



Troubleshooting Peer Review in the ESL classroom

By Elizabeth Musil

Kansas State University

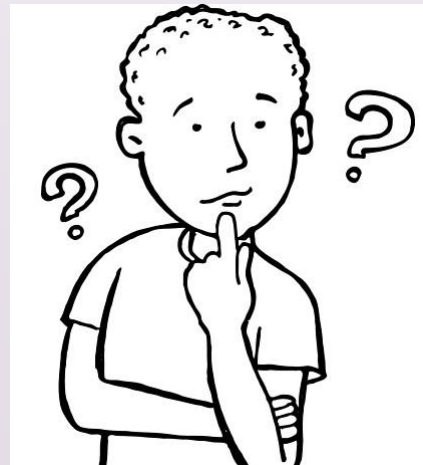
Our own experiences

- ▶ What problems have you had while implementing peer feedback? Discuss with someone sitting next to you. (3 min.)
- ▶ Share



Peer Feedback introduction

- ▶ Many times attempts at implementing peer feedback can end in disaster and be extremely frustrating
 - ▶ Example: Survey of colleagues
- ▶ Peer feedback can be very useful and beneficial
 - ▶ Example: In-class paragraphs
- ▶ Question – how can it be implemented in a productive way? How can we get this process to work FOR our students, and not against them?






3 overarching categories of problems

- ▶ Logistical
 - ▶ Organization, set-up, and execution
- ▶ Quality
 - ▶ The outcomes and results of feedback
- ▶ Behavior of Students
 - ▶ 3 sub categories:
 - ▶ Confidence in self and classmates
 - ▶ Attitude towards partner/s
 - ▶ Participation in activity



Problem: Logistics

- ▶ Problem 1: Not enough time
 - ▶ Classtime needed for other things
 - ▶ Teacher preparation time
 - ▶ Students not finished when class ends
 - ▶ Problem 2: Set-up/execution
 - ▶ Students didn't turn in drafts
 - ▶ Students finish at different times
 - ▶ Problem 3: Differing Abilities
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Solutions Problem 1: Not enough time

- ▶ Never enough time
- ▶ Balance between activities is important
- ▶ Weigh the pros and cons
 - ▶ Peer feedback very beneficial for students
 - ▶ Can see how message was communicated
 - ▶ Can have a wider audience than just the teacher
 - ▶ Can see how others at their level write (helps confidence!)
 - ▶ Can develop skills to view writing critically
 - ▶ Raises awareness of own writing
 - ▶ Helps train to identify and correct errors
 - ▶ Creates unity and support between students





Solution Problem 1: cont.

- Conclusion – how can you NOT use classtime for peer feedback?
- TIP: To save time, have students read and comment on the essay as homework, and use classtime for the discussion about the feedback
- Other problems:
 - Teacher preparation time
 - If this is not a problem for you, then you are not doing enough to get peer feedback to work. It takes good preparation to have successful peer feedback.
 - TIP: Time invested in preparation for peer feedback is well worth it
 - Students don't finish within the classtime
 - TIP: Plan enough time in advance for the activity
 - Often takes at least 30 minutes
 - DON'T have them finish at home/meet outside of classes – few students will

Solution Problem 2: Set-up/execution



- Problem: Students didn't turn in drafts
 - TIP: Have Ss who didn't turn in a draft write their essay in class while the others are doing peer feedback. If they finish early, can do peer feedback with each other
- Problem: Students finish at different times
 - TIP: Have students write a "writer's agenda" (plan of changes to make)
 - TIP: Give students your feedback AFTER they have finished the peer feedback
 - Students can look at while in class and ask questions
 - TIP: Have other activities planned to fill in the time until everyone is finished


Solution Problem 3: Differing Abilities

- ▶ TIP: Choose your groupings wisely
 - ▶ What are strengths and weaknesses of each student? How can these students be paired together to best complement each other?
 - ▶ Strong with weak
 - ▶ Two students about the same ability
 - ▶ Complementary problems
 - ▶ What languages do the students speak?
 - ▶ Different language vs. same
 - ▶ Who works well together?





Problem: Quality

- ▶ Problem 4: Understanding
 - ▶ Too little English to communicate ideas
 - ▶ Don't understand each other
 - ▶ Can't read the handwriting
 - ▶ Problem 5: Quality of feedback
 - ▶ Feedback is not useful, or lacking in substance
 - ▶ Students get "hung up" or stuck on 1 or 2 things
 - ▶ Feedback is inaccurate
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Solution Problem 4: Understanding



- ▶ TIP: Know what your students can and can't do
 - ▶ Very low students – Very specific and limited, works best to focus on specific grammar points being studied that the students CAN work with
 - ▶ Intermediate and higher – have students work on organization and ideas, BUT focus what they are to comment on off of things done in class
 - ▶ TIP: Provide good focus and guidance
- ▶ TIP: Anticipate possible feedback
 - ▶ Read all of the essays before doing the peer feedback, and think about the feedback you would give. This will help you mediate in the event that the students cannot understand each other
- ▶ TIP: Have students type their essays

Solution Problem 5: Quality of feedback

- ▶ Problem: Feedback is not useful, or is lacking in substance
- ▶ TIP: Model good feedback
 - ▶ You can model how to give good feedback, both in written form, and spoken (conferences)
- ▶ TIP: Actively teach students how to give good feedback
 - ▶ I.e. When giving constructive criticism – first we give the positive, then the negative
 - ▶ Also – what words do we use?



