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Using Peer Review to Promote Writing Development in ESL Classes

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Using Peer Review to Promote Writing Development in ESL Classes

By

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Writing feedback is important for English as Second Language (ESL) students because it boosts students' self confidence, it helps students become accountable for their own learning, it encourages students to work on their writing weaknesses and it ought to help students improve on their writing strengths. In addition, writing feedback helps students know if they have learned the material. For instance, it helps students reflect on their own writing skills including their ability to engage in brainstorming, thesis development, sentence construction and paragraph development. Finally, feedback encourages students to interact with teachers and thus interaction can reduce students' misunderstanding of the material taught.

There are different ways of giving students feedback on their written work including teacher feedback and peer feedback. Teacher feedback can be defined as a process through which a teacher communicates with students about how they responded to a task. On the other hand, van den Berg, Admiraal and Pilot (2006) stated that peer feedback can be viewed as a process in which "students assess the quality of their fellow students' work and provide one another with feedback" (p. 135).

Peer review seems to be a venerable teaching strategy that has been used for centuries. Topping (2006) stated that peer review and peer tutoring have been used since the ancient Greek era. However, it has become a crucial feature of writing classrooms these days. In the 21st century, teachers use peer review more frequently than before because some scholars and researchers report that peer review is very effective in improving students' writing performance.

Writing is viewed by many scholars as a process and it requires contributions of time from teachers and students in order for it to achieve satisfactory results. Teacher feedback is common in most of South African schools where I did my schooling. Unfortunately, assessing or grading papers and providing students with feedback in overcrowded classrooms has become a real challenge for teachers in developing and rural areas. In some classrooms in South Africa for example, the student to teacher ratio is 100-150 students per teacher. Teaching in such overpopulated classrooms limits the feedback the teachers can provide to students. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) stated that "Feedback is fundamental to learning, but opportunities to receive it are often scarce in classrooms" (p. 154). This is certainly the case in large language learning classes in South Africa.

Another factor posing a challenge for promoting second language writing development of some South African students is that teachers have limited time to grade students' papers. This often means students receive feedback long after completing a written task. For example, students receive feedback two to three weeks after the submission time, making it hard for them to work on their weaknesses and improve on their strengths before completing subsequent writing assignments. Receiving feedback late does not help students learn better. The main objective of feedback is to give students an opportunity to know if they did well in their written texts and to help them improve their texts. South African teachers need to come up with ways to provide students with credible feedback on their written work. The big question is how can South African teachers provide their students with timely feedback? Peer review may represent one way of responding to this question.

In my own teaching experience, I never employed peer review in my classes. I also do not recall any of my teachers using this method. However, I have had a completely different experience over the past 2 years in US classrooms. For the past two years, I have learned about the importance of peer reviews and many of my teachers use peer review as an important way of providing students with timely feedback on their writing. For example, I spent about six months in California at San Jose State University; in all the writing classes I took, we reviewed each other's written work. I found teachers at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where I enrolled for a Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, also use peer review. Upon my arrival in the US, I did not know the rationale for using peer review in ESL classrooms. Like many of my fellow classmates in South Africa, I did not realize that peer review can be useful as a review technique for giving students feedback regarding their written texts. One reason South African teachers may not have used peer feedback is because students may not trust the opinion of their fellow students. Students believe that the teacher is a superior figure bestowed with the power to answer all students' questions and provide them with feedback on their written papers.

Purpose statement

This Alternate Plan Paper explores the usefulness of peer feedback in ESL classes and suggests how peer feedback can be effectively integrated into South African ESL classrooms. In the literature, the following key terms and definitions are used interchangeably: peer feedback, peer evaluation, peer assessment and peer review (Van den Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2006). In this paper I will use the terms peer feedback and peer review.

Carr (2008) refers to peer review as an important teaching technique in which students read and make comments about their peers' written work. She also stated that this technique gives students an opportunity to learn about their own weaknesses and strengths. In addition, she defined peer review as a way in which students provide feedback to their peers for future improvement. Carr (2008) notes that teachers need to provide students with guidelines (reference list or checklist) that they can refer to as they consider and evaluate their peers' written work.

This paper is divided into four parts. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and presents a purpose statement. Chapter 2 reviews relevant research related to the use of peer review in second language writing classrooms. Chapter 3 offers suggestions for using peer review in the context of South African ESL classrooms based on what was reported in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 summarizes the paper and discusses the implications of introducing peer review in South African ESL classrooms.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of writing has been product-oriented for many years; however, in the past 25 years, the teaching of writing has become more process-oriented and teachers in North American academic institutions seem to use the process-oriented approach in how they teach writing (Hedgecock, 2005). According to Hedgecock, a process-oriented approach to writing involves multiple steps including among others prewriting (thinking and planning), writing, editing, revising and rewriting activities.

