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## Editorial Introduction

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# RW

JOURNAL OF RESPONSE TO WRITING

## Editorial Introduction

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W elcome to the second issue of our third year of publication. As the journal has become more established, we are seeing a wide range of fascinating research and teaching work related to response to writing in both first and second language contexts. This issue is no different.

In this issue, we present two research articles, two teaching articles, and a book review. In the first piece, “L2 Learners’ Engagement with Direct Written Corrective Feedback in First-Year Composition Courses,” Izabela Uscinski examines how second language learners of English engage with feedback from their college writing teachers. Uscinski draws on Svalberg’s (2009) definition of engagement, suggesting that it “encompasses not only the cognitive realm, but also affective and social.” To better understand how writers make use of written corrective feedback and whether it leads to meta-awareness and noticing of language structures, she recruited eight

Chinese-L1 first-year college students taking a stretch composition course at a university in the United States. She asked the students to meet with her when they had received grammar feedback from their teachers and recorded the computer screen as they revised their essays. Playing back the recordings, she then asked the students to discuss what they had done and why.

Uscinski found that most of the feedback the students received was in the form of direct corrections, primarily in which their teachers used Track Changes to write in the correct form. For the most part, the students accepted these changes and moved on without thinking about reasons behind them. When the direct correction was provided in the form of a comment expressed with hedged language or metalinguistic feedback, however, the students engaged with it, considered the reasoning for the changes, and at times revised in a different way than the teacher had suggested. When asked, one student explained that he felt the feedback in the form of comments indicated the teacher saw those as more important errors than those that had been directly corrected. Uscinski concludes that engagement does not necessarily lead to meta-awareness and recommends that teachers need to teach students how to make use of comments and WCF as well as to hold them accountable for learning from the feedback they receive.

Making use of this final recommendation, Hee-Seung Kang and Julie Dykema's study in the second feature article of this issue, "Critical Discourse Analysis of Student Responses to Teacher Feedback on Student Writing," considers English-fluent students' written reflections on the feedback they received from their teacher. Also located in a first-year composition course in a large U.S. university, this study focuses on a brief written text students provided describing their response to teacher commentary on a course assignment. Analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis as a framework, the texts revealed students' identities as emerging academic writers and their perceived positioning in relation to their teacher.

Kang and Dykema found that the students took up teacher-like language in writing their responses, hedging negative comments so as to mitigate the impact. Their language constructed them as "good students" who understood what the teacher wanted them to do and would follow through in their revisions. Students also used the response text as an

opportunity to assert their own authority, questioning or refuting teacher recommendations for revision. The authors conclude that the reflection assignment empowered the students to feel as if their voices were being heard as members of an academic community. They recommend that other teachers consider taking up such practices as hedged comments and recommendations so that “students are presented with advice they can consider, and options they can explore as they wield their authority as writers.”

In the first teaching article of this issue, “Encouraging Active Participation in Feedback,” Claire Louise Rodway presents a teacher’s perspective on a similar practice of cover sheets in which students respond to teacher feedback. Rodway describes a process she used as the instructor of three classes of undergraduate English as an Additional Language students at an Australian university. After they had submitted drafts of writing assignments, Rodway asked students to complete an interactive self-reflection and assessment cover sheet where they could discuss their understanding of the assessment criteria and their own texts. These self-assessments then served as starting points for teacher feedback on the submitted drafts. Rodway’s teaching article demonstrates the effectiveness of starting response from students’ own concerns.

The second teaching article of this issue is Bee Chamcharatsri’s “‘I Could Express Feeling Completely’: Inviting L2 Writers to Use L1 in Peer Responses.” The article describes the responses given by Chamcharatsri’s first-year composition students at a U.S. university after he gave them the opportunity to provide peer response using their first or home languages to students who shared that L1. The students almost universally appreciated the option to speak in their L1 when giving oral feedback, but many preferred to give written feedback in English. Chamcharatsri suggests, “Instead of discouraging students to use their L1s, we need to look at their L1s as another linguistic resource.”

The final piece in this issue is a review of the book *Written Corrective Feedback for L2 Development*. In this review of John Bitchener and Neomy Storch’s comprehensive synthesis of research on WCF, Taichi Yamashita highlights the contributions of the work and points out a few of its limitations.

Taken together, the pieces in this issue emphasize the varied ways that

response to writing can be structured to maximize students' learning. Whether it is teacher-provided corrective feedback or students' responses to their own or their peers' texts, all forms of feedback engage learners in seeing themselves as members of an academic community. We hope that these articles are of use to you in your teaching and research activities.

We thank our authors for their contributions and the reviewers who offered substantial and thoughtful feedback on each article.

## References

- Svalberg, A. M. L. (2009). Engagement with language: Interrogating a construct. *Language Awareness, 18*(3–4), 242–258.

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