute to the purpose of the study were eliminated, she followed the same process as above. This time she used the highlight function to identify meaningful units which could be combined to form themes.

Step 7. Continued this process for each interview transcript until she had themes which she felt were mutually exclusive as well as comprehensive of the thoughts and feelings expressed in the interviews.

4.8.2.2 Application

The themes arising from the analysis of the twelve participant interviews will significantly enhance the depth of understanding across all four research questions and eight propositions. They will be particularly valuable in explaining the underlying reasons and mechanisms, addressing the cognitive and social dimensions that are challenging to quantitative exploration, Research Question 3: How do students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process? and Research Question 4: What is the impact of the development of social relationships between peers on student engagement with online peer feedback activities?

In the areas explored by the quantitative data, the emotional and behavioural dimensions, these qualitative themes will add to the depth of understanding as to why students felt as they did and why students behaved as they did. In addition, the quantitative data and qualitative themes will serve as checks on each other for accuracy and fullness. In the areas where quantitative data was not gathered, the cognitive and social dimensions, the fluid nature of the interview process allowed for the investigation of these poorly understood phenomena.

4.8.3 Summary

The study involved the collection and analysis of two types of qualitative data: reflection papers and interviews.

Participants were tasked with composing reflection papers after the first three online peer feedback activities, responding to specific prompts. The qualitative analysis of these papers followed a structured procedure, adapted from Seidman (2019). The frequency counts of themes allowed for a longitudinal examination of student engagement.

The qualitative themes from the reflection papers enhance the comprehension of all four the research questions and eight propositions. These reflection papers, representing a broader group of students than completed the interview process, offered participants the autonomy to explore topics of personal interest.

To gain a deeper understanding of students' attitudes and their engagement with peer feedback, twelve participant volunteers engaged in interviews during Week

15 of the 16-week semester. These semi-structured interviews included set prompts and were analysed following a multi-step process similar to the one used for the reflection papers.

The resulting themes from the interview analysis enrich understanding of the research questions and propositions. They provide essential context for the emotional and behavioural dimensions studied quantitatively, serving as validation points for data accuracy and comprehensiveness.

The following section will focus on the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing for a more holistic understanding of the results of the data.

4.9 Data integration

Data integration in this study was an important step, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the research findings. Integrating various data sources allows for validation and deeper exploration of the information obtained from each source (O’Cathain et al., 2010). Data integration is not merely about confirming findings but also involves a nuanced process that occurs throughout the study, from data collection to analysis. Without data integration, a mixed methods study may be no more useful than a quantitative and a qualitative study run separately.

Data integration in the present study involved both confirmation and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The qualitative analysis deepened the understanding of student engagement dimensions examined by the quantitative analysis, while the emerging qualitative themes explored the less understood cognitive and social dimensions of student engagement with online peer feedback activities.

O’Cathain et al. (2010) describe three methods of data integration: triangulation, following a thread, and using a mixed-methods matrix. This study employed triangulation and following a thread. Triangulation involved corroborating two independent data sets and integrating them to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. For example, this approach was used to examine how participants responded to feedback in subsequent drafts, utilizing both

qualitative (i.e., interviews, reflection papers) and quantitative (i.e., essay artefacts) data.

Follow a thread, another method used, involves identifying key findings during initial analysis and then exploring these findings across other data sets. This method was particularly useful for investigating complex aspects like cognitive engagement in participant reflection papers and interviews. To ensure she did not merely seek self-confirming data, the instructor–researcher actively entertained alternative interpretations of the data, in addition to the thread.

Regarding potential bias, the study minimized this risk by analysing data after data collection completion, thus preventing the influence of one data set on the collection of another. However, since some data sets were analysed before others, there was a potential for bias in the qualitative analysis. The instructor–researcher followed three principles to guard against these types of biases: passage of time, bracketing, and prolonged engagement. The first of these principles, passage of time, was achieved through an iterative process of data analysis time lasting three years. This was due to a combination of the size of the task, ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the reality of life. Months passed between undertaking the analysis of different data sets, allowing the instructor–researcher to approach each data set with an open mind, as the results of previously analysed data were not fresh in her mind. This significant lapse of time between the analysis of different sets of data helped to minimise the potential for unconscious bias in the analysis. The instructor–researcher achieved the second of these principles, the phenomenological practice of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), by attempting to set aside what she knew or believed, approaching each data set with a fresh view. Finally, the third principle used by the instructor–researcher to guard against bias was prolonged engagement with the data. When analysing the qualitative data (i.e., reflection papers and interviews), and to a lesser extent the quantitative analysis of the (peer feedback and revised essays) the instructor–researcher was engaged with each data set for a prolonged period, weeks to months. This prolonged and intensive engagement

allowed the instructor–researcher to set aside any preconceived ideas she may have formed during her analysis of other data sets.

4.10 Overview

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. This chapter detailed the methodology and data analysis approaches used, highlighting their alignment with the study’s aims and theoretical underpinnings. Data were gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and analysis of course artefacts such as essays, peer feedback activities, and reflection papers, enabling a multifaceted exploration of student engagement across four dimensions: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social.

Addressing the complex research problem required a nuanced approach, combining both qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (quan) methods. Quantitative data provided insights into the research questions dealing with the emotional and behavioural dimensions of student engagement, primarily through questionnaires and analysis of feedback in revised (peer feedback and revised essays). In contrast, qualitative data from reflection papers and interviews informed the research questions dealing with the cognitive and social dimensions. This blend of methodologies allowed for a holistic understanding of student engagement in peer feedback.

Quantitative data provided insights into the emotional and behavioural aspects of student engagement, primarily through questionnaires and analysis of feedback in essays (peer feedback and revised essays). In contrast, qualitative data from interviews and reflection papers were important for exploring the cognitive and social dimensions, while also gaining an in-depth understanding of all four research questions.

The methodology outlined in this study serves to bridge the theoretical concepts with practical, empirical research, providing a framework for understanding

L2 students' engagement with peer feedback in synchronous online settings. The mixed-methods approach, with its combination of quantitative and qualitative data, offers a comprehensive picture of how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the results and analysis of the study will be discussed. The chapter discusses the gathered data from four sources: questionnaires, essays (peer feedback and revised essays), interviews, and reflection papers, and the findings derived from each of these data sources. This data are examined in alignment with the study's research questions and propositions.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis from a mixed-methods study exploring how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. The previous chapters have laid the groundwork for this study: Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature on social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance, L2 writers, process writing, and peer feedback. Chapter 3 detailed the theoretical framework underpinning this research, setting the stage for the empirical exploration. Chapter 4 outlined the research methodology and data analysis methods, including the use of questionnaires, interviews, and course artefacts, such as peer feedback, essays, and reflection papers.

In this chapter, the quantitative (quan) and qualitative (QUAL) data are examined in alignment with the study's research questions and propositions. The study's quantitative results and analysis of the questionnaires and essays (peer feedback and revised essays) are reported, followed by the qualitative results and analysis of the interviews and reflection papers.

5.2 Quantitative results and analysis

This section presents the quantitative results and analysis from two primary data sources: questionnaires and revised essays (peer feedback and revised essays). The findings from each data source are aligned with the study's research questions and propositions, aiming to clarify and provide insights into L2 students' engagement with peer feedback in a synchronous online writing course.

The questionnaire data, collected at three points during the semester, illustrates the progression of participants' attitudes towards the peer feedback process. By employing a longitudinal approach, this analysis offers an evolving understanding of how student attitudes change as they complete successive peer feedback activities. The insights gained from this data source directly address

Research Question 2, which focuses on the factors influencing student engagement in peer feedback, and Proposition 1, which suggests that student attitudes towards peer feedback change over time as they become more familiar with the process.

The essay data, on the other hand, is analysed to explore issues related to Research Question 1, which explores the types and observable activities students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities the peer feedback process. By examining the nature of the feedback provided by peers and the extent to which this feedback is incorporated into subsequent drafts, this analysis helps to explain the impact of peer feedback on students' writing development.

5.2.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire employed in this study was designed to explore students' attitudes towards engagement with the online peer feedback process. By administering the questionnaire at three points during the semester, the instructor-researcher gained insights into not only the students' initial attitudes but also how these attitudes evolved as students participated in an increasing number of online peer feedback activities. While this enhanced understanding helped to inform and guide the qualitative phase of the study, the data analysis of the questionnaires directly contributed to addressing the issues raised in Research Question 2, which focuses on factors influencing students' attitude to online peer feedback, and Proposition 1, which suggests that student attitudes towards peer feedback change over time as they become more familiar with the process:

- Research Question 2:
How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students' attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?
- Proposition 1:
Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.

The twenty-item Likert-style questionnaire was administered online at three specific points during the sixteen-week semester: Administration 1 took place before the first

peer feedback activity, administration 2 followed the completion of the first peer feedback activity, and administration 3 occurred after the second peer feedback activity. A factor analysis conducted on the results of the third questionnaire administration identified three relevant factors: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process. These three factors formed the basis for the descriptive statistical analysis of all three questionnaire administrations. Table 5.1 presents the mean scores for each factor across the three questionnaire administrations, along with the combined means for each factor over all three administrations.

Table 5.1
Factor Means on Questionnaire Administrations

| | Administration 1 | Administration 2 | Administration 3 | Administrations 1–3 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Comfort giving feedback | 2.24 | 2.13 | 1.97 | 2.11 |
| Comfort receiving feedback | 1.65 | 1.62 | 1.5 | 1.59 |
| Helpfulness of the peer feedback process | 1.79 | 1.59 | 1.68 | 1.69 |

Note. Scores closer to 1 indicate a more positive view of peer feedback.

An overview of the means for these three factors indicates that participants generally held a positive perception of peer feedback, with all factor means consistently falling on the positive side of the five-point scale. Likewise, these results align with prior research, which also demonstrated learners' favourable attitudes toward peer feedback (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Among these factors, comfort giving feedback was the closest to being neutral, with an overall mean of 2.11. This observation corresponds with conclusions drawn in previous studies, which similarly identified learners' lack of confidence in providing constructive feedback (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1992) and reviewers fears of offending their peers with negative feedback (Clynes & Raftery,

2008; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992) as reasons for having less positive attitudes regarding giving peer feedback.

Furthermore, the trend supports Proposition 1 that participants reported more favourable views toward online peer feedback with increased exposure to the process, as factor means for all three factors moved in the positive direction with increased experience engaging with peer feedback activities. Notably, comfort giving feedback displayed the most significant positive change, decreasing from 2.24 in the first administration to 1.97 in the third. Similarly, comfort receiving feedback decreased from 1.65 to 1.5, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process decreased from 1.79 to 1.68 on the same questionnaire administrations. All three of these results suggest that students' attitudes toward online peer feedback activities became more positive with increased exposure.

To assess whether the reported positive movement in the participants' attitudes on each of the three factors between questionnaire administrations was statistically significant, a series of t-tests was conducted on the means of each identified factor across the three administrations of the questionnaire. As illustrated in Table 5, these t-tests showed that there were statistically significant differences on two of the three factors: comfort giving feedback and helpfulness of the peer feedback process. Comfort giving feedback showed statistically significant movement in the positive direction between questionnaire administrations 1 and 3 (p-value = 0.006 < 0.01) as well as between administrations 2 and 3 (p-value = 0.042 < 0.05). Helpfulness of the peer feedback process shows a statistically significant finding also in the positive direction between questionnaire administrations 1 and 2 (p-value = 0.026 < 0.05).

Table 5.2

T-tests Comparing Questionnaire Administrations on the Three Identified Factors

| Test Pairings | P-values one-sided t-tests |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Comfort giving feedback 1 to 2 | 0.151 |
| Comfort giving feedback 1 to 3 | **0.006 |
| Comfort giving feedback 2 to 3 | *0.042 |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Comfort receiving feedback 1 to 2 | 0.424 |
| Comfort receiving feedback 1 to 3 | 0.118 |
| Comfort receiving feedback 2 to 3 | 0.214 |
| Helpfulness of the peer feedback process 1 to 2 | *0.026 |
| Helpfulness of the peer feedback process 1 to 3 | 0.195 |
| Helpfulness of the peer feedback process 2 to 3 | 0.169 |

Note. * significant ≤ 0.05 , ** significant ≤ 0.01

The analysis of the questionnaire data, which encompassed three administrations throughout the semester, provided valuable insights into participants' evolving attitudes toward peer feedback. The mean scores for the three key factors—comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process—consistently indicated a positive attitude toward peer feedback.

The results suggest that participants generally entered the course with positive attitudes toward peer feedback, and their attitudes tended to become more positive with increased exposure. Notably, comfort giving feedback appeared as the factor closest to neutrality, suggesting initial hesitancy in providing constructive feedback. However, as participants gained experience with peer feedback activities, there was a significant positive shift in their reported comfort level.

The t-test results highlighted the positive changes in comfort giving feedback and the perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process with increasing exposure, emphasizing the benefits of experience. Although participants entered the study with already positive attitudes toward comfort receiving feedback, this factor had the initial mean closest to neutral among the three factors, indicating that participants may have had some initial reservations about providing feedback on peers' writing samples. However, once exposed to the online peer feedback process, these attitudes shifted in a positive direction at statistically significant levels.

Regarding the helpfulness of the peer feedback process, the questionnaire results suggest that participants came to the study with positive attitudes toward peer feedback, and based on the t-test results, these attitudes became significantly more positive after exposure to the initial peer feedback activity. For the final factor,

comfort receiving feedback, the results indicate that participants entered the study with positive attitudes toward receiving feedback, and their attitudes became slightly more positive with exposure to the online peer feedback activities.

These findings contribute to understanding of Research Question 2, demonstrating that exposure to online peer feedback activities generally leads to more positive student attitudes toward the feedback activities. The results also support Proposition 1.

Although the questionnaire results do not directly expand the understanding of Propositions 2 and 3, they hint at the possibility that the development of trust may help explain some of the observed positive shifts in student attitudes toward online peer feedback activities. This possibility is further explored in the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers and interviews.

5.2.2 Essays

Quantitative data extracted from the peer feedback and revised essays in this study were used to increase understanding of Research Question 1 as well as add support to the validity of Proposition 7:

- Research Question 1:

What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities?

- Proposition 7:

Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.

As shown in Table 5.3, the quantitative analysis of the essays showed that students gave nearly equal amounts of specific and non-specific feedback, 49 and 50 percent respectively. Also, students seemed to take the received feedback seriously, attempting to address feedback 70 percent of the time with over 80 percent of these attempts resulting in successful revisions. Echoing Min's (2003) finding that students had difficulty addressing vague feedback, there was a statistically significant difference in the percent of successful revisions between specific and non-specific

received feedback (< 0.05). When given specific feedback, participants made successful revisions 70 percent of the time with 13 percent being judged partially successful. The revision success rate drops to 43.75 percent successful and 17 percent partially successful when the received feedback was non-specific. Another interesting finding was in the percent of feedback which was not addressed, overall 29 percent of feedback was not addressed. When the feedback was specific the number dropped to 17 percent. However, when the feedback was non-specific, the percent of unaddressed feedback jumped to over 39.

Table 5.3

Given Feedback and How Recipients Addressed Feedback

| | Feedback Given | Not addressed | Superficially addressed | Adequately addressed |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Overall | Total = 95 | Total = 28 % = 29 | Total = 13 % = 14 | Total = 54 % = 57 |
| Specific | Total = 47 % = 49 | Total = 8 % = 17 | Total = 6 % = 13 | Total = 33 % = 70 |
| Non-specific | Total = 48 % = 50. | Total = 19 % = 39.5 | Total = 8 % = 17 | Total = 21 % = 43.75 |

The nearly equal distribution of specific and non-specific feedback suggests that students were engaged in both providing detailed comments and offering more general observations. The key distinction emerges when examining how students responded to these types of feedback. When feedback was specific, students demonstrated a significantly higher rate of successful revisions, exceeding 70%. This implies that when students were given concrete, actionable suggestions, they were better equipped to understand and address the issues raised in their writing. This result underscores the value of specific feedback and its potential to drive meaningful revisions.

Conversely, when students received non-specific feedback, their success rate in addressing the feedback dropped substantially to 43.75%. This suggests that the lack of structure, which clear guidance or specific recommendations can provide, can hinder students' ability to make effective revisions. Moreover, a noteworthy finding is

the percentage of unaddressed feedback, which was substantially higher when the feedback was non-specific, reaching over 39%. These results support Proposition 7. It appears that during periods of increased transactional distance, the lack of specific feedback fails to offer the necessary structure for students to make meaningful revisions.

Although understanding of the issues related to Research Question 1 was improved and the related Proposition 7 was supported by the quantitative analysis of the essays, this data analysis did not provide a complete understanding of why students responded to peer feedback as they did. The qualitative analysis of the reflection papers and interviews, presented later in this chapter, expands our understanding of this issue.

5.2.3 Summary

The quantitative analysis conducted of the questionnaires offers valuable insights into how student attitudes toward engagement with online peer feedback activities evolved within the context of a sixteen-week semester. Adding to the goal of gaining a holistic understanding of student engagement with online peer feedback, the quantitative analysis of the student essays provided direct evidence of both how students responded to peer writing samples and to how students address received feedback.

The quantitative analysis of questionnaires revealed participants' consistently positive perceptions of peer feedback in three main areas: comfort in giving, comfort in receiving feedback, and the perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process. Notably, while participants initially showed hesitation in providing constructive feedback, their attitude toward giving feedback improved significantly with experience. The statistically significant movement in the positive direction in reported attitudes toward both comfort with giving feedback and perceived helpfulness highlights the impact of experience on shaping attitudes towards peer feedback and is consistent with previous studies that have noted learners' favourable views on peer feedback. Despite starting with somewhat neutral attitudes towards comfort in

giving feedback, participants' exposure led to increased comfort in this area, while their comfort in receiving feedback remained high throughout the study. After the first peer feedback activity, participants reported a significant increase in their positive views on the process's helpfulness. Statistical analysis, including t-tests, confirmed significant improvements in comfort with giving feedback and perceptions of the process's helpfulness with more exposure. In addition to adding credence to the body of research which suggests students have generally positive views of peer feedback, the longitudinal nature of the questionnaire data with all three factors trending in the positive direction during the semester allows for support of Proposition 1.

The quantitative analysis of the peer feedback and revised essays showed that students provided almost equal amounts of specific and non-specific feedback and demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing feedback, particularly in the case of specific feedback, as specific feedback demonstrated a substantial advantage in terms of achieving successful revisions, with students succeeding in revising their work following specific feedback around 70% of the time, emphasizing the value of providing concrete, actionable suggestions. In contrast, non-specific feedback led to a lower success rate and higher percentage of unaddressed feedback. These results support Proposition 7, suggesting that non-specific feedback did not provide students with enough structure to adequately respond to issues in their writing during periods of high transactional distance.

While this quantitative data provides valuable insights, a deeper understanding of participants' evolving attitudes to each of the factors—comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process—as well as why students behavioural engagement with the online peer feedback activities showed the patterns reported above will be gained by incorporating qualitative insights from reflection papers and interviews. These qualitative insights are expected to further corroborate the propositions presented and affirm additional propositions developed.

