

Peer Feedback in Anonymous Peer Review in an EFL Writing Class in Spain¹

Retroalimentación entre Pares en un Proceso de
Revisión Anónima por Pares en un Curso de Escritura
de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en España

Robert A. Coté^{2*}

University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

Abstract

The present study reports the results of a process of peer feedback through anonymous peer review in an EFL writing class. Numerous studies have reported on the benefits of peer review (PR) in the ESL/EFL writing classroom. However, the literature also identifies social issues that can negatively affect the outcome of face-to-face PR. In this study, twenty-five students were enrolled in an expository writing class in an Intensive English Program (IEP) of a private, American university in Madrid, Spain, where they attended 25 contact hours of English per week and experienced anonymous, or blind, peer review (PR). It was hoped that removing social interferences would force the participants to focus on the type and number of corrections they made to an unknown classmate's essay and as well as increase the type and number of corrections s/he incorporates into her/his original essay. Results indicate that writers accepted most of the changes proposed by the PR process (70%), an acceptance rate unprecedented in other studies.

Keywords: Anonymous peer review, EFL, writing error correction

Resumen

El presente estudio reporta los resultados de un proceso de retroalimentación entre pares mediante el proceso de revisión anónima por pares en un curso de escritura de inglés como lengua extranjera. Se han realizado numerosos estudios sobre los beneficios de la revisión por pares en los cursos de escritura de inglés como segunda lengua / inglés como lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, la literatura

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¹ Received: July 7, 2014 / Accepted: October 6, 2014

² rcote@email.arizona.edu

también identifica diversos aspectos sociales que pueden afectar negativamente el resultado de la revisión por pares cara a cara. En este estudio, 25 de los estudiantes se matricularon en un curso de escritura expositiva en un programa de inglés intensivo de una universidad estadounidense con sede en Madrid, España. Los estudiantes asistieron a 25 horas de instrucción en inglés por semana con la finalidad de aprovechar al máximo los beneficios de la revisión por pares anónimos o doble ciego. Se esperaba que al reducir las interferencias sociales, los participantes estarían obligados a enfocarse en el tipo y número de correcciones realizadas en el ensayo por un compañero anónimo, así como para mejorar el tipo y número de correcciones que el par incorpora en el ensayo original. Los resultados indicaron que los escritores aceptaron la mayoría de los cambios sugeridos por el par en el proceso de revisión (70%), lo cual indica que se presenta una tasa de aceptación sin precedentes en el área de estudio.

Palabras clave: Revisión por pares anónima; inglés como lengua extranjera; corrección de errores en la redacción de textos

Resumo

O presente estudo reporta os resultados de um processo de retroalimentação entre pares mediante o processo de revisão anônima por pares em um curso de escritura de inglês como língua estrangeira. Foram realizados numerosos estudos sobre os benefícios da revisão por pares nos cursos de escritura de inglês como segunda língua / inglês como língua estrangeira. Entretanto, a literatura também identifica diversos aspectos sociais que podem afetar negativamente o resultado da revisão por pares cara a cara. Neste estudo, 25 dos estudantes se matricularam em um curso de escritura expositiva em um programa de inglês intensivo de uma universidade estadunidense com sede em Madrid, Espanha. Os estudantes assistiram a 25 horas de instrução em inglês por semana, com a finalidade de aproveitar ao máximo os benefícios da revisão por pares anônimos ou duplo cego. Esperava-se que ao reduzir as interferências sociais, os participantes estariam obrigados a enfocar-se no tipo e número de correções realizadas no ensaio por um colega anônimo, assim como para melhorar o tipo e número de correções que o par incorpora no ensaio original. Os resultados indicaram que os escritores aceitaram a maioria das mudanças sugeridas pelo par no processo de revisão (70%), o qual indica que se apresenta uma taxa de aceitação sem precedentes na área de estudo.

Palavras chave: Revisão por pares anônima; inglês como língua estrangeira; correção de erros na redação de textos

Introduction

Incorporating Peer Review (PR) in EFL writing classrooms is not a novel concept, and the traditional responsibility of the instructor providing feedback is often carried out by peers. Such classroom dynamics are proving to be very beneficial for the students. Rollinson (2005) explains, “In recent years, the use of peer feedback in ESL writing classrooms has been generally supported in the literature as a potentially valuable aid for its social, cognitive, affective, and methodological benefits” (p. 23). One of the primary concerns with PR, however, is that factors other than target language competence, including race, native language, gender, and nationality may affect its intended outcomes. Therefore, this study incorporated anonymous, or blind, PR to avoid bias and produce feedback based solely on the text itself and not its author. The qualitative data hails from a biographical survey and Likert-based questionnaires (see Appendix) and includes participant characteristics such as nationality, age, gender, first language(s), major, years of English study, academic performance, personality traits, and personal comments about PR.

