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## **A Mediated Learning Experience Perspective on Engagement with Feedback Through a Sequence of Tasks**

**Trang Thi Doan Dang**

Monash University, Australia

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### **Abstract**

Although student engagement with feedback has been discussed in second language writing studies, student engagement with teacher and peer feedback through a sequence of tasks (SOT) remains under-explored. The present study adopted mediated learning experience (MLE) theory to operationalize the sequence within the teacher's intervention and peer collaboration to facilitate Vietnamese secondary students' engagement. The study explores whether there is student engagement with feedback, whether their engagement satisfies the criteria of MLE, and how it is mediated through the SOT. The analysis of data from audio recordings and correcting texts indicated that there was student engagement with feedback that addressed MLE's criteria and was mediated by the teacher's mediational strategies, peer collaboration, first language, and the learning tasks. Although responding to teacher and peer feedback showed an indication of understanding, indirect feedback caused uncertainties in some cases, and responses to the rewriting task were somewhat transcendent. The findings validate a mediated view of language learning from which implications for research and L2 writing are drawn.

### **Keywords**

Engagement, learning tasks, teacher and peer feedback, mediated learning experience, collaborative learning

## **1 Introduction**

While second language (L2) writing teachers normally provide feedback on different aspects of students' written texts, students do not always engage with teacher feedback. Engagement with feedback, which is defined as students' responses or reactions to forms of feedback (Ellis, 2010; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010), has great potential for students' learning development (Han & Hyland, 2019). However, student engagement with feedback varied according to students' language ability (Zheng & Yu, 2018), their beliefs about learning tasks and strategies, and individuals' involvement (Han, 2017). These factors highlight the need for facilitating student engagement with feedback through learning tasks that has

received little attention from previous research. The study reported in this paper therefore integrated feedback into a sequence of tasks (SOT) that were operationalized by the teacher's intervention and peer collaboration to facilitate student engagement. This paper describes feedback as oral and written forms of comments of the teacher and peers and engagement as students' responsive actions to the SOT involving both feedback and correction to address linguistic and language issues in their letters and descriptions.

Feuerstein's mediated learning experience (MLE) theory is valuable for investigating student engagement with feedback. As a mediator, the teacher provides specific activities to engage mediatees in a range of "problem-solving activities and processes" (Rand, 1991, p. 72), and thus they are able to modify learning features (Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1991). These learning features are relevant to engagement in task-based instruction that Philp and Duchesne (2016) refer to as "highlighted attention and involvement" (p. 51). As such, the sequence of identifying, correcting, and rewriting tasks was designed to engage secondary students in treating their own errors in their writing letters and descriptions through group work, which has been underexplored in secondary schools in Vietnam. These learning tasks varying according to levels of difficulty aim to foster engagement of students with different levels of abilities, as these tasks may help learners "move step-by-step toward more in-depth understandings of challenging concepts" (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005, p. 15). Moreover, the MLE intervention approach with specific criteria for learning is beneficial for enhancing student engagement, as students play an active role in learning interactions, for example, responding to the teachers' meaningful and purposeful feedback (Lee, 2014). This reveals a potential way for the present study to use MLE as an intervention and as an analytical framework to investigate whether there is student engagement with feedback, whether their engagement satisfies MLE's criteria, and how it is mediated through the SOT.

## 2 Theoretical Concept and Review Literature

### 2.1 Mediated learning experience (MLE) and collaborative feedback-correction practices

As a social construct, mediated learning provides insights into learning through interaction. This learning orientation can be viewed through Feuerstein's MLE, which underscores that a mediational practice can achieve positive outcomes if specific criteria of learning are met (Feuerstein, 1990). MLE has been acknowledged as a theoretical and methodological concept applied to the "Learning Potential Device" and "Instrumental Enrichment", such as "enrichment programs for high risk children, adolescents, and young adults" (Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1991, pp. 6–7). Mediated learning prioritizes the understanding that learners' cognitive development occurs through the social environment in which human mediators, for example, their teachers and advanced peers, play an important role in facilitating interactions (Kozulin, 2002). These agents are therefore crucial variables in the present study, especially given the study's aim to maximize learners' roles and their participation in group-work or collaborative learning by using mixed-ability groups (Jacobs, 2006). The study uses group-based learning as a methodological approach, as it involves both "social and cognitive aspects of learning" (Fisher, 2005, p. 91), which are the key channels in Feuerstein's MLE.

Constructing groups with multiple levels of English aims to offer students a peer-tutoring learning environment in which advanced students can assist low-ability peers by discussing and explaining learning difficulties to facilitate and motivate peers' participation. These learning features promote individuals' interdependency through learning from and teaching others, as each member cares about and endeavours to foster reciprocal learning (Fisher, 2005; Jacobs, 2006). However, grouping students with mixed levels may limit the participation of lower ability students due to the advanced students' dominance (Poole, 2008).

The MLE framework clearly emphasizes the role of the teacher as a mediator in the intervention to empower learners' ability to learn. Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) refer to the mediator's specific

activities to accelerate learning of children as *mediated learning experience*. The mediator makes significant contributions to both the learning task and the learner, and the individual learners are problem solvers as they respond to the mediator's intervention to modify learning features. The mediator, the learning tasks, and the learners are key factors within the MLE framework that Williams and Burden (1997) view as interacting with each other in what is regarded as an active and ongoing L2 learning process. However, interaction among the teacher, learners, and learning tasks needs to satisfy MLE's key criteria: *intentionality/reciprocity*, *transcendence*, and *mediation of meaning* (Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 2000), which Williams and Burden (1997) consider prerequisite components in L2 learning. These criteria were therefore used to analyze whether student engagement with teacher and peer feedback satisfies the learning criteria of MLE.

Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) elaborated MLE parameters as follows. As the key conditions of an interaction in MLE, *intentionality and reciprocity* refer to the deliberate intention of the mediator to facilitate learning in the interactional process. Feuerstein and Feuerstein refer to transforming an implicit intention to an obvious and intentional experience as *reciprocity*. In L2 teaching, the teacher-mediator transfers his/her intention to specific tasks and shares learning objectives with the learners to mediate learning through negotiating strategies (Williams & Burden, 1997). These features are potential variables of task-based language instruction (TBLT). *Transcendence* is referred to as going beyond or extending the goals of interaction to the learner's cognitive and affective range of constant functions that enable students to master a learning feature or be competent in an area. As a universal criterion dealing with the dynamic features of interaction, *mediation of meaning* is described as an indication of satisfaction or an effective accomplishment. These criteria are proposed to provide new insights into teacher and peer feedback that can mediate and improve student learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing classrooms, as they stress the nature of learning via interaction and collaboration (see details in Lee, 2014).

## 2.2 Research into feedback practice

From various theoretical perspectives, the practice of teacher and peer feedback is seen to substantially influence L2 learning despite opposing conclusions drawn from research. Teacher feedback on students' single drafts has been reported to have little improvement in L2 writing (Polio et al., 1998; Truscott, 1996, 2007). However, teacher feedback on multiple drafts resulted in improvement in students' revisions (Ferris, 1995) and triggered substitute revisions (Ferris, 1997). Students benefited from teacher feedback on either content or grammar, as this feedback enabled students to gain linguistic accuracy (Ruegg, 2015) and produce accurate revisions (Ruegg, 2017). Empirical evidence shows that peer feedback has led to improved subsequent revisions (Yu & Lee, 2015) and improvement in writing accuracy (Kim & Emeljanova, 2019). The focus of developing students' abilities to edit and revise in response to feedback is conceptualized from the *learning-to-write* paradigm (see details in Leki et al., 2008). Peer feedback has been perceived to enhance interaction and collaboration among peers, as it promotes "a facilitative socio-interactive environment" thanks to peers' mutual support (Hu & Lam, 2010, p. 373).

The ongoing discussion about the impact of feedback has extended research into a mixed form of teacher and peer feedback. Research in L2 writing has reported that the combined mode of feedback on grammatical errors, content, and organization resulted in more improvement than solely teacher feedback (Dang, 2019b; Tai et al., 2015). It has been suggested to consider students' preference for teacher and peer feedback (Hu & Lam, 2010; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2014) and peer work together with teacher support (Dang, 2016; Lee, 2015). The inconclusive findings have led to the question of whether and how students respond to both teacher feedback and peer feedback.

To understand L2 learners' responses to teacher feedback to self-correct, some studies have adopted a sociocultural framework to investigate the effectiveness of corrective feedback (CF) (Aljaafreh &

Lantolf, 1994; Erlam et al., 2013; Rassaei, 2014). For example, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) used one-on-one tutorial feedback conferences varying from indirect to direct feedback practices. The tutor first provided indirect feedback to instruct a student to correct linguistic errors in his/her writing. If the student could not address an error, the tutor then located the error by providing direct feedback. CF is seen as graduated and contingent when it is adjusted to the student's ability to self-correct and is relevant to his/her linguistic issues. This CF practice is described as scaffolded feedback that has resulted in more positive outcomes than those of recasts – reformulating an error in student utterance (Rassaei, 2014) and direct CF – providing direct correction (Erlam et al., 2013). While the practice of scaffolded feedback is beneficial for learning, student responses to feedback are conceptualized within the unique *expert-novice* channel. This shows the need for adopting peer collaboration together with the teacher's assistance through multiple feedback cycles from the MLE framework to facilitate student engagement through student-student and teacher-student interactions.

Student engagement with written corrective feedback (WCF) has been investigated in recent studies (Han, 2017; Han & Hyland, 2015; Zheng & Yu, 2018). These small-scale studies, favoring a multiple-case study approach and university students, reported dimensions of engagement with limited or extensive levels. However, engagement with feedback varies according to delivery methods, categories of errors, peer collaboration, students' language proficiency and first language, learning tasks (Dang et al., 2022), students' beliefs about their learning tasks and strategies, and individuals' involvement (Han, 2017). Han and Hyland (2015) used data from written texts, interviews, verbal reports, and writing conferences to explore affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of engagement with teacher WCF. This case study found that students' learning goals, context, beliefs and experiences and their individual differences are factors impacting student engagement with WCF, and the three dimensions of engagement are interrelated, which corroborates the empirical evidence of a recent study (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). In addition, Zheng and Yu (2018) reported that low levels of English negatively impacted students' behavioral and cognitive engagement with the teacher's WCF, and the three dimensions of engagement varied; for example, student affective engagement was relatively positive compared to behavioral and cognitive engagement. However, empirical evidence from a recent study has shown that low and high levels of English students affectively, cognitively and behaviorally engage with automated, peer and teacher feedback (Tian & Zhou, 2020).

Although dimensions of engagement with WCF have been specified, little is known about how student engagement with feedback and correction is mediated through learning tasks from an MLE perspective. Feuerstein's MLE with interactional features is seen as elaborating what occurs in Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development – what a child can perform with the assistance of an advanced collaborator (Lidz, 2002). Using MLE, the present study could promote students' mutual engagement in multiple feedback-correction cycles through teacher-student and student-student interactions and argues for the need for more interactive and collaborative feedback practices for EFL writing classrooms. This revealed a potential way to operationalize the sequence of tasks within the lens of MLE to seek answers to the following questions:

1. Is there student engagement with teacher and peer feedback? If so, does their engagement satisfy MLE's criteria?
2. How is their engagement mediated through the sequence of identifying, correcting and rewriting tasks?

### 3 Methodology

The study used an exploratory research approach to uncover student engagement with feedback integrated into the SOT through in-depth data from audio recordings and revised texts.

