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Terra Suzanne Myers

The University of Toledo

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Comparing Comments in the L1 and the L2 during the Peer Review Process

by

Terra Suzanne Myers

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in English with a concentration in English as a Second Language

Dr. Melinda Reichelt, Committee Chair

Dr. Barbara Schneider, Committee Member

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The University of Toledo

May 2010
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An Abstract of
Comparing Comments in the L1 and the L2 during the Peer Review Process

by

Terra Suzanne Myers

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in English with a concentration in English as a Second Language

The University of Toledo
May 2010

This study analyzes the use of ESL students’ L1 and L2 during the peer review process in terms of the number of comments and suggestions produced and the types of comments and suggestions produced. For this study, during one session of peer review, the first pair of students was able to give written and spoken comments only in the L2, and the second pair of students was able to give written and spoken comments in both the L1 and the L2. The results of this study suggest that ESL students produce more written and spoken comments and suggestions when they use their L1 and L2 during peer review. The results also suggest that ESL students produce more comments and suggestions concerning meaning errors such as content, development, and organization errors and sentence structure errors when they use their L1 and L2 during peer review, and ESL students produce more comments and suggestions concerning surface errors such as grammar errors and spelling, punctuation, and word choice errors when they use only their L2 during peer review.
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Chapter 1

Research Overview and Literature Review

1.1 Overview of Study

This study analyzes whether more comments and suggestions are produced when English as a Second Language (ESL) students can use their L1 and L2 during the peer review process, or if more comments and suggestions are produced when ESL students can only use their L2 during the peer review process. It also examines the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use both their L1 and L2, and the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use only their L2.

1.2 Introduction

Peer review is a practice of having students read and provide comments and suggestions for each other’s writing (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Mangelsdorf, 1992). Over the years, it has become a very common activity in the writing process, and it is used in almost every United States’ college composition classroom as a way to enhance students’ editing skills and teach them to see writing as a process (Guerrero & Villamil, 1996; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Mangelsdorf, 1992). Peer review provides students with early feedback on their writing, and it is a way to receive feedback from
someone other than the teacher (Baker & Lundstrom, 2009; Hyland, 2000). Peer review is an especially popular technique utilized in native English speaking composition courses, but since about the 1970’s, English as a Second Language (ESL) writing teachers have begun to incorporate peer review into their classes as well (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Zhang, 1995). Although the usefulness of peer review in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) writing classrooms has been widely disputed, there are a number of researchers who have studied the peer review process and found it to be beneficial for students’ learning (Baker & Lundstrom, 2009; Berg, 1999; Liu & Sadler, 2003; Nelson & Carson, 1998).

In an ESL classroom setting, the use of the students’ native language has also been widely disputed by researchers and ESL teachers (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Wang & Wen, 2002). In the past, some researchers thought use of the students’ L1 hindered the students’ acquisition of the L2 (De La Fuente & Scott, 2008); however, in more recent studies, researchers have begun to think the use of the L1 can enable learners to effectively work together and foster the acquisition of English (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Guo & Liu, 1997; Wang & Wen, 2002). In this chapter, I will describe the process of peer review in more detail, and I will discuss previous research that describes the benefits of peer review. I will also overview techniques and suggestions for making peer review effective according to researchers, ESL writing teachers, and ESL students. In this chapter, I will also discuss previous studies concerning the use of students’ L1 in ESL writing classrooms.

1.3 What is peer review? What is its function in the ESL classroom?

Writing a paper is a process that consists of constantly drafting, revising, drafting,
revising, and so on. According to Carson and Nelson (1998), ESL students can often worry so much about creating an error free paper and receiving a good grade that they lose focus on the writing process. Carson and Nelson also indicate ESL students do not realize that it is normal to make errors in the early stages of writing and that even native speakers of English do not create perfect pieces of written material for their first drafts. According to Carson and Nelson, peer review is an activity that can help ESL students revert their attention back to the writing process of revising and rewriting, because it points out students’ weaknesses and strengths within the paper and motivates them to rewrite their papers based on those weaknesses and strengths. Also, by giving comments and suggestions on their peers’ papers during peer review, Carson and Nelson write, ESL students will also see that they are not the only students in the classroom who make mistakes when writing a paper.

According to some research findings, peer review can not only help students view writing as a process of revisions, but it can also improve their overall writing skills. In a study conducted by Paulus (1999), 11 undergraduate students enrolled in an ESL composition writing course took part in peer review several times throughout the semester. For every writing assignment that was given, peer review would take place after the first draft had been completed. At the end of the semester, according to the scores of the students’ essays, Paulus found that the students writing done at end of the semester was far better than the writing done at the beginning of the semester (1999). She also found that students were showing the most improvement in the area of text meaning (meaning of the text through arrangement of ideas and/or developing support to elaborate more on those ideas). According to Paulus (1999),
the peer review process helped improve her students’ writing by teaching them to recognize when their papers needed to be re-organized and more developed.