The quantitative data, based on the 490 suggested essay corrections the students collectively offered to one another during the PR, includes the type and number of questions and comments offered, the type and number of changes suggested categorized by type, size and function, and the type and number of changes accepted. Additional quantitative data resulted from the coding of the two essays written by each participant and TWE scores based on exams administered before and after the writing course.

Literature Review

Brammer and Rees (2007) report, “The process of having students critique each other’s papers has become commonplace in the composition classroom and in English composition textbooks” (p. 71), which has created a variety of scenarios in which non-native speakers (NNS) are working together to develop target language skills. Empirical studies have identified numerous benefits of PR, including clarifying ideas and improving rhetorical organization (Berg, 1999); providing opportunities to give and receive advice and ask and answer questions (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994); making surface and meaning-level changes (Paulus, 1999); improving grammar and augmenting vocabulary (Storch, 2005); and establishing and maintaining inter-subjectivity between reader and writer (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2006).

The literature also presents problems, yet does not often provide remedies. One troublesome aspect of peer collaboration is addressing students' different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Foster, 1998; Hewings & Coffin, 2006; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Zhu, 2001), not to mention age, race, gender and even religion, factors often deeply ingrained in the minds of students. Levine et al. (2002) stated, "Students may use culturally diverse rules for how much and what kind of criticism should be expressed" (p. 1). In addition, there is always the issue of power structure and politeness strategies. Nelson & Carson (1998) wrote, "Socio-linguistic differences in expectations concerning amount of talk, the role of the speaker and listener, and politeness strategies contribute to high levels of discomfort in multicultural peer response groups" (p. 129). In this study, participants came from seven countries, spoke seven different first languages, and practiced four religions. For these reasons, anonymous PR was chosen to remove any possible biases and allow the students to focus solely on the text they would be correcting as opposed to personal characteristics of the author.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a combination of research approaches, including ethnographic, action and participant observer. The criteria of ethnographic research, which "relies heavily on up-close, personal experience and possible participation, not just observation" (Genzuck, 2003, p. 1), was met on several fronts. The researcher served as the academic advisor for all of the participants, taught some of their other ESL classes, including grammar, and he was the instructor for the expository writing class in which the study took place, providing first-hand opportunities to interact with the participants daily in various contexts. In addition, the study utilized typical ethnographic research tools: interviews, observation, and documents.

The researcher also employed action research, defined by Craig (2009) as "typically conducted by teachers for teachers" (p. 4) and "a common methodology employed for improving conditions and practice in classrooms as well as other practitioner-based environments" (p. 3). This was done in order to determine, with empirical evidence, whether or not it is sensible to continue mandating PR in the ESL/EFL writing classroom if the negative attitude of some participants prevents them from conducting effective PR.

Finally, the researcher used participant observation, a process that requires “a researcher to become actively involved in the study of the environment and the parties who interact naturally with each other and with the environment” (Craig, 2009, p. 5). The current study allowed the researcher to spend up to nine hours per day with the participants on the miniscule campus, allowing him to both observe and interact with them in many non-academic situations five days per week. Most of the participants also lived in the same neighborhood as the researcher, so he also interacted with them during the evenings and occasionally on weekends in non-academic settings. As a result, although the micro-environment may have only been a 3-hour per week EFL writing classroom, the macro-environments of a small college campus and a tight-knit Madrid neighborhood also played important roles.

Context and Participants

Because the students had not attained the minimum TOEFL or TWE scores required to attend credit classes, they were enrolled in an intensive EFL advanced writing class for three hours per week. Their most recent TWE scores ranged from 3.0 to 4.0, and their most recent paper-based TOEFL scores ranged from 443 to 593, with a class average of 513. The 25 participants, ages 18 to 25, came from various linguistic and cultural and were pursuing various degrees as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' biographical descriptions

