



## Identity Development of Korean Writing Tutors of English: Working on the Border

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This study examines the identity development of Korean graduate students who worked as tutors of English writing at a Korean university, outside of the context of a writing studio. While many studies have been conducted to better understand the experiences of writing tutors at writing centers, several scholars have emphasized the importance of examining the identity construction of writing tutors who work outside writing centers. They argue that these tutors have more flexibility in developing their own identities compared with writing center tutors, who are more likely to have predetermined roles required of them by writing centers. This study, therefore, focuses on four graduate students who received training on giving feedback in a graduate course and tutored undergraduate students. The analysis of interview data and their feedback to tutees' written texts illustrates that these four graduate students felt insecure as writing tutors, but that they utilize their perspectives as both teacher and student when giving feedback. According to Lave and Wenger's situated learning, these tutors are taking steps towards full participation from legitimate peripheral participants by participating in the community of practice. Further studies can investigate how writing tutors develop and change their identities across other multilingual and local contexts.

**Keywords:** identity, writing tutor, EFL, legitimate peripheral participation, community of practice

### Introduction

By adopting Lave and Wenger's (1991) learning curriculum, this study aims to investigate how four Korean graduate students develop their identities as writing tutors, which might be distinguishable from that of a teacher. Lave and Wenger (1991) distinguish the learning curriculum from the teaching curriculum. While the latter mediates student's learning through an instructor's participation, that is, from their own perspectives on what learning should be, the former emphasizes students' own participation in the learning process. The key idea of the learning curriculum lies in students' participation in "a specific community of practice engendered by pedagogical relations and by a prescriptive view of the target practice as a subject matter, as well as out of the many and various relations that tie participants to their own and to other situations" (p. 97). Drawn upon this learning curriculum, I the instructor provided the graduate students who enrolled in a seminar on applied linguistics—which focused on how to give feedback on second language writing—with the opportunity to tutor undergraduate students. In addition to acquiring knowledge of how to give feedback on second language writing, the graduate students participated in a specific community of practice, that is, teaching writing to English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in a Korean university. Because they earned the special status of working as a legitimate peripheral participant, which is different from that of a full participant such as writing instructor or

professor, the negotiation of their identities as writing tutors and how they develop these identities is of particular interest. Therefore, this study focuses on four graduate students who have been working as teachers of English—at high schools, private institutes, or college levels—and are currently working as writing tutors, and examines the negotiation of these different identities.

## Literature Review

### Tutor Identity

The role of writing tutors has been studied extensively in the first language (L1) context, in particular, at the context of writing centers where L1 tutors work with L1 tutees, and scholars agree that tutors have discernible roles from those of instructors (Agar 1985; Bailey, 2012; Gillespie & Learner, 2000; Harris, 1986; North, 1994; Plummer & Thonus, 1999; Rafoth, 2000; Shamoon & Burns, 1999; Thonus, 2001). These scholars draw upon the model of collaborative learning, where tutors and tutees are viewed as learning from each other, but writing tutors have often been seen as more capable than their tutees. It has been found that there exist variations in the extent to which they feel they are capable and authoritative, compared to the instructors. Some scholars view writing tutors as closer to the instructor (Gillespie & Learner, 2000; Harris, 1986; Plummer & Thonus, 1999), while others view tutors as closer to the peers (Kail & Trimbur, 1987; Rafoth, 2000). For example, emphasizing the importance of one-on-one talk in tutee writing progress, Harris (1986) almost equates the role of writing tutors with that of instructors and asks them to deeply engage tutees in conversation about writing. On the other hand, Rafoth (2000) in *A tutor's guide* argues that tutors should be basically peers to the tutees who visit the writing center to meet with a real audience, although they sometimes need to provide them with a critical and authoritative perspective.

The role of the writing tutor often changes when they interact with second language (L2) learners, with tutors often becoming more direct and authoritative (Blau & Hall, 2002; Cogie, Strain, & Lorinskas, 1999; Thonus, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2002; Williams, 2016; Williams & Severino, 2004). For example, Williams (2016) compared tutor talk with L1 and L2 tutees by approaching it as a kind of institutional talk and found several differences. As with L1 tutor talk, L2 tutor talk consisted of three phases—diagnosis (identification of a problem), directive (directions on how to fix the problem), and report (submission of a report on the tutoring session)—but the diagnosis phase and tutor-turn length tend to be longer with L2 tutees. Williams accounts for this difference as tutors' intentional efforts to facilitate L2 tutee understanding. Moreover, Powers (1993) suggests that tutors take on a different role with L2 tutees—that of cultural informant—based on the assumption that tutors are more knowledgeable in both culture and language than their tutees. These scholars acknowledge that L2 writers are different from native-speaking tutees and thus that they need different kinds of help and tutoring strategies.

