

A Study on the Effectiveness of Dialogic Feedback in English Writing

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Abstract

Feedback in English writing plays an important role in promoting the development of students' writing ability. As one of the feedback forms, dialogic feedback has been gradually integrated into the new teaching concept of EFL writing. This study investigates learners' attitudes toward dialogic feedback compared with written feedback and passive oral feedback. The characteristics of dialogic interaction are observed. The effectiveness of dialogic feedback and the influence of learners' second language ability and instructors' noticing strategies on the quality of feedback are discussed. It especially covers the differences of learners' focus on writing (content, organization, grammar and language) in the process of feedback. Based on the one-to-one peer feedback model of the English writing center of Nantong University, this study collects data from 65 undergraduates through feedback corpus, questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview. The results show that most learners have a positive attitude towards dialogic feedback, which can to a certain degree improve their L2 writing. The higher the learners' L2 proficiency, the more effective the dialogic feedback is. It is also helpful to improve the quantity and quality of dialogic feedback that the tutor uses the appropriate noticing strategy. These findings not only confirm the effectiveness of dialogic feedback, but also help teachers to use dialogic feedback reasonably and improve the effectiveness of feedback in English writing class.

Keywords: dialogic feedback, EFL writing, L2 proficiency, noticing strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

For a long time, teachers' one-way written and oral feedback to students has been dominant in the teaching of EFL writing. However, with the gradual change and improvement of teaching philosophy and teaching objectives, teachers begin to seek more autonomous and interactive writing evaluation methods (Zhu, 2001). At

present, dialogic feedback is widely used in classroom teaching, but it is still rarely used in EFL writing. Dialogic feedback emphasizes the interaction between learners and instructors, and guides each other's attention to specific problems in the text through dialogue (Cha & Park, 2010). In EFL writing, this kind of feedback can help learners in many ways, the most important of which is the improvement of English writing ability, and it can also improve

learners' interpersonal communication ability and cognitive thinking ability (Fang et al., 2018). If the method is appropriate, the dialogic feedback can also stimulate learners' autonomy and enhance their confidence.

However, it is also a highly complex process to build a reasonable and effective dialogic feedback mechanism. Like other forms of feedback, it is influenced by social, historical and cultural factors (Liu & Hansen, 2002). As far as instructors are concerned, these factors include communication ability, second language proficiency and problem-solving ability; as far as learners are concerned, they include learning motivation, self-awareness ability and knowledge level. Therefore, it is necessary to study the various factors that affect the dialogic feedback activities and its effectiveness. In this way, teachers can use dialogic feedback to provide useful guidance and decision-making for students, and students can also build peer dialogic feedback to promote the development of students in all aspects (Liang, 2008).

In recent years, many experts and scholars have investigated teacher feedback and peer feedback, including the positive and negative effects of feedback, different factors affecting the effect of feedback, students' feedback psychology, content and strategies, etc. However, there are relatively few studies on the dialogue between learners and instructors in various forms of feedback in EFL writing teaching, and most of them are non-instant feedback. Saeed & Ghazali (2017) found that the characteristics of different types of interactive comments among students reflect the different areas of concern of the interlocutors in the study of an online writing mutual-aid platform composed of nine second language learners from Arab universities. The research shows that the modification oriented dialogue pays more attention to the global and local problems in writing, while the non-modification oriented dialogue emphasizes the social relevance problems, task processing and technical problems in writing. Saeed et. al (2018) also combed the literature on the mode of dialogue interaction feedback and the factors influencing dialogue interaction feedback.