| Student | Age | L1 | Years English | Future Major | Student | Age | L1 | Years English | Future Major |
|---------|-----|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|-----|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 | 19 | SP | 13 | Int'l Business | 14 | 18 | SP | 13 | Int'l Business |
| 2 | 18 | SP | 14 | Interior Design | 15 | 20 | SP | 6 | Engineering |
| 3 | 23 | SP & PO | 3.5 | Int'l Business | 16 | 22 | Arabic | 1 | Engineering |
| 4 | 18 | FR & Arabic | .5 | Int'l Business | 17 | 19 | SP | 10 | Int'l Business |
| 5 | 18 | SP | 9 | Int'l Business | 18 | 19 | Arabic | 1 | Computer Science |
| 6 | 18 | SP & Basque | 12 | Economics | 19 | 20 | SP | 6 | Engineering |
| 7 | 18 | SP | 5 | Int'l Business | 20 | 18 | Sp & Catalan | 7 | Int'l Business |
| 8 | 18 | FR, SP Arabic | 8 | Int'l Business | 21 | 18 | SP | 11 | Engineering |
| 9 | 20 | SP | 12 | Engineering | 22 | 18 | SP | 7 | Int'l Business |
| 10 | 20 | CH | 3 | Int'l Business | 23 | 19 | SP | 10 | Int'l Business |
| 11 | 18 | SP | 16 | Int'l Business | 24 | 25 | SP | 12 | Int'l Business |
| 12 | 23 | SP | 12 | Engineering | 25 | 22 | Arabic | 17 | Int'l Business |
| 13 | 18 | SP | 12 | Engineering | | | | | |

Data Collection Instruments

Participants were trained on how to conduct a PR on a multi-paragraph cause and effect essay. Before PR training, they completed a questionnaire on previous PR experiences to identify any predisposed positive or negative attitudes towards PR. Students were also trained using a mock essay and Liu and Sadler's (2000) examples of question types and comments that can be offered to a peer during review prior to reviewing a classmate's essay. It was explained that the more explicit a comment or suggestion was, the more likely it would be understood by the author and help him/her to write a better second draft. Although the training was time-consuming (4.5 hours), the students needed to experience peer editing firsthand in order to become proficient reviewers and assist their peers in creating a better final product, defined as one that contained fewer grammatical and organizational errors and whose ideas were clear to the reader. Students were also encouraged to make positive comments. During the next class, some of the comments and suggestions they had made were shown to the students, and it was made clear that the author was not required to accept all suggested changes.

Next, the students attempted a PR for homework. Everyone received a soft copy of an unknown student's essay entitled "The Causes and Effects of War," and was instructed to do a PR via track changes and inserting comments/questions. They brought their marked copy to the next class so that the researcher could see that they had done it successfully, and any issues could be resolved before going to the computer lab for the actual PR task.

On the day of the actual PR task, participants were instructed to write a multi-paragraph essay either on the Causes of Happiness or the Effects of Immigration on Spain in MS Word under exam conditions. Upon completion, draft one was emailed to the researcher. Two days later, during the next lab, each student peer reviewed his/her partner's essay and filled out an electronic PR worksheet, which required them to examine their partner's essay for content, organization, grammar and punctuation. In the final class, the essays with the peer's comments, suggestions and changes were forwarded back to the original author, who then incorporated them into the final draft, which was submitted to the researcher for analysis and grading.

This study used several Likert-based and open-ended question surveys before and after the PR training and writing tasks, including a biographical questionnaire based on Levine et al. (2002), a pre-activity survey, an electronic PR feedback sheet that covered the quality of the introduction, body and conclusion, interest level, adherence to essay

formatting, competence of numerous grammatical points, and a post activity questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The quantitative data came from coding both essay drafts. First, the original essay was examined to count the number and types of questions and comments (Liu & Sadler, 2000) suggested by its reviewer, resulting in a total of 124 for all essays. Then, the number and types of corrections (Min, 2006) categorized by type, size and function, suggested by the reviewers, which numbered 490 in total, were tallied. Finally, each original essay was examined to calculate the number of revisions made by a peer that were incorporated into the final draft per 50 words.

Figure 1 displays the distribution of the raw numbers of all comments, questions and suggestions offered to peers categorized as an evaluation, clarification, suggestion or alteration.