Recently, however, these views that simplify tutor interaction with L1 and L2 tutees as that of native versus non-native speakers have been criticized and the scope of studies on tutor-tutee interaction has been expanded to include more diverse populations. Severino and Cogie (2016) have noted that these polarized views (e.g., non-directive vs. directive, global feedback vs. local feedback) oversimplify the complex negotiations of tutor talk and have asked for more theory-bound practice and more research that reflects up-to-date writing center demographics. In the same vein, Thonus (2001), through her investigation of seven tutors, argues that it is difficult to predetermine a writing tutor's role when they work with L2 tutees. After exploring the roles of writing tutors at the university writing center where her seven tutors worked by interviewing writing instructors, tutors, and tutees, Thonus found that perceptions of these roles differed: some instructors considered tutors as their surrogates, while others distinguished tutors from themselves by expecting them to carry out their own recommendations; tutors tended to consider themselves the colleagues of instructors and not tutees; and tutees tended to consider tutors as authoritative, but less authoritative than their instructors. Based on these findings, she concludes that “the

tutor is not a sharply-defined role but rather a continuum of roles stretching from teacher to peer” (p. 61) and that “the tutor’s role must be redefined and renegotiated in each interaction” (p. 77).

In order to better understand the roles of writing tutors, several scholars have examined writing tutors outside the context of the writing center. Weigle and Nelson (2004) studied three pre-service tutors enrolled in a graduate course in order to identify factors affecting tutor and tutee perceptions of the role of tutors and their evaluations of success. They arrive at the conclusion that contextual factors play important roles in building up a writing tutor’s role and identity, after finding that these tutors have space and flexibility to negotiate their roles as tutors, as they did not receive “the intensive training and supervision that is generally given to tutors in more formal settings and thus did not have as much background and experience as other writing tutors might have” (p. 205). Bright (2013) also studied four first-time graduate student tutors who were in the process of developing their tutor identities through their own tutoring experiences and background knowledge through a graduate course. She compared the effects of an one-day workshop for writing tutors and a ten-week academic course on the tutors’ identity development and found that the tutors who took both the workshop and the course had developed stronger identities as writing tutors by having more chances to reflect on their practices. Based on these results, Bright claims that “taking a closer look at the various modes by which these instructors and tutors were ‘prepared’ (e.g., programs or workshops and related curricula) allows those of us who primarily identify as teachers of writing to reflect on the values and philosophy that guide our composition pedagogy as we attempt to prepare participants from varied ages, disciplines, and career goals in writing education programs” (p. 22). As these scholars recommend, this study aims to explore how tutors who work outside the writing center context negotiate their identities as writing tutors.

### **Theoretical Framework: Legitimate Peripheral Participant**

This study adopts Lave and Wenger’s situated learning as a theoretical framework. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning is situated, meaning that it involves the learner as a whole person and is not simply one individual’s acquisition of knowledge about the world as transmitted by another individual. A social perspective on learning is based on several key principles (Wenger, 1998): “Learning is the ability to negotiate new meanings; Learning is fundamentally experiential and social; Learning transforms our identities; Learning constitutes trajectories of participation; and Learning means dealing with boundaries” (pp. 226-227). According to Wenger, this kind of situated learning cannot be designed a priori, but it can be facilitated based on what they term a “learning curriculum”:

A learning curriculum is essentially situated. It is not something that can be considered in isolation, manipulated in arbitrary didactic terms, or analyzed apart from the social relations that shape legitimate peripheral participation. A learning curriculum is thus characteristic of a community . . . We assume that members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activity, and hold varied viewpoints. In our view, participation at multiple levels is entailed in membership in a *community of practice*. (pp. 97-98)

Lave and Wenger (1991) define learning curriculum by contrasting it with teaching curriculum. In the teaching curriculum, what is learned is mediated through the teacher’s perspective, whereas the learning curriculum provides learners with situated opportunities in which they can participate in a community of practice as legitimate peripheral participants, that is, they are offered legitimate access to a community’s practices. By absorbing and being absorbed in the culture of practice as newcomers, the learners are able to gradually grow as full participants by making the particular culture of practice theirs.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that the process of moving to full participant status from legitimate peripheral participation is not restricted to changes in status, but also changes in identity: “Moving toward full participation in practice involves not just a greater commitment of time, intensified effort, more and broader responsibilities within the community, and more difficult and risky tasks, but, more significantly,

an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner” (p. 111). Wenger (1998) elaborates on the concept of identity by explaining it as a dual process of identification and negotiability: identification provides “experiences and material for building identities through an investment of the self in relation of association and differentiation,” while negotiability “determines the degree to which we have control over the meanings in which we are invested” (p. 188). That is, through identification, legitimate peripheral participants are able to determine what meanings are important to them, but only through negotiability can they negotiate these meanings and make use of them as their own.