In another study, Baker and Lundstrom (2009) discuss the benefits that peer review in an ESL classroom can have on the student giving the feedback. For the study, 91 ESL students enrolled in a university writing class were split into two groups. One group received peer feedback during peer review, and the other group would only give feedback during peer review. By comparing pre-essay (before peer feedback sessions) and post-essay scores (after peer feedback sessions), Baker and Lundstrom (2009) found that the students receiving feedback (“receivers”) had better scores on the pre-test than the students giving feedback (“givers”), but that the “givers” had higher post-test scores than the “receivers”. This suggests that ESL students can improve their own writing by reviewing their peers’ papers. According to Baker and Lundstrom (2009), by critically evaluating other students’ papers during the peer review process, ESL students can presumably learn to critically evaluate their own writing for areas that need revision.

Peer review may also have the potential to benefit students’ socially and emotionally. In the journal article “Using Peer Feedback in the ESL Writing Class”, Rollinson (2005) compiles a list of reasons supporting the use of peer feedback in ESL classrooms based on past studies by Rollinson (1998), Chaulk (1994), Berg (1999), Villamil and Guerrero (1996), and Nelson and Murphy (1992). Although Rollinson reports the improvement of students’ writing and editing skills as being a reason for using peer review in ESL classrooms, he also provides several other positive effects that can be attributed to the use of peer review. According to Rollinson, peer review
can greatly improve ESL students’ interaction with each other (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Villamil & Guerrero, 1996). Since peer review requires two way feedback, students must communicate with each other to discuss explanations, clarifications, suggestions, and so on that pertain to their writing (2005). He also mentions that being social with other students may improve their attitudes towards writing (Berg, 1999). Rollinson believes that even if students remain unconfident in their writing, they may find it reassuring and relaxing to have the opportunity to talk with other students during class time, especially since peer review is much less formal than teacher feedback.

Although there are many researchers who argue peer review is a beneficial activity in an ESL writing classroom (Baker & Lundstrom, 2009; Berg, 1999; Liu & Sadler, 2003; Nelson & Carson, 1998), there are also researchers who argue that peer review is not a beneficial writing activity (Asenavage & Connor, 1994; George, 1991; Leki, 1990). Zhang (1995) is one researcher who argues against the advantages of peer review in ESL classes. In his study (1995), 81 ESL students enrolled in a U.S. university writing class received feedback from their peers on their first drafts and feedback from the teacher on their second drafts. At the end of the course, the students were asked to answer the following question: given a choice between teacher feedback and non-teacher feedback – that is feedback by peers or yourself – before you write your final version, which will you choose? Zhang found that 94 percent of the students preferred feedback from the teacher rather than feedback from their peers and/or themselves. According to Zhang, peer review is an activity that was used first in L1 writing classes and then later borrowed by ESL writing classes; however, he
thinks it is an activity that was not effectively borrowed. Zhang states that effective activities in a L1 writing class like peer review may fail to hold up in an ESL writing class. In order to prevent this, Zhang thinks ESL writing teachers need to listen to the wants of their students, and then, adapt activities from L1 writing classes to better fit ESL writing environments.

Studies by Leki (1991), Asenavage and Connor (1994, and George (1991) also reported similar findings that ESL teachers need to adjust their lesson plans and activities to better fit the students wants and needs. Leki’s (1991) study specifically asked ESL students what they considered was the best source of help for their written work. The students in this study judged the instructor to be the most helpful and fellow ESL students to be the least helpful when it came to providing feedback on their papers. Similarly, George (1991) surveyed ESL students to find what they would like to be done with their drafts. George found that peer review turned out to be the least popular option, while error feedback from the teacher was the most popular option. In Asenavage and Connor’s (1994) study, the number of revisions made by students after receiving feedback from their peers and the instructor were compared. They found that the feedback from the instructor was incorporated into the students’ revision much more than the peers’ feedback. Although the students in these studies (Asenavage & Connor, 1994; George, 1991; Leki, 1990; Zhang, 1995), indicated that all feedback on their papers (feedback from peers, teachers, tutors, and so on) was important, the majority of the students felt that feedback from their teachers was the most helpful and useful, and feedback from their peers was the least helpful and useful.
1.3.1 Methods and Guidelines for Peer Review

For the researchers and the instructors who think peer review activities are very beneficial in ESL classrooms, peer review can be conducted in a number of ways, and peer review can be enhanced or worsened depending on those styles and techniques (Braine, 2003; Hansen & Liu; 2005; Hu, 2005; Murphy & Nelson, 1993). In a study conducted by Murphy and Nelson (1993), the researchers wanted to examine whether or not ESL students incorporated suggestions made by their peers in response groups when revising their papers. For their study, four students (two male and two female) from different countries were placed into a group for peer review. For six weeks, the students in this group took part in peer review once a week. The students read each others’ drafts, answered a set of guiding questions given to them by the instructor, and then, discussed their answers and responses. Each peer review session lasted 45 minutes and was videotaped and later transcribed. All of the students’ drafts were also collected. Murphy and Nelson (1993) found that the students worked cooperatively together as a group and provided several comments for revision by providing answers to the set of questions they were given. They also found that the students were more likely to use their peers’ suggestions during revision when the group as a whole was interactive in the discussions, and when the group interacted in a cooperative manner. Murphy and Nelson also stated that, despite such a small sample, it was possible to conduct a successful and a useful peer review in an ESL classroom in small response groups.

