Title

Keys to Effective Peer Response

Author

Yoshihara, Karen

Peer reviewed

KAREN YOSHIHARA
Foothill College

Keys to Effective Peer Response

■ **More and more ESL writing teachers are trying peer response to give students a wider audience for their papers and to encourage revision. However, in many cases students do not respond effectively, and little revision takes place. This paper discusses some of the problems with peer response and suggests how a clear role, specific tasks, thorough training, and clear accountability procedures can help foster more effective peer response.**

In recent years, teachers of writing to nonnative speakers of English, like their counterparts who teach native speakers, have moved away from a product approach, with its emphasis on form, toward a process approach which focuses on writing as the communication of ideas. In the ideal process-oriented classroom, the atmosphere is nonthreatening, and students are in control of their own activities. Writing is seen as communication. Students "write for real readers; they are encouraged to write for a purpose; they focus on content and ideas rather than on surface features" (Casanave, 1988, p. 31).

In a process approach, students are given strategies to discover and reshape what they have to say. Teachers intervene at various points in the process to give students guidance and feedback, expecting them to make substantial revisions between drafts as a result. However, in the ideal classroom, "the teacher is not the sole evaluator and responder. Students read and respond to the work of their peers and are helped to become critical responders to their own work" (Casanave, 1988, p. 32). Thus peer response is central to a process approach, central to the notion of writing as communication.

The benefits of peer response for native speakers include higher quality papers, more positive attitudes toward writing, the development of critical thinking skills, and the ability to address the needs of the audience (Gere,

1987). As DiPardo and Freedman (1988) point out, "Groups present an arena for intervening in the individual's writing process, for working collectively to discover ideas, for underscoring the writer's sense of audience, for interacting with supportive others at various points in the composing process, and even, perhaps, for developing the writer's intuition" (p. 123).

Teachers of nonnative speakers agree on the benefits of peer response, commenting on "its ability to promote a sense of community in the ESL writing class, to help students develop a clearer sense of audience, to make real the idea that writing must communicate a message, and to encourage a willingness to revise" (Leki, 1990, p. 5).

Of the benefits, perhaps the most important is developing an awareness of audience. Research shows that "more successful writers, under certain conditions, are more conscious of audience than their less successful counterparts. Peer groups provide one way to make audience needs concrete and to help writers who otherwise might not focus on those needs to do so" (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, p. 124).

This immediate audience can be an effective means of enabling students to transform their writer-based prose into reader-based prose. As Flower (1979) notes: "Effective writers do not simply express thought but transform it in certain complex but describable ways for the needs of a reader" (p. 19). Peers' perceptions of a draft can help the writer make those transformations.

Despite the clear benefits of peer response, however, results are not always positive. (See DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, for a discussion of both successful and unsuccessful L1 response groups.) Research on nonnative-speaker revision indicates that in most cases students revise very little, and most of the changes they make from draft to draft are on surface-level errors rather than on content (Berger, 1990; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Schecter & Harklau, 1991).

Teachers also frequently report that groups are ineffective, that students don't take the process seriously, that they are often unprepared or off task, and that the activity does not generally result in substantial revision. The purpose of this paper is to investigate some of the common problems in implementing effective peer response groups and to propose a peer response procedure which can help resolve some of those problems.

Problems With Peer Response

One of the major problems with peer response is that students are often overly critical. Leki's (1990) review of the literature confirms that many students complain about their classmates' harsh criticism, their bluntness and rudeness in peer response. Such criticism can cause a great deal of discomfort for the students. It can destroy the teacher's attempts to create a nonthreatening classroom atmosphere in which students retain control over their own texts. To eliminate criticism, Leki advises teachers "to reiterate to peer responders that the purpose of the activity is to help, not criticize" (p. 11).

Johnson (1992) also notes that peer response can be a face-threatening activity, and that for this reason compliments and other positive politeness strategies become important in creating "a socially appropriate framework for the review as a whole" (p. 210).

Another common problem with peer response is that students often tend to focus more on correctness than on ideas, resulting in more editing than revision (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Leki, 1990). This can be seen in Berger's (1990) study comparing the effects of peer and teacher feedback. While most of the comments students made on their feedback forms dealt with content, most of the actual changes students made in their papers were linguistic in nature.

Peer response also fails because of a lack of preparation or training. Studies confirm that training is critical, resulting in far better peer feedback and better revisions (Leki, 1990; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Stanley, 1992). Stanley compared students who received an extensive seven-hour coaching session on the peer review process with students who received a one-hour training session. She found that the more extensively coached group produced more talk about the writing than the other group, and their comments were more useful.