### 3.1 Research context and participants

The study was conducted in the second semester at a secondary school in a large city in Vietnam after receiving ethics approval from Monash University-Australia, the school's endorsement, and assent from parents and students. Year 10 students ( $N = 31$ ) aged 16 participated in eight weeks of the intervention. Local language teaching has addressed methodological TBLT since recent innovations in English teaching and learning. Vietnamese secondary students learn English as a mandatory subject from grade 6 to grade 12, focusing on four language skills; however, speaking and writing skills are precluded from school tests and national exams.

The focus on writing in textbooks for secondary students varies from guided writing to constructing texts (Dang, 2019a). In the former case, writing activities involve building up sentences, reordering practice, and writing a short paragraph using a target structure or a writing model. The latter is directed to writing a text such as writing narrative and descriptive paragraphs and letters. However, teaching students to construct texts is a demanding task with respect to motivating students to write, providing correction and feedback to, and assessing their texts (Nguyen, 2009). Although students are instructed and encouraged to produce good letters and descriptive paragraphs in the national curriculum, their engagement with collaborative feedback correction and revisions is limited due to receiving teachers' direct correction. This highlights the need for engaging students with feedback, for example, instructing groups of students to work on specific types of errors in their writing to respond to feedback from the teacher and peers.

The study adopted a purposeful selection of participants. The participating students (mixed genders) with low-intermediate English levels were assigned to eight mixed-ability groups: seven groups with four students and one group with three students. The sampling selection was based on students' English scores (out of 10) on the first semester exam of year 10, which varied from different levels: below fair: 3–4.75, fair: 5–6.75, good: 7–8.75, and excellent: 9–10 points. Assigning students with mixed-ability levels aimed to create a peer-tutoring learning environment in which advanced students could support less capable peers (Jacobs, 2006).

A non-native English teacher with 14 years of experience teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills undertook a number of tasks. She instructed the eight mixed-ability groups to write four letters and four descriptions based on which eight correcting sessions were administered to students over eight weeks, each with one session. The writing topics were chosen from the national English textbook (Hoang et al., 2007), and two descriptive paragraphs were adopted from Ur (2009) (see Appendix A). The correcting topics focused on writing letters and descriptions because students had to complete these topics in the curriculum. In addition, two descriptive paragraphs were added as the study aimed to address four descriptions, only two of which were in the textbook.

The researcher designed the learning tasks with multiple learning levels and explained the procedures of the correcting process to the teacher prior to the experimental teaching. She was also involved in the eight correcting sessions as an observer to explore how students engaged in their group-based correction to record and take notes on students' involvement and learning performance.

### 3.2 Intervention validity and procedure

The procedures for validating the SOT were as follows. The learning tasks were reviewed by the researcher and her PhD supervisors, who are experts in the field, and pilot tested with 41 students aged 16 (not the subjects of the present study) to ensure that they were valid and appropriate for the participants. The present study also collected students' comments on each task and on individuals' engagement in each phase of the task through their written responses to a list of questions administered after each correcting session to double-check the validity of the learning tasks. The rewriting task was considered

challenging in that students in some groups required more support from the teacher that was addressed by the teacher's scaffolding strategies (see details below).

The correcting intervention covered eight topics of correction and three types of errors – the present and past tenses, conjunctions 'although and because', and the irrelevance of ideas between the topic and the supporting sentences (Appendix A). These types of errors were selected because the writing topics indicated the use of tenses and coherence of text and the focus of a written paragraph, as described in the English textbook, was to link the ideas between the topic and supporting sentences (Dang, 2021). Eight written papers that were chosen based on the pre-selected errors for the correcting treatment photocopied on A3 papers and delivered to the eight groups. The eight groups (Groups 1–8) worked on the same selected papers that were anonymous in order for the student writers not to feel embarrassed or uneasy when their papers were publicly treated and shown.

The sequence of identifying/detecting, correcting and rewriting tasks that underscores learning by discovery, problem-solving, and reflection aims to facilitate student engagement through multiple learning levels (see Table 1). The detection task prompted groups of students to attend, locate and identify linguistic and language issues or errors in their writing. The correcting task, which extended to solving problems or treating the identified errors, aimed to create a learning experience of working on the incorrect use of language in groups. The rewriting practice emphasized reflective and conscious learning by rewriting and comparing practices. Rewriting the first draft after correction aimed to provide students with an opportunity to transfer knowledge learned from feedback and correction practices to the rewritten texts. In addition, comparing the revised text with the original writing focused on monitoring and reflective learning. This practice was facilitated by individuals within groups and the teacher as students proofread the rewritten texts, double-checked with their original drafts, and the teacher provided explanations if students did not understand any items.

Informed by Feuerstein's MLE, the key MLE criteria are specified within the study as follows. *Intentionality* refers to the teacher's mediational strategies, such as asking questions and/or providing indirect/direct feedback to guide students to work collaboratively in groups to detect and correct errors and to rewrite the texts. *Reciprocity* is seen as joint work through interactive and collaborative feedback-correction and rewriting practices in which students play an active role in responding to and taking up the mediation provided by the teacher. *Mediation of meaning* is related to the significance of interaction and collaboration or effective accomplishment, achieved by responding to feedback and working together with peers to accomplish the learning tasks. *Transcendence* is described as students' ability to transfer knowledge learnt from feedback-correction practices to rewriting of the texts with the correct use of target structures and topic sentences relevant to the ideas in supporting sentences.

