

The Effect of Online Peer Review Activities on Students' Academic Writing Performance

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Abstract- Peer review activities have been conducted in writing classes and have shown good impacts on the students' writing skills. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of online peer review activities on students' academic writing performance. The participants were 50 students of academic writing classes. Participants engaged in a number of online peer review practices before they conducted peer review using Google doc. During the peer review, the students could express their ideas as the result of their peer comment and suggestions through the online communication using Google doc. The online peer review could be done both synchronously and asynchronously. The data were collected using a pre-test and a post-test for language proficiency and writing skill. The result revealed that there is a significant increase in their writing score. Both high-ability students and low-ability students show improvement in their writing skills.

Keywords— Academic writing, online peer review, synchronous, asynchronous

Introduction

Studies describing peer review has been done for decades. A quasi-experimental study on the impact of peer review has been done by [6]. The findings showed that receiving 'justified' comments in feedback improves performance, but this effect diminishes for students with better pretest performance. This study clarifies that one of the factors that make a peer review activity successful is informing the students the purpose of peer review activities and show them what advantages they may get so that the effect will not diminish for any students. Another study shows present article seeks to briefly summarize some of the main arguments in favor and against the role of peer feedback in learning second language writing. By analyzing some sources, they found that peer feedback on writing develops students to improve their knowledge through providing opportunities to think critically, and to improve their autonomy. It is noteworthy that peer feedback has come to take an important part in writing instruction because it provides a flexible platform to help students writing practice. This study collects the proofs from some sources on both the advantages and disadvantages of peer

review activities, yet they conclude that some benefits of peer review activities may improve the students' writing skills.

Different from other researches, a study done by Baker [2] focuses on the process of peer review activities. According to her, peer review is an established strategy for improving the quality of students' writing. Her study moves beyond the focus on outcomes to assess the peer-review process and it is done over 3 years to assess the process of peer review activities. In particular, this study focuses on the timing of the peer review, a highly structured feedback form, and student writers' revisions after engaging in peer review. The data reveal these strategies force students to begin writing earlier in the semester, help the students offer formative feedback to their peers, and encourage students to substantially revise their drafts before submitting the final paper [2]. The study reveals the importance of assessing the process instead of the final findings. By observing the process it will give wider description on the impacts of peer review. Mifta [11] shows that the areas of peer response gained from each session of peer response activities focused much on the idea development, grammar, and mechanic. These activities can improve students that may make irrelevant feedback. The points of peer response were incorporated into revisions because of its advantages to the developments of an essay in terms of grammar, essay structure and coherence, and were not incorporated into revisions because of irrelevant feedbacks. The suitable area between peer response and writer expectation was in terms of grammar accuracy. During peer response activities students engaged in the improvement of their writing ability and the most improvements of the writing aspects were content and grammar. Another study done for three years reveals that the strategies applied in the peer review activities have shown that the students do the revising before submitting their paper. This proves that the review conducted by their peers help them to produce better writing [2].

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incorporated into revisions because incorporated into revisions because of irrelevant feedbacks[14]. The suitable area between peer response and writer expectation was in terms of grammar accuracy. During peer response activities students engaged in the improvement of their writing ability, and the most improvements of the writing aspects were content and grammar.

Another study finds that most students think that peer review as beneficial to their learning. Through reviewing and receiving reviews, students felt that their work has improved and they become confident to provide constructive reviews [13].

Some studies on the peer review characteristics have shown that students with collaborative type improve their writing skills. Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger (1992) (as cited in[5] finds that there are three stance types identified: prescriptive, interpretive, and Collaborative that students take in responding to a sample student essay and students who assumed the collaborative stance got higher course grades.

A study on the application of peer feedback activities shows that there are influences of the pair interaction to revisions and development of writing aspects. In the first term, feedback provided by collaborative learners and expert learners in pair interaction contributed to the revision changes of their partners' writings. Feedback provided by dominant learner had little contribution to revision changes of writing of another dominant learner. Besides, collaborative pairs and expert/novice pairs had better-revised writing than other pairs who were under other patterns [12]. Meanwhile, another study done by Astrid, Rukmini, Sofwan & Fitriati [1] found that students either having low or high writing anxiety had lack of confidence, ability and management control in delivering appropriate feedbacks, but students showed active participation and independency. Thus, it is essential to provide students training to give peer review which can give students confidence in conducting peer review activities. This study will fill the gaps in the peer review activities as the participants of the study are prepared.

A. Academic Writing

Academic writing is a form of evaluation that asks students to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting and presenting (Irvin). Further Irvin explains the elements of academic writing. Further, he explains that academic writing is an argument between the writer and the readers.

In order to be successful in writing academically, there are some components need to be learned. First, a writer needs to have the ability to read complex texts and understand key disciplinary concepts. Besides they need to master the strategies for synthesizing, analyzing and responding critically to new information(Irvin). It is the teachers' responsibility to deal with these aspects of academic writing.

