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# Peer Response in L1 Writing: Impact on Revisions and Student Perceptions

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**Peer response in L1 writing:  
Impact on revisions and student perceptions**

by

**Altay Ozkul**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

Major: Teaching English as a Second Language/Applied Linguistics (Computer Assisted  
Language Learning)

Program of Study Committee:  
Volker Hegelheimer, Major Professor  
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Geoffrey Sauer

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2017

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**DEDICATION**

For my family.

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## ABSTRACT

Peer-response is a strategy frequently used for improving the quality of students' writing both in L1 and L2 writing context (Paulus, 1999; Baker, 2016). Studies has investigated how peer-response impacts students' writing influence of peer-response on revisions in student writing in ESL context (e.g. Paulus, 1999; Min, 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010; Baker, 2016). However, most of the literature focuses on how peer-response influences student revisions in second-language learning context (Baker, 2016). This study addressed the gap in the literature by analyzing student revisions after peer-response in a writing classroom adopting multiple-draft approach in L1 writing context. The study also explored how L1 writers perceive peer-response in writing classrooms. Using Faigley & Witte's (1981) taxonomy of revisions, 31 undergraduate students' essay drafts were analyzed quantitatively to explore how L1 writers revise their essays after each peer-response session. Students were assigned a reflection essay after the writing assignment that consisted of prompts addressing their peer-response experience. These reflection essays were qualitatively analyzed and coded based on themes in order to explore students' perception of peer-response. The results showed that L1 writers mostly make predominantly surface-level revisions in their writing. This finding is consistent with studies conducted in ESL/EFL context (Paulus, 1999; Min, 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010), but vastly different from what has been found in L1 context (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Baker, 2016). This result may be explained by the difference in students' writing proficiency and how it impacts revisions. It was also found that L1 writers show positive perceptions of peer-response in writing classrooms overall.

Key words: peer-response, peer feedback, revision types, L1 writing,

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing is a process in which instructors use various methods and techniques to facilitate student awareness of the complex nature of composing. Such teaching methods, including brainstorming, multiple drafting, revision and editing, are taught and practiced by both teachers and students (Paulus, 1999; Rollinson, 2005). These processes are employed frequently as students' compositions turn into the final product. The impact of drafting, revision, and types of feedback that the writers receive has been a subject of interest in teaching composition (Silva, 1993). One part of the feedback process taking place in writing classrooms is peer-response, which is sometimes referred to as "peer review," "peer feedback" or "peer editing," and can be defined as "use of learners as sources of information, and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing" (Liu & Hansen 2002, p. 1). The use of peer-response has been generally supported in the literature as a "potentially valuable aid for its social, cognitive, affective, and methodological benefits" (Rollinson, 2005: 23), and its beneficial impact and effectiveness have been substantiated by a number of empirical studies (e.g. Min, 2006; Tsui & Maria, 2000; Cai-jing et al., 2015; Liu & Hansen, 2002). It has been of interest in the literature, and has become a common practice in both L1 and ESL writing classrooms.

Feedback generated in peer-response sessions can be a useful tool for students as complementary sources of information to teacher feedback. When planned thoroughly and implemented effectively, peer-response can be beneficial for writing students as it aims to encourage writers to close-read each other's work and share ideas and comments with one

another, promote communicative skills through oral and written communication, and enhance classroom rapport by creating a sense of cohesion among response groups. (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The increasing use of peer feedback in ESL/EFL writing settings was strongly supported by several theoretical frameworks, including collaborative learning theory suggesting that learning is an activity that is constructed socially through communication with peers (Bruffee, 1984), socio-cultural theory (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006, Zhao, 2010) and process writing approach (Elbow, 1973).

Another vital theoretical framework supporting peer-response is Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes that learning is a result of social interaction, provides a framework that can inform studies of learning in response groups in writing classroom. His theory was developed through studies of "dyadic interaction," but it is also applicable to group- or peer-based work in writing classrooms. Vygotsky (1978) states that "good learning is that which is in advance of development" (p. 89) and involves the acquisition of cognitive skills. Such learning, as Vygotsky (1978) argues, can be accomplished in social activities through students' "zone of proximal development." According to Vygotsky (1978), the zone is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Vygotsky (1978) further argues that functions that are in the process of development and "maturation" lies in the zone. Once the development is complete, the learner is able to proceed and work independently. Thus, the "actual developmental zone" can give information about development but not about potential as "the actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively" (p.



87). Thus, a group of students with similar degree of completed mental development can develop through social interaction. They may display different “developmental dynamics” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 87), but it is likely that both will experience a “development”. With the assistance and scaffolding of readers in the ZPD, writers go from a potential development level to an actual development level (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s theory suggests a close relationship between learners, and leads to an understanding of how social interactions —interactions in peer-response in our case— can contribute to writing development. Accordingly, peer-response provides an instructional environment for writers to work within their respective zone of development (Villamil & Guerrero, 1998; Villamil & Guerrero, 2006).

As opposed to its possible benefits, the use of peer-response in teaching writing has also been criticized in the literature. Keh (1990) argues that the use of peer feedback and peer-response sessions in classrooms is impractical and time-consuming in writing classrooms. Sengupta (1998) argues that comments from peers may cause more problems than they are expected to solve due to their lack of cognitive and linguistic knowledge to evaluate their work. Paulus (1999), in his study on investigating the effects of peer and teacher comments on student writing, argues that peer-response sessions can be highly unfruitful for students because of “the very real potential for peer review to become a disastrous, unproductive experience” (p. 268). Although there has been resistance towards the use of peer-response, the list of reasons for employing such methods in writing classrooms surpasses the reasons for avoiding it. (Kasanga, 2004).

Although peer-response groups are supported by many theories and teachers, little attention has been paid to how writers alter their compositions after peer-response sessions. Research has investigated influence of peer-response on revisions in student writing in ESL

context (e.g. Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Min, 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010).

DiPardo and Freedman (1988) suggest that although teachers and practitioners agree that having students work together and provide feedback to each other supports writing process, peer-response groups have been studied mostly to shed light on what processes are supported through peer-response, and how. Only a few studies in the literature have examined the effect of peer-response on the types of revisions made by students in their writing (Cho & MacArthur, 2010). Further research is needed in the L1 academic writing context to investigate how students revise their drafts based on peer feedback they received as they finalize their work, and their perception of peer feedback as means of improving the overall quality of written work.

This thesis seeks to address this gap in literature by focusing on the revisions learners' make on their compositions after peer-response sessions. Specifically, in this classroom-based study, the focus is on L1 learners taking an English foundational writing course at a public university, and how they utilize feedback they receive from peer-response sessions as they alter their compositions. The study analyzes students' reflection essays after the writing process to explore their perception of peer-response. Following the trend in the literature (e.g. Paulus, 1999; Min, 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010; Razali & Jupri, 2014; Baker, 2016), the study adopts a taxonomy of revisions proposed by Faigley & Witte's (1981) to examine revisions in students' essays.

This thesis consists of five chapters, this introduction being Chapter 1. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and present the research questions. Chapter 3 explains the methodology and procedures of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis of data in terms of research questions presented. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by discussing the results, limitations of the study, and drawing implications for future research on peer-response in L1 writing classes.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides an overview of research and literature related to peer-response in writing classrooms. The first section focuses on the approaches to and practices of peer-response groups. The second section is on the literature regarding students' perception of peer-response and peer feedback. The third section provides a review of research conducted on the impact of peer-response on revisions in writing classrooms. Finally, the fourth section provides an argument on the significance of the present study, and the research questions.

