

Focusing on Content: Discourse in L2 Peer Review Groups

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Recent studies on peer review groups in second language classes have focused on various topics, including collaboration (Carr, 2008) and the effect of peer review versus teacher feedback on students' writing (Zhang, 1995). One area that has received little attention is the content of students' speech during peer review. This longitudinal case study examined English as a second language (ESL) students' oral discourse during peer feedback sessions to explore the types of comments ESL students choose to make during peer review sessions. The study was conducted between fall 2009 and summer 2010 at a large urban university in the southeastern United States. Data collection included audio-recorded peer review sessions, interviews with the teacher, and the researchers' observation notes. The researchers thoroughly analyzed the content of the students' discourse during actual peer review sessions. The findings of the study shed light on various aspects of writing ESL that students choose to comment on during peer feedback sessions. The findings may serve as the basis for further research on students' discourse during peer review, teachers' feedback or facilitation of peer review sessions, and issues of collaboration in peer review sessions in ESL classes.

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Peer review is an essential stage in the development of writing in a second language (L2; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Hu (2005), drawing on previous work by Tsui and Ng (2000), defines peer review as "a collaborative activity involving students reading, critiquing, and providing feedback on each other's writing, both to

secure immediate textual improvement and to develop, over time, stronger writing competence via mutual scaffolding” (pp. 321–322). Peer review is also known as peer evaluation (Stanley, 1992), peer revision (McGroarty & Zhu, 1997), process of revision in response groups (Nystrand, 2002), peer response (J. Liu & Hansen, 2002), and peer critique (Marx, 1990). Approaching this activity from a sociocultural theoretical perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), however, we use the term *peer review* throughout this article because we view this process as a collaborative activity of students who, while analyzing a peer’s writing, providing feedback on it, and negotiating the meaning, develop critical thinking skills in English.

Research on peer review has identified some potential benefits of this activity for English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. Such benefits include improvement of students’ revising skills (Berg, 1999b; Min, 2006), significant improvement in intermediate-level ESL feedback givers’ writing in terms of organization and development of ideas and grammar (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), and ESL/EFL students’ achievement of intersubjectivity while negotiating feedback during peer review (Carr, 2008; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). Despite auspicious benefits, teachers have been reluctant to implement peer review in their classes for various reasons: time-consuming preparation of peer review, ESL/EFL students’ preference for teachers’ feedback to their writing, students’ cultural differences, and so forth (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Roskams, 1999; Zhang, 1995). Thus, in order to lessen some of the ESL/EFL teachers’ concerns, and strengthen benefits from peer review activity, we see it as crucial to investigate the multifaceted nature of peer review and to propose practicable implications and benefits to ESL/EFL teachers in the field.

Many studies have focused on various aspects of peer review and its use in ESL classes, such as those studies on the effect of peer review on students’ revisions and writing (Berg, 1999b; Min, 2006), on the advantages and disadvantages of using peer review in ESL classes (de Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996), on students’ attitudes toward this activity (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; E. Liu & Lin, 2007), and

peer review with the use of computers or online (Dippold, 2009; Guardado & Shi, 2007; Liang, 2010; Liou & Peng, 2009). In addition, a few studies touched on the content of peer feedback in ESL classes (e.g., Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Finally, one study focused on the impact of peer review training on the type of students' comments in a non-ESL context (McGroarty & Zhu, 1997), and another investigated the written comments in an EFL class with Japanese students of low and high levels of proficiency in English (Kamimura, 2006). To our knowledge, however, no studies have explored the content of students' oral comments during peer review in a multicultural ESL context.

Conducting peer review in a multicultural classroom may carry several potential obstacles: ESL students may not be willing to participate in a peer review, tension may develop between review partners, students may resist providing negative comments, and they may view group activity differently due to cultural differences (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Considering culture as one of many factors that may influence the peer review activity, our emphasis is on the importance of exploring the process of peer review through students' oral comments in the multicultural classroom. Therefore, a list of questions emerges: What do ESL students from various cultures and with different first languages (L1s) choose to comment on when providing feedback? Do ESL students try to achieve intersubjectivity when they explain their feedback to peer partners? What are the differences between oral and written feedback in peer review sessions? With this list of questions in mind, we choose to focus on the content of oral peer feedback. Importantly, we define the content of peer feedback as any information that ESL students choose to provide for their partners during peer review.