Based on Lave and Wenger’s situated learning, this study investigates the identity development of four graduate students as they participate in the community of practice, teaching writing to EFL students at a college level. In my graduate course on second language writing with a focus on written feedback, the students were offered opportunities to tutor undergraduate students. This study examines how these graduate students, by participating in the practice of giving feedback, learned about the practice and experienced changes in their identity. The guiding questions are:

- 1) What identities do graduate students develop through their practice?
- 2) How do they negotiate these identities?
- 3) How do graduate students manifest their emerging identities in the feedback practice?

## Methodology

### Study Setting

The graduate students in this study were enrolled in a three-credit graduate course entitled “Topics in Applied Linguistics” offered by a department of English Linguistics at a university in Seoul, Korea. The course—focusing on how to give feedback on second language learner writing—was usually run by students. They read and presented research articles on various topics regarding second language writing, ranging from appropriation of student writing and mitigations of feedback to computer mediated feedback, and shared their ideas in group discussion. Graduate students were given two volunteer tutor opportunities, working one-on-one with undergraduate students during the semester. The purpose of these tutoring opportunities was to provide the students a way to link theory with practice, applying what they learned in the course to learners in the real world. Before the tutoring sessions, I explained the goals and requirements of the writing class, as well as that of each writing assignment, and answered any questions tutors might have about the writing assignments their tutees were to complete.

The undergraduate students were enrolled in a beginning-level English writing course designed for first-year students, also taught by me. They completed two major writing assignments—a cause-and-effect essay and an argumentative essay—each of which was a two- or three-paged five-paragraph essay. They composed two drafts for each essay, a first draft and a final draft. After the first draft, all students received feedback from both peers and me, and the students who volunteered to receive tutoring received additional feedback from the writing tutors. They were matched with the graduate students based on their schedules, and for each assignment, they received feedback from different tutors.

### Participants

Out of the 13 graduate students enrolled in Topics in Applied Linguistics, 11 volunteered to tutor undergraduate students, and of the 29 undergraduate students enrolled in the English writing class, 17 volunteered to receive feedback from the graduate tutors. Tutors were assigned one or two tutees depending on their schedule and given their tutees’ drafts beforehand so that they could prepare their written feedback. Depending on the preferences of the tutees, meetings were scheduled either face-to-face or via email. All 11 graduate student tutors provided feedback twice during the semester and discussed

their tutoring experiences during the graduate class with their peers and me their instructor.

This study presents the cases of four writing tutors who have shown their identity development as legitimate peripheral participants more explicitly in comparison with the other tutors. Hyeji, Jina, and Yumi are doctoral students while Suho<sup>1</sup> was an M.A. (Master of Arts) student. The first three participants tutored a tutee at a time and two in total, while Suho tutored two tutees at one time and four in total. Although their official English proficiency scores could not be obtained, I evaluated their English proficiency to be quite advanced considering their writing abilities demonstrated through the research papers they submitted for this particular graduate course.

## Data Collection

Data for this study come from four sources: exit interviews, teaching journals, tutee essays, and tutor feedback. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted for about 20 to 25 minutes in Korean based on the belief that the participants will communicate more freely and openly in their native language. The interviews focused on how tutors prepared their feedback, what aspects of writing they focused on in their feedback, how they thought about their tutoring experiences, and how the graduate seminar affected the type of feedback they gave. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Second, teaching journals were kept by me and the tutors, detailing the tutors' reflections about their tutoring experiences based on class discussion. Finally, copies of the tutors' written feedback and tutee writing were collected. Of the four tutors, only Hyeji met with her tutees face-to-face, while the other three communicated with their tutees by email, which was preferred by the tutees. Hyeji submitted all the copies of her feedback written down on the margin of her tutees' writing, and the other tutors carbon-copied all of their email communications to me.

## Data Analysis

The interview data and teaching journals were analyzed based on Leki's (2006) thematic analysis. As recommended, the interview transcripts and the journals were coded line-by-line, and these codes were repeatedly read against the research questions until common patterns or themes emerged. Two emerging themes were found: uncertain status of working as a tutor and benefits of working on the border: that is, the participants feel risky and insecure themselves as writing tutors, but at the same time, they feel more flexible because of their versatile positions between instructor, tutor, and student. Once these themes were identified, the transcripts were read again to check whether details of the data were congruent with these themes. In order to see whether these perceptions on their status as writing tutors make a difference in their actual feedback, the tutor feedback was analyzed in terms of feedback type and use of mitigation strategies because these two types were often mentioned by the tutors during the interviews. Ferris (2006) was adopted and modified for the analysis of feedback type, and Hyland and Hyland's analysis scheme (2006) was used for the analysis of mitigation strategies. Tables 2 and 3 show categories of feedback type and mitigation strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> All these names are pseudonyms.