#### **2.1 Approaches to Peer-response**

The use of peer-response groups in both L1 and ESL/EFL writing classrooms has increased significantly with the shift to the process approach to writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981); it is used as means of brainstorming in pre-writing stages, generating and exchanging ideas as essays are structured by students (Connor & Asenavage, 1994). Silva (1990) argues that emphasis in these groups is on helping students to acquire strategies for drafting, revising and editing processes. Since the focus of the process approach to writing is evaluation of the product (see Hilgers, 1986), peer-response groups are of vital importance for learners to practice evaluation their own and others' texts (Tang & Tithecott, 1999). From the communicative language teaching (CLT) perspective, peer-response groups facilitate student-centered learning as opposed to teacher-centered classrooms (Savignon, 1991) by allowing instructors to employ student-centered activities in writing instruction.

The use of peer-response in writing classrooms has been of interest due to an increasing focus on the and collaborative learning in writing instruction (Gere, 1987; Bruffee, 1984; McGroarty, 1989; Rollinson, 2005; Yang et al. 2006). Such groups allow learners to achieve

academic success, language development in ESL/EFL context, enhance social communication and self-confidence (Slavin, 1991).

Theories of learning suggest that learning is a direct result of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1986). Peer-response groups allow students to engage in such interactions, and thus enhance their learning through conversations in which they generate ideas, support each other during the writing process. In such cases, students also have the chance to interact with a *real* audience, rather than the *imaginary* audience that is determined by their teachers (Urzua, 1987). Although Vygotsky's theory of social interaction was developed through studies on interactions in pairs (dyadic interactions), it is possible to extend such interactions to examine group peer-response sessions (e.g., Freedman, 1987a; Damon, 1984). In language learning context, Foster and Ohta (2005) defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer" (p.144). The ZPD thus supports use of peer-response in language classrooms in that ESL/EFL learners could potentially facilitate the development of their peers' ESL/EFL proficiency (Zhao, 2010).

Although research has suggested peer-response can enhance learning and support the learning outcomes of a class, it has also been argued that some teachers may not consider such student-centered instructional approach is practical, especially when classroom management and control over students is concerned (DiPardo & Freeman, 1988). This is where control over peer-response groups becomes an issue. Some instructors may decide to provide minimal guidance to groups in order to let learners devise their own intuitive responses to other's writing (Elbow, 1973), whereas others may feel hesitant about such lack of control over the process, and choose

to include some degree of teacher control through the use of guiding questions or reminders (Lamberg, 1980).

Researchers have argued about the difference between group work and pair work in peer-response. Bruffee (1978) focused on the similarities between pair work and collaborative small-group work in peer-response sessions. Spear (1984) argued that learners “anticipate other points of view and to reflect with detachment upon the value of one’s ideas” (p. 74) when they receive multiple points of view on their work in group peer-response sessions. Brannon and Knoublauch (1984), on the other hand, suggested that learners receiving multiple responses from their groups utilize a wider range of feedback as opposed to learners working in pairs. DiPardio and Freedman (1988), suggested that a more hierarchical structure is observed in pairs as “peer tutoring sets up the role of tutor and tutee, matching ... teacher-student relationship than a more coequal student-student relationship” (DiPardio & Freedman, p. 128, cite Damon, 1984, on this point). Although these concerns are not the primary focus of this study, such arguments are taken into consideration. Both Brannon and Knoublauch’s (1984) and Hansen and Liu’s (2005) suggestion on using small-groups in peer-response is followed in the present study.

## **2.2 Students’ Perception of Peer-response**

Peer-response groups are common practice in writing instruction; however, as Connor and Asenavage (1994) pointed out, the practice in ESL classrooms is different than that of L1 writing classrooms. The practice of peer-response changes as teachers of non-native English speaking students find themselves in a different situation, where using such collaborative methods in classes of students from various cultural backgrounds and different language abilities is often a cumbersome process (Allaei & Connor, 1990). Since such difference exists between peer-response in L1 and ESL classrooms, the outcomes of peer-response sessions in ESL context

may not be as beneficial for students as expected. Students of different cultures might have a different understanding of collaboration and varying expectations for such small-group work. Peer-response sessions in such context may not be productive if students are unwilling to collaborate, overly defensive or distrustful of each other (Nelson & Murphy, 1993; George, 1984; Mangelsdorf, 1992). Accordingly, careful planning, thorough structuring and learner training are necessary in order to hold successful and fruitful peer-response sessions in ESL classrooms (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

Empirical research related to peer feedback in ESL writing classrooms has focused on the sociological issues, type of interaction and behavior in groups (see Beach & Friedrich, 2006; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Topping, 1998). Carson and Nelson (1994) studied the dynamics of ESL writing groups in terms of cross-cultural issues. They found that students coming from a more “collectivist” background, such as students from the People’s Republic of China or Japan, collaborated solely for the benefit of the whole group, whereas students from a more Westerner background took the needs of the individuals into consideration. Therefore, they argued that student backgrounds in multicultural groups and their impact on group dynamics should be accounted for in ESL writing classes (Carson & Nelson, 1994).

Tang and Tithecott (1999) explored the value of peer-response and the types of interaction took place during peer-response sessions in ESL writing classes. They investigated 12 international students from Asia in order to find their perceptions with regard to peer-response, and types of activities they engaged in during peer-response sessions. They found that Asian ESL students tended to make more positive comments to their peers, and were more aware “of the obligation to avoid hurting others’ feelings and to help others improve their writing” (Tang & Tithecott, 1999; p. 35).

There have been studies focusing on students' attitudes towards feedback they receive in peer-response sessions. Mendonça and Johnson (1994), in their study on ESL students' perception of peer feedback, found that all their participants thought peer-response was helpful in terms of generating ideas and receiving readers' comments on their product. Mangelsdorf (1992), in her study focusing on attitude of ESL students toward peer review, found that advanced-level students had positive reactions to peer reviews.

Considering that the research on learners' attitudes and perception toward peer-response have been conducted mostly in ESL/EFL context, the present study is designed to explore the perception of peer-response in L1 learners and how they changed their writing as result of participating in peer-response sessions.

### **2.3 Impact of Peer-response on Students' Revisions**

Research has shown that students take feedback received during peer-response sessions into consideration as they revise. Nelson and Murphy (1993) found that ESL students taken their peers' suggestions into consideration as they work on their subsequent drafts. Stanley (1992) found that students who had been trained for generating effective suggestions made a high number of revisions in their drafts.

Only few studies have focused on the type of changes students made after they engaged in peer-response sessions (e.g. Faigley & Witte, 1981; Fitzgerald & Markham, 1987; Berg, 1999; Paulus, 1999; Yang et al. 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010). Hedcock and Lefkowitz (1992), examined two groups of college-level learners in a foreign-language context in terms of the effects of oral peer feedback on revisions. In the study, the control group received feedback only from the instructor, and the experimental group practiced oral peer-response in small groups. They found that those who participated in peer-response sessions performed as well as those who were given

feedback by their instructor. They also found that revisions based on peer-response resulted in revisions on the content, organization and vocabulary, whereas teacher feedback resulted in improvement in surface errors and grammatical structures. There have also been studies conducted with younger students suggests that peer revising can be effective in helping students improve the quality of their papers through revisions (e.g. Boscolo & Ascorti, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007).

Sommers (1980) compared the revision processes of freshmen college students and experienced adult writers, and found that student writers view revision as a process of “cleaning up” the original draft. They make changes in words or phrases but leave the original meaning intact. By contrast, Sommers (1980) found that experienced writers use revision as a way to find the form and shape of the argument as they revise. Experienced writers begin with very rough drafts, and they make significant changes in the meaning of text, adding and deleting material. These differences suggest that students receiving feedback from peers may use that feedback to make primarily surface-level changes, whereas experienced writers make more changes in meaning.