Finally, given the lack of qualitative research studies on the content of oral peer feedback in a multicultural ESL setting and the potential implications of the study for ESL/EFL educators and researchers, there exists a need for qualitative case studies to explore students' oral discourse during peer review sessions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the relative lack of research studies on the content of students' oral discourse during peer review, in this literature review we focus on those studies that have examined the content of peer feedback and negotiation.

Several research studies have focused on the types of feedback that ESL students offer during peer review. For example, the task dimension of peer review was the focus of Nelson and Murphy's (1992) study. The researchers aimed at determining whether four intermediate ESL students stayed on the task of peer review. In their study, the peer review training included the teacher's explanation of the goal of peer review, the language that should be used to provide polite and focused feedback, and examples of "reader-based" responses (p. 175). In addition, the students had a chance to practice writing responses on the drafts of the teacher's former students. Finally, the teacher distributed the guiding questions for peer review, which—based on the examples in the article—focused primarily on writing organization. The teacher asked that students not correct their peer's grammar, spelling, or punctuation. The students read the peer's writing, wrote their comments, and then discussed them orally with their peers in groups. Though the researchers collected data from multiple sources, such as videos of peer review sessions, student journals, students' interviews with the teacher and another interviewer at the end of the course, and students' writings, the major data source was the video observations of peer review sessions. Nelson and Murphy analyzed the transcripts of videotapes using a modified version of Fanselow's (1987, as cited in Nelson & Murphy, 1992) classroom-observation instrument—Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings (FOCUS). The FOCUS content categories used were study of language, life general knowledge, life personal knowledge, procedural concerns, and format issues. The study-of-language category embraces all language issues, including word order, organization, cohesive devices, and so on. The findings of the study show that the ESL students' comments were mostly about study of language (73% of the total number of comments). Unfortunately, no further

information was included about which aspects of language the students addressed when providing feedback.

Another study that shed light on the content of students' comments during peer review was carried out by McGroarty and Zhu (1997). The researchers examined the effects of peer review training on the quality of 169 first-year college students' comments in English composition classes. Both experimental and control groups received peer review training typical for that time in the non-ESL English composition classes—watching a video of a peer review session and a whole-group discussion about it. Further, the experimental group received thorough three-session training with practice reviewing a peer's writing, commenting on it, providing suggestions, and the instructors' facilitation of students' feedback in terms of clarity and focus on global aspects of writing (development of ideas, audience, and purpose of writing). The findings of the study show that training led to a significantly higher number of students' comments on the global features of writing in the experimental group.

Finally, Kamimura (2006) investigated the effects of peer feedback on the writing performance and revisions of EFL students in two Japanese university-level classes. In addition, the researcher aimed to determine whether there was a difference in the content of comments based on the various levels of proficiency in English. Furthermore, the study aimed to detect whether there were any connections between the types of comments and the students' further revisions of their writing. The participants' EFL proficiency levels in the two classes were determined to be high and low based on the General Tests of English Language Proficiency. Both classes received identical 2-hour peer review training designed on the basis of Stanley's (1992) and Berg's (1999a) studies.

Kamimura's (2006) focus on the content of students' comments is of particular interest to us. The researcher collected only students' written comments on the peer feedback worksheet in order to address the matter under study. The two readers coded the written comments using the two categories and 11 subcategories: the meaning-based category (unity, logical order, logical division, lack of support, quality of support, concluding

sentence, coherence, sentence structure, and diction) and the form-based category (grammar and mechanics). The findings of the study show that EFL students of both low and high proficiency levels commented most frequently on the lack of support in their peers' writing. After that subcategory, the other most frequently occurring subcategories were quality of support and concluding sentence. In contrast, few comments fell into the form-based category.

Having reviewed the relevant research on peer review and the content of ESL/EFL students' feedback, we identified the need to explore the content of oral feedback that ESL students provide to each other during peer review. In addition, we aimed to investigate the role played during the peer feedback exchange by the multicultural nature of the participants' population. Thus, the present qualitative case study aims to fill this gap through rich description and analysis of oral discourse during peer review training and peer review sessions. In particular, we aim to answer the following research question: Which aspects of peers' writing do ESL students choose to address during oral peer review sessions in an ESL class?