George Braine, an English instructor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, conducted a study to test the belief that Chinese students cannot actively
participate in providing peer feedback because they are passive learners that function better in a teacher-centered classroom. Braine’s (2003) study consisted of 30 Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in one of two academic writing courses. One course was taught in a traditional classroom setting while the other course was taught completely online through the course’s webpage; therefore, peer review in one course was done in the classroom, and peer review in the other course was done online via a discussion board. In groups of three, the students first read each others’ papers and wrote comments and/or suggestions for revision. Then, the students discussed with each other the comments and suggestions that were made. Braine (2003) found that given the chance to work in non-threatening, small groups, the Chinese students could adapt to new learning styles and successfully work and learn in an environment that is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. In addition, the results from his study showed that during both online peer review and classroom peer review, the Chinese students offered several helpful comments and suggestions for their peers. Braine (2003) also stated that peer review can be successful whether it is conducted inside or outside of the classroom.

Since peer review can be conducted in numerous manners, it is important for ESL teachers to experiment with different types of peer review to find the method or methods that work best for a particular classroom. Hu (2005) conducted a study that followed his ESL writing class over the course of three years. Hu’s students participated in peer review in each of the three years; however, the manner in which peer review was conducted changed from year to year. In the first year, no class time was devoted to peer review. Instead, students were to find time outside of class to
meet with an assigned partner and read each others’ papers. Since the students rarely did this, Hu changed the peer review process for the next year. The students still did peer review with a partner, but this time, one class session per assignment was devoted to peer review. For the third year, Hu continued to do peer review in class, but he also added several peer review training activities. After each year, the students were asked to rate the usefulness of peer review. Hu’s students thought peer review was least helpful after the first year, and they thought it was most helpful after the third year. Hu also noted that the students incorporated the most suggestions into their revision after the third year. According to Hu, peer review success lies in giving the students peer review strategies during training activities and also by providing students with ample time during class to read and comment on their peers’ papers.

Hansen and Liu (2005) suggest several guidelines that ESL teachers can use for effective peer review. Hansen and Liu state that teachers should first talk with the students about their experiences with peer review and group work. After speaking with the students and choosing the method of peer review that is going to be used, Hansen and Liu recommend teachers model the process and create a mock peer review session. When peer review is actually taking place in the classroom, Hansen and Liu say teachers should monitor the students and the groups and encourage them to discuss the meanings of the comments that were made. According to Hansen and Liu, if teachers follow these guiding principles, peer review can help ESL students’ development in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

1.4 Native language (L1) use in the second language (L2) classroom

ESL classrooms can be comprised of students from all around the world.
They can also consist of students that have different native languages and students that speak more than one language. Many researchers have studied and debated the use of the students’ native language (L1) in an ESL classroom (Antón & Dicamilla, 1999; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; De La Fuente & Scott, 2008; Wang & Wen, 2002). Some researchers think that the use of the L1 holds back the students from fully acquiring the L2 (De La Fuente & Scott, 2008); however, other researchers think the use of the L1 can allow the students to effectively work together and better acquire the L2 (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Guo & Liu, 1997; Wang & Wen, 2002). Wang and Wen (2002) researched the students’ use of the L1 while composing a paper in the L2. In the study, 16 Chinese students enrolled in an English writing course at a Chinese university were observed and taped composing aloud with no interruption. When a student would pause for longer than eight seconds, a beeper would sound and the students would be asked to report his/her thoughts aloud. After the writing tasks, the tape was played back and the students were asked for more details about their composing process and what they were often thinking. Wang and Wen found that when the students were planning their ideas for the papers, they planned mostly in the L1. Wang and Wen also found that the students used their L1 30 percent of the time when speaking aloud and 80 percent of the time when they were only thinking. According to Wang and Wen, the use of the L1 can help students generate and organize ideas during the writing process for a paper written in the L2.

Antón and Dicamilla, like Wang and Wen, are two researchers who argue in favor of ESL students using their L1 in the L2 classroom. In the study by Antón and Dicamilla (1999), ten native English speaking students studying Spanish were
recorded while the students completed three different writing tasks in groups of two. All of the writing tasks were completed collaboratively among the pairs, and all the papers were to be written in Spanish. Antón and Dicamilla observed that the students often used both the L1 and the L2, and that the L1 was used mostly to make meaning of something, retrieve language from memory, and maintain the dialogue. They also found that the students used the L1 to make the writing tasks’ instructions more clear and to help each other with the writing task. According to Antón and Dicamilla, the use of the L1 provided an opportunity for L2 acquisition to take place.

In two separate studies, Guerrero and Villamil (1996, 2000) explored strategies, techniques, and behaviors that ESL students exhibit while participating in peer review in pairs. The pairs’ conversations were audio taped during two sessions of peer review after the students’ first drafts were completed. Guerrero and Villamil found that the most common strategy that the students in both studies used was the continuing use of the students’ native language. According to Guerrero and Villamil, the students’ L1 was used mostly to further communication between the students, make meaning of the writing, and retrieve information from memory. Guerrero and Villamil also stated that the L1 can be a very useful learning tool for students in the L2 classroom.

