

## **Writing Circles: developing learner self-efficacy and agency through peer review activities**

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### ***Abstract***

'Fear and anxiety are the enemies of learning' (Gibbs, 2014).

This paper outlines evaluation of practitioner research into a writing development intervention used with a group of international students studying at Masters level in a UK university. The research was motivated by our understanding that academic writing is a task which provokes significant anxiety for students. Our methodology was informed by evidence in the literature pointing to the utility of group learning and giving and receiving peer feedback. We aimed to explore the extent to which structured writing analysis and facilitated group feedback activities (conducted through writing circles) influenced student perceptions of confidence in academic writing. Our thesis was that instruction in identifying and noticing elements of effective disciplinary writing combined with writing circles cycles of review and redrafting would lead to an improvement in measures of confidence in academic writing. We examined the impact on students through interviews in addition to pre- and post-intervention questionnaires which assessed self-confidence, anxiety and self-efficacy. This paper presents a clear, practical solution to the difficult problem of increasing students' confidence in undertaking academic writing. Our results indicate a positive impact on overall confidence in academic writing, increased perception of agency and a decrease in anxiety. The findings align with a large body of research which indicate the positive impact on students on being given opportunity to give and receive feedback on their work. This case study demonstrates the value of writing circles as a simple practical activity that acts as a generative frame for student activity. It affirms value of interdisciplinary practice sharing.

**Keywords:** writing circles; student anxiety; academic self-efficacy; peer review.

## ***Introduction***

If, as Gibbs says, “fear and anxiety are the enemies of learning” (2014), then an examination of student feelings is both legitimate and pedagogically necessary in order to create conditions for learning to occur. The central premise here begins with an acknowledgement that while challenge can be a positive, indeed essential, aspect of learning, anxiety in the classroom has a debilitating effect on learning or skill acquisition. At the same time, we recognise that writing at university is for many students an anxiety provoking activity. The relationship between these co-related concepts of confidence and anxiety is not one of simple binary apposition. Research that explores in a classroom context how anxiety and concepts of self-efficacy and confidence are related, suggests a fundamental link between learner anxiety focused on writing and a whole variety of factors, including negative past experience, limited reading skills, time, tutor expectation, concern about the opinions of peers, language competence, and cultural attitudes and approaches to writing (Cheng, 2004; Huang, 2014; Genc and Yayli, 2019). The learner’s self-perception as a writer, the writing context and the task set can result in negative emotions and have an adverse impact on the planning and writing process (Atay and Kurt, 2006; Jahin, 2012). Self-efficacy, the belief in the potential to succeed, for example, to plan and write successful assignments is an essential element of self-confidence and agency (Bandura, 2006), and is an important quality in reducing anxiety with academic writing (Huerta, et al. 2017). This may be especially true in a post-graduate Higher Education Institution (HEI) context where writing tends to be conducted in isolation and requires a high level of self-discipline. Self-efficacy can also contribute to motivation, aspiration and performance in academic writing and may be linked to the learner’s past experience of feedback (Martinez, Kock and Cass, 2011). This may suggest therefore, that classroom activities which encourage self-efficacy should result in greater agency and improved confidence. As academic writing is largely positioned as a self-managed activity (Huerta et al., 2017) the learners’ belief in their own abilities and potential are essential.

The research problem we were interested in exploring concerned the extent to which feelings of confidence and self-efficacy can be influenced via instruction and practice of writing skills. We examined this question through a practical action research project. As

practising teachers and applied linguists working in adjunct support roles, our focus is very much on the intersection of theory and practice. We work broadly within an academic literacies perspective (Lea and Street, 1998) that foregrounds the specificity of disciplinary ways of knowing. Equally important to the theory we draw on are the wider practitioner accounts that provide clues as to optimum delivery and we briefly outline some of the key elements of classroom practice that informed our thinking

: the value of exemplar analysis; the importance of group instruction; and use of writing circles as a set of practices adapted for teaching. A writing circle is a creative writing practice where writers come together to share drafts, read each of other's work and then the group moves to providing constructive and supportive feedback to each participant. Groups generally work collaboratively at any stage of the writing process from prewriting to reviewing and collaborate through structured reading, commentary and group discussion. They have proved quite a flexible tool and have been applied developmentally with children (Vopat, 2009), with doctoral students (Caukill, 2017), trainee teachers (Roberts, Blanch and Gurjar, 2017) and with academic staff (Pasternak et al., 2009). As a teaching tool they offer a low-risk, authentic and co-operative form of peer review activity which encourages peer collaboration. Successful writing circles used in teaching contexts should involve learner choice and decision making. For more detail on the mechanics of running a writing circle see Malone et al., (2020).