METHODS

The present research is part of a larger study conducted from fall 2009 to summer 2010 (10 months). Due to the focus on the oral discourse during peer review sessions in one ESL reading and writing class and the several participants who constitute one case, we define the methodology of the study as a holistic within-site instrumental case study with embedded units (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

Setting

We conducted the study in the English Language Institute (ELI) at a large urban university in the southeastern United States. The ELI is an intensive language program with five levels of ESL that focuses on the development of academic English. In addition to improving their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English, ELI students develop learning strategies, critical thinking, presentation skills, library research skills, and basic computer

skills, as well as knowledge of academic culture. Typically, enrollment in the ELI ranges from 200 to 250 students, and class size is usually around 15–18 students. Usually every class is multicultural, with students of diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. The majority of students, however, come from countries in the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The age of the students ranges from 17 to 60, with most of the students in their early 20s.

The class in which the study was conducted, Academic Preparation, is a mandatory content-based course that focuses on academic reading and writing. The majority of the data analyzed for the present study was collected in Level 5 (advanced) of Academic Preparation in summer 2010. At the advanced L2 proficiency level, the primary objective of this course is to prepare students to write a research project in a target language that meets the academic requirements of U.S. universities. With the focus on the process of developing a research project in particular and academic reading and writing in general, the teacher of Academic Preparation 5, one of our participants, viewed peer review as an essential activity in her class. Academic Preparation 5 classes met three times a week for a total of 5 hours weekly.

Participants

The teacher who accepted our invitation to participate in the study is an experienced ESL instructor who strongly believes in multistep process writing and the benefits of peer review in ESL classes. The other participants of the study are three students in Academic Preparation 5 who volunteered to participate, submitted the required assignments, and were present during the peer review sessions. Importantly, the three ESL students became our focal participants, although we did consider the data collected from the participant teacher during observations of the peer review sessions. Finally, although the teacher initially wanted to divide students into pairs for peer review sessions, the three student participants were working as a triad due to the uneven number of students who had submitted their drafts for peer review. We deliberately chose to focus on this triad because of the richness of the students' comments.

To protect participants' privacy, we use pseudonyms. Shelley is a North American ESL instructor in her 40s with a master's degree in applied linguistics/teaching ESL. She has been teaching ESL at the ELI for approximately 6 years. The student participants in our study are Beatriz, Lorena, and Maria. Lorena, from Colombia, is 26 and has been in the United States for 7 months; she has been studying English at the ELI for that entire time, and studied it for 3 years in Colombia. Maria, from Venezuela, is 19. She has spent 1 year in the United States and has been enrolled in English language classes in the ELI during this time. Maria reported that she has been studying English as a foreign language in Venezuela since she was 5 years old. Both Lorena and Maria are Spanish speakers. Beatriz, from Brazil, is 23. She has spent 1 year and 11 months in the United States and has studied for two semesters (8 months) at the ELI; she has studied English for a total time of 6 years. Her L1 is Portuguese.

Data Collection

Part of a larger longitudinal research project, the umbrella topic of the whole longitudinal study was the peer review activity; within the whole study, we examined two different aspects of peer review. The teachers' perspectives on peer review activity became the focus of another study. In this article, we examine the content of L2 students' oral feedback during peer review. We collected data from multiple sources, such as a survey with questions of a demographic nature, interviews with the teacher, multiple observations of the course, one of the researchers' observation field notes, and student participants' writings. For the purposes of the present study, the primary data to be analyzed were audio recordings of the peer review sessions, the researcher's observation field notes, and the survey with demographic questions.

We observed the participant teacher multiple times during three semesters, from fall 2009 to summer 2010. The recordings we analyzed for the current study, however, were made during summer 2010. In addition, the observations of peer review training and peer review feedback were audio-recorded. In total, we conducted approximately six observations of Academic Preparation 5 in summer 2010. Four observations were

audio-recorded. Finally, we asked the student participants to fill out the survey with demographic questions. Thus, triangulating the data through transcription of audio-recordings of peer review sessions and the researcher's observation field notes allowed us to enhance the reliability and credibility of the study's findings (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Data Analysis

In order to begin our analysis, we transcribed the audio-recordings of peer review sessions verbatim and organized our observation field notes based on the time it took to facilitate matching the relevant data from the transcriptions with the field notes. We considered it important to include our descriptive and reflective observation field notes because the researchers' reflexivity constitutes an important stage in data collection, analysis, and writing of a qualitative report (Janesick, 2000). Further, we perused the transcriptions and observation field notes several times to color code them and to identify emerging themes (Creswell, 2007). In coding the data, we employed the direct interpretation method (Creswell, 2007), the essence of which is to interpret every single instance of relevant information without looking for and comparing recurrent instances of data of interest for the matter under study.

