

Symposium on Second Language Writing 2015

Learning to Write for Academic Purposes

Anonymous feedback from multiple peers in a digital online environment in EAP

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Overview of presentation

- Theoretical background of peer feedback
- Potential risks in peer feedback
- Anonymity in peer feedback
- Online peer feedback
- The study
 - Methodology
 - Findings
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion
 - Implications

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Introduction

- Communicative approach:**
 - The focus of FL teaching shifted from *accuracy* towards *fluency*.
- A very recent publication by Morton, Storch, and Thompson (2015):
 - Changes in the framework of teaching academic writing:
 - This time from accuracy and fluency towards *individual differences*.
- How to handle such individual differences in an EAP writing class?*
 - Encouraging peer feedback may provide a balance.

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Peer feedback

- 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 (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013)
 - Greater benefit for the reviewer than the author (Lu & Law, 2012).
- 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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Peer feedback: Theoretical background

- Receiving help to accomplish a writing task and benefits from the *social constructionist theory of learning* (Hanjani & Li, 2014).
- Collaborative writing* also benefits from the interaction between social interaction and feedback (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012):
 - Consider principles of *sociocognitive approach*; namely:
 - inseparability, adaptability, and alignment (Atkinson, 2010; Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).

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Peer feedback: Theoretical background (Cont.)

- Activity theory* (dates back to Vygotsky, 1978; developed by Leont'ev, 1981; expanded by Engeström, 1987, 1999) deals with the interaction of writing with other concepts such as computers (Yang, 2014).
- Peers' interaction and collaboration exists in Vygotsky's (1978) *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* as a powerful way of developing skills through the process of *scaffolding* (Weissberg, 2006).
- If students can manage peer review tasks successfully:
 - Noticing hypothesis*: They can turn input into intake (Schmidt, 1990)
 - This may improve their own writing skills.

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Collaborative writing

- ◆ Coordination of two or more authors on the production of a unique text (Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Forman, 1991).
- ◆ Demand for more collaborative writing:
 - ◆ Collaboration of teamwork in business.
 - ◆ Language teaching methods; communicative approach.
- ◆ Recent papers in the Journal of Second Language Writing on collaborative writing:
 - ◆ Neumann and McDonough, 2015; Tabari, 2015 [book review]; Yang, 2014
- ◆ Rationale for collaborative writing and principles (Storch, 2013).
- ◆ **Contribution of each group member cannot be known by the lecturer** (Neumann & McDonough, 2015).

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(Meta)cognition?

- ◆ Flavell (1979) coined the term metacognition:
 - ◆ May not always be possible to differentiate cognition from metacognition.
- ◆ Three essential cognitive processes in writing (Ong, 2014):
 - ◆ Planning, transcribing, and reviewing.
- ◆ Metacognitive knowledge of tasks operates when the nature of a task forces learners to think about how they will manage.
 - ◆ For difficult tasks, learners allocate more time, or prepare an outline (Flavell, 1985).
- ◆ Metacognitive experiences occur when careful, conscious monitoring of one's cognitive efforts is required (Abbott, 2006).
- ◆ **Conclusion: Planning, transcribing, and reviewing seem to be metacognitive processes.**

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Peer feedback: Potential risks

- ◆ Its **reliability** questionable (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013).
- ◆ 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).

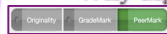
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Anonymity in feedback

- ◆ **Very few studies: Lacked a successful description of its impact.**
 - (1) Anonymous peer review provides awareness of academic writing (Robinson, 2002).
 - (2) Better writing performance and more critical feedback in anonymity (Lu & Bol, 2007).
 - (3) Survey: preference of anonymity among university students (Hosack, 2003).

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Why digital technology?



