A Study on Students' Attitudes towards Peer Review in Online Writing Classes

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ABSTRACT

Online peer review has been applied in Academic writing classes and it has given a positive impact on the students' writing skills. Further study was done to find out the students' attitudes toward online peer review in online writing classes. A questionnaire on students' attitudes was distributed to 43 students in academic writing classes who are practicing online peer review. The statements in the questionnaire cover their attitude towards online peer review in three aspects: affective strategies, writing processes, and interaction ability. The findings show that the students have a positive attitude towards online peer review. They have a positive attitude toward the aspects. However, the students have a negative attitude shown by one of the statements in social interaction ability. The average students do not see that this online peer review helps them learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.

Keywords: *Attitude, Peer Review, Online*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a basic language skill for language learners which needs attention as it covers five aspects of writing; contents, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. Online peer feedback has been done in writing classes and it has been proven that these activities give positive impacts in improving students' writing skills. Although students tend to prefer teacher review to peer review, the attitude may not completely negative toward the online per review activities. This study aims to investigate students' attitudes toward online peer feedback on their essays, specifically towards the affective strategies, the writing process, and social interaction ability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer feedback or peer review has been regarded as a crucial feedback delivery system in process-based L2 writing classes, and it has been widely considered as an effective approach to facilitate teachers for students' writing improvement. Providing written feedback to students and offering individualized attention, as one of the ESL writing teacher's most important tasks,

is rarely possible under normal classroom conditions (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). However, some studies have been done to find out a better way to teach so that students will achieve better writing competence. One of the ways that teachers have started to do is doing a peer review or peer feedback. Peer review can be defined as "a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards" (Liu & Carless, 2006). Peer review process involves collaborative learning in which students assess one another's work and provide each other with feedback (Pearce et al., 2009). Feedback has its functions as praise, criticism, and suggestions (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Further, they define "Feedback is the communication of a response to a student's performance in relation to a given task. This response can be written, oral, electronic or a combination of all or any of these" (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In this study, I use the term peer review instead of feedback as these two terms are reversible as it can be defined as communication between students on their writing performance.

By having a peer review activity, learners will get benefits as they will have a communication with the peer who can give them input to improve their writing performance. Some studies on peer review have found out that peer review can improve students' writing abilities (Gielen et al., 2010); (Bijami et al., 2013); (Farrah, 2011); (Baker, 2016). Additionally, peer review is to stimulate the writer to rethink the entire document (Chisholm, 2006). Thus, having peer review may develop students' abilities in expressing their ideas.

A study on the effectiveness of peer review done in Iranian proves that peer review training had a positive effect on the students' subsequent revisions (Esmaeeli, Hadiseh ;Abasi, Maasumeh; Soori, 2014). As it gives positive impacts, it also needs to know their attitude towards the online peer review. For many reasons, training is a crucial element for establishing an open environment for peer feedback sessions. Training sessions may also reduce the potential negative attitudes of peer review. Student reactions towards peer feedback can turn negative if the peer commentators are not open to critical feedback or are over-defensive. In addition, cross-cultural issues that may arise with satisfaction could relate to the students' home culture.

METHOD

To get the data, the researcher modified the questionnaire constructed with 9 questions on the students' attitude towards online peer review in online writing class. The first three statements are on the affective strategies, the second three are on the writing process and the last three are on social interaction ability. For the evaluation criteria, a four-point Likert scale

was used with the options *strongly agree, agree, disagree* and *strongly disagree*, which were used to measure students' attitude toward online peer review in online writing class. *Strongly agree* weighed at 4 while the statement marked *strongly disagree* weighed at 1. The questionnaire was distributed to the students after they did online peer review activities.

The questionnaire was administrated by five students. The writer used the R table as the validity level. The value of 5 respondents is 0.8054. The statement is considered valid if the value of significance is higher than the value in R-table. In this pilot study, the researcher used 5 participants which means df = 5 – 2 = 3 with a significance level of 5%. The significance level of 5% is used because the social studies usually come with 5% significance level. In order to check the reliability, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument is considered as reliable if the value is more than 0.70. It was found out that all the items are valid. It is also reliable as the Crombach's alpha is .804.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of three aspects including nine questionnaire statements are presented respectively. It shows the mean of all the aspects to see their attitude. Table 1 is the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	43	3.00	3.00	3.0000	.00000
VAR00002	43	2.00	4.00	3.1860	.45018
VAR00003	43	3.00	4.00	3.5814	.49917
VAR00004	43	3.00	4.00	3.4419	.50249
VAR00005	43	1.00	4.00	2.9302	.70357
VAR00006	43	3.00	4.00	3.6744	.47414
VAR00007	43	3.00	4.00	3.4884	.50578
VAR00008	43	2.00	3.00	2.7674	.42746
VAR00009	43	3.00	4.00	3.1628	.37354
Valid N (listwise)	43				

Based on table 1, the average of all the items is 3.248. It means that the participants have positive attitude towards the online peer review activities.