Researchers and instructors who argue against the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom argue that, in order to maximize exposure and learning of the L2, only the L2 should be used (Cook, 2001; De La Fuente & Scott, 2008). They also believe that in order to be completely successful in acquiring the L2, the L1 must be completely separated from the L2; therefore, the L2 should be learned solely through the L2,
instead of being linked to the L1 (Cook, 2001). Although she is not a supporter of only using the L2 in a second language classroom, according to Cook, if the L1 is used in the L2 classroom, students may begin to think that the L2 is not important because it is not being continuously used. Lastly, according to Hawk (2001), since many L2 classrooms are comprised of students with various native languages and since the teacher is most likely not able to speak all of the L1s in the classroom, then there is no need to incorporate the L1 in the L2 classroom.

1.5 Preview of Study

After reading the studies and articles previously mentioned in this chapter, along with my own experiences as an ESL instructor, I began to wonder if the outcome of peer review changed depending on if the students communicated in both their L1 and L2 or only in their L2. Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Wang and Wen (2002) argue that ESL students’ should be allowed to use their L1 in the classroom. In their studies (Anton & Dicamella 1999; Wang & Wen, 2002), both sets of researchers found that the use of the students’ L1 was very helpful when the students were attempting to generate and organize ideas during the writing process for a paper written in the L2. However, their studies examine ESL students’ use of their L1 during the composing process only. Neither study examines ESL students’ use of their L1 during the revision process.

Unlike Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Wang and Wen (2002), Guerrero and Villamil (1996, 2000) explored strategies that ESL students exhibit while participating in peer review, and they found that the most common strategy that the students used was the continuing use of their native language. According to Guerrero
and Villamil, during peer review, the students’ L1 was used mostly to help the flow of communication between the students and to make meaning of the writing. However, their study examined the use of the L1 only as a strategy that was used when the students were having trouble communicating in the L2. Guerrero and Villamil did not focus on how much the L1 was used to generate comments about the paper and suggestions for revising the paper.

My study will help to fill in the gaps in existing research by examining whether ESL students produce more comments and suggestions during peer review when they are able to use their L1 and L2, or if they produce more comments and suggestions when they are able to use only their L2. This study will also help to fill these gaps by analyzing the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use both their L1 and L2, and the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use only their L2.

In the following chapters, I will describe the research I have done on the use of the L1 and the L2 during the peer review process. For my study, the participants wrote a paper as part of a class assignment, and the first draft of the paper was used for peer review. In pairs, the students read their partners’ papers and made comments and/or suggestions on the paper, and then, the students were given time to discuss the comments they made and parts of the essays that were unclear and needed revision. For the study, one pair consisted of students that were able to provide and discuss comments and suggestions in their native language and in English. The other pair consisted of students that were able to provide and discuss comments and suggestions in English only. The discussion between the two sets of pairs was audio taped and
later transcribed, and the drafts of the students’ papers with their comments were collected. To calculate the number and analyze the types of comments the two pairs of students produced during peer review, I examined the coded data taken from the participants’ written remarks on their drafts and the transcriptions from the audio taped discussions between the participants.
Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1 Introduction of Topic

This study analyzes whether more comments and suggestions are produced when English as a Second Language (ESL) students can use their L1 and L2 during the peer review process, or if more comments and suggestions are produced when ESL students can only use their L2 during the peer review process. It also examines the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use both their L1 and L2, and the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use only their L2. This chapter will describe the setting and the participants in detail. It will also outline the methodology used in this study, followed by a discussion of the data collection and data analysis.

2.2 Context

The study took place at The University of Toledo, in the section of ESL composition I (English 1110) that I instruct as a graduate instructor. All ESL students are required to take English 1110, and in order to be enrolled into this course, the students had to first receive a placement exam score of English 1110 on an entrance exam or receive an exit exam score of English 1110 on an English 1020 exit exam
English 1020 is a pre-composition writing course that some ESL students take in order to strengthen their writing skills before taking English 1110. A passing score on the entrance exam suggests that the students’ writing in terms of grammar, content, organization, and development will allow them to be potentially successful in English 1110. The coursework for the class focuses on generating, developing, researching, and presenting ideas for several different writing assignments including summary papers, response papers, proposal papers, and research papers.

For this study, the participants took part in a session of peer review for the first draft of the research paper assignment. For the research paper, the students were instructed to write a five page paper on a topic within their current major that they had selected and proposed earlier in the semester. In the paper, the students were to present the information on their topic that they had learned from their research. The paper had to contain an introduction with a thesis statement, several paragraphs that each had their own topic sentence, in-text citations to credit the source/s for their ideas, a concluding paragraph, and a list of references the students used for research.

