Improving English L2 Writing in Web Communication: Can Peer Feedback Help?

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Abstract As teachers of English as a second language (L2) in web communication, our aim is to help L2 students improve their spoken and written English language skills. Teacher feedback has been shown to do this in some cases. However, only using teacher feedback can put huge pressure on the teacher, both in terms of time and resources. This paper describes and discusses our attempt at introducing peer feedback as an additional way of providing students with feedback on their English writing. Before conducting this study, we did not know if peer feedback would be feasible in our teaching environment or whether it would benefit the students and teachers. Our aim was to establish a status quo of our students' abilities in providing and implementing peer feedback. We introduced peer-feedback tasks and focused on the types of feedback provided by the students, the phrasing of the feedback, both when implemented and not implemented by the students, and the types of revisions made by the students. Our findings allowed us to develop peer-feedback process guidelines for web communication as a way towards improving written feedback processes in higher education, and hopefully for others to adapt and implement in their own communication classrooms.

Keywords peer feedback, L2 writing, scaffolding, feedback types, revision types, phrasing of feedback, professional skills

1 Introduction

Well-targeted and constructive feedback in educational settings is particularly powerful, since activities within this environment involve significant new learning (Hounsell 2007: 101). For many students, activities they undertake while at university can be unfamiliar, which makes feedback even more beneficial. Traditionally, the majority of feedback is provided by the teacher either in the form of a grade accompanied by written comments, or written comments without a grade (Hounsell 2008: 5). It is then expected that students use these feedback comments to identify any shortcomings in their work, and to use them as a guide when undertaking a similar exercise in the future. However, Hounsell (2003) has shown that students do not always use the feedback as intended by the teacher and sometimes do not receive sufficient feedback during the semester. These findings are perhaps the result of the era of mass higher education, which has meant larger class sizes, lower unit costs and increased student-staff ratios. A knock-on effect of these is a reduction in the number of assignments students complete during the semester. It also means the students have fewer opportunities to receive written feedback and to discuss the feedback they received with their teacher. Furthermore, a perhaps unintended consequence of semesterisation at some European universities has been "the 'bunching' of

assignments and assessments towards the end of a course unit, limiting the scope for students to carry forward what they have learned from feedback in one task to a subsequent one in the same course unit" (Hounsell 2008: 2).

Given these new challenges, it is important to identify ways of giving effective feedback to students that do not ultimately add to the teachers' existing workloads (Hounsell 2008: 3). Teacher-led feedback does not always result in "enhanced learning or higher student satisfaction" (Nicol 2011: 1).

One way identified in the literature is to alter the role of the student in the feedback process (Askew 2000, Black et al. 2003, Nicol 2014, Nicol/Macfarlane-Dick 2006, Sadler 1989). Students can take a more active role in their own learning, and peer feedback is one way of ensuring this. We define it as an activity whereby students assess their peers' texts and provide written comments within the same topic domain. This practice has also been termed *peer review* (Nicol 2014), *peer assessment* (Boud/Cohen/Sampson 2001) and *peer editing* (Keh 1990). Taking an active role in the feedback process allows students to develop self-regulatory skills which cannot be achieved "through assessment practices that are solely carried out and controlled by teachers or where the primary conception of feedback is that of teacher transmission" (Nicol 2014: 198).

To self-regulate their learning effectively, students must develop evaluative judgement. To achieve this, students need to be directly involved in assessing other students' work and generating feedback for those students. Likewise, gaining experience in reviewing and assessing peers' work results in students being better at reviewing and assessing their own texts (Nicol/Thomson/Breslin 2014: 116, Rollinson 2005: 24).

We teach web communication to students on an undergraduate course, who have English as their L2. This course is taught in English and during the semester, the students are expected to produce a number of written tasks focusing on English business communication in a web communication context. The final exam is a 12-hour written exam, covering various topics within web communication. Therefore, while the students are encouraged to engage in discussions during class time to develop their English oral skills, particular focus is placed on their English written skills.

The course trains students to describe, explain, analyse, produce and critically discuss web content. It lays a path for student understanding of the key concepts that constitute the building blocks of web-based communication theory, social media marketing strategies and their practical application (Lardi/Fuchs 2013). These concepts comprise accessibility, usability and social media marketing (to name but a few) – utilized to the advantage of companies and organisations. The students acquire "web-based information literacy" (Edwards 2006).

They learn differences between online and other communication means, become familiar with page design and site architecture and practice writing for the web (Felder 2012, Lior 2013, Redish 2007). Text production for the web includes writing succinctly, in a conversational style using plain and precise terms, chunking information, and writing for interaction (e. g. using hyperlinks in the writing). The students obtain knowledge about website user behaviour, such as scanning and browsing, and learn how to optimise texts to meet online receivers' needs. The main aim of the course is to train the students in processes and strategies to provide web content that contributes to the overall understanding and successful interaction between stakeholders in web communication contexts. Localisation is a part of the course content, to enable students to manoeuvre in the global information ecosystem.

The motivation to conduct this study came from our experiences of teaching on this course during two previous semesters. We observed that the students' writing needed to improve significantly, if they were to achieve higher grades in the final exam and for their professional careers following graduation from university. However, despite the fact that in previous semesters students received extensive feedback from the teachers, we could see that, similar to Hounsell (2003), not all students were using this feedback to improve their work. This is why we opted to include a new method in our teaching with the aim of improving the students' writing. While we knew from the literature that this method had received clear support, some research had also shown that not all types of feedback, including peer feedback, were suitable in every context (Hattie/Timperley 2007, Kluger/DeNisi 1996, Price/Handley/Millar 2011, Shute 2008, Strijbos/Narciss/Dünnebier 2010). Furthermore, some critics have said that peer feedback has limited value in the L2 classroom (Nelson/Murphy 1992, Zhang 1995). Given the contrasting views in the literature, we considered it an important step to conduct an exploratory study to test the peer-feedback method of providing feedback comments on L2 writing. Our communication students have English as their L2 and we believe that the students require skills to provide feedback in their L2 for future professional practice. More specifically, our goal was to determine if peer feedback could be a method to use in the future that would provide the students with the opportunity to: reflect more on the concept of feedback and the important role it plays in the learning and writing processes (Boud 1995, Quinton/Smallbone 2010, Topping 1998); become critical, independent learners, and hence develop learner autonomy (Falchikov 1995, Searby/Ewers 1997); and develop responsibilities and a sense of ownership for both their own and their peers' work (Topping et al. 2000).

The small-scale study involved 4th- and 6th-semester students of a content-based course in International Business Communication. In addition to teacher feedback on several tasks during the semester, students provided and received peer feedback on four text production tasks in groups of two or three, which were specific to the medium of web communication. The tasks allowed the students to be more involved in the feedback phase of writing texts, and the feedback as a course element did not put an extra, unsustainable workload onto the teachers (Rada/Michailidis/Wang 1994). The approach also incorporated the idea of providing and responding to feedback as a professional skill, rather than simply a skill used in a classroom environment and practised exclusively by the teacher.