TABLE 1  
*Feedback Type*

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

TABLE 2  
*Use of Mitigation Strategies*

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

Feedback types and mitigation strategies were coded by me and another rater who has been teaching English for several years in Korea. Whenever the codes did not correspond with each other, they were discussed until the category was agreed upon.

## Results

All four participants have the following perceptions in common: they felt uncertain about their roles as a peripheral participant, but they also learned and benefitted from their experiences working on the border—juggling with various roles available to them as in the following.

### Hyeji: Teacher through Tutor/Researcher

Hyeji was negotiating her identity between being a teacher and a tutor, gradually moving toward a

researcher. When this study was conducted, she had been teaching English specific to secretaries as a college instructor and as a private academy instructor for several years. Although quite established as an English instructor, Hyeji felt insecure as a writing tutor. Her sense of insecurity as a writing tutor partly came from her identity as a non-native speaker of English as well as her consciousness of the professor as a supervisor of her activities. At the interview, Hyeji confessed that she felt a lack of confidence in giving feedback on written English.

I told the tutees frankly that I'm not a native speaker of English, nor did I study in English-speaking countries. When I write in English, I'm not sure whether it is natural English or Korean English. So I'm not able to correct all of your errors 100 percent, nor am I even sure whether my corrections are right.

This lack of confidence as a non-native speaker of English seemed intensified by her awareness of me as her professor and impacted her approach to giving feedback: "You the professor are watching what kind of feedback I'm giving to the tutees. So I paid more attention to my feedback." This awareness led her to invest more time and effort in preparing her feedback than before and to change her style of giving feedback.

Prior to this tutoring, I always corrected grammar. I did it very directly almost without any mitigation... . Since I gave lots of students feedback on their resumes and cover letters, I didn't have a chance to use mitigation... . This time, I intentionally gave feedback indirectly. I gave only a few direct feedback and asked the tutees to correct their errors themselves. I used lengthy comments using mitigations and honorifics.

In her prior work environments, she used to give very direct feedback to students, with no use of mitigation due to the job-specific purpose of the courses. However, through the influence of the graduate course, Hyeji felt that she had to use mitigation and expresses regret that she used to give feedback too directly.

This change in her feedback style is reflected in the written feedback given to students. In both of her written feedbacks, she used more indirect feedback (# of indirect feedback = 41 out of 78 in total) than direct feedback (# of direct feedback = 19). She also used many hedges in order to mitigate her feedback. In the following example, we see her comments on a segment of an essay her tutee wrote about why cafés are booming in Korea. After introducing the first reason, i.e., running a café does not require professional skills, the writer introduces a second reason, i.e., the café's comfortable atmosphere attracts customers.

<p>Cohesion, You may need to put a linking sentence here.</p>	<p>Moreover, running a café does not need professional skills (<u>Kim, Y. H.</u>); anyone can simply start to enter the industry if they want to do it, and this drags not only who <del>do not open a café and</del> have dreamed to <del>start run a café</del> but <i>run a coffee shop for a long time</i><sup>2</sup> also people who do not know what to do specifically. (A café has a few comfortable and convenient characteristics which drag consumers there. When people are in a café, they can do almost everything they want to do....) <i>I hope you will make this sentence sound more natural.</i></p>
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Example 1. Hyeji's Feedback.

As a response to this essay, Hyeji gave indirect feedback by merely indicating that the tutee should correct the citation format (Kim, Y. H) and the punctuation (,) through underlining both elements. She also suggested that the tutee insert a linking sentence between the two paragraphs, pinpointing a problem in cohesion. Hyeji's comments show her use of hedges such as "I hope" and "you may need to."

<sup>2</sup> The italics are the comments and corrections provided by the tutor on the margin of the essay. They were originally in Korean and I translated them into English.

Hyeji's status of working between the instructor and the tutor as a legitimate peripheral participant does not make her status solely insecure. Her current position also gives her an opportunity to reflect on her status as a student and envision herself as a novice researcher.

When I first read the tutee's writing, I felt that their writings are much better than those I had written as a college student. I was surprised to see that college students knew how to cite others' works. Recalling the poor quality of the texts I had written at that time, I felt shameful.