Cause: Inappropriate Role

Most of the problems with peer response can be traced back to a single underlying cause: Students often take on the role of critical expert in peer response rather than the more appropriate role of supportive peer. The role of expert is a very uncomfortable one for students. Not only do they dislike being criticized and corrected, especially by peers whose language is probably no better than their own, but many are uncomfortable criticizing each other or even offering suggestions because they know that their own papers are also flawed—as second language speakers, they often cannot be sure of what is right or wrong in terms of language. In this role, they are likely to give inappropriate or incorrect feedback, and they are unlikely to trust their peers' suggestions.

One reason students take on the role of expert in peer response groups is that teachers often expect them to. Teachers and researchers alike confuse peer response with peer evaluation. DiPardo and Freedman (1988) report on one study in which the researchers "suggest ways of getting stu-

dents to assume the points of view of teachers...to pose teacher-type questions" (p. 132). In Chaudron's (1983) study of the relative effectiveness of peer as opposed to teacher feedback, students were given a guide to lead them to mark "perceived linguistic and mechanical problems" (p. 7). Newkirk's (1984) study concludes that peers are not necessarily the best audience, but this is based on differences in evaluation, not response.

Another example of this problem can be seen in the Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992) study. The researchers found that during peer response, students were most often prescriptive in their feedback, giving generic comments and focusing on form. But student responses may have been influenced by the way the task was stated: "The writer now needs to know how well the paper followed English writing conventions" (p. 238). Students may have interpreted *conventions* to mean correct language and form and probably responded accordingly.

Teachers prepare such written guidelines for peer response in order to control the process, to make sure that students know what to do in groups and stay on task. However, teachers need to be careful about the kinds of tasks they ask students to do in peer response. As DiPardo and Freedman (1988) warn, "In attempting to build a teacher-mandated agenda into the structure of response groups, instructors may erode rather than enhance their potential by encouraging students to role-play the teacher instead of interacting as peers" (p. 129).

Even without specific guidelines which put students in the role of experts, they may still take on that role. As Leki (1990) suggests, when students respond to each other in peer groups they may be "imitating responses they have received to their own papers, particularly in ESL language classes not focused so much on writing as on practical applications of grammar lessons" (p. 9). Zamel's (1985) study of how ESL teachers respond to student texts confirms that grammar is the focus in many ESL classrooms. Most of the ESL teachers she studied, viewing themselves as linguists, were even more likely than teachers of native speakers to focus on language concerns in student texts.

Although peer response presents many potential problems, if students are supportive of each other, focus on ideas rather than language, and retain control over their own papers, peer response can be effective. In order to create such an environment, students must understand the purpose of peer response, be given tasks which foster an appropriate role, be given explicit training, and be held accountable for their responses.

Peer Response Procedure

In order to begin to solve some of the problems associated with peer response, students need to have a clear sense of writing as a process. They should expect to go through multiple drafts of a paper, revising substantially from one draft to the next. One activity which contributes significantly to this endeavor is freewriting. When students are in the habit of writing a number of exploratory drafts, they learn that much will inevitably be discarded and that the final version will undoubtedly be very different from earlier drafts (Elbow, 1973).

It is also important for students to understand the purpose of peer response. The purpose is not to have a final draft evaluated. The purpose is to encourage revision—not just editing—to enable the writers to see how their writing is perceived by others so that they can resolve conflicts between intention and perception, as Elbow (1973) puts it, and finally to help writers see what they are doing well so that they can continue to do those things on subsequent papers.

Most importantly, students must have an appropriate role in order for peer response to be effective. It is more useful for students to play the role of conversation partner in peer response than the role of teacher/expert. Writing is communication, and writers need an opportunity to have someone respond to their ideas, just as they would in a conversation. When we are talking, people don't interrupt us constantly to correct our language errors or prescribe how we should say something. Generally speaking, they listen attentively, reflect back their perceptions, and ask questions to clarify and call for more detail. From the kind of supportive feedback we get in a conversation, we are able to clarify our ideas and even pursue our thoughts further. This is the most useful kind of feedback that writers can get to their writing. To paraphrase Elbow (1973), writers don't need advice or theories; what they need to know is how others perceive their ideas. The role of students in peer response groups, therefore, should be similar to the role of conversation partners—that of interested, supportive, but perhaps confused listeners.