In addition, Hedgecock (2005) stated that the process-oriented approach includes "…formative feedback from real readers in peer response workshops" (p. 605). The process-oriented approach requires teachers to use various teaching techniques to teach writing in ESL classes.   Included among the teaching strategies is a technique called peer response; it is also called peer review. Peer review is a teaching strategy in which ESL writing students work together in small groups to give each other feedback on their written texts (Hedgecock, 2005).

Peer review is based on several important language learning theories, including cooperative learning and social interaction. Cooperative learning can also be referred to as collaborative learning. According to Jacobs et al. (1998) cooperative learning can be defined as "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (p. 1). Peer review requires students to work together in pairs or small groups depending on the kind of the task students are required to fulfill; therefore, cooperative learning

serves as a pedagogical rationale for the use of peer review (or what some may refer to as peer feedback) in ESL writing classes.

Furthermore, peer review is based on the theory of social interaction that has been attributed to the work of Vygotsky (Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998). Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) believe that social interaction serves as the foundation for learning and development. Since peer review is based upon the theory of social interaction amongst students in the class, it is theoretically justified on the basis of social interaction theory. Social interaction facilitates students' ability to make comments that are helpful for their peers' learning development.

<div align="center">Selected Classroom Studies of Peer Review</div>

Table 2.1 *Selected studies of peer review*

Author/ (s) and year	Research focus	Data collection and analysis procedures	Key findings
Davies, P. (2006)	The study investigated the effectiveness and quality of peer feedback on essay writing.	Computer software, observation, and document analysis.	Students who understood the material best had confidence in providing feedback, and their feedback was received as more credible by peers.
Dippold, D. (2009)	The study investigated the extent to which the use of blogs facilitates peer feedback.	Computer software, questionnaire, and focus group interviews	The use of blogs appears to contribute to the effectiveness of peer review.
Guangwei, H. (2005)	The study sought to determine the extent to which peer review was an	Survey of colleagues (interviews) and	Peer review is generally useful to students and it is most effective when teachers follow up to see how students respond to the feedback.

	effective instructional strategy and useful as an alternative to teacher feedback in writing classes.	student (questionnaires)	
Hyland, F. (2000)	The aim was to examine the effects of peer feedback on students' academic performance in ESL writing classes.	A longitudinal case study that collected interview and questionnaire data from students.	Peer feedback helps students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in writing.
Li, L., Liu L.X. and Steckelberg, A. (2010)	The study investigated how peer feedback affected the quality of students' writing in course projects.	Document analysis	Students learn about themselves when they interact with their peers and peer feedback appears to improve the quality of students' writing.
Ngar-Fun, L. and Carless, D. (2006)	The study sought to establish a rationale for peer feedback and determine the extent to which it enhances students' learning.	Survey of students using questionnaires and interviews	Peer feedback appears to increase the amount and timeliness of feedback students receive on their writing.
Nilson, L.B. (2003)	Can student's peer feedback be improved and is it accurate?	Document analysis	Peer feedback is important to students for both short and long-term goals.
Reuse-Durham, N. (2005)	The study examined the extent to which peer feedback was considered by students to be useful and meaningful.	Survey of students (questionnaire)	Students report that peer feedback is useful to them.

This section presents the key findings of selected studies of peer review on learners'
development of written texts.

In 2006, Davies conducted a research study regarding the effectiveness of peer review in
relation to how students reviewed their essays after receiving feedback from their peers; the main

aim of his study was to investigate the quality of peer review as demonstrated in the written essays of students. Davies (2006) used a computer software program to collect data from 8 university students who had background with using computers. These participants were required to produce about 8 essays each for a total of 67writing samples. Davies also interacted with the participants over a long period of time in which he was able to collect data by observation and document analysis. Davies' research revealed that students who were better at providing peer review in class were those students who had a better understanding of what was taught in the class. Davies argued that students who had difficulties understanding what was taught in class did not have the confidence to give their peers adequate feedback. Davies found that students who did not have a grasp of what was taught ended up not giving good feedback and their input or contribution was not valued as credible and reliable. This suggests that students need to have confidence in their ability to provide helpful peer feedback to their peers and this requires that students understand course content.

Dippold (2009) examined the extent to which "blogs can facilitate peer feedback and what issues need to be addressed for them to be a valuable tool in this process" (p. 18). The researcher conducted a research study using a triangulation method of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies including interviews and questionnaires to collect data from a group of students who were in a German language class. These students knew how to use computers. They used a computer program on MySpace to blog and peer review each other's blogs and provided each other with feedback. Dippold discovered that conducting peer review through online blogs appeared to be useful to students. She also argued that peer feedback is important and needs to

be done under controlled circumstances; specifically teachers need to take leadership roles and need to orient students on the proper way of reviewing their peers' papers.

Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) reported on how feedback is given and how it should be provided to students. They highlighted several benefits linked to peer review. Firstly, they argued that peer review encourages students to be responsible for their own learning. It encourages students to become responsible and accountable for their own learning rather than leaving everything to the teacher. The more students become responsible for their own learning, the more likely they will be to be able to give each other valuable feedback on their written texts.

Secondly, Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) asserted that peer review gives students an opportunity to engage in constructive and less intimidating talk about their own written work. Given the teacher's superiority in the class, students may be uncomfortable and as a result students end up not paying attention to their teacher's feedback. The interaction between students and the teachers is often more formal than the interaction between peers and this makes peer review less intimidating. Too formal an environment often discourages students from asking questions on aspects they do not understand.

 Thirdly, Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) argued that peer feedback allows students a chance to receive feedback from real audiences. In face-to-face interaction, students tend to provide each other with authentic reactions and constructive feedback on their written texts. Interacting with an authentic audience may also reduce chances for ambiguous and vague comments because writers can ask for clarification and get answers to questions.

Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) based their generalizations about peer review on the results of data collected on 43 graduate students who were randomly assigned to three groups. Analysis of data revealed that peer review allowed students and teachers to build strong rapport and students in the study gained knowledge and skills from the feedback they received from their peers (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005).

Interestingly, Johnson and Johnson (1999) also found that peer feedback builds strong bonds amongst students in such a way that students begin to care deeply about each other's academic achievement (p. 125). The researchers argued that the more deeply students care about each other, the more they provide constructive feedback to each other and the more they focus on improvement of their weaknesses. When students review their peers' written work, there is an opportunity for students to help each perform better in their academic work. Given the amount of work students need to put into producing a well written piece of text in their L2, they need as much assistance as possible and peer feedback is one form of assistance.

Guangwei (2005) examined the use of peer review among Chinese ESL teachers and students. He used questionnaires and interviews to collect data from his Chinese ESL colleagues and students who had studied English for at least 6 years. The researcher sought to determine the extent to which peer review can be an effective pedagogical strategy that can be used as an alternative to teacher feedback in classes. Based on the data collected from colleagues who had used peer review in their classes, Guangwei found that when teachers do not follow up, peer feedback is ineffective with students. However, he reported that it was an effective teaching technique when teachers follow-up to see how students have given feedback and reacted to their

peer's review. He stated that peer feedback was generally constructive because it often touched on areas that appeared to be problematic for the ESL writers. Guangwei (2005) found that students took peer reviews seriously and they tried to incorporate peer feedback into their revisions after careful considerations. In fact, Guangwei (2005) reported that most students found the peer review useful and 9 participants rated it as very useful (p. 339). This study revealed that students find peer review useful and it can make a positive contribution to students' academic knowledge and skills.

Hyland (2000) investigated the effects of peer feedback in ESL writing classes by examining two cases of students who showed mixed reactions to how peer review affected their academic performance. She conducted a longitudinal study that was based in a university in New Zealand and collected data from the participants who were in a full-time English development course which ran for 14 weeks. She used interviews and questionnaires to gather data from the study participants. Her results revealed that peer feedback helped students become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses in as far as their written work was concerned.

In another study of university students, Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) explored how peer assessment affected the quality of the projects students produced in a course. The study included 43 university students who were required to complete a research project using webquest. The results revealed that students learn about themselves when they interact with their peers and peer review appears to improve the quality of a student's writing.

Similarly, a study conducted by Reuse-Durham (2005) investigated the extent to which peer feedback is effective and meaningful to students. The study included 19 educational research

graduate students as participants and each filled out an evaluation form based on a research paper provided to them.   According to Reuse-Durham (2005), peer review is important because it gives students an opportunity to share ideas and learn skills and peer review provides students with informed feedback that can help them improve on their work. Reuse-Durham concluded that peer review is important and has the capacity to influence the academic performance of students positively.

   Mendonca and Johnson (1994) investigated whether students made changes on their written papers based on what their peers suggested (cited in Hyland, 2000). According to Mendonca and Johnson, more than 50% of students who participated in their research study embraced peer feedback and incorporated the suggestions made by their peers into their written work. Similarly, in a study reported by Nelson and Murphy (1992b), 50 % of students considered their peers' comments and the student authors made changes to their written papers accordingly. These two studies and the study reported by Guangwei (2005), reveal that students attended to feedback from their peers and responded to it.