5.3 Qualitative results and analysis

Following the presentation of the quantitative results and analysis from the questionnaires and essays, the subsequent section presents the findings and insights gleaned from the two qualitative data sources employed in this study: reflection papers and interviews. These qualitative findings are aligned with the relevant research questions and propositions, serving to further elucidate and contextualize the insights derived from the quantitative results.

The themes that emerged during the qualitative analysis of the twelve interviews and the twenty-nine sets of three reflection papers are explored and reported. These two data sources employ similar approaches to explore student engagement with online peer feedback activities from a more comprehensive and holistic perspective. While adding depth and nuance to the understanding gained from the quantitative data analysis, the qualitative data also allows for the exploration of aspects of student engagement with online peer feedback where quantitative data is challenging to gather or may not fully capture the intricacies of the phenomenon.

By leveraging both quantitative and qualitative data sources, this study aims to provide a well-rounded and rigorous examination of student engagement with online peer feedback activities, offering valuable insights that can inform educational practices and future research in this domain.

The themes which emerged in the interviews and the reflection papers largely support each other. While acting as a form of triangulation on each other, collecting data, which explored related areas, in a different form offered some advantages beyond acting as a check on each other. The interviews were semi-structured, offering the advantage of allowing the instructor–researcher the opportunity to pursue areas of interest. Although the written reflection papers by virtue of being written and submitted to the instructor–researcher were more structured, they were collected at three points over the semester, giving a glimpse at the participants' evolving engagement with the peer feedback process. In addition, the reflection papers were completed by all the participants, in contrast with the volunteers who sat

for interviews, providing a safeguard against self-selection bias, and ensuring the instructor–researcher gathered data from a wider range of participants.

5.3.1 Interviews

Data from the interviews provided insights into all four of the study’s research questions and related propositions:

- Research Question 1:
What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities?
- Research Question 2:
How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students’ attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?
- Research Question 3:
How do students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process?
- Research Question 4:
What is the impact of the development of social relationships between peers on student engagement with online peer feedback activities?
 - Proposition 1:
Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.
 - Proposition 2:
Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.
 - Proposition 3:
Trust in students’ ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.
 - Proposition 4:
As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.

- Proposition 5:
As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance.
- Proposition 6:
Culture will influence students' attitudes toward engagement in the online peer feedback process.
- Proposition 7:
Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.
- Proposition 8:
Due to individual differences, students will achieve different levels of cognitive engagement.

The three factors identified in the questionnaire analysis, comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process also emerged as major themes during the qualitative analysis of the interviews. In addition, a fourth major theme, social interaction, which focused on the importance of sustained peer-to-peer social interaction in the students' engagement with online peer feedback activities emerged. This theme of social interaction interacted with all other themes. Finally, a sub-theme which the instructor–researcher labelled problems with negative feedback was also prevalent. This theme interacted with the themes comfort giving feedback and comfort receiving feedback.

In the sections which follow, the elements of each theme are discussed with student examples from the interviews. The relationship to each research question and proposition are also elaborated.

5.3.1.1 *Comfort giving feedback*

Perhaps the strongest theme which emerged from the interview data was comfort giving feedback. A major component of a theme reflected how daunting students found the task of giving peer feedback. Similar to the findings suggested in the questionnaires and previous research (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy,

1992), participants reported lacking the confidence in their ability to give helpful feedback. This participant's comment illustrates this theme: "I was [a] little nervous about giving others feedback on their writing. I don't feel like I know enough to be able to tell others what is wrong with their writing ... I'm not the professor". Another student added: "I was a little uncomfortable giving feedback. I was afraid I might give some wrong advice ... I didn't have confidence that my feedback was correct".

These excerpts illustrate the general lack of confidence expressed by many participants during their interviews. These results, coupled with the statistically significant finding from the questionnaires of attituded on giving feedback becoming more positive with increased exposure, directly support Proposition 3.

This lack of confidence appears to be rooted in two key factors. First, it is associated with their belief that they lack the necessary skills and expertise to provide constructive feedback on their peers' writing. Second, it is linked to a fear of exceeding the boundaries of their role as students in the class. Participants conveyed a sense of not feeling knowledgeable enough, often stating, "I don't know enough", while also expressing concerns about potentially overstepping their role by stating, "I'm a student not the teacher. I shouldn't be telling other students what's wrong with their writing".

Several participants expanded on the types of feedback that they felt more or less confident giving. The following two excerpts illustrate these elements of the theme: "Giving basic feedback on grammar, like sentence structure, was OK, but I didn't feel OK about giving feedback on organization or structure. I couldn't be sure what I was saying was correct".

This participant mentioned the desire for guidance: "I was fine giving feedback on something we covered in class or that was on the rubric. I knew if these were right or wrong. Other feedback left me a little confused; I wasn't always sure of myself".

The excerpts highlight a recurring theme: participants sought concrete knowledge or authority to bolster their confidence when providing feedback. All participants in the study were Korean learners of English as L2, and most had

learned English within the Korean education system, which emphasizes grammar instruction. The first excerpt illustrates the participant's reliance on their own internal expertise to build confidence in giving feedback. In contrast, the second excerpt reveals a tendency to rely on external authority, particularly the professor's, to gain confidence when offering feedback. This reliance on authority can be understood in the context of Korea's high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2016) and hierarchical culture, which places significant value on expert knowledge (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992).

Notably, students felt more assured when their feedback aligned with what had been covered in class or what was outlined in the rubric, highlighting the role of established guidance and clear expectations in boosting their confidence during the feedback process. As long as the given feedback was limited to what the professor has gone over in class or what is in the rubric, the student can have confidence while giving feedback. This theme adds depth to the understanding of the finding from the questionnaires which suggest that the students had some initial hesitancy about giving feedback to their peers. The interview analysis strongly suggests that this more negative attitude toward giving feedback is related to a lack of confidence in their own abilities and a desire to remain safely in their role as student rather than take on some of the authority of an expert role.

Nearly all interviewees expressed an increase in their confidence regarding their capacity to provide valuable feedback as the semester progressed. This increase in confidence appeared to be linked to their repeated engagement with peer feedback activities and their ongoing interactions with peers. This excerpt nicely illustrates these themes:

At first, I didn't think I could give anyone feedback on their writing. After we did it a few times, I saw that my partners took my feedback seriously and seemed to think I was helping them. Yeah, ummm, I liked this feeling, so I tried harder on the feedback assignments and think I got better at it.

This student seems to be describing a positive feedback loop. Initially lacking confidence, positive feedback from peers caused increased effort and improved ability and confidence. These results support Propositions 1 and 3.

In the theme discussed above, the importance peer-to-peer social interaction plays in student engagement with online peer feedback activities begins to become apparent. This idea that the social composition of peer feedback activities has an impact on the individual's experience with the peer feedback activity is reminiscent of reports by Mendonca and Johnson (1994), who reported an instance where a single negative group member managed to derail the dynamic or cohesion of a peer feedback group.

The theme of comfort giving feedback supported the findings of previous scholars which found that students questioned their ability to give helpful feedback to their peers (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Included under the larger theme of a lack of confidence in their ability to give helpful feedback was a need for an internal or external authority source to have confidence, and improved confidence through positive interactions with peers and with prolonged engagement with the task of giving feedback. This theme suggests that participants generally lacked confidence in their ability to give helpful peer feedback, however, engagement in the peer feedback process increased their confidence during the semester. The mechanisms which lead to an increase in confidence seem to be the ability to rely on an internal authority (i.e., their own prior knowledge) or an external authority (i.e., the professor) and positive engagement with their peers.

In addition to lacking confidence in their ability to give accurate, helpful feedback, interviewees also related fear of offending their peers as an additional source of discomfort when giving feedback. This finding supports previous research (Clynes & Raftery, 2008) which suggests that fear of offending is a significant obstacle for students when confronted with the task of giving negative feedback. This interview excerpt illustrates this point: "I only wrote positive things. If I found a problem, I might ask about it during our group meeting. But I wouldn't say I thought it was wrong. I didn't want anyone angry with me".

The interviewee openly shares her reluctance to provide negative comments, stemming from a fear of offending her partner. Instead, she expresses a preference for indirectly addressing issues during small group meetings, hoping to help her partner without causing direct confrontation. This approach is understandable within the context of South Korean culture, which is deeply influenced by Confucian values that prioritize group harmony and the avoidance of direct conflict (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992).

5.3.1.2 Comfort receiving feedback

The second major theme to emerge from the data was comfort receiving feedback. This theme diverged into two seemingly contradictory sub-themes: participants reported taking peer feedback seriously while also expressing scepticism about the accuracy of received peer feedback. The interviews showed that participants had a generally positive view of receiving peer feedback, considering it an important part of their writing process. However, they did not accept peer feedback without question, supporting the findings of Leki (1991) and Mangelsdorf (1992) that students had doubts about their peers' ability to give accurate feedback. Instead of being taken as authoritative, peer feedback was viewed as a starting point, pieces of information that needed to be examined for their veracity. One participant's comments illustrate this point:

I always considered the peer feedback when I was rewriting my papers but ... ummm ... not completely; only as a reference point. My peers are other students; they aren't experts. I took my peers' feedback seriously, but I checked it was right first.

In this excerpt, the participant displays a certain amount of scepticism toward the quality of peer feedback while also acknowledging that it may be a useful tool in improving subsequent drafts.

The interviewees related two aspects of overcoming their scepticism about the accuracy of the peer feedback they received: external authority and the peer feedback process itself. As with gaining confidence in giving feedback, participants

relied on external authority sources to validate peer feedback. In this course, they turned to the instructor–researcher as the authority:

Most of the feedback seemed good. I checked it against what the professor said in class or feedback she gave me. There was a high level of correlation between what my peers gave me and what the professor said. This gave me confidence that my peers knew what they were talking about.

Here, the participant continues the theme of having some scepticism about the accuracy of peer feedback while extending the process of verifying peer feedback against an external authority. In this case, the instructor–researcher was used as a check on the accuracy of peer feedback; other participants related using other resources, such as dictionaries and grammar guides.

While many interviewees related turning to external sources of authority to verify peer feedback, an almost equal number also looked to the peer feedback process itself to improve their confidence in received peer feedback. A major sub-theme in the area of received feedback was that participants' confidence in received peer feedback improved as the semester progressed:

After doing peer review a few times, I began to have confidence in the feedback I was getting. It wasn't all good, but I began to know who gave me good feedback and who didn't. We got to know each other ... I could trust some group members to do a good job. By the end of the class, I didn't feel like I had to check to see if the feedback was right.

In this excerpt, we can see that the process of engaging in peer feedback activities with a group allowed participants to gain confidence in the accuracy of the peer feedback they received. Rather than relying on external sources outside of the group for authority, the peer feedback process itself, or the peer feedback group, became an authoritative tool for verifying the accuracy of peer feedback.

From the qualitative analysis of the interviews, one of the major themes to emerge was comfort receiving feedback. This theme diverged into two sub-themes: participants reported taking peer feedback seriously and expressing scepticism about the accuracy of received peer feedback. The analysis showed how

participants overcame their scepticism in two ways: by checking with external sources, both from the course and outside the course, and by relying on the trust that developed between group members during previous experiences receiving feedback from their peers.

The qualitative analysis revealed that most participants saw peer feedback as a valuable part of their writing process, recognizing its importance. At the same time, they did not take it as the final word. Instead of unquestioningly accepting peer feedback as the ultimate authority, they regarded it as a reference point that necessitated verification; participants found peer feedback to be a helpful reference, but they also wanted to ensure its accuracy.

Simultaneously, many interviewees described how their confidence in received peer feedback improved as the semester progressed. Engaging in multiple peer feedback sessions allowed participants to form an understanding of which peers consistently provided valuable feedback, suggesting that the peer feedback process itself, in the context of the peer feedback group, evolved into a source of authority for verifying the accuracy of peer feedback.

These results add to the understanding of the issues involved with Research Question 2 and Research Question 4, while supporting Propositions 1 and 2.

5.3.1.3 *Helpfulness of the peer feedback process*

The third major theme to emerge from the interview data was the helpfulness of the peer feedback process. This theme was composed of three sub-themes: incorporating feedback, having an authentic audience, and promoting higher-order cognition. In line with the findings of early research in the field of peer feedback, as reported by Mendonca and Johnson (1994), Jacobs and Zhang (1989), and Nelson and Murphy (1998), the interviewees related that they incorporated the feedback they received in their future writing at a high rate, sometimes resulting in major revisions to their second drafts. This excerpt is illustrative of this theme:

Having multiple sources of feedback helped me to see problems in my first draft. Each peer gave me feedback that I could then try to use. Having more

than one peer gave me more detailed feedback. Peers could concentrate on one or two papers and give detailed feedback, more detailed than the professor could give.

Here, the interviewee comments on the desire to get and use as much information as possible, noting the reality of how workload influences the feedback given. As suggested by the participant, students have a limited number of papers to read, which results in more detailed feedback than a single instructor–researcher could possibly provide.

In addition to the benefits of receiving detailed feedback from multiple sources, several interviewees commented on the benefits of having an authentic audience for their writing, echoing previous scholarship that highlighted the advantages of students writing for an authentic audience (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013; van der Strap & Blair, 2018). The following interview excerpt voices this point:

I was sometimes surprised by the comments I received. I worked hard on my first draft and thought it was clear and my argument was good. Reading my peers' comments let me see where my writing was confused and the holes in my position. I can find grammar errors, but these kinds of problems are difficult for me to find on my own. Having someone read my essay and say, "I don't understand this" was really helpful.

In this excerpt, the interviewee recognizes both the limitations of self-editing and the benefits of having an authentic audience. Having peers provide feedback gave the writer insights that only a reader can provide. This increased sense of audience has been reported by previous scholars (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; van der Strap & Blair, 2018).

Supporting the position of previous researchers (Kennette & Frank, 2013; Lee, 2017; Rollinson, 2005), the interviewees related that the peer feedback process had benefited them beyond directly writing-related activities by encouraging higher-order cognition, supporting Proposition 5 and increasing understanding of the issues involved in Research Question 3. Both the act of critically reading and processing received feedback pushed participants to develop higher-order cognitive skills, such

as questioning, analysing, evaluating, and synthesizing. While reading with the purpose of giving feedback, participants went beyond reading for comprehension to using analytical and evaluative skills:

Some of my peers gave ideas that I had never thought about. I had to think the things, what did it mean? It made me think about changing my idea. This kind of feedback from peers was good ... [hmmm] but bit difficult.

In this excerpt, the interviewee describes being required to use higher-order cognition when confronted with unfamiliar ideas. Comprehending the peer's ideas was not enough; the task required an analysis of the idea, an evaluation of its meaning, and an attempt to synthesize the peer's ideas with their own. The same interviewee goes on to describe a similar process when receiving feedback:

I always appreciated my partner's feedback, but I had to decide if it was correct. This wasn't always easy. Sometimes ... [ahhhh] my partner and I had different ideas, so I had to think if I was right. Did I need to change what I had written?

Again, the interviewee describes a process using higher-order cognition to analyse, evaluate, and synthesize. These excerpts provide insight into the cognitive demands and benefits associated with the peer feedback process. Participants described how engaging with peer feedback necessitated the application of higher-order cognitive skills, extending beyond mere comprehension. They mentioned the challenges of encountering novel ideas and viewpoints from their peers, requiring them to engage in analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. This cognitive demand was evident both when providing feedback and when receiving it, as participants navigated differences in their perspectives and assessed the accuracy of feedback received from their peers. These accounts stress the role of peer feedback in cultivating cognitive skills, suggesting that the peer feedback process not only contributes to improving writing but also serves as a platform for the development of critical thinking.

The interviews revealed a valuable perspective on the helpfulness of the peer feedback process, revealing sub-themes: incorporating feedback, having an authentic audience, and promoting higher-order cognition. According to the

interviewees, they frequently incorporated the feedback they received, often resulting in significant revisions to their drafts. As attested by the interviewees, having an authentic audience helped participants consider the needs of their readers, revealing aspects of their work that self-editing might overlook; it brought to light issues related to clarity, coherence, and argument structure that are difficult to identify in isolation. In addition, the peer feedback process promoted higher-order cognition. Interviewees described how the peer feedback process stimulated higher-order cognitive skills, prompting participants to engage in activities such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. This cognitive engagement was not limited to providing feedback; it extended to receiving it. Participants described the need to carefully assess and, at times, reconcile conflicting perspectives. This evidence suggests that the peer feedback process not only supports writing development but also fosters higher-order cognition. As noted above, the themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews shed light on how students cognitively engaged with the online peer feedback process and supported Proposition 5.

5.3.1.4 *Social interaction*

A fourth major theme to emerge from the analysis of the interview data was social interaction. This theme focused on the importance of sustained peer-to-peer social interaction in the participants' engagement with online peer feedback activities. These results support Propositions 1 to 3. The interviewees reported that social interaction during the online peer feedback process was beneficial primarily in the development of trust between peers—or community building (Corgan et al., 2004; Etmer et al., 2007)—and in themselves and, to a lesser extent, in the development of social skills and the promotion of higher-order cognition, as has been noted by previous researchers (Kennette & Frank, 2013; Lee, 2017; Rollinson, 2005). For the purposes of this study, social interaction included communication between peers both asynchronously and synchronously. Participants communicated asynchronously with written feedback on the peer feedback activity (Appendix C), through Zoom Chat and the Discussion Board in the course's LMS, Blackboard, and using the

Korean mobile messaging application, KakaoTalk (similar to other chat apps, such as WhatsApp). Likewise, participants communicated synchronously during the class period through Zoom video, in whole class settings and breakout rooms.

As reported by the interviewees, the primary benefit associated with social interaction was the development of trust between peer feedback group members as well as trust in their own abilities. This supports Propositions 2 and 3.

Through the interviews, participants related two prominent issues with lack of trust at the beginning of the semester: lack of trust in their peer's ability to give accurate and helpful writing feedback and lack of trust in their own ability to give accurate and helpful writing feedback. The following excerpt from a participant interview illustrates this aspect of the theme of trust: "I'm a student. I'm here to learn not to give advice. Same with all the other students in the class. I don't feel that I can give good feedback. Why should I think other students can either?"

This participant succinctly expresses this lack of trust, which was common among the interviewees, in the ability of students to give other students meaningful feedback, whether it be themselves or others. Students expressed that they are not experts and only experts should give feedback. However, as the semester progressed, the students' trust in the peer feedback process grew.

Although a lack of trust in the ability to give feedback was prevalent at the beginning of the semester, participants developed trust in both themselves and in others as the semester progressed. The same interviewee quoted above expressed the development of trust this way:

After the first couple of peer feedback assignments, I saw that my group members appreciated my feedback and seemed to think it was correct. I began to feel the same way about my group members. I went from doubting them to seeing that most of the feedback I got was correct. We were able to talk it over and explain and ask questions. This helped me know that my group members had put a lot of effort into the feedback they gave me.

Here the interviewee is describing how through the social process of the peer feedback activities, trust was developed in others and in themselves. There seem to

be two aspects of the development of trusting relationships and trust in oneself: one based on the structural process of the online peer feedback activities and the other founded in the peer-to-peer social interaction. The first aspect, based on the structural process, relates to the positive feedback loop that is developed as feedback is given or received, checked, and proven to be accurate, supporting the Propositions 1 to 3.