One of the four tasks included in the overall study has been published previously with a focus on translation training (Flanagan/Heine 2015). This translation and translation commentary task applied a similar methodology to the present study and explored peer feedback as a teaching tool from a translation didactics perspective. The focus of Flanagan/Heine (2015) was on the types of feedback provided, the revisions made by students in a translation/localisation context and which findings could be used in a translation-training environment. We report on the remaining three tasks (T1, T2 and T4) in this paper. Insights gained from the previous study informed the present one.

The primary research questions in the present study were:
1) Which elements of the texts did students provide feedback on?
2) How did the phrasing of the feedback affect implementation?
3) What kind of revisions did the students make based on the feedback received?

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: in Section 2, we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the current study; in Section 3, we present the core concepts of peer feedback

in L2 writing with a focus on student instruction (scaffolding). We discuss types of feedback identified in previous studies and the types of revisions made by students in their writing, as well as present the concepts of higher-order and lower-order concerns in the feedback process. The topic of writing for the web is also introduced in this section. The methodology is presented in Section 4 and our results are outlined in Section 5. Finally, in Section 6, we put forward suggestions for how to integrate the current findings to further develop students' professional skills in providing feedback when working with English as their L2. Our peer-feedback process guidelines are provided in the Appendix.

2 Theoretical underpinnings

In this study, we drew on socio-constructivist perspectives on feedback. This approach to feedback required students to "actively engage with the feedback" (Rust/Donovan/Price 2005: 234) in order for it to positively affect future learning and student achievement (Boud/Molloy 2013, Hattie/Timperley 2007, Moore/Teather 2013). In essence, our approach was to explore the zone of proximal development (in the Vygotskyan [1978] sense) between our students' own abilities and what they could achieve based on support from a peer. We wanted to deduce information on how we could support students' self-reflective learning via peer-feedback tasks in the future. While we did not assume peer-feedback tasks would address all the weaknesses and problems identified with our current teacher feedback practices (for example, students not using the feedback in subsequent tasks or in the final exam), we had some key assumptions in mind when designing the study, which are implicit in the socio-constructive approach to feedback:

- The students are active participants in a continuous reflexive process (Nicol/MacFar-lane-Dick 2006) which allowed them to construct meanings based on their own experience.
- Peer feedback must ultimately trigger an inner dialogue in the students' minds so that they engage in a process with the feedback comments. The process involves decoding, assimilating, internalising, comparing, judging the quality, and using the comments to improve the final task. The trigger results from peer feedback as "a dialogical and contingent two-way process" involving "peer-to-peer interaction and active learner engagement" (Nicol 2010a: 503).
- The teacher-student relationship is built on guidance rather than instruction (Adams 2006) (cf. Section 3.1 'Degree of scaffolding').

Feedback can be viewed as either a product or a process (Price/Handley/Millar 2011: 881). When feedback is viewed as a product (Lalande 1982), the expected response from the student is most likely a behavioural one (e. g. making edits), rather than a cognitive one (e. g. listening, reflecting, thinking, acting). When feedback is viewed as a process (Mittan 1989, Zamel 1985), it can be deemed a social practice. For this study, we regard peer feedback as a process in which the students engage on a regular basis. Given our theoretical approach, we first wanted to determine our students' capabilities in providing peer feedback through minimal teacher guidance (scaffolding) before providing them with ancillary guidelines and checklists, as described further in the next section.

3 Peer feedback in L2 writing

3.1 Degree of scaffolding

Several studies on peer feedback in the L2 writing classroom have reported the benefits of including this method in the overall feedback process. These benefits included students' increased awareness of their audience and ownership of the text (Ho/Savignon 2007, Mendonça/Johnson 1994, Nelson/Murphy 1992, Paulus 1999, Tsui/Ng 2000), students' increased understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in writing (Tuzi 2004), social, cognitive and affective benefits (Lundstorm/Baker 2009, Rollinson 2005, Storch 2005) and improved communication (Diab 2011, Dochy/Segers/Sluijsmans 1999). Many studies on peer feedback support the idea of providing students with pre-defined feedback criteria, clear assessment criteria or some form of guidance or elaborated instructions before engaging in the peer-feedback process (Goldberg 2012, Hillocks 1986, MacArthur et al. 1995, Min 2005, 2006, Topping 2009, Van Steendam et al. 2010, Yang/Meng 2013). Such framework approaches to teaching are commonly referred to as *scaffolding* (Wood/Bruner/Ross 1976). Students are expected to adhere to this scaffolding when providing and implementing feedback until such a time the scaffolds can be withdrawn and tasks assigned can be mastered without guidance, e. g. using a 'no guideline' method (Chandrasegaran 1989).

Rollinson (2005: 26) is a strong advocate of training students in peer interaction and response because untrained students may be "destructive and tactless or overgenerous and uncritical". Mangelsdorf/Schlumberger (1992) suggest that untrained students' feedback tends to deal with surface matters rather than with suggestions of improvement on meaning and content. They claim that untrained peer reviewers might be prescriptive and authoritarian in their comments rather than collaborative and supportive. Furthermore, guidance in the form of instruction and support prior to the peer-review task or as part of the peer-review task is considered a crucial element in teaching approaches with feedback (Min 2005, Nelson/Schunn 2009, Van Steendam et al. 2014). Yet open questions remain: To what degree should scaffolding be applied? Should the criteria used for scaffolding be pre-defined or self-administered by the students (Leijen 2014: 179, Nicol 2010a), and should a combination of both be applied (Hounsell 1997, Nicol 2010b). Another open question is which aspect(s) of the feedback tasks should be scaffolded?

In our view, recommendations given to students should not draw on over-generalised checklists for appropriate (academic and English-language) writing. Textbook checklists or peer-editing sheets are intended for broad audiences, not for specialised domains and more often than not, they exclude guidance on content. Generalised peer-editing sheets can cause students to focus more on the concerns of their teachers who assign these sheets than on interaction with their peers. Content-related instructions, in turn, may invoke helpful comments from the peer regarding the content taught in class and appear in line with expectations towards the content expressed by the teacher. Yet these comments may neglect structural and mechanical concerns (e. g. such as academic writing).

Despite our awareness of scaffolding recommendations and our general appreciation of the notions behind them, we opted for a minimalist approach to scaffolding. The rationale was that we wanted to observe the students' understanding of feedback and their behaviour around feedback and feedback performance before providing them with scaffolding in a web communication context. We also drew on findings from Cho/MacArthur (2010: 334) in which

the students "*demonstrated* that at least under some conditions, [they] are able to provide useful feedback to their peers without training in evaluation or revision" (emphasis in original). Since the participants in our study were 4th- and 6th-semester students, we knew that they had previously been exposed to academic writing, concepts of English grammar, drafting and formulating texts within a business environment, and that many of the 6th-semester students had also spent a semester abroad in an English-speaking environment. Therefore, the concept of receiving feedback (predominantly from teachers) and implementing it into their texts was not new. However, as a baseline measure, we ensured that all students received the same information on providing and exploiting feedback. In all of the task descriptions, we instructed student groups to provide constructive feedback reciprocally, which was to include corrective feedback and comments on the content, with specific relation to the course literature. Corrective feedback takes the form of "responses to learner utterances that contain a linguistic error" (Ellis/Loewen/Erlam 2006: 340).