Prior to this study, in this course, the participants had had approximately five past experiences with various styles of peer review, including the style of peer review used in this study. Some of the students may also have had previous experiences with peer review in an English 1020 course or in classes taken at an intensive English program. In the course for this study, peer review was implemented for every first draft of all papers assigned before the research paper. Previous styles of peer review consisted of students reading each others’ papers in pairs, in small groups (three to four students), and as a class. When peer review was done in pairs, students would
chose one partner and trade papers with each other. Then, they would take approximately twenty to thirty minutes to write comments and suggestions on the paper and to fill out a peer review sheet that I had created. After the students were done commenting on the papers, they would spend the remainder of class discussing their papers and the comments and suggestions that were made. A similar process was used when peer review was done in small groups. However, the students would read one paper at a time, write comments on the paper, and then discuss the comments as a group. After one paper was read and discussed, the group would move on to the next group member’s paper. When peer review was done as a class, I would project one student’s paper at a time up on the projector screen. The student would read his/her paper aloud while the class would follow along, and when the student was done reading, the rest of the students would take turns commenting on the paper. This would continue until every student in the class had a chance to read his/her paper aloud.

2.3 Participants

Students enrolled in my section of the course described above were asked to participate in the study. The class as a whole was first told orally about the study and the research in great detail. Then, the students were given a couple of days to think about whether or not they would like to participate in the study. Those who decided they wanted to participate were given a written description of the study (See Appendix I) and a couple more days to think about participating or not. After examining the oral and written descriptions of the study, the students who were still interested in participating were given a short survey to complete. The survey
consisted of questions concerning the students’ cultural and educational backgrounds (See Appendix II). Once the surveys were collected and analyzed, from a total of 16 students, four were selected to participate in the study based on the similarities of the students’ backgrounds. For this study, I wanted participants who were similar in age, gender, home country, and previous experience and education in English in order to try to prevent any issues that may arise by having participants that have vastly different backgrounds. Out of all of the possible participants, the four students I selected were chosen because they were the most similar. All of the chosen participants were female, had come to the U.S. from China, and had been in the U.S. for less than five months. The following is a brief description of the four students at the time of the study. The names have been changed to protect the identity of the students. I have also included a brief description about myself and about my past teaching experiences.

2.3.1 Hong Li.

Hong Li was a female from Suzhou, China. She was 22 years old and a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. She began studying English at the age of eight at primary school in China, and she had been in the United States for approximately three months. She was a freshman studying in the University of Toledo’s College of Business and majoring in Accounting. For the final research paper, she was researching and writing about the Certified Public Accountant Examination that accountants have to pass in order to become a qualified accountant.

2.3.2 Ying Wang.

Ying Wang was a female from Suzhou, China. She was 20 years old and a
native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. She began studying English at the age of seven at primary school in China, and she had been in the United States for approximately three months. She was a freshman studying in the University of Toledo’s College of Business and majoring in Accounting. For the final research paper, she was researching and writing about various jobs that are available for accountants and accounting majors.

2.3.3 Ping Ma

Ping Ma was a female from Wuhan, China. She was 18 years old and a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. She began studying English at the age of twelve at middle school in China, and she had been in the United States for approximately three months. She was a freshman studying in the University of Toledo’s College of Business and majoring in Accounting. For the final research paper, she was researching and writing about the code of ethics that accountants must follow.

2.3.4 Yan Ding.

Yan Ding was a female from Xi’an, China. She was 20 years old and a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. She began studying English at the age of thirteen at middle school in China, and she had been in the United States for approximately four months. She was a freshman studying in the University of Toledo’s College of Business and majoring in International Business. For the final research paper, she was researching and writing about products that are made in China and sold in the United States.

2.3.5 The Researcher

I am a female from the United States. I was born and raised in northwest
Ohio, and I was 23 years old at the time of the study. I received my Bachelor’s degree in English with a concentration in writing from the University of Toledo. After graduation, I was accepted into the Master’s English program with a concentration in English as a Second Language, and I was also awarded a graduate teaching position at the University of Toledo. As a graduate instructor, prior to the study, I had instructed one section of English 1020 and one section of English 1110, and I had taken the course “Issues in ESL Writing” and participated in regular ESL writing staff meetings. I had also instructed various reading, speaking, and listening labs at an intensive English program, and I tutored ESL students in the Writing Center. As an ESL instructor, my teaching approach is to help and encourage my students so they become conscious of their own method of learning and their own personal style and interests, as well as, understanding that being able to write clearly and comprehensibly will help them succeed in all their other courses and later on in their life and career.

2.4 Methodology

The methodology for this research was developed based on previous qualitative research concerning peer review in the ESL writing classroom. Guerrero and Villamil (1996; 2000) conducted two studies that explored strategies, techniques, and behaviors that ESL students exhibit while participating in peer review. In both of the researchers’ studies, they analyzed transcripts from recorded interactions between the participants during peer review to investigate types of social activities and strategies L2 students utilize during peer review in pairs (Guerrero & Villamil, 1996). In their studies, Guerrero and Villamil (1996; 2000) also examined the comments and
suggestions the participants had written on their partner’s drafts to explore different mechanisms used by the students in helping each other revise their papers. In both studies, Guerrero and Villamil found that the major strategy that aided in the interaction between the students was the continuing use of the students’ native language. Similar to the studies of Guerrero and Villamil (1996; 2000), in my own study, I conducted a primarily qualitative study that employs a very small number of subjects placed into pairs for a session of peer review. Like Guerrero and Villamil, I also collected my data by calculating the number of comments and suggestions each pair produced by reading and counting the students’ written remarks on their peer review drafts and transcribing the audio taped discussions between the students.