The experience of working as a tutor enables Hyeji to look back on her past experiences as a college student herself and to feel inferior to her tutee. Additionally, this experience makes her realize that the act of giving feedback is as helpful as the act of receiving feedback, which resulted in her becoming interested in investigating this topic further as a researcher.

[Through this tutoring experience] I came to know that giving feedback is more helpful than receiving feedback myself. While reading others' writings, I felt that I should have put more effort to write well like these or that I should have self-edited my writing more so that I would not make these kinds of errors.

By experiencing the benefit of giving feedback herself while working as a tutor, Hyeji not only became interested in researching this topic, but also submitted a research proposal on this topic as her final assignment for the graduate course. She hoped to compare and contrast the effects of giving and receiving feedback with regard to ESL student writing. In Hyeji's case, the experience of working as a writing tutor provided her the opportunity to negotiate her present and past identities as instructor, student, and researcher on the border, and prepared her to move closer towards the area she has been engaged in as a novice researcher.

### **Jina: Teacher through Tutor**

During the course of the graduate class, Jina continuously juggled her teacher and tutor identities. When she enrolled in the graduate course, she was already an established high school English teacher. With more than 10 years of experience, she was used to giving feedback on student writing as an instructor, but she was not sure about her role as a tutor.

Because I have never worked as a tutor—I often worked as an instructor—because I have never helped students in the role of tutor, I was not sure about it. I was not quite sure the borderline between the instructor and the tutor, so I was very cautious.

Because of the differences she felt existed between the role of tutor and instructor, Jina not only paid more attention to her feedback, but also differentiated her feedback style from the style she often used as an instructor.

When I worked as an instructor, I often asked the students to correct the errors themselves by using a question mark or indirect feedback. That's because I could check whether they made corrections or not. But as a tutor, I could not check it, so I was more likely to give direct feedback.

Throughout the semester, Jina worked with two tutees, and the feedback she gave on their written texts seems to reflect her remarks. Although she did not give as much direct feedback as she intended—she gave 22 direct feedback and 31 indirect feedback out of 53 in total, she prefers to explain what is wrong, whether she gave direct or indirect feedback. 16 out of 22 direct feedback as well as all of the indirect feedback was accompanied by her explanations of the problems, as in Example 2.

<p>According to the experts, insomnia includes a wide range of sleeping disorders, from lack of quality of sleep to lack of quantity of sleep ("Insomnia: Causes, Symptoms and Treatments." Medical News Today). The problem of <del>the</del> insomnia is that it can undermine school and work performances, as well as being a cause of obesity, anxiety, and depression ("Insomnia - Symptoms &amp; Causes". Sleep Education Organization). To prevent <u>these</u> harmful <u>influences</u>, we are required to know what causes insomnia and the reasons are various among patients respectively. Experts suggest there are roughly two factors that cause insomnia. One is medical factors and the other is habitual factors.</p>	<p><i>Insomnia does not likely need the definite article.</i></p>
	<p><i>Incongruence between modifier and modified</i></p>

*Example 2. Jina's Feedback.*

After deleting the definite article "the," and correcting disagreements between the modifier "these" and its modified "influences," she adds that the word insomnia does not need the definite article, and that there is incongruence between the modifier and the modified. These efforts may come from her concern about her inability to check the tutee's corrections. That is, in justifying why she made those corrections, she may believe that the tutees will be more likely to accept them.

Her uncertainty about her role as a writing tutor is also reflected in the way she handled an episode of plagiarism. While giving feedback to her first tutee, Jina realized that he copied more than five consecutive words from an original source without proper citation techniques such as paraphrasing or quotation marks.

I wanted to let him know about those cases, but at the same time, I was also concerned that he might be in trouble if I gave that kind of feedback. Even though my intentions were good, to help him, he might be caught by his instructor because of me... . Because I did not have the same level of authority as the instructor, when I deal with sensitive issues such as plagiarism or originality of a thesis . . . I'm concerned that I may not look impartial. I'm concerned that I may cross the line of my work as a tutor.

This kind of uncertainty regarding her role as a tutor led her to use more lengthy comments and explanations, although she preferred a concise feedback as an instructor.

As seen in the excerpt, Jina repeatedly uses the term "concerns" during her interview, which reveals that she keeps trying to identify what her role is as a tutor. Her conscious efforts to peruse her role as a tutor can be also confirmed by her overt attention to her tutees' response to her feedback. She did not receive a response from either of her tutees after emailing her feedback to them, and she interpreted this lack of response as a sign of their dissatisfaction with her feedback:

Because I didn't hear anything from either of the tutees, at first I thought that they might be busy, but when I didn't hear from the second tutee either, it occurred to me that they might not like my feedback or that they might think that my feedback is not helpful.

