Using Online Peer Feedback through Blogs to Promote Speaking Performance

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ABSTRACT

To extend the recent growth of literature on using peer feedback through blogs to enhance students' speaking performance, this study investigated the effects of online peer feedback via blogs on the speaking performance of college students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Participants comprised 45 EFL college students, from two classes English Conversation and English Listening and Speaking, who were required to practice English speaking by recording a series of video clips and giving/receiving peer feedback on their speaking performance. Students also reflected on their experiences at the end of the semester. The collected data included the students' scores on their first and final video clips, their blog entries, and their self-reflection sheets. Based on the differences in scores on their first and final clips, the students were classified into groups who made more progress (MP) and less progress (LP) respectively. After receiving peer feedback through blogs, only the MP group showed significant progress in the development of the content of their videos, including introduction, supporting points and conclusions while both groups showed significant improvement in the delivery area except for vocabulary use and grammar. It was also found that those responding more actively to peers' problematic feedback gained more progress in the revised clips. Several pedagogical implications are also discussed.

Keywords

Online peer feedback, Video Blogs, Speaking performance

Introduction

The use of peer feedback in language learning has received growing attention in student-centered and collaborative learning studies. Liu and Carless (2006) defined peer feedback as "a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards" (p. 280). Whereas the sole reliance on teacher feedback might lead students into passive learning (Lee, 2008), peer feedback encourages learner participation and fosters communicative competence through two-way interaction (Hyland, 2003). When peer feedback is based on given criteria, it helps both parties recognize strengths and weaknesses in their performance and thus develop an awareness of the qualities of good performance.

During the past few decades, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) technologies have provided new affordances for peer feedback exchange. Indeed, computer-mediated peer feedback, also referred to as online feedback, has been identified as having advantages over traditional face-to-face oral or written peer feedback in that it (1) overcomes time-and-place constraints, (2) reduces students' discomfiture arising from face-to-face critique, (3) alleviates the anxiety of giving immediate responses, and (4) gives teachers access to monitor all students' discussion about peers' language performance (DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001; Ho & Savignon, 2007; Liou & Peng, 2009; Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004; Warschauer & Ware, 2006). Scholars have further suggested that asynchronous CMC tools like blogs, which allow time for thoughtful review and constructive peer feedback, were more beneficial for language learning (e.g., Dippold, 2009; Liou & Peng, 2009; Pham & Usaha, 2016) than traditional face-to-face and synchronous CMC peer feedback.

Although scholars have highlighted the potential values of peer feedback using blogs in language learning, in particular by investigating its effects on students' writing (e.g., Ciftci & Kocoglu, 2012; Dippold, 2009; Liou & Peng, 2009; Pham & Usaha, 2016), the possibilities for enhancing students' speaking performance via blogs remains underexplored. This study therefore investigated the effects on peer feedback that arose through the use of blogs on EFL college students' speaking performance. Four research questions were addressed:

- What were the effects of blog-supported peer feedback on non-English major students' speaking performance?
- How did the effects on content and delivery items differ between higher and lower performing non-English major students via blogs?

- How did peer feedback impact the students' speaking performances of higher and lower performing non-English major students via blogs?
- What were non-English major students' receptions of and follow-up responses to problematic feedback via blogs?

Literature review

Theoretical framework for peer feedback

The use of peer feedback draws upon the theoretical underpinning of social-constructivism. Instead of focusing solely on individuals' learning processes, social constructivism asserts that knowledge is constructed by individuals when they interact with others socially (Swan, 2002). Through social interactions, individuals can gradually accumulate and internalize knowledge constructed collaboratively with other participants (Kanuka & Anderson, 2007; Bonk & Cunningham, 1998). To this end, having students provide feedback on peers' work prompts them to generate knowledge through meaningful interactions. Peer feedback activities are also supported by Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), described as "the process distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Similar to Vygotsky's ZPD, scaffolding is usually construed as an interactive process by which less capable learners are guided by more capable ones (e.g., teachers or peers) to advance in knowledge or skills (Bull, Shuler, Overton, Kimball, Boykin, & Griffin, 1999; Ko, Schallert, & Walters, 2003). In peer feedback activities following the ZPD frame, more advanced students help less proficient peers by providing scaffolding, such as feedback and any appropriate assistance.

Online peer feedback

Advances in CMC technologies have propagated the emergence of computer-mediated peer feedback over the past few of decades. Warschauer and Ware (2006) describe online peer feedback as "the means by which human feedback, particularly peer response, can be provided via technology" (p. 109). Compared with traditional face-to-face peer feedback, online peer feedback offers students several learning benefits, such as overcoming time and place constraints, creating less threatening environments, and promoting textual exchange interactively. Students can choose to review peers' work and give peer feedback at any time and place, as online peer feedback makes peer interaction viable beyond the limits of classroom walls (Liu & Sadler, 2003). In addition, giving feedback online helps students diminish their peer pressure, which in turn helps students respond to peers' work more judicially and comfortably (MacLeod, 1999). Under this less threatening environment, online peer feedback represents one form of computer conversation as characterized by DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001), which "allows students to respond spontaneously, yet offers them the opportunity to reflect on their ideas, rehearse their responses, and respond at their own pace" (p. 269). Liu and Sadler (2003) also argued that students using technology-enhanced peer feedback could generate more revision-oriented comments as well as an increased quantity of comments compared with those using traditional peer feedback, and that the asynchronous nature of the discourse was even more effective in student interactions than conventional synchronous modes.