A chapter on exploiting feedback (McMillan/Weyers 2011), which provided examples of feedback types and tips on how to deal with feedback, was available to the students. Instructions on using the track changes and commenting functions in Microsoft Word for providing feedback and submission instructions for their writing tasks were offered (cf. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 for a description of participants and the peer-feedback tasks). Other than this, we did not instruct the students explicitly on how to interpret and implement the feedback received.

3.2 Lower-Order Concerns and Higher-Order Concerns

There are two kinds of concerns that teachers and students providing and implementing feedback can focus on: lower-order concerns (LOCs) and higher-order concerns (HOCs). LOCs include areas such as spelling and grammar, while HOCs include the focus, organisation, and development of the paper (Krest 1988: 28 f.). It has been suggested that students (both in their L1/first language and in their L2/second language) should focus first on HOCs and then when working on subsequent drafts, they can focus on the LOCs identified (Krest 1988, McDonald 1978). Unfortunately, this multiple-draft peer-feedback cycle was not possible in our case. Given that our web communication course was not a specific 'composition course', we also had to cover other aspects of communication, including presentations and website design. Therefore, we had to restrict the peer-feedback tasks to one peer review stage, which meant that students had to identify both LOCs and HOCs in the same draft. This situation was clearly not ideal. Furthermore, even though students were given the opportunity to finish the peer-feedback tasks outside of class before submitting them to the teacher, no students availed of this (cf. Section 4.2). Therefore, the limited class time available for the peer-feedback task might have influenced the students negatively, meaning that they focused more on LOCs rather than HOCs.

3.3 Feedback types, phrasing of feedback and revision types

Based on a review of the literature, we discuss feedback types, the phrasing of feedback and revision types that have inspired the present study.

Cho/Schunn/Charney (2006) and Cho/Schunn (2007) use feedback categories such as directive, non-directive, criticism, praise, summary and off-task feedback. They explain that directive feedback involves explicit suggestions of specific changes, while non-directives are general observations. They use criticism (negative evaluation) and praise (encouraging obser-

vations) as counterparts and introduce the category of summary and off-task feedback which remain unexplained. Nelson/Schunn (2009: 381) comment that praise is commonly included as a feature of peer feedback, but research has shown that praise rarely results in changes in university students' writing (Ferris 1997). It is also argued that praise is "ineffective in enhancing learning" (Hattie/Timperley 2007: 102). Yet, undergraduate peers are still very likely to include praise in their feedback (Cho/Schunn/Charney 2006). Literature on feedback in general and especially models of good feedback in educational settings suggest to include praise (Nilson 2003, Saddler/Andrade 2004) as it appears to be liked (Cho/Schunn/Charney 2006) by students and could be considered a motivator that affects the students' general behaviour (e. g. writing or revision/feedback activities in general) (Nelson/Schunn 2009: 376). However, due to the complex nature of writing performance, it could be difficult to pinpoint the effect of praise on feedback implementation without follow-up interviews with the students.

Coding of the feedback types in our data is inspired by the literature discussed above. We detected five feedback types: motivation (praise to suggest a good standard was achieved or how performance could be improved), questions (looking for clarification), statements (neutral declaratives), directive suggestions (feedback specificity, cf. Nelson/Schunn 2009 below) and expressive suggestions (which includes the opinions of the feedback provider and the use of mitigating language, cf. Nelson/Schunn 2009 below).

In studies of revision types, Berg (1999), Min (2006) and Cho/MacArthur (2010) all use a revision coding scheme based on Faigley/Witte (1981), while Cho/MacArthur (2010) also incorporate the coding system implemented by Sommers (1980). Faigley/Witte (1981) distinguish between "surface-level change, micro-level change, macro-level meaning change and reference" categories (cf. Table 4 for more details). Surface changes and reference categories do not change the meaning of the text, while micro- and macro-level meaning changes do. We adopted the scheme used by Cho/MacArthur (2010: 336) and incorporated two subcategories within 'surface change' in accordance with Faigley/Witte (1981: 403) to cover all the revision types identified in our data. In this scheme, surface-level changes are considered LOCs, while the other three categories (micro-level meaning, macro-level meaning and reference) are considered HOCs.

Nelson/Schunn's (2009: 376–380) study focused on the features or phrasing of peer feedback. They examined five feedback features for their effect on feedback implementation. Four of these features, *summaries*, *specificity*, *explanations* and *scope*, are cognitive in nature, while the fifth, *affective language*, is emotional in nature. "Summaries" are often short, condensed statements, which can focus on various aspects of the writing (e. g. action taken, claim or topic). "Specificity" refers to the information contained in the feedback comment, including problems, solutions and identifying the location of the problem or solution. "Explanations" clarify the reasons for providing feedback. "Scope" differentiates between local-level feedback (surface features) and feedback at a global level (overall writing performance). "Affective language" includes praise, inflammatory language and mitigating language. While praise is always deemed positive, mitigating language can include praise and criticism. Inflammatory language is criticism that is considered insulting rather than constructive. Based on the findings, they concluded that feedback was more likely to be implemented if the receiver understood the problem identified in the feedback. The study found three features that aided the understanding of the problem: solution provided (specificity), location of problem provided (specificity), and a summary included in the feedback (summaries). The feature "solutions" positively impacted feedback implementation, which meant that feedback was implemented if the solution

was understood, but this did not necessarily mean that the problem was understood. Nelson/Schunn (2009: 393) noted that implementing a solution without understanding the problem could result in the peer implementing the solution unsuccessfully.

4 Methods

4.1 Participants, groups and tasks

The participants were not subject-matter experts in the field of web communication, but they had background knowledge in both business communication and academic writing from previous courses obligatory for all students. The course encompassed the analysis of websites on the basis of web-communication theory, followed by reflection, production of web content and production of written texts outlining the findings.

The study was conducted during one semester and comprised four written peer-feedback tasks to be completed in groups of two or three. Students also carried out several other written and oral tasks outside of the study. To address previously-identified concerns in the literature that feedback should be provided in good time for students to use it in subsequent tasks (i. e. due to the 'bunching' of assignments, cf. Section 1), we spread the peer-feedback tasks evenly throughout the semester. Participation in this study was optional. Hence, not all students participated in or completed all tasks fully. From 65 course participants, ten groups will be focused on who completed at least three of the four tasks in full. Of these groups, nine consisted of two students, while one consisted of three students. Group and task participation are outlined in Table 1.[1] The lowest number of students participated in Task 4. This could be attributed to the task being the last one in the semester, when student numbers attending class can sometimes dwindle. Furthermore, given the peer-feedback task was voluntary, students could decide in advance whether or not to attend class and participate. Perhaps some students felt that their time would be better spent revising specific topics for the upcoming exam.

Table 1: Groups and feedback tasks (+ participation, – non-participation)

Groups \ Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total participants per task
1	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+	19
2	–	+	+	+	+ (2)	+	+	+	+	–	16
4	+	–	+	+	–	+	+	–	–	+	12

4.2 Task description

We have previously analysed and reported on Task 3 in detail in Flanagan/Heine (2015). Therefore, we excluded it from our analysis in this paper. In Tasks 1, 2 and 4, student groups were asked to write an individual text (e. g. an analysis of a website, see specific details in Table 2) during class time, and then to assess each other's work through changing roles from writer to reader to feedback provider and feedback receiver (Altstaedter 2016, Crasnich/Lumbelli 2004,

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[1]   Group 5 usually had three students, but had only two for Task 2.