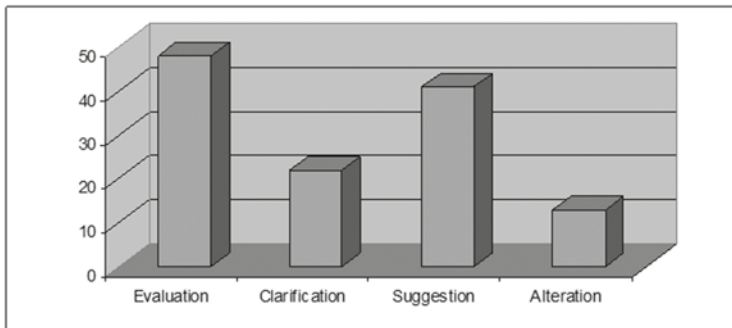


Fig. 1. Comment and question types offered to peers

The numbers clearly show that students were twice as likely to offer their peer an evaluation or suggestion as opposed to asking for more information (clarification) or suggesting that a specific change be made to the essay (alteration). If we compare these as percentages to Liu & Sadler's similar study (2003, p. 205) which also used track changes and inserting comments for students via computer mediated communication (CMC) peer review (Fig. 2) and upon which the current student was modeled, we see that the trends are similar except for alteration.

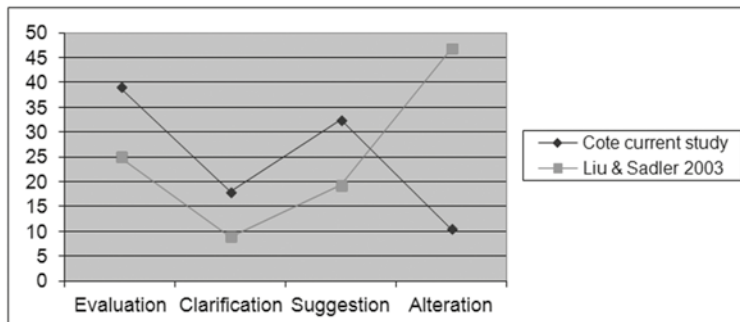


Fig. 2. Percentages of comment and question types in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) across two studies (Cote current study vs. Liu & Sadler 2003).

A possible explanation for the divergence with respect to alteration comments is that in the current study, participants simply made the change themselves instead of explicitly commenting to a peer to “change x to y,” the specific phrase identified by Liu & Sadler (2000) as an alteration comment. Examples of these can be seen in Table 2, which shows replacements that are clearly alterations but do not contain the specific wording “change x to y.”

Table 2. Alteration comments offered by participants (Cote current study)

| Original | Alteration | Original | Alteration | Original | Alteration |
|----------|--------------|----------|------------|---------------|-----------------|
| This | These | Also | However | Two | love and health |
| One | of the three | Also | Moreover | accept the | except for |
| Pass | go through | Money | Economic | more and more | Faster |
| be with | Support | Speak | Talked | this people | Them |
| Anything | Nothing | Travel | Trip | Fail | Let you down |

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Had the participants used the phrase “change x to y” verbatim, the alteration percentage would have been closer to 35%, still not as high as Liu & Sadler’s (2003) approximately 47%, but at least trending in the same direction.

Next, the questions and comments were re-grouped as either global, affecting larger portions of the text or local, affecting only a word, clause or phrase. Local comments outnumbered global ones by a

margin of three to one, which is very beneficial to the authors as local suggestions, because they address specific words, phrases or sentences, are clearer to understand and easier to incorporate into the final draft. In other words, they are not open-ended questions or vague comments and do not require any guessing on the part of the essay's author. Comparing the percentages of the global and local revisions between the two studies, the percentages for the computer-mediated groups are identical: 28% for global changes and 72% for local ones. It was hoped that there would be similar percentages in the two studies, but for them to be identical was unexpected.

Finally, the essays were re-analyzed and coded for a third time based on whether or not the author was expected to make some type of revision. There were 100 revision-oriented questions and comments versus less than twenty non-revision ones resulting in a five-to-one ratio. This much higher number of revision-oriented questions and comments is important because it indicates that the reviewers made a strong effort to provide feedback, even negative, that was intended to encourage the author to make specific changes. On the other hand, the non-revision comments were all positive in nature, either commending the author in some way or simply suggesting that the text was acceptable in its original form and should not be altered.

In terms of the revision versus non-revision types of comments and questions, percentage values in the current study were more balanced than Liu & Sadler's computer-based group. The revision/non-revision percentages here were 83% and 17% respectively, compared to Liu & Sadler's computer-based percentages of 92% and 18% (2003, p. 207). This was likely due to the fact that the group in Spain was weaker than the US group with respect to English language skills since the American group also included native speakers.