The second aspect, founded in peer-to-peer social interaction, develops from the negotiation of meaning of the feedback, which fostered an understanding of the feedback as well as an appreciation of their peer's knowledge and effort.

The process of negotiating the meaning of peer feedback, involving students both asking and answering questions, fostered the development of social skills. This sub-theme of the development of social skills is closely related to the inherent riskiness of providing feedback. Participants exhibited a greater reluctance toward giving feedback compared to other aspects of the peer feedback process. This hesitancy can be attributed, in part, to their lack of confidence in delivering accurate feedback. However, a substantial portion of the reluctance to provide feedback is rooted in the fear of potentially causing offense to their peers. This interview excerpt sums up this issue:

When I thought I should say that my partner made a mistake, I [uhhh] ... I worried about what to write. How can you tell someone they are wrong without upsetting them? I worried about this. After getting to know my group members, I felt that I didn't need to worry. In our group, I learned I could give positive and negative feedback; I was able to give negative feedback and still be supportive. We [ummm] we all knew the others were trying to help each other.

This interviewee nicely illustrated how social interaction, and the associated community building, helped overcome the reluctance to give negative feedback, which many participants related, while being a supportive peer and avoiding offending their peers. In the social setting of the small peer groups, participants were able to discuss the feedback and see the earnest efforts of their partners. Seeing

how serious and hardworking each group member was helped soften the blow of receiving negative feedback. This supports the findings of Hansen and Liu (2005) who argued that the peer feedback process has a positive effect on community building.

In addition to helping to overcome the reluctance to give negative feedback, social interaction helped some participants develop social skills which will benefit them outside of the classroom. In comments related to this theme, interviewees related gaining self-confidence, "Seeing how my partners took my comments seriously gave me confidence. I was able to speak up more and state my opinions", improving their ability to express themselves, "I know this is a writing class, but I also got a lot of practice in how to say what I want and how to ask questions", and learning how to work with others, "Working with my classmates helped to learn how to make constructive comments and also how to take criticism".

The promotion of higher-order cognition is the second subtheme associated with social interaction. As mentioned earlier, the small peer group meetings gave participants a chance to ask and answer questions. At times, this process of asking and answering questions put participants in the position of having to think deeply about the issue under consideration. In the following interview excerpt, the interviewee is responding to the instructor–researcher's question regarding how working in small peer feedback groups might have helped her refine or reconsider her points:

Yes, one time my partner didn't understand my main point. He asked me to explain it and asked me questions. I usually think my ideas are clear ... yeah, but [ummm] his questions helped me see that my point wasn't that clear and that there were other ways of looking at my argument. I used my idea but, after he gave me this feedback, I made my writing more clear.

In this excerpt, the interviewee is describing how being challenged on her ideas pushed her to examine her argument in a deeper way. This social negotiation of meaning pushes both the giver and receiver of the feedback to employ higher-order

cognition, as they attempt to defend their own ideas or to examine and understand the ideas of others.

Social interaction played an important role in the development of trust among peers and in themselves, while also fostering the growth of social skills and higher-order cognition. The primary benefit derived from social interactions was the establishment of trust among peer feedback group members, leading to improved feedback exchanges and a willingness to take risks in developing social skills. At the start of the semester, participants expressed doubts about their peers' ability to provide helpful feedback, mirroring their own insecurities about giving feedback. However, as the semester progressed, trust evolved in both self and peers. This trust development had two dimensions: a feedback loop of accurate feedback delivery and the negotiation of feedback meaning, which enhanced social skills and fostered understanding. The latter aspect, the negotiation of feedback, also mitigated the apprehension of giving negative feedback, ultimately improving the participants' capacity for expression and collaboration. Moreover, the promotion of higher-order cognition was evident as participants engaged in in-depth discussions and challenged each other's perspectives, leading to a better understanding of their own arguments and those of their peers. These results support Propositions 1 to 3.

5.3.1.5 *Problems with negative feedback*

In addition to the four major themes and their related sub-themes discussed previously, an additional sub-theme which the instructor–researcher labelled problems with negative feedback also emerged during the qualitative analysis of the interviews. This theme interacted with the themes comfort giving feedback and comfort receiving feedback.

Negative feedback was an issue for these interviewees in terms of both received feedback being too positive and how to give negative feedback while remaining socially appropriate in the context of Korean culture. When receiving feedback, there was a strong theme of peer feedback being largely accurate and helpful. However, interviewees expressed discontent with the feedback they received

in terms of the sparsity of negative feedback received; interviewees related that they wanted to receive more negative feedback to help them see their errors and improve their writing. The excerpt below illustrates this theme:

I appreciated the feedback I got. It was mostly good. But ... the problem is it was all good. We all avoided pointing out the problems in each other's writing. I don't need someone to tell me what I did right. I needed to learn what I'm doing wrong, so I can fix it. The peer feedback wasn't tough enough.

This interviewee expressed a common theme among the interviewees: they wanted tough feedback, to find out where they made mistakes. This can be seen in this comment that the participants took the feedback seriously and wanted to use it as a tool to improve their writing. However, in some instances they were not receiving the type of constructive feedback that would allow them to improve their writing.

The issue of negative feedback was also a concern when giving feedback. When confronted with a situation where giving negative feedback might be appropriate, the interviewees related three obstacles: not seeming to overstep their level of expertise, protecting peer's self-esteem, and cultural prohibitions. These results support Proposition 6.

As was noted in the discussion of the theme of giving feedback, participants initially lacked confidence in their ability to give helpful feedback, only to gain confidence with further exposure to the peer feedback process. Giving negative feedback seems to heighten these feelings of insecurity around giving feedback. This interviewee's comments highlight this theme:

Sometimes I thought, who am I to tell someone they are wrong? What if I'm wrong? There have been times when I was pretty sure of my opinion. Even when I was sure, I usually kept it to myself. I didn't want to give someone the wrong information.

In this excerpt, the interviewee is expressing the general feeling that as students they are not in a position of authority, not wanting to overstep. This reluctance to take on an authoritative role seems to be exacerbated when confronted with the possibility of giving criticism, as the stakes of being wrong are raised.

While the possibility of being wrong when giving negative feedback raises the stakes, giving correct negative feedback also has risks. Like Clynes and Raftery's (2008) findings, interviewees frequently cited a desire not to hurt their peer's feelings as a reason to avoid giving negative feedback. One interviewee put it this way:

I had to be in a group with my peers for the whole semester ... and sometimes I might be in other classes with them. Giving some criticism is a small thing. I didn't want to create any long-term bad feelings, so tried to just say the nice things.

This excerpt reminds us that the peer feedback process occurs in a social setting which will affect how students engage with each other and with peer feedback activities. In this case, the interviewee was more concerned with not harming a peer's feelings and maintaining good relations than with the accuracy of given feedback.

Although the final barrier to giving negative feedback, culture, was only mentioned by a few interviewees, it is worth consideration due to the myriad of contexts that peer feedback activities may occur in and how it may be related to the theme of comfort giving feedback and the previous two aspects of problems giving negative feedback. In the context of this study, an American university located in South Korea, Korean culture and the preference for indirect communication plays a role. One participant related this on the issue of Korean culture and criticism: "For Koreans, giving direct criticism can be impolite. It can be difficult to be helpful by giving negative feedback and still maintain a harmonious relationship". While this perspective aligns with the earlier theme of wanting to protect peers' emotions, here the interviewee is expressing a desire to protect the harmony within the group, including both the interviewee and the peer's positions in the group. This concern extends beyond the individual's feelings to preserving group harmony and the social standing of both the giver and receiver of feedback, reflective of the wider Korean cultural emphasis on expertise and collectivism.

The sub-theme of problems with negative feedback emerged from the interview data and intersected with the themes of comfort giving feedback and

comfort receiving feedback. Interviewees expressed a desire for more constructive criticism when receiving feedback; several related how they wanted to take feedback seriously as a tool for improving their writing, yet often found positive feedback outweighing the constructive kind. Many of these same participants also related a reluctance to give their peers negative feedback. They expressed concerns about overstepping their expertise and preserving peers' self-esteem. They faced initial confidence issues, particularly when delivering criticism. Additionally, the fear of hurting a peer's feelings often discouraged participants from offering negative feedback, prioritizing positive relationships within peer groups and the broader academic context. Further supporting Proposition 6, some interviewees also discussed the influence of culture, notably Korean culture with its preference for indirect communication. Balancing helpful negative feedback with maintaining harmonious relationships in such contexts posed a distinct challenge.

5.3.2 Reflection papers

The analysis of the reflection papers revealed four prominent themes: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, incorporating feedback in subsequent writings, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process. These themes closely align with those found in the analysis of the interviews, providing a consistent and coherent understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions. The data gathered from the reflection papers offered valuable insights into Research Questions 1 and 2, as well as Propositions 1 to 4, illuminating the factors influencing student engagement with online peer feedback activities and the cognitive processes involved:

- Research Question 1:
What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities?
- Research Question 2:
How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students' attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?

- Proposition 1:
Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.
- Proposition 2:
Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.
- Proposition 3:
Trust in students' ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.
- Proposition 4:
As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.

The reflection papers proved valuable to the instructor–researcher's analysis, as they were completed by a substantial portion of the participants (22 out of 29), mitigating concerns of bias that could arise from a self-selected group of interviewees. Moreover, the reflection papers were written at three distinct points throughout the semester, offering insights into the progression of participants' engagement with the peer feedback process over time.

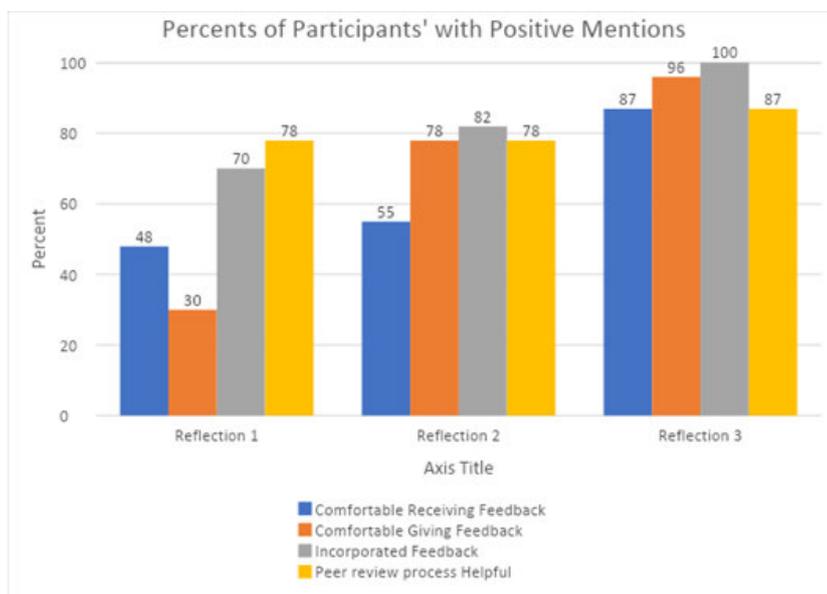
The quantitative analysis of the qualitative data involved counting the positive mentions of the four identified themes in the students' three reflection papers. This approach was crucial, as it demonstrated the evolution of engagement as students gained more experience with the peer feedback process. By examining the frequency of theme mentions across the reflection papers, the instructor–researcher could track changes in participants' perceptions and experiences, providing a longitudinal perspective on their engagement with peer feedback activities.

5.3.2.1 *Comfort giving feedback*

The first theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers was comfort giving feedback. As illustrated by Figure 5.1, mentions of feeling comfortable giving feedback showed the greatest increase over the three reflection papers, starting at 30 percent in reflection paper 1 and increasing to 96 percent in reflection paper 3.

Figure 5.1

Percentage of Participants Who Made Positive Mentions for Each Theme



The qualitative analysis of the reflection papers sheds some light on the reasons for this increase. In reflection paper 1, reminiscent of the findings of Nelson and Murphy (1992), Mangelsdorf (1992), and Engle, the primary theme is that participants lacked confidence in their ability to give helpful feedback. They related being fearful that they could make an error and give advice that was incorrect:

Rather than having confidence and comfort, concern was ahead of me because I had never done this before in participating in a peer review. I wondered, “Will I be able to do well for my friend?”

Following the first peer feedback activity, this participant's reflection expresses her lack of confidence and comfort in giving her peers feedback. This participant's discomfort was mirrored in several other participants' reflection papers:

When I was participating in the peer review of one of my classmates, I didn't feel too comfortable in taking part of the review. Although I was glad to help others with my opinion, it was difficult, and I was very cautious of my wording. I was not really sure myself about what should be added or corrected, so it was hard to find another person's mistake. I was trying to word my opinion in a way that was not offensive for the other person to read since making corrections to their work can make them feel uncomfortable or they might not agree with me.

This participant's reflection following the first peer feedback activity reveals initial reservations, with a lack of confidence and comfort in giving feedback to peers. This sentiment, echoed in several other participants' reflection papers, underlines a common theme of uncertainty and self-doubt experienced by the participants following the first peer feedback activity. The expressed uncertainty about their own skill level for providing feedback indicates that, at this stage, participants were grappling with the perceived challenges of evaluating their peers' work. This common initial apprehension highlights the need for effective support and guidance in nurturing students' confidence and competence in peer feedback situations.

Following the initial peer feedback activity, several participants expressed a lack of confidence in offering feedback because they believed their English L2 abilities were inadequate:

I believe that getting a feedback is one of most important processes in writing, it helps me to extend my perspective, however, giving out my feedback is something I wouldn't do unless it is necessary. I don't think I have the sufficient English skills to give out any feedback.

After the initial peer feedback activity, it is evident that some participants lacked confidence in providing feedback due to perceived inadequacies in their English L2 abilities. This viewpoint is expressed by one participant who believes that receiving

feedback is essential for improving their writing but hesitates to offer feedback unless absolutely necessary, citing a lack of confidence in their English language skills for providing feedback. This apprehension about language proficiency affecting their ability to contribute meaningfully to the peer feedback process was echoed by several participants.

To a lesser extent, participants felt that giving advice to peers seemed arrogant, an overstepping of their position as students. Discomfort with giving negative feedback was also prominently mentioned: "Participating in peer review was a bit uncomfortable. I was worried that my evaluation would hurt my peer. At the same time, I also thought that how dare I evaluate that person".

This participant expressed his hesitation to provide negative feedback, as he found it uncomfortable to evaluate a fellow student's work. Like other participants, this reflection indicates that some participants perceived giving advice to their peers as potentially appearing arrogant. This hesitance to offer feedback was compounded by concerns about causing discomfort or hurt to their peers. The reflection conveys a sense of hesitation and self-doubt regarding their own authority in evaluating others, reflecting a common reluctance to provide negative feedback due to these apprehensions. This underscores the emotional complexity participants experienced during the peer review process, where they grappled with concerns about how their feedback might be received and the perceived arrogance of evaluating others.

The analysis of reflection paper 2 shows that participants' attitudes toward giving feedback began to change as they gained experience with peer feedback activities. In general, they found that engaging in giving feedback had a positive impact on their confidence. As their peers acknowledged and found their feedback valuable, participants' confidence in their ability to provide meaningful feedback grew, along with their overall comfort. They shared that the experience of assisting their peers through feedback was a positive one:

Participating in the peer review of argument essay felt a bit more comfortable than the first time. Before taking this course I was not confident or comfortable in giving feedbacks and reviewing other people's paper. Since I had the idea

of how can I evaluate or give feedbacks to other people's paper if I am not at writing essays. However, through taking this course no matter how small I did develop my skills of writing, so I am more comfortable than before.

After the second peer feedback activity, this participant clearly expressed their increased comfort and confidence in offering feedback to their peers. The analysis of reflection paper 2 highlights a significant transformation in the participants' perception of giving feedback throughout the course. This evolution can be attributed to their growing confidence and comfort as they gained experience with peer review activities. This positive trend continued in the final reflection paper: "I think I felt more comfortable during this peer review because I've already done it twice". Following the third and final peer feedback activity, this participant reported increased confidence in providing feedback due to experience. The analysis of the reflection papers reflects initial reservations and self-doubt by participants regarding their ability to provide feedback effectively, especially in the context of evaluating their peers' work. However, as the course progressed and they witnessed the positive reception of their feedback by their peers, their confidence in their feedback-giving skills increased. This shift in attitude suggests that the peer feedback process not only benefits the receivers but also plays a crucial role in enhancing the confidence and competence of the participants as contributors to the peer review process.

The social context of the peer review process also contributed to the reported increase in comfort with giving feedback. As the participants developed relationships with their peers, they became more comfortable in giving feedback, particularly when giving negative feedback:

I feel comfortable and confident about participating in this peer review. I've spent the whole semester with my group so I got used to them which didn't make me feel awkward anymore.

Following the third peer feedback activity, this participant reflected on her increased comfort due to knowing her peers better. The analysis of participants' responses in this context underscores the significant influence of the social context within the peer feedback process. The development of relationships and familiarity with their peers

over the course of the semester played a central role in enhancing their comfort and confidence in giving feedback. The provided insight from one participant, expressing a newfound comfort due to spending time with their peer group, exemplifies how these social interactions positively impacted the feedback process. This suggests that not only the structure of the peer feedback activities but also the social environment within the classroom can play a crucial role in facilitating more effective and comfortable feedback exchanges. These insights support Propositions 1 and 3.

5.3.2.2 *Comfort receiving feedback*

Another dominant theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers was comfort receiving feedback (Fig. 6). As with giving feedback, the analysis of the reflection papers showed that participants felt more comfortable receiving feedback with more experience; 48 percent of participants made positive mentions regarding feeling comfortable receiving feedback in reflection paper 1 and trending up to 87 percent in reflection paper 3. The analysis of reflection paper 1 suggests that participants were initially uncomfortable with receiving feedback on their writing from peers. Concurring with the findings of Leki (1991) and Mangelsdorf (1992), participants cited a lack of confidence in their peers' ability to give helpful feedback and a desire to get feedback from the authority of the professor:

I reflected on nearly 50–60% of the feedback I got on the final draft. But I didn't think all the feedback could be correct, so I used my ideas when I wasn't able to 100% trust my peer feedback.

This participant's reflection illustrates how participants considered their peers' feedback but also relied on their own judgment when they were uncertain about the accuracy of the feedback received. This reflects the initial apprehension participants had about relying solely on peer feedback.

Participants frequently highlighted the absence of negative feedback as an issue. While expressing a desire for more constructive criticism, participants also conveyed concerns about potential negative judgments being passed on their work:

I was nervous to receive my peer's feedback, in case there was a lot of negative comments, but the feedback was very kind. It was nice to read kind comments, but it would be better to have the 'constructive' feedback the professor asked peer reviewers to give the peers.

Participants consistently emphasized the lack of negative feedback as a concern. They expressed a need for more constructive criticism while also showing apprehension about the possibility of receiving negative judgments on their work. The provided reflection illustrates this sentiment, where the participant was initially nervous about receiving their peer's feedback. They were pleasantly surprised by the kindness of the feedback but noted that having the "constructive" feedback the professor had requested from peer reviewers would be more beneficial. This reflects the participants' desire for balanced and helpful feedback, underscoring the importance of constructive criticism in the peer review process.