These remarks show Jina's feeling of being a peripheral participant in the community of working with EFL students at a college level while working as a tutor. Her responses demonstrate the difference she feels in her role as instructor and her role as tutor, showing the uncertainty and insecurity she feels about her role as a writing tutor.

On the other hand, because of her legitimate status as a graduate student in a course, which allows her to work on the border between the tutor and the teacher, she is also provided with opportunities to look back upon her previous practice of giving feedback as a teacher.

While working as a tutor, I looked back upon my experiences of giving feedback when I worked as a teacher. My students might have had more confidence in and ownership of their writing if I had mitigated my feedback. While paying attention to tutee's writing from a tutor's perspective, I came to realize that I paid too much attention to the issue of whether my high school students' writing is

improved or not.

She also noted that her role as a tutor helped her gain the opportunity to practice what she learned during the graduate class as a student in the real world: “this immediate application of what I have learned in the reality makes me remember this opportunity and use it when I return to school as a teacher.” During the process of negotiating three different identities—that of teacher, tutor, and student, she not only feels insecure in her status as a peripheral participant in the community of teaching writing to EFL college students, but her status as a writing tutor who works on the border between the teacher and the student, seems to give her the chance to reflect on her roles as a teacher and a student and eventually to gain a deeper understanding of how to teach academic writing.

### Yumi: Teacher/Student through Tutor

Like Hyeji and Jina, Yumi also showed lack of confidence while working as a writing tutor. Although she has been teaching TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) reading for several years at private academies as well as at a university, she had never taught English writing. Her sense of insecurity came partly from her lack of experience, but mostly from her identity as a non-native speaker of English. Out of the four participants, she reveals the highest level of awareness of her status as a non-native speaker of English. When asked about the main difficulties she experienced while giving feedback on student writing, she answered, “I cannot help questioning whether I am qualified to give feedback. Because I am not perfect, I’m concerned about what will happen if I give incorrect feedback.” In order to compensate for this lack of confidence, Yumi chose to obtain help from a native speaker, a professional editor she knew, and even paid for this service out of pocket. However, Yumi did not simply take the native speaker’s changes and pass them along to the tutee; she tried to find her role in the process. Reflecting on her roles as an experienced English teacher and as a Korean learner of English herself, she screened the native speaker’s feedback and adapted it to her tutee’s needs.

When I looked at the professional editor’s feedback on my tutee’s writing, I found that he didn’t give any feedback on content because he is a professional editor... . He has been editing the writing of more advanced speakers, but this time there were so many mistakes he had to fix. He made too many corrections on one page. I thought that it is not meaningful to give all these comments to my tutees. So I selected only the feedback on the mistakes that I thought are repeated, easy to remember, and helpful for the tutees to improve their writing. Also, I tried to motivate them more by using an indirect type of feedback such as asking “How would you say this in natural English?”

Her actual feedback reflects this approach. Yumi gave more direct feedback ( # of direct feedback = 20 out of 34 in total), but her direct feedback has an idiosyncratic characteristic. She gave her tutees a chance to correct the errors on their own first by raising a question for them in the margins, and to provide answers at the end of the text, as follows:

*What preposition would you use in front of a date?*

In October 20, 2015, Korea University announced that they will abolish all of their academic scholarship from next year, and increase the amount of money that supports students who are in poverty

*Do you use scholarship in singular or plural?*

*Next year means after this year. Then how would you say after?*

On/ scholarships / the following year

*Example 3. Yumi’s Feedback.*

Example 3 shows the types of problems Yumi pointed out through these questions to the writer—what preposition goes with a date, whether the word “scholarship” is used in singular or plural, and how next year is referred to after a certain period of time in English—and the correct answers—“on,”

“scholarships,” and “the following year,” instead of “in,” “scholarship,” and “next year.” By asking these questions, Yumi’s intention is to motivate her tutee to think of appropriate corrections on their own.

Yumi’s process of giving feedback also reflects her identity as an EFL student. She spent two or three hours to prepare feedback for each tutee—she asked the native speakers to edit the writing first, screened it based on her tutee’s needs, and finally added her own content-based comments. Although she admitted that this approach was not time-efficient, she justified it as follows:

If I were the tutee, I would want to get this kind of feedback. In fact, if I was a student, I would want feedback I can perfectly agree with, that is most objective, like there is a jump in my logic, my conclusion is insufficient, or expressions are awkward. I really wanted to say something in English, but I had no idea how to express it in natural English, so I would use a wrong expression. Then it would be really helpful if someone gave me feedback on it.

As seen here, Yumi juggles her various identities as English teacher, non-native speaker of English, and English language learner to negotiate her role as a writing tutor. Her status as a writing tutor working in the area of legitimate periphery allows her to try out these various identities in the process of moving towards her role as a writing tutor.