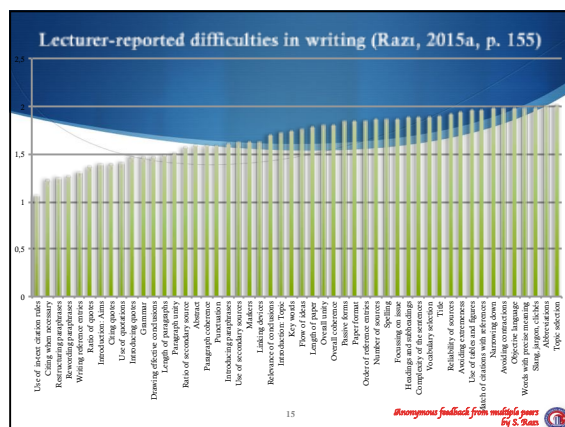
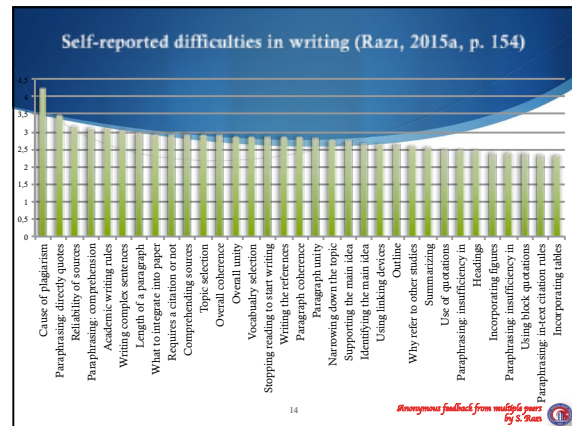
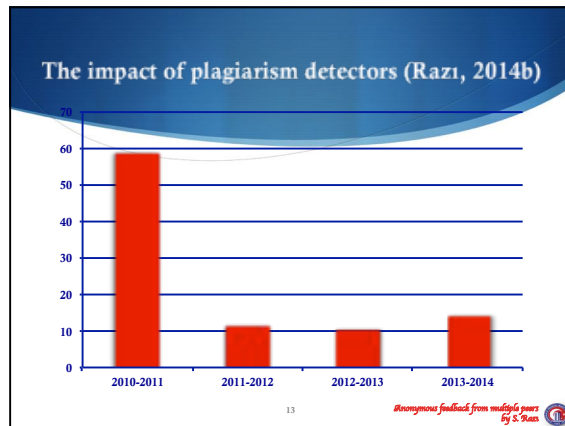
- ◆ The initial aim: Checking student papers for plagiarism.
- ◆ Providing timely and more effective feedback.
- ◆ No consensus on the superiority of online feedback over traditional modes (Elwood & Bode, 2014).
- ◆ Anonymity may not be possible without digital technology.
- ◆ Online peer review eliminates the social constraint of face-to-face feedback (Ho & Savignon, 2007).
- ◆ Teachers should consider different student groups carefully and give precise instructions about the peer review task (Rollinson, 2005).

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The case of COMU ELT Dept. Academic Writing Skills Course

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Problem Statement

SEVERAL STUDENTS
WERE UNAWARE OF
THEIR ACTUAL 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 anonymous peer review.
- ♦ **The expectation:** Anonymity will help in exchanging more effective feedback and, in turn, will contribute to better academic writing skills.
- ♦ **Assumption:** students were reluctant to highlight their friends' errors (Liou & Peng, 2009).
- ♦ **Research questions:**
 - ♦ RQ1: Do students benefit from anonymous peer review more in comparison to open one?
 - ♦ RQ2: Do students provide more effective feedback anonymously in comparison to open one?
 - ♦ RQ3: What are the participants' opinions of open and anonymous peer feedback?