The analysis of reflection papers two and three showed that participants gained confidence in received feedback as the semester progressed. After receiving feedback that was accurate, participants began to feel more confident in their peers' ability to give accurate feedback. One participant shared their increased value of the peer feedback process following the second peer feedback activity:

I was not that confident at first in showing my work to my peers in the beginning. I was nervous about getting feedback from my peer because I did not know what to expect. However, my peer reviewer gave me very constructive feedback that helped me complete a much better essay. He included positive remarks as well as constructive feedback on how I could improve my writing. I incorporated a lot of the comments that he provided me and was a big help. Peer reviewing my peer also helped in writing my own essay as well. It gave me ideas about how I should make my essay flow a bit better and how to format it more properly.

The analysis of reflection papers two and three demonstrates a notable increase in participants' confidence in receiving feedback as the semester progressed. This shift in confidence stemmed from the reception of accurate and

constructive feedback, which, in turn, led participants to have more trust in their peers' ability to provide valuable input. This participant's reflection illustrates this transformation, as they initially lacked confidence in sharing their work with peers, feeling nervous about the feedback. However, after receiving constructive feedback that significantly improved their essay, they grew to value the peer feedback process. This change in perception highlighted the mutual benefit of peer reviewing and its role in enhancing participants' writing skills.

In addition, as the semester progressed, participants developed relationships and trust within their peer groups. As trust was developed, receiving negative feedback became more common and there was less concern with being judged. This participant's reflection following the second peer feedback activity illustrates this nicely:

To be honest, I felt uncomfortable with my first experience of peer review because I was worried about my mistakes that my peer is going to point out. However, kind notice of my mistakes and suggestions from the peer were helpful for the revision of my draft and I changed my view of the peer review. Now I really like and trust the peer review process. After getting the comments about my paper from the peer, I read them carefully and reflected all the sources that I also agreed. Peer's assessments were accurate, and they found something I see.

This participant's comments reflect a common sentiment found in the reflection papers: that participants fostered relationships and trust within their peer groups as the semester progressed. This increased trust resulted in more frequent instances of receiving negative feedback and a reduced concern about being judged. Similar to Villamil and de Guerrero's (1996) findings that social engagement led to high levels of camaraderie, this study showed that social engagement led to increased levels of trust and associated risk-taking. This participant's experience, for example, initially felt uncomfortable with the first peer review due to worries about mistakes being pointed out. However, she found the kind and helpful nature of feedback from her peers led to a change in her perspective. Over time, participants grew to like and

trust the peer feedback process, as they recognized the accuracy of their peers' assessments and their ability to identify areas of improvement. This transformation illustrates the role of trust in enhancing participants' acceptance of constructive criticism and embracing the peer feedback process. As participants gained more experience with peer feedback and developed relationships with peers, their initial lack of trust and discomfort lessened to the point where 87 percent of participants made positive comments about receiving peer feedback.

Overall, the analysis of the reflection papers revealed a notable change in participants' comfort with received feedback. Initially, many participants expressed discomfort and a preference for feedback from professors over peers. They also mentioned the absence of negative feedback as an issue, coupled with a fear of negative judgment. However, as the semester advanced, participants gained confidence in their peers' feedback abilities and developed trust in their peer groups. This resulted in an increased comfort with received negative feedback and a decreased fear of negative judgment, in support of Propositions 1 and 2.

5.3.2.3 Incorporating feedback in subsequent writings

An additional notable theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers was incorporating feedback in subsequent writings (Fig. 6). Consistent with previous findings (Jacobs & Zhang, 1989; Nelson & Murphy, 1993), participants reported incorporating feedback into subsequent drafts at a high rate. Positive mentions of incorporating feedback into subsequent drafts started at a high level, 70 percent, and climbed to 100 percent in the third set of reflection papers.

From the outset, participants were generally positive about incorporating feedback in their subsequent drafts, although in the first round of reflection papers, concerns over the accuracy of feedback were voiced despite overall positive mentions. In the second round of reflection papers, participants related increased confidence in peer feedback. At this stage, many participants began to relay that getting feedback from an authentic audience was beneficial, helping them see where their arguments were weak or their writing unclear.

By the third round of reflection papers, concerns over the accuracy of peer feedback had disappeared. All participants related that they felt positive about the feedback they received and that they tried to use it in their subsequent writing. However, in this final round of reflection papers, a new concern arose; as mentioned in other areas of this analysis, participants related that they were bothered by the lack of negative feedback that they received and how that limited how helpful feedback was in their rewriting process.

Overall, the analysis of the reflection papers revealed a consistent trend of participants effectively incorporating feedback into their subsequent drafts. This aligns with the previous research findings of Min (2003) and Eksi (2012). Initially, some concerns about the accuracy of feedback were voiced, even though participants generally had a positive attitude toward this practice. As the study progressed, participants became increasingly confident in peer feedback, acknowledging its value in identifying weak arguments and unclear writing.

By the final round of reflection papers, any doubts about feedback accuracy had vanished, and all participants reported using the feedback positively in their subsequent writing. These findings support Propositions 2 to 4. However, a new concern emerged in this phase, highlighting the need for more critical feedback to further enhance the helpfulness of the feedback received.

5.3.2.4 *Helpfulness of the peer feedback process*

Another significant theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers was the helpfulness of the peer feedback process. Positive mentions of the helpfulness of the peer feedback process started at a high level, 78 percent, and rose slightly to 87 percent in the third round of reflection papers. Although the percent of positive mentions was relatively steady, the nature of these positive mentions shifted over the three reflection papers.

In the first round of reflection papers, participants wrote of the benefits of critiquing the writing of others as related to finding problems in their own writing:

I felt pretty confident and comfortable about participating in this peer review because I understood the assignment perfectly and I felt that I could give efficient feedback so that my peer review partner can revise her work to make hers perfect as well. During the process of giving my peer review partner feedback, I was able to see some mistakes I made in my own writing.

This same sentiment was echoed by participants on at least three other occasions: "Peer reviewing other papers helped because as fixing mistakes in the others' paper, the mistakes were also found from my own". Following the first peer feedback activity, participants emphasized the advantages of critiquing their peers' writing, particularly in relation to identifying issues in their own work. They acknowledged the value of receiving feedback from peers, which enabled them to enhance their final drafts by addressing problems they had not previously considered. Additionally, participants highlighted the benefits of reviewing others' work, emphasizing how it facilitated natural comparisons with their own writing and led to the identification of mistakes, supporting previous findings by Cho and Cho (2011), Cho and MacArthur (2011), Ekşi (2012), Leki (1990b), and Lundstrom and Baker (2009).

Following the second peer feedback activity, several participants' reflections showed a shift in perspective: from that of a writer to beginning to view their own writing through the eyes of a reader. The second reflection papers showed similar positive comments, although there was an increase in the intensity and assuredness of these comments.

In the third round of reflection papers, participants wrote glowingly of how they now had confidence in their ability to identify errors in others' writing as well as their own. Participants reported that they found the peer review process beneficial in two primary ways: in developing critical reading skills while reading the work of others as well as their own and broadening the way they viewed their own writing, being able to write with the view of the reader in mind.

Overall, the qualitative analysis of the reflection papers highlighted the theme of the helpfulness of the peer feedback process. Positive mentions of its helpfulness remained consistently high, ranging from 78 percent to 87 percent across the three

rounds of reflection papers. The nature of these positive comments evolved over time. Initially, participants emphasized the benefits of critiquing others' writing in identifying issues in their own work and shifting their perspective from a writer to a reader. In subsequent reflections, participants expressed increased confidence in their ability to identify errors in both others' writing and their own writing, supporting Propositions 2 and 3.

In general, participants found the peer feedback process beneficial for developing critical reading skills and for broadening their perspective on their own writing, allowing them to approach it with the reader in mind. The peer feedback process not only helped participants improve their own writing but also fostered a more comprehensive understanding of effective communication from the reader's perspective.

5.3.3 Summary

The analysis of the reflection papers yielded four distinct themes: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, incorporating feedback in subsequent writings, and helpfulness of the peer feedback process. These themes closely mirrored the findings from the interviews, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

The reflection papers provided a valuable, non-biased perspective from a majority of participants and offered insights into the evolution of their engagement with peer feedback over the course of the semester. Participants' comfort levels with both giving and receiving feedback improved with experience and positive peer interactions, highlighting the importance of repeated exposure and supportive social dynamics in the peer feedback process.

Furthermore, participants consistently incorporated feedback into their subsequent drafts, demonstrating their willingness to actively engage with and apply the suggestions received from their peers. This finding aligns with previous research that emphasizes the positive impact of peer feedback on students' writing performance (Eksi, 2012; Min, 2003).

The perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process remained consistently high throughout the reflection papers, emphasizing its role in developing critical reading skills and fostering a reader-centric perspective on participants' writing. By engaging in the peer feedback process, participants not only improved their own writing but also developed a more comprehensive understanding of effective communication from the reader's perspective.

Overall, the themes that emerged from the reflection papers provided a rich and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences with peer feedback, complementing the findings from the interviews and offering valuable insights into the factors that influence student engagement and the cognitive processes involved in peer feedback activities.

5.4 Overview

This chapter presented the results and analysis of a mixed-methods research study that explored how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities in a synchronous online writing course at a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea. Data were collected from four sources: questionnaires, essays (peer feedback and revised essays), interviews, and reflection papers.

The analysis of the quantitative data, which included questionnaires and essays, revealed several key findings. Participants displayed a generally positive perception of online peer feedback, with increased exposure leading to enhanced comfort in giving feedback and a significantly more positive view of the peer feedback process's helpfulness. The study also found that specific feedback was more effective in driving successful revisions compared to non-specific feedback, which led to lower success rates. This finding emphasizes the importance of providing specific feedback to facilitate meaningful improvements in writing.

The qualitative analysis of reflection papers and interviews yielded several themes that provided a holistic understanding of students' engagement with online peer feedback activities. These themes included comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, incorporating feedback into subsequent writings, helpfulness of

the peer feedback process, social interaction, and problems with negative feedback. The reflection papers and interviews offered complementary perspectives and supported each other's findings, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions.

The emergence of these themes highlighted the dynamic nature of students' engagement with peer feedback activities, as their comfort levels in giving and receiving feedback evolved over time. The study also revealed the importance of social interaction in the peer feedback process, as positive peer relationships contributed to increased trust and willingness to provide constructive feedback. Additionally, the findings illuminate the challenges associated with negative feedback, such as the reluctance to provide criticism and the potential impact on peer relationships.

The findings presented in this chapter provide the groundwork for the upcoming discussion in Chapter 6, which presents the integrated findings for each of the four research strands, each focused on a dimension of student engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. The chapter then explores the influence of culture and language on student engagement, followed by the identification of three types of engagers. The chapter concludes with discussion related the influence of culture and language on student engagement. Then three types of engagers are identified.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the integrated findings of a study that explored L2 students' engagement with peer feedback activities in an online writing course at a U.S. university branch campus in South Korea. By examining the interplay of observable activities, attitudinal shifts, cognitive processes, and social dynamics, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of student engagement across four research strands, each guided by a specific research question and related propositions. The distinctive setting allows for an exploration of the influence of cultural backgrounds and linguistic factors on students' engagement as they navigate practices that may differ from their previous educational experiences (Atkinson, 2016; Hung & Hyun, 2010; McKinley, 2015).

The chapter discusses a significant contribution of the study: the identification of three distinct types of student engagers—independent, dependent, and minimal. This novel typology offers a framework for understanding the diverse ways students approach and interact with online peer feedback activities, highlighting varying levels of autonomy, motivation, and cognitive engagement. The chapter also addresses the implications relevant to the integrated findings for each research strand

6.2 Discussion of integrated findings for each research strand

This section offers a synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study, focusing on the four research strands that correspond to the four dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021; Deng et al., 2020; Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

By triangulating data from multiple sources, this discussion provides a multifaceted understanding of how students engage with online peer feedback activities across the four research strands, underscoring how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other.

6.2.1 *Research strand 1*

The first research strand aimed to answer Research Question 1 and address Propositions 4, 5, and 7. This strand focused on the behavioural dimension of student engagement in online peer feedback activities. The findings of this strand can be categorized into three main sections: overall summary findings, specific responses to the research question and propositions, and implications for practice.

Overall, the integrated findings revealed that participants exhibited a strong capacity to provide substantive and accurate feedback on their peers' written work (Allen & Mills, 2016; Wu & Schunn, 2021). Furthermore, the data indicated consistent efforts by participants to thoughtfully review and incorporate the feedback they received into subsequent revisions of their own writing. However, a notable pattern emerged: participants' ability to effectively respond to and address peer feedback varied considerably depending on the specificity and clarity of the feedback provided (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Next, the discussion turns to a detailed examination of the research question and propositions. Here, insights into the types of activities students engage in during online peer feedback and the impact of transactional distance on these activities are offered.

- Research Question 1:

What types of observable activities do students engage in while completing online peer feedback activities?

The integrated findings revealed three main types of observable activities that students engage in during online peer feedback activities. First, students demonstrated a strong capacity to provide substantive and accurate feedback on their peers' written work. Second, they consistently made efforts to thoughtfully review the feedback they received from peers. Third, students worked on incorporating the received feedback into revisions of their own writing.

The findings also noted that while these activities were consistently observed, the effectiveness of students' responses to peer feedback varied. This variation was largely dependent on the specificity and clarity of the feedback provided, suggesting

that the quality of engagement in incorporating feedback was influenced by the nature of the feedback received.

- Proposition 4:

As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.

The findings provided support for this proposition. The data indicated that when giving feedback, participants predominantly drew from their existing knowledge of English grammar and concepts covered in the course materials, allowing them to provide feedback closely aligned with the instructor's guidelines and rubrics. This reliance on familiar reference points seemed to help lessen the transactional distance in the online environment.

- Proposition 5:

As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance.

The findings partially support this proposition. The qualitative data provides examples of behavioural techniques participants employed to try to lessen the transactional distance created by ambiguous online peer feedback. When receiving feedback from peers, participants described behaviours like carefully re-reading the comments multiple times and spending significant time thinking deeply about the feedback to try to decipher the intended meaning (Bedenlier et al., 2020; Heilporn et al., 2021). The data suggests that some students developed behavioural techniques like close analysis, deliberate consideration, and problem-solving efforts in order to bridge the gap caused by vague or non-specific feedback in the online environment. However, this was not universally the case.

While the data indicates participants still frequently struggled with unclear feedback comments, suggesting these behavioural techniques did not always fully overcome transactional distance, the qualitative examples illustrate some participants' attempts to develop and apply behavioural strategies to lessen transactional distance when possible.

- Proposition 7:

Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.

The findings strongly supported this proposition. Participants had considerable difficulty responding effectively to non-specific or ambiguous peer feedback comments lacking explicit guidance for revision. This difficulty stemmed from the transactional distance inherent in the online environment.

Finally, the implications of these findings for instructors and students engaged in online peer feedback activities are considered, highlighting key areas for improvement and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of this learning approach.

These findings accentuate the importance of providing specific, detailed, and actionable feedback to facilitate effective revision and meaningful engagement with the peer feedback process. Conversely, ambiguous or non-specific comments can present significant barriers, hindering students' ability to understand and respond effectively to the feedback they receive. The results underscore the need for instructors to guide students in developing strategies to interpret and unpack vague feedback and/or request follow-up discussions with their peers when feedback requires clarification. Creating structured opportunities for such peer dialogue, through brief follow-up sessions or discussion forums, could help students resolve uncertainties about received feedback.

By fostering an environment that emphasizes the provision of clear, actionable feedback and equipping students with the skills to engage productively with feedback of varying specificity, instructors can enhance the overall effectiveness of online peer feedback activities and maximize the learning potential for all students. Furthermore, understanding the factors that influence the provision and reception of feedback can inform the design of peer feedback activities and support mechanisms that promote productive engagement and facilitate meaningful learning experiences.

6.2.2 *Research strand 2*

This research strand aimed to answer Research Question 2 and address Propositions 1, 2, and 3. This strand focused on the emotional dimension of student

engagement in online peer feedback activities. Like above, the findings of this strand can be categorized into three main sections: overall summary findings, specific responses to the research question and propositions, and implications for practice.

Overall, the analysis revealed a compelling narrative: engaging with the online peer feedback process led to a significant improvement in participants' comfort levels when both providing and receiving peer critiques over the course of the semester. This positive shift in emotional experiences can be largely attributed to the development of trust—trust in one's own abilities to offer accurate and valuable feedback, as well as trust in the capabilities of their peers to provide helpful and insightful critiques (Hu & Lam, 2010; Latifi et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). The quantitative data provided statistical evidence of these attitudinal improvements, showing significant positive shifts in participants' attitudes across three key factors: comfort giving feedback, comfort receiving feedback, and perceived helpfulness of the peer feedback process. The qualitative data painted a nuanced picture of participants' evolving emotional experiences, highlighting the transformation they underwent as they engaged with the peer feedback process over time. Early feelings of anxiety and self-doubt gradually dissipated, replaced by a newfound sense of confidence and self-assurance, largely attributed to the constructive social interactions and supportive relationships that developed within the peer feedback groups.

Next, the discussion turns to a detailed examination of the research question and propositions. Here, insights into how engaging with the peer feedback process influences students' attitudes and the development of trust in online peer feedback activities are discussed.

- Research Question 2:

How does engaging with the peer feedback process influence students' attitudes toward the online peer feedback process?

The findings strongly support that engaging with the peer feedback process positively influences students' attitudes toward online peer feedback (Conrad & Openo, 2018; Filak & Sheldon, 2008; Hughes et al., 2008). Quantitative data showed

statistically significant positive shifts in participants' attitudes regarding comfort in giving and receiving feedback, as well as the perceived helpfulness of the process, measured at different intervals throughout the semester. Qualitative data revealed a transformation from initial anxiety and self-doubt to increased confidence and self-assurance as the semester progressed, characterized by participants overcoming their initial apprehensions about their ability to provide meaningful feedback.

- Proposition 1:

Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.

The findings support this proposition, with both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrating that as students engaged with peer feedback activities over time, their attitudes became increasingly positive. Initial feelings of anxiety and apprehension were replaced by confidence and appreciation for the process.

- Proposition 2:

Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.

The findings support this proposition. Qualitative data showed that participants' initial scepticism about the accuracy and value of peer feedback gradually transformed into increased trust as they observed the usefulness of the feedback they received over time. This evolution in trust was closely tied to the participants' observations of their peers' commitment to the process, as witnessed through the changes and improvements made based on the feedback provided.

- Proposition 3:

Trust in students' ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.

This proposition is strongly supported by the data. Qualitative insights revealed that as participants gained more experience with peer feedback activities within their static groups, their confidence in their ability to provide accurate and valuable feedback grew significantly. The use of static groups played a crucial role in this process, allowing for the cultivation of deeper relationships and a more comfortable

feedback environment over time. As students witnessed their peers genuinely valuing and benefiting from the feedback provided within these established groups, their confidence in their own feedback-giving abilities grew, creating a positive feedback loop of increased comfort, effort, and skill development.

Finally, the implications of these findings for instructors and students engaged in online peer feedback activities are discussed, highlighting key areas for improvement and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of online peer feedback processes.