Being an ESL instructor at the ELI at that time allowed the primary researcher to better understand the context, the nature and procedures of classes, and the participants' behavior and experiences. Furthermore, we had the additional benefit of counterbalancing the primary researcher's analysis and interpretation of data because the second author was not a teacher in the institute. Finally, in writing the present case study report, we aimed at rich description of the case and thorough analysis of emic voices from the data in order to achieve verisimilitude—creating a realistic and clear description of the context and procedure of the study that allows readers to feel as if they are transported into the story (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDINGS

In the process of analyzing data to address the research question (Which aspects of peers' writing do ESL students address orally

during peer review sessions in an ESL class?), five topics were discussed by students most frequently: organization of ideas, clarity of ideas, vocabulary, using information from L1 sources in L2 writing, and mechanics. Further, the theme of organization of ideas contained thesis statement, development of ideas, support, and consistency in the development of the argument, and mechanics embraced punctuation and formatting.

Organization of Ideas

Thesis statement. During the peer review training, Shelley, the teacher of Academic Preparation 5, emphasized the importance of the thesis statement as the explicit statement of the main idea at the end of the introduction in an academic paper. During two peer review sessions, the students, when providing feedback to the writer, clarified the location of the thesis statement. For example, Maria said, “The thesis statement I think it’s this one because in the . . .” Similarly, Beatriz asked, “That’s you thesis. Right?” In both instances, students were accurate in their identification of the thesis.

Moreover, Lorena commented on Beatriz’s thesis statement in terms of it being too broad. Lorena first commented on the clarity of the introduction, saying that she could understand what her peer was writing about. Afterward, she remarked that there was still a problem with one statement there. The conversation between Lorena (L), providing feedback, and Beatriz (B) was as follows:

Excerpt 1

1. B: Oh, this is my thesis.
2. L: Yeah. First, that I see is you have, I think, in my opinion, you have to put out this
3. “many challenges” is too broad
4. B: Yeah.
5. L: Yeah? I think that is better because you are going to focus in. . . you, in your paper
6. you have
7. B: But what could
8. I say though? Because I want to talk about the child. What could I say about the
9. child?

Excerpt 1 is from a conversation on the thesis statement in Beatriz’s paper. According to the conversation, Lorena considered the thesis statement with the words *many challenges* too broad for the paper with its specific focus. Not only could the student identify that the thesis statement in her peer’s writing was not clear, but she could also comment on the clarity. In the following conversation, Lorena stated that discrimination, credibility, and frustration were the challenges Beatriz was writing about in her paper and that an explicit statement of these themes would make Beatriz’s paper stronger.

Development of ideas. One aspect of writing that participants provided feedback on was the need to explain and develop an idea further in order to make it complete. Though this subtheme may be considered part of the theme of meaning or content, students did not view it as a clarity issue. In their feedback discussion, students commented that they could understand the meaning perfectly well, but felt that the idea was not sufficiently described or completed. For example, Maria told Lorena: “Maybe you should focus more in the points.” Lorena agreed and extended Maria’s idea to amplify the primary idea.

In addition, the peer reviewers revealed their ability to identify gaps in the overall structure of the paper. Beatriz told Maria:

Excerpt 2

1. B: So you show the problem, you came with the evidences, great evidence, but then... I
2. think that at the end you did not connect the evidences with the problem you had
3. mentioned. It’s like “Drugs are really bad. Let me show you.”

Thus, Beatriz herself was able to make the connection between the problem and the evidence in the other student’s paper; however, she was also able to identify the missing explicit statement of this connection in the peer’s writing.

Support. Participants frequently commented on the absence of support or lack of evidence to support the main or supporting

ideas in the writing. For instance, during the feedback discussion, the first comment Lorena made about Beatriz's writing concerned the need to provide support for some statements in the writing. She commented positively about the introduction, but pointed out the lack of reference or support for the facts included in the introduction:

Excerpt 3

1. L: The only thing that I don't know if you want do it here is I just said:
"You have to pay
2. to," because look what you say, but you have this kind of. . .
(unclear)/ For example,
3. "Now better non-native English speaker teacher are in the (unclear),
in the USA" but
4. how you prove it? You always have to think how to prove.