The teacher, as a mediator, used a number of mediational strategies to facilitate groups in processing errors. She instructed each group to appoint a group leader who could help handle group work and encourage individuals' participation in their collaborative correction. She also delivered feedback sheets (Appendix B) to students, directed them to work on the three types of errors in their written texts, and explained the purposes and procedures of the correcting process. The teacher observed group work and provided instruction, feedback and assistance while students were working on their tasks. She also intervened in groups' presentation; for example, if groups failed to identify and process errors, she would direct students by asking questions such as "Is the use of past tense in line two, paragraph one correct?" or "What is the purpose of the letter?" If the guiding questions still failed to obtain appropriate responses from students, the teacher would locate the errors and encourage students to suggest corrections on the identified errors. Not only did she provide indirect/direct feedback on students' corrections within groups, but she also elicited alternative corrections and feedback from peers among groups. The teacher facilitated students' engagement with the rewriting task by summarizing categories of errors corrected, providing further explanations if needed, and reminding groups to amend those errors when rewriting their corrected texts.

Peer collaboration was promoted through group work to complete the learning tasks. Peers within groups (intra-peers) worked together to detect and correct errors and rewrite the corrected texts by discovering and underlining errors, thinking and discussing ideas to correct errors, checking for accuracy and clarity of their amendments and revisions. Peers among groups (inter-peers) reviewed intra-peers' discovery, correction and revision to provide feedback through groups' presentations and/or transforming practice that aimed to maximize students' skills in presenting, explaining, clarifying, and providing and responding to peers' feedback. Upon completing each task, groups were invited to place their papers on the board to present their discovery, correction, and revision to the whole class and/or to transform their papers to other groups. Individuals of each group collaborated with each other to rewrite the corrected texts by discussing and suggesting the revised sentences for a representative – a note taker to rewrite the texts. In this way, students were offered opportunities for learning by doing and reasoning since they worked with intra-peers to process specific errors in their texts, explained their corrections to other groups, and modified their texts to respond to peer and teacher feedback.

Table 1

*The Sequence of Tasks (Dang, 2021)*

| Sequence of Tasks                        | Feedback and Correction Practices  |
|--|--|
| <i>Detecting errors</i><br>Group-work    | locate/identify 3 categories of errors on feedback sheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in peers' texts</li> <li>• working with peer group</li> <li>• receive indirect/direct feedback and cues</li> <li>• from the teacher (T)</li> <li>• peers in groups</li> <li>• after all errors identified: display text for class review, and, prompted by T or peers among groups to find remaining errors</li> </ul>     |
| <i>Correcting practice</i><br>Group-work | work with peer group to correct errors identified in phase 1<br><i>during this work</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get indirect/direct feedback from T</li> </ul> <i>then</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• display + explain corrected text to class</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• share corrected text with other groups to check corrections</li> <li>• respond to teacher and peer feedback</li> </ul> |
| <i>Rewriting practice</i><br>Group-work  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rewrite draft including corrections</li> <li>• compare rewritten version with original to review corrections</li> </ul>   |

### 3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection lasted eight weeks in the second semester of the school year in Vietnam. The researcher participated in the classroom to collect data while the intervention was being conducted. With permission from the teacher and the students, their teaching and learning activities were audiotaped so she could better identify the learning performance of the eight groups, each with an audio-recorder. She also took photos of the corrected and rewritten texts, which could be used to support the information from the audiotape and her observational notes focusing on students' engagement and performance through the process. To respond to the two research questions, she extracted only data showing evidence of students' engagement with teacher and peer feedback and how their engagement is mediated during the sequence.

The process of analyzing the audio recordings of students' interactions included transcription, categorization, organization, and synthesis. The audio recordings were first transcribed verbatim and analyzed by a deductive approach; the researcher worked to and fro from the transcripts of each group and categorized them according to MLE's criteria. She designed a table with reference to the criteria of MLE, categories of each criterion, and examples of students' interaction to code the data (Appendix C). She then reviewed the transcripts and labeled extracts that could elucidate the research questions. The accuracy of the transcription was checked by one of her colleagues (not the teacher).

## 4 Findings

The study explored whether there was student engagement with feedback, whether their engagement satisfied MLE's criteria, and how it was mediated by the teacher and peers through the SOT.

The interaction between teacher-student and student-student and groups' revised texts were analyzed by MLE's key criteria: *intentionality* (INT)/*reciprocity* (REC), *transcendence* (TRA), and *mediation of meaning* (MED). The analysis indicated that student engagement was facilitated by the teacher's mediational strategies, such as questions, indirect feedback, feedback with cues to process the three types of errors, and giving assistance for groups' discussion. Peer collaboration and support, first language (L1), and presenting and sharing practices were also valuable for prompting students' negotiation and engagement. While responding to teacher and peer feedback exhibited an indication of understanding, the teacher's guiding questions and indirect feedback sometimes caused uncertainties. The learning tasks also affected the engagement of individuals among groups, and their responses to the rewriting task did not fully result in *transcendence* in some cases.

### 4.1 Mediated learning experience with detecting errors

The analysis showed that the teacher directly facilitated student engagement when groups presented their discovery. The following exchange between the teacher (T) and students (S) shows examples of using questions and clues directing students' attention to an unclear topic sentence. This was extracted from the eighth correcting session focusing on 'A letter of complaint'.

#### Extract 1

1. T: What is the purpose of this letter? What do you write this letter for?<sup>INT</sup>
2. S: To complain the poor quality of the services at English for Today Center.<sup>REC</sup>
3. T: What services are poor?<sup>INT</sup>
4. S: Learning and teaching quality<sup>REC</sup>
5. T: What are examples of learning and teaching quality?<sup>INT</sup>
6. S: Cassette recorder, air conditioner, less practice of speaking, materials, small classroom, many students<sup>REC</sup>
7. T: Ok, which word can you use to describe cassette recorder, small classroom, and air conditioner?<sup>INT</sup>
8. S: Uhum...service..., learning condition..., equipment..., facility<sup>MED</sup>...
9. T: Good, read the topic sentence again, is the meaning clear? If not, underline it<sup>INT</sup>.