1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Research

Since both learners' second language proficiency and teachers' noticing strategies are two significant factors during the process of dialogic feedback, the present study aims to further

develop the previous investigation by means of collecting feedback corpus, questionnaire and interview information in order to investigate learners' attitude towards dialogic feedback, probe into the effectiveness and disclose the influence of second language proficiency and teachers' noticing strategies on this kind of writing assessment, especially on the focus areas (content, organization, grammar and language accuracy) of feedback. Besides, it also attempts to find out the underlying reasons that cause the ultimate differences. By this way, English teachers will be competent to offer beneficial instruction to students, meanwhile, students will also be endowed with a dynamic classroom environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dialogue and Dialogic Feedback

Dialogue is communication or discussion between people or groups of people, and the principle of dialogue is the core in communication, because it reveals how dialogue becomes a part of our thinking and language, then affecting our cognitive development. Dialogic feedback method emphasizes the importance of allowing learners to participate in the dialogue around learning. This gives learners the opportunity to work with the quality and standards of the subject. This in turn makes it possible for students to understand and understand feedback (Steen-Utheim & Wittek, 2017). Dialogic feedback is a process in which individual learning can be activated because that others experiences, thoughts and utterances are made visible and available in concrete contexts. The parties in a dialogue appear as co-authors of each others' contributions. This means that the recipients (or rather the idea of them) are present already when the sentence is formulated. The idea of whom we are talking to mediates the action of deciding how to formulate oneself. Co-authors can be both physically present and represented as third parties, like for example the author of a syllabus book (Linell, 2009).

Based on preceding studies, it is indisputable that dialogic feedback brings out diverse benefits to learners. At the same time, dialogic feedback probably contributes to the development of social skills, cognitive skills, and meta-cognitive strategies and enhanced text quality (Lenore et al, 2018). In addition, it has been documented that dialogic feedback can stimulate learners' autonomy and confidence if

applied appropriately and also makes it possible to transform learners from passive recipients to more passionate and more independent ones. However, dialogic feedback is confronted with some challenges as well. It is mainly because that feedback given by tutors is subjective and students are not motivated to give feedback because of low self-efficacy. Other studies criticize dialogic feedback considering that dialogic feedback is more time-consuming and complicatedly tailored are two inhibiting factors.

2.2 Dialogic Feedback and Interactionist Theory

Vygotsky (1963) laid the foundation for the interactionists view of language acquisition. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays an important role in the learning process and proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where learners construct the new language through socially mediated interaction. Vygotsky (1978) believes that there is a gap between students' actual ability to solve problems independently and the ability under the guidance of teachers or collaboration with peers. This theory has some implications for dialogic feedback of English writing. When students converse with tutors interactively, dialogic revision provides bilateral rather than unilateral participation and learning. Plus, learners who are proficient are usually better assisted by those who are more proficient due to an inevitable gap of language proficiency between novice learners.

2.3 Dialogic Feedback and Noticing Hypothesis

The noticing hypothesis is a concept in second-language acquisition proposed by Richard Schmidt in 1990. Schmidt (1990, 2001) stated that learners cannot learn the grammatical features of a language unless they notice them. Noticing alone does not mean that learners automatically acquire language; rather, the hypothesis states that noticing is the essential starting point for acquisition. When learners "notice" new language, they pay special attention to its form, use and meaning and at some point, in their acquisition, notice their errors in production. Noticing will only occur when the learner is ready to take on the new language. Lotfie & Samad (2007) reviewed an exploratory study on the role of noticing in improving writing accuracy. These concepts have been translated into three types of written output feedback techniques and techniques are enhanced, reformulated and sequenced.

Findings are that noticing skills are all a means to improve learners' awareness of past time form, so they are essentially form centered, but avoid clear explanation of writing accuracy.

2.4 Dialogic Feedback and L2 Proficiency

Second language proficiency (L2 proficiency) is regarded as a learner's competence to adapt second language knowledge to accomplish tasks in some different situations (Ellis, 2008). Generally, the so-called language proficiency covers four inter-dependence aspects: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Apparently, L2 proficiency plays an essential role in dialogic feedback.