   The aim of research conducted by Ngar-Fun and Carless (2006) sought to establish the rationale for peer review and to find out if peer feedback enhances learning. The researchers used questionnaires and interviews to survey a sample of students and faculty. The study participants included 1740 higher education students and 460 faculty members in Hong Kong. The data from these participants revealed that peer review enhances students' learning because students can help each other. The researchers stated that using peer review not only gives students the opportunity to help their peers, but it also gives students a chance to know about their own

weaknesses. According to Ngar-Fun and Carless (2006), students receive more feedback from their peers than they would normally get from their professors and it is more timely feedback. Furthermore, Ngar-Fun and Carless found that students continued giving each other feedback on a private and individual basis and this contributed to further learning outside of class (Ngar-Fun & Carless, 2006).

Based on the studies reported in this section, the following generalizations can be made about the use of peer review.

- Self confidence is a factor in students' ability to provide credible peer feedback.
- Teachers need to prepare students for peer review and to monitor students' use of it.
- Peer review can decrease anxiety, increase face-to-face interaction and rapport amongst students, and create an authentic audience for student writing.
- Peer review can contribute to students' insight about themselves and their writing.
- Peer review appears to be valued and utilized by students.

Cautions in Using Peer Review

Notwithstanding the positive effects peer feedback can have on students' academic progress, Nilson (2003), Davies (2006) and Ngar-Fun and Carless (2006) have found that if it is not administered properly, it may in fact have negative effects. For example, Nilson (2003) used a document analysis research method to see if peer feedback is important to students. The

documents he analyzed were based on the use of peer review in classrooms in tertiary institutions. The results suggest that some students find peer review misleading and less credible since they believe that their peers do not have the expertise to review their work or to provide adequate and meaningful responses to it. Based on this finding, it may be important to help students appreciate the benefits of peer review and to train students in the use of peer review. According to Ngar-fun and Carless, peer review becomes questionable if students are asked to allocate grades to their peers. Ngar-fun and Carless stated that grades should be the teacher's responsibility because peers do not like being accountable for misjudging their peers.

Given these student concerns, peer review should be administered under controlled circumstances. This means that the teacher should develop checklists and guidelines for students to use when they evaluate their peers' written work and teachers should assume responsibility for assigning grades to students' writing.

Preparing ESL Students to Use Peer Review in Writing Classes

As noted above, one of the most important considerations in the effective use of peer review in ESL writing classes is the need to prepare students to engage in the process of giving and using peer feedback. For peer feedback to be reliable and useful, teachers need to train students in how to provide feedback. Based on the studies reviewed in this chapter and other selected references, there are concrete steps teachers can take to facilitate the use of peer review in ESL classrooms. For instance, teachers can use blogs in which students read each others' work and provide each other with feedback using guiding questions or checklists provided by the teacher.

Carr (2008) suggested that teachers use a framework similar to the one displayed in Table 2.2 to guide students on what to look for in their peers' written texts.

Table 2.2 *Sample Peer Review Framework* Based on Carr (2008)

Story writing rating scale: Type of Evaluation: Self or peer (Circle one):	
Item	**Good, ok or not yet**
The story has a well-thought-out setting.	
The story has well-thought-out characters.	
The story has a conflict.	
The story has a solution to the conflict.	
The writing contains correct capitalization.	
The writing contains correct punctuation.	
The writing contains words that are correctly spelled	
Comments:--	

Raimes (1983) claimed that "If students are alerted to what to look for and how to look for it, they can be very helpful to each other. It is not productive just to expect students to exchange and actually mark each other's papers.... With guidance, with clear, specific instructions on what to look for and what to do, they can be useful readers of drafts (p. 148)."

Carr (2008) suggests that guidance can take the form of providing students with sample texts of poorly written peer comments so that students can avoid making similar mistakes. Carr (2008)

also advocates that teachers should provide students with guiding questions to make sure they know what to do in evaluating their peers' written work. According to Jacobs et al. (1998), teachers should model for students how they should review written texts. In other words, teachers should demonstrate to students what to focus on and how to communicate about their peers' written papers.

The success of peer review in many cases seems to hinge on teachers guiding students in what to do with respect to written texts. When teachers provided guidelines of appropriate feedback, it helped students to provide better feedback on their peers' written papers. Although some studies found that peer review may not work for all students, most of the studies reported in this chapter found that peer feedback contributed positively to the academic performance of ESL writing students, by helping students to realize the strengths in their writing and how to improve the perceived weaknesses in their texts. Studies also revealed that peer review is more effective when students are prepared for it. Therefore, teachers should use guiding questions and should share with students sample writing documents from previous classes. In Chapter 3, I propose how to investigate and apply the use of peer review in South African ESL classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

APPLICATION

This chapter suggests how peer review can be used to promote the writing development of South African students based on what was reported in Chapter 2 of this Alternate Plan Paper. It also describes the pilot study that was conducted with ESL teachers and students at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and how the study can be modified and used to investigate South African ESL teachers' and students' perceptions toward peer review.