We will start by outlining the practical details of the intervention and its scope, then we will move to outlining the methodology used, with reference to the literature which informed it. Results from this small project indicate that attention to mechanics of text, combined with opportunities for peer review and redrafting of current papers led to increased self-confidence, self-efficacy and reduction in anxiety among this small cohort. We set out some of the practical implications of these findings, chiefly concerning the balance and timing of activities and the importance of working in different modalities across a group.

## ***Background***

### **Anxiety and Academic Writing**

A certain amount of challenge is seen as central to learning: Hattie describes "challenge and feedback" as "two of the essential ingredients of learning" (2009, p.24). However, the student experience of academic writing at university appears to be one that provokes a

significant amount of anxiety and a concomitant lack of confidence and self-belief, with potential impacts on student wellbeing and performance. The distinction between task focused distress and positive challenge and attention is both very personal and the focus of ongoing research. However, it is clear that the learner's emotional state and subsequent effect on their cognitive ability has been linked to the quality of the writing produced (Uzun and Topkaya, 2018). Low self-confidence has also been shown to impact negatively on learners' self-efficacy resulting in vulnerability, poor performance, and leading to procrastination or avoidance of writing tasks altogether (Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert, 1999; Cheng, 2004).

Looking specifically at international students for whom English is a second language (as these were our focus cohort), they are very likely to feel challenged and anxious when working with the complex content, ideas, lexis and language in academic writing (Zhang, 2019) that they are expected to produce while studying in higher education in English speaking countries. Such anxiety may lead to low self-confidence and a reduced sense of agency, resulting in lower quality writing and lower grades (Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert, 1999; Huerta, et al., 2017), thus perpetuating a sense of powerlessness and concern when tasked to write assignments.

International students may have specific needs concerning academic writing in a higher education context. Anxiety with academic writing can also result from various types of feedback, from both teachers and peers, which can affect motivation (Tsao, Tseng and Wang, 2017). Research of multilingual contexts has indicated that problems with language and unfamiliar classroom cultures and activities, such as group work and group discussion, can inhibit how learners convey ideas in the second language and contribute to activities. As a result, their potential or self-efficacy may be suppressed as the learner senses a lack of recognition of their expertise and knowledge, which may become a source of anxiety, resulting in the inability to produce well-reasoned ideas (Kim, 2011). However, anxiety focused on academic writing is not limited to any particular student group. The research cited here indicates a complex relationship between overall measures of confidence, self-efficacy, and student performance; this research also suggests, if the relationship is bi-directional, there is an opportunity to improve confidence through focusing on the mechanics of writing and developing these technical features of writing.

## Peer Review

It has been suggested that peer review writing activities can make a major contribution to improving learners' sense of empowerment and self-regulation, thereby improving their confidence, self-efficacy and agency (Lee, 2017). Arguably, the most common means to develop learners' understanding of writing style and genre is tutor feedback. However, there may be little sense of student agency in this feedback process as tutors control the format and language in which the feedback is delivered (Lee, 2008). In contrast, review and feedback on writing from peers can be more compatible with learner language levels and learning needs (Rahimi, 2013). Through discussion of writing and the development of skills among peers, learners may become better able to review and assess their own writing and thereby become increasingly independent and self-regulated, (Lundstrom and Baker, 2009; Lee, 2017). Many authors and practitioners have thereby concluded that peer review activities should be encouraged as learners can benefit from differing approaches, styles, and levels of competence in writing, and may be well-equipped to provide the necessary support to develop each other's writing output (Min, 2005). Lee (2017) outlines multiple benefits to the peer review of written work, including: raising awareness of the reader; developing a better understanding of content, organisation, appropriate language and genre; providing a social-interactive environment with scaffolding and support between peers; and the facilitation of second language acquisition. Research has also shown that both reviewer and reviewee may benefit from the peer review relationship (Lundstrom and Baker, 2009; Kim, 20011; Nicol, Thomson and Breslin 2014).