Thus, Lorena identified the weakness in Beatriz's writing—the lack of support—and pointed it out to the peer writer with the suggestion that she keep in mind the need to provide support for her ideas.

Consistency in the development of argument. Finally, peers discussed the consistency in the development of the argument. The student participants could identify whether there was a discrepancy between supporting ideas and the thesis statement. For example, Beatriz, having looked through all the supporting ideas in Maria's writing, identified one that was not aligned with the other ideas in the paper. After listening to Maria's objection to it, Beatriz said, "I get what you are saying, but then you said the opposite." Thus, Beatriz analyzed the development of ideas in the paper and her peer's oral explanation of the content, identified the contradiction, and commented on the area of weakness in the peer's writing. In fact, she continued explaining until Maria appeared to understand how to revise and improve her paper.

Clarity of Ideas

Surprisingly, the participants' feedback on the clarity of ideas in their peer's writing was mostly positive. For example, Beatriz complimented Maria on the clarity of her writing in the following way:

Excerpt 4

1. B: Your body [of the paper] was very, you know, was very clear. It was well organized. I
2. like it. I like it, you know, the way that you mention things, you know, you gave the
3. information. I think the introduction was pretty good because you, you, you talk about
4. it. . . you mention about what you were going to talk about. Then you came with your
5. thesis and then in the body, you, you, you know, you talk about what you mention in
6. the introduction.

This excerpt was from the beginning of the feedback session between Beatriz and Maria. Thus, the feedback giver started with the positive comments about the peer's writing and then chose to comment on the clarity of the paper.

Vocabulary

The participants turned out to be worried about vocabulary errors that might influence the clarity of the ideas in the writing. For example, Maria asked Lorena to clarify the meaning of a word she did not know, pointing out the weakness in Lorena's writing in this way. The further negotiation of meaning ended in the following way:

Excerpt 5

1. L: I want to say "in also" or "in the same way"
2. M: like "in addition"? Oh. OK.

Thus, through the oral negotiation of meaning, the feedback giver helped the writer with the transition phrase that the writer could not express because of her lack of knowledge of idiomatic vocabulary.

A similar instance occurred when Beatriz identified the problem with idiomatic expressions in Maria's writing. In Beatriz's opinion, Maria's problem with idiomatic expressions might interfere with readers' understanding of the text; therefore, she pointed the problem out to Maria and suggested a solution in the following way:

Excerpt 6

1. B: "People should be blahblahblah." And then you said here "in not when they become
2. adults for some reasons." I think that, if you leave like this, people are not gonna
3. understand. People . . .
4. M: don't study
5. B: don't learn when you are an adult. So that's why I mentioned here. Maybe you could
6. say "not only when they become adult"
7. M: yeah, yeah. Right.
8. B: You know. Not only.
9. M: yeah.

In this case, Beatriz identified the problem with lexis in the writing and suggested an alternative that she thought would be correct. Clearly, Beatriz could find the weakness with idiomatic expression in her peer's writing and was able to suggest the correct version.

Using Quotations in L1 in L2 Writing

Another type of peer reviewer's comments on the writing concerned the use of information from the research article in the writer's native language, Spanish, in an L2 paper. Thus, Maria commented on Lorena's use of Spanish when providing evidence from the research article from Chile in her L2 writing:

Excerpt 7

1. M: can you write in Hispanic (laughing)?
2. L: Ahh. (laughing) because this information is in the article that make from a university
3. from Chile
4. M: (laughing)
5. L: and I just put it (laughing)
6. M: all right, no Español
7. L: yeah (laughing)

It is hard to say whether the problem was Lorena's code switching or her forgetting to translate and paraphrase the information from the article in order to use it in her paper. Regardless, Maria identified and discussed this aspect of writing during the peer review session.