Preparing Students for Peer Review

Liu and Hansen (2002) offer guidelines that will prepare ESL students for peer review. The guidelines are organized into four categories: affective, cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic. Teachers can prepare students for peer review by following the recommendations included in each category.

Affective

- Create a comfortable environment to assist students in establishing peer trust
- Encourage peer support
- Establish the role of peer response in classrooms
- Allow sufficient time to familiarize students with the peer response procedures and format, especially with computer software
- Give peer comments before those from the teacher

Cognitive

- Highlight the purpose of peer response

- Stress the importance of peer response for revision by using drafts and peer response to demonstrate the effects of peer response on revision

- Use task-specific peer response sheets catering to the needs of learners at different proficiency levels

- Model proficiency levels by using videos or simulations

- Provide concrete guidelines based on peer responses

- Practice asking questions that encourage negotiation of meaning

Sociocultural

- Increase the awareness of the nature of intercultural communication in group work

- Invite students to work from their own experiences and perceptions toward peer response work

- Introduce peer response strategies such as turn-taking, interaction, showing respect to peers, etc.

Linguistic

- Introduce pragmatic and useful expressions in peer response

- Use examples to show what is inappropriate in peer response

- Instruct students in asking the right questions

From: Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 129.

Utilizing Peer Review in South African ESL Classrooms

South African students will not be familiar with peer review and may resist engaging in it.

Therefore, the teacher will need to familiarize students with peer review. The teacher will also

need to explain explicitly to students how peer review should be conducted. Table 3.1 represents

a survey that can be used to obtain insights into how South African ESL students view peer

review.

Table 3.1 *Survey of South African ESL Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Peer Review*

Questions	Responses
1. What does peer review mean to you?	
2. What are the advantages of peer review?	
3. What are the disadvantages of peer review?	
4. Would you like to use peer review in ESL classes?	
5. What should teachers do to ensure successful use of peer review in South African ESL classes?	

Following the administration of the student survey, the teacher will do the following with students.

> **Step 1** Discuss the survey results with students so that they can understand why it would be important to embark on a process of reviewing each others' written work. Some researchers stated that teachers should mention the objective of peer review in ESL classes. As noted above, Liu and Hansen (2002) emphasize the need to help students understand the role of peer review.

> **Step 2** Demonstrate examples of student writing and appropriate and inappropriate peer review responses (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

> **Step 3** Provide students a handout that contains peer review guidelines (Raimes, 1983; Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Table 3.2 provides an example of guidelines that could be included in the handout that can be used in a South African context with ESL learners.

Table 3.2 *Peer Review Guidelines for ESL Learners in South Africa*

What is the main idea of the paragraph? Write your response on the right margin. For example, "This paragraph is about…"
Underline the topic sentence, use a different color if possible
Circle the example or supporting details
Now what do you think your peer needs to do to improve their written paper?

Table 3.3 provides an example of peer review guidelines for beginning or low intermediate

level ESL students who are developing a paragraph that describes a process.

Table 3.3 *Peer Response Sheet for a Process Paragraph* (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 134).

1. What is the process?

2. Is the topic sentence clear? What is it?

3. How many steps are there in the process? Can you follow them clearly? Do
   you think you would be able to make/ do X based on these steps? Why or why
   not?

4. Should the writer add more steps or delete steps? Which ones and why?

5. Are there signal words before each step? Should the writer add more?

6. How does the writer end the paragraph? Should the writer change the ending?

7. What other suggestions do you have for the writer?

Step 4 Distribute an anonymous ESL writing sample and have students engage in

providing peer review with it. For example, in some of the classes I took in the US

the professors used to bring some papers to classes to show students models for their

writing projects.

Step 5 Have students engage in peer review in pairs based on a short piece of writing

and have them pose questions about it to see if they are attending to the guidelines. In

this regard, students should be encouraged to work together in reviewing a piece of

writing and have a discussion about it to see how students' reviews are similar or different from each other.

Step 6 Provide students a set of useful phrases for responding appropriately to classmates' texts. Liu and Hansen (2002) offer the following set of useful statements for facilitating peer response to texts.