## Group Learning

Collaborative learning theories indicate that "feedback from peers has the potential to contribute to learning, which is considered a socially and collectively constructed activity" (Yu and Lee, 2016, p. 463). The benefits of peer review, therefore, can include the negotiation of meaning, promoting collaborative learning, encouraging social support and scaffolding, and facilitating independence in the learner by reducing reliance on tutors (Hu and Lam, 2010). There are also benefits for the peer reviewer in developing the skills required to critically evaluate and comment on peers' academic writing, and the ability to identify issues surrounding organisation, argument and logical gaps, could potentially

empower the learners as better writers and reviewers of their own writing (Lundstrom and Baker, 2009; McConlogue, 2015; Huisman, et al., 2018).

It is possible to argue that it is only when learners provide effective feedback that peer review of writing becomes meaningful. Studies have shown that learners who are not provided adequate support to make the peer review process a constructive, positive discussion are likely to find the experience unsatisfying (Berg, 1999). This suggests the need for training learners in the required skills and expertise in order to deliver effective feedback to peers (Rahimi, 2013). Feedback that is vague and open to misinterpretation can have a negative impact on the peer review process. Therefore, providing learners with the skills needed to provide effective feedback and giving them instruction in appropriate responses will not only enable them to generate more effective and specific feedback but also build their confidence when evaluating peers' writing (Min, 2005; 2006; Rahimi, 2013; Lee, 2017).

## ***Intervention***

The study consisted of a writing intervention, the impact of which was measured via a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire (see Appendix 1) measuring levels of confidence with academic writing, sense of agency with academic writing, and attitudes towards collaborative peer review activities. The intervention was provided in the form of eight two-hour academic writing classes embedded weekly in the students' main subject, with the entire cohort of approximately 60 students split across three classes. While all students completed the questionnaire in the first class, only thirty-seven (61.5%) completed both pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. Students were subsequently invited to participate in semi-structured interviews; seven students came forward to participate. The questionnaire and interviews were focused on student awareness and understanding of themselves as learners in line with participatory action research methods (Freire, 1976; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Results from the interviews were transcribed and repeatedly analysed and discussed by the authors to identify common themes (Clarke and Braun, 2017) in light of our reading of the literature on anxiety and self-efficacy in classroom contexts.

While we acknowledge the challenges of tutor-led research and the influence of teacher researcher on student respondents (see Talmy 2010 for critiques of the way qualitative interview data is used), our focus as action researchers involved in participative research meant we prioritise student self-perception and their accounts of their development.

A series of writing circle activities were developed, aimed at maximising opportunities for peer review of on-going academic writing. While we wanted to draw on the benefits of an authentic peer-led task where responsibilities were shared with peers and use writing circles to increase student engagement, we also wanted to combine a writing circle with a tutor-led input. In this way we adapted Vopat's (2009) model, where each session followed a theme (for example, how to structure a paragraph) and input was provided via a tutor-led presentation focused on analysis of exemplars before moving on to collaborative peer review. A series of writing circle sessions were planned which focused on the topics listed in Table 1 and followed a regular format as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 1. Topics of writing circle sessions.**

Week number	Academic skills input	Writing group activity	Intended learning outcomes By the end of this session students will be able to...
1.	Understanding the task and structure	Groups develop questions about texts/writing. Writing task set here.	identify macro features of academic style, with a focus on organisation of writing and referencing conventions.
2.	Reading and note-taking to writing	Joint construction. Students complete writing task as homework.	select appropriate reading materials. use notes to support an argument or discussion.

3.	Paragraphs Structure and planning	Students analyse a text for paragraph moves and signposting. Students review first drafts of writing task.	write a simple plan
4.	Critical reading to critical writing Understanding description, analysis, criticality + critical reflection	Students analyse a text for criticality and use of sources. Students review drafts of writing task.	identify critical analysis particularly authorial stance
5.	Coherence and Cohesion: making writing flow	Students analyse a text for use of cohesive devices. Students review and edit drafts of writing task.	recognise how to use signalling and linking devices to make arguments and information flow in academic writing.
6.	Critical writing (paraphrasing + combining sources)/academic integrity	Students analyse a text for academic integrity and synthesis. Students review notes from reading for assignments.	integrate sources of evidence into texts build on using sources to develop voice and criticality.
7.	Ensuring criticality/voice/language – Building an argument	Students analyse a text for criticality and development of an argument. Peer review of plans/paragraphs	identify critical analysis in academic writing construct simple argument in own text
8.	Five principles of academic writing: Accuracy, appropriateness, clarity, informed, concise	Peer review of paragraphs/drafts	provide constructive feedback to a peer based on discussion of assignment plans, notes and first drafts of paragraphs.