Saeed & Ghazali (2017) found that the characteristics of different types of interactive comments among students reflect the different areas of concern of the interlocutors in the study of an online writing mutual aid platform composed of nine second language learners from Arab universities. The findings imply that L2 proficiency acts as an important factor, which can impact the outcomes of dialogic feedback. The proficiency strongly influences the quantity of suggestions and this difference seems to be more obvious when higher proficiency reviewers are paired with lower proficiency ones. Furthermore, it is not only the actual proficiency of a learner but also his/her competence compared with that of the instructor that exerts decisive influence on the type and quantity of suggestions written and incorporated. However, this study only concerns the suggestions of the general article, not focusing on the different dimensions of it that includes content, organization, grammar, and language accuracy. More details need to be provided so that teachers can design meaningful and useful pedagogy and motivate learners' well-round development of English writing.

Yang & Carless (2013) once studied the feedback triangle and the enhancement of dialogic feedback processes concerning peer feedback and L2 proficiency. It is found that learners' perception of their language proficiency also greatly affected the interaction of writing assessment. If the learners realized their L2 proficiency was lower than that of the reviewers, they were more likely to accept the suggestions and then revised. Further study (David, A & Akiko, K, 2016) was also carried out and concluded how differences in perceived proficiency led to different types of feedback.

On the basis of classroom observation and interview data, the results suggest that perceived difference in L2 proficiency is one of the indispensable elements leading to different patterns of feedback, such as meaning-related, register-related and language-related feedback.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This exploratory study provides a new perspective to investigate an under-explored field of dialogic feedback research in the EFL classroom, that is, the influence of students' second language proficiency and instructors' noticing strategies on the quantity and quality of feedback as well as their focus areas of English writing. Specifically, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What's students' attitude towards dialogic feedback, especially compared with other forms of teacher feedback?
- 2) Does students' English proficiency influence dialogic feedback in terms of the quantity, quality and focus areas of writing?
- 3) Does noticing strategy influence dialogic feedback in terms of the quantity, quality and focus areas of writing?

3.2 Procedures

The present study began with a dialogic feedback activity in two different classes to collect some feedback corpus. The conversations were transcribed into written texts for analysis.

After that, the subjects of the two classes needed to complete a questionnaire with 10 questions in Chinese. Then another 4 participants from them attended a semi-structure interview to express their opinions on dialogic feedback. The corpus, questionnaire and records of interview would be analyzed and summarized to respond to the research questions.

3.3 Subjects

Sixty-five students from Nantong University were involved in this study, with 26 sophomore tutees from English Teaching 191 class, 26 sophomore tutees from English Teaching 192 class and 13 tutors from senior classes. All subjects were native Chinese speakers from the School of Foreign Studies. In the experiment, English Teaching 191 class was the comparative class while English Teaching 192 class was the experimental class. In order to control variables, the English proficiency of all senior tutors is on the same level.

3.4 Instruments

3.4.1 Measuring English Proficiency

L2 proficiency was assessed with tutee subjects' average scores of comprehensive English course in the last three semesters. This course tests their vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing abilities, reflecting their English proficiency level. Since the average score of all subjects is 80, students' English proficiency level can be classified as the following table.

Table 1. Number of tutee subjects of different English proficiency levels in two classes

Class	High (above 85)	Average (80-85)	Low (below 80)
English Teaching 191	4	13	9
English Teaching 192	4	11	11

3.4.2 Dialogic Feedback Activity

Both classes of tutee subjects were required to complete a TEM4 writing task within 30 minutes. The topic was about parent-child relationship, selected from 2019 TEM4 exam. After the tutees had finished writing, each of them accepted one-to-one dialogic feedback by senior tutors in 15 minutes. In the process of feedback, tutors instructing tutees of English Teaching 192 will not directly correct the writing mistakes of tutees; instead, they use specific noticing strategy to help tutees notice their mistake and refine their writing by talking to tutees.

3.4.3 Questionnaire

There was also a questionnaire for all the subjects to answer after the dialogic feedback activity. After tutorial procedures, tutees then completed the questionnaire of 10 questions within 10 minutes. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions, which can be classified into three facets: question 1-4 investigate subjects' general evaluation of dialogic feedback; question 5-6 attempt to inquire their opinions about the influence of English proficiency on the feedback results; question 7-10 inquire their ideas on the potential impact of noticing strategy deployed

by tutors.