Studies on revision types have employed Faigley and Witte’s (1981) taxonomy to determine the types of changes students make in their writing based on feedback they receive in peer-response sessions. Faigley and Witte (1981) argued that revisions can only be considered successful if they improve the overall text quality in some way. They presented a taxonomy of revisions that is “simple, yet robust, system for analyzing the effects of revision changes on meaning” (p. 401), distinguishing between meaning-level revisions and surface-level changes. The former refers to the revisions that do not add new information to the text, but only modify the overall structure of the text, whereas the latter refers to the revisions affecting only the



information that is already present in the text. The authors further divided both main categories into two sub-categories (see Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1 *Taxonomy of revisions (Faigley & Witte, 1981)*

I. Surface Changes	II. Meaning Changes
A. Formal Changes	A. Microstructure Changes
1) Spelling/capitalization	1) Additions
2) Tense/number/modality	2) Deletions
3) Abbreviations/contractions	3) Substitutions
4) Punctuation	4) Permutations
5) Formatting	5) Distributions
6) Morphological changes	6) Consolidations
B. Meaning-preserving Changes	B. Macrostructure Changes
1) Additions	1) Additions
2) Deletions	2) Deletions
3) Substitutions	3) Substitutions
4) Permutations	4) Permutations
5) Distributions	5) Distributions
6) Consolidations	6) Consolidations

The surface changes are divided into two categories, namely formal and meaning-preserving changes. Formal changes refer to the proofreading changes such as punctuation, mechanics, or spelling, while meaning-preserving changes refer to the changes in concepts that exist in the text, but do not change the essential meaning. These changes are local-level changes that only affect the surface structures of a text.

The other main category, meaning changes, is divided into two types of changes as well. Microstructure changes refer to revisions altering the information structure but do not affect the overall direction of the text. These changes can be in the form of providing additional information or building on existing ideas within the text. Macrostructure changes, on the other hand, refer to the changes that impact the overall meaning of the text in the way they would “alter the summary of a text” (Faigley & Witte, 1981; p. 404).

Based on their taxonomy, Faigley and Witte (1981), found that inexperienced writers focus more on surface-level revisions, whereas advanced-level writers changed their text in terms of its meaning. Using this taxonomy, Connor and Asenavage (1994) examined how peer-response and teacher comments impact the revisions of ESL students as they drafted and revised essays. The researchers analyzed the drafts that were revised based on teacher comments, group peer-response comments, and outside source comments to determine what types of revisions were made by students. They found that only 5% of total revisions was influenced by suggestions given by peers, 35% of these revisions was influenced by teacher comments, and interestingly, 60% was influenced by other sources. They also found that 70% of the peer-influenced changes, along with 22% of the teacher-influenced revisions, were meaning-level changes. In their study on impact of peer-response on student revision, Mendonça and Johnson (1994) concluded that students incorporated peers' comment into 53% of the revisions they made on their drafts.

Research have specifically focused on type of revisions students make in their essays. Studies on the revision types in L2 writing context found that students mostly make surface-level changes in their essays (Tagong, 1991; Hall, 1990). Paulus (1999), in her study with 11 ESL students, analyzed the effect of both peer and teacher feedback on the revision process. She categorized types and sources of revision based on Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy, and evaluated the frequency of revision types based on the source of feedback. She found that 62.5% of total revisions made by the students after peer-response were surface-level changes, whereas 37.5% of the changes were meaning revisions. More specifically, of total revisions, she found that 21.9% were formal, 40.6% were meaning-preserving, 21.7% were microstructure, and 15.8 were macrostructure changes. She concluded that changes made as a result of peer and teacher

response were meaning-level changes, while the majority of changes that students made on their own were surface-level revisions. Ting & Qian (2010), in their study with 30 EFL undergraduate students taking a foundational writing course, found that 82.4% of total revisions that students made were surface changes, 37.9% of which were formal changes and 44.4% of which were meaning-preserving changes. They also found that only 17.6% of total revisions were meaning changes, categorized as either microstructure changes (16.7% of meaning changes) or macrostructure changes (0.8% of meaning changes). They addressed the high percentage of surface level changes in student revisions by arguing that the writing course focused on “sentence-level and paragraph-level writing” (p. 94) initially, which might have allowed students to develop their linguistic skills more than their writing abilities (p. 94).

Although there has been a significant focus on how peer-response affects revisions in writing, most of the literature focuses on L2 learners. Only a few studies (Fitzgerald & Markham, 1987; Baker, 2016) examined how L1 writers revised their essays after receiving feedback from peers. Baker (2016), in a study conducted with 91 upper-level L1 writers over 3 years, found that these advanced-level writers predominantly made meaning-level changes (78.9%) in their writing. As research that specifically investigated the types of revision conducted mostly in ESL/EFL context, this study aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on types of revisions L1 writers make in their essays by comparing drafts that they produce after peer-response sessions.

## **2.4 The Current Study**

As most of the similar studies are conducted in the ESL academic writing context, investigating how L1 writers go about peer-response sessions and, accordingly, revisions are of interest. Teachers of L1 writing classes can change the way they incorporate peer-response

practices into classrooms if such research can determine the effectiveness and students' perception of peer-response.

Two specific research questions are addressed in this study:

1. To what extent does peer-response impact L1 students' revisions in a writing classroom adopting multiple-draft process?
  - a. What type of revisions students make in their drafts after receiving feedback from peers?
2. What are students' perceptions of peer-response as means of revision in the writing process?
  - a. What are students' thoughts on possible benefits and drawbacks of peer-response?
  - b. How do students perceive in-class teacher processes in preparation for peer-response?

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methodology followed in this study, and is divided into four main sections, namely, participants, setting, materials, procedure, data analysis. The first section will introduce the learners participated in this study. The second section will introduce the setting in which the study took place. The third section will describe the data collection procedure and materials provided to participants. Finally, the fourth session will explain the methods used to analyze the data to answer the research questions presented.

#### **3.1 Participants**

The study was conducted with 31 undergraduate students taking a foundational composition course entitled “Written, Oral, Visual and Electronic Communication (ENGL 250)” at a public university. Both native and non-native speakers may take this course after either taking the prerequisite course “Critical Reading and Communication (ENGL 150),” or being exempt from it. All participants are native speakers of English, and were recruited from two sections of ENGL 250. Two non-native speakers who were taking the same sections as the participants were not recruited for the study. Initially, the number of participants were 44, but 13 participants failed to provide data, thus they were excluded from the study. Of 31 participants, 11 were freshmen, 18 were sophomores, and 2 were seniors. The study was classified as exempt by the Institutional Review Board (IRB ID 16-554).

#### **3.2 Setting**

The course that participants were taking is designed to develop students’ skills in analyzing, composing, and reflecting on written, oral, visual, and electronic (WOVE) discourse within academic, civic, and cultural contexts. The course consists of six assignments, namely,

diagnostic essay (where students talk about their literacy experiences in the past), summary writing, textual rhetorical analysis, visual rhetorical analysis, documentation essay, and semester portfolio. The rhetorical analysis assignments and the documentation essay focus on analyzing and developing claims rhetorically and supporting findings with evidence through academic resources. The class met three times a week for 14 weeks, with each section lasting 50 minutes. The researcher was also the teacher of both sections of the course.