Studies on the use of peer feedback through blogs to enhance students' speaking

There has been a recent growth in blog-related research on facilitating students' speaking performance in the context of learning a second or foreign language. Researchers have investigated using audio blogs in language classes to evaluate students' oral assignments (Hsu, Wang, & Comac, 2008), understand students' voice blogging stages/strategies (Sun, 2009; Huang, 2015), and explore perspectives on video blogging to learn speaking (Huang, 2015; Hung, 2011; Shih, 2010), and examine the effectiveness of speaking performance (Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016). Hsu et al. (2008), for instance, found that the use of audio blogs provided an effective way to assist instructors in managing oral assignments and interacting with students. In addition, students perceived that voice blogging facilitated their English speaking and pronunciation skills. Sun's (2009) study identified five stages in voice blogging, namely, conceptualizing, brainstorming, articulation, monitoring, and evaluating and found that students developed a number of strategies for tackling blogging difficulties. In brief, research so far has indicated that blogging is a promising approach to helping students develop speaking skills.

Although several studies concluded that students generally held positive perspectives toward video blogs to improve their speaking, only a few have explored how students perceived video blogs with the support of peer feedback to learn/improve English speaking (Hung, 2011; Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016; Shih, 2010). For example, Shih (2010) formed a blended learning environment by integrating video blogs with face-to-face instruction in an English public speaking course and investigated how this model would affect students' learning and satisfaction with the process. Both the instructor and the students commented on uploaded video clips of the students' blog entries. The students then uploaded their revised clips based on the comments received. The results of 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaires showed that the students were satisfied with peer feedback as a way to help them improve their public speaking performance.

Similarly, Hung (2011) explored students' perceptions of using video blogs in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) class. The students uploaded four video clips and provided feedback after watching clips on their peers' blog entries. The findings indicated that students perceived that peer feedback provided them with diverse perspectives, and cooperating with peers in a learning community provided opportunities for speaking practice. In a more recent pilot study, Hung and Huang (2015) examined the effects of video blogs on students' oral presentation performance. Throughout an 18-week semester, the students were required to upload four presentation files and give one another peer feedback. The results indicated that the students' overall presentation performance significantly improved, especially in the areas of projection, intonation, posture, introduction, conclusion, and purpose. To sum up, the research to date has shown a relatively positive effect of video blogs coupled with peer feedback upon students' learning of English speaking.

However, research on using peer feedback through blogs to improve students' speaking performance is still in its infancy. More studies need to be carried out to investigate how peer feedback through blogs can lead to improved students' speaking performance. Another problem is that participants in the previously reviewed studies (Hung, 2011; Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016; Shih, 2010) did not receive explicit peer feedback training, which has been identified as an important factor for students' positive learning outcomes in video blog-mediated peer review activities (Dippold, 2009; Liou & Peng, 2009; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008). Without feedback training, students may fail to provide peers with feedback that is constructive enough for them to improve their speaking performance. The last problem is that students' receptions of and responses to problematic peer feedback on blogs to learn speaking have not been thoroughly investigated as previous studies tended to focus on learning outcomes of blogs rather than on peer feedback. The absence of this information, which is vital to understanding students' learning problems of peer feedback, may contribute to difficulties in providing immediate and proper scaffolding to help students benefit from peer feedback. Hence, the present study aimed to bridge the gap found in the literature by examining how the use of online peer feedback through blogs could promote EFL college students' speaking performance.

Methodology

Participants

Two groups comprising 20 non-English and 25 English majors at a university of technology in Taiwan voluntarily participated in this study. The non-English majors were taking an 18-week elective course called English Conversation. They were assessed as intermediate level speaking ability by the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), a nationwide English proficiency test developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan. The English-major participants were enrolled in an 18-week required course called English Listening and Speaking, and their English speaking proficiency, also evaluated by the GEPT, ranged from upper-intermediate to advanced level. In accordance with the ZPD frame, therefore, the English majors represented high achievers whose feedback could help the non-English majors develop English speaking skills. All participants were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and had been learning English for 10 to 12 years.

Research design

In the first week of the semester, the students took the GEPT speaking test to measure their English proficiency before participating in the study. After the test, the instructor introduced the students the course objectives and the video blogging project, which was one of the requirements for both classes. The rationale for choosing video over audio-only blogging was to enable students to authenticate their oral communication, an introduction to some aspect of their country, Taiwan, in English to foreigners, with non-verbal cues and visual aids. In the

following week, the instructor introduced the blog website (WordPress.com) and demonstrated its main functions to the students. After the tutorial, students registered and set up their individual blogs.

From the fourth week onwards, three 4-week cycles of blogging tasks were implemented to offer students additional speaking practice outside of class. In the first week, students individually video-recorded three-minute videos in which they introduced Taiwan in English, which they then uploaded to their individual blogs. During the following two weeks, the students were randomly assigned four peers' blog sites (two from each class) by the researchers. For each blog entry, they provided peer feedback including strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement (based on Hung, 2011; Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016). The recipient students were encouraged to respond to their peers' feedback until it was clear to them. To reduce the anxiety of using English to provide peer feedback, the students were allowed to comment on peers' video clips in either Chinese or English. In the last week of each blogging cycle, the students revised their video clips based on feedback given by their peers and then uploaded the revised clips to their blogs again.

After completing the three blogging cycles, each student had produced three initial and revised clips in total. In week 18, students were given self-reflection worksheets with four guiding questions (Appendix A) on which to reflect upon giving and receiving peer feedback via blogs in this course. To encourage in-depth reflection on their learning experience, they were allowed to complete the sheets in Chinese.

Peer feedback training

In the third week, prior to participating in peer feedback, the students were explicitly instructed about how to offer peers helpful feedback on comment boards. After they were given feedback sheets specifying the essential features of effective peer feedback and the scoring criteria adopted in the study (see discussion below), they watched a sample video clip and discussed the speaker's strengths and weaknesses and formulated constructive feedback in small groups. To help students continue to improve the quality of their feedback, during the actual blogging cycles, the teaching assistant periodically chose examples of more and less effective peer feedback from the students' blogs to discuss with the class.