3.4.4 Semi-Structured Interview

In order to find out more about students' perceptions of their own proficiency and to investigate the influential factors of dialogic feedback process, another 4 participants (Cecilia, Richard, Shirley and Daniel) with different L2 proficiency level were chosen randomly from the two classes. Cecilia and Shirley were in the top group for the English proficiency while Richard and Daniel were in the average and low level respectively. They received a semi-structured interview on the day one week

after the dialogic feedback activity. The typical structure and types of questions can be viewed in Appendix 1. The interviewer first elicited some general information from the participant about his or her impression of the course and English ability, then focused on dialogic feedback interactions and possible influence of L2 proficiency and noticing strategies. The interview was conducted in the first language, Chinese and the content was recorded and transcribed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Learners' Attitude towards Dialogic Feedback

Table 2. The questionnaire about subjects' general evaluation of dialogic feedback

Q1. Dialogic feedback is necessary in English writing classrooms.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	27	50
Agreed	69	42
General	0	8
Disagreed	4	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0
Q2. You are satisfied with the feedback given by your tutor.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	15	35
Agreed	35	46
General	46	19
Disagreed	4	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0
Q3. Dialogic feedback can help improve your writing ability.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	31	38
Agreed	50	54
General	19	8
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0
Q4. Dialogic feedback can help you comprehend the criteria of writing evaluation more deeply.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	15	50
Agreed	62	46
General	23	4
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0

In the questionnaire, questions 1-4 investigate subjects' general evaluation of dialogic feedback. According to Table 2, over 90% of the subjects deemed it necessary to conduct dialogic feedback activity in English writing classrooms. In fact, most of the subjects were satisfied with the feedback given by their tutors. In addition, the subjects generally believed dialogic feedback exerted some positive influence. For instance, dialogic feedback can help them improve their writing ability and further comprehend the evaluative criteria of English writing.

During the semi-structured interview, the researcher also inquired of the four participants about their opinions on dialogic feedback. Cecilia affirmed the benefits of dialogic feedback because she thought "compared with the authority and professionalism of written feedback, dialogic feedback empowers students to interact with their tutors and exchange

different ideas." From Richard's perspective, dialogic feedback was a kind of method easy to understand for students. Just as he explained, "Sometimes it is difficult to understand written or passive feedback provided by teacher because the teacher is far more proficient than students." Therefore, he preferred to receive feedback in which he could take in knowledge comprehensively and recognize as many mistakes as possible in detail. By contrast, Shirley had different ideas and stated that she preferred written feedback mainly because dialogic feedback was time-consuming and it demanded high communication skills of both learners and tutors. Daniel also did not give favor to dialogic feedback because he thought there was often a gap between students and tutors that cannot be filled.

4.2 The Influence of L2 Proficiency on Dialogic Feedback

Table 3. The average number of feedback

Class	Level	Total	Content	Organization	Grammar	Language
English Teaching 191	High	26	10	2	10	4
	Average	19	4	4	7	4
	Low	10	2	2	4	2
English Teaching 192	High	25	9	2	10	4
	Average	11	4	1	5	1
	Low	7	3	1	2	1

Table 4. Feedback that tutees considered effective to their writing

Class	Level	Percentage of effective feedback
English Teaching 191	High	85%
	Average	74%
	Low	60%
English Teaching 192	High	88%
	Average	82%
	Low	71%

Table 5. The number of tutees who received feedback covering four areas

Class	Level	Number	Percentage of the total
English Teaching 191	High	4	100%
	Average	9	69%
	Low	4	44%
English Teaching 192	High	4	100%
	Average	9	69%
	Low	4	44%

English Teaching 192	Average	8	73%
	Low	6	55%

The relationship between learners' L2 proficiency and the results of dialogic feedback is discussed in this section. Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 present statistics collected from the dialogic feedback corpus in the two classes. Table 3 provides the average number of feedback for the subjects of different English proficiency level. According to Table 3, the quantity of the subjects' feedback differentiated as their English proficiency varied. High-level subjects received the most feedback and the average number was 20 per person in English Teaching 191 and 22 per person in English Teaching 192. The overall number of the feedback sent by subjects of average and low level was lower, with 12 and 14 per person and 10 and 12 per person respectively. In regard to the feedback on different areas, feedback of grammar and content tend to be emphasized, but less feedback is given on organization and language. Students might be more interested in these two areas rather than the other two.