In order to achieve this supportive, content-focused role in peer response, it is helpful to structure activities which focus on ideas, which emphasize questions and positive comments. With this type of structure, suggestions and criticisms are not necessary and should, in fact, be prohibited since they may lead to defensiveness and take ownership of the paper away from the writer.

To help students focus on the ideas rather than the surface features of a text, I ask them to read their own papers out loud to their classmates rather than having their classmates read the writer's paper silently. This oral read-

ing is an approach which has been advocated for native speakers by Elbow and Ponsot and Deen, among others (Leki, 1990). Hearing the text rather than reading it enables peers to respond more effectively because they get a holistic view and are not distracted by surface features.

Reading their own texts out loud benefits the writers as well. As Zamel (1983) notes, proficient ESL writers often find a lot of their own errors and confusing spots simply by reading their own papers out loud, "as if hearing it spoken meant 'seeing' it in a new and more removed way" (p. 174).

For nonnative speakers, there are certainly problems with listening to classmates' papers, such as coping with accents. Students generally complain the first time we do peer response that the room is too noisy and that they can't understand each other. But with practice, they learn to listen carefully and to ask the writer to stop and repeat something if they can't hear or don't understand.

Another concern with listening to a text rather than reading it is that some students need more visual support than others. For this reason, I do allow students to look over each others' shoulders to see the paper as the writer reads, but I don't want classmates to just read the writer's paper silently. Problems associated with oral reading are easily overcome and are far outweighed by the benefits.

Response Tasks and Training

In order to respond effectively, students must have clear and appropriate tasks. The response procedure I use consists of four specific tasks: restatement of the main idea, identification of main supporting ideas, identification and analysis of effective writing techniques, and asking questions. These tasks help students develop important analytical skills. Students are told not to criticize, to offer suggestions, or to correct each others' papers. In this way, they are able to give useful feedback in a supportive, nonthreatening manner and writers retain control over their own writing.

Giving students clear tasks is not enough, however. As was noted earlier, training and practice are essential for effective peer response. The first three response tasks are practiced thoughout the term on published writing. In addition, students are given a separate one-hour training session which reviews the first three tasks and focuses on asking appropriate questions. This peer response training is considerably less than the seven hours of training advocated by Stanley (1992) but seems to be effective nonetheless.

Main Idea Restatement

The first task in this peer response procedure is to restate the paper's main idea. Restatements enable the writer to see how classmates perceive the paper and provide a framework for the rest of the response. No restatements are wrong. Peers are simply reflecting back their perceptions. If the writer finds a discrepancy between her intentions and her classmates' perceptions, it is up to her to decide whether and how to resolve the problem. The restatement can help the writer "[select] a focus of mutual interest to both reader and writer" (Flower, 1979, p. 37) and help the reader discover what is significant about the paper.

Students practice restating main ideas throughout the term by summarizing published essays and individual paragraphs. In addition, at the beginning of the one-hour training session, I read a short student paragraph, such as Linda's paragraph about Hong Kong (Appendix A), and ask the students to write down a statement summarizing the main idea. Having students write the statement out first ensures that they all have an opportunity to give the main idea statement some thought.

For this initial training, it is helpful to use a paragraph with a very clear main idea. At first students often respond with announcements of topics such as "Her paper is about the benefits of Hong Kong," or noun clauses such as "How nice Hong Kong is to visit," or topics such as "The benefits of visiting Hong Kong." Such responses provide the opportunity to discuss what a sentence is and what a thesis statement is. When students come up with several possible thesis statements, all reflecting the same main idea, "Hong Kong is a nice place to visit," they learn that it is possible in English to state the same thing in a number of different ways. This is very useful to nonnative speakers, many of whom believe that there is one right way to say something.

If time permits, students are also asked to restate the main idea of an unfocused paragraph. This activity is similar to what students will encounter during actual peer response. In response to unfocused writing, students produce a variety of statements, reflecting back to the writer in a nonthreatening way that the piece is not unified or that the main idea is not communicated as clearly as it could be. The writer than decides how to focus the paper. This is achieved without any suggestions or criticisms.

Supporting Ideas

With longer papers, students are also asked to identify the main supporting ideas during peer response. This task can help students achieve a more reader-based prose by "transforming the narrative or textbook structure into a rhetorical structure built on hierarchical relationships between ideas and organized around the purpose for writing, rather than the writer's process" (Flower, 1979, p.37).

Students are trained to reflect back supporting ideas in much the same way as they are trained to identify the main idea of a piece. With published essays, students are asked how they would divide the text into large sections and why. They also examine the purpose of individual paragraphs and how the writer signals a new thought or signals the relationship to the overall main idea of the paper.