**Table 2. Format of exemplar analysis and writing circle.**

1. <b>Tutor Input</b>	Exemplar analysis
2. <b>Exemplar Analysis</b>	Learners (in small groups) were given a section of an article (linked to their degree topic) that had been altered to match the session's theme (for example, the paragraph structure had been poorly arranged).
3. <b>Discussion &amp; Writing Task</b>	Provided with discussion prompts, learners worked collaboratively to identify the problems and then reconstruct an improved version of the text.
4. <b>Comparison key features of effective writing</b>	Learners compared their improved text with the original and were encouraged to notice and discuss similarities and differences between the two.
5. <b>Read and Review: 2 stars and a Wish</b>	Groups discussed and reviewed each other's writing (which could be in any form, such as rough notes, or first draft paragraphs). This stage included a task, for example, 'two stars and a wish': two things that the peer reviewer liked and one thing that could be done differently, to give the learners clear parameters for discussion.
6. <b>Plenary Discussion and recap</b>	The class ended with whole group discussion of some of the key points from the peer review.

## Aims

The aim of this combination of activities was to develop assessment and feedback literacy and support the transition from exemplar analysis to independent production of writing. The activities were designed to prioritise active student engagement and maximise collaborative student writing and peer discussion through the design of activities that a student would not be able to complete alone. The initial activity was to explore an aspect of disciplinary writing. The writing circle focused on peer review through which learners would articulate their understanding of academic writing. Through this combination of

activities, we aimed to develop understanding of specific features of writing and ultimately ability with academic writing, reduce any anxiety, and develop a greater sense of self-efficacy and agency.

## **Participants**

The participants were all female, adult, Chinese students, studying a one-year, full-time post-graduate (PG) degree in education at an HEI in the UK. All participants were using English as a second language and had a diverse experience of academic writing prior to attending the course, from attending international schools in their country of origin, to completing foundation and undergraduate courses in the UK, with some completing a ten-week pre-session course at an HEI in the months leading to the start of their PG course.

## **Methods**

This project was a practical action research project which involved a reflective process of progressive problem-solving integrating research, action, and analysis. The research problem at its simplest is that students experience learning to write within their discipline at university as anxiety provoking, and this anxiety is a barrier to learning. We were interested in exploring the extent to which feelings of confidence and self-efficacy can be influenced via instruction and practice of practical writing tasks applied to disciplinary texts.

## **Results**

### **Comparison of pre- and post-intervention self-report data**

Table 3 shows results for student attitudes to anxiety, agency and peer work in academic writing, comparing student perspectives pre- and post-intervention. The total number of respondents was 20 (all female).

**Table 3. Student attitudes to anxiety, agency and peer work in academic writing: a comparison of pre-and post-intervention data (n=30).**

Topic/ Question	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
<b>Anxiety/confidence in academic writing</b>					
<i>I am confident about writing my assignments.</i>	+3%	+25%	+16%	-35%	-10%
<i>I feel nervous when I think about writing my assignments.</i>	No change	-19%	+6%	+6%	+6%
<i>I feel anxious about academic writing.</i>	-13%	-10%	+10%	+6%	+6%
<i>I am worried about the quality of my academic writing.</i>	No change	-10%	+13%	-3	No change
<i>I am concerned about writing academic assignments.</i>	-15%	-6%	+ 19%	No change	No change
<b>Agency in academic writing</b>					
<i>I can express my ideas clearly in academic writing.</i>	+3%	+19%	+10%	-32%	No change
<i>I am confident I can edit and improve my own work.</i>	+3%	+6%	-13%	+3%	No change
<i>I know what I need to do to improve my own writing.</i>	+6%	+10%	+3%	-16%	-3%
<i>I understand where my writing needs to develop.</i>	+6%	+6%	-13%	No change	No change
<i>I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses in academic writing.</i>	No change	+29%	-16%	-13%	No change
<b>Peer work and Academic Writing</b>					
<i>I am confident I can give feedback to my peers on their writing</i>	-6%	+32%	-13%	-10%	-3%
<i>I am happy to share my ideas with my peers</i>	No change				
<i>I can learn from discussing writing with my peers</i>	+32%	-6%	-22%	-3%	No change
<i>I can see the benefits of sharing writing with my peers</i>	+3%	+13%	-6%	-6%	-3%

