

Open and anonymous peer review in a digital online environment in English as a foreign language academic writing

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This study primarily aimed at comparing the impact of administering 'open' and 'anonymous' peer review in a digital online environment in English as a foreign language academic writing classes. The impact of teacher-mediated feedback was also considered. The data were collected in Advanced Reading and Writing Skills course that was taught by the researcher at English Language Teaching department of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey in 2014-2015 academic year fall term. The students submitted their three writing assignments through Turnitin. By the help of the score to the first written assignment, two experimental groups were set which were similar to each other in terms of writing proficiency. For the second assignment, students peer reviewed a paper anonymously in the experimental group and openly in the control group. To guarantee anonymity, peer review process was conducted in a limited time at a computer laboratory under the invigilation of the lecturer. Following this, students revised their assignments and resubmitted. The lecturer provided additional feedback and students resubmitted once more. Finally, students submitted a reflection paper in which they explained how they benefited from both peer and teacher-mediated feedback. For the third assignment, a similar procedure was followed with two changes. Firstly, the order of peer and teacher-mediated feedback was replaced to enable comparing their effects. Secondly, students peer reviewed three papers to reveal the impact of receiving multiple feedback. The findings discuss the effectiveness of open and anonymous peer review in addition to teacher-mediated feedback. Since the relevant literature provides very limited information about the impact of anonymous peer review in teaching academic writing and none deals with digital environment, the results are important in the development of an effective academic writing teaching model.



The University of Nottingham


Innovative Language Teaching and Learning at University:
Enhancing Participation and Collaboration

**Open and anonymous peer review
in a digital online environment
in English as a foreign language
academic writing**

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Outline


- ◆ Peer review
- ◆ Peer review in a digital environment
- ◆ Anonymity in peer review
- ◆ Relevant studies
- ◆ The study
 - ◆ Methodology
 - ◆ Findings and discussion
 - ◆ Conclusion and implications
 - ◆ Ongoing research



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Introduction: Peer review


- ◆ Receiving help to accomplish a writing task and benefits from the social constructionist theory of learning (Hanjani & Li, 2014).
- ◆ Difficult to measure its impact (Kleijn, Mainhard, Meijer, Brekelmans & Pilot, 2013):
 - ◆ Usually beneficial (e.g., Hu, 2005; Hu & Lam, 2010; Zhao, 2014).



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Zone of Proximal Development


- ◆ Students may learn from each other:
 - ◆ Create opportunities for interaction with peers.
- ◆ Such interaction and collaboration is described by Vygotsky's (1978) *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* as a powerful way of developing skills through the process of *scaffolding*, as termed by Weissberg (2006).
- ◆ If students can manage peer review tasks successfully:
 - ◆ This may improve their own writing skills.



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Pros and cons


- ◆ Peers may draw a student author's attention to problematic aspects of a paper that had been overlooked (Ruecker, 2010).
- ◆ A valuable experience both for authors and reviewers (Aghae & Hansson, 2013)
 - ◆ The benefit for the reviewer may be greater than for the author (Lu & Law, 2012).
- ◆ Its reliability questionable (Aghae & Hansson, 2013).



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Potential risks

- ◆ Students with limited abilities
 - ◆ misleading each other due to their own deficiencies;
 - ◆ leading to lack of trust in their peers' feedback (Paulus, 1999; Rinehart & Chen, 2012; Rollinson, 2005; Ruecker, 2010; Saito & Fujita, 2004).



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Asymmetrical and symmetrical considerations (Hanjani & Li, 2014)


- Subsequent applications of ZPD enable both asymmetrical and symmetrical considerations.
 - Asymmetrical: signals feedback from an expert to a novice learner
 - Symmetrical: deals with feedback between learners of equal ability.

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Reasons to benefit from digital technology

- Two reasons for incorporating digital technology into writing classes:
 - Checking student papers for plagiarism, and
 - Providing timely and more effective feedback.

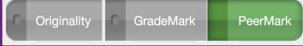
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turnitin

- Original aim was simply detecting plagiarism.
- Recently focused on improving its peer review feature.
- GradeMark*: for online marking.
- PeerMark*: for peer reviews.
- In addition to reducing instructors' workloads, increase opportunities for students to improve their writing.
- A fairly new phenomenon: No consensus on the superiority of online feedback over traditional modes (Elwood & Bode, 2014).