During the one-hour training session, students have no difficulty finding three supporting ideas in Linda's paper (Appendix A). During actual peer response, however, students are likely to be responding to unorganized or writer-based pieces. When students respond with a variety of supporting ideas, the writer sees that the paper is not very clearly organized and sees a number of ways of reorganizing. Again this is achieved in a non-threatening environment without criticisms or suggestions, with the writer retaining control over the paper.

Effective Writing Techniques (Strengths)

Praise is another critical element of peer response. Positive comments help foster a supportive atmosphere. Without hearing anything positive, the writer might interpret a response as criticism and feel discouraged. As Daiker's (1989) review of the research demonstrates, praise improves student writing, increases the length of student papers, and promotes a more positive attitude toward writing. Poor writing performance, he finds, may be due in part to apprehension resulting from past experiences of failure and criticism. In one study reported on by Daiker, "after just four weeks, students who received only negative comments about their work or none at all were writing papers significantly shorter than those of students who were praised" (p. 106).

Praise must be specific, however, if it is to be useful to the writer. The writer may doubt the sincerity of a general statement such as "That's an interesting idea" or "I like your description." Although such comments are valid positive responses, they are not as useful as more specific comments. If peers can point to a text-specific, effective writing technique and explain why it is effective, the writer will know that the response is sincere and will be able to continue using this technique on subsequent papers. In addition, in pointing out such effective writing techniques, students develop important analytical skills, and as they notice these techniques, in published writing and in their classmates' writing, these techniques begin to appear in their own writing.

Training students to praise each others' writing is critical, but as Daiker (1989) points out, "Praise...is more easily enjoined than put into practice" (p. 107). As with the first two peer response tasks, training stu-

dents to praise, to find strengths in writing, is an on-going process. With published essays studied in class, students are asked what they like best, what is clear and effective, and why. At first students usually respond by saying that they like certain ideas. To train students to become more analytical, I ask them why they like a particular introduction or example or word or whatever they point to as effective. I then ask them to analyze what makes that technique particularly interesting or effective to them. I also spend class time pointing out effective writing techniques which students do not necessarily notice on their own, at least not initially. Students can easily learn to become aware of the use of signaling devices, deictic markers, repetition of key terms. or parallel structure.

Due to the time limits of the peer response training session, the length of Linda's paper, and the enormous improvement of her revision (Appendix E), I don't ask students to discuss Linda's effective writing techniques until they have heard the revision. At that point, students can point to many specific techniques and explain why they are effective for them personally as readers.

During actual peer response, students are required to find at least one effective writing technique in each paper they respond to. If they have a problem with this task, the writer can reread a section of her paper which she thinks is particularly good and ask classmates to respond.

Questions

One of the most important parts of peer response is asking and answering questions. Good questions enable the writer to clarify ideas, relationships, and language and to provide needed explanations and supporting details in a natural, nonthreatening way, as in a conversation. Unless students are specifically trained to ask questions about a text, however, they tend to "supply meaning to essays they read, to close coherence gaps that the writer had left open" (Stanley, 1992, p. 219).

Asking questions about the writer's paper can also be helpful in resolving another problem discussed by Leki (1990): Students may come to the writing task with different rhetorical expectations and are probably unfamiliar with the expectations of the academic community. As the students are carefully guided through the questioning process, they learn how English texts are structured. They learn what is expected next and what information the writer is obligated to provide. Student writers quickly see that information which was clear or understood to them was not so clear for the reader and so are encouraged to revise their papers in order to clarify.

When students develop this habit of questioning, they begin to view texts they read in a different way. Their reading improves and they become

aware that in good texts written in English, their questions are generally anticipated and answered by the writer. Thus the experience of questioning and answering in peer response can help students understand the rhetorical expectations of texts in English.

Although students can practice identifying main ideas, organizational patterns, and effective writing techniques as they analyze published writing thoughout the term, additional time must be devoted to training students to ask questions. Such training enables students to develop confidence that they can ask useful questions about each others' papers.

The question training takes up the bulk of the one-hour training session. I begin by rereading the same short student paragraph that was used when practicing main idea restatements (Appendix A), this time one sentence at a time. After each sentence is read, students are asked to write down the first question that comes to mind. Again, writing the question rather than stating it out loud ensures that each student has a chance to think. Students are told not to be concerned about whether their questions are good or bad; they should simply write down the first question that would come to them if this were a conversation, no matter how obvious and whether they already know the answer or not.