Holliway/McCutchen 2004). Upon receiving written feedback from their peer, each student had the opportunity to incorporate the feedback and apply newly acquired knowledge to their respective tasks. Students were able to start the peer-feedback process in class and were given the opportunity to submit their final text to the teachers to also receive teacher feedback one day after the class.

At the outset of the study, we assumed that students would implement peer feedback that they regarded as making a serious and/or appropriate improvement to their own text. The tasks specified in Table 2 were of varying difficulty and represent different text production types. Task 2 comprised two parts: an 'About Us' text for a website and a commentary in which the students addressed the writing task with reference to course literature on writing for the web.

Table 2: Peer-feedback tasks

Task	Description of the task	Information provided to the students	Word count (after integrating feedback)
1	*Text production task* Describe moves and rhetorical strategies of a homepage (relying heavily on an understanding of the literature, and no text provided to start off)	Provide each other with constructive feedback on the text	400 words
2	*Text production task (revision task and academic commentary)* Using an existing 'About Us' text as a point of departure, rewrite the text in line with the literature on writing for the web. Write an academic commentary on the reasons for your edits	Provide each other with constructive feedback on the 'About Us' text and the commentary	'About Us' text: 360 words Academic commentary: 200 words
4	*Text production task (comparison)* Compare two websites with a focus on a website analysis model provided by the teachers	Provide each other with constructive feedback on the text	500 words

4.3 Coding the data

We coded the data in two stages: peer-feedback types provided and types of revision made. The coding of the data in the present study is identical to the previous localisation/translation study (Flanagan/Heine 2015).

4.3.1 Coding stage 1: Peer-feedback types

We adopted the coding approach taken by Artemeva/Logie (2002). Similar to their study, we worked together with one task in order to define our unit of analysis and to devise meaningful feedback type categories. In this paper, a unit of analysis equals an *idea unit.* An idea unit is a self-contained message on a single problem (of peer feedback) (Cho/Schunn/Charney 2006: 268). This means that a feedback comment in our data can contain more than one unit of analysis. All units of analysis and feedback types were discussed and negotiated together for the first task before we continued with the coding process independently for the remainder of the tasks. Once we had coded all of the tasks independently, we met again, and negotiated all of

the codes until we reached high agreement. Table 3 provides an overview of the peer-feedback types identified and an explanation of each type.

Table 3: Peer-feedback types identified

Feedback type	Explanation
Motivational	Motivational feedback is defined as praise for specific parts of the task or the task overall.
Suggestions (directive)	Suggestions (directive) feedback is defined as explicit suggestions (solutions) by the peer to specific changes in the student's writing (without necessarily providing the problem).
Suggestions (expressive)	Suggestions (expressive) feedback is defined as comments on specific aspects of writing, which often provide both the problem and solution, but do not explicitly direct the student to implement the feedback.
Questions	Questions are defined as comments that use a question to highlight specific aspects of writing and are followed by a question mark. A question can require students to confirm the question (e. g. "isn't it?"), or be used as a means of initiating a conversation with the peer (e. g. "Do you think …?").
Statements	Statements make a non-directive, neutral comment about an aspect of the writing, which can be either specific to the writing task (e. g. "'More popularity' doesn't sound like proper English") or could apply to any writing task (e. g. "I think you make an important point in this last sentence, but it is not really linked with the rest of the paragraph"). This feedback type often identifies problems without presenting an explicit solution.

4.3.2 Coding stage 2: Revision types

Revision types refer to the revisions made by students based on the feedback they received from their peers, i. e. *implemented feedback.* We adopted Cho/MacArthur's (2010: 336) revision coding scheme, and the two subcategories from Faigley/Witte (1981: 403) under 'surface change' to code revisions made by students (cf. Table 4). Similar to coding feedback types, both authors worked closely together to identify the types of revisions made in one task, before working independently on the remaining tasks. All revisions types were reviewed together until we reached high agreement.

Table 4: Revision coding scheme as used in Flanagan/Heine (2015)

Revision type	Explanation
Surface change: Lower-order concerns (LOCs)	
Formal change	Spelling, tense, punctuation, abbreviations, and format
Meaning-preserving change	Additions, deletions, substitutions, permutations, distributions, and consolidations
Micro-level meaning change: Higher-order concerns (HOCs)	
Complex repair	This includes fixing constituents in a sentence by deletion or changing existing constituents in a sentence or paragraph level
Extended content	This means elaboration on and/or justification of an existing point or example

Macro-level meaning change: Higher-order concerns (HOCs)	
New content	This refers to new points, including entire new paragraphs
Organization	This involves changes to, addition of and deletion of headers, movement of a paragraph, or change to or deletion of connectives/transitional phrases
Reference: Higher-order concerns (HOCs)	
Adding supportive materials	This refers to the addition of tables, figures, figure captions, and references, including footnotes and citations
Changing supportive materials	This refers to changes to and/or movements of tables, figures, figure captions, and references, including footnotes and citations

5 Results

We now provide a detailed analysis on the three aspects of this study: the types of feedback provided and the textual elements that this feedback related to; implementation of the feedback and whether the phrasing of the feedback had an effect on the implementation; and, the revision types made by the students.

5.1 Feedback types

A total of 384 feedback comments were provided in commenting boxes across Tasks 1, 2 and 4. This resulted in a total of 421 units of analysis or *idea units.* Table 5 provides a breakdown of the feedback types. Feedback types are listed according to the most common type identified across the three tasks. On average, students provided more feedback comments in Tasks 1 and 4 (9.7 and 9.6 respectively) than in Task 2 (7.5).

Table 5: Feedback comments divided into feedback types per task

Task Feedback Types	1 N = 19 μ = 9.7	2 N = 16 μ = 7.5	4 N = 12 μ = 9.6	Total feedback comments per type
Suggestions (directive)	39.0 % (72)	16.6 % (21)	41.4 % (48)	33 % (140)
Motivational	23.2 % (43)	28.3 % (34)	22.4 % (26)	24 % (103)
Suggestions (expressive)	17.8 % (33)	29.2 % (35)	19.0 % (22)	22 % (90)
Questions	14.6 % (27)	14.2 % (17)	11.2 % (13)	14 % (57)
Statements	5.4 % (10)	11.7 % (14)	6.0 % (7)	7 % (31)
Total feedback	**100 % (185)**	**100 % (121)**	**100 % (116)**	**100 % (421)**

The feedback types identified are now discussed in more detail. The categories from Table 4 above are used to discuss the results relating to LOCs and HOCs. Students most often provided *suggestions (directive)* feedback type in Tasks 1 and 4, and it was the most common type when looking at all three tasks (33 %). Some examples taken from the students' work included:

[MV5]:   *Change "but" into "However" followed by comma.*
[MM12]:   *Use "do not"*
[MN21]:   *Add a comma* ☺

In the example from student [MN21], there are in fact two idea units in this one comment. The first, *add a comma*, is an example of *directive* feedback and the second, a smiley emoticon ☺, is an example of *motivational* feedback. We coded these idea units (and others) accordingly in our data set, but we have kept the full example here under *suggestions (directive)* feedback.