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Design

- ♦ **Mixed methods triangulation research design** (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007):
 - ♦ **Quantitative data:**
 - ♦ Assignment analysis:
 - ♦ Submission on three occasions, as two versions for each phase.
 - ♦ Served formative and summative aims.
 - ♦ Formative: Continuous improvement through peer feedback
 - ♦ Summative: Twofold assessment at each phase through performance in:
 - ♦ providing effective peer feedback and
 - ♦ writing earlier drafts.
 - ♦ Peer feedback analysis
 - ♦ Comparison of peer and lecturer feedback
 - ♦ **Qualitative data:**
 - ♦ Reflection paper analysis

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Setting

- ♦ **Turkey:**
 - ♦ **Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University**
 - ♦ **ELT Department**
- ♦ **2014-2015 academic session**
- ♦ **Spring semester**



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Participants

- ♦ **Academic Writing Skills Course:**
 - ♦ 3 intact classes
 - ♦ 152 students enrolled
 - ♦ **N = 62 (regularly attended included)**

Turkish EAP learners: Novice authors as acknowledged by Clare Furneaux in her session yesterday!

Experimental Group (Anonymous peer review)	Control Group (Open peer review)
$n = 31$	$n = 31$
$n_{male} = 9$	$n_{male} = 9$
$n_{female} = 22$	$n_{female} = 22$
$M_{age} = 19$	$M_{age} = 19$

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Grouping Participants

Enabling true experimental design

- ♦ An independent-samples t-test **did not indicate significant differences** between the two groups' mean values on their Academic Writing Skills Course scores from the fall semester.
- ♦ Experimental group ($M = 78.16$, $SD = 8.75$)
- ♦ Control group ($M = 78.81$, $SD = 5.64$)
- ♦ $t(60) = -0.35$, $p > .05$

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Subcategorizing Participants

- ♦ Students were put into descending order with reference to their scores in the fall semester.
 - ♦ Categorized into three groups: ; namely, 'good', 'moderate', and 'weak'.
- ♦ Each student received feedback (directive/corrective) from a good, moderate, and weak peer; and provided feedback to a good, moderate, and weak paper.
- ♦ The students were aware of this categorization but did not know into which category they were placed.
- ♦ Rationale: Teachers should consider different student groups carefully and give precise instructions about the peer review task (Rollinson, 2005).

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DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT




- ♦ **Turnitin as a digital environment:**
 - ♦ **COMU institutional license.**
 - ♦ **Superiority in detecting plagiarism (Hill & Page, 2009).**
 - ♦ **Enables anonymous and open peer review.**
 - ♦ **Enables matching for multiple reviewers.**

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PROCEDURE

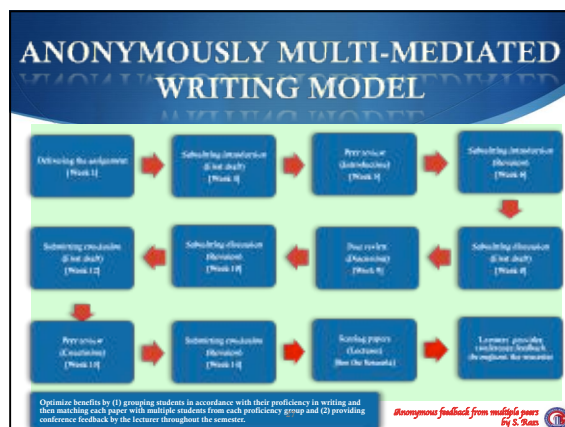
- ◆ Course content suggested by Razi (2011) was adapted.
- ◆ 14-week semester.
- ◆ Writing an ELT related review paper; restricted but non-assigned topic.
- ◆ 1,5000 words; excluding abstract and references.
- ◆ Submission on 3 occasions:
 - ◆ Submission of introduction (draft, feedback, revision)
 - ◆ Submission of discussion (draft, feedback, revision)
 - ◆ Submission of conclusion (draft, feedback, revision)
- ◆ Reflection paper submission



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Anonymously Multi-Mediated Writing Model

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Suggested Assessment Formula (Adapted from Razi, 2014a)