Once most of the students have written a question in response to the first sentence of the student essay, one student is asked to read his or her question out loud. Since many students have the same question, they may nod their heads or agree verbally as questions are read. Students who have similar question are asked to raise their hands. When they see that many of their classmates have the same questions, students gain confidence in their ability to ask useful questions.

After the class has shared questions to a few sentences read one at a time, the rest of the paragraph is read all at once. This process is more like what students will be doing in actual peer response groups with each others' papers. This time students are asked to keep the unanswered questions in their minds and write them down after the paragraph is read. While I am reading, they may jot down a word or two, but I discourage extensive note taking, as it might interfere with comprehension.

After students have written down several questions, they share their lists in small groups, looking for similarities. This activity promotes confidence and helps students see what questions they may have overlooked. Each group is then asked to share one question which several students in their group have in common but which no other group has yet mentioned. In this way, students gain an appreciation for the range of common questions that can be asked.

During the actual peer response, students are required to spend time answering the questions that their classmates ask, even if they feel that the question is not relevant. Answering questions forces the writer to think further about the ideas of the paper, to express those ideas directly in English, and to clarify those thoughts by negotiating meaning.

Negotiation of meaning has been found to be an important factor in revision. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) in a study of teacher-student conferences on student papers found that students who negotiated meaning made more revisions in the following draft that improved the text than students who did not negotiate meaning. The authors explain that "just as negotiation clarifies meanings in ordinary conversations, negotiation in the conference may clarify the need for revision and the strategies to undertake the revision. Students therefore may understand more clearly what to revise, how to revise, and why they need to do so. In addition, negotiation may lead to better retention of what has been discussed" (p. 457).

Setting Up Groups

Once students understand their role, are familiar with the peer response tasks, and have been specifically trained to ask questions, they are ready for their first peer response session. Students are asked to form groups of three with as much diversity as possible. This may require some assistance on the part of the instructor. Groups of three are effective because students can get more than one viewpoint, and the class period–50 minutes–is too short to have more than three in a group. If the class does not divide by three, some students can work in pairs. Diversity within the group is helpful because a person from the other side of the globe is less likely to understand what is unstated in the student's paper than is someone from the same country or a neighboring country.

Sometimes students stay with the same group all term, but more often, they switch partners once they realize who will give them the most effective response. Students often come to class early on peer response days so that they can pair up with the "right" person.

During the actual peer response, I circulate to make sure that students are reading their own papers out loud, not reading their classmates' papers silently, that they are listening to each other, that they are doing the tasks, that they are actually answering the questions they are asked, and that they are using their time appropriately. The students are always eagerly engaged in the activity.

Revising

Although the purpose of peer response is to give feedback that will assist in rewriting the paper, revision doesn't always happen automatically, even after the best peer response. This is probably because rethinking a

paper is a difficult task. Students have not been told how to change their papers. They must decide for themselves how to change them in order to make them clearer to readers.

To ensure that students revise, they are asked to write a short Reflections Statement immediately after the response. The Reflections Statement is a five-minute freewriting telling how the response group was helpful and what specific changes they plan to make in their papers. Writing the statement forces students to think about the responses they have gotten and to do something about those responses. If they reflect on the responses immediately after the peer response activity, the ideas are transferred to long term memory, and they are more likely to revise.

In some classes, it may also be necessary to take some time for guided revision. After their classmates' responses, students are asked to mark their papers where they want to add information and to add that information in the margin or on another sheet of paper. They are also asked to cross out anything that is not relevant and to use arrows to indicate how they will move information. This activity helps students understand what revision is and what is expected of them.

Accountability

The clear role, specific tasks, and explicit training can help foster effective peer response but not if the students don't take the work seriously. For this reason, after each peer response, students are asked to turn in one Response Report (Appendix B) for each of the classmates they have responded to.

Response Reports are introduced at the end of the training session. I show the students a sample Response Report on the student paper which has been used for the training session (Appendix C). They see that the student who wrote the report asked many of the same questions that they had and got full credit for the questions despite his weak language.

The reports are to be written at home, not in class, based on what happened in the response groups. Students may take notes during peer response to help them write their reports and revise their essays, but to ensure active negotiation of meaning, there should be no silence during the actual peer response (See Appendix D: "Peer Response Instructions").

To ensure that students come to class prepared for peer response, I warn them that I will not read a paper if a classmate has not responded to it first. If they are absent the day of peer response or come unprepared, it is their responsibility to find someone from the class from a different language group who is willing to respond to their paper for no additional credit. When students hear this warning in advance, they generally come to

class prepared for peer response. They know that at the very least they can bring in a 20-minute exploratory draft.

