

Usefulness of Peer Response Groups:
Reactions from the Saudi EFL Writing
Classroom.

Mohammad S. Al-Alam Al-Zahrani, Ph.D.

Department of English Language and Literature

College of Languages and Translation

Imam University

2006

Abstract:

This paper intends to examine the effectiveness of peer response in the Saudi EFL classroom and report on students' views and reactions to it. Three research questions are addressed; 1-How often is peer response employed in the Saudi EFL writing classroom. 2.What aspects of peer responses do Saudi EFL students find useful? The data of the study was collected using two questionnaires. The first gathered information about the frequency of peer response, while the second examined its usefulness from the students' viewpoint. Subjects of the study were 82 students enrolled in the Department of English language and Literature, Al-Imam Mohuhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. Results that students have participated in peer reviews before. However, the frequency of comments differed in their type, in that the scope of the comments was mostly on surface errors. Less frequent comments, however, were pertinent to the content of writing. As far as the usefulness of comments, there was a general consensus among participants that peer response helped them improve their writing. Participants regarded comments that related to the content of their writing to be the most useful, with correcting mechanical errors at the bottom of their list. Pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed, with special focus on the role of the teachers in the implementation of PR.

Introduction:

Over the last two decade, literature on EFL writing has focused on how writers write instead of what they write. This paradigm shift in the teaching of writing has brought along with it new concepts to the writing practice. Peer response groups, deeply-rooted in collaborative learning and advocated by ESL researchers and teachers, (Elbow, 1973; Reid, 1993) is one of such concepts that helped both teachers and students to view writing in a rather different light.

While a growing research has been focusing on peer response in ESL writing, research on EFL peer response has just began gaining attention, with limited studies focusing on related variables like culture, acceptance of peer rating by students, effectiveness of peer response in the EFL classroom.

With these reasons in mind, this study is intended to answer the following thee research questions:

1. How often is peer response employed in the Saudi EFL writing classroom?
2. What aspects of peer responses do Saudi EFL students find useful?

Literature Review:

In an interview with Ulla Conner, a native of Finland, and a highly published scholar in the teaching of writing, she states that writing is one of the most difficult skills for EFL learners. She believes that "The codes of writing, rhetoric and conventions of academic disciplines need to be learned. These conventions vary from language to language and, therefore; often need to be learned in L2" (1997). Such conventions are particularly true in the case of Arab Learners of English, whose L1 (Arabic) is quite distinct from English. Differences between the two languages include almost all levels of the language, specifically writing. When Arab learners of English, especially the novice ones, write in English, they tend to do so employing their Arabic writing strategies and techniques.

As far as peer response is concerned, the EFL research has benefited from that of L1 and ESL a great deal. While the concept is still unclear to some EFL teachers and even questionable to some others, it has been gradually been gaining attention by many others.

Some EFL Teachers, who wish to implement peer response groups, believing in it as being an important component of process-oriented approach, often deal with some hurdles in

their writing classrooms. Below is a brief discussion of some of the difficulties associated with the implementation of peer reviews:

Students' attitudes: Studies that have been conducted in the L1 and L2 revealed mixed results. In the L1 context, Bencich, (1989/1990) study of the 11th- graders, showed that some students had positive attitudes and viewed their peers' opinions more valuable than the grade, and Liner, (1984) showed that the 10th and 11th-graders enjoyed exchanging their experiences with their peers. Some studies, however, showed that students had rather negative attitudes towards peer response, as shown by Spear, (1988) where college students did not view their peers as a valid audience.

Amores (1997) states that students perceive peer reviews as a social activity with a great deal of emotional involvement. Her students became defensive and felt uneasy to assume a teacher's role in editing their peers' writing. By the same token, some EFL students feel uncomfortable or even unconfident about their peers' ability to edit their papers, Sengupta (1998).

Tension among peers is another challenge that EFL teachers need to watch out for. Jacob (1987) reports on the disagreement of peers over types of feedback, while

Zhang, (1995) states that students preferred teachers' feedback over their peers' feedback. In a similar vein, one of the participants of this study states "*a classmate is not able to provide a good feedback, because he/she writing ability is like mine. My teacher is the only one who can give me the right feedback*". Similarly, some studies have shown that students preferred native speakers' feedback over non-native speakers' feedback (Chaudron, 1984).