2.5 Data Collection

For this study, peer review was conducted in pairs during one class period. The participants were randomly split into two pairs. Pair one consisted of Hong Li and Ying Wang, and pair two consisted of Ping Ma and Yan Ding. During peer review, Hong Li and Ying Wang were allowed to provide written and spoken comments and suggestions in English only. Ping Ma and Yan Ding were allowed to provide written and spoken comments and suggestions in both English and their native language (Chinese). After the students had traded their papers with their partner, they were given approximately twenty minutes to read their partner’s paper. While reading, the pairs were instructed to write comments and suggestions directly on their partner’s paper, and also, answer questions from a peer review sheet I created. After reading and writing comments and suggestions on each others’ papers, the participants were then given approximately thirty minutes to discuss the
comments they had written and the aspects of the paper that they felt needed to be revised. The discussion between the peers was audio taped, and the participants’ drafts and peer review question sheets were collected.

2.6 Data Analysis

Since this study compares the number of comments and suggestions given only in English to the number of comments and suggestions given in both English and in the student’s L2 during one session of peer review, in order to code the data collected from the study, I had to first define a comment and a suggestion. For this study, a comment was defined as a statement about the paper that expresses opinion (i.e. “The paper was interesting.”), or a statement about the paper that expresses a need for an explanation or interpretation (i.e. “I do not know what you mean here.” or “I do not understand this sentence.”). A suggestion was defined as a proposal for something to be changed, added, deleted, or so on in the paper that can be rejected or accepted by the student (i.e. “The verb ‘say’ should be in past tense.”).

After defining a comment and suggestion, I transcribed the audio taped discussions between the participants. Since one of the audio tapes included discussions in Chinese, I sought out the help from a visiting Chinese professor who translated the discussions from Chinese into English. Once both audio tapes were transcribed, the transcriptions were first read holistically. Then, I read the transcriptions again, but this time, I counted and recorded everything that fit the definition of a comment and suggestion. This same process was used to count and record the comments and the suggestions from the participants’ drafts and peer review sheets.
While counting the comments and suggestions from the audio taped discussions and peer review drafts, I took notes on reoccurring trends and potential categories throughout the comments and suggestions, which later developed into a coding system. Altogether I identified five categories of comments and suggestions: content, development, and organization; grammar; sentence structure; spelling, punctuation, and word choice; formatting (including MLA style). After I had counted all of the comments and suggestions, I went back through the transcriptions and drafts, and I coded the data again based on the previously mentioned categories. Every written and spoken comment and suggestion was placed into at least one of the categories. In order to ensure coding reliability, a second coder independently coded approximately twenty percent of the data. The second coder was a fellow graduate instructor pursuing his Master’s degree in English with a concentration in ESL. He also had taught one section English 1110, and he was interested in L1 and L2 use in ESL classrooms. For his own thesis study, he is analyzing the use of ESL students L1 in the pre-writing process.

During a short meeting with my second coder, I first gave him a brief background of my study, along with my research questions. Then, I explained to him the manner in which my data was collected and coded. Next, we went through the data and the codes together, and I showed him a couple of examples of each of type of code that was in the data. At the end of the meeting, I left my second coder with a copy of all of my data, a copy of the data I had coded, and the codes that I had generated. We decided to meet again and discuss the data and coding system after he had finished coding approximately 20 percent of my data.
After my second coder was done coding my data, we met again to compare the data I coded with the data he had coded. We had about a 90 percent agreement concerning the use of the codes. My second coder agreed with all of the categories that I had created, but he pointed out instances that he believed did not fit the coding category in which I had placed it. For example, when a student in pair two suggested her partner delete a two word phrase from her sentence, I categorized it as a comment concerning content, but my second coder felt it was a comment concerning word choice because it did not represent a massive change to content. I agreed with this particular instance and with other instances, but there were some instances I disagreed with. For example, when a student in pair one suggested her partner delete a comma and replace it with „and”, I categorized it as a comment concerning sentence structure, but my second coder felt it was a comment concerning punctuation. We continued to discuss this disagreement and other disagreements until an agreement was reached.

There were also a couple of spoken and written utterances that I did not place into any category. These were utterances that usually confirmed and/or explained the comments and suggestions in more detail. After looking at the data, my second coder was able to create a clarification category that he felt these utterances all fit into, and I agreed; so, we went through and coded the non-coded utterances using the newly created clarification code. After all of the coding issues were resolved, I re-coded the rest of the data based on the agreed coding system.
Chapter Three

Results

3.1 Overview

This chapter will present my findings in two sections. The first section will present my findings in relation to whether more comments and suggestions are produced when ESL students can use their L1 and L2 during the peer review process, or if more comments and suggestions are produced when ESL students can only use their L2 during the peer review process. The second section will present my findings concerning the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use both their L1 and L2, and the types of comments and suggestions that are more likely to be produced when students use only their L2. Following my results, there will be a discussion about the relevance of the study and my findings, and I will also provide classroom implications based on the results I found.