The day after the oral peer response, when the reports are completed, students make a photocopy for the classmate they have responded to and give the original report to the instructor. The purpose of the reports is not to facilitate revision. The writer should be able to revise based on the oral peer response. The purpose of the written report is to indicate to the teacher how well the student is responding and to enable the writer to provide proof of peer response.

Reports are evaluated very quickly. Two points credit are awarded for each response for a total of 20. Points are not deducted for language problems. In fact, no comments are made on language unless there is a very basic repeated problem that the student should be aware of. In such cases, it is usually helpful to make a statement such as "You should be able to form questions correctly at this level."

Extra credit is given for additional strengths or questions, so an individual report might earn more than 20 points. At the end of the quarter, the five highest scoring Response Reports are added together to determine the report grade. Since students are in five response groups during the quarter, they have the opportunity to do many more than five reports. If they get 20 points on each of five reports, they have 100 points and don't need to write any more reports. It is also possible for them to get 100 points before they have done five reports if they have enough extra credit. Those who get their 100 points early are the most helpful response partners. Their classmates know that they respond well, so they continue to be sought out for peer response, and they continue to give effective response.

Since evaluating reports is an additional burden on me, one term I experimented with not requiring the report. I told students that they would not have to write a report if they performed well in peer response groups. That quarter I thought the groups were working well, so I didn't require the reports. However, at the end of the quarter when I asked which paper had improved the most as a result of peer response, I was shocked to read their responses: All but two students said that peer response did not help them. This was the first quarter I had gotten such a response. I decided that the reports were an essential part of peer response, that without them, students were not held accountable and effective response did not take place.

Results

The specific peer response procedure outlined above can be very effective, as can be seen from the substantial revisions that Linda made in her paper (Appendix E). When students hear Linda's revision at the end of the

peer response training period and analyze its strengths, they are very impressed and are convinced that peer response works. They are ready to give it a try.

Although the changes in most papers may not be as dramatic as those we see in Linda's revision, most students do revise extensively for content after peer response. The changes from one draft to the next have not yet been analyzed empirically, but it is clear from the following student comments about the peer response activity that they have a greater awareness of audience, they understand revision as an expected process of reconstructing meaning, not simply as editing, and they retain control over their own texts:

Excerpts from Self Analysis

Q. Which paper improved the most as a direct result of peer response? Specifically how did it improve and why?

1. *I became to realize...my peer response won't understand the word that too abstract and I am always repeat my idea within a paragraph that make them confuse. Therefore, I looked back my paper and clarify the idea and mistakes.*

2. *As a result of peer response...I noticed how long it was, how dark in some places, unclear. I realized that one idea should be expressed with a few words and does not need any repetition. I realized that I have to make a clear choice about what I really want to tell, and accept that some ideas must be erased. I improved a lot about the organization of my ideas and in talking not too abstractly. I learned that clear examples tell much more than long sentences of abstract language.*

3. *I said that my friend changed her habit of late because of her good friends' comment. But I didn't mention in what way her friends helped her and how she was changed. My response group asked about this point and I can add the detail.*

4. *He made me realize that I was using too many technical words and that some people would not understand me. I was using words like "syntax errors," "files," "data," "Pascal," and "Basix." I realized that I had to write without using technical words.*

5. *My group was very helpful in giving me question like I said that I want to go back home and they gave me a question like Do you think that U.S. is a good country for you to stay and would you recommend people to live here? I made me give a concrete and clear conclusion that it doesn't matter where you are, home is still inside you.*

6. *They helped me to organize my ideas much better and to synthesize them. I had too many reasons to hate my job and some of them were very alike, could be together.*

7. *After I discussed with her, I find that she had difficult time to follow my ideas or she might get a wrong information from my paper so I made changes on focusing my ideas together and each supporting idea supported the main idea. I also changed the example and added new details.*

8. *The group response helped me a lot to decide the main idea, and also in what I really wanted to say.*

Conclusion

When I initially tried peer response, like many teachers I was very frustrated. Despite the many theoretical benefits, it didn't seem to be worth the time and effort. But now that I have a more systematic approach and students really understand what they are supposed to do, it is a step in the writing process that I would never omit.

Students not only develop their ideas and clarify their language during peer response but benefit from hearing other models of writing. They are much more aware of what makes writing clear and effective and are able to pick up techniques from other writers in their group who do particularly well.

Students also become better listeners and readers as a result of peer response. As they listen carefully to a classmate's paper, they form hypotheses, which they reevaluate as they hear more of the paper, and they form questions in their minds, just as proficient readers do.