These integrated findings underscore the impact that social relationships and interactions can have on students' emotional engagement with peer feedback activities within an online learning environment. By intentionally fostering a supportive and collaborative learning community that encourages meaningful social interaction and the development of trust among peers, instructors can create conditions that promote positive emotional engagement, reduce anxiety, and increase confidence in both giving and receiving peer feedback. This, in turn, can lead to more productive and meaningful engagement with the peer feedback process.

6.2.3 *Research strand 3*

This research strand aimed to answer Research Question 3 and address Propositions 4, 5, 7, and 8. This strand focused on the cognitive dimension of student engagement in online peer feedback activities. The findings of this strand are categorized into three main parts: overall summary findings, specific responses to the research question and propositions, and implications for practice.

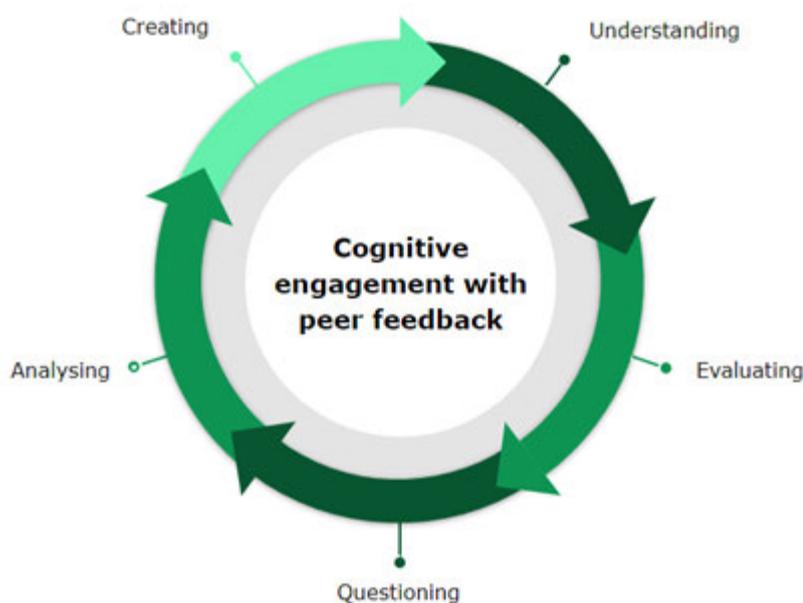
The examination revealed insights into the diverse cognitive processes and strategies employed by participants as they navigated the complexities of online peer feedback activities. The integrated findings indicated that participants exhibited varying styles and levels of cognitive engagement, with their approaches heavily influenced by the degree of structure, dialogue, and transactional distance present within the online learning environment. When the online peer feedback process

involved high levels of structure and dialogue (low transactional distance), all participants were able to effectively employ a range of cognitive strategies to engage with the activities at hand. However, during periods characterized by high transactional distance, where dialogue and external structure were limited, participants displayed notable variations in their levels of autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and higher-order cognition. These individual differences significantly influenced their ability to overcome the challenges posed by high transactional distance through the use of higher-order cognitive strategies.

As reflected by Figure 6.1, the qualitative analysis uncovered a five-step recursive cognitive engagement process that participants navigated: understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating. While not all participants reached the final stage of creating new knowledge or insights, those who displayed elevated levels of autonomy and intrinsic motivation were able to engage in higher-order cognition despite facing situations with limited peer interaction or external structure. These highly engaged participants actively interrogated and critically analysed the ideas presented in their peers' writing and feedback, employing questioning, analysis, and synthesis to generate novel understandings that expanded upon or challenged the original concepts (Tian & Zhou, 2020; Abassi et al., 2006).

Figure 6.1

Students' Cognitive Engagement with Peer Feedback



While not all participants reached the final stage of creating new knowledge or insights, those who displayed elevated levels of autonomy and intrinsic motivation were able to engage in higher-order cognition despite facing situations with limited peer interaction or external structure. These highly engaged participants actively interrogated and critically analysed the ideas presented in their peers' writing and feedback, employing questioning, analysis, and synthesis to generate novel understandings that expanded upon or challenged the original concepts. One participant shared a reflection that encapsulated this process:

Engaging with my peers' writing pushed me to think more critically about my own ideas. When I encountered viewpoints that challenged my own, I had to really examine my beliefs and consider alternative perspectives.

The student went on to reflect that this process of questioning, analysing, and sometimes creating new understandings was challenging but also very rewarding.

To further illustrate the diverse cognitive engagement profiles observed among participants, the study presented illustrative case studies of three individuals, each representing a distinct engagement type: independent engager, dependent engager, and minimal engager.

Mina (pseudonym), an independent engager, demonstrated a remarkable ability to create knowledge that extended beyond what was present in social interactions or available resources. She actively and critically engaged with peer texts, employing internal dialogue, questioning, and in-depth analysis to generate new insights and understandings that challenged or expanded upon the original ideas presented. As Mina described:

Sometimes when I read my partner's essays or feedback, I would disagree or not be sure what it meant. Even after talking to my partner, the meaning might not be clear, or I might disagree so much that it would be hard for me to make sense of it. Then I would try to understand it by trying to understand their point. By arguing against my points, I was able to find weak reasoning in my partner's writing and my own assumptions.

In contrast, Hayun (pseudonym), a dependent engager, relied heavily on the knowledge and cognitive tools developed during periods of peer dialogue and the provided textual resources. While she effectively completed the peer feedback activities, her cognitive engagement did not transcend the boundaries of the available tools and social interactions. Hayun's cognitive processes primarily involved understanding, evaluating, and applying the knowledge and strategies acquired through peer dialogue and provided resources. As Hayun explained:

I couldn't always understand everything in the essay I was giving feedback on. Some points were so different and difficult for me. I didn't know what to do. I would ignore things I didn't understand or sometimes I wrote that the point wasn't clear to me.

Minho (pseudonym), identified as a minimal engager, exhibited limited cognitive engagement throughout the peer feedback process. His cognitive efforts were primarily focused on responding to assignment instructions and specific feedback that offered clear, straightforward solutions. Minimal engager, Minho, struggled to benefit from social interaction or engage in higher-order cognitive processes such as questioning, analysing, and creating. Instead, he relied solely on the explicit structural tools and resources provided within the peer feedback activity.

Next, the discussion turns to a detailed examination of the research question and propositions. Insights into how students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process and the impact of transactional distance and individual differences on this engagement are discussed.

- Research Question 3:

How do students cognitively engage with the online peer feedback process? The findings revealed that students' cognitive engagement with the online peer feedback process is multifaceted and varies significantly based on the level of transactional distance and individual differences. Participants employed a variety of cognitive strategies, including understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating, to engage with peer feedback activities.

- Proposition 4:

As transactional distance increases, students will rely on structure provided by the peer feedback activity to lessen this distance.

The findings support this proposition. When transactional distance was high (low structure and dialogue), students exhibited a greater reliance on the provided structure of the peer feedback activities. The structured elements of the feedback process served as an important scaffold, enabling students to navigate and engage with the activities more effectively despite the lack of extensive dialogue and interaction.

- Proposition 5:

As transactional distance increases, students will develop behavioural and cognitive techniques to lessen this distance.

The findings partially support this proposition. Some students developed effective behavioural and cognitive techniques to mitigate the effects of high transactional distance. For instance, independent engagers like Mina demonstrated the ability to employ higher-order cognitive strategies such as critical analysis and synthesis to overcome the challenges posed by limited interaction. However, this was not universally observed, as dependent and minimal engagers struggled to develop or employ such techniques effectively.

- Proposition 7:

Due to transactional distance, students will have difficulty responding effectively to non-specific feedback.

The findings support this proposition. Students, particularly dependent and minimal engagers, faced challenges in responding to non-specific feedback during periods of high transactional distance. These students often found it difficult to interpret and utilise feedback that lacked clarity or specificity, as evidenced by dependent engager, Hayun's, reliance on peer dialogue and explicit guidance to understand and apply feedback.

- Proposition 8:

Due to individual differences, students will achieve different levels of cognitive engagement.

The findings strongly support this proposition. The study highlighted significant individual differences in cognitive engagement levels. Independent engagers, such as Mina, demonstrated high levels of autonomy and intrinsic motivation, enabling them to engage deeply with peer feedback and generate new insights. In contrast, dependent engagers like Hayun and minimal engagers like Minhó exhibited lower levels of cognitive engagement, relying more heavily on provided structures and peer interactions to navigate the feedback process. This variation underscores the influence of individual differences on students' ability to engage cognitively with online peer feedback activities

Finally, the implications of these findings for instructors and students engaged in online peer feedback activities are considered, highlighting key areas for improvement and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of cognitive engagement in online peer feedback processes.

These findings highlight the importance of designing peer feedback activities that intentionally foster higher-order thinking skills and encourage students to engage in questioning, analysing, and creating novel knowledge and perspectives. By developing a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes involved in peer feedback activities and the factors that influence students' ability to engage in higher-

order thinking, instructors can create supportive learning environments that actively promote cognitive development and enhance overall learning outcomes for students.

Furthermore, recognizing the diverse cognitive engagement profiles exhibited by students underscores the need for differentiated instructional approaches that cater to individual needs and strengths. For instance, independent engagers may benefit from activities that provide ample opportunities for intellectual exploration and knowledge construction, while dependent engagers may require additional scaffolding and structured guidance to support their cognitive engagement. Minimal engagers, on the other hand, may benefit from targeted interventions that cultivate autonomy, motivation, and higher-order thinking skills.

6.2.4 Research strand 4

The fourth research strand aimed to answer Research Question 4 and address Propositions 1, 2, 3, and 6. This strand focused on the social dimension of student engagement. As with each of the previous research strands, the findings of this strand can be categorized into three main parts: overall summary findings, specific responses to the research question and propositions, and implications for practice.

Despite the inherent challenges and constraints of the online learning environment, the integrated findings revealed that participants were able to establish meaningful social connections with their peers throughout the peer feedback process (Yu & Lee, 2016; Zhao, 2018). These social relationships had a multifaceted impact on engagement across the emotional, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions (Conrad & Openo, 2018; Filak & Sheldon, 2008; Hughes et al., 2008), underscoring the importance of social interaction and collaboration in facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

Within the small, static peer feedback groups, prolonged social interaction over the course of the semester led to the development of trust among group members and a shared sense of credibility and mutual respect. This collective trust had significant implications for participants' engagement across multiple dimensions,

creating a positive feedback loop that reinforced and amplified the benefits of social engagement.

In the behavioural dimension, the development of trust in the accuracy and relevance of peer feedback motivated students to take the critiques and suggestions they received seriously, and to make concerted efforts to thoughtfully respond to and incorporate this feedback into subsequent revisions of their own writing. The quantitative analysis of essays (peer feedback and revised essays) supported this finding, revealing that participants attempted to address approximately 70% of the peer feedback they received. As one participant commented:

I always appreciated my partner's feedback, but I had to decide if it was correct. This wasn't always easy. Sometimes ... my partner and I had different ideas, so I had to think if I was right. Did I need to change what I had written?

In the emotional dimension, the trust that developed within peer feedback groups significantly increased participants' comfort levels in both giving and receiving feedback, even when the feedback was critical or negative in nature. As evident in the findings, participants demonstrated enhanced engagement in the peer feedback process as they developed trust in their peers' abilities and gained confidence in their own capacities to provide meaningful critiques. This transformation was most apparent in their attitudes toward giving feedback, with positive references to comfort giving feedback increasing from 30% in the first reflection paper to 96% in the third. One participant reflected on the impact of social relationships on their engagement, sharing:

In the beginning, I was hesitant to share my writing and provide feedback to others. But as we got to know each other better and built trust within our group, I felt more comfortable opening up and engaging in meaningful discussions about our work.

The positive feedback loop between social engagement and emotional engagement was evident, as increased trust and comfort levels further encouraged participants to invest in building stronger social connections, which in turn enhanced their emotional engagement in the peer feedback process.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis revealed that social interaction, particularly in the form of actively negotiating meaning and understanding within peer groups, directly contributed to the creation of new knowledge and insights. When faced with ideas or perspectives that contradicted their own, participants were pushed to engage in a cognitive process involving advanced thinking skills such as questioning, analysing, and evaluating (Sato & Lyster, 2012). This process frequently led to the consolidation, rejection, or creation of new ideas and understandings that expanded upon or synthesized the original concepts. A participant highlighted this connection, stating:

The conversations we had in our peer feedback group often sparked new ideas and pushed me to think more deeply about the topics we were writing about ... The back-and-forth exchange of perspectives and the need to clarify and negotiate meaning helped my understanding and helped me grow as a writer.

The positive feedback loop between social engagement and cognitive engagement was apparent, as the social interactions within peer feedback groups stimulated higher-order thinking processes, which in turn motivated participants to engage more deeply in the social negotiation of meaning and understanding.

Next, the discussion turns to an examination of the research question and propositions. Here, insights into the impact of social relationships on student engagement with online peer feedback activities and how cultural factors influence this engagement are offered.

- Research Question 4:

What is the impact of the development of social relationships between peers on student engagement with online peer feedback activities?

The study revealed that the development of social relationships among peers significantly impacted student engagement with online peer feedback activities. These relationships enhanced engagement across emotional, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions, emphasizing the importance of social interaction and collaboration in creating meaningful learning experiences.

- Proposition 1:

Prolonged engagement with online peer feedback activities leads to a more positive attitude toward the peer feedback process.

The findings support this proposition. Prolonged engagement within small, static peer feedback groups facilitated the development of trust and mutual respect, leading to a more positive attitude towards the peer feedback process. The increase in comfort levels for both giving and receiving feedback, even when critical, indicates that sustained interaction positively influenced participants' attitudes. This shift is evident in the rise from 30% to 96% in participants' comfort with giving feedback from the first to the third reflection paper.

- Proposition 2:

Trust in received feedback will increase with prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback groups.

The findings support this proposition. The development of trust among group members over time led to an increased trust in the accuracy and relevance of the feedback received. This trust motivated students to seriously consider and incorporate peer feedback into their revisions. The quantitative analysis showing that participants attempted to address approximately 70% of the feedback received further underscores the importance of trust in enhancing engagement with the feedback process.

- Proposition 3:

Trust in students' ability to give meaningful feedback will increase through experience and prolonged engagement in their online peer feedback group.

The findings support this proposition. As participants gained more experience and engaged over a prolonged period within their peer feedback groups, their confidence in their ability to provide meaningful critiques increased. This transformation was marked by a significant rise in positive references to comfort in giving feedback, suggesting that trust and familiarity fostered a supportive environment where participants felt capable of contributing valuable feedback.

- Proposition 6:

Culture will influence students' attitudes toward engagement in the online peer feedback process.

The findings support this proposition, highlighting the significant influence of cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies on students' engagement with online peer feedback activities. Participants' initial discomfort with the collaborative and critically evaluative nature of peer feedback was rooted in Korean societal norms that prioritize group harmony and respect for hierarchies. This cultural perspective initially posed challenges, as providing direct criticism was seen as potentially disruptive to maintaining harmonious group dynamics.

However, as the semester progressed and social bonds were forged within the peer feedback groups, these cultural concerns gradually diminished. The groups developed their own set of norms that encouraged constructive critique and open exchanges of feedback, even when it involved negative comments or contrasting perspectives. This shift was driven by the participants' motivation to benefit from the peer feedback activities. One participant reflected on this cultural adaptation, noting that engaging in the peer feedback process challenged their cultural assumptions and allowed them to adopt a more active and critical role within the group.

Additionally, while English was the language of instruction, it was an L2 for all participants. The peer feedback activities provided opportunities for meaningful language interactions and negotiations, which positively impacted some students' confidence and proficiency in English. Participants reported increased confidence in communicating and experimenting with English usage within their supportive peer feedback groups.

Finally, the implications of these findings for instructors and students engaged in online peer feedback activities are discussed, highlighting key areas for improvement and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of social engagement in online peer feedback processes.

These integrated findings underscore the importance of social engagement in the peer feedback process, highlighting its multidimensional impact on emotional,

behavioural, and cognitive dimensions of engagement. The development of trust and supportive social relationships within peer feedback groups not only facilitated more productive feedback exchanges and increased comfort levels but also fostered higher-order cognitive processes and the creation of new knowledge. The positive feedback loops that emerged between social engagement and the other dimensions of engagement served to reinforce and amplify the benefits of social interaction in the learning process.

By intentionally fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment that encourages meaningful social interaction and the development of trust among students, instructors can design peer feedback activities and support mechanisms that promote meaningful engagement across all dimensions. This holistic approach can ultimately enhance learning outcomes and facilitate personal growth for students in online educational settings.

6.3 The influence of culture and language

The cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies of participants played a notable role in shaping their engagement with online peer feedback activities (Atkinson, 2016; Hofstede, 2016). This finding underscores the importance of considering these contextual factors when designing and implementing such activities in culturally diverse learning environments.

The findings revealed that participants' cultural perspectives, rooted in Korean societal norms that prioritize group harmony and respect for hierarchies (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005), initially posed challenges in embracing the collaborative and critically evaluative nature of peer feedback processes (Ng, 2009). Several participants expressed discomfort with the idea of providing direct criticism to their peers, as it was perceived as a potential threat to maintaining harmonious group dynamics (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Lee, 2008; Siu, 1992). As one participant commented during an interview: "For Koreans, giving direct criticism can be impolite. It can be difficult to be helpful by giving negative feedback and still maintain a harmonious relationship".

However, as the semester progressed and social bonds were forged within the peer feedback groups, these concerns about disrupting group harmony gradually dissipated. The peer feedback groups developed their own set of norms that, to some extent, superseded the dominant cultural norms. Driven by a strong motivation to derive benefits from their participation in these peer feedback activities, the groups organically adopted norms that encouraged constructive peer critique and open exchanges of critical feedback, even when it involved negative comments or contrasting perspectives:

The peer feedback experience challenged some of my cultural assumptions about the role of students and the nature of feedback. By engaging in this process and seeing the benefits of more direct, critical feedback, I was able to adapt my approach and take on a more active, expert role within my group.

The findings suggest that while there was an initial tension between the principles and practices of peer feedback and the values inherent in Korean culture (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005), this tension was ultimately resolved as trust developed among members of the peer feedback groups. As trust solidified, the emerging social norms within these groups supplanted the dominant cultural norms, allowing participants to embrace the exchange of feedback and actively engage in collaborative knowledge creation.

Regarding language, although English was the language of instruction on the campus where this study took place, it was an L2 for all participants. While not a central theme in the reflection papers or interviews, there was anecdotal evidence suggesting that participating in online peer feedback processes had a positive impact on some students' confidence and proficiency in using English.

Several participants reported experiencing increased confidence in communicating and expressing themselves in English as a result of the meaningful interactions and language negotiations that occurred within their peer feedback groups. One participant shared:

The supportive environment in our peer feedback group made me feel more comfortable taking risks and experimenting with my English usage. I knew

that my peers would be understanding and helpful if I struggled to find the right words or made mistakes. This allowed me to push myself and grow as an English language learner.

6.3.1 Implications

These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural perspectives and linguistic challenges when designing and implementing peer feedback activities, particularly in L2 contexts. By being aware of the possible conflicts between cultural norms and the collaborative critiquing involved in peer feedback processes, instructors can create supportive classroom settings. These settings can help reduce those conflicts while taking advantage of opportunities for genuine communication and language growth.