3.2 Results: Number of Comments

Hong Li and Ying Wang, the participants in pair one, were able to provide written and spoken comments and suggestions only in English during the peer review process. While reading and commenting on their partner’s draft, this pair produced a
total of 14 written comments and 42 written suggestions. During the discussion part of peer review, this pair produced a total of 12 spoken comments and 36 spoken suggestions.

Ping Ma and Yan Ding, the participants in pair two, were able to provide written and spoken comments and suggestions in both their L1 (Chinese) and English during peer review. While reading and commenting on their partner’s draft, this pair produced a total of 18 written comments and 56 written suggestions. During the discussion part of peer review, this pair produced a total of 37 spoken comments and 51 spoken suggestions.

Since pair two was able to give comments in both their L1 and L2, the number of spoken and written comments and suggestions given in Chinese and in English were also calculated. Of the 74 written comments and suggestions, 73 were written in English and one was written Chinese. Out of the total 88 spoken comments and suggestions, 80 were in Chinese and eight were in English.

3.3 Results: Types of Comments

Of the 56 written comments and suggestions pair one (English only) produced, the majority of the comments and suggestions given dealt with grammar issues and spelling, punctuation, and word choice issues (see table 1). The following are examples of written comments and suggestions that the students in pair one produced:

1. [The verb „have” should be in] past tense – had (Grammar)
2. „them” [should be] their (Grammar)
3. „gave” [should be] had given (Grammar)
4. [Change] „mentions‘ to ‘defines’ (Word Choice)

Of the 48 spoken comments and suggestions pair one produced, the majority of the comments and suggestions also dealt with grammar issues and spelling, punctuation, and word choice issues (see table 1). Here are some examples of written comments and suggestions that the students in pair one produced:

1. “Choose should be in the past tense…” (Grammar)
2. “Here, the word ‘public’ needs to be changed to ‘government’…” (Word Choice)
3. “Salaries needs to be singular…” (Grammar)
4. “„To’ should be changed to „for’…” (Word Choice)

Table 3.1: Pair One’s Comments and Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comment/Suggestion</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content/Development/Organization</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling/Punctuation/Word Choice</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format (including MLA style)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For pair two, the types of written comments and suggestions in Chinese and in English were determined. Of the 73 comments and suggestions that were written in English, the majority of the comments and suggestions dealt with content, development, and organization issues and sentence structure issues (see Table 2). The following are some examples of written comments and suggestions in English that the students in pair two produced:

1. You can divide this sentence (Sentence Structure)
2. [This paragraph] needs to be longer (Development)
3. What is the meaning [of these words]? Define [these words] (Content)

4. [The introduction is] too long. Separate it here (Organization)

Table 3.2: Pair Two’s Comments and Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comment/Suggestion</th>
<th>Written (English)</th>
<th>Spoken (English)</th>
<th>Written (Chinese)</th>
<th>Spoken (Chinese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content/Development/Organization</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling/Punctuation/Word Choice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format (including MLA style)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one suggestion that was written in Chinese dealt with a sentence structure problem. Of the 80 comments and suggestions that were in spoken in Chinese, the majority of the comments and suggestions also dealt with content, development, and organization problems and sentence structure problems (see Table 2). Here are some examples of spoken comments and suggestions in Chinese that the students in pair two produced:

1. “Maybe you can make this sentence into two…” (Sentence Structure)

2. “This paragraph looks too short. Maybe you could add one or two more sentences.” (Development)

3. “Here you say ‘two countries’. I would mention what they are.” (Content)

4. “I think this paragraph would be better here.” (Organization)

The eight comments and suggestions that were spoken in English were mostly concerned with content, development, and organization issues and format problems. The following are some examples of spoken comments and suggestions in English.
that the students in pair two produced:

1. “In your title, capitalize the ‘c’ in contribution.” (Format)

2. “You need an in-text citation somewhere in this paragraph.” (Format)

3. “I think you should describe these words more.” (Content)

3.4 Discussion

During the peer review activity, pair two generated more written and spoken comments and suggestions using both their L1 and L2 than pair one, who only used English (see Table 3). In the studies by Antón and Dicamilla (1999) and Wang and Wen (2002), the researchers found that the use of ESL students’ L1 was very beneficial to students while they were generating and organizing ideas in the composing process. Given that pair two (English-Chinese) produced more comments during peer review, my finding seems to add to their ideas by showing that the use of the L1 is not only important in the composing process but also in the revision process.

Table 3.3: Comparative Table of Pair One and Pair Two’s Comments and Suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Comment/Suggestion</th>
<th>Written (Pair One)</th>
<th>Spoken (Pair One)</th>
<th>Written (Pair Two)</th>
<th>Spoken (Pair Two)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content/Development/Organization</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling/Punctuation/Word Choice</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format (including MLA style)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result is also consistent with the findings of Guerrero and Villamil (1996, 2000). According to their study, during peer review, ESL student used their L1 to mostly help the flow of communication between the students and to make meaning of
the writing. In the present study, since the pair that was allowed to use both their L1 and L2 produced significantly more spoken comments and suggestions than the pair that could only use their L1, my study also indicates that the use of the L1 helped communication to flow and helped the students generate more comments.