- ◆ **Final score (out of 100) =**
- ◆ (Lecturer score X .60) +
- ◆ ((100 – (difference between lecturer score and score for peer)) X .40).
- ◆ [Consider integrating self review score]

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Assistance in providing peer feedback

- ◆ Students were provided with questions to manage the peer review task.
- ◆ Avoidance of focussing simply on grammatical accuracy (Storch, 2007).
- ◆ The following 22 questions: for introduction and discussion.
- ◆ Transparent Academic Writing Rubric (TAWR – Razi, 2015b): for conclusion.
- ◆ TAWR included 50 items in 5 categories:
 - ◆ introduction (8 items),
 - ◆ citation (16 items),
 - ◆ academic writing (8 items),
 - ◆ idea presentation (11 items),
 - ◆ mechanics (7 items).

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Questions: Introduction & Discussion

- ◆ Is the paper related to ELT?
- ◆ Is the title effective (i.e., includes key words)?
- ◆ Is the length of the title appropriate (no more than 14 words)?
- ◆ Is the length of the introduction/discussion appropriate?
- ◆ Are the sentences complex enough? Consider the use of short and choppy sentences. Mark them and write 'SS'.
- ◆ Does the author make use of passive voice only when necessary?
- ◆ Is the level of formality appropriate? Consider the use of colloquial English (informal and daily use of language). Mark inappropriate language use and write 'LF'.
- ◆ Are there any grammatical mistakes? Mark them and write 'GM'.
- ◆ Are there any spelling mistakes? Mark them and write 'SL'.
- ◆ Are there any punctuation mistakes? Mark them and write 'PN'.
- ◆ Are there any short forms (e.g., i.e., i.e., i.e.)? Mark them on the text and write 'SF'.
- ◆ Are there any unclear abbreviations (e.g., STM)? Mark unclear ones and write 'UA'.
- ◆ Is the paragraph organization of the introduction appropriate?
- ◆ Are the paragraphs well-developed? There should be more than two sentences in each paragraph and have only one main idea. Mark problematic paragraphs and write 'SP' for short and 'LP' for long ones.
- ◆ Does the author introduce the topic well enough?
- ◆ Does the introduction present the thesis statement?
- ◆ Do all the ideas support the thesis statement? Mark the ones that are irrelevant and write 'IMI'.
- ◆ Are there any sentences that need citation? Mark them and write 'NC'.
- ◆ Are paraphrases and summaries appropriately cited (author surname and date of publication)? Mark inappropriate ones and write 'PC'.
- ◆ Are quotations appropriately cited (author surname, date of publication, page number, and double quotation marks)? Mark inappropriate ones and write 'PQ'.
- ◆ When you consider the organization of the whole paper, does the flow of ideas make sense? Consider unity and coherence both at paragraph and essay levels.
- ◆ When you consider your answers to the previous questions, what is your score (out of 100) for the introduction and discussion?