Data collection and analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, including (1) the scores of students' video clips, (2) the students' individual blog entries containing blogging videos and peer comments, and (3) self-reflection worksheets. Though these data were collected from both English and non-English major students, the analysis of the data was mainly based on non-English major students for the scope of the current paper. First, the scores of the students' video clips were used to examine the 20 non-English majors' progress in speaking performance after receiving online peer feedback (RQs 1 and 2). The rubric for scoring speaking performance was adopted from Brown's (2004) oral presentation checklist and modified to better fit the context of the present study. The revised version comprised two main categories, content and delivery, with several respective subcategories. Specifically, the content area comprised five items: purpose, introduction, main idea, supporting points, and conclusion. The delivery area consisted of seven items: gesture and body language, eye contact, vocabulary use, volume of speech, fluency, pronunciation, and grammar. The score for each item ranged from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) for a range of 12 to 60 total points. To achieve scoring consistency between the researcher and the research assistant, two rater training sessions were conducted, during which the researcher first acquainted the research assistant with the study purpose and the rubric. Next, they individually rated the same five video clips, compared scores, and reconciled any scoring discrepancies. In the formal assessment process, the two raters scored each student's first and final clips individually and then averaged the two scores on each video clip to represent the students' speaking performance. The inter-rater reliability, measured by percentage agreement, reached .89.

Based on gains in scores between the first and final video clips, two groups were drawn from the 20 non-English majors, the More Progress (MP) Group, consisting of five students in the upper quartile of gain scores, and the Less Progress (LP) Group, which included five students in the lower quartile. The students' speaking progress was analyzed using paired sample *t*-tests to investigate the two groups' different degrees of improvement.

Secondly, the students' individual blog entries were examined in order to explore the follow-up revisions and performances of higher and lower performing non-English majors after the use of online peer feedback (RQ 3). Two cases, Student 1 (S1) and Student 2 (S2) were then chosen from the MP and LP groups respectively based

on typical case sampling (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2011). The criterion for selecting the two cases was that their gain scores were closest to the mean gain scores of their respective groups. The use of such purposeful sampling was to show how representative students from the two sub-groups were likely to perform relative to the entire group. Drawing on the archives of S1's and S2's blogs, their initial and revised videos, peer feedback received, and responses to peers were analyzed and compared.

Thirdly, the self-reflection sheets were analyzed to examine non-English majors' receptions of and responses to problematic peer feedback (RQ 4). Content analysis was used, including coding, categorization, description and interpretation (Patton, 2002). In the coding phase, the research team read students' responses on the self-reflection sheets thoroughly and highlighted meaningful statements from which several codes were generated and then collapsed into categories. For example, concerns about peers' language proficiency, the reliability of feedback, and incorrect feedback found were codes constituting one of the main categories, correctness of the students' receptions of peer feedback. In the description phase, the main ideas of the categorized units were summarized and documented. Finally, in the interpretation phase, the research team interpreted important factors by providing possible explanations, reaching conclusions, and drawing inferences from each main idea. Reliability was established through regular discussions between the two coders on emerging themes and the inter-rater reliability reached .86. The individual blog comment boards also served as explanatory data to show how the students attempted follow-up revisions and its impact on their revised videos.

Results

RQ 1: What were the effects of blog-supported peer feedback on non-English major students' speaking performance?

A paired sample *t*-test was computed to examine the relationship between the mean scores of the students' first and final video clips. As shown in Table 1, the results were significant (t = -16.40, $p < .01$), indicating that there was significant improvement in the students' speaking between the first video clip (M = 35.95, SD = 2.34) and the final video clip (M = 43.40, SD = 3.60).

Table 1. Results of the *t*-test in the students' first and final video clips (N = 20)

	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*	*t*(19)	*Sig.* (2-tailed)
First clip	30.50	41.50	35.95	2.34	-16.40	.00**
Final clip	35.50	52.50	43.40	3.60		

Note. **$p < .01$.

RQ 2: How did the effects on content and delivery items differ between higher and lower performing non-English major students via blogs?

Two more paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted to determine the extent to which the students improved their speaking scores on the 12 related items under the two main speaking categories, content and delivery. As shown in Table 2, though improvements in purpose, main idea, vocabulary use, and grammar were not significant, the MP group's gains in the other areas were statistically significant particularly in introduction (t = -5.70, $p < .01$), conclusion (t = -6.00, $p < .01$), and gesture and body language (t = -6.33, $p < .01$). This finding affirmed that the provision of online peer feedback helped the MP group enhance their speaking performance in most items in both content and delivery categories.

Table 2. Criteria results of students' speaking performances in the first and the final video clips in the MP group (N = 5)

	First clip		Final clip			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(4)	*Sig.* (2-tailed)
Content						
Purpose	3.30	.48	3.70	.67	-1.63	.18
Introduction	2.80	.27	4.20	.53	-5.70	.00**
Main idea	3.10	.65	3.30	.45	-.78	.48
Supporting points	3.20	.45	4.30	.27	-3.77	.02*
Conclusion	2.70	.76	3.90	.82	-6.00	.00**
Delivery						
Gesture & body language	3.00	.50	4.00	.61	-6.33	.00**

Eye contact	3.40	.74	4.40	.41	-4.47	.01*
Vocabulary use	3.00	.35	3.30	.27	-1.50	.21
Volume of speech	3.40	.65	4.30	.57	-3.09	.04*
Fluency	3.20	.27	4.50	.50	-3.83	.02*
Pronunciation	2.70	.76	3.90	.42	-3.53	.02*
Grammar	3.00	.35	3.10	.22	-.41	.70

Note. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

Table 3, however, shows that the LP group made no significant gains in the subcategories of content, suggesting that the students in this group made less productive use of peer feedback when revising their video clips than those in the MP group. In the delivery component, apart from the items of vocabulary use *(t* = -.41, p = .70), pronunciation (*t* = -1.63, *p* = .18) and grammar (*t* = -2.45, *p* = .07), the LP group showed improvements similar to those of the MP group: gesture and body language *(t* = -4.81, *p* = .01), eye contact (*t* = -4.71, *p* = .01), volume of speech *(t* = -3.16, *p* = .03), and fluency (*t* = -6.00, *p* = .00), indicating that the students in the LP group tended to improve largely in the delivery area, in which revisions might have been less cognitively demanding. Notably, in the content category, both groups did not statistically improve their scores in terms of purpose and main idea. In addition, neither group showed significant improvement in vocabulary use and grammar, suggesting that online peer feedback through blogs might have limited impact on these aspects of students' speaking performance.