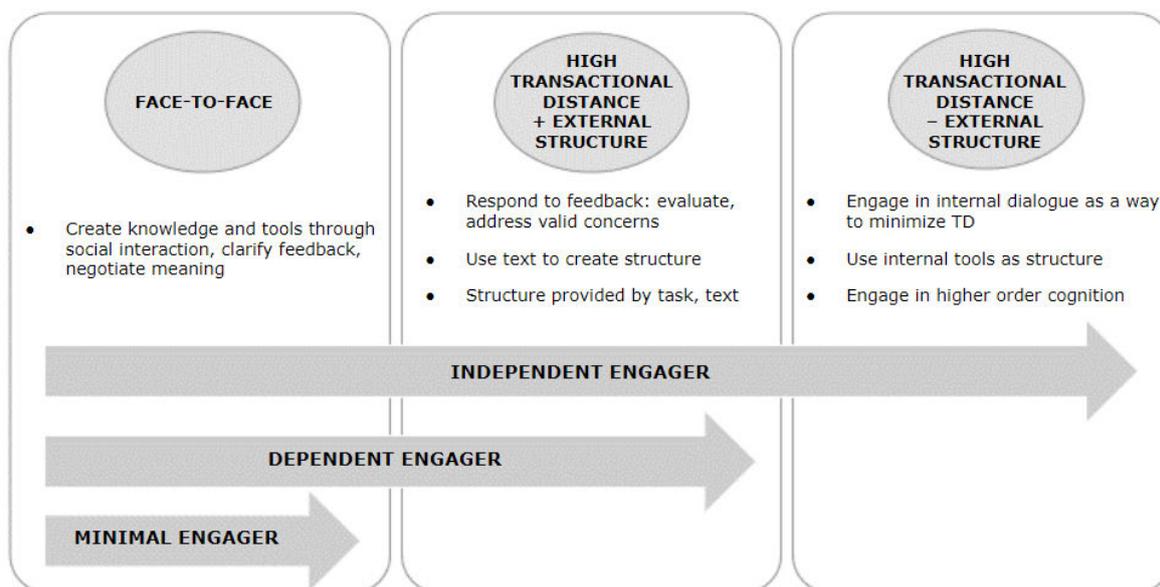
Fostering an inclusive classroom culture that values diverse perspectives and encourages the development of alternative norms within peer groups can facilitate a shift towards embracing constructive criticism and collaborative knowledge creation. Additionally, incorporating peer feedback activities that involve meaningful language negotiations can provide valuable opportunities for L2 learners to enhance their confidence and proficiency in the target language.

6.4 Three types of engagers

A significant contribution of this study is the identification of three distinct engagement profiles—*independent engagers*, *dependent engagers*, and *minimal engagers*—that emerged from the in-depth analysis of participants' experiences with online peer feedback activities. As depicted by Figure 6.2, this novel typology offers a nuanced framework for understanding the diverse ways in which students approach and interact with peer feedback activities (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Zhang & Hyland, 2018), highlighting notable variations in their levels of autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive investment.

Figure 6.2

Engagement through the Feedback Process



Independent engagers, exemplified by the case study of Mina (pseudonym), were distinguished by their ability to actively engage with peer-to-peer dialogue and written feedback in ways that led them to create knowledge that extended beyond what was present in the initial social interactions or available resources. These participants demonstrated a high level of autonomy and were intrinsically motivated to maximize their learning outcomes from online peer feedback activities.

Mina, for instance, actively and critically engaged with peer texts, employing internal dialogue, questioning, and in-depth analysis to generate new insights and understandings that challenged or expanded upon the original ideas presented:

There were times when I disagreed with a point in the essay or comments on my essay. If we were in class, I would question these points. Of course, it's different being at home and only having what was written. So, kind of play devil's advocate and argue with myself, taking my classmate's position and then arguing back with my view.

Dependent engagers, represented by the case study of Hayun (pseudonym), shared similarities with independent engagers in providing meaningful feedback and appropriately responding to received feedback. However, dependent engagers did not venture beyond what was presented in their social interactions, dialogues, and

peer essays and feedback. They generally completed activities successfully but rarely engaged in higher-order cognitive processes independently.

Hayun, for example, relied heavily on the knowledge and cognitive tools developed during periods of peer dialogue and the provided textual resources. While she effectively completed the peer feedback activities, her cognitive engagement did not transcend the boundaries of the available tools and social interactions. As Hayun explained:

Sometimes when I read my partner's essays or feedback, I would disagree or not be sure what it meant. Even after talking to my partner, the meaning might not be clear, or I might disagree so much that it would be hard for me to make sense of it. Then I would try to understand it by trying to understand their point. By arguing against my points, I was able to find weak reasoning in my partner's writing and my own assumptions.

In contrast to both independent and dependent engagers, minimal engagers, represented by the case study of Minho (pseudonym), did not derive significant benefits from socially constructed knowledge. This group of participants tended to only provide specific feedback that followed the instructor's guidelines and were only able to respond to feedback that was both specific and easily addressed.

Minho exhibited limited engagement beyond the assignment instructions and straightforward feedback, struggling with peer interaction and higher-order thinking processes. His cognitive efforts were primarily focused on responding to assignment instructions and specific feedback that offered clear, straightforward solutions.

The identification of these distinct engagement profiles illuminates the diverse needs, strengths, and challenges that students may encounter when engaging with online peer feedback activities. By recognizing these varying engagement approaches, educators can tailor their pedagogical strategies and instructional design to better support and facilitate meaningful engagement for all types of learners.

For instance, independent engagers may thrive in environments that provide ample opportunities for intellectual exploration, knowledge construction, and

autonomous learning. Instructors could design peer feedback activities that encourage questioning, analysis, and synthesis, while also fostering a collaborative learning community that supports the exchange of diverse perspectives.

Dependent engagers, on the other hand, may benefit from structured guidance and scaffolding to support their cognitive engagement and facilitate the transition towards more independent higher-order thinking processes. Instructional strategies could include modelling cognitive processes, providing structured frameworks for analysis and evaluation, and gradually releasing responsibility to students as their confidence and skills develop.

Minimal engagers may require targeted interventions that develop autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and higher-order thinking skills. While this study's pandemic context and the instructor–researcher's first experience teaching online limited her ability to fully support students like Minho, instructors could typically incorporate strategies such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and metacognitive prompts to encourage greater cognitive investment and engagement. Additionally, fostering a supportive learning environment that promotes risk-taking and values diverse perspectives could help minimal engagers feel more comfortable engaging with peers and exploring abstract ideas, though it's important to recognize that some students may consciously choose their level of engagement based on personal priorities and circumstances.

6.4.1 Implications

By recognizing the diverse needs and challenges associated with the three distinct engagement profiles—-independent engagers, dependent engagers, and minimal engagers—educators can tailor their pedagogical strategies and instructional design to better support and facilitate meaningful engagement for all types of learners.

For independent engagers, who thrive on intellectual exploration and autonomous learning, instructors could design peer feedback activities that encourage questioning, analysis, and synthesis, while fostering a collaborative

learning community that supports the exchange of diverse perspectives. Dependent engagers may benefit from structured guidance and scaffolding, such as modelling cognitive processes, providing structured frameworks for analysis and evaluation, and gradually releasing responsibility as their confidence and skills develop. Minimal engagers may require targeted interventions that develop autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and higher-order thinking skills, such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and metacognitive prompts, along with a supportive learning environment that promotes risk-taking and values diverse perspectives. By tailoring pedagogical approaches to address the specific needs and characteristics of each engagement profile, educators can create inclusive and effective online peer feedback experiences that promote meaningful engagement and facilitate learning for all students.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented discussion on the integrated findings from this study, structured into four research strands aligned with the study's four research questions, related propositions, and dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social. Each research strand has explored in depth how L2 students engaged with peer feedback activities in an online writing course within a cross-cultural context. Table 6.1 summarizes each research strand's key findings, presenting them in relation to the corresponding research question, propositions, engagement dimension, methodology, and data sources.

Table 6.1*Key Findings*

| Research Strand | Research Question | Propositions | Dimension of Engagement | Method | Data Source | Findings |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------|---|---|
| 1 | RQ1 | P4, P5, P7 | Behavioural | quan | Essays (peer feedback and revised essays) | Students provided substantive feedback, reviewed feedback received, and attempted to incorporate feedback into revisions. Effectiveness varied based on specificity and clarity of feedback. |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews | |
| 2 | RQ2 | P1, P2, P3 | Emotional | quan | Questionnaires | Engaging with peer feedback led to increased comfort levels in giving and receiving feedback. Trust in peers' abilities and one's own abilities grew over time. |
| | | | | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews | |
| 3 | RQ3 | P4, P5, P7, P8 | Cognitive | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews | Students employed diverse cognitive strategies (understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, creating). Individual differences in autonomy and motivation influenced higher-order cognitive engagement. |
| | | | | quan | Essays (peer feedback and revised essays) | |
| 4 | RQ4 | P1, P2, P3, P6 | Social | QUAL | Reflection papers Interviews | Development of social relationships and trust among peers positively impacted engagement across emotional, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions. |
| | | | | quan | Questionnaires | |

The integrated findings from the first research strand revealed that participants actively incorporated feedback from their peers in subsequent writings, with quantitative analysis showing that they attempted to address approximately 70% of the peer feedback they received. The integrated findings from the second research strand highlighted the improvement in participants' comfort in giving feedback over time, as evidenced by the increase in positive references to comfort giving feedback from 30% in the first reflection paper to 96% in the third. The integrated findings from the third research strand identified the diverse cognitive processes and strategies employed by participants. Notably, this strand revealed three types of engagers—independent engagers, dependent engagers, and minimal engagers—and uncovered a five-step recursive cognitive engagement process that independent engagers traversed: understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating. The fourth research strand addressed the social dimension, underscoring the salient role of social relationships in shaping L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, particularly in the context of Korean culture, where social harmony and interpersonal relationships are highly valued. The development of trust and supportive social relationships within peer feedback groups and the resulting positive feedback loop were identified as significant factors influencing engagement across all dimensions.

The chapter has also explored the role of cultural perspectives that facilitated a shift towards constructive criticism and collaborative knowledge creation within peer feedback groups, highlighting how L2 students adapted to and navigated the challenges and opportunities presented by the cross-cultural setting. The identification of three distinct student engagement profiles—independent, dependent, and minimal engagers—has offered a framework for understanding the diverse ways in which students approach and interact with online peer feedback activities, considering the influence of cultural factors on their engagement patterns.

Furthermore, the implications of these findings for educators and institutions have been briefly discussed, emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive and supportive online learning environments that cater to the diverse needs and

engagement profiles of L2 students from different cultural backgrounds. The potential linguistic benefits of online peer feedback activities for enhancing L2 students' confidence and proficiency in using English have also been touched upon, taking into account the influence of cultural factors on language learning and communication styles.

In conclusion, this chapter has presented an overview of the integrated findings from the four research strands. These findings hold significance in understanding how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities when operating within a cross-cultural, synchronous online learning environment. The insights gained from this study have the potential to inform the design and implementation of peer feedback activities in online L2 writing courses, ultimately enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in cross-cultural settings.

The next chapter, Chapter 7, concludes the study by discussing how the study addressed the research problem and questions, the study's significance, implications, recommendations for educators and institutions on improving L2 students' engagement with peer feedback in online writing courses, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter synthesizes key findings from the present study that explored how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other, guided by a framework grounded in the theories of social constructivism, student engagement, and transactional distance.

The chapter revisits the research problem, research questions, and related propositions, providing an overview of the study's key findings and their significance. It discusses the implications of these findings and proposes practical recommendations for educators and institutions to enhance student engagement in online writing courses delivered synchronously. The chapter also addresses the study's limitations. Finally, recommendations for future research are made.

7.2 Addressing research problem and questions

This study explored how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within an online writing course that is delivered synchronously and how the various aspects of engagement interact with each other. The research was guided by four key questions, each associated with specific propositions, forming distinct strands that examined the behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of student engagement. The key findings are summarized in Table 6.1 at the end of Chapter 6.

The first research strand explored the observable activities students engage in during online peer feedback, with a focus on how transactional distance influences these activities (Research Question 1; Propositions 4, 5, and 7). The study posited that as transactional distance increased, students would rely more heavily on provided structures and develop their own techniques to bridge this distance. It also proposed that greater transactional distance would make it challenging for students to effectively respond to non-specific feedback. The findings supported these propositions, revealing a complex interplay between transactional distance and

student behaviour. Students indeed leaned more heavily on provided structures when faced with increased transactional distance, engaging in activities such as reading and reviewing their peers' work, providing written feedback (specific and non-specific), asking questions and negotiating feedback in breakout rooms or via text or chat, and making revisions based on the feedback received. However, they also developed their own strategies to mitigate the effects of transactional distance, though they struggled with non-specific feedback, particularly when transactional distance was high.

The second research strand examined how engagement with the peer feedback process influences students' attitudes (Research Question 2; Propositions 1, 2, and 3). The study proposed that prolonged engagement would lead to more positive attitudes and increased trust in both received feedback and students' own abilities to provide feedback. The findings strongly supported these propositions, demonstrating a significant change in students' attitudes over time. Initial apprehension gave way to increased comfort and appreciation for peer feedback, largely attributed to the development of trust among peers. This shift underscored the importance of sustained engagement in fostering positive attitudes towards the peer feedback process.

The third research strand explored students' cognitive engagement with the online peer feedback process (Research Question 3; Propositions 4, 5, 7, and 8). Building on the propositions related to transactional distance and prior research on varying levels of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), this strand posited that individual differences would result in varying levels of cognitive engagement. The findings revealed diverse cognitive strategies employed by students and identified three distinct engagement profiles: independent, dependent, and minimal engagers, each characterized by different levels of cognitive engagement, intrinsic motivation, and autonomy in the peer feedback process. Notably, independent engagers employed a five-step recursive cognitive process: understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating. They thoroughly read and understood their peers' work, critically evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the writing, posed

thoughtful questions to clarify and encourage deeper thinking, analysed the feedback received from their peers, and used this analysis to create meaningful revisions in their own work.

The fourth and final research strand explored the impact of social relationships on student engagement with online peer feedback activities (Research Question 4; Propositions 1, 2, 3, and 6). Building on earlier propositions about trust and prolonged engagement, this strand also proposed that cultural factors would influence students' attitudes toward engagement, aligning with research on Confucian cultural influences in Korean education (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005). The findings emphasized the crucial role of positive social relationships in fostering engagement across all dimensions. As students built rapport and trust with their peers, they became more comfortable sharing their work, providing constructive feedback, and engaging in meaningful discussions. This social dimension was found to be particularly important in the online learning environment, where the lack of face-to-face interaction can potentially hinder the development of social connections (Park & Bonk, 2007). Moreover, the findings revealed how cultural factors, such as the Korean emphasis on social harmony, initially influenced students' engagement but were gradually navigated as trust developed within peer groups, supporting previous research on cultural impacts in L2 writing contexts (Atkinson, 2016).

Through these four research strands, the study demonstrated the interconnectedness of the behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of engagement in synchronous online peer feedback activities. It highlighted how transactional distance, the development of trust, individual differences, and cultural factors all play significant roles in shaping L2 students' experiences with peer feedback in online environments. These findings not only confirmed the proposed relationships between variables and student engagement but also provided insights into how students adapt and engage in response to the specific challenges and opportunities of online peer feedback contexts.

Despite examining student engagement with peer feedback activities within the specific context of L2 students in a synchronous online writing course at a U.S. branch campus in South Korea, this study offers valuable implications for educators and institutions seeking to enhance the peer feedback process across various educational settings. The insights gained from this research can inform the design and implementation of effective peer feedback activities that foster student engagement, promote cognitive development, and support the growth of social relationships in diverse learning contexts. While focused on a specific group, the findings have broader applications for understanding and improving peer feedback processes in a variety of educational settings, including traditional in-person, asynchronous online, and synchronous online environments.

7.3 Significance

This study makes significant contributions to the literature on L2 students' engagement with online peer feedback in writing contexts. Its holistic, multidimensional approach, building on established research on student engagement dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004), provides a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing L2 students' experiences, taking into account the role of transactional distance in the synchronous online learning environment (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

A key contribution is the development and application of an integrative theoretical framework incorporating behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of student engagement. This framework, underpinned by social constructivism (Palincsar, 1998), transactional distance, and student engagement theories, offers nuanced insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping L2 students' experiences with online peer feedback.

The study identifies three distinct engagement profiles: independent, dependent, and minimal engagers, extending research on student engagement in online environments (Fredricks et al., 2004; Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Independent engagers demonstrate high autonomy and intrinsic motivation, supporting earlier

findings about learner autonomy (Moore & Kearsley, 2012), while dependent engagers rely more on social interactions and structural support. Minimal engagers provide only specific, safe feedback and struggle to benefit from socially constructed knowledge, reflecting challenges identified in previous research (Carson & Nelson, 1996). This typology has significant implications for instructional design and support strategies in online L2 writing courses. Furthermore, the study reveals a five-step recursive cognitive process (understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating) employed by independent engagers, offering insights for designing activities that foster critical thinking skills.

The research underscores the influence of cultural factors on L2 students' engagement within the Korean context, where the emphasis on social harmony initially posed challenges, consistent with previous research on the influences of Confucian culture (Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992). However, students adapted as trust developed within peer groups, supporting findings about the importance of trust in peer feedback (Liu & Hansen, 2002), highlighting the need for culturally responsive pedagogical approaches in diverse online learning environments.

The study emphasizes the impact of social relationships on engagement, revealing how trust development led to a positive feedback loop across all dimensions. This aligns with and extends prior research on social engagement in online learning. Additionally, the study addresses technology-mediated education, demonstrating how digital tools can facilitate communication and collaboration among L2 students in synchronous online environments.

By examining process-oriented writing instruction within a social-constructivist framework, the study contributes to L2 writing pedagogy literature and offers insights into implementing peer feedback activities in synchronous online learning environments. The findings provide practical implications for educators and institutions seeking to design and implement effective peer feedback activities in online writing courses, taking into account the diverse engagement profiles and cultural backgrounds of L2 students.

7.4 Implications

The study's findings have significant implications for educators and institutions seeking to enhance L2 students' engagement with online peer feedback in writing courses. By examining engagement through the lens of a theoretical framework grounded in social constructivism (Palincsar, 1998), student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004), and transactional distance (Moore & Kearsley, 2012), this study highlights the multifaceted nature of student engagement and the importance of considering behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions when designing and implementing online peer feedback activities, building on established research about the interconnected nature of these dimensions (Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021). This comprehensive approach emphasizes the need for educators to take into account the complex interplay of these dimensions in shaping students' engagement in online learning environments.

The identification of three distinct engagement profiles—*independent*, *dependent*, and *minimal engagers*—underscores the importance of comprehensive peer review preparation and processes for all students, supporting previous research on the necessity of peer feedback training (Min, 2005, 2006). This preparation should include providing students with sample texts of varying quality to practice peer feedback, modeling specific and constructive feedback approaches (Liu & Hansen, 2002) (e.g., "Your thesis statement could be stronger. For example, instead of 'This essay discusses social media,' you could write..."), and requiring students to support their comments with examples from peers' writing. All students should participate in preparatory sessions analyzing exemplar feedback, practicing peer review on sample texts, and observing detailed feedback modeling, with clear requirements to cite specific examples when giving feedback. While these strategies would be implemented uniformly across the class, they would most *minimal engagers*, who would be provided the opportunity to develop skills to move beyond surface-level feedback through the scaffolded practice and clear exemplars.