The above conversation exhibited a relationship between teacher mediation and student engagement. This can be seen from the conversation that the teacher frequently used questions as a form of indirect feedback in lines 3, 5, and 7, directing students to identify the irrelevant word in the topic sentence



in line 4 ‘*Learning and teaching quality...*’. Students, in fact, responded to the teacher’s questions by providing other words in line 8 that might be used to substitute the word ‘*learning*’ in the topic sentence. The teacher also provided feedback with clues in line 9 to guide students to complete the detection task. The exchange of information between the teacher and her students helped students identify the unclear meaning of the topic sentence, which illustrated the relationship between *intentionality/ reciprocity* and *mediation of meaning*. However, some students were unsure about the teacher’s guiding questions (see Extract 2).

Peer support was found to promote students’ engagement. Group 7 students were not quite sure about the teacher’s questions and clues in the exchanges (see Extract 1), which motivated them to ask peers within the group to confirm information – Extract 2, but they used Vietnamese. The translated sentence appears in square brackets.

### Extract 2

S1: Vậy là từ learning không phù hợp phải không? mình nên dùng những từ các bạn nêu ra để mô tả cho những điều mà mình muốn complain như máy cassette, lớp học nhỏ và máy lạnh phải không? [The word learning is not appropriate, is it?<sup>REC</sup> Is it right that we should use the words that our friends listed to describe things we would like to complain such as a cassette recorder, a small classroom, and an air conditioner?]<sup>REC</sup>

S2: Đúng rồi, từ learning không phù hợp [Yes, learning is not appropriate. ]<sup>REC</sup>

Responding to the peer’s question is evidence of MLE’s *reciprocity*. S2 confirmed the information by stating ‘learning is not appropriate’, but explanations were not given. It is clear that L1 was used to ask for clarification and confirm information. In this case, the use of the mother tongue sustained students’ negotiation and engagement.

Unlike peer support in Group 7 – Extract 2, Group 3’s collaboration to detect errors entailed explanations—an indication of active engagement. One example of students’ collaboration within groups (intra-group) and among groups (inter-group) is from the leader of Group 3, Khoa, who talked to peers in his group:

### Extract 3

Can you look at last summer and check the use of tense to see [if] it [is] correct or not? If not, underline them. We also need to check the content and organization of the letter. If they are not relevant, take notes and correct them later.<sup>REC</sup>

Khoa shared the identified errors with other groups.

We are happy to present the identified errors to you. We think that the content and organization of the letter are ok. Look at the underlined words and phrases. The topic is about the memorable activity in the past, but ... some verbs are in the present. We can also see the incorrect use of some passive verbs, conjunctions, and words.<sup>REC</sup>

The examples shown in Extract 3 illustrate an advanced peer’s active engagement in the detection task by tutoring and sharing behaviors—an example of *reciprocity*. Khoa assisted peers in his group in detecting errors by signaling “*the word last summer*” in the text. He was also confident in reporting the errors identified and explaining why the underlined phrases were incorrect by saying “...*the memorable activity in the past, but ... some verbs are in the present...*”

## 4.2 Responses to mediational strategies on the correcting practice

Similarly, the teacher's mediational strategies were seen to have contributed to engaging students in the correcting task upon group presentation. The correcting practice required students to react to the identified errors by responding to feedback and providing appropriate corrections. The following extract from the first correcting session, 'Celebrations in Vietnam', is an example of responding to the teacher's questions and indirect feedback and feedback with cues to add a missing topic sentence.

### Extract 4

1. T: Is there a topic sentence in the second paragraph?<sup>INT</sup>
2. S: Yes..., No...
3. T: If yes, what is it? If no, add one.<sup>INT</sup>
4. S: Tet is generally celebrated on late January or early February.<sup>REC</sup>
5. S: No, this is the time on Tet.<sup>REC</sup>
6. T: What are the activities on Tet?<sup>INT</sup>
7. S: Buy and prepare special food, clean and decorate house, receive lucky money.<sup>REC</sup>
8. T: Does the topic sentence describe the activities in paragraph two?<sup>INT</sup>
9. S: No...
10. T: Okay, read paragraph two and think of a sentence to describe it.<sup>INT</sup>
11. T: Read the topic sentence aloud!<sup>INT</sup>
12. S: Tet has many interesting activities.<sup>REC</sup>
13. S: Tet makes family get together and everyone relax.<sup>REC</sup>
14. S: Tet is an occasion for everyone to get together and to prepare many things to welcome it.<sup>REC</sup>
15. T: Good! In your groups, discuss these sentences and choose one that is relevant to its supporting ideas.<sup>INT</sup>
16. T: Which is the topic sentence that you choose?<sup>INT</sup>
17. S: I think Tet has many interesting activities.<sup>REC</sup>
18. S: Teacher, can we correct the sentence?<sup>REC</sup>
19. T: Of course, you can. Read your topic sentence.<sup>REC</sup>
20. S: Tet occur[s] late in January or early February has many interesting activities.<sup>MED</sup>
21. T: Okay, but there are two verbs in this sentence. Can you revise it?<sup>REC</sup>
22. S: Mmmm.....can we use which?<sup>REC</sup>
23. T: Sure, how?<sup>REC</sup>
24. S: Uhum .... Tet[,] which occur[s] in January or early February[,] has many interesting activities.<sup>MED</sup>
25. T: Good!

The exchange in Extract 4 shows signs of reflective actions and understanding, evident in students' reactions to the teacher's questions in lines 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, and 24. The teacher directed students' attention to the topic sentence by asking the main activities of paragraph two (lines 6, 10, 11). Clearly, students were able to provide appropriate answers in lines 12, 13, 14 and 17. This finding shows that there was a transition from students' responses to the teacher's feedback and guides to MLE's *mediation of meaning* (verbalised explanations – effective accomplishment).