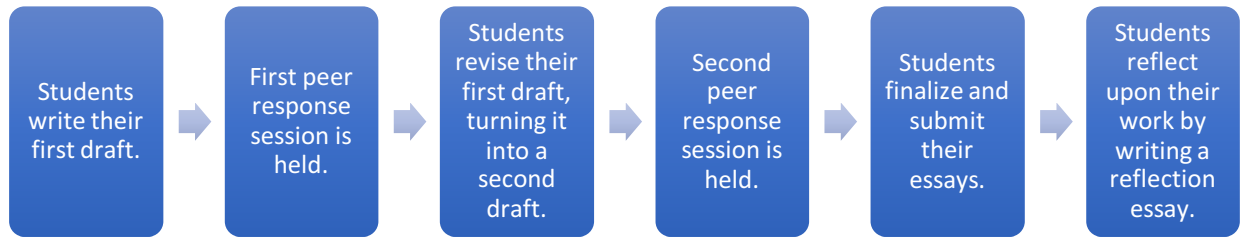
The course began with a diagnostic essay where students write about their literacy experiences. The purpose of this diagnostic essay was to help the teacher to understand the overall writing skill of students. For both sections, the participants' level of academic writing skills was ranging from high-intermediate to advanced. During the first week of classes, 11 participants stated that they had taken the prerequisite ENGL 150 before, thus they were familiar with the process of peer-response in these foundational courses. Before the third assignment, which is the textual rhetorical analysis, students had received training on peer-response sessions as to how to comment on student essays and offer suggestions respectfully, communicate effectively, and manage peer groups efficiently, based on Hansen and Liu's (2005) *Guiding Principles for Effective Peer-response*. One student in each group had been assigned as the group manager, whose duties included determining the order in which group members' papers would be discussed, and managing time for the reading and response sessions. Each group were also monitored by the teacher to ensure that the groups were reading essays, and providing feedback on time. The purpose and possible benefits of receiving feedback from other students were discussed in class, and during these discussions, students reached a consensus that receiving a reader's opinion on their work is beneficial for them in terms of organization and ideas of the essay.

Considering the benefits of receiving feedback from different learners, as suggested by Brannon and Knoublauch (1984), the students worked in groups of three in each peer-response session. The groups were formed by the teacher based on the classroom rapport and group dynamics, and, grades of the summary writing assignment. Each group consisted of at least one student who received a high grade and two students with relatively lower grades. The groups had worked together for the textual rhetorical analysis assignment prior to the study, thus they were familiar with each other and had had experience with their peers before the visual rhetorical analysis assignment.

After each assignment, students were assigned to write a reflection, where they reflected upon their own writing experience. For the reflection essays, students were given prompts to help them generate ideas on their own writing processes and experience. Students also wrote about how feedback received from peers helped them improve their essays.

### **3.3 Procedures and Materials**

The data collection process took place during the classes in Week 7, where students were working on the visual rhetorical analysis assignment. This assignment required students to perform rhetorical analysis on one of the visuals or public service announcements provided by their teachers (see Appendix A for the assignment instruction sheet). This assignment and time was chosen particularly since students had practiced both rhetorical analysis and peer-response prior to this assignment.



*Figure 3.3.1* Overview of research procedures

As can be seen in Figure 3.3.1, after writing their first drafts outside of class, students participated in their first guided peer-response session, where they gave feedback to each other about their paper by consulting the peer-response guiding sheet (see Appendix B). This sheet allowed students to check their peers' essays and provide feedback in terms of context, substance, organization, and style. In each group, each student read essays of other two peers, and filled out the sheet as they were also marking the points that they wanted to give feedback on in the essays, in the order determined by their group managers. At the end of the discussion, students handed the marked version of their peers' essays, along with the peer-response sheet with their answers on, back to their peers.

Based on the feedback the students received from their peers, students revised and turned in their first drafts. In the next class period, the students brought their second drafts to class for another peer review session. This time, students were not given the peer-response sheet, but were asked only to read the drafts and have a discussion in terms of the context, substance, organization, and style. This session also lasted for one class period. The final versions of essays were collected two days after the second peer review session.



After the submission of the final essays, the students were given the reflection prompts regarding their writing experience for this assignment. One of the prompts was designed to have them reflect upon the peer-response session they participated in to determine their perceptions of peer-response (see Appendix C).

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

This study will adopt a mixed-methods design to answer the two research questions. A mixed-methods design is employed as it allows researchers to increase the validity of research and reach generalizable conclusions in studying complex and multi-faceted issues (Dörnyei, 2007). Such design also provides opportunities to triangulate data — comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings and minimizing the negative effects of adopting a single method and increasing the validity of the findings (Dörnyei, 2007). This study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2015) in order to provide a thorough explanation and support quantitative findings with qualitative findings.

The first research question, which addresses impact of peer-response on student revision, will be answered through quantitative methods. Student revisions will be categorized throughout the writing process, and quantitatively analyzed. In terms of the second research question, qualitative data will be collected from student reflection essays and coded. A methodological triangulation, that is, using different measures or research methods to investigate a particular phenomenon, will be employed (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 181).

Table 3.4.1 below provides an overview of the data collected and analyzed for each research question.

Table 3.4.1 *Overview of data collection and analysis procedures*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
RQ1: To what extent does peer-response impact L1 students' revisions in a writing classroom adopting multiple-draft process?	1st draft, 2nd draft, and final essays	Revisions made in each draft were categorized according to Faigley & Witte's (1984) taxonomy of revisions  Unit of analysis was lexical, phrasal, clausal, sentential or multi-sentential
RQ2: What are students' perceptions of peer-response as means of revision in the writing process?	Reflection essays written after the assignment	Student reflection essays were read, and their answers to the prompt regarding peer-response were categorized to extract information on their perceptions

Using Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy, each revision made to the first and second drafts was categorized as either surface (categories of which are change or meaning-preserving changes) or meaning change (microstructure change or macrostructure change). Each revision in drafts was analyzed either at lexical, phrasal, clausal, sentential. (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Paulus, 1999). These findings were analyzed to answer the first research question.

As suggested by Mackey and Gass (2015), a simple percentage for interrater reliability was calculated to ensure the reliability of the revision coding process. Once students submit their second drafts, the researcher and two independent raters categorized revisions made in three randomly-chosen students' first and second drafts. Inter-rater reliability was accounted for 91% for revision types

Table 3.4.2 shows the themes serving as the basis of the analysis of student reflection essays:

Table 3.4.2 *Themes and definitions for student reflection essays*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theme Definition</b>
Efficacy of peer-response in writing process	Statements from students about whether peer-response is beneficial/helpful in the writing process
Effects of feedback from peers on revisions	Statements or examples from students about how students revised their papers after receiving feedback from peers
Teacher processes in peer-response sessions	Statements or examples from students on whether training and activities designed by the teacher contributed to the effectiveness of peer-response sessions

In reflections essays, students' answers to the prompt regarding the peer-response sessions were extracted, and overarching responses were categorized based on the themes to answer the second research question. Two of the prompts for the student reflection essays were designed to explore student's thoughts and experiences in order to answer the second research question (see Appendix C, questions 5 and 6). Students' answers for the two prompts in their reflection essays were extracted. A two-cycle coding system was followed this qualitative analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Provisional coding was used by the researcher for the first cycle of analysis; preliminary codes were determined based on patterns in students answers to prompts (Mackey & Gass, 2015), the reflection prompts, and the research questions. This first cycle allowed for emerging themes and an initial summary of the data. The second cycle of the qualitative analysis process involved pattern coding that allowed the summaries of student reflections to be grouped into themes determined.

One of the two independent raters worked on coding of student revisions agreed to participate in the pattern coding procedure as well to ensure reliability of themes and patterns. The coding procedure was explained to the independent rater by the researcher. The rater was

involved in the second cycle of the coding process. Although no quantitative reliability measure was calculated for this process, the researcher and independent rater reached an agreement on the emerging themes and student statements.