Adine Levine, (2002) examined the differences in peer responses between EFL Israeli students and ESL students studying English in the U.S. as well as the differences of attitudes of both groups towards peer response. She found both similarities and differences in the revision behavior of Israeli EFL students and ESL students, in that ESL students tended to write more extensively, whereas EFL students wrote shorter comments, due possibly to cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students. Similarly, the attitudes of students varied in terms of the EFL students' the authority of the teacher, particularly. Interestingly, EFL Israeli students viewed the teacher as an expert, whereas the ESL students viewed him/her as an authority figure whose feedback is preferred over their peers'.

Another variable that may interfere with the peer response groups is culture. According to Nelson (1997), Arab learners of English differ from US students in both power distance and face, as being to of Hofstede's Four Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences. In their study entitled "A Cross-Cultural Study of Egyptian and U.S. Education Based on Hofstede's Four Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences", (Nelson, El-Bakary, and Fathi, 1996) point out that "*Egyptian students were significantly more likely than U.S. students to agree with the statement "students expect teachers to direct their own learning"*". (P.4). That is, the distance between the teacher and his/her students is high in the Arabic culture, and consequently, students view their teachers as the one who "knows". With this attitude, peer response may be affected negatively in cultures where the power distance is high, or as Nelson (1997), points out, students from countries with large power distance are much less likely to value their peers' views than students from countries with smaller distance.

The concept of face, as one of Hofstede's four dimensional model of cultural differences, is another factor that has a great impact on students performance in peer response groups. According to Nelson (1997), face has

a great value in the Chinese and Japanese culture, and thus it is reflected in students' reactions to peer response groups. Arabic culture is very much similar to the Chinese and Japanese cultures.

In his book, *Understanding Arabs*, Nydell (1987) states that Middle Eastern students are sensitive to criticism, specially when given in front of others, and can be interpreted as an offense. Arab EFL learners, therefore, find it difficult to criticize their peers or be criticized by them, simply because they avoid losing face.

A final concern about peer response implementation in the writing classroom is the inability of novice writers to provide appropriate feedback on various levels of the the target language and its rhetorical conventions, (Carson and Nelson, 1996; Nelson and Carson, 1995; Villamil & Guerrero, 1996).

Another set of problems arises from the nature of the feedback of peers, in that some learners tend to focus on surface errors, such as spelling or grammatical mistakes. (Leki, 1990, Nelson and Murphy, 1992)

While some L1 and ESL studies have questioned some aspects of peer response, specially studnets' attitudes towards it, and some others placed reservations about its possible effectiveness, the majority of researchers (Gere &

Stevens, 1985, Nelson, 1989/1990, Nystrand, 1986, believe that it plays an important role in developing students' writing. Others believe that peer reviews should be viewed as an important complementary source of feedback in the ESL classroom, Villamil & Guerrero, 1998.

In their study entitled "*Assessing the Impact of Peer Revision on L2 Writing*", which examined writers' final drafts in two rhetorical modes, narration and persuasion among 14 Spanish-speaking ESL college students, Villamil & Guerrero, 1998 point out that, depending on the students' linguistic abilities, peer response can help L2 learners realize their potential for effective revision.

Others have stressed the importance of peer response in contributing to the students' text diagnosis ability, monitoring their writing process and developing audience awareness, (Bencich, 1989/1990; Liner, 1984, Nelson and Murphy, 1992), encouraging collaborative learning and providing valuable opportunities for students to receive social support from peer, (Jacob et al., 1998).

Verifying the common negative conception of peer rating, Saito and Fujita (2004) examined the characteristics and user acceptance of peer rating in EFL writing classroom and found that peer feedback did not affect student attitudes towards peer rating, in that

students who received high scores from peers and those who received low scores had equal positive attitudes towards peer ratings. They state that

"..the use of peer assessment allows students to take responsibility for participating in assessment of their classmates and open up a possibility of changing a traditional one-way teacher -to-student route of evaluation to multi-route peer-to-peer as well as teacher-to-student evolution"(48).

Similarly, Byland, (2005) found that peer response and self-assessment improved both students' critical thinking and writing skills. Students were better able to discuss main content issues such as organization, supporting details, coherence, etc. Byland, (2005) stress teacher modeling and involvement in the peer response. H/she, according to Byland, should be a reflective practitioner, who should constantly observing the appropriateness of the activities

Such mixed results of the research on peer response encourage researchers to conduct further studies to explore the potential benefits and drawbacks of peer reviews, particularly in relation to aspects like students' cultural backgrounds, which have not been examined thoroughly.