From our analysis, we identified that the majority of *suggestions (directive)* feedback was provided on LOCs in the texts (94 %), which included comments concerning spelling, grammar (including tense), punctuation, deletions and additions (of words and punctuation). The remaining 6 % of feedback comments concerned HOCs: complex repair (4 %), new content (0.7 %), organization (0.7 %) and adding supporting materials (0.6 %).

Motivational feedback was the second most common type, constituting 24 % of all feedback provided in Tasks 1, 2 and 4. *Motivational* feedback included all types of praise, and the feedback related to specific sentences or paragraphs, as well as to the entire text. It should be noted here that one student in this study did not provide any motivational feedback in any of the tasks. Some examples taken from the students' work included:

[NM5]:   *A well-structured text. Arguments for and against the claim. The customers are also people that are interested in high-quality and homemade food.*
[CM16]:   *Your thesis statement is good, short and to the point.*
[M10]:   *A good analysis of the structure.*

Motivational feedback was provided in all cases on HOCs. These included the use of headings (6 %), domain concepts described at sentence level (25 %) and paragraph level (22 %), the organisation of the complete text (16 %), argumentation used in the text (5 %), referencing (6 %) and use of specific web communication terminology and concepts, including references to writing for the web (20 %). *Suggestions (expressive)* were the third most common type of feedback, constituting 22 % of the total feedback provided. While *suggestions (expressive)* as a feedback type highlighted problems, offered solutions or both, they almost always included hedging words, making them non-directive. Some examples taken from the students' work included:

[K10]:   *I think it would be good if you could compile these two sentences in some way.*
[MM10]: *Maybe you could delete the full stop and instead write "which identifies the sender" to give a better flow in the text.*
[CM22]: *I think 'on' is the correct preposition.*

Similar to *suggestions (directive),* our analysis showed that the majority of *suggestions (expressive)* feedback was provided on LOCs in the texts (70 %), which also included comments on spelling, grammar (including tense), punctuation, deletions and additions. Feedback on HOCs for this feedback type included complex repair (18 %), extended content (6 %), organisation (4 %) and new content (2 %).

The fourth most common type of feedback was *questions*. This feedback type constituted 14 % of all the feedback comments provided. *Questions* as a feedback type are closely related

to *suggestions (expressive)*, since the students avoided telling the students what to do explicitly. However, *questions* were identified by the use of an explicit question mark or tag question, once the feedback provider described the problem, the solution or a mix of both. Some examples taken from the students' work included:

[A17]:   *Isn't this something from the B2B site?*
[TGO2]: *Why do you use might?*
[M3]:   *What information?*

The feedback type *questions* also focused mostly on LOCs (67 %), with a similar emphasis on grammar, spelling and punctuation as per the feedback types mentioned above. Furthermore, the students once again used this feedback type to comment on HOCs, which included complex repair (22 %), extended content (4 %), organisation (2 %), new content (2 %), adding supporting materials (2 %) and changing supporting materials (1 %).

The last feedback type was *statements*, which only accounted for 6 % of all feedback analysed. Some examples taken from the students' work included:

[NL14]: *Really long list.*
[A23]:   *I wanted to mention this!*
[CM19]: *It is obvious that we have structured our texts differently. You made it shorter and mentioned only the important information.*

Like most of the other feedback types, *statements* focused predominantly on LOCs (65 %). The remaining feedback focused on HOCs, including the categories complex repair (19 %), extended content (10 %), organization (3 %) and referencing (3 %).

While it was encouraging to identify 421 idea units in the data set that focused on both LOCs and HOCs and covered a range of categories, not all of this feedback was implemented by the students and not all of the feedback implemented actually improved the quality of the final text. We will take a closer look at the implementation and non-implementation of the feedback in the next section, with a particular focus on the phrasing of the feedback and the effect of implementation on the final quality of the text.

5.2 Phrasing of feedback

Of the 421 idea units (feedback) provided by the students, 301 of these (71 %) were implemented by their peers, leaving 120 units (29 %) not implemented. In this study, students may have decided to implement or not implement the feedback based on a number of variables, which remain unknown to the authors. In our data set, we noted cases where the feedback was implemented correctly, which led to an improvement in the quality of the final text. Yet there were also cases where the feedback was implemented incorrectly or the feedback implemented actually reduced the quality of the final text. Conversely, there were cases where the feedback should have been implemented to improve the quality of the final text, but the student decided not to do so. One way of trying to understand the behaviour in this context is to investigate the implementation of feedback and the corresponding phrasing of the feedback. Table 6 below presents an overview of the feedback implemented and not implemented, which are sorted according to the tasks and feedback types.

Table 6: Peer feedback implemented and not implemented by task and feedback types (IM: implemented; NIM: not implemented)

Task	1		2		4	
	IM	**NIM**	**IM**	**NIM**	**IM**	**NIM**
	N = 19		**N = 16**		**N = 12**	
Feedback Type	μ = **6.7**	μ = **2.9**	μ = **5.7**	μ = **2.8**	μ = **6.8**	μ = **2.9**
Suggestions (directive)	54 % (69)	5 % (3)	27 % (20)	2 % (1)	56 % (46)	6 % (2)
Motivational	0	76 % (43)	0	71 % (34)	0	76 % (26)
Suggestions (expressive)	23 % (29)	7 % (4)	37 % (27)	17 % (8)	26 % (21)	3 % (1)
Questions	18 % (23)	7 % (4)	22 % (16)	2 % (1)	11 % (9)	12 % (4)
Statements	5 % (7)	5 % (3)	14 % (10)	8 % (4)	7 % (6)	3 % (1)
Totals	**100 % (128)**	**100 % (57)**	**100 % (73)**	**100 % (48)**	**100 % (82)**	**100 % (34)**

Table 6 shows the percentage of feedback comments implemented and not implemented across the three tasks. It also includes the number of students who participated in each task and the mean implementation/non-implementation results. The average implementation rate and non-implementation rate are very similar across the tasks. The implementation pattern across Tasks 1 and 4 is the same. Students most often implemented *suggestions (directive)*, followed by *suggestions (expressive)*, *questions*, and *statements,* while in Task 2, the students implemented more *suggestions (expressive)* than *suggestions (directive).* The authors assume that the differences observed between Tasks 1 and 4 and Task 2 relate to the text type that the students were asked to produce (cf. Table 2). In Task 2 the students engaged in an authentic, professional task that evoked comments on course content, offering suggestions for improvement – *suggestions (expressive)* – and praise for their peers work (*motivational* feedback). All the data on implementation and non-implementation of feedback are based on edits made to the final text. Since there were no visible edits made based on the *motivational* feedback, we cannot say that this feedback was implemented by the students. However, as mentioned in Section 3.3, the high percentage of *motivational* feedback identified in each task could have contributed to the students' willingness to implement the other feedback types and to revise their final text.