Due to the varying lengths of the essays, whose word count ranged from 209 to 476, it was necessary to standardize the corrections by calculating the number of comments and questions for every 50 words of text to determine if a participant offered more or less comments and question types relative to the other participants. An amount of fifty words was chosen as a guideline because while reading the essays, it became apparent that generally speaking, this was the number required for students to explain one thought. Shorter texts did not usually contain complete ideas, while longer ones tended to cover more than one concept.

To calculate the type and number of changes suggested to a peer, the corrections offered by the anonymous partners to the students' original

essays were coded using Min's (2006) method for categorizing essay revision suggestions based on Sengupta's (1998) earlier "framework for analyzing types, sizes, and functions of revisions" (p. 126). More specifically, revision types included addition, deletion, substitution, permutation (or rephrasing), distribution (re-writing information in larger chunks), consolidation or re-ordering (moving) text (Min, 2006, p. 139). Figure 3 shows the overall tally of revision types as well as the revision types as a percentage.

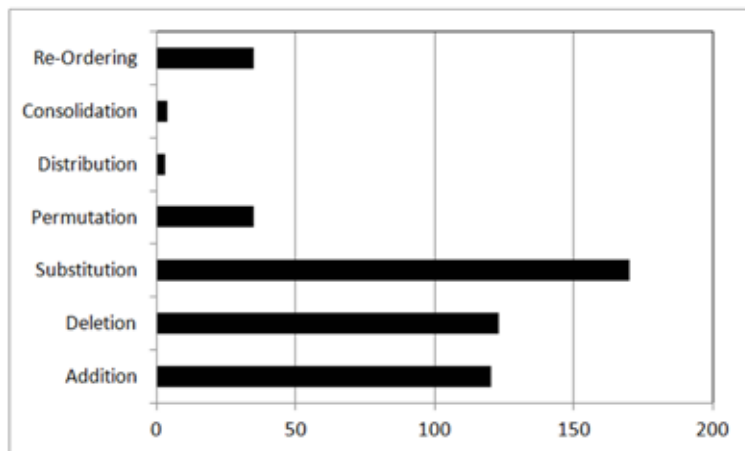


Fig. 3. Number of revisions offered to peers categorized by type.

This study found that substitutions (35%) were the most common type of revision, which is corroborated by previous studies (Min, 2006; Sato, 1991; Sengupta, 1998;. However, Min's (2006) second and third rankings went to permutations (19%) and re-orderings (18%), unlike the current study where deletions (25%) and additions (24%) held the second and third places. Permutation (7%) and re-ordering (7%) were ranked much lower and only accounted for less than 15% of the total, unlike the 37% reported by Min. These differences could be contributed to the fact that Min's participants had much higher TOEFL scores, ranging from 523 to 550 (2006, p. 122) compared to the Spain group, where only nine of the 25 participants had scores at or above 523. It seems the higher English language abilities of Min's participants allowed them to make more complex suggestions and revisions to their peers' papers. In addition, the top three ranks in Min's (2006) study accounted for only 57% of the total revision types (p. 130), significantly lower than the nearly 85% of all revisions which made up the top three revision types in the Madrid study. Again, higher target language

competence would likely result in more of a distribution among the various revision types as opposed to a clustering among the easier three types of addition, deletion and substitution found in the Spain group.

Revision size was the next type of coding executed. Size refers to symbol, word, phrase, clause, sentence or paragraph. Figure 4 shows the revision distributions by size.

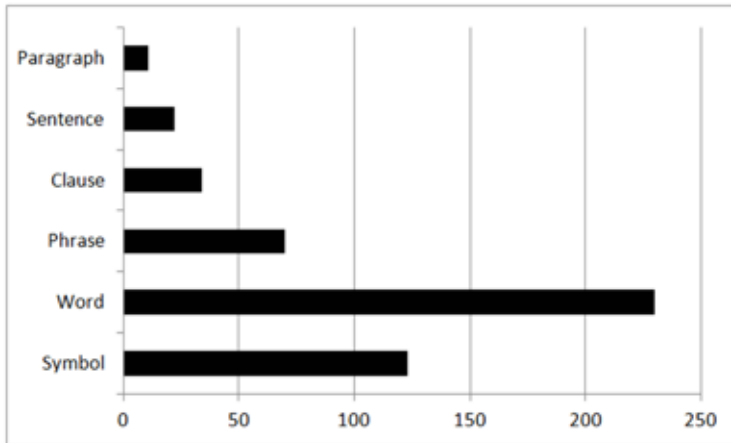


Fig. 4. Number of revisions offered to peers categorized by size.