This chapter explained how the data was gathered and analyzed in order to answer the two research questions. The materials and procedures for data collection were described in this chapter. The next chapter will present results of the data collection process, and discuss the findings by comparing them with the previous studies in the literature.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of peer-response on student revisions and students' perceptions of peer-response and peer feedback in writing courses. The study aimed to contribute to the literature by analyzing types of revisions made by students in a writing course adopting multiple-draft approach in L1 writing context, which has not been of interest in the literature. Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy was employed to determine the type of each revision in student essays in order to answer the first research question. Another goal of this study was to explore students' perception of peer-response and peer feedback in writing classrooms. Students' reflection essays were analyzed, and their responses regarding the prompt on peer-response and peer feedback were extracted and categorized based on the themes introduced in the previous chapter in order to answer the second research question. Results obtained from this study helped the researcher to answer the two research questions introduced in the previous chapter through both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This chapter first presents findings on revision types and student perceptions, then discusses findings of the study by comparing them with the literature, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

#### 4.1 Revision Types in Student Drafts

The first research question asks what type of changes students make in their essays after receiving feedback from their peers. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer this question. Students' first and second drafts, and second drafts and final essays were compared to find if there had been any revisions made. Revisions were categorized based on Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy of revisions. Frequency of each revision type were recorded and percentages of revision types (based on the total number of revisions for each draft)

were calculated. Table 4.1.1 provides an overview of types of revisions for each student between Draft 1 and Draft 2:

Table 4.1.1 *Overview of types of student revisions between Draft 1 and Draft 2*

Student	Surface Changes		Meaning Changes		Total Revisions
	Formal	Meaning-preserving	Microstructure	Macrostructure	
A	8	4	4	0	16
B	0	2	5	2	9
C	2	0	0	2	4
D	3	2	2	1	8
E	2	0	2	0	4
F	6	9	4	7	26
G	7	10	7	6	30
H	2	4	0	7	13
I	8	10	7	10	35
J	5	10	6	6	27
K	4	9	4	6	23
L	4	5	1	0	10
M	1	0	0	0	1
N	2	3	2	8	15
O	1	1	0	0	2
P	7	21	10	17	55
R	6	3	0	0	9
S	7	3	3	4	17
T	1	2	0	0	3
U	1	1	1	4	7
W	4	0	0	0	4
X	14	3	3	1	21
V	6	1	1	3	11
Y	9	6	1	0	16
Z	1	0	0	0	1
A1	7	1	2	1	11
B1	13	6	3	0	22
C1	20	3	0	0	23
D1	13	9	3	0	25
E1	13	7	0	0	20
F1	15	12	9	3	39

Table 4.1.1 continued

<b>Total</b>	192 (37.9%)	147 (29.0%)	80 (15.8%)	88 (17.4%)	507 (100.0%)
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Note: Student names are coded to preserve anonymity.

Table 4.1.2 illustrates the number of each revision type, and raw frequency of each revision type, along with their percentages of total revisions, between students' first and second drafts.

Table 4.1.2 *Frequencies and percentages of revision types between Draft 1 and Draft 2*

<b>Revision Type</b>	<b>Raw Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (of total revisions)</b>
Formal	192	37.9%
Meaning-preserving	147	29.0%
<b>Total Surface Revisions</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>66.9%</b>
Microstructure	80	15.8%
Macrostructure	88	17.3%
<b>Total Meaning Revisions</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>33.1%</b>
<b>Total Revisions</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The 31 participants made a total of 507 revisions in their first drafts. Of these revisions, 339 (66.9% of total revisions) were categorized as surface revisions. Raw frequency of formal changes was 192 (56.6% of surface revisions), and meaning-preserving changes were 147 (43.4% of surface revisions). The remaining 168 (33.1% of total revisions) changes were considered as meaning revisions, categorized as both microstructure changes, which accounted for 80 (47.6% of meaning revisions), and macrostructure changes, which accounted for 88 (52.4% of meaning revisions).

Table 4.1.3 provides an overview of types of revisions for each student between Draft 2 and Final Draft:

Table 4.1.3 *Overview of types of student revisions between Draft 2 and Final Paper*

Student	Surface Changes		Meaning Changes		Total Revisions
	Formal	Meaning-preserving	Microstructure	Macrostructure	
A	2	1	1	0	4
B	0	2	0	0	2
C	22	36	13	0	71
D	2	1	0	0	3
E	5	4	5	18	32
F	1	0	0	0	1
G	0	1	0	0	1
H	8	5	3	13	29
I	2	0	0	0	2
J	7	19	5	6	37
K	3	1	0	0	4
L	12	9	1	1	23
M	11	9	0	0	20
N	4	4	0	0	8
O	1	0	2	0	3
P	9	0	0	0	9
R	3	8	1	0	12
S	8	11	2	1	22
T	2	1	0	0	3
U	4	5	14	9	32
W	4	9	3	1	17
X	3	2	1	3	9
V	8	11	6	13	38
Y	1	0	0	0	1
Z	3	1	0	17	21
A1	6	7	4	1	18
B1	4	3	1	0	8
C1	3	0	0	0	3
D1	17	9	3	5	34
E1	12	8	4	8	32
F1	5	4	2	0	11
<b>Total</b>	172 (33.7%)	171 (33.5%)	71 (13.9%)	96 (18.8%)	510 (100.0%)

Note: Student names are coded to preserve anonymity.



Table 4.1.4 illustrates the number of each revision type, and raw frequency of each revision type between, along with their percentages of total revisions, between Draft 2 and Final Paper

Table 4.1.4 *Frequencies and percentages of revision types between Draft 2 and Final Paper*

<b>Revision Type</b>	<b>Raw Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (of total revisions)</b>
Formal	172	33.7%
Meaning-preserving	171	33.5%
<b>Total Surface Revisions</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>67.3%</b>
Microstructure	71	13.9%
Macrostructure	96	18.8%
<b>Total Meaning Revisions</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>32.7%</b>
<b>Total Revisions</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The participants made 510 revisions between their second drafts and final essays. Of these revisions, 343 (67.3% of total revisions) were categorized as surface revisions. Frequency of formal changes were 172 (50.1% of surface revisions), and meaning-preserving changes were 171 (49.9% of surface revisions). The remaining 167 (32.7% of total revisions) changes were considered as meaning revisions, categorized as both microstructure changes, which accounted for 71 (42.5% of meaning revisions), and macrostructure changes, which accounted for 96 (57.5% of meaning revisions).

Table 4.1.4 provides an overview of frequency of revision types between all drafts:

Table 4.1.4 *Overview of revision types between drafts*

<b>Revision Type</b>	<b>Draft 1 – Draft 2</b>	<b>Draft 2 – Final Paper</b>	<b>Total</b>
Formal	192	172	364 (35.8%)
Meaning-preserving	147	171	318 (31.3%)
<b>Total Surface Revisions</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>682 (67.1%)</b>
Microstructure	80	71	151 (14.8%)
Macrostructure	88	96	184 (18.1%)
<b>Total Meaning Revisions</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>335 (32.9%)</b>
<b>Total Revisions</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>1017 (100%)</b>

In both Draft 1 and Draft 2, a total of 1017 revisions were made by students. 67.1% of these revisions were surface level changes, and 32.9% were meaning revisions. Of 682 surface revisions, formal changes accounted for 364 (35.8% of total revisions), whereas meaning-preserving changes accounted for 318 (31.3%). Of 335 meaning revisions, microstructure changes accounted for 151 (14.8% of total revisions), and macrostructure changes accounted for 184 (18.1%).

Although students made changes both at surface and meaning level, the number of surface revisions students made throughout their process of writing is greater than that of meaning revisions. This finding resonates Hall's (1990), Paulus' (1999), Ting and Qian's (2010) results that surface changes made by students are far more frequent than meaning changes. There are no significant differences in frequencies of surface and meaning revisions between both Draft 1 and Draft 2, and Draft 2 and Final Paper. In terms of surface changes, the frequency of formal changes seems to decrease between Draft 1 and Draft 2, while meaning-preserving changes increase by 24. As for meaning revisions, the number of microstructure changes seem to decrease by 8, whereas macrostructure changes increase by 8. Although there are differences in

subcategories of both surface and meaning revisions between drafts, these differences are not significant.