Table 3. Criteria results of students' speaking performance in the first and the final video clips in the LP group (*N* = 5)

	First clip		Final clip			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(4)	*Sig.* (2-tailed)
Content						
Purpose	3.30	.27	3.40	.22	-1.00	.37
Introduction	2.80	.27	3.10	.22	-2.45	.07
Main idea	2.90	.22	3.00	.35	-.41	.70
Supporting points	2.90	.42	3.00	.35	-1.00	.37
Conclusion	2.60	.42	2.90	.22	-2.45	.07
Delivery						
Gesture & body language	2.50	.35	3.40	.22	-4.81	.01*
Eye contact	2.40	.65	3.60	.42	-4.71	.01*
Vocabulary use	3.10	.42	3.20	.27	-.41	.70
Volume of speech	3.20	.57	3.70	.45	-3.16	.03*
Fluency	3.10	.74	3.70	.57	-6.00	.00**
Pronunciation	3.10	.55	3.30	.27	-1.63	.18
Grammar	2.80	.27	3.10	.22	-2.45	.07

Note. $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

RQ 3: How did peer feedback impact the students' speaking performances of higher and lower performing non-English major students via blogs?

To more closely examine how the students used peer feedback to improve their speaking performance, S1 from the MP group and S2 from the LP group were purposefully selected as representative cases in that their gain scores were the closest to the mean gain scores of their respective groups. As illustrated in Table 4, both S1 and S2 improved their speaking performances between the first clip and the final clip, with S1 obtaining 5.5 gain points more than S2. In the following discussions, the remaining non-English major students are consecutively identified as S3, S4, S5, etc. while the English-major students were labeled ES1, ES2, ES3, etc.

Table 4. Background of the two selected participants from the two groups

Participants	Group	First clip	Final clip	Gain scores	Mean gain sores of the group
Student 1	MP	35.5	45.5	10	10.1
Student 2	LP	34.5	39	4.5	4.7

S1: Speaking improvement after extensive revisions supported by online peer feedback

Taking the second blogging cycle as an example, S1 introduced three well-known tourist spots in Taiwan in her video. In her initial clip, S1 exhibited the content problems with introductions and supporting ideas, and had the delivery problems with volume and fluency of speech, pronunciation, and eye contact. With regard to content, her peers pointed out that S1 failed to provide a strong introduction to her topic, and the supporting points for each tourist spot could have also been strengthened. For the delivery problems, throughout the video, S1's voice was sometimes not loud enough to be heard clearly, and her speech was further obscured by frequent pauses and pronunciation errors. Three peers (S3, S4, and ES1) suggested that she maintained more eye contacts with her audience. However, her peers did not identify S1's grammar as especially problematic, and only one peer mentioned an issue with vocabulary use.

After receiving peer feedback, S1's revised video showed notable improvement in the coherence of content, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammar. Specifically, Table 5 compares parallel transcript excerpts from S1's initial and revised clips. Words in bold font highlight the differences between S1's initial and revised video clips. In terms of content, the information in S1's revised clip was more complete and coherent than in her initial presentation. She not only followed peers' suggestions to include an adequate introduction, but also extended supporting points to further explain each tourist spot as S3 and S4 had suggested (see excerpts 1 and 2). S1's revised video showed that she adopted most of her peers' feedback on her delivery. She maintained more eye contacts, spoke more audibly, corrected pronunciation errors, and achieved greater fluency by reducing the number of unnecessary pauses and voice hesitations. ES1's and ES2's feedback helped S1 reduce her pronunciation errors from twelve to five (which included two new errors in the revised clip). On the other hand, S1 made few changes in vocabulary use and grammar, which had not been the focus in the feedback she received. She adopted ES2's grammar corrections by changing sit the boat into sit in the boat (excerpt 3), but she did not follow ES1's suggestion to change the word large in relation to competition (excerpt 4).

Table 5. Comparison between S1's initial and revised transcript excerpts related to peer feedback

Excerpts from the initial clip	Highlights of peers' feedback	Excerpts from the revised clip	Revising actions (category)
(1) Hello, everyone. I'm Sandy. Taiwan is small in the (P) Earth, but it is really an amazing island for many beautiful scenery. If the foreigners (P) come to Taiwan, I would take them to travel…around the…Taiwan.	ES1: Introduction could be strengthened.	(1) Hi, everyone. **Today I want to introduce about Taiwanese scenery.** Taiwan is small in the (P) Earth, but it is an amazing island because it has many beautiful scenery. **We should go there at least once in lifetime. For example, Taroko National Park, Alishan National Scenery Area, and Sun Moon Lake are famous around the world.**	Adding an introduction. (content)
(2) I think that, that…natural landforms there (P) are the most amazing…to trac-, attract many travelers coming Taiwan.	S3 and S4: You can explain more in each tourist spot to enrich your contents.	(2) **There are many uncommon animals, natural landforms, peculiar** (P) **plants in the Taroko National Park.** I think natural landforms <u>there</u> are the most amazing to…attract travelers coming Taiwan. **If you like to go walking and hiking, Taroko…Gorge is the perfect place.**	Adding more supporting points. (content)
(3) If the foreigners (P) get there (P), they can sit the boat to travel the lake and see so many beautiful…landscape around the lake.	ES2: You should say sit in the boat not sit the boat.	(3) If the <u>foreigners</u> get <u>there</u>, they can sit **in** the boat to travel the lake and see beautiful landscape	Fixing a grammar error. (delivery)
(4) In September, there (P) is a large competition for swimming through the lake.	ES2: It's weird to use large to describe competition.	(4) In September, <u>there</u> is a large competition for swimming through the lake.	Sticking to the original word "large." (delivery)

Note. (P): pronunciation error; …: unnecessary pause; uh/um: voiced hesitation sound; underlining: corrected pronunciation error.