Furthermore, the study's findings on the five-step recursive cognitive process employed by *independent engagers* offer valuable insights for educators and

institutions seeking to promote higher-order thinking skills and deeper cognitive engagement among L2 students. By designing peer feedback activities that explicitly target these cognitive processes, educators can foster the development of critical thinking and self-directed learning skills, supporting previous findings about the relationship between peer feedback and critical thinking development (Ekşi, 2012). This can be achieved by incorporating guided questions, prompts, or reflective exercises that encourage students to engage in these processes, such as evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a peer's argument, analysing the effectiveness of their evidence, or considering alternative perspectives.

The study also highlights the importance of considering the cultural backgrounds and expectations of L2 students when designing and implementing online peer feedback activities. Educators and institutions should be aware of the potential challenges that may arise due to cultural differences, such as the emphasis on social harmony and the avoidance of direct criticism in some cultures (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Shin & Koh, 2005). Supporting previous research on cultural influences in L2 writing (Atkinson, 2016), and building on findings about Confucian educational values (Ng, 2009), educators can foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment that supports the engagement of all L2 students by providing explicit guidance on the purpose and value of peer feedback, as well as creating opportunities for students to discuss and reflect on their cultural experiences and perspectives related to giving and receiving feedback.

Finally, the study's findings on the role of technology in facilitating communication and collaboration among L2 students in synchronous online environments have important implications for educators and institutions. By leveraging digital tools and platforms, such as video conferencing, discussion forums, and collaborative writing tools, educators can create opportunities for L2 students to engage in meaningful interactions and provide feedback to their peers. The use of technology can also help foster a sense of community and connectedness among L2 students, which is crucial for promoting social engagement in online learning environments.

By considering these implications and implementing appropriate strategies based on the study's findings, educators and institutions can create online learning environments that effectively support L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, taking into account their disparate needs, cultural backgrounds, and cognitive processes. This, in turn, can lead to the development of critical thinking, writing skills, and cross-cultural competencies among L2 students in online writing courses.

7.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, several recommendations are proposed for educators and institutions seeking to enhance L2 students' engagement with online peer feedback in writing courses.

Firstly, educators should consider assigning students to static peer feedback groups throughout the course to foster trust, rapport, and a sense of community, supporting research on the importance of social relationships in peer feedback (Carson & Nelson, 1996). Encouraging frequent interactions within these groups using various communication channels, such as breakout rooms and mobile messaging applications, can cater to diverse preferences and promote active participation.

Secondly, providing enhanced structural support, such as detailed guidelines and modelling, can scaffold engagement in peer feedback activities, particularly for dependent and minimal engagers, aligning with research on the importance of peer feedback training (Min, 2005, 2006). Dedicating class time to teaching effective feedback techniques and offering opportunities for low-stakes practice can help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to engage meaningfully in peer feedback.

Thirdly, designing guided peer feedback activities that explicitly target higher-order thinking skills, such as assessing thesis statements, evaluating evidence, analysing arguments, and considering alternative perspectives, can promote deeper cognitive engagement, building on research about cognitive development in L2 writing (McKinley, 2015). Incorporating reflective exercises alongside these activities

can further promote metacognition and self-regulated learning, supporting findings about the relationship between reflection and writing development (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996).

Furthermore, implementing differentiated instruction to address the specific needs of independent, dependent, and minimal engagers is crucial. Providing opportunities for self-directed exploration, additional scaffolding, targeted support, one-on-one consultations, or peer mentoring programs, as needed, can help ensure that all students receive the support they require to effectively engage with peer feedback.

Leveraging technology is another essential aspect, as it can promote communication and feedback exchange among L2 students. Utilizing digital tools and platforms, such as discussion forums, video conferencing, and messaging apps, can facilitate engagement and foster a sense of connection in online learning environments.

Lastly, recognizing and addressing the cultural expectations and limitations that may impact L2 students' engagement with peer feedback is essential. Providing appropriate support and creating an inclusive educational experience that equips students to engage effectively in peer feedback activities targeting higher-order skills can help ensure that all students benefit from the peer feedback process.

By implementing these recommendations, educators and institutions can create online learning environments that effectively support L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, fostering the development of critical thinking, writing skills, and cross-cultural competencies. These recommendations stem from the findings and implications of this study and aim to provide practical strategies for enhancing student engagement in online L2 writing courses.

7.6 Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into student engagement with online peer feedback in L2 writing contexts, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalizability of the findings.

Firstly, the self-selected nature of the participants, who voluntarily enrolled in a course taught by the instructor–researcher, introduces the possibility of subject bias. The supportive student–teacher relationship that naturally develops over the course of a semester, coupled with Korean cultural values emphasizing harmony and respect for authority figures (Shin & Koh, 2005; Siu, 1992), may have influenced participants' responses and behaviours. Participants might have been more inclined to provide positive feedback or engage more actively in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with the instructor–researcher, potentially leading to an overestimation of engagement levels. As discussed in the conclusion section, involving additional non-instructor researchers or personnel in future studies could help mitigate the potential effects of subject bias on the findings.

Secondly, the methods used to examine the cognitive dimension of engagement, primarily reflection papers and interviews, provide a retrospective understanding of students' thought processes and strategies. While these methods offer valuable insights, they rely on participants' ability to accurately recall and articulate their cognitive experiences after the fact. More immediate data collection techniques, such as think-aloud protocols or real-time observation of student interactions, could offer further insights into the moment-by-moment cognitive processes that unfold during online peer feedback activities. The absence of these real-time data sources may limit the depth and accuracy of the study's findings related to the cognitive dimension of engagement. Employing real-time data collection methods in future research could help to address this limitation and provide a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement.

Finally, the study's specific context—Korean L2 students at a U.S. university branch campus—may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations and settings. The specific characteristics of this student population, including their shared cultural background, English proficiency levels, and prior educational experiences, may influence their engagement patterns in ways that differ from L2 students in other contexts. Additionally, the institutional context of a U.S. university branch campus may provide resources, support structures, and instructional

approaches that are not representative of other online learning environments. As such, the findings of this study should be applied cautiously to other L2 writing contexts, recognizing the potential influence of cultural, linguistic, and institutional factors on student engagement with online peer feedback. As noted in the conclusion section, conducting cross-cultural studies in diverse contexts could help to address this limitation and provide a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement across different populations and settings.

7.7 Further research

Building upon the significance and limitations of this study, several avenues for further research emerge that could deepen understanding of student engagement with online peer feedback in L2 writing contexts, extending current research on engagement in online environments (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013).

To address the potential influence of subject bias arising from the instructor–researcher's relationship with the participants, particularly within cultural contexts where authority relationships significantly impact behavior (Shin & Koh, 2005), future studies could involve additional non-instructor–researcher personnel in the data collection and analysis process. Having an impartial researcher person administer questionnaires, conduct interviews, and analyse data could help mitigate the potential effects of the student–teacher relationship on participants' responses and behaviours. This approach could also allow for a more objective assessment of engagement levels and patterns, reducing the risk of overestimation due to social desirability bias.

Furthermore, future research could explore the influence of cultural factors on student engagement with online peer feedback by including participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, building on existing research about cultural influences in L2 writing contexts (Atkinson, 2016; Carson & Nelson, 1996). Conducting cross-cultural studies that compare the engagement patterns of L2 students from different countries or regions could shed light on the ways in which cultural norms, values, and communication styles shape students' approaches to

online peer feedback, extending research on how cultural backgrounds affect writing and feedback processes (Hung & Hyun, 2010). Such research could also help identify culturally responsive strategies for designing and facilitating online peer feedback activities that accommodate the needs and preferences of students from various cultural backgrounds. Exploring cross-cultural comparisons could help to address the limitations related to the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement across different populations and settings.

To gain more direct insights into students' cognitive processes during online peer feedback, future studies could employ real-time data collection methods such as think-aloud protocols or screen recording software. These methods could capture students' in-the-moment thoughts, decision-making processes, and problem-solving strategies as they engage with peer texts and provide feedback, extending our understanding of how L2 writers process and provide feedback (Min, 2005). By analysing these real-time data sources in conjunction with retrospective reflection papers and interviews, researchers could develop a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the cognitive dimension of engagement, revealing the dynamic interplay between internal thought processes and observable behaviours. Employing real-time data collection methods could help to address the limitations related to the depth and accuracy of the findings related to the cognitive dimension of engagement.

Additionally, video or audio recording of peer group interactions could provide a more immediate window into the impact of social dynamics on student engagement, building on research about social interaction in peer feedback (Nelson & Murphy, 1992). By analysing the content and patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication within peer feedback groups, researchers could gain insights into how social relationships, power dynamics, and interpersonal factors shape students' participation, collaboration, and meaning-making processes, extending understanding of how cultural and social factors influence peer feedback interactions (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). Such research could inform the development of

strategies for fostering supportive and inclusive peer feedback environments that promote active engagement and equitable participation.

Finally, longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of engagement in online peer feedback on L2 writing development and language proficiency could further illuminate the potential benefits of these activities, addressing gaps identified in previous research (Ruegg, 2015a). By tracking students' progress over an extended period, such as multiple semesters or academic years, researchers could examine how sustained engagement with online peer feedback influences writing quality, revision strategies, metacognitive awareness, and overall language growth, building on research about the development of writing skills over time (Sasaki, 2000). These studies could also explore the transfer of skills and knowledge acquired through online peer feedback to other writing contexts and communicative situations, extending research on knowledge transformation in L2 writing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), providing insights into the long-term impact of these activities on L2 students' linguistic and academic development. Conducting longitudinal studies could help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of student engagement with online peer feedback on L2 writing development and language proficiency.

7.8 Conclusion

This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of how L2 students engage with peer feedback activities within a synchronous online writing course. It explores how various aspects of engagement interact with each other, offering a comprehensive examination across multiple dimensions—behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social—and providing nuanced insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping L2 students' experiences with online peer feedback. By examining engagement through the integrative lens of social constructivism, transactional distance theory, and student engagement theory, the study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors that shape engagement in online L2 writing contexts.

The findings align with the social constructivist notion that learners construct knowledge through social interaction and collaboration, while also highlighting individual differences in how students approach these processes. The identification of three distinct engagement profiles—*independent*, *dependent*, and *minimal engagers*—underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of L2 students. The study's findings on the five-step recursive cognitive process employed by independent engagers (*understanding, evaluating, questioning, analysing, and creating*) offer valuable insights for educators and institutions seeking to promote higher-order thinking skills and deeper cognitive engagement among L2 students.

The practical implications stemming from this integrative theoretical framework are far-reaching. Educators can use these insights to create inclusive, engaging experiences catering to L2 students' diverse needs and engagement profiles. Recommendations include fostering supportive peer groups, providing structured feedback training, designing higher-order cognitive activities, implementing differentiated instruction, leveraging technology for interaction, and considering cultural influences. The study highlights the importance of considering the cultural backgrounds and expectations of L2 students when designing and implementing online peer feedback activities, as well as the role of technology in facilitating communication and collaboration among L2 students in synchronous online environments.

At an institutional level, these findings can inform professional development for L2 writing instructors and refine policies and support structures to actively engage students across behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. Ultimately, this holistic, multidimensional perspective can guide the design and implementation of online writing courses, prioritizing active learning, social interaction, and personalized support.

While limitations related to subject bias, retrospective data collection, and cultural context should be considered, the study provides a foundation for future research. Involving additional researchers, cross-cultural comparisons, real-time

data collection methods, and longitudinal studies can further illuminate engagement dynamics and inform evidence-based practices.

This study provides a holistic perspective on L2 students' engagement with online peer feedback, using an integrative theoretical framework. The insights gained from this research can inform the design and implementation of effective peer feedback activities that foster student engagement, promote cognitive development, and support the growth of social relationships in diverse learning contexts. By considering the multifaceted nature of student engagement and the role of transactional distance in shaping students' experiences, educators and institutions can create online learning environments that effectively support L2 students' engagement with peer feedback, leading to the development of critical thinking, writing skills, and cross-cultural competencies.

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APPENDIX A

Name:

Course & Section #:

Questionnaire

Copy and paste this check mark (✓) to answer each question. If you are unsure, leave a blank or select 'Neutral.'

| | | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neutral | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|--|----------------|---------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 2 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates positive feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 3 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to organization. | | | | | |
| 4 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to grammar. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 5 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates feedback on their writing related to material covered in our class. | | | | | |
| 6 | I enjoy giving my classmates positive feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 7 | I feel comfortable giving my classmates negative feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 8 | I avoid giving my classmates negative feedback on their writing. | | | | | |
| 9 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 10 | I value receiving positive feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 11 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to organization. | | | | | |
| 12 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to grammar. | | | | | |
| 13 | I feel comfortable receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates related to material covered in our class. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 14 | I feel comfortable receiving negative feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 15 | I value receiving feedback on my writing from my classmates. | | | | | |
| 16 | I incorporate peer feedback related to organization into my writing. | | | | | |
| 17 | I incorporate peer feedback related to grammar into my writing. | | | | | |
| 18 | I incorporate peer feedback related to material covered in our class into my writing. | | | | | |
| 19 | The peer review process (i.e. giving feedback to classmates and receiving feedback from classmates) helps me to improve my next draft. | | | | | |
| 20 | The peer review process (i.e. giving feedback to classmates and receiving feedback from classmates) improves my knowledge of writing. | | | | | |

APPENDIX B



Consent to Participate in Research

(Questionnaire, Writing & Peer Review, Interview)

Project Details

Title of Project: An Exploration of the Pedagogical Efficacy of Peer Review in English Writing Classes at a University in Korea
 Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H20REA015

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Alice Wrigglesworth, PhD ABD
 Assistant Professor
 Department of English, College of Humanities and Social Sciences #646
 George Mason University Korea
 Email: [REDACTED]
 Telephone: [REDACTED]

Supervisor Details

Sang-Soon Park, EdD
 Senior Lecturer
 K323 Language Center, Toowoomba Campus
 University of Southern Queensland
 Email: [REDACTED]
 Telephone: [REDACTED]

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

| Copy and paste this check mark (√) to indicate your answer to each question. | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| • Have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. | | |
| • Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction. | | |
| • Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team. | | |
| • Are over 18 years of age. | | |
| • Understand that any data collected via questionnaire may be used for this research study and future research activities. | | |
| • Understand that any data collected via writing (i.e., essay drafts, peer review, reflections) may be used for this research study and future research activities. | | |
| • Understand you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. | | |
| • Agree to participate in the research study. | | |

Participant Name

Participant Signature (Type or sign your name)

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the questionnaire.



연구 참가 동의서

(설문, 작문 및 동료평가, 인터뷰)

프로젝트 기본정보

프로젝트명: 한국의 대학 영어작문 수업에서 동료평가의 학습효과에 관한 연구
 인간연구윤리허가번호: H20REA015

연구팀 연락처

연구책임자

Alice Wrigglesworth, PhD ABD
 조교수
 영어과, 인문사회과학대학 #646
 한국조지메이슨대학교
 이메일: [redacted]
 전화: ([redacted])

감독자

Sang-Soon Park, EdD
 Senior Lecturer
 K323 Language Center, Toowoomba Campus
 University of Southern Queensland
 이메일: [redacted]
 전화: +[redacted]

동의 항목

아래에 서명함으로써 귀하는 아래 사항을 명시합니다:

| Copy and paste this check mark (√) to indicate your answer to each question. | 예 | 아니오 |
|---|---|-----|
| ● 본인은 '참가자를 위한 연구 관련 정보'를 읽고 이해했습니다. | | |
| ● 본인이 가지고 있던 질문들에 대한 만족스러운 답변이 제공되었습니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 추가적인 질문이 있는 경우 연구팀에게 연락할 수 있음을 이해했습니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 18세 이상입니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 설문을 통해 수집한 데이터가 동 연구 및 향후 연구 활동에 사용될 수 있음을 이해했습니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 작문(예, 에세이 초안, 동료평가, 의견)을 통해 수집한 데이터가 동 연구 및 향후 연구 활동에 사용될 수 있음을 이해했습니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 어떤 이유에서든 동 연구에 대한 참가 의사를 언제든지 철회할 수 있음을 이해했습니다. | | |
| ● 본인은 동 연구 참가에 동의합니다. | | |

참가자 이름

참가자 서명

날짜

설문지를 작성하기 전에 이 동의서를 연구팀에 제출하여 주시기 바랍니다.

APPENDIX C

Researched Argument Essay Peer Feedback Activity

Peer Reviewer:

Writer:

Research Essay Title:

Complete the questionnaire about your attitude to peer feedback before you begin the peer feedback activity. To do this, 'make a copy' of the Google Doc or download as a Word file. Upload the completed questionnaire to the appropriate course folder in the 'Questionnaires' folder (in 'Course Content').

The goal of this guided peer feedback activity is for you as a reader/reviewer to provide the writer of the paper with comprehensive, constructive, actionable feedback, while reflecting on ways to improve your own paper. It is also my hope that you and your peers encourage each other and share new ideas and strategies for writing.

As a group, determine whose paper each of you will review. Confirm with your instructor before progressing. Then, go to 'Discussion Board' to locate the paper you will review. Download your peer's paper and this form as Word files and save them to your computer.

This peer feedback activity requires you to annotate a peer's paper (using highlights and optional 'comment bubble' annotations) and answer questions and provide advice on this document. This peer feedback activity is derived from the rubric your instructor will use to grade your Researched Argument Essay.

Complete this peer feedback activity for one group member. You will be assessed as a reader/reviewer on how comprehensive, constructive, and actionable your feedback is. You must begin this review during our virtual class. Upload both

completed files (this form and the essay with your annotations) to 'Discussion Board' by the end of day by replying to the writer's thread. Use encouraging, constructive comments and emojis (😊💪👏👍). This Researched Argument Essay Feedback Activity is worth 25 points.

Requirement: You must be in class (online) and have submitted a Researched Argument Essay inclusive of three parts and approximately 1300 words prior to the beginning of the class start time to participate in/receive credit for the peer review.

1. Introduction

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|--|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Introduction Thesis Statement Weight 20% | Introduction gives exemplary background information to the area of study. Follows three moves of the CARS Model Thesis Statement— arguable thesis; strong verb; clear concise | | | | |

Locate and mark these three items in the introductory paragraph:

- Move 1: Establish a Territory (highlight)
- Move 2: Establish a Niche (highlight)
- Move 3: Occupy the Niche (highlight)

Comments:

- What sources does the writer cite in the introduction? Provide author surname and year of publication:
- What is the writer's thesis statement?
- What could the writer do to improve this introduction?

Fill in the rubric for 'Introduction' using the paint bucket icon (use green color).