Surface level changes were the most frequent type of revisions made by students in each draft. This finding resonates with Paulus' (1999) result that surface changes occupied much higher percentages than meaning changes did. Hall (1990) and Tagong (1991) also found that much of revision made by L2 writers are surface level changes. Ting & Qian's (2010) also found that 82.4% of total revisions made by L2 writers were surface level changes. Therefore, it may be argued that, in peer-response activities, both L1 and L2 writers are primarily focused on revising at surface level more than making revisions impacting the meaning of the text.

The most common type of surface level revisions students made in their essays were formal changes that consisted of revisions related to formatting, punctuation, spelling, tense, or morphological changes. Formal changes accounted for 35.8% of total revisions, while meaning-preserving changes accounted for 31.3%. This result is quite different than Paulus' (1999) finding that 21.9% of total that students made were formal changes. Hall (1990) found that 51% of revisions made by students were meaning-preserving changes, which is inconsistent with the findings of the current study. Interestingly, Ting and Qian (2010) found that 37.9% of surface revisions made by students were formal changes; although, Ting and Qian (2010) suggest that some of these revisions were self-initiated, rather than peer-initiated (p. 94). Accordingly, it could be said that L1 writer's primary concern is to solve surface-level problems in their papers with their peers, such as formatting or grammatical/mechanical errors.

These findings, however, are vastly different from what Baker (2016) found. In her study, advanced-level writers made mostly meaning-level revisions, which validates Sommers' (1980) finding and Faigley and Witte's (1981) argument that skilled writers make more meaning-level

changes than surface-level changes. In the current study, writers predominantly made surface-level changes in their texts. Since the participants of the current study could be considered as intermediate-level writers, it could be argued that the findings also confirm that inexperienced writers tend to make more surface-level changes (Faigley & Witte, 1981).

#### 4.2 Students Perceptions of Peer-response

Table 4.2.1 below provides an overview of each theme and emerging statements found in the reflective essays. Some of the statements provided in the right column are verbatim (italicized).

Table 4.2.1 *Emerging themes expressed by students in reflection essays regarding peer-response*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Statements made by students</b>
Efficacy of peer-response in writing process	<p>Peer-response was helpful in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing opinions from other classmates</li> <li>• Receiving insights from an actual reader</li> <li>• Learning about other perspectives and interpretations in writing</li> <li>• Improving communication with other classmates</li> <li>• Brainstorming ideas on how to fix a problem in the essay</li> <li>• Receiving criticism that is constructive</li> </ul> <p>Peer-response was not helpful due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of peers in first/second peer-response session</li> <li>• Peers not having any material to work on</li> <li>• Peers not considering peer feedback as a serious process</li> <li>• Having to work with the same group in both peer-response sessions/not being able to hear from different students</li> <li>• Peer not offering insightful comments/<i>Peer only saying, “It looks good” or “I don’t have anything to add”</i></li> <li>• Time restrictions</li> </ul>

Table 4.2.1 continued

Effects of feedback from peers on revisions	Feedback from peers allowed me to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write an attention-getting opening paragraph/a “hook”</li> <li>• Write/improve thesis statement</li> <li>• Improve the organization/flow of the paper</li> <li>• Correct the formatting of the paper</li> <li>• Improve the writing style of paper based on academic writing conventions</li> <li>• Support the main points of the paper better</li> <li>• Correct grammatical and punctuation errors that I missed</li> <li>• Hear about other interpretations on my topic that can be used to improve the substance of the paper</li> </ul>
Teacher processes in peer-response sessions	Teacher processes that improved peer-response sessions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group training on effective communication, making appropriate comments, managing class time effectively during peer-response sessions</li> <li>• Assigning students into specific peer-response groups</li> <li>• In-class discussion on peer-response etiquette</li> <li>• In-class discussion on determining peer group rules and group managers’ rules.</li> </ul>

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Overall, students had positive perceptions of peer-response sessions, which resonates Mangelsdorf’s (1992) findings. As can be seen from Table 4.2.1, students expressed that peer-response is helpful in that it allows students to hear other student’s thoughts on their essays, share ideas and comments with each other, and collaborate to improve writing processes in general. This finding is consistent with what Mendonça and Johnson (1994) finding that peer-response is helpful to gain insights on a paper or brainstorm ideas with other classmates. However, it can also be seen that some students stated that their peer-response sessions were not as helpful due to lack of useful comments from other peers, absence of peer group members, or time constraints. As students worked with same peers in both peer-response sessions, some

students stated that they did not think that was a good learning experience for them and would have liked to work in different groups in both sessions, which are similar to Nelson and Murphy's (1993) and Mangelsdorf's (1992) findings. Some students also stated that peer-response was not helpful for them as their partners did not have insightful comments for their essays. In this context, one student noted that "It was helpful getting other students' feedback during the first session, but during the second session, I had already revised most of my essay, so my peers could not provide any feedback." This comment suggests that lack of feedback from peers do not always stem from introversion or lack of knowledge; students may think that the essay is already well-written and meets the evaluation criteria.

Findings also show that teacher processes, such as trainings and in-class group discussions to prepare students for effective peer-response sessions, were also perceived positive by students. These findings support Hansen and Liu's (2005) suggestions on designing and scaffolding effective peer-response sessions in writing classrooms. However, it should be noted that some students stated that they could have benefited more from working with different groups in both sessions, rather than completing both peer-response sessions with the same peer group, which is inconsistent with Hansen and Liu's (2005) guidelines.

Students expressed that peer feedback allowed them to improve their writing style, organization, and improve the substance of their essays. This finding matches with the findings on revision types; although students mostly made surface level changes, they also revised their essays at meaning level. They made revisions at meaning level by adding new elements to their essays and/or improving the pre-existing main points based on insights and feedback received from peers. Comments also illustrate that students perceive training on how to engage in

effective peer-response sessions positively. They expressed that prior in-class training sessions, activities and discussions on effective peer-response improved their peer-response sessions.

These findings are consistent with the implications of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. The theory suggests that development and "maturation" can be achieved through peer interaction within the zone. Students stated that they were able to gain insights from their peers as readers and improve their writing according to the feedback. Thus, they were able to develop within their zone through social interaction and collaboration. Although, as suggested by Vygotsky (1978), the "developmental dynamics" varies across learners in terms of both the type and amount of revisions they incorporated into their writing and their positive and negative perceptions, they still managed to improve through interaction to some extent. It may also be argued that students have experienced a "prospective mental development" as they have become more experienced writers and peers at the end of the writing process, which can be supported by positive perceptions raised by students in the reflections on both efficacy and effect of peer-response. Student improvement on writing processes as result of peer work (effect of peer response) might arguably be an indicator of such mental development.

### **4.3. Summary**

The findings revealed that students who engaged in this peer-review process made more surface-level changes to their drafts than meaning-level changes. This finding is consistent with studies conducted in ESL context (Paulus, 1999; Min, 2006; Ting & Qian, 2010), but it differs from what research conducted in L1 context have found (Baker, 2016). This may be due to the difference in levels of writing proficiency. In Baker's (2016) study, advanced-level L1 writers made more meaning-level changes, which resonates what Sommer's (1980) study with experienced writers revealed. Although all students in this study had prior writing experience,

they were considered as intermediate-level writers. It may also be argued that writers in this study focused mostly on surface-level changes because many of these students were framing their essays as the final version of their papers in early stages of writing. In other words, they were confident with what they had in their first drafts, thus they only made minor, surface revisions in their second drafts.