In this study, the three most common revisions with respect to size were word (47%), symbol (25%) and phrase (14%), which when combined, represent 86% of all size-based revisions. This is quite different than what Min (2006) reported, “The most frequent revision occurred at the level of sentence (32%), closely followed by paragraph (20%) and word (20%). The least revised part in terms of size of revisions was at the level of symbol” (p. 131). In this study, sentences (7%) and paragraphs (2.5%) were the least common, again likely due to the students’ English abilities, most of whose TOEFL scores were below 520, lower than Min’s students. It is possible that the high number of symbol-size revisions in my study, which includes small scale items such as spelling, punctuation and inflectional morphemes, can be attributed to the frequent correction of punctuation in the students’ essays as well as the fact that I counted all inflectional morpheme changes, such as plural ‘-s’ and past tense ‘-ed’ as symbol revisions, for they only modified a verb’s tense or a noun’s number without affecting the word’s meaning or class.

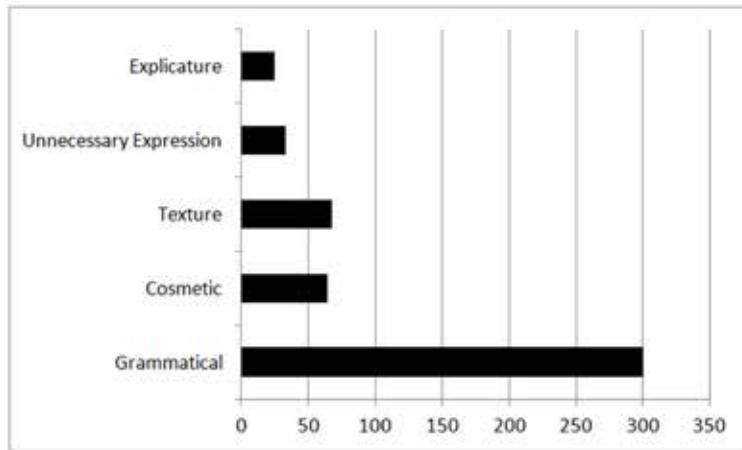


Fig. 5. Number of function-based revisions.

Revision functions, shown in Figure 5, were classified as grammatical, cosmetic, texture, which makes the text more coherent” (Min, 2006, p. 141), un-necessary expression or explicature. The current findings in terms of function were very different from those found by Min (2006), who determined that the most common functions were texture (39%), explicature (29%) and cosmetic (21%) which the current researcher calculated as 14% for texture, 5% for explicature and 13% for cosmetic. At first, it seemed that my study contained some error in the coding. However, Min (2006) may have inadvertently biased her students; she wrote, “It is likely that texture (concerning coherence) and explicature (concerning explanation) were the most commonly perceived functions of revision because two of the principal foci of the guidance sheet used in peer review training were format and content” (p. 131). This was not the case in the Spain study because there was no particular focus in either the pre-activity training or the feedback sheet they completed during the PR in the computer lab.

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Even more divergent between Min’s (2006) and the current study is the percentage of grammar-based revisions, which made up the majority in Spain and accounted for an impressive 61% of all function-based revisions versus only 4% in Min’s. The researcher made it clear to all participants both before and during the peer writing task that the primary purpose of the PR activity was to provide extensive feedback so that the partner could improve the chances of writing a better second draft. Everyone was strongly encouraged to mark any irregularities in the essays they reviewed, included items that they did not understand,

obvious grammatical and/or structural errors and anything that deviated from the expository writing style that had been taught in the classroom.

One area of the PR process that is often overlooked despite its importance is the amount of feedback that a student writer accepts or rejects after receiving a classmate's suggestions, comments and corrections. Min (2006) acknowledged this issue when she wrote, "In contrast to the large number of studies centering on the cognitive, affective, social, and linguistic benefits of peer response/review groups, few studies have examined the extent to which peer feedback is incorporated into students' subsequent revisions (Chou, 1999; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Results from these studies reveal a low acceptance rate, ranging from 5% (Connor & Asenavage, 1994), 22% (Chou, 1999), less than 50% (Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000), to a little above 50% (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Tang & Tithecott, 1999)" (p. 119). Incorporating or rejecting feedback is worth exploring because how beneficial can PR be if the recipients do not accept their peer's suggestions. There is no way to enforce a student to implement suggestions made by a peer, but if all but 10 percent of the students are making some sort of modification to their papers after peer collaboration, this should be considered a significant accomplishment of PR.