Table 3.4 *Liu and Hansen List of Useful Sentences for Peer Review Activities*

What ESL students might say	What might be more appropriate
▪ This wrong	▪ Is this right ▪ I'm not sure if this is right ▪ I wonder if this is what you had in mind ▪ I'm afraid I don't understand what you meant ▪ Could you explain to us what you wanted to say here? ▪ I did not quite understand your point here. ▪ Would you please rephrase this sentence?
▪ How could you say that?	▪ What do you mean here ▪ This idea is interesting, but I could not find any discussion in your paper to support this idea. ▪ Your point is well made, but there is lack of evidence to convince me.
▪ Please change this word/ expression/ sentence because it makes no sense here.	▪ I thought this word meant… ▪ I don't understand this word. ▪ Could you please clarify this word/ expression/sentence? ▪ I might be wrong, but I did not catch what you meant here. ▪ Can you come up with a better word/ expression/ sentence for what you had in mind
▪ I don't understand this paper	▪ What do you mean? ▪ What is your main idea? ▪ I'm afraid that I did not quite understand this paper because… ▪ It seems that you have spent a lot of time working on this paper, but could you give us a brief summary of it?
▪ I don't like this paper	▪ I'm a little confused about the paper. ▪ I'm not sure I agree with ideas ▪ You put a lot of effort into this paper, but I feel like I could have

		▪	enjoyed it more if I knew what you intended to say.
		▪	Although some points are well made, I guess your way of thinking is different from mine.
▪	How could you write this paper without thesis statement?	▪	Can you tell me where your thesis statement is?
		▪	Your thesis statement is not clear to me.
		▪	Could you help me locate your thesis statement in the paper?
▪	Why did you use this word/ expression/ sentence again and again?	▪	Can you use another word here?
		▪	You use this word a lot. Maybe use a different word.
		▪	This word/ expression/ sentence is good here, but its power is decreased due to overuse.
		▪	I like this word/ expression/ sentence, but your paper might be better with a variety of expressions.
		▪	Could you think of another word/ expression/ sentence to enrich the text?
▪	You could have done a better job	▪	This is good but you need to…
		▪	I like your paper, but you can…
		▪	I can see your effort here, but I am sure you can find many ways to improve your paper such as…
		▪	I can see you have a lot to do in your revision of this paper, although the basic idea of this paper is there.
▪	This paper is perfect	▪	Very good. You could…
		▪	This is good but if you want you can…
		▪	Well done. But this paper could be better if you…
		▪	What a good job! If I were you, I would still work hard to improve…
		▪	Nice job. I believe you can still work on…

(From: Liu & Hansen, 2002, pp. 141-142)

Step 7 Have students post a writing task online and have students provide each other with peer reviews in the form of a post. This can be done through the use of blogs on the Internet (Dippold, 2009). At this stage some teachers who have learned how to teach language through computer mediated system can show students how to utilize the Internet in this way.

This section of Chapter 3 demonstrates how South African ESL students can be prepared to utilize peer review. The proposed pedagogical sequence is based on the investigations and recommendations of researchers.

The Pilot Study of ESL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Peer Review

Since peer review is currently not a feature of ESL writing in South African classrooms, it is important to conduct empirical investigations related to the practice. In preparation for conducting a study in South Africa, I carried out a small pilot study at a medium-size, Midwestern public university in the United States in 2011.

The purpose of the pilot study was to investigate ESL teachers' and students' perceptions of peer review in ESL writing classes in order to design a larger study that could be used to explore the issue as it pertains to the South African context. Data were collected through the use of structured interviews that were conducted one-to-one and during a single session. Each participant was interviewed for a minimum of five minutes. Interviews were conducted in the university student union in February 2011. While the interviews were conducted in a public setting, the interviewer met with participants in a relatively quiet location. The researcher purposefully selected participants on the basis of their having taken or taught an ESL writing class. Two of the participants were teachers who taught ESL writing classes and three participants were ESL students in writing courses. Participants were asked the following four key questions:

1. What does peer review mean to you?
2. Do you think peer review is helpful? If yes or no why?

3. Name two ways peer feedback peer review has been helpful to you or your fellow

   students.

4. Would you recommend the use of peer review in ESL writing? How should it be

   used in ESL classes?

The researcher used a field note procedure to collect participants' responses to interview

questions. Table 3.5 presents the verbatim responses to interview questions.