The next step in this process was to investigate whether the implementation of the feedback led to improvements in the quality of the final text. The two authors independently judged the quality of the final texts, both in terms of implemented feedback and whether the quality would have improved if the non-implemented feedback had in fact been implemented. A consensus was reached by the authors for all feedback comments. Table 7 below illustrates the results per task and per feedback type. The data in Table 7 correspond to the percentage of feedback implemented that led to improvements in the final text based on the overall implemented feedback in each task (cf. Table 6).

Table 7: Peer feedback implemented that had a positive effect on final quality

Feedback Type \ Task	1	2	4
Suggestions (directive)	86 % (59)	75 % (15)	93 % (43)
Suggestions (expressive)	93 % (27)	70 % (19)	100 % (21)
Questions	83 % (19)	75 % (12)	100 % (9)
Statements	71 % (5)	90 % (9)	100 % (6)

The data in Table 7 show that the majority of the feedback implemented across the three tasks led to improvements in the quality of the final text. In Task 1, the highest percentage of comments implemented was *suggestions (expressive)*, in Task 2, it was *statements*, and in Task 4, it was a three-way tie between *suggestions (expressive), questions* and *statements*. One variable that could influence implementation rates is the phrasing of the feedback. Since we identified cases in our data set where the feedback was not implemented but should have been to improve the quality of the final text, it is worth investigating examples of phrasing of feedback that were both implemented (improved quality) and not implemented (that would improve the quality if they had been implemented). Table 8 illustrates some selected examples from the data.

Table 8: Phrasing of implemented feedback that improved the text quality and feedback not implemented that would improve the text quality*

Feedback Type \ Task	Original Text	Feedback Comment (focused on bold, italicised text)	Feedback Implemented
Suggestion (directive)			
Example 1 (Task 1)	"***On the customer page is branding the*** company as attractive, friendly, and natural."	[DoP5]: Rephrase	Yes
Example 2 (Task 1)	"When entering the website you are met with a navigation bar at the top of the homepage which contains several different generic links, ***but*** none of these links have more than one layer of links below."	[MV5]: Change "but" into "However" followed by comma.	Yes
Example 3 (Task 2)	"Prestigious, high-quality, shops and cafes around the country are today ***stocking my range***."	[HM10]: Consider to rephrase	No
Example 4 (Task 4)	"These qualities that are mentioned are ***probably*** all something that attracts customers."	[LA9]: Leave this out – either they are or not.	No

Feedback Type / Task	Original Text	Feedback Comment (focused on bold, italicised text)	Feedback Implemented
Suggestion (expressive)			
Example 5 (Task 1)	"The target audience could be middle ages women, which are costumers of the product and with an interest in making food and trying new *recipes*."	[A7]: I think you could be right about the target audience but they need to be interested in the product (not a recipe). Another target audience could be stores that wish to sell the products because there is a link asking: "Like to stock our products?"	Yes
Example 6 (Task 2)	"This resulted in a really tasty homemade jam made the old-fashioned way, using high quality *ingredients*."	[J19]: Perhaps somewhere in this sentence you could make a hyperlink to the "product" page at the website.	Yes
Example 7 (Task 2)	"*And* the popularity of my jams and chutneys was growing."	[M10]: I'm not a big fan of sentences starting with an 'and'. Instead I would write, "I attended markets most week-ends, and the popularity …".	No
Example 8 (Task 4)	"The pictures on the B2B webpage have a professional look *like* the picture of the Arla truck on the front page."	[J17]: Maybe write: an example is the picture…	No
Questions			
Example 9 (Task 1)	"They are not establishing a dis-course community."	[TG08]: Why mention this if it is not relevant?	Yes
Example 10 (Task 2)	"However, I also wanted to experi-ment with recipes to mix innova-tion and tradition, and this is what you will find in my homemade *products* today."	[E7]: This could maybe be a link to the products? (I have also forgotten to include links)	Yes
Example 11 (Task 1)	"BRK gives the *target audience (TA)* a welcoming greeting espe-cially because of the text in the buttom of the homepage and the opportunity to contact them."	[TGO2]: Who is the target audiance?	No
Example 12 (Task 4)	[Feedback comment provided at the end of the text].	[MV13]: No reference list?	No

Feedback Type / Task	Original Text	Feedback Comment (focused on bold, italicised text)	Feedback Implemented
Statements			
Example 13 (Task 1)	[In reference to the student having not provided a title for the academic text on the moves and rhetorical strategies of a homepage].	[K9]: Missing title	Yes
Example 14 (Task 2)	"I brought my homemade jam to a few local craft fairs and stocked my local café (Seamus Ennis Cultural Centre, Naul, Ireland)." [Feedback comment referring to the beginning of the sentence, which began a new paragraph].	[J18]: I am missing a little bit of a topic sentence here.	Yes
Example 15 (Task 1)	[Feedback comment offered at the end of the text in relation to the entire text].	[M8]: There are some phrases that need revising to make it a little more "academic".	No
Example 16 (Task 2)	[Feedback comment offered at the end of the text in relation to the entire text].	[CM19]: It is obvious that we have structured our texts differently. You made it shorter and mentioned only the important information. But you have made the about us section text much more serious. When I read it, I don't really feel the cosy atmosphere that I think the owner would like the reader to feel.	No

*All examples are transcribed exactly as they appear in the students' peer-feedback tasks.

Example 1 did not outline the problem (specificity, Nelson/Schunn 2009), but provided a solution and the location of the problem.[2] While Example 1 was implemented correctly in this context, the directive 'rephrase' was quite vague. Taking similar directive feedback from our data that were not implemented correctly as a starting point, we would suggest that students provide more detailed feedback to ensure successful implementation in all instances. The feedback comment in Example 2 is clear and concise in terms of what the student should do. However, it did not explain why a change should be made. If the feedback receiver did not understand the reasoning behind this comment, or the information contained in the comment, then the receiver could implement it incorrectly or simply ignore the feedback (Nelson/Schunn 2009). Both an explanation of the problem and a solution should have been provided. The feedback in Example 3 gave a clear order to reconsider the phrasing of the sentence. However, no suggestion for how to rephrase was provided, which possibly meant that the student ignored the feedback. Here, the stronger L2 learner could offer the weaker L2 learner a suggestion for how to implement the feedback successfully. The phrasing in Example 4 was clear and concise, and it included an argument for the feedback. Yet, the peer decided not to implement

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[2]   For all of the examples relating to implementation analysis, where we state the location was specified, this refers to the use of the comments function in Microsoft Word to highlight the specific location.

the feedback. In such a case, a suggestion would be that the feedback provider and receiver enter into a dialogue to ensure the receiver understands the feedback fully.

Example 5 incorporated praise for the receiver and a specific suggestion in the feedback, incorporating support for the suggestion from the website under analysis. The explicitness of this feedback most likely motivated the receiver to implement the comment. Example 6 used support from the course literature to argue for why edits should be made, which resulted in a successful outcome. In Examples 7 and 8, the conditional tense and hedging were used before a solution was provided. These linguistic elements can be analysed as politeness markers, which Brown/Levinson (1987) argue that students should apply to formulating feedback. We also believe that enculturating students in an appreciative, forward pointing and encouraging approach to feedback prepares them not only for (future) feedback practices during their studies, but particularly for the workplace, where such feedback behaviour is part of the professional practice and crucial to team work. However, in these instances, it might have been a mix of the subjectivity/politeness and lack of reference to theory that affected implementation.