One interesting aspect of the current study is how Participant 25 dealt with his partner's suggested corrections; he ignored 11 out of 16, or approximately 69%, incorporating only .92 suggested revisions per 50 words, well below the group average of 2.28. This is not something expected, for the logical assumption is that a more positive attitude towards PR would result in more acceptance of feedback. What the researcher failed to take into account was the reality that some peer feedback will inevitably be bad. In this case, five of the eleven suggestions made by his peer were indeed incorrect, and by ignoring them, Participant 25 avoided changing text that did not need to be changed, thus maintaining the quality and accuracy of his original text. Additionally, he further revised three of the suggestions (two incorrect, one correct) resulting in a better final product (Table 3).

Table 3. Participant 25 text changes

| P25 Original Text | P12 Suggested Changes | P25 Final Text |
|--|---|--|
| When the immigration offers foreigners the Spanish residency | When immigration offers to foreigners the Spanish residency | When the immigration offers the Spanish residency to a foreigner |
| so it decreases job opportunities | so job opportunities decreases | which decreases job opportunities |
| that are very time consuming | that requires many time | , which are very time consuming process to the applicant. |

It appears that having his attention drawn to specific parts of his original text forced him re-analyze what he wrote. Covill (2010) reported this trend from numerous studies writing, “The experience of critiquing someone else’s writing makes students look at their own writing with a more critical eye (Herrington & Cadman, 1991; Nystrand, 1986; White & Kirby, 2005)” (p. 205). P25 validated this assumption by stating, “I would like to add the experience [doing an electronic peer review in ESL 112] helped me realize mistakes that I would not have noticed before.” He agreed that peer review was a valuable part of the writing process, adding “it helps me to improve my essay realizing mistakes that I won’t realize when I’m writing the first draft.” He also agreed that peer review improves student writing in general “because it is always possible to improve an essay by reviewing it.”

Results

Based on the positive effects of anonymity found in previous studies (Johnson, 2001; Lu & Bol, 2007; Zhao, 1998) it was expected that the anonymous PR activity would encourage students to incorporate as much feedback as possible into their final draft, resulting in a better final product. Johnson (2001) believed that anonymity in PR writing could avoid unnecessary biases; he encouraged his students to submit papers without names on them to avoid being influenced by factors such as knowing an author’s past grades, gender, or target language proficiency (p. 10).

80 To determine the amount of feedback that the participants’ incorporated into their final essays, the final drafts were analyzed based on the following: percentage of changes accepted and rejected per total number of changes received and the number of changes accepted per 50 words in order to determine if there was any correlation between their attitude towards PR and the number of suggested changes they incorporated into their original essay.

Surprisingly, participants accepted, on average, an impressive 70% of the revision feedback as a group, a rate unprecedented in any of the previous studies. This could be based on several factors. One is that in this study, the participants rewrote their essay and submitted it to the researcher for a grade. Another is the fact that they were regularly scheduled class periods to rewrite their original essay; as a result, there was no imposition on their personal time. A third possible cause, and one that can only be surmised, is that the students were all aware that the researcher was going to be analyzing the essays for dissertation research, and considering the extremely high faculty evaluations he received from the group, it is entirely possible they made an extra effort simply to please him.

Analyzing the changes accepted per 50 words (Figure 6), participants 10 and 22 clearly stand out as the two participants who incorporated the most peer-offered changes.

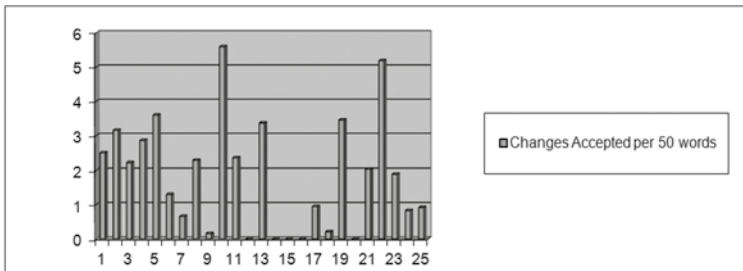


Fig. 6. Changes accepted per 50 words

While this is to be expected from participant 10, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.85 was tied for the highest, it is very surprising for Participant 22, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.08 was second to the lowest. Other unexpected outcomes were participants 7 and 25, both among the most positive at the start, yet with very low acceptance rates.

In fact, calculating the acceptance rates revealed that there was in fact no correlation between a student's attitude toward PR and the acceptance rate. Looking at the most positive, neutral and most negative participants, in Table 4, it appears that there is no relationship.

