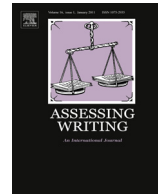




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Assessing Writing



Teacher modeling on EFL reviewers' audience-aware feedback and affectivity in L2 peer review



Carrie Yea-huey Chang*

Department of English, Tamkang University, Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory classroom research investigated how prolonged one-to-one teacher modeling (the teacher demonstrating desirable behaviors as a reviewer) in feedback to student reviewers' essays may enhance their audience-aware feedback and affectivity in peer review. Twenty-seven EFL Taiwanese college students from a writing class participated in asynchronous web-based peer reviews. Training was conducted prior to peer reviews, and the teacher modeled the desirable reviewer behaviors in her feedback to student reviewers' essays to prolong the training effects. Pre-modeling (narration) and post-modeling (process) reviews were analyzed for audience-aware feedback and affectivity. Reviewers' audience awareness was operationalized as their understanding of reviewer–reviewee/peer–peer relationship and reviewees' needs of revision-oriented feedback on global writing issues to improve the draft quality. Paired *t*-tests revealed significantly higher percentages of global feedback and collaborative stance (revision-oriented suggestions), more socio-affective functions, and a higher percentage of personal, non-evaluative reader feedback and a lower percentage of non-personal evaluator feedback in the post-modeling reviews. Such a difference, however, was not found in review tone. Overall, our findings confirm that EFL student reviewers can learn peer review skills through observation of their teachers and use of complementary tools such as checklists.

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* Corresponding author at: Department of English, 151, Ying-chuan Road, Tamshui District, New Taipei City 25137, Taiwan.
Tel.: +886 2 2621 5656x3206.

E-mail address: yechang@mail.tku.edu.tw

1. Introduction

Writing, which requires an intricate orchestration of cognitive and linguistic abilities, among many other skills, is never an easy task. With first language (L1) interference and second language (L2) proficiency coming into play, L2 writing becomes an even more daunting task. This might be able to explain the proliferation of pedagogies and research pertinent to L2 writing in the past decades. Among the numerous instructional issues in L2 writing, one of great concern is authenticity in foreign language (FL) writing. FL learners often lack the incentive and environment to practice the target language naturalistically. The absence of authenticity in school writing curricula has thus been the target of criticism: students write mainly for/to the teacher, and rarely have the opportunity to write for real purposes and audiences (Cohen & Riel, 1989; Jacobs, 1989; Nehal, 2004).

An instructional technique advocating writing for real purposes and audiences appears to offer an answer to this challenge. Peer review, peer feedback or peer response, all refer to the practice of learners exchanging drafts and offering feedback on global (e.g. content, text organization) and/or local (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, punctuation) writing issues. Peer review may be conducted in face-to-face or computer-mediated environments. In face-to-face peer review, feedback may be oral, written or a combination of both. Likewise, computer-mediated peer review may be synchronous (e.g. chat) or asynchronous (e.g. e-mail or Bulletin Board System).

To date, L2 writing research has reported learners' positive perception of/attitude toward peer review (Brammer & Rees, 2007; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Huang, 2004; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhang, 1995), writers' improvement of essay quality after receiving peer feedback (Berg, 1999; Huang, 2004; Miao, Badger, & Zhen, 2006; Min, 2005, 2006; Paulus, 1999; Peng, 2007), and reviewers' improvement of their own writing as a result of reviewing peer drafts (Berggren, 2015; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Tsui & Ng, 2000).

Peer review in general, no matter conducted in face-to-face (oral or written) or computer-mediated (synchronous or asynchronous) environments, has thus far been treated as merely an instructional measure to attain the desired learning outcomes, be it better revisions, writing quality or learners' satisfaction with collaborative learning. Written peer review in particular, as a non-mainstream writing at school, seems to have long been perceived as possessing secondary, if any, importance in L2 writing. In reaction to this, this researcher and others (Guardado & Shi, 2007) argue that written peer review itself, in its own right, is an absolutely legitimate and authentic writing practice that can reap educational benefits.

Written peer review is equally beneficial to the feedback recipients and providers. Firstly, learning-writing-by-reviewing hypothesis espouses that observing others' writing is important in learning to write (Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam, van den Bergh, & van Hout-Wolters, 2004; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2002). For one, seeing others' writing weaknesses may remind learners to retrospect their own ineffective writing strategies, and better yet, to avoid or address them. For another, being an efficient reviewer critically examining others' writing from the reader's perspective also makes one a better self-reviewer to detect, diagnose, and remedy problems in one's own writing (Cho & Cho, 2011); hence, a more efficient writer (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Secondly, commenting on peer writing is a high-order writing practice, which involves critical thinking and sophisticated writing skills, including justifying writing quality, explaining problems, providing examples, and offering solutions (Cho & Cho, 2011). Thirdly, a peer review writing scenario is far more meaningful and authentic to learners than writing solely to/for the instructor (as such, the teacher-student relationship is asymmetrical) because learners are actively engaged in authentic communication as readers to the writers or as student writers to their comrades. Since learners' role as peer reviewers is more like an authentic reader or a student writer to another writer, high-quality peer feedback must reflect this awareness of writer-reader comradeship. That is, written peer review creates an authentic writing scenario that is interpersonal and symmetrical, which is rarely seen and practiced in L2 writing but is definitely needed. Such a need is particularly evident in FL settings where learners do not necessarily have the opportunities outside the writing class to hone their interpersonal communication skills.

Consequently, the merit of written peer review itself as an authentic writing practice for FL learners to practice their peer-to-peer communication skills is doubtless. Several researchers (Cho & MacArthur, 2010; Ho & Savignon, 2007; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zamel, 1983)

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