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INTRODUCTION		Poor	Acceptable	Excellent
1	Topic selected	0	1	2
2	Narrowing down the topic	0	1	2
3	Title of the paper	0	1	2
4	Headings and subheadings	0	1	2
5	Abstract	0	1	2
6	Key words	0	1	2
7	Introduction to the topic	0	1	2
8	Highlighting the aims in the introduction	0	1	2
CITATION				
9	Citing when necessary			
10	Introducing paraphrases/summaries (variations in style)			
11	Restructuring in paraphrases/summaries			
12	Rewording in paraphrases/summaries			
13	Introducing quotes (variations in the style)			
14	Use of quotations			
15	Citing quotes appropriately			
16	Ratio of quotes			
17	Sufficiency of the number of cited sources			
18	Reliability of the cited sources			
19	Appropriate use of secondary sources			
20	Ratio of secondary source use			
21	Appropriate use of in-text citation rules			
22	Writing reference entries			
23	Order of reference entries			
24	Exact match of citations with reference entries			
ACADEMIC WRITING				
25	Focusing on the issue (omitting personal pronouns)	0	1	2
26	Appropriate use of abbreviations	0	1	2
27	Avoiding contractions (e.g. don't)	0	1	2
28	Avoiding extremes (e.g. use of must)	0	1	2
29	Avoiding slang, jargon and cliché	0	1	2
30	Use of words with precise meaning	0	1	2
31	Use of objective language	0	1	2
32	Balanced use of passive forms	0	1	2
IDEA PRESENTATION				
33	Appropriate use of markers (e.g., firstly)	0	1	2
34	Appropriate use of linking devices (e.g., however)	0	1	2
35	Flow of ideas	0	1	2
36	Paragraph unity	0	1	2
37	Overall unity	0	1	2
38	Paragraph coherence	0	1	2
39	Overall coherence	0	1	2
40	Appropriate length of paragraphs	0	1	2
41	Complexity of the sentences	0	1	2
42	Relevance of conclusions with the discussion	0	1	2
43	Drawing effective conclusions	0	1	2
MECHANICS				
44	Paper format	0	1	2
45	Grammar	0	1	2
46	Spelling	0	1	2
47	Punctuation	0	1	2
48	Vocabulary selection	0	1	2
49	Use of tables and figures	0	1	2
50	Length of the paper	0	1	2

TAWR:
Conclusion

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Sample feedback from multiple peers

Originality Grammar Punctuation Vocabulary learning turnitin 16% --

READ ONLY

Reviews

All Reviews

~10

~10

~10

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Asymmetrical vs. symmetrical feedback (Hanjani & Li, 2014)

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

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Reflection Papers (Elicitive feedback?)

- Like semi-structured interview sessions.
- Students were provided with 13 both open- and close-ended questions to reveal their opinions on providing and receiving either open or anonymous peer feedback.
- Responses either in their L1 or English.
- Online submission at the end of the semester.

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Findings

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Preliminary Findings RQ1: Quantitative data

- Do students benefit from anonymous peer review more?
- An independent-samples t-test indicated significant differences between the two groups' mean values on their final products.
- Experimental group ($M = 83.90$, $SD = 7.25$)
- Control group ($M = 79.32$, $SD = 6.28$)
- $t(60) = 2.66$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.68$ overall scores with a moderate effect size.

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Preliminary Findings RQ2: Quantitative data

- ◆ Do students provide more effective feedback anonymously?
- ◆ **Holistic** evaluation of the feedback provided by students.
- ◆ An independent-samples *t*-test indicated significant differences between the two groups' mean values on their feedback performances.
- ◆ Experimental group ($M = 83.87$, $SD = 7.72$)
- ◆ Control group ($M = 70.16$, $SD = 6.90$)
- ◆ $t(60) = 7.38$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.87$ overall scores with a large effect size.

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Forget about statistics!

- ◆ What do students think about providing and receiving either open or anonymous feedback?
- ◆ Isn't it more important in terms of motivational aspects?
- ◆ Paul Kei Matsuda, in his keynote speech, warned against the dangers of demotivation yesterday.

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Findings RQ3: Qualitative data - Reflection papers

- ◆ Participants' consensus on the contribution of peer feedback for the development of better academic writing skills.
- ◆ **Strengths:**
 - ◆ Significant contribution was reported related to use of linking devices, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary choice, spelling, citation rules, punctuation, and paper format.
 - ◆ Limited contribution was reported in terms of unity and coherence.
- ◆ **Weaknesses:**
 - ◆ Useless and careless feedback.
 - ◆ Confusing feedback.
 - ◆ Misleading, resulted in replacing a correct expression with something wrong.
 - ◆ Individual differences.
 - ◆ Insufficient feedback related to flow of ideas and complexity of sentences.