S2: Speaking improvement after minor revisions supported by online peer feedback

The topic of S2's speech was an introduction to popular festivals and food in Taiwan. His initial video showed a number of content problems with respect to supporting ideas, which his peers pointed out. S5 and ES3 commented that information about the population of Taiwan was not very relevant to the purpose of his topic. S5 and S6 also commented that the supporting points were not detailed enough to give viewers an integral understanding of the topic. S6 and ES4 also mentioned S2's lack of a definite conclusion when summing up his speech.

Several pronunciation and grammar errors were also identified in S2's delivery. For example, S2 mispronounced several words, such as dragon, lunar, and annually. He also paused frequently and voiced hesitation "um," and his facial expression lacked animation, which made his speaking less professional and vivid. The peers suggested that he practiced more and preview the next recording before uploading it to the video blog. However, although grammatical errors could easily be found in S2's initial transcript, as in S1's case few peers provided feedback on these, suggesting that students attended less to grammar slip-ups than to other aspects when they were reviewing peers' video clips.

With respect to the use of the comment board, S2 seldom utilized this function to interact with his peers, seek further support, or verify the nature of their feedback. He tended to merely acknowledge feedback by posting such phrases as "thank you" or simply pressing the "Like" button. As demonstrated in the comparison of his initial and revised transcript excerpts (Table 6), S2 made only slight modifications to the content of his speech in the revised clip. First, he simply removed the irrelevant statements from his introduction but failed to include new points pertaining to his topic (excerpt 1). Second, his supporting points were not sufficiently developed as only a few complete statements were included (excerpt 3). Third, the revised video clip still lacked the explicit conclusion his peers had suggested (excerpt 4). Therefore, there were few differences in content between the original and the revised clips. However, S2 made greater improvements in pronunciation, fluency, and gesture and body language in his delivery. First, he corrected his pronunciation errors such as dragon, annual, and lunar which were underlined as examples in excerpt 2, and 3. Second, he reduced the number of pauses and voiced hesitations. Third, he exhibited more appropriate body language and facial expressions. These adjustments resulted in moderate improvement of his overall speaking performance, though his grammatical errors remained uncorrected in his revised video.

Comparison between S1 and S2's speaking improvements

The selected cases had different degrees of improvements in their speaking. First, S1 exerted more effort in revising and enriching her speaking content by adding introduction and supporting details while S2 made only minor adjustments on supporting ideas, so S1 made notably greater improvements in content area. Second, both S1 and S2 made notable progress in their delivery, especially in the aspect of fluency, which could be attributed to both peers' feedback and additional practice before the second recordings. Third, both seldom corrected their grammatical errors or improved their vocabulary use in their revised presentations, perhaps because they received little feedback in these areas. Finally, the feedback that was given on vocabulary use, grammar, and pronunciation was provided by English majors (ES1, ES2, ES3, ES4), suggesting that non-English major students lacked the confidence or knowledge to address peers' problems in these three areas.

Table 6. Comparison between transcript excerpts from S2's initial and revised video clips

Excerpts from the initial clip	Highlights of peers' feedback	Excerpts from the revised clip	Revising actions (category)
(1) Hello, today I will introduce festivals and some food of Taiwan to you. There are many things you should know about Taiwan. Do you know we have over twenty, twenty three million (P) people live in Taiwan, and um…most of its population live (P) on the western plains (P).	S5 and ES3: The beginning part is not related to your topic.	(1) **Hi guys,** my **name is Tom.** Today I **want to** introduce festivals and some food of Taiwan to you.	Removing the old introduction without adding a new one. (content)
(2) First is the Dragon (P) Boat	ES3 and ES4: You	(2) First **one** is the <u>Dragon</u> Boat	Correcting a

Festival. This festival fall…falls on May fifth on the lunar (P) calendar.	had mispronunciations, such as dragon, lunar, and annually.	Festival. This festival falls on May fifth on the **Chinese** <u>lunar</u> calendar.	mispronunciation. (delivery)
(3) This festival has its story of Qu Yuan. Uh…he jumped (P) into the river. People want to save him, so they throw rice dumping into the river to keep fish from eating his body. Second is the Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival. This event is held annu-, annually (P). People write down their best wishes(P) on the lanterns…and release them. Third is the Moon festival. It take place on the fifteenth of August on the lunar (P) calendar.	S5: You should talk more about Qu Yuan. Foreigners may not know him.	(3) This festival has its **own special** story of Qu Yuan. **Qu Yuan was a great Chinese poet in the … ancient time.** He jumped (P) into the river. People want to save him, so they throw rice dumplings into the river to keep fish away from eating his body. Second **festival** is the Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival. This event is held…<u>annually</u> **in the place called Pingxi**. People write down their best wishes (P) **for the coming year** on the lanterns and release them **to the sky**. Third **popular festival** is the Moon festival. **People also call it the Mid-autumn Festival, um**…**because** it take place on the fifteenth of August on the <u>lunar</u> calendar.	Adding a supporting point. (content)
(4) This is why people love them. Hope you will like Taiwan after this video. Bye.	S6 and ES4: The conclusion is not so clear.	(4) This is why people love them. **I** hope you will **know more about** Taiwan after this video **now. Thanks for your listening.** Bye.	Not adding a concrete conclusion. (content)

Note. (P): pronunciation error; …: unnecessary pause; uh/um: voiced hesitation sound; underlining: corrected pronunciation error.