In order to develop academic writing skills, writers must engage with ideas. They must find ideas that interest them and connect these ideas to their knowledge and experience. The more student writers are intrigued by ideas, the more time and effort they will spend in writing about them. Besides, they must be aware of the context in which they are writing meaning that they have to consider the expectation of academic audiences and the ways of thinking that typically fulfill the expectation (Farrell)

Online Peer Review

A computer-aided peer review has been done by (Macleod). She explains that the advantage of using a computer is that the messages can be posted, read and responded to at the writer's and reader's convenience. Besides, the one who is reviewed does not need to meet

face and face so that they do not need to feel ashamed as in some cultures like in Indonesia, to be criticized and to criticize are not preferred. However, they still can chat or communicate. A definition on synchronous and asynchronous are given by [7]. Synchronous online classes are those that require students and instructors to be online at the same time. Lectures, discussions, and presentations occur at a specific hour. All students must be online at that specific hour in order to participate. To see the differences he also explains Asynchronous classes as just the opposite. Instructors provide materials, lectures, tests, and assignments that can be accessed at any time. Students may be given a timeframe – usually a one week window – during which they need to connect at least once or twice. Overall, students are free to contribute whenever they choose. Asynchronous learning typically allows students to participate in online courses. Based on the findings, the researcher suggested a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous paradigms to create an ideal environment for e-language learning in Pakistan[10]. Although this study shows that blending both synchronous and asynchronous learning is ideal, my study will not blend this as the purpose of my study is to find out whether there is a different impact of different online peer review on academic writing skills of students with different learning styles.

By observing the process of asynchronous peer review, Chou [3] suggested that this activity gives the opportunity for collaboration on building the knowledge base and sharing information whereas, in synchronous mode, there were more questions and answers. Students were more engaged in the synchronous discussions. There was a stronger sense of immediacy to respond to peer's questions in synchronous mode than in the asynchronous mode

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to examine the effects of online peer review activities on students' academic writing performance. It examined both high-ability and low ability students. The participants were 50 students of academic writing classes. In order to be able to do the peer review activities, students were trained to give comment on both the compositions (organizations) and the grammar. The composition skills are limited to the area of the hook, thesis statement, topic sentence and concluding paragraph. The participants were trained to do the practiced that have been prepared in <http://academic-writing-practice.com>. The participants engaged in a number of online peer review practices before they conducted peer review using Google doc. The participants choose their own partner for the online peer review activities. This was meant to make them feel relax to criticize their partner' performance. The post-test was done after the participants finished the final draft after the peer review process. The results of the pretest and the posttests then were scored by two writing teachers using the same rubric and the scores were counted to get the final average score.

During the peer review, the students could express their ideas as the result of their peer comment and suggestions through the online communication using Google doc. The online peer review could be done both synchronously and asynchronously. The data were collected using a pre-test and a post-test for language proficiency and writing skill. The result revealed that there is a significant increase in their writing score. Both high-ability students and low-ability students show improvement in their writing skills.

III. DISCUSSIONS

The peer review activities were conducted by 50 students who were paired. Each pair reviewed each other's essay. When they did it synchronously, they could write their argumentation on the comments that their partner has made. Then, they could improve their writing skills. By comparing the result of the pretest and posttest, it was found out that the score of all the students increased. Before doing peer review activities, the writers made sure that all of the participants understand how to conduct peer review synchronously and asynchronously. They had conducted the practice which was prepared and could be checked whether they had done it correctly. The following shows the result.

TABLE I. THE CORRELATION VALUE

	increase	Correlation Value
Asynchronous	1.893617021	0.850221316
Synchronous	5.063829787	0.830844942

The table above clarifies that there is a significant increase in students' score in both synchronous and asynchronous online peer review. However, the increase is much higher when students do the online peer review synchronously although the correlation value is almost the same. The correlation values show that there is an improvement in the students' writing skills. Besides based on the data, there is an improvement on most all of the students' writing score by comparing their pre-test and post-test. This proves that peer review really can improve the students' writing skills as what Baker [2], Miftah [2] have found out. What is interesting in this finding is that peer review activities are done online through synchronous and asynchronous peer review activities, and the result shows that doing peer review synchronously could increase to 5.06 which is almost three times compared to doing it asynchronously

Meanwhile from the data of the pretest and posttest, it can be seen that the students improve both in their language proficiency (in this case we mean the grammar skills which are limited on the kinds of clause, run on sentence, subject-verb agreement, noun form, verb form, pronoun form and pronoun reference).

TABLE II. THE NUMBER OF GRAMMAR MISTAKE

Kind of grammar	Pre-test	Post-test
Kind of clause	12	10
Run on	6	3
S V agreement	7	7
Noun form	25	27
Verb form	23	9
Pronoun form	12	4
Pronoun reference	18	15
punctuation	5	9

The table above shows that there is an improvement in the students' grammar skills. For example, the number of verb form error has dropped from 23 to 9, and the pronoun form is from 12 to 4. However, there is also an increase in the number of the students' mistake in punctuation and noun form. It can be assumed that the students may or may not understand the topic of the grammar and they may not pay attention to it.

When applying for peer review it has been found that there are benefits that students may get. This study also proves that there is an increase in students' understanding in applying grammar skills in their essay.

The students' writing skills have been improved as they have discussed with their peer. During the discussion that they do when doing the peer review using the Google doc, automatically, they learn from their partner on writing skills.

Based on the findings, writing teachers can pay attention to the importance of emphasizing grammar skills which should be the basic skills for the students in order to write appropriately.

Conclusion and pedagogical implication

Thus, it can be concluded that peer review activities can improve the students' writing skills. They may do it both synchronously and asynchronously, as both activities have resulted in an increase on their writing scores although the increase of the score is higher when they do it synchronously where they can share their thought directly. Thus, it is recommended that they can learn and improve their writing skills by practicing peer review that they feel appropriate for them, either synchronously or asynchronously.

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