The sharing practice between groups was found to maximize students' responses to peer feedback,

but individuals among groups were not always responsive to the task. Exchanging amended papers with other groups provided students with more opportunities to share their corrections with peers. For instance, each group proofread the amendments made by the other groups and provided feedback on peers' work. It was observed that representatives of Groups 1, 3, and 5 joined the other groups to interpret their corrections to their peers, while individuals of Groups 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 did not fully attend to the practice. Consider the following exchange between Group 3 and Group 8:

*Extract 5*

1. G3: We add[ed] 'the picture tells us about the boy and a wallet and change verbs in past tense'.  
REC
2. G8: Why?<sup>REC</sup>
3. G3: We need a topic sentence for this paragraph. The story is in the past so verbs should be in the past. See..., there was a boy... a woman walked ...she dropped her wallet, the boy picked it up...and many others.<sup>REC</sup>
4. G8: Did you change the sentence in line[s] .....8 and 9?<sup>REC</sup>
5. G3: Yes, we change[d] [the] present tense into [the] past tense and reorder 'so'.<sup>MED</sup>
6. G8: I think 'so' is ok 'So surprised is she that she doesn't know when she lost her wallet'. Just change verb into past tense. Compare this sentence with your sentence.<sup>REC</sup>
7. G3: Okay, we miss 'so'; it's 'She was so surprised that she didn't know her wallet had lost'.<sup>MED</sup>
8. G8: Sound good! I think we can keep 'so' at the beginning or the middle.<sup>REC</sup>
9. G3: Great!

The above conversation provides an example of prompting responses to peer feedback. Responses to peer feedback increased when one representative of Group 3 joined Group 8 to explain the corrections of their group (lines 1, 3, and 5), and members of Group 8 responded to peers' explanations by asking questions (lines 2 and 4) to confirm the information. Group 8 (line 6) acknowledged the corrections of Group 3 but at the same time commented on their peers' work by asking peers to compare the initial writing with their corrections. This helped students identify that their group had missed 'so' in their corrections. Completing the correcting tasks within and among groups illustrated aspects of *reciprocity* and *mediation of meaning*.

Group presentation also promoted responses to peers' indirect feedback that exhibited an indication of understanding and reacting in the correcting practice, showing an alignment with *intentionality* and *reciprocity* and *mediation of meaning*. A sign of modification in response to peers' comments can be seen when Group 6 presented their completed corrections, and a representative of Group 5 suggested adding a topic sentence in the second paragraph (see Figure 1 below). The presenter of Group 6 immediately took note 'topic?' at the beginning of the second paragraph, but he could not correct it. Peers in his group offered assistance by adding a 'comma' and 'which' after the word school and another 'comma' after the word large and 'has various activities'. These modifications indicated levels of understanding and an acknowledgement of inter-groups' comments. However, Group 6 corrected some grammatical issues that are beyond those suggested in the feedback sheet (relative clause, preposition, and verb form, see Figure 1).

The correcting practice in Figure 1 appears to have created a sense of effective accomplishment described as *mediation of meaning* in MLE. Students attended to peers' comments by amending the errors, interpreting their corrections, and providing feedback on their peers' corrections. Indeed, intra-groups' presentations motivated inter-groups' engagement by responding to intra-groups' corrections and explanations.

Figure 1

Example of Completing the Correcting Task: Collaboration and Achievement

<sup>have been</sup>  
~~We went to primary school, secondary school and high school. In every school, we have different impression. But the school we enjoy the most is my current school, Marie Curie high school.~~

<sup>Topic?</sup> ~~My high school, very beautiful and large, It was established in 1918 and located in center of the city, District 3. To help students improve their skills and have a chance to meet new friends, my school organized a lot of activities. Such as:~~

~~flashmob contest, singing contest, decorate cake on Woman's Day, decorate Non La, make poster, ... The teaching activities in here are good. All the teachers have done their job pretty good, but their life is very hard. They tried to provide students some additional activities like doing experiments in the laboratory, searching more information online, and visiting historical places.~~

~~The reason why I like my school most~~

~~because it's the place for everyone and their friends meeting and studying. This is the best school ever. I really love my school. This is my second home.~~

#### 4.3 Responses to mediational strategies on the rewriting practice

While the teacher and peers accelerated students' engagement in the detecting and correcting tasks, students' responsive actions to the rewriting task varied among groups. Before students started the rewriting task, the teacher facilitated the eight groups by consolidating the types of errors to be amended, which she reminded students to improve in their rewritten texts. She also directed groups to discuss and share ideas prior to commencing intra-groups' rewriting of the texts. However, students within groups

were not always responsive to mediation. Groups 1, 3, 5 and 8 were seen to work collaboratively and present informative and comprehensible rewritten texts (see Figure 2—Group 3's improved rewritten text).

Figure 2

*Example of Improved Rewritten Text*

In Vietnam, there are a lot of events such as Tet holiday, Teacher's day, Women's Day, and Mid-autumn festival. My favorite celebration is Tet holiday because it not only shows Vietnam's traditional culture but brings good memories for family members.

Tet is a favourite occasion among adults and children. It occurs from late January to early February. On this occasion, the streets are decorated with beautiful flowers to welcome the New Year. In most families, both parents and children join hands to complete various activities. Although we are very busy cleaning/decorating the house and cooking traditional food to prepare for Tet, we feel excited during these days. Travelling around to visit grandparents and relatives attract children's attention because they can receive lucky money after sending best wishes to elderly people. Family members have more opportunities to get together by playing various kinds of games and enjoying traditional food. Further activity is dragon dancing which is fantastic and skilful because dancers can stand and walk on a very small and tall column.

I think it's the greatest festival of the year that most people would love to welcome. I hope it will not disappear.