RQ 4: What were non-English major students' receptions of and follow-up responses to problematic feedback via blogs?

Drawing on the data from the 20 students' reflection sheets, a total of 44 statements were coded as students' receptions of problematic peer feedback. The 44 statements of the problematic peer feedback were then categorized into three types: peer feedback lacking in clarity, doubting of its correctness, and having difficulties tackling inconsistencies arising from peers' different feedback on the speaking content. As shown with examples in Table 7, the major problematic peer feedback type was clarity and this showed that most of the feedback the students received was not explicit enough for them to adopt in their revised speaking videos.

The students' follow-up responses to problematic feedback were also identified. Table 8 presents the three major types: (1) ignoring peer feedback directly (58%), (2) seeking external help before adopting or ignoring the online peer feedback (23%), and (3) asking for clarification (19%). In Type 1, the majority of the responses indicated that students would disregard peer feedback which they did not think would help them improve their speaking performance. S8's reflection represents this view: "If peers' feedback was too vague, I would directly skip it because it was usually not valuable. I only considered adopting clear comments." This type of follow-up response required less effort than asking their peers for clarification.

Most students who looked for external help (Type 2) either searched for related information on the Internet or asked others for opinions. For example, when S1 was not sure whether to adopt a peer's feedback suggesting that big was a more common adjective than large to qualify competition (Figure 1), she consulted the Internet for verification before responding to her peer, "I checked it on Google. Both words work."

Table 7. The students' initial receptions of problematic peer feedback

Types of reception (Total = 44 statements)	Examples
Clarity (22 statements)	"One peer told me my pronunciation was a bit weird, but he didn't point out the specific problems, so I still did not know how to improve it." (S8) "Some comments were not clear enough. Some only commented that my introduction needed to be strength and without telling me how to do it" (S9)
Correctness (15 statements)	"I am not sure if I should trust peers' feedback, especially those non-English majors, because I think some of them are at the same English proficiency level." (S4) "Classmates' correction might be wrong…one peer suggested that I change the word from eat to drink the soup, but I knew eat is correct." (S10)
Consistency (7 statements)	"Feedback on content is rather subjective. It's hard to decide which one to adopt sometimes. But I like English-major peers' feedback more." (S11) "I happened to have two peers' different opinions on my speaking content. One said it's good to use detailed examples, but the other said it is redundant." (S12)

Table 8. The students' major types of follow-up responses to problematic peer feedback (N = 20)

Types of actions taken	Frequency (percentage)
1. Ignoring online peer feedback directly	25 (58%)
2. Seeking external help before adopting/ignoring online peer feedback	10(23%)
3. Asking for clarification	8 (19%)