Table 2 .The aspects of affective strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00001	43	3.00	3.00	3.0000
VAR00002	43	2.00	4.00	3.1860
VAR00003	43	3.00	4.00	3.5814
Valid N (listwise)	43			

On the aspect of affective strategies, the mean is 3.255. This shows that they have positive attitude towards the aspect of affective strategies. The following is the data of each statement.

Table 3. First Affective Strategy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	43	100.0	100.0	100.0

The first statement is *I was less anxious while giving online peer review to peers' work*. All of the students chose agree, meaning that all believe that they were not really anxious when doing the online peer review activities.

Table 4. Second Affective Strategy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
	3.00	33	76.7	76.7	79.1
	4.00	9	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Almost all participants agree with this statement: *I was more confident in giving online peer review to peers' work*. There is only one who stated that he or she disagreed. Maybe they feel convenient because it is done online or they know what to do.

Table 5. Third Affective Strategy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	18	41.9	41.9	41.9
	4.00	25	58.1	58.1	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants agree with the statement: *My positive feelings helped me cope with my*

stress and anxiety while offering online peer review to peers. This shows that all of them have positive feelings toward this activity and they feel fine in doing it.

Table 6 .The aspects of writing process

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00004	43	3.00	4.00	3.4419
VAR00005	43	1.00	4.00	2.9302
VAR00006	43	3.00	4.00	3.6744
Valid N (listwise)	43			

On the aspect of affective strategies, the mean is 3.348. This shows that they have positive attitude towards the aspect of writing process. The following is the data of each statement.

Table 7. The first aspect of writing process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	24	55.8	55.8	55.8
	4.00	19	44.2	44.2	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All students agree with this statement: *I received worthwhile experiences from doing online peer review*. This proves that doing online peer review is considered beneficial.

Table 8. The second aspect of writing process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	2	4.7	4.7	4.7
	2.00	6	14.0	14.0	18.6
	3.00	28	65.1	65.1	83.7
	4.00	7	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Some students disagree with the statement *I understand the writing strategies in producing a written paragraph while giving online peer review to peers' work.* More students (81.4%) agree. It can be interpreted that most participants feel that their writing skills improve.

Table 9. The third aspect of writing process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	14	32.6	32.6	32.6
	4.00	29	67.4	67.4	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants agree with this statement: *I could identify the paragraph structure of each genre while giving online peer review to peers' work.* One of the aspects that the students have to check in peer review activities is the paragraph structure. They have to comment whether the essay that they review have the appropriate paragraph structure. By doing this, they feel that their ability in identifying paragraph improve.

Table 10 .The aspects of social interaction ability

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00007	43	3.00	4.00	3.4884
VAR00008	43	2.00	3.00	2.7674
VAR00009	43	3.00	4.00	3.1628
Valid N (listwise)	43			

On the aspect of affective strategies, the mean is 3.139. This shows that they have positive attitude towards the aspect of social interaction ability. The following is the data of each statement.

Table 11 .The first aspect of social interaction ability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	22	51.2	51.2	51.2
	4.00	21	48.8	48.8	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants agree with this statement: *Discussing with peers enhanced my social interaction skills.* This means that they believe by discussing the result of online peer review, they able to interact well with their peer.

Table 12 .The second aspect of social interaction ability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	10	23.3	23.3	23.3
	3.00	33	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

There are 23.3% who chose disagree making the average 2.76 with the following statement: *Online peer review activities helped me learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.* Some students do not believe that online peer review activities can make them maintain harmony in pair work.

Table 13 .The third aspect of social interaction ability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	36	83.7	83.7	83.7
	4.00	7	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants agree with this statement: *I realized individuals' differences in the aspect of their writing ability through conducting online peer review activities.* 83% agree and 16.3% strongly disagree.

CONCLUSION

This study has been conducted to know students' attitude on the online peer review activities in three aspects: affective strategies, writing process and social interaction ability. The data were collected using questionnaire with four options. The result of the study shows that they have positive attitude on the three aspects. However, there is one statement: *Online peer review activities helped me learn about maintaining harmony in group work* as one of the statements for social interaction ability that shows negative attitude. It means that the average students do not see that this online peer review help them learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.

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