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turnitin

- Offers lecturers several opportunities:
 - May distribute papers automatically,
 - Remove student identification for anonymous peer review,
 - Provide a set of review tools and metrics to students themselves.
- Would not be possible without digital technology.
- Online peer review eliminates the social constraint of face-to-face feedback (Ho & Savignon, 2007).

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Anonymity in feedback

- Relevant literature: lacked descriptions of the impact of anonymous peer review on undergraduate writing skills.
- Encouraging students for anonymous peer review helps them better understand the characteristics of academic writing (Robinson, 2002).
- The basic assumption in the present study, of retaining anonymity in the peer review process is underpinned by Liou and Peng's (2009) study where students were reluctant to highlight their friends' errors.
- Anonymity may help in exchanging more effective feedback and, in turn, may contribute to better academic writing skills.

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Research studies

- Turnitin (2010)**: a scientific basis by reviewing 21 independent studies of pedagogy and practice in writing in which, overall, teachers were encouraged to integrate writing processes, benefit from peer review, and apply technology to enhance writing among other factors.
- Turnitin (2014, p. 9)**: evidence for their educational gains "facilitating electronic submission and helping instructors reduce the amount of time spent grading, while increasing the quality of feedback they give and the level of student engagement".
- Conclusion**: When students are provided with feedback about their writing, and have access to plagiarism detectors, they are able to develop better writing skills.

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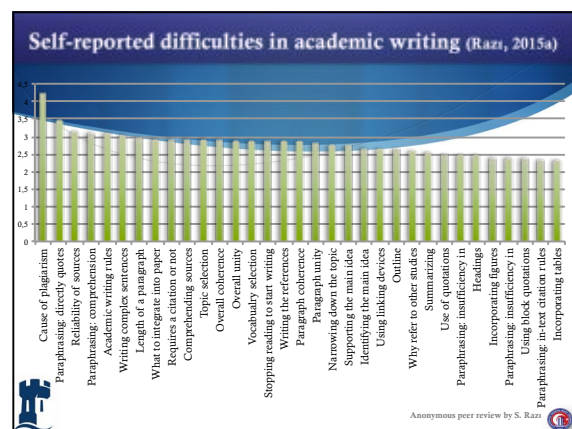
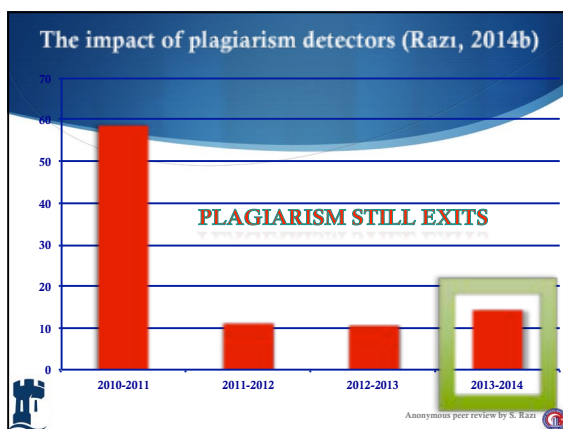
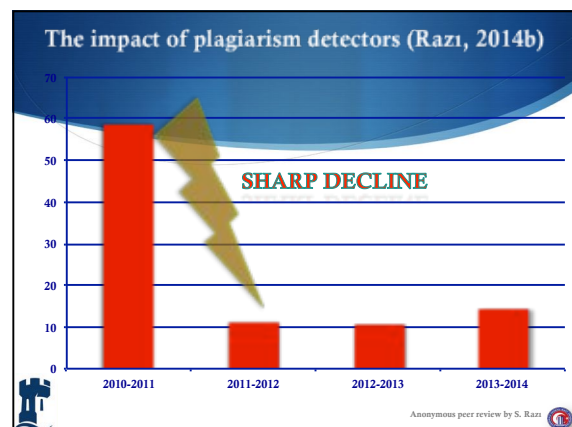
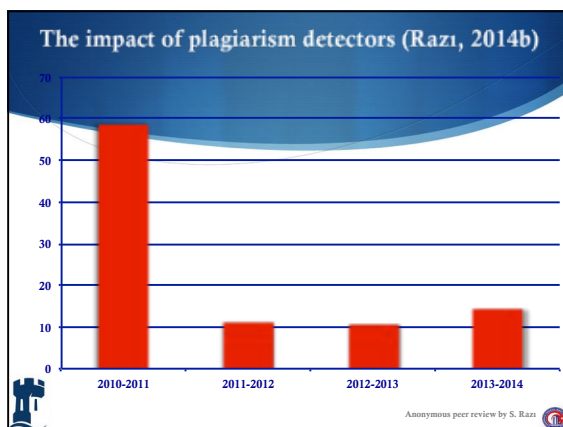
Research studies