Having given feedback twice during the semester of course does not seem enough to make Yumi feel a little more confident of giving feedback to English writing. She points out her lack of native-like intuition regarding grammar as one of the biggest obstacles to her gaining confidence as a writing tutor. However, the opportunity to take the graduate course and work as a writing tutor seemed to make a difference in her identity as a teacher. She noted that “in the past, I would underline mistakes in the student writing. I have the role of the teacher, not helper. But this time when I gave feedback as a writing tutor, I tried to be helpful so that I can help the tutees to continuously develop their writing.” It seems that Yumi is in the process of negotiating her identities as teacher, student, non-native speaker of English, and writing tutor, and gradually moving towards a new identity of a writing instructor as a helper.

### **Suho: Student/Tutor through Tutor**

In contrast to the other participants, Suho was quite confident in giving feedback because he had a lot of prior experience working as a tutor. Before entering this graduate school, he had worked for two years at a department of English language office as a student assistant, helping students whenever they came to seek feedback on their writing. Through these experiences, Suho seemed to build his confidence in dealing with student writing: “From the beginning, I had confidence because I had tutored for 2 years before... I have read lots of student essays, so I did not suffer from lack of confidence in giving feedback on them.”

Despite this confidence as a tutor, Suho also reflected on his current and prior experience as a student while giving feedback. He noted that he worked to integrate what he learned through the graduate course in his feedback, particularly the concepts of appropriation and mitigation, resulting in increased awareness of the effects of tutor feedback on students and therefore being more cautious than before.

Two years ago when I worked as an unofficial tutor, that is, before I took this course, I corrected their errors without being concerned about the tutees’ feelings. While learning about appropriation and mitigation in this graduate course, I no longer feel free to give any kind of feedback as I did before because of the concern that my feedback may hurt their feelings.

In addition to reflecting on his current experiences as a student, Suho also reflected on his past experiences as a student.

When I first took a writing class, my professor gave lots of feedback to me. I accepted all the

feedback and corrected everything, but I felt as though this was not my own writing. At that time, I finished the semester with the feeling that I would not write like this if I rewrote it for myself.

Due to his reflections on the impact instructor appropriation had on him in the past—although he did not know about the concept itself at that time—in his current experience giving feedback, Suho tried not to appropriate student writing by encouraging his tutees to think about their errors on their own by indicating them instead of correcting them. Unlike what he stated in the interview, however, his actual feedback to his two tutees reveals that he gave much more direct feedback (# of direct feedback = 117) than indirect feedback (# of indirect feedback = 71). Interestingly, however, even when he gave direct feedback, he tended to provide several options so that his tutees could decide what to accept themselves.

<p>If one is to pick the greatest philosopher or economist throughout the mankind history, who would deserve to be selected? In the poll hosted by BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) in 2005, Karl Marx ranked in 1<sup>st</sup> place in the poll. Even though he is primarily well known as a philosopher, as a scholar, he has left a number of lessons relating to not only philosophy but also economics.</p>	<p>Starting with interrogative form seems nice as a hook sentence, but 'one' is not suitable as a subject.</p> <p>The phrase <b>a number of</b> may be wordy. Consider changing the wording (e.g., some, many, multifarious, etc.)</p>
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Example 4. Suho's Feedback.

In Example 4, instead of directly correcting aspects of the text, Suho makes several suggestions to the writer, such as replacing the pronoun “one” with another and using alternative terms to the phrase “a number of.” These strategies represent his efforts to not take ownership away from his tutee.

Therefore, Suho approaches student writing from the perspectives of both teacher and student—in other words, as both a helper and a peer. Out of all the 11 tutor volunteers, he is the only one who explicitly mentions the benefits of working on the border between the teacher and the student as a writing tutor.

I think I benefit from these tutoring experiences. I have lived my life in this EFL context both as a learner and an English teacher. As a tutor, I feel that I am between the student and the teacher. I could incorporate both perspectives of being a student and a teacher in my feedback... . While reading the tutees' writing from both a teacher's perspective and a student's perspective, I reflected on myself as a student and what I'm supposed to do as a teacher as well. Those two perspectives are entangled in my identity as a tutor.