However, another relevant aspect of the present study, which is not addressed by Guerrero and Villamil (1996, 2000), is that majority of the types of comments and suggestions both pairs produced during peer review were very different from each other. Pair one produced more comments and suggestions concerning surface errors such as grammar errors and spelling, punctuation, and word choice errors. On the other hand, pair two produced more comments and suggestions concerning meaning errors such as content, development, and organization errors and sentence structure errors. Paulus (1999) found that after peer review, ESL students were more likely to make revisions based on comments about meaning errors than comments about surface errors, and Berg (1999) found that ESL students who were trained in peer review produced more comments about meaning errors than the students who were not trained in peer review. Although the focus of these two studies and the focus of the present study are quite different, the results of this study provide additional information concerning meaning errors and circumstances that are more likely to cause ESL students to identify meaning errors. My findings indicate that ESL students are more likely to comment on meaning errors in their peers’ paper during peer review when they use their L1.

Another interesting result of this study is that the majority of written comments and suggestions that pair two produced were written in English; however,
the majority of spoken comments and suggestions that pair two produced were spoken in Chinese. In Wang and Wen’s study (2002), the researchers examined certain instances when students were more likely to use their L1 and their L2 during the writing process. They found that the students had a tendency to use their L2 more than their L1 when they were taking part in review activities where the students were examining each others’ papers for the first time. Their results parallel my finding that pair two produced more written comments in English than in Chinese. During peer review for the present study, written comments and suggestions were given first as the students were reading and examining their partner’s paper for the first time. According to Wang and Wen, this could explain why pair two wrote the majority of their comments and suggestions in English rather than in Chinese.

There could also be another explanation as to why pair two produced more written comments and suggestions in English than in Chinese. The comments and suggestions that were written on the drafts by both pair one and pair two were comprised mostly of one, two, or three word phrases. On the other hand, when the students in both pairs were discussing the papers, the majority of their comments and suggestions were given in full sentences. This could explain why pair two (English-Chinese) provided more written comments and suggestions in English and more spoken comments and suggestions in Chinese. Speaking in Chinese gave the students in pair two the freedom to let their conversation naturally flow and to speak comfortably without hesitation.

3.5 Classroom Implication

The results of this study generated one major classroom implication. The
most important implication is that ESL teachers have evidence that the use of the students’ L1 is a beneficial tool for students to use during classroom activities that require collaborative discussion; therefore, ESL teachers might want to modify their current practices if they completely prohibit L1 use in student interaction.

3.6 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There were some limitations in the design of this study. First, all of the participants were young, female, international students from China; therefore, the results from this study may not apply to all ESL students. Also, the study consisted of only four participants; so, the small sample size could have limited the generalizability of the results. Future research should increase the number of participants in the study, and it should include a sample size that includes both males and females, and participants that are of different ages and ethnicities.

Another limitation of this study which may have affected results is the type of peer review that was used. The style of peer review used in ESL classrooms varies from teacher to teacher. A different style of peer review may have produced different results; as a result, future research could expand to include data collected during various types of peer review. It would be interesting for future research to also broaden the scope of this study and analyze the amount and types of revisions the participants made after peer review.

Finally, the fact that I was the researcher and the teacher may have affected my findings. Although the class was conducted in a normal manner, knowing that the study was being conducted could have influenced my behavior in some way. Also, the students in the study may have behaved differently because they knew they were
participating in the study, too.

3.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the use of ESL students’ L1 and L2 during the peer review process in terms of the number of comments and suggestions produced and the types of comments and suggestions produced. The results of this study suggest that ESL students produce more written and spoken comments and suggestions when they use their L1 and L2 during peer review. The results also suggest that ESL students produce more comments and suggestions concerning meaning errors such as content, development, and organization errors and sentence structure errors when they use their L1 and L2 during peer review, and ESL students produce more comments and suggestions concerning surface errors such as grammar errors and spelling, punctuation, and word choice errors when they use only their L2 during peer review. However, more research should continue be done regarding ESL students’ use of their L1 and L2 during the peer review process.
References


*CATESOL Journal, 3*(1), 5-19.


Appendix A

Brief Written Description of the Study

**Purpose of the Study:** You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, Comparing Comments in the L1 and the L2 during the Peer Review Process, which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of Terra S. Myers. The purpose of this study is to determine if English as a second language (ESL) students produce more comments and/or suggestions during peer review when they are allowed to use their native language or when they are only allowed to use English.

**Description of Procedures:** This research will take place during one peer review session for the assignment titled “Research Paper” for your Composition One class at the University of Toledo. You will be asked to take part in one session of peer review with a partner as a part of a class requirement. You will read your partner’s paper, make comments on the paper, and then discuss the comments with your partner. For this session of peer review only, your discussion with your partner will be audio taped and your peer review draft will be collected. Your participation will take about one hour.
Appendix B

Possible Participant Survey

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender:  Male       Female

4. Home Country (please include city, also):

5. First Language (please include dialect, also):

6. Year in School:

7. Major:

8. Research Paper Topic:

9. At what age did you begin learning English?

10. Where did you begin learning English?

11. How long have you been in the United States?

12. Have you studied English anywhere else in the United States?

13. Have you taken any other English classes at The University of Toledo?

14. Please include any information about your education and learning English that you think is important?