Group 3

Group 3's rewritten text in Figure 2 exhibits evidence of *mediation of meaning* and *transcendence*. The fact that students presented an improved rewritten text is an example of *mediation of meaning* or effective accomplishment. The text, with an appropriate topic sentence and correct uses of because, although and the present tense, responds to the requirement of *transcendence* in MLE since students were able to transfer knowledge learnt from correction to the rewritten text.

In contrast, it was observed that the engagement of Groups 2, 4, 6 and 7 varied according to individual students. For example, Groups 4 and 6 attempted to complete the task with support from the teacher and other groups, and Groups 2 and 7 – each with two members – only partially responded to the rewriting task. Thus, their rewritten texts did not fully address the criterion of MLE *transcendence* in some cases (see Figure 3 – Group 7's unimproved rewritten text).

The unimproved text of Group 7 – Figure 3 is an example of being somewhat *transcendent*. Figure 3 shows that the text includes the incorrect use of the present and past tenses because of an unclear statement of writing purpose, and a topic sentence in the second paragraph is missing.

Figure 3

Example of Unimproved Rewritten Text

Hi Anh  
 Thank you very much for your invitation. I received your letter last week. That is the reason why I wrote this letter to reply. I love your birthday party because different activities and you will be 18 end of this month.

I will be at school from Monday to Friday and I have tutoring classes at on weekend. If your birthday party is celebrated on weekend, I would join in your party. I feel excited when you say that you will organise the games to play, singing and dancing activities. I'm interested in playing blind man's bluff, eating fried chicken, hamburger, and drinking coke. Moreover, I will pick up Nga at school because she doesn't have a bike.

I am looking forward to seeing you in your birthday's party.

With love,  
 Dung (A letter of acceptance - Group 7)

## 5 Discussion

This study has uncovered student engagement with feedback that satisfied MLE's learning requirements and was facilitated by the teacher's mediational strategies, peer collaboration, and the learning tasks. However, some students were uncertain about the teacher's guiding questions and indirect feedback, and some groups' responses to the rewriting task were somewhat *transcendent*.

From the mediated learning perspective, the teacher's mediation makes a significant contribution to accelerating student engagement. The teacher's uses of questions, different forms of feedback, consolidating categories of errors, and assisting with groups' discussion are possible reasons for students engaging better in the learning tasks. For example, students became more involved in social and cognitive processes by responding to the teacher's mediational strategies aimed at helping them work out solutions to treat errors (Extract 4) and rewrite the texts (Figure 2). The study's findings identify the usefulness and high quality of teacher feedback (Wang, 2013; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2010), which resulted in a positive impact on students' revisions (Ferris, 1995; Ruegg, 2017) and linguistic acquisition (Ruegg, 2015). Responding to indirect feedback from peers and the teacher enabled students to process errors—Figure 1 and improve their rewritten texts—Figure 2, which confirms the impact of indirect feedback on student engagement and learning improvement (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010).

Indirect instruction, English ability, the teacher's authority, peer support, and first language are factors determining student engagement. Limited English ability is a possible explanation for uncertainties about the teacher's questions from Extract 1 that led to using L1 to ask peers for clarification in Extract 2. Individual students' limited responsiveness to the sharing practice may also be a consequence of being afraid of making mistakes or losing face, which is considered to influence Vietnamese students' participation in sharing or articulating their ideas in learning (Tomlinson & Bao, 2004).

The teacher's authority is also given as a reason for preventing Group 7 students from asking the

teacher for clearer information in Extract 1. In contrast, peer support and collaboration and the use of L1 are possible reasons for motivating students' interaction and engagement in Extracts 2, 3 and 5. Peer response in this case validates the perceived ideas that peers had things in common when sharing ideas (Yang et al., 2006), which promoted peer collaboration (Hu & Lam, 2010). The use of L1 is testament to the unique feature of MLE, which is the emphasis on the importance of interaction and the focus on how the interaction takes place, irrespective of what language is used (Feuerstein, 1990).

From the cognitive and social perspective, collaborative learning possibly activates students' social skills and cognitive functions as they respond to teacher and peer feedback to complete the learning tasks. Experiencing engagement with multiple levels of learning tasks – group discovery, group correction and group revision – may have contributed considerably to learners' ability to modify language features and skills in giving and responding to feedback (see Extracts 2, 4, 5 and Figure 1 for examples). These learning aspects are considered to develop students' cognition and social skills in learning (Fisher, 2005). For example, the students' engagement in the learning tasks clearly shows that they were active learners as they worked on their errors in a peer-tutoring environment where advanced peers might benefit from tutoring and sharing with peers. In turn, less capable peers could learn from peers' input and from collaborating and interacting with them. The explanation finds support from the idea that students are able to learn by supporting and collaborating with others (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Although the responses of Groups 2 and 7 to the rewriting task were somewhat *transcendent* (Figure 3), their engagement in the detecting and correcting tasks validates the idea that mediation of learning takes place even when learners have limited ability to interact and communicate (Feuerstein et al., 1988).

From a TBLT perspective, the learning tasks possibly contributed to student engagement and responses to feedback. Evidence of this contribution can be seen in how students worked on the detecting, correcting and rewriting tasks to process the errors by asking and responding to questions and forms of feedback and by providing solutions to treat the errors as well as explanations to peers (Extracts 3 and 5). Engaging in correcting errors from intra-groups to inter-groups in Figure 1 enabled students to modify language features and the corrections used to rewrite the texts, as illustrated in Figure 2. In addition, the rewriting task seemed to prompt students' reflection on and use of language features as a form of output – for example, rewriting a corrected essay can affect learning (Polio, 2012) – which can satisfy the *mediation of meaning* and *transcendence*. Indeed, identifying the errors and correcting the identified errors were found to lay a foundation for rewriting; however, it was reported to be a challenging task (see details in Dang, 2021). The rewriting task's challenging level might, on the one hand, trigger more interaction, collaboration, and inter-group's support, but on the other hand, preclude Groups 2 and 7 from addressing the criterion of *transcendence*. While this finding supports the potential of “high challenge” and “high support” to motivate learner autonomy (Mariani, 1997, p. 10), it illustrates the influence on students' engagement of learning tasks such as rewriting the texts (Ellis, 2010; Han, 2017).