<i>I can learn from reading other students' work/ writing.</i>	+10%	-16%	+10%	No change	-3%
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There was a reduction in a number of negative emotions connected to academic writing; lack of confidence, anxiety and concern. The biggest change is a development in self-belief concerning ability to express themselves with clarity. The final section of questions indicate that this intervention had a positive influence on student understanding and valuing of discussion with peers, and a similar increase in confidence in their ability to give feedback. These self-report measures are broadly indicative of a reduction in negative feelings associated with academic writing, increase in agency and an increased appreciation of the value of peer work, and a more detailed examination of student interview data appears to corroborate these findings and student quotes are provided as illustrative examples.

### **Interview findings**

In the interviews, the student comments largely aligned with the overall findings of the questionnaire. One student mentioned the reduction in negative emotions related to academic writing when asked generally about the impact of the study:

'I am not afraid of writing an academic essay any more. Writing circles actually inspire me a lot when starting to write an essay'.

Others described how they 'became more confident' and were 'not so afraid of the academic writing'. There was also mention of how this intervention led to 'feeling more control with writing'.

A number of students elaborated on this connection between technical knowledge of writing, skill improvement and feelings of confidence:

'The text analysis activity is a good way for me to practice the knowledge I have learned'.

'[The intervention] really help me to have a better understanding of how to write [and] practice which truly help me to become a better writer'.

'Writing circle helps to improve my writing in organizing my thought into written words'.

The benefits of reading each other's drafts was frequently mentioned positively:

'Peer reviews can be inspirational. As regular readers, peers give intuitive and effective feedback',

Within the comments concerned with peer review, a number of students mentioned the positive affective aspect of peer review and how it improved class dynamics by establishing group trust:

'I know that group quite well ... people won't plagiarise your work. So, you have a good relationship ... people don't judge ... it depends on the classmates you'll get as well, I think my classmates were quite nice'.

The reciprocity of support was key for learners:

'I can get some ideas from others so and others can also help me...You can just help each other to get to know each other's ideas and help each other'.

Students also mentioned the value of a peer reviewer's perspective, their ability to comment on your writing and the ideas as a knowledgeable informant:

'My writing also to looked by my classmates, and they gave me really good suggestions'.

'I can learn from other people's ways of thinking not only their writing but their ways of thinking how they approach the assignment question maybe in from a different angle'.

'You're likely to learn something that you don't have in your writing for from your peer writing and your peer writing just keeps you an inspiration'.

'They are classmates ... and everyone has some, some common mistakes or something. And it's okay we just look at each other's and we share our opinions'.

'I feel like in the kind of the peer feedback ... I can learn from what others have done'.

For some students, peer review seemed to prompt deeper reflection on their own work:

'It will help you reflect. Did I do that, the same in my essay, it usually helps.'

While for others peer review marked a development in their editorial skills:

'She didn't have a topic sentence in the first position of a paragraph so I just reminded her'.

## ***Discussion***

Findings for this intervention study were largely positive, although there are obvious limitations to the generalisability of the findings given the small size of the cohort and the fact that the interviewees were self-selecting. This small total number of respondents needs to be borne in mind in interpreting these results, in order not to overestimate the significance of the percentages shown. Given the small sample size, the percentage figures are indicative of trends reflecting changes in this particular cohort. While wary of overgeneralising from these results the figures do reflect some interesting broad patterns in changes of thinking in this group of students.

Acknowledging the multiple limitations, if we examine these findings in light of research then overall, results indicate engagement in a series of writing circles appeared to alleviate some of the more negative feelings associated with academic writing and there are initial indications of some improvements in agency and self-efficacy. Overall, the interview confirmed the benefits of experience of writing circles resulting in the reduction in negative emotions related to academic writing, initial tentative expression of a connection between

technical knowledge of writing, skill improvement and feelings of confidence, and numerous benefits to devoting class time to detailed peer review as a platform for writing work.