Mechanics

Punctuation. The only punctuation issue the participants talked about during the peer review sessions was the use of quotation marks. For example, Beatriz commented on the lack of quotation marks in Maria's paper:

Excerpt 8

1. B: And another one, here. Like these. Be careful when you do these.
You have to get the
2. whole thing that the guy said because here you kind of, I think you kind of cut what he
3. said. So I just. . . but I don't know, but I did not see your quote. So I just said "I think
4. you? And forgot the name here." So just make sure . . .
5. M: Oh, no, because this one was paraphrasing

Thus, the students demonstrated awareness of the need to cite others' ideas appropriately using quotation marks. In another instance during the peer review, the participants emphasized the necessity to include the name of the person and the year of the publication in order to give proper credit to the owner of the idea and avoid plagiarism.

Formatting. The formatting of the paper according to the requirements of the assignment and APA style was also one aspect on which the participants provided feedback for their peers and negotiated in search of the correct answer. For example, Beatriz, in the role of the writer, looked for Lorena's help in citing the secondary article mentioned in the article she read.

Excerpt 9

1. B: but I think I wanted it, this information about (unclear), I do not know how to say the
2. name, this information I found in another article that mentioned him.
So I was
3. wondering if I should cite the part of the article that I read or the original.
4. L: I had the same. I had that question.

After some discussion, the participants turned to the teacher for help with this question because neither of them knew how to properly cite the material. Nevertheless, even without their

teacher's feedback about this aspect of their writing, they were able to identify the issue in their writing.

DISCUSSION

Previous research on peer review activities has mostly focused on ESL students' attitudes (E. Liu & Lin, 2007), advantages and disadvantages (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), and the effect of peer-reviewed activities on various aspects of ESL students' writing (Min, 2006). As we reviewed above, few studies have investigated the content of peer feedback. Though these studies have contributed to our understanding of peer review sessions in ESL classes, they have simultaneously revealed the gap in the research literature on the content of ESL students' oral discourse during peer feedback and negotiation in a multicultural classroom. The findings of the current study on the types of oral comments ESL students choose to make during peer review sessions highlight the importance of oral feedback and negotiation as an essential step of peer review activities. In addition, the findings shed a helpful light on the larger picture of how ESL students approach giving feedback and the underlying reasons for their comments.

Oral or Written Comments?

Though several studies on peer review have included ESL students' oral feedback as a part of their analyses, little attention has been paid to its absolute necessity as a part of a peer review activity. As we have observed and analyzed in our study, however, oral feedback was a crucial step for students' clarification, discussion, and negotiation of written comments on peers' writing. Having analyzed ESL students' oral discourse during peer review sessions, we found that students stayed on task and addressed various aspects of peers' writing, as in Nelson and Murphy's (1992) study. Moreover, as in Kamimura's (2006) and McGroarty and Zhu's (1997) research, our participants commented on global features of writing during the peer review session. In addition to commenting on organization of ideas (thesis statement, development of ideas, support, and consistency in the development of the argument) and their clarity of ideas; however, ESL students in our study also commented on such form-based issues as vocabulary, using

information from L1 sources in L2 writing, and mechanics (punctuation and formatting). Given the opportunity to discuss and negotiate feedback orally, students were able to explain to their peers why they had commented on form-based aspects of writing instead of only reading written comments.

Surprisingly, during the oral negotiation of feedback, the students were also modifying the written comments they had made while reading the peer's writing to make them more explicit, correct, and ultimately helpful for the peers. Identification of the discrepancy between the written feedback for the peer on the feedback form and the oral feedback, therefore, emphasizes the need for a combination of oral feedback and written comments during peer review sessions. Most ESL classes in the United States are multicultural, with students of various L1 backgrounds. Therefore, providing clear and concise comments on peer feedback forms can be a difficult task for the peer reviewer, taking into account the constraints of time for the activity and constraints of their knowledge of the target language. When the participants in the current study had an opportunity to provide feedback orally and further negotiated it with the writer, however, they were able to explain their written notes for the peer writer, providing more details to clarify the message of the comment, and to reach intersubjectivity, as pointed out by de Guerrero and Villamil (1994) and Carr (2008). Thus, the combination of written and oral feedback during peer review sessions is essential for enhancing the quality of peer review in ESL classes.

Why Do They Do It?