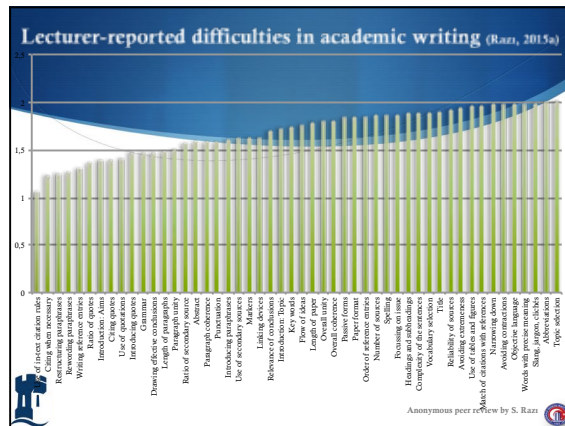
- Teachers should consider different student groups carefully and give precise instructions about the peer review task (Rollinson, 2005).
- A combination of self, peer, and tutor review is needed "to help students make informed decisions about how to revise their early drafts and how to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of their writing development" (Lam, 2013, p. 446).
- Little research on the impact of anonymity in peer review:
 - Robinson (2002) investigated the impact of multi-reviewer anonymous peer review, in a non-digital environment.
 - "Anonymous peer review is not a panacea for eliminating subjectivity in marking or for increasing the amount of feedback students receive" (p. 190).

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The case of COMU ELT Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course

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Problem Statement

STUDENTS WERE NOT AWARE OF THEIR REAL PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC WRITING!!!

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THE STUDY

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Aim of the study

- ♦ **Aim:** Enhancing student participation and collaboration in EFL academic writing by means of peer review.
- ♦ **The expectation:** Developing better review skills would contribute to their development of academic writing skills.
- ♦ **Research questions:**
 - ♦ RQ1: Does digital peer review work properly?
 - ♦ RQ2: How to manage peer review process? Openly or anonymously?
 - ♦ RQ3: Which should precede? Lecturer-review or peer-review?

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Setting

- ♦ **Turkey:**
 - ♦ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
 - ♦ ELT Department
- ♦ **2014-2015 academic year**
 - ♦ Fall semester

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Participants

- ♦ **Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course:**
 - ♦ 3 intact classes
 - ♦ 84 students enrolled.
 - ♦ 65 first time takers
 - ♦ 59 regularly attended (included)
 - ♦ 19 repeating (excluded)
 - ♦ 10 male
 - ♦ 9 female

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Grouping Participants

True experimental research design

Independent samples t test did not indicate significant differences between the two groups' mean values on the first assignment

Experimental Group (Anonymous peer review)	Control Group (Open peer review)
$n = 30$	$n = 29$
$n_{male} = 9$	$n_{male} = 9$
$n_{female} = 21$	$n_{female} = 20$

$M_{Age} = 19$

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INSTRUMENTS



- Turnitin as a digital environment:
 - Institutional license,
 - Superiority in detecting plagiarism (Hill & Page, 2009), and
 - Features of peer review.

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DATA COLLECTION

- Advanced Reading and Writing Course Contents suggested by Razi (2011) were adjusted.
- 3 written assignments:
 - Each approximately 800 words.
 - Assigned topic:
 - Lecturer provided sources
 - Assignment 1: Piloting
 - Assignment 2: Peer review one paper
 - Assignment 3: Peer review three papers

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Assignments

- Assignment 1:**
 - Describe self use of metacognitive reading strategies.
 - Reference reading: *Metacognitive Reading Strategy Questionnaire* by Taraban, Kerr, and Rymearson (2004).
- Assignment 2:**
 - Examine the procedure of teaching English as a foreign language to young learners with specific emphasis to the role of using children's L1 in the classroom.
 - Reference reading: House, 1997; Phillips, 2001; Puchta & Williams, 2011.
- Assignment 3:**
 - How to encourage learners to read in English either in the classroom or after school with specific emphasis to the role of the type of the texts that students are expected to read.
 - Reference reading: House, 1997; Lowes & Targat, 1998; Phillips, 2001.