Students showed positive perceptions of peer-response sessions overall, though some students expressed concerns regarding the efficacy of peer-response. This finding is consistent with what previous studies have found (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994). These concerns expressed by students are not unique; problems in peer-response due to lack of collaboration or time constraints have been observed previously (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Paulus, 1999; Hansen & Liu, 2002). Writing instructors should always account for such restrictions on peer-response sessions as they incorporate such methods into their teaching. In terms of teacher processes and their effectiveness, students showed positive perceptions, which supports Hansen & Liu's (2005) guide for instructors to structure effective in-class peer-response sessions.

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of the present study according to the two research questions. The findings have shown that surface changes are the most common type of revisions that L1 writers make in their essays, and their perceptions of peer-response in writing classrooms are positive in general. The next chapter will conclude this thesis by summarizing the findings, presenting limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter outlines the summary findings discussed in Chapter 4, and also shares the limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of peer-response sessions in L1 writing classes in terms of types of revisions students make in their essays. The study also investigated students' perceptions of use of peer-response and peer feedback in foundational composition classes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were employed to answer the two research questions presented in Chapter 3. By analyzing the revisions made in two drafts and final essays that students wrote and categorizing themes expressed by students for peer-response sessions in reflection essays, the study presented the effect of peer-response in student writing and students' perceptions.

The data have shown that students made surface level revisions in their essays more than meaning revisions that changes the overall gist of an essay. The qualitative data collected from student essays have shown that students' have overall positive perceptions of peer-feedback, although some students expressed concerns which are presented in the results section. Students also thought that teacher's methods consisting of in-class activities and training sessions, prepared students for effective communication in peer feedback, and were resulted as effective in-class peer-response sessions. The results of this study used objective data in order to confirm and complete the analysis impact of peer-response on student revisions and students' perceptions.

This study was conducted in order to explore the effects, efficacy and perception of peer-response as a method of essay improvement used in composition classes. The current study,

which focused on native speakers of English, was driven by the motivation of analyzing peer-response in its own right, as a method frequently used in writing classrooms, without accounting for other variables that might occur in an ESL/EFL context, such as difference in language proficiency level or culture-based behavioral differences that has been observed in several studies (e.g. Allaei & Connor, 1990). When such variables are non-existent, it might be possible to have a clear understanding of how peer-response actually shapes students' writing processes. The study aimed to minimize the impact of such variables by focusing on native English speakers. Although variability among students in terms of language proficiency was eliminated, it could still be argued that cultural or individual differences among students might have influenced the in-class peer-response sessions; however, these differences are observed in every classroom. On the other hand, by comparing the results of this study with research conducted in L2 context (e.g. Paulus, 1999, Ting & Qian, 2010), one may argue that language proficiency does not have a significant influence on how students provide feedback to each other and revise accordingly. In fact, one could further argue that only factor impacting student revisions significantly is level of student proficiency. Moreover, based on the results of this study and findings of previous research in the literature (Paulus, 1999, Ting & Qian, 2010, Baker, 2016), it can also be discussed that, both in L1 and L2 context, students tend to make more surface-level changes as the writing proficiency level decreases. This finding is vital for especially teachers and instructors teaching in both L1 and L2 context as they need to consider how peer-based writing activities work for students when they employ such methods in their teaching.

Although the current study was conducted in L1 context, it provides important considerations for ESL/EFL researchers and teachers. It is important for researchers to understand to what extent student writers in L1 and L2 contexts differ from or resemble each

other. Researchers need to identify these similarities and differences in order to put forward pedagogical implications that teachers and instructors would take into account. Instructors, therefore, would incorporate specific strategies into their teaching based on research to foster student learning. Within this scope, the findings of this study showed that peer-response leads to predominantly surface-level changes in L1 intermediate-level writers' essays, which conforms with what research in L2 with intermediate-level participants has found (Paulus, 1999). Based on this finding, one could argue that peer-response in both L1 and L2 is likely to have similar efficacy and impact on student writing processes. As for student perceptions, the findings of this study resonate research conducted in L2 context (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994). Students showed both positive and negative perceptions towards peer-response. In terms of negative perceptions, it could be argued that such concerns from students are not specific to this study; these concerns can occur in any classroom adopting peer-based or group-based activities. Teachers should take such possible problems into consideration when such methods are employed. However, the findings also show that negative perceptions could be avoided with certain teacher processes, such as learner training or in-class discussions. Therefore, one could argue that the benefits of peer-response could be maximized both in L1 and L2 through appropriate teaching methods. Moreover, additional teacher processes could be employed in L2 context in order to minimize negative perceptions stemming from cultural differences or learner variability (Allaei & Connor, 1990).

There are some limitations to this study that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. First, it should be noted that peer-response sessions both on Draft 1 and Draft 2 were executed in-class. Although students worked in the same groups in both sessions, some students were absent in both sessions, which forced the researcher to rearrange some of the

groups in order to maintain three students in each peer group. This might have had an influence on how peers worked together, thus impacted the revisions students made in their papers. It should also be noted that there had been a drop in the number of participants after the data collection started. The results of this study could have been different if these participants had not been dropped out of the study due to the failure to provide data.

Another limitation of the study is that some students did not revise their essays as much as others. It is still unknown that these participants did not make many revisions because they did not put much effort into the revision process, because they did not receive constructive feedback from their peers, or because their paper was already effectively written and did not need revision. A correlation between student's grades and their revisions could have clarified this ambiguity.

Lastly, some students, in their reflection essays, stated that peer-response was not helpful for them since they were forced to work with same peer groups in both peer-response sessions. This might have had an impact on the revision frequencies observed in student essays. Unfruitful peer-response sessions might have led to lower frequencies of revisions. Another limitation was that some students expressed that their peer-response experience was not beneficial due to lack of constructive criticism. As for constructive feedback, in future studies, teacher may hold more training sessions on providing effective and helpful comments in peer-response sessions to reduce the negative effect of this limitation on the data. Lack of time was another limitation that might have had an impact on students' revisions., especially when the class duration (50 minutes) and number of students in each peer group (3 students) are considered. It could have been more effective to hold more than one peer-response sessions for each draft. Future studies may consider designing a research design having multiple peer-response sessions in writing classrooms adopting multiple-draft approach.

In conclusion, despite the limitations discussed above, this study shed light on how peer-response affects students' revision behavior in their writings by analyzing revisions made in essays. It also attempted to provide data on how students perceive peer-response in foundational writing courses. Peer-response and peer feedback is a crucial process in writing classrooms; when it's impact on revision behavior and students' perception are considered, research is still needed on this issue to provide both methodological and pedagogical implications to researchers and teachers in the field.

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**APPENDIX A****ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS SHEET****English 250****Assignment #4: Rhetorical Analysis of a Visual Text** (600+ words)

Spring 2017

Date Due:

**What is this assignment?**

You will write a 600-word minimum rhetorical analysis of one of the options we have identified in class as appropriate for this assignment. This may be a still ad or PSA. Your visual rhetorical analysis should show how the visual fulfills (or doesn't fulfill) its purpose for a particular audience. The visual might accomplish or fail to accomplish its purpose through how its words, visuals, structure, and ideas connect with each other and with the intended audience. The audience you will be writing to is an educated person who has seen the visual you are analyzing.

**Once you complete this paper, you will also give a brief presentation on what you have written.**

**What is the purpose of this assignment?**

The purpose of this assignment is to help you achieve one of the course objectives from the syllabus: to rhetorically analyze visual communication. This kind of writing requires you to think critically about visual texts and to clearly articulate your analysis to an audience, both of which are skills you will use in many ways in the future.

In addition, this assignment can help us to better understand the use and effects of various kinds of visual texts. There are so many ads and PSAs in our daily environment that we seldom pay attention to them, or at least, we don't pay conscious attention. Most are successful because they are designed to work below the level of our conscious awareness, and this is precisely why visual rhetorical analysis is important.