As is shown in Table 4, feedback that tutees considered effective to their writing also differentiated as their English proficiency varied. High-level subjects received the most effective

feedback and the percentage of effective feedback in total feedback was 85% in English Teaching 191 and 88% in English Teaching 192. The percentage of the effective feedback that subjects of average and low level receive was lower, with 74% and 82% and 60% and 71% respectively in English Teaching 191 and in English Teaching 192. It can thus be extrapolated that the higher level of English proficiency level of tutees, the more effective feedback they can receive.

Table 5 illustrates the number of tutees who received feedback covering all four areas (content, organization, grammar and language). As is shown in Table 5, in both classes, all of the high-level subjects received their tutors' feedback from four different areas. At the same time, 69% and 73% of the subjects of average level in the two separate classes received all feedback on these areas while only 44% and 55% of the subjects of low level received assessment from a full-scale aspect. It indicates that students of high level have the ability to interact with tutors on their own initiative in four areas, but those of average and low level need to improve their awareness and ability.

Table 6. (a) The subjects' attitudes towards noticing strategies before the process of dialogic feedback

Q5. The English proficiency of tutees can influence the results of dialogic feedback.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	35	46
Agreed	46	35
General	19	19
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0
Q6. The focus areas of the dialogic feedback you expect.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Content	8	12
Organization	8	8
Grammar	19	8
Language quality	8	12
All of the above	58	62

As Table 6 represents, the tutee subjects who thought English proficiency would affect the

consequences of dialogic feedback were more than 80%. As for the focus areas they expected,

over 50% of the subjects in the two classes hoped to receive more comprehensive feedback which covering all the four feedback areas.

The participants who attended the interview also expressed their opinions on the influence of students' second language proficiency. Cecilia believed learners' English proficiency greatly influenced the results of feedback. Actually, she was satisfied with her tutor's feedback because it nearly paid attention to all the aspects. She ascribed this effective feedback to her English proficiency so that she and her tutor could interact well and mistakes could be pointed out as many as possible.

Richard said, "I think proficient students possess good comprehension and have a better command of evaluative criteria." However, the English competence of him was average and he was not completely satisfied with the feedback from his tutor in that he was unable to comprehend all the feedback his tutor gave him and the quantity was not enough and some mistakes still remained uncorrected. Besides, he was more willing to share opinions with his tutor in two areas, which showed that his English competence led to the selection of focus area when he received dialogic feedback.

Daniel pointed out that he was unsatisfied with the feedback given by his tutor due to inadequate quantity and low quality. Most of the time during the process of feedback, his tutor was imparting knowledge and writing skills to him but he had little interaction with his tutor. His feedback only focused on grammar and content. The reasons Daniel came up with were his low proficiency in organization and language quality and the time limit as well. Consequently, he asserted that English proficiency greatly affected dialogic feedback. In one word, although both feedback to students of high and low English proficiency could be

beneficial to them, the former was much more helpful.

4.3 The Influence of Noticing Strategy on Dialogic Feedback

The tutors who gave feedback to tutees of English Teaching 192 engaged in the feedback had acquired some noticing strategies before dialogic feedback, thus the condition experienced an apparent change compared with that in English Teaching 191. According to Table 2, significantly more subjects in English Teaching 192 express more positive attitude toward dialogic feedback than subjects in English Teaching 191. As is shown in Table 3, although the number of feedback that high-level subjects in two classes obtained nearly remained the same, that of the average-level and low-level subjects in English Teaching 192 increased dramatically, almost twice as much as before. As is illustrated in Table 4, subjects in English Teaching 192 generally received more effective feedback than the comparative class. According to Table 5, the number of tutees in English Teaching 191 who received feedback covering four areas is also higher than that in English Teaching 191. Therefore, subjects can also be able to raise their awareness to obtain more effective feedback on four areas through some professional application of noticing strategies.