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DIGITAL PEER FEEDBACK PROCESS

Assignment 1



Assignment 2



Assignment 3



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Limitation

- Generalization:**
 - Data from a single university in the Turkish tertiary context.



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Findings and Discussion

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Findings RQ1

- **RQ1: Does digital peer review work properly?**
 - ◆ Yes!
 - ◆ Students' familiarization is essential.
 - ◆ To make it more effective, Turnitin should enable the facility of grouping students according to their proficiency in writing and then provide multiple matching from each group.
 - ◆ Otherwise, matching students from each group is rather complicated.

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Preliminary Findings RQ2: Quantitative data

- **RQ2: How to manage peer review process? Openly or anonymously?**
 - ◆ Independent samples *t* test: no significant differences between the two groups' mean scores on either the second or third assignments.
 - ◆ Analysis should be extended to cover each step in the review process!
 - ◆ Consider benefiting from an independent rater.
 - ◆ What about qualitative data that come from reflection papers.

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Preliminary Findings RQ2: Qualitative data: Reflection papers

- **RQ2: How to manage peer review process? Openly or anonymously?**
 - ◆ Students prefer digital feedback in comparison to the manual one.
 - ◆ Students prefer peer feedback from multiple peers, not from a single one.
 - ◆ Specifically good students indicated that they do not benefit from single peer reviews.
 - ◆ Open peer review: Felt like giving feedback to a friend, avoid criticizing.
 - ◆ Anonymous peer review: Felt like a teacher who gives feedback to a student.
 - ◆ Call attention to their relations in daily life that would have an impact on revealing their real criticism.
 - ◆ Giving feedback contributes to classroom management skills of trainee teachers.
 - ◆ Welcoming feedback from three peers and being able to revise accordingly, if necessary, is a very essential skill.

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Preliminary Findings RQ3: Qualitative data: Reflection papers

- **RQ3: Which should precede? Lecturer-review or peer-review?**
 - ◆ Students prefer lecturer feedback after peer feedback, not before the peer feedback.
 - ◆ One preferred just the opposite since this would leave little demand for peer evaluation ☺
 - ◆ Receiving lecturer-feedback helped appreciate peer-feedback.

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Discussion & Conclusion

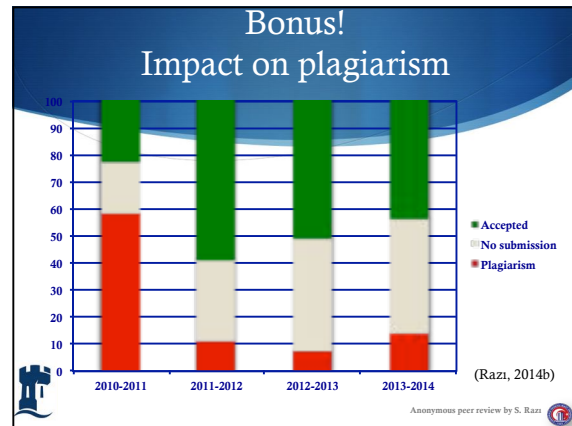
- ◆ Consider first-year undergraduates inexperience (e.g., Park, 2003; Razi, 2015b; Yeo & Chien, 2007).
- ◆ "Sometimes the best motivational intervention is simply to improve the quality of our teaching" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 273).

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Implications: On-going research

- In 2014-2015 academic year
 - Teach how to benefit from digital feedback (Razi, 2014a).
 - Multiple submissions:
 - Consider drop in plagiarism incidents from the 1st to the 2nd assignment (Ledwith & Riques, 2008).
 - Peer review:
 - 3 anonymous peer reviews for each student:
 - An invaluable experience both for the author and the reviewer (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013).

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Implications

- Integrate peer scores into assessment.
- Does not mean that a student's final score is a combination of lecturer score and peer score.
- Consider the mean differences among the lecturer score and the students' score for his/her peer's paper.
- Student's self evaluation may also be considered.

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Implications

Suggested formula (Razi, 2014a):

$$\text{FINAL SCORE (OUT OF 100)} = (\text{LECTURER SCORE} \times .60) + ((100 - (\text{DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LECTURER SCORE AND SELF SCORE})) \times .20) + ((100 - (\text{DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LECTURER SCORE AND SCORE FOR PEER})) \times .20).$$

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