Implementation and Perception of Online Peer Feedback by Korean EFL Students*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the process-oriented writing, teachers get close to burning out from a heavy workload because they “have to provide feedback in every stage of students’ writing from brainstorming to the final draft” (Yu and Choe, 2011, p. 188). Although it is a very demanding process, there has been a doubt and a skeptic about the effects of teacher feedback. For example, Brick (2004) and Hu (2002) argue that even though teacher feedback is valued very highly by students, the mistakes in their essays keep on repeating. In his study on EFL teachers in China, Hyland (1990) observes that teachers suffer from the tedious and unrewarding chore of correcting students’

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essays. Yang, Badger, and Yu (2006) claim that teaching writing is often treated as a thankless job despite the importance attached to writing.

Peer feedback has been recommended as an alternative to alleviate teachers’ heavy workload and to help enhance students’ writing ability. Chaudron (1984) enumerates the advantages of peer feedback over teacher feedback: (1) Peer feedback is more at the learner’s level of development or interest, (2) learners learn more about writing and revision by having to read each other’s drafts critically, and (3) since multiple peers may be used, learners gain a sense of a wider audience (pp. 2-3).

Peer feedback is claimed to have crucial benefits since feedback from multiple perspectives encourage self-awareness which can foster additional learning (London and Tornow, 1998). It is also reported that peer feedback helps students develop a sense of responsibility for learning (Saito and Fujita, 2004). To sum up, peer feedback not only plays a positive role in second language writing for students to improve their writing but also provides a rather different environment from teacher feedback for them to experience wider audience.

Recently, much interest has been paid to search for a more convenient and less time-constrained method to conduct peer feedback. Online peer feedback has been recommended as a key to solve the time-restricted environment such as the classroom because it offers a room for students to utilize after-school time. It also has another benefit that anonymous environment may encourage students to make more comments (Tsui and Ng, 2000).

Accordingly, online peer feedback appears to be worthy of studying in search for its usefulness as well as its applicability in Korean EFL writing classes where peer feedback rarely has been an option to support students. Besides its rarity, the steady growth of the importance of English writing in the Korean EFL context warrants the necessity of this research. To scrutinize the effects of online peer feedback in a given Korean EFL context three research questions were posed in the present study: (1) What areas and types of feedback do Korean EFL students focus