2. Sources

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|--|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Sources Integration & Cohesion (5+ sources) Weight 30% | Forwarded information provides meaningful evidence to support assertions/arguments | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Forwarded information is directly related to argument Each Body paragraph includes well synthesized, forwarded information and analysis/synthesis Cohesion used between paragraphs and appropriately within paragraphs | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Locate:

- all in-text citations (integrated or non-integrated); highlight reference information
- each of these sources on the References page
- compare the format of the References page with [this sample](#); highlight, or comment on any inconsistencies or incorrect citation formatting

Comments:

- Has the writer used transitions to guide the reader between ideas?
 - How could the writer improve the cohesion of their paragraphs and/or essay?
- Fill in the rubric for 'Sources' using the paint bucket icon (use green color).

3. Organization

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|--|---|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Organization Body Paragraphs Weight 30% | Paragraphs contain topic sentences that support thesis Paragraphs clearly organized around a single main idea, inclusive of evidence and analysis in support of an | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | argument and a warrant New offering and/or solution included (if appropriate) Counterclaim and rebuttal included (if appropriate) | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|

Locate:

- thesis statement
- topic sentences (of first three body paragraphs)
- ONE body paragraph—topic sentence (highlight), evidence/forwarded information (direct quotations or paraphrases; highlight), analysis (underline), warrant (highlight)
- transitional words and phrases within one (1) body paragraph and between body paragraphs (mark as **bold**).
- main ideas/arguments for each body paragraph
- counterclaim + rebuttal paragraph

Comments:

- Copy and paste the paper's thesis statement and the topic sentences for each of the first three body paragraphs below:
 - Thesis Statement:
 - Topic Sentence 1:
 - Topic Sentence 2:
 - Topic Sentence 3:
- Assess the alignment of each of the topic sentences to the thesis statement. Do these topic sentences support the claim made in the thesis statement?
- Look at one body paragraph in the essay (the one you highlighted): Does the topic sentence and paragraph content support the thesis statement claim? Does the analysis of the evidence add meaning? What could the writer do to improve the alignment, argument and/or organization of this paragraph?

- Look at the body of the essay (i.e. all the body paragraphs). Identify the main ideas of each paragraph. Do these ideas prove the thesis statement? Is there something you recommend the writer add to strengthen the support of their argument?
- Has the writer presented a commonly taken oppositional position, followed by a rebuttal telling how their position is the correct position? If there is no counterclaim paragraph, should they have included one?
- Has the writer presented a new offering and/or solution paragraph? Are the conclusions/solutions included here logical based on the content of the essay?

Fill in the rubric for 'Organization' using the paint bucket icon (use green color).

4. Conclusion

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|--------------------------|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Conclusion Weight 10% | Conclusion includes a transition from the Body, restates the thesis, summarizes the main ideas of the essay, includes main findings/new offering (solutions), relevance (optional), and concluding remarks | | | | |

Locate:

- conclusion paragraph—transition, main findings/new offering (highlight)
- solutions (if included; possibly the new offering) (underline)
- relevance (if explicitly stated) (highlight)

Comments:

- How could the writer improve the conclusion of their essay?

Fill in the rubric for 'Conclusion' using the paint bucket icon (use green color).

5. Language & Formatting

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| Language & Formatting Weight 10% | English comprising correct sentence structure and grammar is used APA formatting is adhered to for title page formatting, in-text citations, and references | | | | |

Consider:

- language (sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, etc.)
- spelling, capitalization, and punctuation (standard US English)
- formatting—APA style

Comments:

- Look at the paper as a whole. **Do not highlight or edit for specific language errors.** How could the writer improve the formatting and/or language aspects of their essay?

Fill in the rubric for 'Language & Formatting' using the paint bucket icon (use green color).

General comments:

APPENDIX D

Researched Argument Essay Assignment Sheet

Task

Write a 1500-word synthesis researched argument essay.

Description

- A researched essay is a clearly-written and well-organized essay that comprises a synthesis of credible source material and your own analysis of this forwarded information. In the case of this assignment, your researched essay should answer a research question related to our course theme and take the form of an argument essay, inclusive of a thesis statement with a clear claim and problem.
- Your position must be informed and supported by at least five (5+) credible sources, two of which must be peer reviewed, academic journal articles. These sources should be included in/drawn from your Annotated Bibliography assignment. All sources should be published in English.

Your paper should:

- Comprise academic writing and follow common essay structure: an introduction, body, conclusion, and 'References' page, inclusive of specific rhetorical elements we have covered in class.
- Consider your *audience*. As you write, you need to imagine a general academic audience that is interested in our class theme and your argument, but that has not done the same extensive reading on the topic that you have, in addition to a more specific audience that you will be able to reference or speak to in your conclusion, to show *relevance*.
- Include an introduction comprising the three moves of the Creating a Research Space (CARS) Model, inclusive of forwarded information from at least one (1+) source within Move 1 or Move 2 of your introduction.
- Include the thesis statement at the end of your introduction. Ensure your thesis statement makes a strong, arguable clear claim based on facts and logic; avoid presenting your opinion or forwarding vague, non-credible information to prove your claim. Ideally, your thesis statement will directly answer your unique

research question and pose a problem. Your thesis statement may contain the main points (or arguments) that you will develop in the body of the essay.

- Contain three *argument* body paragraphs. Each of these paragraphs should contain a topic sentence that presents the claim that you will prove in the paragraph with synthesized forwarded evidence and your analysis of this evidence; include counterclaims where appropriate within body paragraphs (or in a separate counterclaim/rebuttal paragraph). Where appropriate, end each body paragraph with a warrant, showing how the paragraph supports your thesis statement claim.
- Include a solution/*new offering* paragraph to the problem presented in the thesis statement.
- Include a concluding paragraph that restates your thesis, summarizes your main arguments and solution/*new offering*, *relevance*, and concluding remarks or a 'call to action.'
- Use APA Style 7th Edition for each in-text and end-of-text citation, included on a 'References' page at the end of the paper. It is acceptable to rely more heavily on some sources than others but avoid writing a paper that closely tracks only one source and barely uses the others; your analysis of a synthesis of multiple research materials is an important aspect of this assignment. Ideally, your essay will comprise a mix of integrated and non-integrated citations and paraphrased information and/or embedded direct quotations that add to, rather than detract from, a consistent scholarly voice.
- Comprise 1500 words before (i.e. excluding) your 'References' page. Ensure this list of references is alphabetical and that each source type reflects the appropriate entry style.

Formatting

- Create a Microsoft Word document with a filename inclusive of your name, G number, course code and section number, and the abbreviated assignment name (e.g. Mina Kim_G0120000_ENGH 100-K01_Essay).

- Include a title page, inclusive of your paper's title, your name, course code and section, your professor's name, and the date of submission.
- Use APA documentation style (7th Edition): 12-pt Times New Roman font, 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins, double spaced, heading levels, citations, list of references.

Grading

- This assignment is worth 350 points (35% of your final grade). It will be graded using the rubric at the end of the assignment sheet.

Rubric

Rubric assumes 1500+ words and 5+ sources; grading will be prorated.

| Criteria | Exemplary | Proficient | Needs Work | Below Par | Unacceptable |
|---|---|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| <p>Introduction Thesis Statement Weight 20%</p> | <p>Introduction gives exemplary background information to the area of study</p> <p>Follows three moves of the CARS Model</p> <p>Thesis Statement—arguable thesis; strong verb; clear concise</p> | | | | |
| <p>Sources Integration & Cohesion (5+ sources) Weight 30%</p> | <p>Forwarded information provides meaningful evidence to support assertions/arguments</p> <p>Forwarded information is directly related to argument</p> <p>Each Body paragraph includes well synthesized, forwarded information and analysis/synthesis</p> <p>Cohesion used between paragraphs and appropriately within paragraphs</p> | | | | |
| <p>Organization Body Paragraphs Weight 30%</p> | <p>Paragraphs contain topic sentences that support thesis</p> <p>Paragraphs clearly organized around a single main idea, inclusive of evidence and analysis in support of an argument and a warrant</p> <p>New offering and/or solution included (if appropriate)</p> <p>Counterclaim and rebuttal included (if appropriate)</p> | | | | |
| <p>Conclusion Weight 10%</p> | <p>Conclusion includes a transition from the Body, restates the thesis, summarizes the main ideas of the essay,</p> | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | includes main findings/new offering (solutions), relevance (optional), and concluding remarks | | | | |
| Language & Formatting Weight 10% | English comprising correct sentence structure and grammar is used APA formatting is adhered to for title page formatting, in-text citations, and references | | | | |

APPENDIX E

Interview Prompts

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Tell me about your peer feedback experience this semester. |
| 2 | How comfortable did you feel providing peer feedback to your classmate's work? Why? |
| 3 | How confident did you feel about the feedback you received from your peer reviewer? Why? |
| 4 | Tell me about the types of changes you made to your draft following the peer feedback process. |
| 5 | Tell me about the peer review process compared to the process of receiving feedback from your instructor. |

APPENDIX F

Reflection

Write a one-paragraph reflection of the peer feedback process. Consider the following questions as you reflect. Include details and/or explanations in your paragraph where appropriate:

- How comfortable and/or confident did you feel about participating in this peer feedback process? Why?
- To what extent did you incorporate feedback/changes suggested by your peer reviewer before submitting the final draft of your assignment?
- To what extent did the “process” of reviewing another student’s paper influence changes you made to your own paper before submitting the final draft.

APPENDIX G

Example interview transcript

Interview Transcript_P5

Interview Location: via Zoom (South Korea)

Interviewer: Alice Wrigglesworth

Participant: P5

Date: 9 June 2020

Name of Transcriber: Alice Wrigglesworth

Recording length: 15:15

I: So, this slide tells you that I'm just going to ask you five questions and that I'm voice recording the conversation, unless you're not comfortable with that. In which case you should tell me. [laugh]

P: OK.

I: And, I think that's all because you've done the consent form.

P: Right. [throat clearing]

I: So to begin with, can you tell me about your peer review experience this semester.

P: Ummm, well, I always thought that peer reviews process was kind of waste of time because I wrote in the peer review semester reflection that ummm the previous English classes that I attended at previous universities were terrible in terms of like peer review ...

I: OK. [laugh]

P: ... and group work, so I always had this idea that ummm peer review is a process that you need to learn but you're not going to use it in real life. [laugh]

I: OK.

P: I always had that idea but ummm from this course I kind of changed it. Well, it was actually helpful, a little bit, and as long as I know my peers' writing styles and ummm the way they explain, like structure or sentences, then I was able to understand they're staying, so

I: Do you mean when they gave you the feedback you were able to understand?

P: Yes, oh yes.

I: OK. OK.

P: Like whenever they were giving me feedback, not when I was reviewing their paper.

I: OK, so you found it mildly helpful? Or moderately helpful?

P: [Laugh]

I: [Laugh]

P: On a scale of 1 to 10, I would say 7.

I: OK, well that's quite high on a scale. How comfortable did you feel peer reviewing your classmate's work?

P: Mmmm. Again, ummm, on a scale of 1 to 10, I was uhhhh, well ummm, grammar wise, I was like 5, but structure and sentences, I'll say 6, 7.

I: And as far as content or organization?

P: Contents, organization, other, like everything is around 6 and 7, but grammar is like 5. Because ummm, well, for example, while I was doing the second peer review, the paper was kind of terrible. [Laugh]

I: [Laugh]

P: So, I couldn't understand what the writer was trying to say, I couldn't get the object of study, so, OK, yeah, so as long as I got the idea or main topic or evidence, I kind of figured out how to follow them, but, if I don't have them, then I'm completely lost in the process, and especially, ummm, the second peer review, there was lots of run-ons and fragment sentences, so, and the structure of the paragraph was kind of like two paragraphs mashed into one or one paragraph divided into two, so, yeah, I was very struggling.

I: OK, so then the first peer review compared to the second, the first one, the peer review itself wasn't as detailed, it asked you to like just give advice, right?

P: Right.

I: Did the set up of the peer review make a difference?

P: Set up of peer review was very clear and then you specifically told us to give ahhh positive feedback, so I think that was OK.

I: OK. So, how confident did you feel about the feedback you received from your peer reviewer? As far as it being accurate or of high quality or correctness and so on?

P: Mmmm

I: I'll just give you the scale of 1 to 10 numbers first, that way you can just write it down.

P: Accuracy is 6. Quality is also 6. And correctness is 7, sometimes 8.

I: OK. Can you explain why?

P: OK, I'll do that. Accuracy, ummm, so in terms of accuracy, ummm. So, we do have like prompt and grading rubric to start with, right, and then the peer review process you explained quite in detail about the structure, organization, and grammars, etc., right?

I: Mmmm-hmmm.

P: So, I think that if instruction is given, everybody, I mean the feedback I received was very accurate, but sometimes they are kind of, well they need to give positive feedback, so they are only saying nice things, so that's why I said 6 on the accuracy.

I: OK.

P: Because I feel like they wanted to say something, but it could be negative so that's why they kind of sugar-coat it in the feedback.

I: Do you think that's true? Because I get, maybe I have to change the emphasis of that, because like their feedback should be comprehensive, so they should give a lot, and constructive, so it should be useful, but I just don't want people to be rude to each other, is why I say be nice. [Laugh]

P: Mmmm you can just say descriptive.

I: Right.

P: [Laugh]

I: But without being too mean.

P: Yes.

I: I've seen some quite harsh feedback, so [Laugh] I think students can be more harsh than instructors sometimes, so

P: Because, because [laugh], because the people that they were reviewing, I was working this hard and this guy's not very working hard so, like, why should I give him good grades, or something like that.

I: Yeah, maybe.

P: Ummm and so next thing is quality. Quality is very good. Ummm, so since we followed the rubric and instructions, ahhh, most of my group members were very, so, descriptive and concise, so I liked that. And the correctness, ummm, ahhh, ummm, my last feedback was about persuasive letter, right?

I: Mmmm-hmmm.

P: So, the feedback I got, I was missing one additional source, citation source, from the letter. I'm kind of missed that point. But I got that correct from my peer review feedback.

I: Hmmm-hmmm.

P: And I asked you a question about it, so yeah.

I: OK.

P: So, they are fixing, ummm they are reviewing my paper, like fix my mistakes, and ummm, improve my writings, so I think the correctness satisfies that.

I: OK. Can you tell me about the types of changes you made to your draft following peer review?

P: Hmmm. Ummm. First to start. Uhhhh. Organization. And formatting. And language. Those are the three main things that I fixed from the feedback. Ummm because ahhhh sometimes, sometimes they told me that ahhhh it's really hard to understand in the sense of like conclusion or new offering paragraph, so I tried to reorganize my paragraph to make my readers understand better and the language of course, like spelling, typos, like ummm, wrong use of idiom. I kind of fixed that. And formatting, I was kind of rushed into writing stuff, so, like, formatting, uhhh the

formatting process, was kind of easy but easy to miss. You know, like, font 12, Times New Roman, single spaced.

I: [Laugh] Yeah.

P: I always kind of forgot that, so they [laugh] they kind of pointed it out in the feedback, so I fixed it all the time. And ahhh, yep, ummm, well actually my group members are very helpful, actually. They were very eager to give me constructive feedback, so, yeah. I had really easy feedback time 'cause

I: That's good

P: I mean, I knew, like what to fix, and they were very clear about it.

I: Good.

P: So, I was lucky.

I: [Laugh] OK. Last one.

P: OK.

I: Tell me about the peer review process

P: Mmmm-hmmm.

I: Compared to the process of receiving feedback from your instructor, from me.

P: Mmmm K. Ummm. Feedback from the instructor, unless I turn it in early [laugh] I wasn't able to get like detailed feedback, other than just general, like, you know, outline feedback. So, I was OK with that because I was always like, ummm, I wouldn't say late, but I was turning in my assignment on time, some of the time [laugh] but ahhhh in the peer review process, ummm, we always had ummm lots of time to work on, so for me, I was reading 5 or 6 times before I write something for my peers, so, uhhh, I understand that you have lot of, lots of papers for you to grade, and feedback is different for everyone, so that's why you giving general feedbacks, but it was more effective to fix my paper from my peer review feedback.

I: OK. Yeah, I mean, I grade by the rubrics, so I tend to focus my feedback on where your grade will improve

P: Mmmm-hmmm

I: and because language is only ten percent of the rubric

P: Right

I: I don't focus on

P: [Laugh]

I: I don't sweat the small stuff. I don't look at, I mean I'm not trying to teach language in this course. It's a course for multilingual speakers, but it's not a language course, so yeah, I don't give feedback on language to your class, unless we do like the, like sometimes I do line-by-line feedback for language. I mainly do it with the PPP students, but ahhh yah, that is, it is something that I think you get more help from because your peers are going to be more comfortable working on that ummm sentence-level, the sentence-level aspect of your essay, where as I'm working on teaching you how to build a paper, like, to organize it and provide evidence, so yeah.

P: Mmmm-hmmm.

I: That's certainly something I think students appreciate from the peer review, is the specific feedback they get, the details, which you don't get from me because ummm that's just not the focus of the course. [Laugh] OK. Thanks.

P: You're welcome.

I: That's it.

End of Interview

APPENDIX H

Example reflection responses

Reflection #1_P20

My reviewer was [participant name redacted], and he actually only wrote kind words for me. Therefore, it was completely fine reading his version of peer review. The only advice he told me to change was capitalizing the article's title. I wasn't aware of the APA style title capitalization and I just copied the article's title as it is. Realizing my mistake, I followed his simple piece of advice. I reviewed Ian Park's paper and while I was peer reviewing his work, I found myself more concentrating on his, comparing to when I was proofreading mine. It seems that I read my summary so much that I was too used to it and tend to roughly review it while Ian's summary was a new one which made me naturally be immersed in it. After realizing this, I promised myself to check my summary meticulously no matter how many times I read it. Also, I learned what expressions are awkward and what are smooth which allowed me to obtain a better, a more abundant writing style. I believe learning from other students' summary is a brilliant way to improve one's writing skills.

Reflection #2_P20

I wasn't that confident about peer reviewing others because I was a newbie myself on this whole essay writing and revising. I made mistakes, too. I wasn't so sure if my advice is actually correct or even a good advice. I was only to point out explicit mistakes like grammatical errors or huge citation errors. My peer reviewer only said compliments and rarely gave me negative feedback. I gladly edited the typos she pointed out for me. Honestly, I didn't realize what my mistakes were so I didn't change a lot comparing to first draft. When I reviewed Eunji's I advised her to put subtitles to make the essay easier to read and after the individual conference, I found out that no subtitles were better! I didn't realize that before my second draft, so I had subtitles in mine. Nevertheless, now I know what is a better option and I can change it before the final draft.

Reflection #3_P20

I feel comfortable and confident about participating in this peer review. I've spent the whole semester with my group so I got used to them which didn't make me feel awkward anymore. My peer reviewer advised me to add more examples about the problem situation to help the reader understand the circumstances better. I included more evidences and supporting details to explain the issue more specifically. The process of reviewing another student's paper definitely helped me a lot. By reviewing others' paper, I realized what parts they did good and compared to mine. Eventually, the process revealed what I lacked in my letter and I was able to improve it. For instance, my solution was very vague and hard to specify but after reviewing [participant name redacted]'s I learned how she made her solutions practical and rational. I followed her steps and I came up with some reasonable solutions. Furthermore, I found out I missed some requirements after reading hers so I corrected them immediately after the first draft. This process of peer reviewing is my favorite part of the entire peer review.