Example 9 was feedback posed as a question with a clear message that the receiver should delete this information as it did not contribute to the text. Even though the feedback was correctly implemented in this context, it could be envisaged in other instances that the receiver could ignore this comment. Therefore, the feedback should be phrased differently (e. g. identify the problem and then offer the solution) (Nelson/Schunn 2009) or in cases where a question is posed, students should enter into a dialogue to discuss the feedback (Nicol 2010a, 2010b). The feedback in Example 10 was more likely to be implemented due to two things: it referenced terminology from the course literature and the subsequent acknowledgment from the feedback provider of the importance of links in the text strengthened the argument. Both Examples 11 and 12 should have been implemented into the final text to improve the quality. Yet the questions posed in both feedback comments did not provide enough guidance to the feedback receiver on how to act on the feedback. While a problem was identified by both feedback providers, neither a possible solution nor an explanation of the problem was provided (Nelson/Schunn 2009). Providing a solution has been identified in the literature as a feature of feedback phrasing known to positively affect implementation, but providing an explanation has had mixed outcomes, where in some cases feedback with explanations has been implemented less often (Nelson/Schunn 2009: 379). We could argue here that without a solution and possibly an explanation of the problem resulted in the student not implementing the feedback suggestion.

Examples 13 and 14 were *statements* that stated a problem, indicated the location of the problem and indirectly included *directives* (e. g. add in the missing title; add in a topic sentence). The phrasing of the feedback in Example 14 was strongly connected to several politeness strategies (e. g. hedging, using the conditional). The use of such strategies may improve the willingness of the peer to embrace the feedback (Wachholz 1997: 17). Both examples included references to specific writing structures – a title or heading and a topic sentence, which most likely aided comprehension of the feedback. Examples 15 and 16 were also *statements*, and they were provided as feedback comments at the end of the text. Neither of the feedback comments specified the location of the problem nor the particular problem (e. g. "some phrases need revising" and "I don't feel the cosy atmosphere"). The feedback concerned HOCs in both texts. Therefore, the lack of a solution and location of the problem most likely negatively affected implementation. If such feedback were to be effective, more details would have to be provided or the feedback provider and receiver would have to engage in a dialogue to discuss these issues in more detail.

5.3 Revision types

Table 9 presents the revision types related to the implemented feedback that improved the quality of the final text. The revision types are taken from Table 4 (Cho/MacArthur 2010, Faigley/Witte 1981).

Table 9: Revision types made by students across tasks

Task \ Revision type	1	2	4	Total revision types
Surface change (LOC)				**83 %** **(203)**
Formal change	66 % (74)	51 % (28)	63 % (50)	
Meaning-preserving change	15 % (16)	27 % (15)	26 % (20)	
Micro-level meaning change (HOC)				**14 %** **(34)**
Complex repair	11 % (12)	20 % (11)	10 % (8)	
Extended content	3 % (3)	0	0	
Macro-level meaning change (HOC)				**2.5 %** **(6)**
New content	3 % (3)	0	0	
Organisation	2 % (2)	2 % (1)	0	
Reference (HOC)				**0.5 %** **(1)**
Adding supportive materials	0	0	1 % (1)	
Changing supportive materials	0	0	0	
Totals	**100 %** **(110)**	**100 %** **(55)**	**100 %** **(79)**	**244**

The revision types predominantly made by the students (83 %) were *surface changes* (LOCs). Across the three tasks, the percentage of formal changes dropped slightly and the percentage of meaning-preserving changes increased slightly. This could signal an improvement in the students' writing, since the formal changes are related to the mechanics of writing, while the meaning-preserving changes require the writer to have a higher competence in the L2. The percentage of revisions relating to HOCs are low in comparison (17 %). Unsurprisingly, the majority of the HOCs related to *micro-level meaning* (*complex repair* – 13 %, *extended meaning* – 1 %), since these revision types would be the next step up from *surface changes*. While only 3 % of revisions made related to *macro-level meaning* and *reference*, it is at least encouraging to identify revision types relating to these kinds of HOCs. We would speculate that with structured guidance (see our peer-feedback process guidelines below), the rates of peer-feedback comments and revisions concerning HOCs would increase.

6 Discussion and conclusions

The peer-feedback approach with minimal scaffolding adopted in this study was conducted to gain insight into our students' abilities to provide useful feedback and to implement the feedback appropriately. Given the small scale of this study and the restricted number of peer feedback comments, generalisations cannot be made. Another limitation of the study is that we assumed the students to be equal-status learners, but did not test them on their language skills prior to the study. In addition, group composition was random, and we did not assign students to ability groups, we did not rotate participants and we did not know who was a high or low achiever (Patchan et al. 2013). Also, it would have been beneficial for classroom situation and research project as a whole, if we had followed-up on the complex learning implications that feedback might have (had) on the students, but shortage of classroom time did not allow that.

This study focused on feedback types and the focus of students' feedback, the phrasing of the feedback in relation to implementation and non-implementation, and revision types made by the students. Despite the limitations mentioned above, the findings of this study allowed us to draw the conclusions highlighted below. We also developed peer-feedback process guidelines (see Appendix) for our teaching context to help students develop self-regulatory skills required at university and later on in the workplace. The guidelines encompass a peer-feedback loop, including preparation, providing, receiving and implementing feedback. These focus areas integrate concepts from the literature that are known to improve the use of peer feedback as a method in the classroom, including familiarisation with assessment criteria, assuming responsibility and ownership of texts, and taking a dialogical approach to the peer-feedback process (see for example, Nicol 2010a). The guidelines acknowledge that self-initiated and self-governed feedback is difficult for learners who are in the process of "acquiring genre-specific criteria for what a good text entails at the same time as they are in the process of experiencing what texts do to readers" (Rijlaarsdam et al. 2008: 55). They provide students with process steps, actions and states of the feedback process. Our guidelines raise awareness to the process element "time" and the text production component "quality". We view high quality of the submitted final text product a crucial component of the overall peer-feedback process. Therefore, the guidelines suggest that students take responsibility for their own and their peers' work during the peer-feedback process loop. The guidelines not only address responsibility, but encourage students to engage in reflective thinking beyond their own work, while at the same time respecting the approach and style of the peer and acknowledging that the final decisions about implementation of feedback lie with the author. At their core, the guidelines acknowledge the importance of student dialogue about their feedback. These guidelines are not limited to the L2 web communication classroom. They can be adopted and applied by others looking to introduce peer feedback as a method taking a dialogical approach into their own classroom environment.