**How can I write this assignment?**

*Planning:* First, select a visual from the choices given to you. Review the visual carefully; what do you notice about it? Consider the rhetorical choices the designer uses to carry out their goals (e.g., related to substance, organization, and/or style) and the following as you take notes on your selected visual:

- use of visuals within the artifact (people, places, colors, font, objects, etc.)
- use of a logo and/or brand name
- content, layout, graphics, color, and interactivity of the visual
- usability of the visual (e.g., do you know where to look first, do you know where to look next, and so on)
- substance of text
- tone of the visual (e.g., font color, size, and style; word choice; how the word choice and font design interact)
- types of appeals meant to persuade the viewer (i.e., ethos, pathos, logos)

- adherence to guidelines for good visual design discussed in the *Student Guide*
- overall impact

As you look over your visual, be sure to note its context (the visual's history and how this connects to the intended readers' expectations), purpose (the designer's goals for the intended audience), and audience (who the designer is targeting and the relationship the author establishes with that audience). What relationships do you note between the text's context, purpose, and audience and its rhetorical strategies? Answering this question can help you develop your thesis statement.

*Drafting:* Use the notes you developed in the planning stage to draft your rhetorical analysis. Be sure to include a description of the text's context, purpose, and audience and a thesis statement that covers the entire paper.

In addition, consider the visual design of *your* paper. Consider using headings to break up your main points and definitely include a picture or image of your selected visual in the body of your paper (with words wrapped around it and with a caption below it).

*Revising:* As you revise, consider *your* audience and purpose. Revise to ensure that you are better fulfilling the assignment. Check that you have a thesis that covers the entire paper, that you include the visual's context, purpose, and audience, that you are focusing on how the visual you are analyzing fulfills its goals for its particular audience, and that your conclusion effectively wraps up your discussion.

### **How will this assignment be evaluated?**

At a minimum, your paper needs to satisfy these criteria. However, the grade is based not just on whether a feature is present or not, but on *how well* it has been integrated into your paper. The visual analysis should

- Orient the reader to the purpose of the rhetorical analysis
  - Establish the context of the visual you are analyzing
  - Present a clear, well-supported thesis
- Incorporate well-developed substance
  - Focus on two or three rhetorical choices used to carry out the designer's goals (e.g., related to substance, organization, and/or style)
  - Analyze rather than summarize the visual (again, assume your reader has already seen the visual text)
  - Support your claims with evidence from the visual
- Use audience-oriented organization (not writer-oriented organization)
  - Write focused paragraphs
  - Transition smoothly from one point to another with transitions and topic sentences
- Use appropriate style
  - Use varied sentence structures and word choices
  - Avoid errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Look professional
  - Properly format the analysis in APA or MLA style

- For any textual elements, accurately paraphrase the author's important ideas without using the author's phrasing

**What if I want more help?**

In addition to peer-response, feel free to talk to me during my office hours and/or schedule an appointment at the Writing and Media Center.

## APPENDIX B

### PEER-RESPONSE GUIDING SHEET

#### ASSIGNMENT #3 – PEER-RESPONSE SHEET

Please take your time and read your peers' draft carefully. Once you are done with the reading, answer to the questions below by referring to your peer's draft. Make sure you provide adequate answers when possible - do not simply put a "yes/no" for open-ended questions. You may include specific examples from your peer's draft by quoting them.

**Group managers:** It is **your duty** to manage time for each draft. Remember that you only have 50 minutes for this session. Determine the time you will be spending on reading your peers' drafts, and the order in which the papers will be discussed. Note that each group consists of three people, so each member will be reading and commenting on **two** drafts. (If you are working as a pair, though, you will only comment on your partner's paper.)

After reading your peer's draft, please answer each question below and offer suggestions to your peers accordingly:

#### 1) **Context**

a) Are the piece (ad or public service announcement), intended audience and purpose introduced in the beginning paragraph?

-

b) Does the introduction have an attention-getting opener catching the reader's interest? If not, how else might the draft begin?

-

c) Is the argument that is made in the visual (the claim) well-stated? If not, what would you suggest to your partner to improve it?

-

- d) Are the strategies (ethos, pathos, logos) forecasted in the introduction? Is there anything that needs to be improved?

-

## 2) **Organization**

- a) Is the writing easy to follow? What are your thoughts on the paragraph organization?

-

- b) How effective are transitions between paragraphs? Is the main point of each body paragraph stated at the beginning?

-

- c) Do body paragraphs focus on only one main point? Is there anything in the paragraph structure that might confuse the readers?

-

## 3) **Substance**

- a) Does the author insightfully mention design principles (contrast, color, chunking, etc.)?

-

- b) Does the essay analyze visual using ethos/pathos/logos, and make connections between design choices and appeals? If not, what would your suggestion be to improve it?

-

- c) Does the writer offer analysis of text of persuasive strategies used in text?

-

## 4) **Delivery**

- a) Does the paper conform to the MLA format? Is there anything missing? (Refer to the MLA guideline on Moodle)

-

- b) Are the in-text and ending citations correct? Is there anything missing?

-

- c) In conclusion, is the argument restated? Are the main points summed up briefly? Does it answer the “so what?” question?

-

- d) Is there a visual? Did the author place the visual appropriately, and include a caption underneath it?

-

**5) Style**

a) Is there any grammatical, punctuation or mechanical errors that you spotted?

-

b) Is there a smooth transition within and between sentences (coordination, subordination)? Is there a "flow?"



**APPENDIX C****PROMPTS FOR THE REFLECTION ESSAY**

## Reflection - Visual Rhetorical Analysis with Oral Presentation

As you consider how well you performed (and yes, it is a performance, even if you are just scrolling around on a website showing people stuff), reflect about what you did well and what you realize you could have done better. Projecting ahead, think about how you will use this reflection in future performances. First, review the rubric for the presentation and rate yourself. Then answer these questions. **You don't necessarily need to compose a full-blown essay**, just answer the questions. Try to write at least a paragraph for each question. What I will be looking for is deep thoughts about **what you have learned** from this experience.

Post your reflection to your ePortfolio reflection blog. **Make sure you submit your reflection instead of saving a draft by clicking "Publish" button.** If your reflection is not visible, you will lose participation points.

1. Where do you rate yourself as having done an "excellent" or "good" job? Describe why, using specific wording and categories from the rubric.
2. Where do you rate yourself as "fair" or "needs work"? Describe why, using specific wording and categories from the rubric.
3. How do your marks and thoughts correspond with the marks and thoughts you received from your classmates? Describe where you agree, describe where you do not agree, and discuss why.
4. Think about the presentation aspect of this assignment. What have you learned from this experience? Do you think this presentation was a good practice opportunity for next

assignment? What will you take from this experience to do better presentations in this class and in future situations where you must talk in front of people?

5. What's are your thoughts on the peer-response session for this assignment? Did you find it helpful? Why or why not? How did you use the feedback from your peers to build a stronger paper? Consider five elements of pentad (context, organization, substance, delivery, style), and give specific examples.
6. What are your thoughts on how you have been trained/prepared for the peer-response sessions? What helped you become a better feedback-giver?

## APPENDIX D

## IRB APPROVAL MEMO

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board  
Office for Responsible Research  
Vice President for Research  
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202  
Ames, Iowa 50014  
515 294-4566

**Date:** 11/17/2016  
**To:** Altay Ozkul  
3920 Maricopa Dr. Apt 311  
Ames, IA 50014  
**CC:** Dr. Volker Hegelheimer  
341 Ross Hall  
**From:** Office for Responsible Research  
**Title:** Investigating students' perception of peer-feedback in foundational writing courses  
**IRB ID:** 16-544  
**Study Review Date:** 11/17/2016

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted education settings involving normal education practices, such as:
  - Research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or
  - Research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

**Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form.** A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that **approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.