In addition, after gaining some noticing strategies from the tutor, the quantity of feedback on the whole article and different areas also witnessed some increase. However, the distribution of the average number did not change too much. It seems that no matter how various students' English proficiency is or whether they have received noticing strategies, they are likely to attach the most importance to grammar, less to the content and the least to organization and language quality.

Table 6. (b) The subjects' attitudes towards noticing strategies after the process of dialogic feedback

Q7. Whether to use noticing strategies or not can influence the results of dialogic feedback.		
Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	31	38
Agreed	50	54
General	19	8
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0

Q8. It is necessary for both tutees and tutors to elevate noticing awareness before conducting dialogic feedback.

Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	23	50
Agreed	62	46
General	15	4
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0

Q9. Dialogic feedback becomes more objective and comprehensive by adding noticing strategies.

Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	15	31
Agreed	69	62
General	15	8
Disagreed	0	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0

Q10. You are more willing to receive dialogic feedback based on some noticing strategies.

Choice Description	English Teaching 191(%)	English Teaching 192 (%)
Strongly agreed	23	31
Agreed	58	62
General	15	8
Disagreed	4	0
Strongly disagreed	0	0

Table 6 demonstrates the subjects' attitudes towards noticing strategies in the process of dialogic feedback. A majority of the subjects (over 80%) suggested that whether to receive noticing strategies or not could make a difference to the dialogic feedback. Therefore, it is necessary for both the teacher and the student to be familiar with the noticing theory so that feedback can be completed more effectively. More significantly, over 80% of the subjects believed that dialogic feedback instructed by the tutor adding noticing strategies could become more comprehensive and objective which made the feedback more persuasive.

As for the four interviewees, all of them regarded noticing strategy as a significant factor when conducting dialogic feedback activity. Cecilia said, "Students need to acquire some knowledge on noticing strategies which can offer specific criteria and enhance the interactivity between tutors and them." Richard also thought that the teacher needed to master excellent noticing strategies and give sufficient and different instruction with accord to different

genres and content of writing topics. Only by this method can students get an explicit structure and conducive guidance of feedback which improves the outcomes of dialogic feedback. Shirley thought it was necessary for the teacher to give some noticing strategic training in advance so that the difficulty of feedback would decrease while the effectiveness would increase. Daniel expected the instruction should not be conducted only once; instead, it needed to be emphasized over and over again. He also suggested some methods of instruction, for example, detailed explanation is absolutely necessary. Besides, watching some videos on this issue is also a good choice because it is more interesting and can attract students' attention.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

A vast majority of the subjects accepted dialogic feedback and also realized its potential benefits. Without doubt, written and passive oral feedback is less time-consuming and more convenient and easy to conduct, but in these

ways not every student's personal situation can be taken into consideration. As for students of low English proficiency, they considered written and passive oral feedback sometimes difficult to understand and hindered the revision of their articles. They actually need more time to comprehend. Conversely, students felt much more relaxed and targeted when having dialogic assessment. Since all students possess the ability to realize and correct their mistakes on their own initiative, they can gain a deeper understanding about teachers' feedback by actively expressing their own opinions. If they cannot understand the content or meaning of feedback given by tutors, they will discuss in details with each other. Such kind of positive interaction in EFL classrooms makes great contributions to their writing ability. However, some worried about the effectiveness of dialogic feedback for lack of English proficiency and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships with tutors.

It is self-evident that students' English proficiency exerts significant influence on the results of dialogic feedback. Firstly, in terms of quantity, learners of higher proficiency accepted more feedback than those of lower proficiency did. Secondly, with regard to quality, if a learner were proficient in English, he/she would succeed to receive feedback in the all-round four areas (content, organization, grammar and language quality). They also receive more effective feedback. By contrast, students who were not good at English received feedback only in one or two areas and receive less effective feedback. The reasons of this difference are as follows. Most importantly, students of high proficiency are generally adept at writing and also know well about the evaluative criteria. They have the consciousness that a good writing should consider four areas together. So they can interact with their tutors more effectively. Besides, students' perception of their own English proficiency also matters. Those with low proficiency have more burdens on their feedback because they are afraid of talking to their tutors, which eventually decreases their quantity and quality of feedback. However, almost all the subjects paid more attention to grammar and content regardless of their English proficiency because these two areas were more highlighted and practiced than the other two areas in the English writing classroom.