Some students have reported that after leaving my class, they continue doing peer response with their friends for papers in other classes and that whenever they write, there is always a little reader in their heads asking questions, which is exactly what I want to happen.

For me as a teacher, the advantage is that I now have a much better product to respond to when I first see a student's paper. I may be spending the same amount of time responding to papers, but the papers I read are in far better condition after peer response, and subsequent papers are better on earlier drafts. I now get essays which are easier and more enjoyable to read because they are well thought out, purposeful communication for a real reader. I have found that with training and accountability, peer response is well worth the time and effort. ∎

Karen Yoshihara is an ESL instructor at Foothill College and teacher-consultant for the Bay Area Writing Project and the San Jose Area Writing Project. She holds master's degrees in French and English from California State University, Hayward and expects to complete her MA TESOL from San Francisco State University in December, 1993.

References

Berger, V. (1990). The effects of peer and self-feedback on ESL students' revisions. *The CATESOL Journal, 3*, 21-35.

Chaudron, C. (1983). *Evaluating writing: Effects of feedback on revision.* Revised version of a paper presented at the meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Toronto, Canada. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 227 706).

Casanave, C. (1988). The process approach to writing instruction: An examination of issues. *The CATESOL Journal, 1*, 29-39.

Daiker, D. (1989). Learning to praise. In C. Anson (Ed.), *Writing and response: Theory, practice, and research* (pp. 103-113). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

DiPardo, A. & Freedman, S. (1988). Peer response groups in the writing classroom: Theoretic foundations and new directions. *Review of Educational Research, 58*(2), 119-149.

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Flower, L. (1979). Writer-based prose: A cognitive basis for problems in writing. *College English, 41* (1), 19-37.

Gere, A. R. (1987). *Writing groups: History, theory, and implications.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Goldstein, L., & Conrad, S. (1990). Student input and negotiation of meaning in ESL writing conferences. *TESOL Quarterly, 24* (3), 443-460.

Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1992). Collaborative oral/aural revision in foreign language writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 1* (3), 255-276.

Johnson, D. (1992). Interpersonal involvement in discourse: Gender variation in L2 writers' complimenting strategies. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 1* (3), 195-216.

Leki, I. (1990). Potential problems with peer responding in ESL writing classes. *The CATESOL Journal, 3*, 5-19.

Mangelsdorf, K., & Schlumberger, A. (1992). ESL student response stances in a peer-review task. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 1* (3), 235-254.

Nelson, G., & Murphy, J. (1992). An L2 writing group: Task and social dimensions. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 1* (3), 171-194.

Newkirk, T. (1984). Direction and misdirection in peer response. *College Composition and Communication, 35* (3), 301-311.

Schecter, S., & Harklau, L. (1991). *Annotated bibliography of research on writing in a nonnative language* (Technical Report No. 51). Berkeley: University of California, Center for the Study of Writing.

Stanley, J. (1992). Coaching student writers to be effective peer evaluators. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 1* (3), 217-234.

Zamel, V. (1983). The composing processes of advanced ESL students: Six case studies. *TESOL Quarterly, 17*, 165-187.

Zamel, V. (1985). Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 19* (1), 79-102.

Appendix A

Linda's First Draft

Hong Kong is a good place to visit. There are many shop: where you can go shopping very easy. Clothes are cheap and have many different styles, (either cheap or expensive). Food is very easy to buy. There are many restaurants, different taste, but they are all delicious, not so expensive. So there is a famous sentences "eat in Hong Kong." Traffic is easy in Hong Kong. You can go everywhere by bus, ferry or subway.

Appendix B

Response to _____'s Paper

1. **Restatement:** (2 pts) Summarize your classmate's paper in one sentence. Your sentence should be your own version of a good thesis statement for your classmate's paper. Avoid saying "This paper is about..." which results in only a topic.

2. **Main Supporting Ideas:** (2 pts) List the three or four main supporting ideas that you detected in the essay.

3. **Strengths:** (2 pts each) What did you like best about the way your classmate wrote his/her paper? Why? Be sure that you mention something that your classmate can continue to do on future papers. Comment on writing skills, not topic selection. **Be careful! Two points will be deducted if you make a suggestion or criticize. Also two points will be deducted if you don't include at least one strength.**

4. **Questions:** (2 pts each) What are the best questions you asked about your classmate's paper? These should be questions that are clearly related to the main idea, that will help the writer clarify and further develop his/her paper.