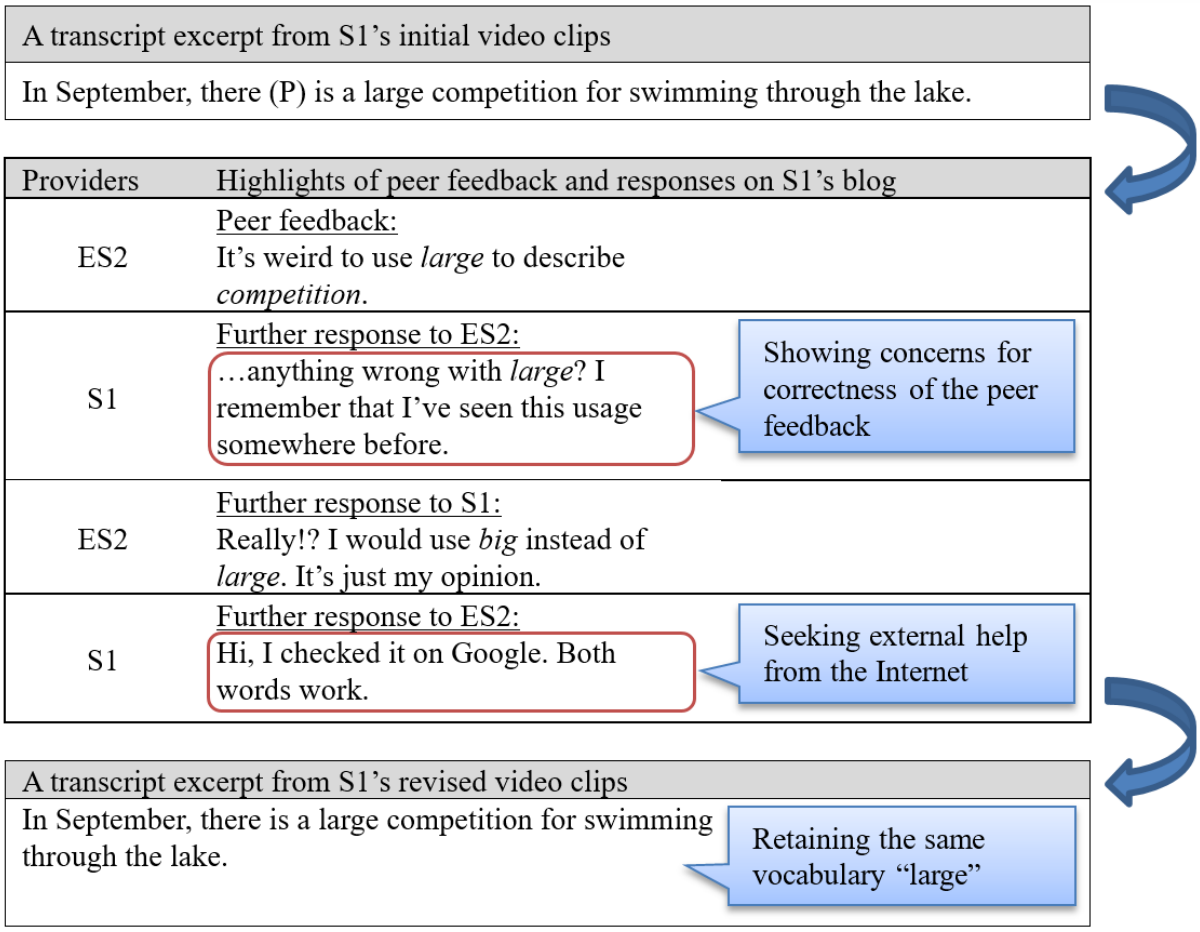

Figure 1. An example of a student's Type 2 follow-up attempt

The third most frequently mentioned follow-up attempt, Type 3, comprised requests for clarification from peers on blogs before revising their presentations. For instance, in response to the comment on her initial clip "introduction could be strengthened," S1 asked ES1 to further clarify this feedback by providing more concrete suggestions for her revision (Figure 2). ES1 then responded, "maybe if you mention the names of the three places before introducing them, it will make your introduction more connected to the content." After she adopted

ES1's suggestion, S1's introduction in the second video was more complete, and thus the feedback helped her improve the content of her presentation. This example shows that students can receive more support from peers if they directly ask about unclear feedback.

Among the three types of responses to feedback, it was found that Types 2 and 3 had better results because the students were more active in responding to peers' feedback and expressed concerns regarding feedback they found problematic as well as further verified it before making modifications. That is, active involvement in using the comment board such as responding to peers' unclear feedback or asking for more information from peers seemed to optimize the effect of peer feedback use.

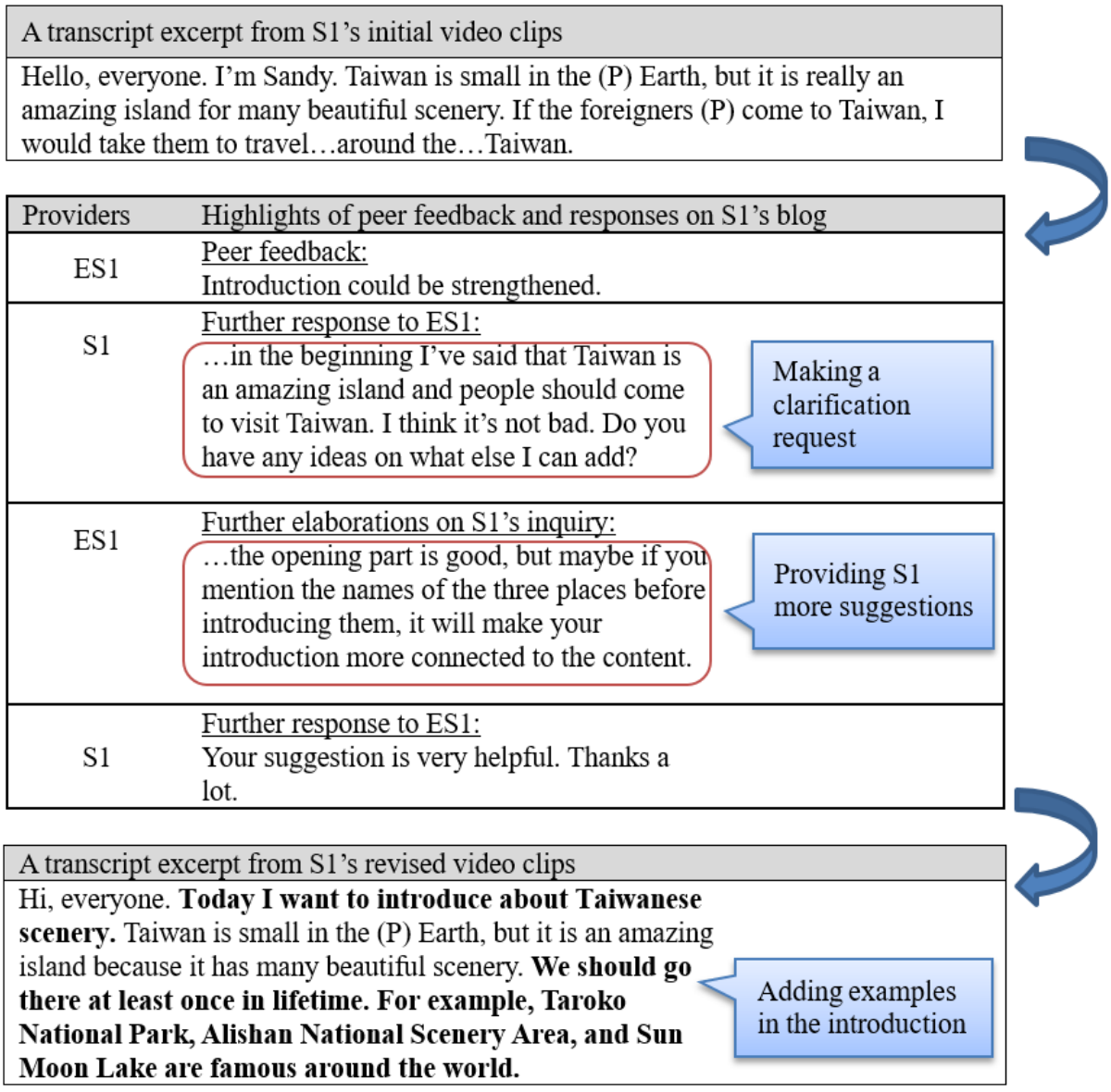

Figure 2. An example of a student's follow-up attempt in Type 3

Discussion and conclusion

This study has shown how the use of online peer feedback through blogs can enhance students' speaking performance as captured in their blogging videos. A comparison of students' scores on their first and final video presentations indicated that the students' overall speaking performance significantly improved with the support of peer feedback. This finding corroborated prior research (Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016; Shih, 2010) which suggested that utilizing blogs as a learning tool for speaking practice combined with peer feedback had a positive impact on students' speaking performance. In addition, this study can enrich the current literature (Hung, 2011; Hung & Huang, 2015; Hung & Huang, 2016; Shih, 2010), which merely evaluated students'