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Findings RQ3: Qualitative data - Reflection papers

Preferences of anonymous or open peer feedback:

Anonymous group:	
◆ Anonymous feedback	: 27
◆ Open feedback	: 1
◆ Does not matter	: 3
Open group:	
◆ Anonymous feedback	: 20
◆ Open feedback	: 5
◆ Does not matter	: 6

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Findings RQ3: Qualitative data - Reflection papers

Quotes on anonymous peer feedback:

- ◆ Anonymous peer review is more objective and enables fairer evaluation.
- ◆ If I know the student who gave me a low score, I wouldn't be comfortable.
- ◆ If I receive open feedback, I go and ask my friend why she criticized my paper.
- ◆ If I know the reviewer or the author, my emotions play a role. I don't want to see her mistakes. I think, it makes me blind.
- ◆ One of my friends hates a class mate since she criticized her paper. Anonymity saves our social relationships.
- ◆ I prefer anonymously because we can criticize papers bravely.
- ◆ Peer reviews should not contain our emotions and personal ideas so I prefer anonymous feedback.
- ◆ When people know our identity, they might review our papers based on their views towards our personality.
- ◆ I disturbed me when the author saw my name as a reviewer.
- ◆ We can concentrate on the task in case of anonymous feedback.
- ◆ We cannot criticize our close friends if it is open but we can do it anonymously.
- ◆ If I know the author, I consider whether I love him/her or not; and whether he/she is lazy or not.
- ◆ Not everyone can control their emotions.

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Findings RQ3: Qualitative data - Reflection papers

Quotes on open peer feedback:

- ◆ I prefer openly, because when owner of the paper see their name people start to care about reviews.
- ◆ I want to know the reviewer so that I can decide whether I need to pay attention to his/her feedback.
- ◆ Sometimes students may give careless feedback. They try to give feedback more carefully if it is open.
- ◆ I want to know who provided feedback because I can ask questions about the feedback later.

Quotes on does not matter:

- ◆ It does not matter because receiving feedback anonymously or openly does not affect me. I focus on my mistakes.
- ◆ It does not matter for me because we must be objective in both cases.

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Findings RQ3: Qualitative data - Reflection papers

- Open peer review: Felt like giving feedback to a friend, avoid criticizing.
- Anonymous peer review: Felt like a teacher, giving 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:
 - metacognitive skills that are transferable (refer to Dana Ferris plenary speech yesterday for more on metacognition.).

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Discussion

- 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.
 - Social relations: may prevent them from criticizing.
- 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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Discussion

- Consider first-year undergraduates inexperience (e.g., Park, 2003; Razi, 2015b; Yeo & Chien, 2007).
- Teach how to benefit from digital feedback (Razi, 2014a).
- "Sometimes the best motivational intervention is simply to improve the quality of our teaching" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 273).
- Krashen's (1985) 'Affective Filter Hypothesis' under the umbrella term 'Input Hypothesis'.

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Discussion

- Receiving feedback from several peers requires deep analysis.
- This contributes to the development of *metacognitive skills* and becoming an *autonomous learner*.
- Written corrective peer feedback contributes to the development of form-focused cognitive processing and results in employment of *metacognitive revising strategies* (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).
- Speculation: strategy or skill?

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Tentative Conclusions

- EAP learners benefit from anonymous peer feedback more than open one in writing.
- More effective and critical feedback can be provided in case of anonymity.
- EAP learners prefer exchanging feedback anonymously.
- Overall conclusion:** Anonymously multi-mediated writing model resulted in better writing performance.

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Pedagogical Implications

For optimum benefits of anonymously mediated writing model:

- Multiple match: asymmetrical & symmetrical distribution of feedback (for more on grouping students, attend Neomy Storch's plenary this afternoon).
- Peer feedback should be supported by lecturer feedback.
 - For large classes, conference feedback might be practical.
- Practice how to address peer feedback.
 - Self review sessions might be valuable.
 - This increases the benefits of metacognitive skills.
- Assess performances in providing peer feedback.
- Preference of open/anonymous feedback; necessary arrangements.

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