• **I will not read any essay that is not accompanied by an earlier draft and a response report.**

•• **Total score - 20 points; (Extra points possible)**

Appendix C

NAME: Jay H.
DATE: 1/12/88

Response to Linda's Paper

1. **Restatement:** (2 pts) Summarize your classmate's paper in one sentence. Your sentence should be your own version of a good thesis statement for your classmate's paper. Avoid saying "this paper is about," which results in only a topic.

   Hong Kong is a good place to visit because of its profound supply of cheap goods and foods.

2. **Main Supporting Ideas:** (2 pts) List the three or four main supporting ideas that you detected in the essay.
   There are many styles of cloth you can buy.
   Food are cheap.
   Good transportation

3. **Strengths:** (2 pts each) What did you like best about the way your classmate wrote his/her paper? Why? Be sure that you mention something that your classmate can continue to do on future papers. Comment on writing skills, not topic selection. **Be careful! Two points will be deducted if you make a suggestion or criticize. Also two points will be deducted if you don't include at least one strength.**
   Have good ideas about Hong Kong such as cheap food, good transportation system.
   Teacher comment: NOT IDEAS
   The paragraph is focus on how good Hong Kong is.

4. **Questions:** (2 pts each) What are the best questions you asked about your classmate's paper? These should be questions that are clearly related to the main idea, that will help the writer clarify and further develop his/her paper.
   How cheap those goods is compare to USA or other countries?
   What kind of food do they eat?
   What kind of style clothing that is cheap?
   What kind of style clothing that is expensive?
   Why are food and goods cheap in Hong Kong?
   How much is the transportation cost?
   Teacher comment: BE SURE TO FORM QUESTIONS CORRECTLY

- I will not read any essay that is not accompanied by an earlier draft and a response report.

•• Total score = 20 points; (extra points possible)

Appendix D

Peer Response Instructions

During Response:

1. Watch the clock. Spend 15 minutes on each person's paper.

2. Read your own paper out loud. Do not have your classmates read it.

3. Listen carefully. Stop the reader if you can't hear or don't understand.

4. Do the tasks in order. don't leave any out.

5. **Do not** write the report in class during response. You may take notes, but there should be **NO SILENCE**.

6. Answer the questions that your classmates ask you.

Immediately After the Response:

Immediately after your group has finished, spend five minutes freewriting your **"Reflections Statement."** In your statement, answer the following questions:

1. How was the response helpful to you?

2. What specific changes do you plan to make on your paper?

At Home:

1. Mark your paper with changes. Add information that you think will help clarify your paper. Delete anything which doesn't contribute to the main idea. Rearrange anything that seems out of place. A messy draft indicates to me that you have given your paper serious thought.

2. Write out a report of your response to each of the two other classmates in your group. Use a separate piece of paper for each report. Do not write on the form. Use it as a guide. Tomorrow, give a photocopy of the report to your classmate and give me the original.

Appendix E

Linda's Revision

Pearl of the Orient—Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a nice place to visit, if you enjoy shopping, eating and efficient transportation. Hong Kong is located at the southern tip of China. It has an area of 400 square miles but a population of 6 million. It is a popular place for tourists.

There are many shops opening from 10am until 12pm, in Hong Kong, so you can go shopping easily. Clothes have new design and a lots choice. The price is inexpensive. For example, you can buy a nice dress for 10 US dollars, but here must be more than 15 dollars. Many kinds of home appliances are available, for instance, rice cooker, food processor, T.V., stereo, answering machine etc.

Hong Kong has many excellent restaurants. They are different from those in the United States. Restaurants are everywhere, just open your eyes, a few must be in front of you. food is fresh, especially chicken, fish, bird, crab and prawn, not from box or refrigerator. They are almost alive before cooking. You can have real style food such as Chinese, French, Italian, Singaporean, Thai, Japanese and American. You still can walk into a Macdonald's or Burger King as easily. Spend about 30 US dollars, you can have a delicious Chinese dinner with four main dishes: a fish, chicken, beef, prawn, vegetable, and soup, serving four persons. You can have free desert too. If you want something cheaper, walk into a canteen, get a bowl of noodles with meat and vegetables just 1 US dollar, without tips.

Indeed, traffic is easy in Hong Kong. You can go everywhere by bus, subway or ferry. Schedules are frequent. You can take a taxi as necessary. It's convenient and cheap. You wouldn't have trouble. Worth mentioning, bus and ferry have double deck. Subway is very fast and clean.

In summary, many people like Hong Kong. Tourists like Hong Kong too.