Our data showed that students most often provided their peers with the feedback type *suggestion (directive)*. Regarding the phrasing of feedback, the examples provided in Section 5 show that the feedback comments sometimes consisted of only a couple of words, e. g. "Use 'do not'", but could also include a specific suggestion, e. g. "Change 'but' into 'However' followed by comma". However, this type of more elaborate comment within this feedback type was the exception rather than the rule. While the short, brief feedback comments seemed to be accepted and implemented by many students (cf. Tables 6 and 7), the directive feedback was not necessarily correct and often lacked clarity, which led to misunderstandings on the receivers'

part. For example, the feedback comment "Reference?" led the receiver to include the word *reference* rather than incorporate an in-text citation. The feedback comment "Find a synonym for the word 'below'" made the receiver find a different word for *below*, when he should have rephrased the sentence to relate more to domain literature. These examples echo Nelson/ Schunn's (2009: 393) findings concerning a misunderstanding of the problem resulting in an incorrect implementation of the solution. Based on this finding, we addressed this point in our peer-feedback process guidelines (guideline 7a), where we suggest to phrase feedback clearly, in order to remind our students of the importance of the transparency of their comments.

In much of the *suggestion (expressive)* feedback, students highlighted a problem or offered a solution. Most importantly, the fact that students highlighted a possible problem made the receiver reflect on the highlighted word, sentence or paragraph. We identified some cases where the feedback comment was incorrect (e. g. [TGO3]: *was* instead of *are*? relating to the text "To begin with the homemade jams ***are*** being sold"). This feedback comment is incorrect (cf. tense), but it did trigger the receiver to edit the text, which led to better quality in the final text. If no comment had been provided, the receiver would most probably not have revised the text. This finding is reflected in our peer-feedback process guidelines under receiving feedback (guideline 9), where we have stressed the importance of carefully reading and evaluating the feedback received.

The focus of the students' feedback was unduly placed on LOCs and often a lack of consideration was shown towards HOCs, which has been reported as a downside when scaffolding is not implemented (Wachholz 1997: 21). In this regard, guideline 7 concerns the phrasing of feedback and the focus of the feedback. It suggests feed-forward feedback with a focus on providing a problem and a solution and stresses that peer comments should relate to sentence, paragraph and document level. Guideline 8 suggests focus areas for students to concentrate on – including areas that would invoke comments at other levels than mere language errors, stylistic errors or errors regarding the mechanics of writing; namely course content areas and overall text organisation.

The high number of *motivational* feedback comments identified across the tasks (cf. Table 5) might signal that this is the kind of feedback that students expect to see in their own tasks. Researchers are divided on whether motivational feedback is useful (cf. Section 3.3). Nelson/ Schunn (2009: 381) suggest that "the use of praise and mitigation in the form of compliments may augment a person's perception of the reviewer and feedback, resulting in implementation of the rest of the feedback". Based on our findings, we would argue that some form of motivational feedback is necessary, but students should offer this feedback more often in relation to the overall organisation of the text (HOCs), rather than at several individual instances throughout the text. Our guidelines exclude any reference to praise or motivational commenting. Instead, we included a guideline (6) on the respectful treatment of peers' work and the idea of being thoughtful and helpful as an implicit reference to the social roles performed in peer-feedback tasks. Future peer-feedback instructions could indicate to students that praise or mitigating language relating to HOCs would be more useful for the peer's learning process and professional development.

Regarding revision types, the majority of revisions made (83 %) were *surface changes*, which most often addressed LOCs. The remaining revisions made (17 %) addressed HOCs, with *micro-level meaning changes* being the most common. These results were not surprising, since previous research has shown that without structured training in providing and implementing peer feedback, L2 revisers mainly focus on LOCs (Flynn 1982, Leki 1990, Mangels-

dorf/Schlumberger 1992, Van Steendam et al. 2010). The findings are also in line with Cho/MacArthur (2010: 334), who found directive feedback to be positively associated with surface changes. Previous studies also noted that too much focus on LOCs (Nelson/Carson 1998, Tsui/Ng 2000) and a high number of surface change revisions (Cho/MacArthur 2010) will not improve the meaning of the text, and hence the quality of the text. We would argue that in an L2 setting, being able to identify a problem in the writing and suggesting a solution that improves the accuracy, comprehensibility and readability of the text is still worth pursuing. However, in terms of feedback guidelines, we need to highlight the differences and roles played by HOCs and LOCs in L2 writing (cf. Keh 1990, Nelson/Carson 1998), and the resulting revisions that could be made based on the feedback. Likewise, we need to discuss the concept of providing feedback on local vs. global issues, since global issues are considered to address HOCs. In particular, feedback should be specific when referring to global issues (Nelson/Schunn 2009: 395); otherwise, students may misunderstand the feedback and fail to implement it when necessary.

Our guidelines address the HOC/LOC and local/global issue by stressing the importance of indicating the problem (7b), suggesting a solution (7c) and by emphasising the importance of the inclusion of balanced feedback (7d). In addition, the relevance of HOCs is emphasised by guideline 7e, which directs students to relate their feedback comments to sentence, paragraph and document levels.

In addition to the guidelines, we want to contribute further to the study of peer feedback in the classroom. Our intention is to conduct focus group interviews and surveys with students during and after the semester to gather data that could inform teachers about issues concerning feedback types, phrasing of feedback, feedback implementation and revision types made. These data could be used to further develop and improve our process guidelines and course content. Another area to investigate is the incorporation of predefined versus self-administered assessment criteria integrated into the feedback tasks and their respective influences on feedback implementation and implementation quality. In the same vein, the influence of student dialogue about feedback prior to or during the implementation stage of feedback sessions requires scholarly attention. Student pair composition, role descriptions and students' perceptions of their roles in feedback sessions, as well as teacher feedback on student feedback could be other avenues of research to pursue in the future. Our main goal remains to help communication and language students to develop an understanding of the importance of feedback as a professional skill.

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Appendix

Peer-feedback process guidelines

Preparing for the peer-feedback process
1. **Familiarise yourself** with the assessment criteria of the course and the assessment criteria specified in the feedback task prior to the feedback session.
2. **Schedule time** for the feedback task, for discussion with your peer if necessary and for feedback implementation.
3. **Take responsibility** for the quality of your own work **and** your peer's work.

Providing feedback
4. **Begin** the peer-feedback process immediately after the text production task is completed.
5. **Engage** with the peer's style and the peer's argumentation – do not superimpose your own style on your peer.
6. **Treat** the work of your peer respectfully, be thoughtful and make your feedback comments as helpful as possible.
7. **Provide** feed-forward feedback comments by:
   a) **Phrasing** the feedback clearly
   b) **Indicating** the problem in the text (use track changes and commenting function in Word)
   c) **Suggesting** a solution to the problem if possible
   d) **Including** balanced feedback: textual edits and problem-solution feedback comments
   e) **Relating** your comments to sentence, paragraph and document level
8. **Focus** your feedback on:
   a) Course content, including theory and terminology
   b) Organisation of the text for web communication
   c) English language and stylistic errors
   d) Academic writing, including the mechanics of writing

Receiving feedback
9. **Read and evaluate** the feedback you receive carefully.
10. **Implement** the feedback you deem appropriate. Note that you as the author of the text have the power to make the final decision regarding feedback implementation.
11. **Discuss** unclear feedback comments with your peer, engaging in this dialogue in a professional manner.

Submitting the final document
12. **Submit** a polished and proofread final version to your tutor.