Noticing strategy also plays an essential role in

the process of dialogic feedback. According to the research, with tutors applying noticing strategies to the feedback process, more feedback could be provided in the four areas and the number of total feedback also greatly increased. In addition, the subjects became more satisfied with the feedback and were willing to adopt these suggestions. This means that relevant noticing strategies on feedback effectively stimulate the quantity and quality of dialogic feedback. The main reason is that noticing strategies supply specific assessment requirements and structure, guiding students to interact and realize key points with clear purpose and reasonable logic. Therefore, subjects can also succeed to raise their awareness to obtain more effective feedback on four areas through some professional application of noticing strategies. Otherwise, the effect of dialogic feedback will leave much to be desired.

5.2 Implications

In the first place, since both dialogic feedback and other forms of feedback have their own benefits and drawbacks, the teacher is supposed to take the essence and discard the dregs. The best way is to combine dialogic feedback with other forms of feedback so that students can improve their writing ability to the largest extent.

Secondly, the teacher should be aware of differences in students' English proficiency. When the teacher conducts dialogic feedback activity in the classroom, he/she had better tailor different feedback strategies for students of different English proficiency. As for students of higher proficiency, the teacher should work out advanced writing guidelines which suit their abilities. As for students of lower proficiency, basic knowledge and writing skills should be emphasized much more. At the same time, the teacher should elevate the sufficiency of time to finish the dialogic feedback. Only in this way can students of different proficiency get effective feedback and then enhance their writing skill as much as possible.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

Despite gaining some insights into the importance of English proficiency and noticing strategies during the process of dialogic feedback, the findings could hardly be generalized. Only two classes of tutees participated in this study, with 65 subjects totally.

The time of dialogic feedback seemed to be limited, thus some of the subjects completed their feedback hurriedly. Future and larger-scale research endeavors could examine the influence of learners' subjective initiative and teachers' targeted instruction for learners of different proficiency.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire Questions

1. Dialogic feedback is necessary in English writing classrooms.

Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

2. You are satisfied with the feedback given by your tutor.

Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

3. Dialogic feedback can help improve your writing ability.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

4. Dialogic feedback can help you comprehend the criteria of writing evaluation more deeply.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

5. The English proficiency of tutees can influence the results of dialogic feedback.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

6. The focus areas of the dialogic feedback you expect.
 Content ☐ Organization ☐ Grammar ☐ Language quality ☐ All of the above ☐

7. Whether to use noticing strategies or not can influence the results of dialogic feedback.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

8. It is necessary for both tutees and tutors to elevate noticing awareness before conducting dialogic feedback.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

9. Dialogic feedback becomes more objective and comprehensive by adding noticing strategies.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

10. You are more willing to receive dialogic feedback based on some noticing strategies.
 Strongly agreed ☐ Agreed ☐ General ☐ Disagreed ☐ Strongly disagreed ☐

Appendix 2: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Topic	Examples of questions
Own English proficiency	What's the level of your English proficiency? High, average or low? How about your listening, speaking, reading or writing skills?
Attitude towards dialogic feedback	What's your opinion on dialogic feedback activity? Which area do you pay attention to when you receive feedback from your seniors? (content, organization, grammar and language accuracy)
Suggestions	Please comment on the feedback.
Dialogic feedback and English proficiency	Do you think English proficiency influence the result of dialogic feedback, specially the focus areas? Why?
Dialogic feedback and noticing strategy	Do you think noticing strategy should be used in dialogic feedback? Do you think whether using noticing strategy or not influences the result of dialogic feedback? Why?