improvements either from their gain scores or perceived progress of speaking, by further dividing students' speaking performance into the content and delivery components with several respective subcategories to discuss the influence of online peer feedback on students' speaking performance specifically. The comparison of the results from Tables 2 and 3 indicated that for the content area, the MP group was the only group who made significant improvement in purpose, supporting ideas, and conclusion, and neither the MP or LP group made any significant progress in purpose and main idea. The lack of improvement in the content area especially in terms of purpose and main idea may possibly account for the fact that once the students settled down into the topics of their initial videos, most of them retained their original purpose or main idea in their revised clips in spite of doing extensive revisions to the introduction, supporting points and conclusion. The students' receptions of feedback shown in Tables 7 and 8 supported this claim in which S11 indicated that "Feedback on content is rather subjective. It's hard to decide which one to adopt sometimes. But I like English-major peers' feedback more." With respect to the delivery area, the MP and LP groups made significant progress in gesture and body language, fluency, and speech volume. The results revealed that the implementation of online peer feedback into video blogging primarily benefitted students' expressive language skills such as gesture, speech volume, and the use of pauses and voice hesitations.

Both groups did not make significant improvements in their vocabulary use and grammar of the delivery component. Similarly, the comparison of S1 and S2's transcripts showed that both seldom corrected grammar mistakes or improved their vocabulary use in the revised speaking videos, which might be attributed to the limited feedback on these two aspects which they received. While reviewing peers' video clips, the students might not have paid much attention to these two types of errors as long as they could understand the contents of the presentations. Another possible explanation was that the students doubted the correctness of the peer feedback related to vocabulary use and grammar. The students' receptions of feedback (Table 7) showed that the students did not trust the feedback of non-English majors. The students such as S1 and S2 benefited more from English major students' feedback as they were able to provide more feedback on syntactical, morphological, or phonological problems than non-English major students, and their scaffolding played a major role in this blog-enhanced peer feedback activity, affirming the frame of the ZPD emphasis on the guidance of more knowledgeable peers (Ko et al., 2003).

The students' receptions of feedback revealed in this study is in line with the researchers' claims that since students are not considered knowledge experts, when compared with their teachers, their feedback to peers might contain problems and thus are less favored by students (Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, 2010; Strijbos, Narciss, & Dünnebier, 2010). However, the interactive processes between feedback providers and receivers in this study were captured in students' follow-up responses to problematic peer feedback on blog comment boards. It was found that after receiving peer feedback, those verifying comments received and taking the initiative in asking for further suggestions from peers made more progress in their revised clips. This finding echoes Yang, Badger, and Yu's (2006) study, which suggested that students with doubts or reservations about peers' feedback would, instead of solely relying on them, be encouraged to find related sources to confirm or correct received feedback, and such a self-correcting process was more likely to result in their better performance. In addition, students' levels of engagement with responding to peers' problematic feedback for clarification might also influence their learning outcomes. As Baggetun and Wasson (2006) stated, "in order to generate feedback one needs certain skills, in particular, participation skills…and [knowledge of] how to invite or [ask] questions so that someone feels tempted to reply" (p. 460).

Based on the findings in this study, several pedagogical implications may be drawn. First, because students made significant improvements in their overall speaking performance after receiving and responding to online peer feedback with teacher guidance and knowledgeable peer scaffolding, language teachers are recommended to provide students with explicit training in efficient feedback strategies and include more proficient learners in their instructional design so as to optimize the effects of blog-mediated feedback activities. Second, as seen in this study, although the students had received feedback training, sometimes they still provided unclear or implicit feedback. Hence, the teachers should encourage students who received the feedback to actively probe unclear feedback and negotiate problems through continuous interactions. Third, given that students' vocabulary use and grammar did not significantly improve, teachers should focus online peer feedback on enhancing students' speaking fluency. To develop students' speaking accuracy through online peer feedback, teachers should set one specific goal such as commenting only on peers' grammar or vocabulary use to help students attend to aspects to which they might otherwise pay little attention. In addition, students should be required to upload transcripts into their individual video blogs to supplement the audio portion of the videos.

As the present study may be regarded as an initial exploratory study, suggestions for further research include the following. First, larger sample sizes from different language proficiency levels or age groups can be recruited to

examine whether the use of online peer feedback via blogs can yield similar outcomes with a broader range of students. Second, this study did not explore the relationships between improvement of non-English major's content and delivery items and EFL ability of English major students who provided feedback to those non-English majors. Future research may explore how the language proficiency of more capable majors' content and delivery items impacts the improvement of less capable ones' speaking performance. Third, researchers can further investigate whether posting transcripts as well as the video clips affects the quality of students' feedback, which might in turn influence students' speaking performance. Finally, more follow-up qualitative case analysis for documenting the experiences of individual students can also be conducted to generate different insights gained from peer feedback through blogs.

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Appendix A

Self-reflection sheet

Please use the following guiding questions to elicit your learning in this course. You should write at least a 100-word response to each question.

(1) What difficulties did you encounter while giving peer feedback on video blogs?
(2) How did you solve each difficulty you encountered? Please explain in detail. For each difficulty, you may propose more than one solution.
(3) What are the benefits of utilizing peer feedback through blogs?
(4) What are your suggestions for improving this project especially in the aspect of utilizing peer feedback via blogs?