Table 3.5 *Participants' Responses to Interview Questions*

Participant	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
1 (student)	Help each other revise work and point out errors	Yes, sometimes we cannot see our own problems by ourselves and other can help	Helped me use grammar properly	Definitely in class, ESL students can spend some time reading each others' work and discuss together
2 (teacher)	A very useful and effective way for students to give suggestions to each other	Yes, I do believe it is helpful. Sometimes some errors which occur in your composition are not easily detected and the same situation could be happening to your peer	Error correction Idea recommendation	I would recommend the use of feedback in ESL writing classes. Before teacher corrects students' essays, a teacher can let students give feedback of their essays to each other.
3 (student)	It means a lot because you get to know what your peers think about your writing ability.	Yes because they will give up a constructive criticism	Helped me review my paper Helped me make a career decision I had difficulty with subject-verb-object agreement (SVO), peer review helped me know how to overcome that challenge because my peers used to show how me the areas that needed attention."	No, because ESL writing students are in ESL class because they need assistant writing their own papers.
4 (student)	it offers another analysis of my academic work and	yes, it gave me insight into how well I accomplish a	Has improved my academic writing. Helps enhance ideas of	Yes, I would recommend it. It should be used help students

	helps me conceptualize the pros and cons of my writing	specific goal	how to improve a project or essay.	others' works and to compare and contrast the various qualities they contain
5 (student)	Peer review means a learning environment in which students are given an opportunity to interact and give each other feedback and ideas	Peer review is helpful because it makes students less nervous than teacher feedback It creates a sense of learning community	Decreases nervousness It helps in finding more ideas from peers.	Yes, I highly recommend peer review because students share ideas and information during review of each others' work.
6 (teacher)	Peer feedback is the process by which a peer (same age or same level-not a teacher) gives an informal education of some type of presentation, project, writing, etc.	Peer review serves to create a sense of learning community in a learning environment. It also helps students play up their strengths while helping them strengthen their weaknesses	Peer review helped me understand how to write clear, unambiguous and less vague paper, "when you write a lot is simply clear in your own head and not necessarily communicated to others. Peer review can highlight those areas that aren't clear"	I would, absolutely. Especially in the language classroom some students will be better at certain elements of language than others. Peer review needs to be set up clearly so that students can understand what they are supposed to focus on (organization, grammar, word choice, clarity etc). Teachers need to guide students in this regard.

Based on their responses, participants generally agree that peer feedback is an informal process whereby students of the same age or study level help each other revise their written work. For instance, participant 1 stated, "Students help each other to revise written work, and point out the errors." This view coincides with some of the definitions cited in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. According to van den Berg, Admiraal and Pilot (2006) peer feedback refers to a process whereby students read each others' work and make constructive comments about each others' work.

According to the data, participants think that peer feedback is beneficial to students' academic writing skills. Student participants stated that peer feedback enabled them to identify

their writing weaknesses, something they would have not been able to do by themselves. Similarly, Hyland (2000) stated that peer feedback enables ESL students to know about their writing strengths and weaknesses. When asked the above mentioned question, participant 1 stated "Yes, sometimes we cannot see our own problems ourselves."

In addition, the data from the pilot study shows that participants believe that peer feedback creates a community of learners. Participant 5 stated, "It [peer feedback] creates a sense of learning community." Scholars who have studied how peer feedback affects ESL students writing skills generally concur with what participants reported. For example, Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) stated that peer feedback gives students an opportunity to have face to face interaction with their peers. These authors submit that face to face interaction builds rapport and good relations amongst students. Good interaction seems to serve as a good foundation for the constructive feedback provided by peers to one another.

Data collected from participants also revealed peer feedback improves the quality of written work. Some participants stated that peer feedback helped them clarify written concepts and phrases in their essays. They mentioned that peer feedback helped them clearly communicate their ideas to their readers. For instance, participant 2 (teacher) stated, "When you write in your own head [to you it] is clear, but to the reader it is not; therefore peer feedback helped me take into consideration the intended readers."

Furthermore, some student participants highlighted that peer feedback helped them with grammar mistakes. They mentioned that peer feedback helped them to write sentences that were grammatically correct. For example, participant 3 stated, "I had difficulty with subject-verb-

object agreement (SVO), peer review helped me know how to overcome that challenge because my peers used to show how me the areas that needed attention."

In additions, data revealed that some teacher participants never thought of writing as a process that needs to be revised several times before it will conform to a particular academic writing genre. Therefore, peer feedback helped them understand that academic writing in ESL classes requires a process approach that includes revision based on feedback.

Furthermore, data revealed that ESL students revised their written work several times after receiving feedback from their peers. In this case students appeared to value peer feedback and used it to their benefit. This is consistent with what Reuse-Durham (2005) found: Peer feedback encourages ESL students to revise their written work. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) also found that students considered peer feedback and the suggestions made by their peers when they revised their written work.