Table 4. Participant attitude versus changes accepted

| Positive parts | Pre-task Score | Changes Accepted (%) | Neutral Parts | Pre-task Score | Changes Accepted (%) | Negative Parts. | Pre-task Score | Changes Accepted (%) |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 4 | 3.85 | 100 | 21 | 3.46 | 83 | 11 | 3.15 | 93 |
| 7 | 3.85 | 36 | 23 | 3.40 | 75 | 20 | 3.15 | 0 |
| 10 | 3.85 | 100 | 17 | 3.38 | 40 | 18 | 2.90 | 33 |
| 19 | 3.85 | 92 | | | | 15 | 2.62 | WD |
| 25 | 3.85 | 31 | | | | | | |

To confirm this, a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was conducted comparing a participant's pre-activity attitude score to the number of changes they accepted per 50 words. The coefficient of $+0.034$ indicates too weak of a relationship between the two variables, and the Sig (2-tailed) value of $.892$ further supports the conclusion that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and changes incorporated.

Conclusions

This study provides extensive data on the number and types of questions, comments and correction types students made to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review in an expository EFL class in Madrid, Spain. It also shows the percentage of corrections students accepted (or rejected) from an anonymous peer and then incorporated into their original essays based on the feedback they received from a peer. However, it did not indicate any relationship between student willingness to participate in PR and the quality of a peer review.

The reader must be cautioned to both address and attempt to lessen the misconception that most students have towards PR, namely that its purpose is "to be finding mistakes or problems in each other's essays" (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 122). In addition, anonymous or blind PR should be encouraged to free students from the negative aspects of the collaborative writing process. In fact, the researcher believes that based on many of the social, cultural and academic factors mentioned in this paper, anonymous reviewers will be more comfortable conducting a thorough PR, will offer more and better constructive criticism and will be more honest in their critique, regardless of attitude towards the experience, simply because of the fact that they do not know whose essay they are correcting.

In closing, classroom instructors must also keep in mind that PR may not always provide the expected outcomes. Target language competence, individual personalities, and proper training in giving feedback must be taken into account before assigning activities that require peer collaboration in order for the participants to get the most benefit from the PR experience in the EFL writing classroom. Unlike most empirical studies on PR in the writing classroom, this study offered anonymous PR as an alternative to face-to-face PR, so students who do not enjoy or benefit from face-to-face interaction, for whatever reasons, would still be able to participate in PR, but through a different approach. This does not imply that face-to-face PR should be replaced with anonymous PR, only complimented by it when the proper setting, available technology and sufficient time are available.

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Author

***Robert A. Coté** received his PhD in Second Language Acquisition & Teaching from The University of Arizona majoring in sociolinguistics and minoring in pedagogy and program administration. He began his career 20 years ago when he taught ESL at a farm worker's camp for Literacy Volunteers of America. Since then, he has worked as an administrator, teacher trainer and classroom instructor in university IEP's, community colleges, adult education centers and public high schools in Miami Florida, Nogales Mexico, Madrid Spain, Dubai United Arab Emirates, and Guangzhou China. He enjoys teaching all aspects of the English language, and his research interests include teaching writing, peer review, Generation 1.5 students, CALL and special needs.

Appendix

Pre-activity Questionnaire

- Please define peer review. If you do not know what it is, write what you think it is.
- Have you ever done peer review before? Yes or No
 - a. If no, would you like to learn more about peer review?
- If yes,
 - a. Where? _____
 - b. When? _____
 - c. For what classes? _____
 - d. How many times? _____

Please state your opinion on the following statements. Please try to agree or disagree. Choose neither agree nor disagree only if you have absolutely no opinion in the matter.

1. I like correcting someone else's essay.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

2. I am confident in my ability to provide feedback to a peer.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

3. I am confident in my peer's ability to provide feedback to me.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

4. Peer review improves student writing.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

5. Peer review has been helpful in revising my essays in the past.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

6. The time it takes to do-peer review justifies the benefits of the activity.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

7. Peer review is a valuable part of the writing process.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

8. I like to correct a paper without knowing the author.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

9. I prefer to know whose paper I am correcting.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

10. I like to have my paper corrected anonymously.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

11. I prefer to know who is correcting my paper.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

12. I will be more critical if I do not know the author; therefore, I will make more corrections and suggest more changes.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|

Why?

13. I will be less critical if I do not know the author; therefore, I will make fewer corrections and suggest fewer changes.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|