## 6 Conclusion

Constructed from the MLE framework, this study contributes to L2 writing instruction and the corpus of research data on this topic. The study sheds new light on engaging students in the sequence of tasks through group work by documenting the teacher's mediational strategies to facilitate students' engagement and responses to teacher and peer feedback. The findings of this study, however, elaborate on the importance of detection, correction and revision that are all combined as the focus of intervention to satisfy MLE's requirements. As such, the inquiry adds to the literature and L2 writing regarding how to address students' engagement with feedback-correction and revisions to enhance the effects of feedback and to implement MLE in the area of L2 learning. The study also offers insights into developing students' conscious awareness of specific errors in their writing by acting on those errors and transferring

knowledge of correction to rewriting. This has pedagogical implications for writing classrooms in Vietnam as well as in similar EFL contexts where responding to feedback on erroneous structures and inappropriate ideas is limited. In addition, examples of peers' collaboration and contributions to process gaps and rewrite the texts suggest writing teachers in similar contexts to consider students as a feedback provider/recipient and/or a reviewer/writer. To ensure individual contributions to group work and empower students' responsive actions to linguistic and language issues in their texts, teachers can train students in collaborative working skills and in providing and responding to peer feedback before administering the correcting sequence through small groups. The findings also suggest that writing teachers should consider students' language ability and the levels of difficulty of learning tasks to facilitate students' engagement and to help develop their capability to modify issues in their writing when implementing the correct design.

There are, however, some limitations that may be addressed in future research. The small sample of one class in one city suggests the value of further research with a larger population in different educational contexts to examine the effectiveness of integrating into learning tasks the combined mode of feedback on a range of errors. The eight-week period of intervention was relatively short, so there is a need for investigations into the long-term impact of engagement with the sequence and responses to teacher and peer feedback. More studies are also needed to show whether and how student engagement with feedback integrated into learning tasks can have impacts on new pieces of writing.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: *Correcting Topics and Categories of errors* (Dang, 2019a)

| Correcting Topics  | Categories of errors  |
|--|---|
| Phase 1: Students learn to write in groups in their writing classes (morning sessions) | Grammatical errors:   |
| Phase 2: Correcting treatment (afternoon sessions)                                     | the simple present and past tenses  |
| A paragraph to describe one of the most popular events/celebrations in Vietnam         | conjunctions: although & because  |
| A letter to tell your friend about your past memorable activities                      | Nongrammatical issues:  |
| A paragraph to describe your favorite school   | • the irrelevance of ideas between the topic and the supporting sentences       |
| Picture description: the boy and the wallet  | • the omission of the topic sentence and/or of the statement of writing purpose |
| Picture description: the fox and the grapes  |   |
| A letter of invitation   |   |
| A letter of acceptance   |   |
| A letter of complaint  |   |



**Appendix B: Feedback Sheet (Dang, 2019a; Adapted from Yang et al., 2006)**

Use the following suggestions to discover errors and discuss some ways to correct the identified errors in your pieces of writing in your group. You are encouraged to give more than one solution to treat errors.

**Non-grammatical issues**

- Does the writer introduce the topic of the letter or description? Yes/No
  - If no, suggest the ideas to introduce the topic of the letter or description.
  - If yes, circle it and check a ✓ after the sentence.
- Is there a topic sentence in each paragraph? Yes/no
  - Point out the paragraph without topic sentences. Paragraph.....
- Are ideas relevant to the topic sentence? If you think the ideas are not appropriate, please suggest ideas that are more relevant.

**Grammatical errors**

Use the following suggestions for grammar errors and provide corrections

- Is the use of tense correct?
  - If yes, check a ✓ after the correct tense
  - If no, provide corrections
- Does the writer use appropriate conjunctions (i.e., because & although) to link ideas?
  - If yes, check a ✓ after the correct conjunction
  - If no, provide corrections

**Appendix C: An Example of Coding Data**

| MLE Criteria                       | Category of MLE Criteria   | Examples of Responses   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Intentionality<br><i>INT</i>       | teacher’s mediational strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• questions</li> <li>• indirect/direct feedback</li> <li>• cues</li> </ul>   | What is the purpose of this letter?<br>Good, read the topic sentence again, is the meaning clear? If not, underline it.<br>If yes, what is it? If no, add one.                                      |
| Reciprocity<br><i>REC</i>          | joint practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher-student interaction</li> <li>• student-student collaboration</li> <li>• responding to and/or taking up the mediation provided by the teacher/peers</li> </ul> | Learning and teaching quality<br>The word learning is not appropriate, is it?<br>Yes, learning is not appropriate.<br>Okay, but there are two verbs in this sentence.<br>Mmmm.....can we use which? |
| Mediation of meaning<br><i>MED</i> | significance of interaction & collaboration achieved by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responding to feedback</li> <li>• working together with peers</li> </ul>  | Uhum...service..., learning condition..., equipment..., facility<br>Uhum .... Tet, which occur[s] in January or early February, has many interesting activities.                                    |

|                             |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Transcendence<br><i>TRA</i> | ability to transfer knowledge learnt from feedback-correction practices to rewriting the texts with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the statement of writing purpose</li> <li>• the correct use of target structures</li> <li>• topic sentences relevant to the ideas in supporting sentences</li> </ul> | Responses to the mediational strategies on the rewriting task (Appendices 2 and 3) |
|-----------------------------|---|--|

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**Trang Thi Doan Dang** is a teaching associate in the Faculty of Education, Monash University - Australia and a lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam. She has recently published in the fields of English language pedagogy and researcher development in higher education studies.