



Designing Peer Review Sessions: What Works and What Doesn't?

*A Workshop for the
Center for Faculty Development*

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Linguistics and Language Development

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Introduction...

- Names, departments
- Warm up:
 - What concern or question do you have about using peer review?
- Overview of the session:
 - 1. Student backgrounds and how they affect writing instruction
 - 2. Effective and ineffective strategies in peer review
 - 3. Calibrated Peer Review (technology enhanced system). John Leih will present this part.



My thanks to Dana Ferris

- Ferris has researched & written voluminously on the issues of responding to college student writing. Most everything I present here is directly attributable to her work.



A brief review about our students' language backgrounds

- For purposes of better understanding college students' needs, writing experts often categorize students into 3-5 groups. These are:
 - International students (have F-1 visas and plan to return to live in their country of origin)
 - US resident students with a background in a language other than English (also called "language minority students")
 - Late arrival resident students (in the US fewer than 8 years)
 - Early arrival resident students (in the US longer than 8 years) (also called "Generation 1.5 students")
 - US-born native English speakers



Characteristics that *may* pertain to these groups & affect their academic literacy skills

(Ferris 2009)

- International students:
 - Tend to be “eye learners” -- that is, “the primary route to English language learning was through formal classroom language study” (Ferris p. 30, citing Reid, 1998/2006)
 - Usually have a strong foundation in their first language (L1)*
 - Usually well educated in their home country
 - May exhibit different rhetorical structures (patterns of organization) in writing assignments than what is expected
 - May be unfamiliar with the process approach common in US writing classes (pre-writing, multiple drafts, peer and expert feedback, etc.)
 - Still struggle with grammar, vocabulary, use of appropriate register.

** Note that students from India, Singapore, Nigeria etc. already speak and write English fluently because it is one of the national languages.*



Characteristics, continued

- Late arriving resident students
 - Some of them, depending on how much education they received in their home country, may also be primarily “eye” learners
 - Others may be “ear learners” -- that is, they acquired English primarily through naturalistic exposure to the language.
 - They may or may not be literate in their L1 (it depends on how much education they had in the home country and the type of L2 learning experiences they have had (e.g., formal or informal))
 - May have had little composition instruction in English prior to college.



Characteristics, continued

■ Early arriving resident students

- Primarily “ear learners”; they have acquired English naturalistically, on the playground, with peers, etc.
- Grammar analysis skills may be weak due to its under-emphasis in public school curricula (though this may be changing in recent years) (Scarcella, 2003). Students may not know the “parts of speech” etc.
- Oral skills in English are strong; these students are fluent English speakers.
- Often have limited or no literacy in the L1
- Can self correct based on intuition, more than on the basis of formal grammar knowledge
- Are more confident of their US cultural knowledge than the previous two groups
- May have picked up English from peers who speak in non-standard varieties
- May use overly conversational or informal style in their writing



Characteristics, continued

- US-born native English speakers
 - Have strong intuitive English skills
 - Are confident of their US cultural knowledge
 - May speak ethnic or regional varieties of English that diverge somewhat from “standard English”
 - Depending on previous schooling, they may not have much “grammar knowledge”
 - May not have had consistent or high quality instruction in writing beyond the sentence level (e.g., paragraphs, essays etc.)



Students' concerns about peer review

- Students may feel peers are not competent to give useful feedback;
- Students feel they themselves are not competent to give useful feedback;
- Students fear harsh criticism from peers, or feedback that is “too nice”;
- Students don't want to lose face by giving critical feedback to peers; egalitarian relations may be threatened;



Students' concerns, cont.

- Students fear that peer review will mean instructor gives no feedback;
- Students don't like working in groups or pairs;
- Students from other countries may have no experience with peer review and lack a cultural framework to explain why it's done here.



Instructors' concerns about peer review

- It will take time away from other more important activities;
- I've had bad experiences with it before;
- I'm not sure how to do it effectively;
- Plus... instructors share many of the same concerns that students voice.



What are the arguments for peer review of writing assignments?

- It is part of a process approach to writing -- drafts, stages, revision;
- Professional writers seek feedback from their peers, so students should also;
- Research shows that by and large, peer review when well implemented does improve student writing over time (Mendonça and Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy 1993; Schmid, 1999; all cited in Ferris 2003)



Arguments for, continued

- Students can see how other students approached an assignment;
- Getting feedback from classmates and co-workers will be expected in your future professional life;
- Peers can help you see whether your intentions were communicated effectively (writing is about communication with an audience)



Suggestions for implementing **effective** peer review

- Allow students to discuss their concerns about peer review as well as potential benefits; instructor reinforces & clarifies.
- Model what you expect the Ss to do in peer review.
- Allow them to practice with a sample paper; adjust procedures as needed.
- Structure the task so that students know what to do or not do (e.g., do you want them to focus on ideas, grammar editing...be specific).
- Create peer review pairs or groups intentionally, not randomly; 3 is ideal; place stronger students with weaker ones, & mix language backgrounds.



Suggestions, continued

- Use peer review consistently so that Ss become familiar with the procedures and improve their responding skills.
- Hold students accountable for using feedback they get from peers
 - Make peer response part of the grade
 - Require students to reflect on their peer's suggestions and discuss changes they may or may not make as a result



Suggestions, continued

- Solicit input from students after 1-2 sessions to find out how the process might be improved.



GETTING STARTED WITH CALIBRATED PEER REVIEW (CPR)

- <http://cpr.molsci.ucla.edu>
- “Who uses CPR?” for a list of schools currently using CPR
- Arlene Russell, Project Director
russell@chem.ucla.edu
- CPR Faculty contact: Tim Su
telemark@chem.ucla.edu



Discussion and sharing

- Your experiences? Suggestions?
Cautions?
- What further support would you like in
this area?



Additional handouts

- Sample guidelines for working with others (Collins)
- Sample peer review procedure from Collins (this one presumes a native English speaker population)
- Sample peer review forms (Collins, Ferris)
- Calibrated peer review flowchart
- Weblinks for writing support



The end!

- Thanks for coming!
- PS: Next workshop is on developing genre awareness among your students so that they can be more effective professionals.
 - Wednesday April 14th, 3:00-4:15 pm



References

- Collins, P. *Community writing: Researching social issues through composition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ferris, D.R. (2009). *Teaching college writing to diverse student populations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ferris, D.R. (2007). Preparing teachers to respond to student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 16: 165-193
- Ferris D.R. (2003). *Response to student writing. Implications for second language students*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Reid, J. (1998/2006). “Eye” learners and “ear” learners: Identifying the language needs of international and US resident writers. In P.K. Matsuda, M. Cox, J.Jordan, & C. Ortmeier-Hooper (Eds.), *Second language writing in the composition classroom* (pp. 76-88). Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.
- Scarcella, R.C. (2003). *Accelerating academic English: A focus on the English learner*. Oakland: University of California.