## **Anxiety**

The first group of questions focus on nerves, worries and anxieties around academic writing. These results indicate an overall reduction in negative emotions associated with academic writing. It is worth noting, our results indicate the relevance of the intervention and are consistent with previous literature showing an initial high anxiety baseline. Academic writing at university is a task that provokes anxiety, worry and concern. Comparing pre- and post-intervention self-report measures indicates a reduction in these negative emotions and a related increase in overall confidence associated with academic writing.

Agency and self-efficacy have been linked with learner self-regulation and motivation, goal setting and positive behaviours and greater academic success (Zhang and Ardasheva, 2019) and there is some indication of these for learners in the writing circles activities. The learners expressed more control and understanding of the academic writing process suggesting the motivational and decisional processes key to developing greater self-efficacy (Bandura, 2002) and appear to be better able to exercise choice in the application of the writing techniques modelled through writing circles, which is an essential element in agentic learning (Lindgren and McDaniel, 2012).

The peer review process appears to have been beneficial for learners in that they were engaged in sharing good advice on writing and, whether by receiving or providing this advice, were displaying their improved understanding of academic writing (Ngar-Fun and Carless, 2006). As a result, learners were in the process of moving from being 'other regulated' to becoming 'self-regulated' and better able to face the challenges of academic writing independently (Lee, 2017). The findings show that there was a good sense of collaboration, trust and reciprocity, which are essential qualities of peer review activities (Ludemann and McMakin, 2014; McConlogue, 2015) as without this, learners are likely to reject the advice from peers (Ngar-Fun and Carless, 2006). There were clearly benefits to both the reviewer and the reviewee in the writing circle activities which would inform the reviewees' understanding of problems in their writing and help the reviewers learn through

the feedback they provide, therefore giving both parties a sense of control over their writing (Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin, 2014; Huisman et al., 2018). That is not to say that all participants found the peer review activities an easy process as anxiety was expressed when the reviewer felt their writing was weaker than that of their peers. It is essential, therefore, that any programme of peer review begins with training the learners to become effective reviewers, focuses on the skills required to analyse texts in detail and develops awareness of how to learn from good models of writing. This will improve any trust issues, build confidence, allow learners opportunities to articulate understanding of good writing and provide greater motivation for the review process through exposure to a range of texts (Kim, 2011, Ludemann and McMakin, 2014; McConlogue, 2015).

There is some evidence from the findings that a degree of anxiety remains for these learners, especially regarding time-management and use of English, both of which can be said to impact on the learners' critical reading and synthesis of sources. It is possible to argue that a more flexible timetable for assignments could help these learners in the future, and it can be surmised that the learners' confidence in discussing academic writing and future goals indicates a reduction in anxiety overall.

## ***Conclusion***

This study was undertaken to find a practical means to address student anxiety focused on learning to write within a discipline. While we experienced some success that students attributed to this intervention, this small study demands we re-consider how best to address academic anxiety and consider the need to address this pedagogically rather than therapeutically. We would propose that this use of writing circles is a successful model of interdisciplinary practice that provides a frame for independent student development. As a set of classroom practices writing circles prioritise active student engagement and high challenge. This study has shown how peer review activities used in writing circles can enable opportunities for learners to achieve agency with their academic writing through analysis of model texts and collaborative tasks. The findings suggest that the writing circles structure, moving from tutor input, to peer discussion of a text, to peer review and opportunities for collaboration and sharing good practice, promote independent student development. Writing circles offer a rich constellation of learning activities, an intense combination that supported a number of students move from anxiety to engagement. A



methodological implication of this study is that to fully appreciate and understand the benefit offered by such activity cycles requires more research fully grounded in the classroom (or wherever we encounter our students) that acknowledges and recognises the messy complexity of teaching and learning.

The balance of activities and timing appears to be crucial. Whereas more typical approaches to peer review activities involve learners discussing finished work, writing circles focus on ongoing writing and this allowed for closer analysis of specific features of disciplinary academic writing on a lesson-by-lesson basis. In practical terms, working on live texts (prior to submission) may allow for a more granular level of analysis and may make it easier to identify aspects needed for development. This finding, that the timing of the pedagogical input is crucial in determining the efficacy of the peer review process, also aligns with recent meta analyses of use of exemplars (To, Panadero and Carless, 2021).

As we emerge from the pandemic, we would suggest that as a community there will be more focus than ever on identifying cycles of activities such as this that offer students opportunities to develop increased agency and confidence, and we would like to suggest writing circles for your consideration.

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