Solution Problem 5: cont.

- ▶ Problem: Students get “hung up” or stuck on one or two things
- ▶ TIP: Create a guide with questions for them to answer that require them to look at specific aspects of the essay
- ▶ TIP: Make the questions simple, ie. Yes/no questions
- ▶ TIP: If students are off-task or focus on only 1 thing, remind them of the guide
- ▶ EXAMPLE: See handouts



Solution Problem 5: cont.


- Problem: Feedback is inaccurate



- This WILL happen on occasion. No student will be able to give 100% perfect feedback (can WE even do this???)
- TIP: Have the students focus on **organization/ideas**, NOT on grammar!
 - Grammar feedback comes from YOU!
 - Exception: Purpose of the exercise/assignment is to work on specific grammar topics, then be very specific and guided in what you ask them to do
- TIP: Have students focus on topics specifically being learned in class
- TIP: Be familiar with the students' papers, and anticipate feedback



Problem: Student Behavior

- Subdivided into 3 categories:
 - A: Confidence in self and classmate
 - B: Attitude towards partner
 - C: Participation in activity
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Problem: Student Behavior (Confidence in self and Classmate)

- ▶ Problem 6: Self-confidence
 - ▶ Self-doubt
 - ▶ Uncomfortable with others reading their work
- ▶ Problem 7: Trust in partner
 - ▶ Only want feedback from the teacher
 - ▶ Saving face

Solution Problems 6: Self-confidence



- ▶ TIP: Get student buy-in!
- ▶ TIP: Help students to understand WHY they are doing peer feedback, and how it will be beneficial for them and their own writing
- ▶ TIP: Address their fears
 - ▶ Show them that you DO understand how they are feeling, and why they might not be the most comfortable with the process
- ▶ TIP: Provide motivation and encouragement
- ▶ TIP: Remind students that learning is a process, that it takes time
 - ▶ My philosophy – there is no such thing as mistakes in writing! Only ways to improve it – which even the best writer still needs to do!

Solution Problems 7: Trust in Partner



- ▶ TIP: Create a comfortable classroom environment where students can trust each other
- ▶ TIP: Create groups rather than partners. Students will trust 2 people who say the same thing more than just 1 person
- ▶ Tip: Remind students – it's someone's opinion/how they see it – you don't have to follow the advice
 - ▶ Also – It's their work. No one else will change it for them, or make them change it
- ▶ TIP: Re-inforce the students' comments with your own feedback
 - ▶ NOTE: Don't give your feedback until after the process is done!
- ▶ Summary of Problems 5 and 6: **Remember – if peer feedback is going to be successful, the students have to be convinced of it's benefits.**



Problem: Student Behavior (Attitude Towards Partner)

- Problem 8: Won't give feedback
 - Shy/afraid to criticize

- Problem 9: Impolite
 - Rude
 - Judgmental
 - Laugh at partner

Solution Problem 8: Won't give feedback

- Teach students how to give feedback
- Focus the feedback on things that students know
- TIP: Always have students say something positive about the writing



Solution Problem 9: Impolite

- ▶ Remember – students might not mean to be impolite
 - ▶ Might not know how to give feedback
- ▶ Choose groups carefully
 - ▶ Think about how students relate to each other
 - ▶ Have groups of 3
- ▶ TIP: Create a good, supportive environment
- ▶ TIP: Call students to task
 - ▶ If students are rude, forceful, or otherwise impolite, remind them of why we are doing the feedback – let them know when something is inappropriate





Problem: Student Behavior (Participation in Activity)

- ▶ Problem 10: Off-task
 - ▶ Bored, not focused, not giving feedback, done quickly
 - ▶ Won't work together
- ▶ Problem 11: Ignore feedback

Solution Problem 10: Off-task

- ▶ Provide good guidance
- ▶ Get student buy-in
- ▶ Choose groups wisely

- ▶ If they are off-task and/or are not doing the task, then likely you have a problem with one of the above areas



Solution Problem 11: Ignore Feedback



- ▶ Problem exists for ALL feedback (including from teacher!)
 - ▶ Recognize – ultimately, it is their work and their choice for what/how to change it
- ▶ TIP: Give your own feedback following the peer feedback
 - ▶ Surprisingly, oftentimes very similar to what they got from the student!
- ▶ Have the student complete a “writer’s agenda”
- ▶ When revised drafts come with unchanged elements that you know they got feedback on, call them to task. Ask why they didn’t change it

Summary

- ▶ Good organization and planning is essential for successful peer feedback
- ▶ Choose groups with thought and care
- ▶ Provide good guidance and focus
- ▶ Get student buy-in – help them understand how it is beneficial
- ▶ Address student fears
- ▶ Provide training
- ▶ Anticipate questions, assist, and reinforce
- ▶ Follow-up with your own feedback

- ▶ Have patience!



Questions, comments, concerns?

- **Name: Elizabeth Musil**
- **Email: emusil@ksu.edu**