The qualitative methodology of our study and the audio-recorded data from observation and the researcher's observation field notes permitted us to gain insight into the underlying reasons for students' choice of comments on certain aspects of a peer's writing. As Beatriz explicitly pointed out, her comment on the error in vocabulary usage was addressing the weakness in the peer's writing that may prevent readers from understanding the paper. The students were clearly attempting to help peers express their ideas in writing. According to Connor (2006), cultural differences and transfer of L1 linguistic patterns and rhetorical conventions

may cause difficulties in ESL students' sharing ideas clearly in L2 writing. According to our findings, the ESL students chose to share their feedback on these issues that could interfere with the audience's understanding of the specific ideas in the text as well as on the issues of development and expressing their ideas following the conventions and linguistic patterns in L2 academic writing.

ESL students in a multicultural classroom often have difficulties with L2 writing due to the cultural differences in rhetorical conventions and linguistic patterns. Though their views and expectations of writing may differ, ESL students ordinarily share the same goal of improving their L2 writing. Therefore, appropriating the roles of a reviewer and feedback receiver, understanding the value of feedback, and having a common goal may help ESL students scaffold for their peers and help them not only to recognize the weaknesses in their writing, but also to examine that writing critically.

When providing comments on a peer's writing, ESL students could not only identify the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' writing, but also point them out to the writers and usually suggest how to improve the paper. Having chosen to comment on a certain weakness in the peer's writing, the feedback giver was also asking for clarification and further explanation of the issue and was providing the feedback itself and the justification to attend to that part of the writing. Finally, after this mutual scaffolding, both feedback giver and feedback receiver could arrive at some agreement on the issue in order to improve the writing.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of our study led us to several implications that may inform ESL educators, administrators, and researchers. In addition, EFL teachers may find the findings of the study relevant to their context and helpful in terms of understanding the content of peer feedback in a multicultural classroom. The major implication of our study is the need to include oral feedback sessions in peer review activities for L2 students' and teachers' benefit.

Oral feedback sessions as a step in a peer review activity can carry multifaceted benefits for L2 students. First, when students

have a chance to discuss and negotiate their written feedback comments, they improve their speaking and listening skills. Second, the complexity of the oral feedback sessions affords L2 students an opportunity to use and develop their critical thinking skills. Students are challenged not only with the task of reading the peer's writing and taking note of what is correct and what may be improved, but also with considering how to clearly explain their feedback to the author of the paper, to ask for clarifications, and, finally, to co-construct meaning during such conversations. Feedback receivers, in their turn, need to open themselves to their peer's ideas about their writing, to analyze the feedback giver's opinions, and to participate in the negotiation.

Therefore, we view peer review sessions as L2 students' constant appropriation of the author and reviewer roles. When two peers are motivated to help each other and to negotiate the feedback, they see themselves as both author and reviewer, which leads to another benefit of oral peer feedback sessions—the opportunity “to see a larger picture,” or, in other words, to look at the writing from the reviewer's standpoint. Having such an opportunity, due to the peer's scaffolding, their shared goal, and motivation, allows L2 students to take an additional step forward in the development of their L2 writing—to consider the audience for their writing and to evaluate the organization of their ideas and the clarity of their expression. Thus, oral feedback sessions constitute an essential step in peer review that carries many benefits for ESL students' L2 learning.

Moreover, ESL/EFL teachers might consider including oral feedback sessions in order to save time on giving responses to students' drafts. When including oral feedback sessions, ESL teachers afford students the benefits of feedback giving and receiving which we discussed above. We believe that peers' responses should complement teachers' feedback in the multistep approach to L2 students' development of writing. Finally, to make the process beneficial for L2 students, ESL/EFL teachers should address the pragmatic aspects of oral discourse in an academic setting in the United States. An example of such activity during peer review training may be role-playing or a game that would model for students how to agree and disagree, how to ask

questions and provide answers, or how to suggest and advise politely.

Our qualitative case study on the types of oral comments L2 students choose to make allowed us to assess the value of oral feedback sessions in a peer review activity. In addition, the findings contribute to research on the content of peer review sessions with several types of comments that have not previously been discussed. The findings may serve as the basis for further research on pragmatic aspects of teacher–student and student–student oral discourse during peer review training. A study with the microgenetic approach to this matter would, therefore, fill a gap in the research literature and inform ESL/EFL teachers. In addition, further research on ESL/EFL students' appropriation of the roles of feedback giver and feedback receiver or author and reviewer will enhance our understanding of L2 students' cognitive processes and motivation during peer review sessions.

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