Unlike the other participants, Suho is more confident in preparing his tutor feedback and is not unfamiliar with the practice of giving feedback to EFL college student due to his past tutoring experience. Interestingly, the unique status of tutors—working on the border between teacher and student—provides him opportunities to call on his present and past identities as teacher and student. Compared to the other participants, Suho has adopted the identity of being a tutor with fewer struggles than the other participants did, but in some sense, because of his more established identity as a tutor, he seems to be aware of a writing tutor's ambivalent status of a legitimate peripheral participant more clearly.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The four participants reveal four different ways in which they negotiate their identities as a writing tutor, depending on their prior experiences and current careers, but they are in common in that they were given opportunities to test out several identities as a peripheral participant in the practice of giving feedback to EFL learners in the Korean context, where both tutors and tutees are learning English as a foreign language. Although differences exist in the degree to which the participants of this study feel they move close to the identity of being a tutor—Suho feels quite comfortable with his identity as a tutor,

whereas Hyeji and Jina struggle in their negotiation of their identities as teacher and as student, and Yumi is not sure whether she is qualified to giving feedback to the tutees because of her identity as a non-native speaker of English—all four benefit from the freedom of testing out multiple identities entangled in the practice of giving feedback in a university setting. Because they are not true peers to the tutees, they think they are authorized to give feedback to them. On the other hand, because they are not classroom instructors, they are not fully responsible for teaching the students how to write well in English, they are not evaluated on their ability to teach writing based on student outcomes, and they do not evaluate (i.e., grade) the writers.

As Thonus (2001) found among her writing center tutors, the participants of this study have not adopted one clear role as a writing tutor. Instead, each of them negotiates multiple identities in helping them understand how best to perform the role of writing tutor. Moreover, as Weigle and Nelson (2004) and Bright (2013) suggested, context is shown to be a key factor affecting the development of their identities as writing tutors. The EFL context where both the tutors and the tutees are learning English as a foreign language not only significantly affects their understanding of their abilities to perform the role as writing tutor, but also complicates it. Because they are non-native speakers of English, the tutors consider themselves learners of English, which Zacharias (2010) found to play an important role in identity development of the nonnative teachers in her study as well. The overlapping status of being a teacher of English writing and also a learner of English makes their job to give feedback precarious in some sense (i.e., in the case of Yumi), but it also makes their status as legitimate peripheral participants more apparent. That is, they can easily sympathize with their non-native tutees because of their similar language background and give feedback from a learner's perspective as well as from a teacher's perspective.

The fact that the participants are enrolled in a graduate course and are learning how to give feedback to second language learners while they are working as writing tutors provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences as learners. Their official status as graduate students who are in the process of being trained as second language writing instructors and researchers offers them legitimate status as learners; that is, they are able to legitimately participate in the practice of giving feedback as peripheral, and not full, participants. As trainees, they may be vulnerable to making mistakes in giving feedback, but they are relatively free from the blame full participants (i.e., faculty) would be confronted with if making the same kind of mistakes. As writing tutors, they are in a precarious situation, as they may not receive the same kind of authority and respect from their tutees as their writing instructors do. However, this precariousness also allows them the freedom to test out their multiple identities as teacher, learner, non-native speaker of English, and researcher to identify their roles as writing tutors. Working outside the context of a writing center facilitates this freedom. As Weigle and Nelson (2004) acknowledged, tutors who do not receive as much training and supervision as those who work in writing centers are more flexible in negotiating their roles as tutors.

Although this study investigated a small number of participants and thus cannot be generalized to other contexts, this study shows that the experience of working as writing tutors provides the four participants opportunities to conduct the practice of giving feedback to EFL students at the college level beyond merely studying about it and thus enabled them to participate in the practice as legitimate peripheral participants. It has been pointed out that this kind of opportunity to participate in a practice is essential for pre-service teachers to transfer what they learned in the classroom to their own teaching (Cho, 2015; Gan & Yang, 2018). While working as writing tutors, the participants of this study learned both by experiencing what it means to be a writing tutor and contributing to the practice of giving feedback in a university setting in the EFL context. In an EFL context like Korea, where English is only taught as a foreign language and rarely used outside the classroom, and where the infrastructure and personnel for teaching writing is weak, the chance to work as a tutor in the status of a legitimate peripheral participant may be necessary for English teachers who rarely taught English writing to EFL college students to develop their identities as writing instructors.

One's identity as a writing tutor cannot be prefixed or predetermined. The participants of this study juggle with various identities they have obtained through their lifetime experiences such as L2 learner,

English teacher, graduate student, writing tutor, or even L2 researcher in order to figure out what they are supposed to do as a writing tutor. Nor can I say that the journey of this study's participants to figure out their identity as a writing tutor had an end once this study was completed. As Ivanič (1998) and Tardy (2016) argue, one's identity continues to change and develops through social interactions they have had with other members in a community. And thus it would be interesting to see how L2 writing tutors, like the participants of this study, will further develop their identities for a term longer and to also hear their voices through their written works or feedback styles since identity studies often consider writers' voices as one of the major components that contribute to establishment of one's identity.

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