Based on the results of the pilot study, the researcher will make a number of changes before conducting a larger study in South Africa. First, it is important to obtain a representative sample of the population of ESL teachers and students in South African tertiary schools. If it is too expensive or challenging to obtain a random stratified sample, the researcher may use a larger purposive sampling procedure. An equal number of students and teachers would be included in a larger study and separate interview questions will be developed for each group. To facilitate the review and analysis of responses, interviews will be audio-taped. Also, the researcher will adopt a semi-structured interview procedure because it is more likely to capture a richer source of information from participants than the structured interview protocol used in this pilot study

(Nunan, 1997). This data collection procedure will be combined with a questionnaire in order to expand the amount of data obtained from study participants and to triangulate the data collected in the study. In order to increase the reliability of the interpretation of the results, the researcher will include multiple researchers in all phases of the study, including the data collection and analysis phases of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, the discussion was centered on a brief historical background of how the researcher was exposed to peer review. It also focused on the prospects of using peer review in schools in South Africa. Furthermore, Chapter 1 provided a theoretical perspective on the notion of peer feedback. In addition, it addressed the researcher's interest in finding out the effect of peer feedback in ESL writing classes.

Chapter 2 reviewed scholarly work on the effect of peer feedback in ESL classes. The studies that were reviewed in Chapter 2 provided a definition of peer review and how it affected ESL students' writing ability. In addition, the chapter focused on how peer feedback could be implemented effectively in ESL writing classes.

In Chapter 3, the researcher discussed the results of a small pilot study that explored the perceptions of students and teachers regarding peer review. The chapter also proposed how the researcher could use the results of the research reviewed in Chapter 2 to prepare South African ESL students for peer review.

Chapter 4 provides a summation of this Alternate Plan Paper. It also argues based on the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2, peer feedback is arguably an important teaching technique and a valuable assessment tool.

Peer feedback is an important teaching strategy for South African teachers because it saves time for grading papers. Sometimes it may not be easy for teachers to explain everything to the

students especially regarding the writing skill. Peer feedback can be helpful in such instances because teachers indirectly use students as co-teachers in the sense that students discuss and help each other in small groups. According to Reuse-Durham (2005) peer feedback is useful in the sense that it gives students an opportunity for sharing ideas and learning skills.

Moreover, peer feedback has been proven to build good relations amongst students. Some students showed that students learnt best from their peers and experienced love and the sense of sharing when working together in small groups. According to Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) peer feedback gives students a less intimidating learning environment conducive for a successful acquisition of English as Second Language.

Notwithstanding the positive effect peer feedback has on the academic performance of students in ESL writing classes, some researchers argued that peer feedback may have a negative effect on the academic performance of students in ESL writing classes. For instance, Davies (2006) asserted that students who had difficulty coping with what was taught could not give their peers constructive feedback. In some instances, it was also argued that students had no confidence in the feedback they received from their peers.

There are some possible ways teachers can ensure that peer feedback is implemented successfully in ESL writing classes. Some of the suggested ways include the use of checklists or guidelines designed by teachers. However, students would need to be guided in how to use the guidelines. A teacher would also need to show students what to look for in their peers' written papers. Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) recommended that teachers lead the peer review discussions in the classes. Similarly, Ho and Savignon (2007) stated that teachers need to be

careful when administering peer review in their ESL writing classes. They argue that peer feedback works best if used under controlled circumstances. Controlled circumstances involve a process by which teachers lead and guide students on how to evaluate their peers' written texts.

Finally, peer feedback has positive effects on students in ESL writing classes in several ways. For example, it improves students self confidence, it makes students accountable for their own learning, it minimizes grading workload on teachers' shoulders, it helps students know about their writing weaknesses, and it builds a community of learners in ESL writing classes.

Potential Challenges for Implementing Peer Review in South Africa

There are several challenges that may affect the utilization of peer review. Firstly, teachers may not be familiar with the effective ways of implementing peer review in their ESL classes. Secondly, teachers may have a negative attitude towards implementing peer review in ESL writing classes. Thirdly, students may have difficulties reviewing each others' written papers. Finally, students may have negative attitudes toward the use of peer review in ESL classes.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned challenges, there are several things that can be done to ensure that using peer review as an alternative teaching strategy works well for both teachers and students. The following preliminary steps may be needed in the case there are challenges regarding peer review use in ESL writing classes in South Africa.

1. Teacher workshops on the use of peer review/ peer feedback would need to be conducted.

2. Extra materials containing how peer review should be utilized should be provided to teachers of ESL writing classes.

3. Sample texts need to be provided to students for reference.

4. Teachers need to take the lead in how peer feedback is provided in their ESL writing classrooms.

5. More explanation on why peer feedback matters should be shared.

If these steps are taken, it is likely that peer review can be effectively introduced and used in South African ESL writing classes. Both students and teachers would benefit from the adoption of peer review.

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