The role of self-assessment and written corrective feedback in L2 writing development: A complex dynamic systems theory approach

Attila Miklós Wind, Eötvös Loránd University

Self-assessment (SA) and written corrective feedback (WCF) has been found to promote second language (L2) writing development (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2012; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). SA promotes self-regulatory processes (Butler, 2016; 2018) and has been positively associated with learners' performance (Butler & Lee, 2010). The main aim of WCF, apart from focusing on language errors, is to facilitate L2 writers develop their editing, revision and overall writing skills. From this perspective, WCF is associated with the learning-to-write dimension of L2 writing (Manchón, 2011). Previous studies found that L2 writing develops nonlinearly showing ebbs and flows (Verspoor, Lowie, & van Dijk, 2008). Therefore, this study adopted a Complex Dynamic Systems Theory approach to investigate the L2 writing development of 11 English as a foreign language (EFL) university students. The participants composed 10 argumentative essays while attending an Advanced Writing course at a university in Budapest. The participants were asked to self-assess the quality of their writing using a rubric, while the teacher provided WCF. The essays were analysed for linguistic complexity indices, while the essays were rated by two teachers. The accuracy of SA was calculated by correlating the students' and the teachers' scores. This study found that the participants improved the accuracy of SA from the first to the last measurement points. However, the trajectories of SA accuracy showed peaks and dips between the first and the last measurement points. As far as linguistic complexity is concerned, the only statistically significant change was detected in the mean length of sentence index. The essays contained shorter sentences at the last than at the first measurement point. This study shows that the interaction of SA and WCF contributes to improvements in L2 writing especially in organization. This study also has pedagogical implications by demonstrating the usefulness of SA in L2 writing development.