Of a special importance is the investigation of peer response in the EFL context, where there has been a sever

lack of research on the effectiveness of peer response in the writing classroom, and students' attitudes towards and the effectiveness of peer response in the Arab world. As for the Saudi EFL learners, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has not been any study that examined peer response.

The Study:

The present study seeks to examine the effectiveness of peer response in the Saudi EFL classroom. The following research questions guided the research:

1- How often is peer response employed in the EFL writing classroom.

2. What aspects of peer responses do students find effective?

Participants:

The participants of this study were 82 male students majoring in English at the Department of English Language and Literature, (DELL) College of Languages and Translation, (COLT) at Al-Imam University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Prior to their enrollment at the DELL, all participants had had at least six years of English in their intermediate and high school stages. In addition, they enrolled in an intensive English course for 5 hours a day, for 14 weeks before they were matriculated to the (COLT).

Now, they are all in their last two years of college. That is, their English proficiency level ranged between high-intermediate and advanced.

Procedures:

The data collection of the present study was collected through five stages.

Stage 1: Instructors in each classroom were given four sheets of paper and instructed on how to utilize them in the classroom. Sheet 1 included general peer evaluation guidelines (see Appendix 1). The purpose of the instruction was to clarify the concept of peer response to those who might not have been familiar with it. Each student was given a copy of Sheet 1 and was instructed by his instructor to read it carefully and pose any questions to his instructor. It showed students how to respond and the types of responses they can offer to their peers' drafts.

Stage 2: Divided in pairs, students were asked to write an essay on any topic they preferred. After they finished the first draft, they were asked to exchange the drafts.

Stage 3: Students then were handed a peer editing questions (see Appendix 2) and instructed to read and utilize in their feedbacks to their peers. Sheet 2 included guiding

statements that were intended to facilitate and guide responses.

Stage 4: After writing their comments on Sheet 2, students (the author and the reviewer) were asked to exchange sheets and discuss comments. Then, they were instructed to start their second draft employing their partners' suggestions.

Stage 5: After students had finished their second and final drafts, they were given a questionnaire to fill out, which was adapted from Lockhart and Ng (1993) with some modifications to suit the purpose of this study. The questionnaire (see Appendix 4 and 5) included 14 items to measure the frequency comments students received during the sessions of peer reviews of peer response, and more questions in tandem with the previous items to examine the effectiveness of peer reviews and their role in improving students' writing.

Results and Discussion:

The following section is ordered in the order of the research questions of the study.

Question #1: How often is peer response employed in the Saudi EFL writing classroom?

The purpose of the question was to know first if students have ever participated in collaborative tasks before in the classroom, and if so, how frequently did they

encounter the comments listed in the questionnaire below in their peer reviews. The following table shows that, generally, students have participated in peer reviews before. However, the frequency of comments differed in their type, as shown below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the frequency of comments participants received from their peers.

Statement	N	NVR %	STM %	Ofn %	Mean	SD
My partner told me if my ideas were clear or not	78	2.6	46.2	51.3	1.4872	.55229
My partner told me if my ideas were interesting or not	80	5.0	50.0	45.0	1.4000	.58677
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended purpose	74	5.4	75.7	18.9	1.1351	.47756
My partner corrected spelling mistakes.	80	35.0	25.0	40.0	1.0500	.87004
My partner suggested how I could explain my ideas more clearly	80	22.5	52.5	25.0	1.0250	.69309
My partner corrected grammatical mistakes.	82	31.7	34.1	34.1	1.0244	.81613
My partner told me where I needed to support my ideas with additional information	80	22.5	57.5	20.0	.9750	.65555
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended audience	74	16.2	70.3	13.5	.9730	.54830
My partner told me what ideas I should exclude	80	30.0	60.0	30.0	.8000	.60379
My partner suggested specific ideas to add	76	34.2	52.6	13.2	.7895	.65961
My partner suggested how I could organize ideas within a paragraph	80	35.0	52.5	12.5	.7750	.65555
My partner suggested ways of showing relationships between ideas	80	40.0	47.5	12.5	.7250	.67458
My partner suggested words or sentences that I could use.	78	35.9	56.4	7.7	.7179	.60081
My partner suggested how I could organize the entire essay	78	51.3	41.0	7.7	.5641	.63634

Note: NVR=never, STM=sometimes, OFN=Often

The variance in the frequency of the comments participants received from their peers above shows that the scope of the comments seems to be mostly on surface errors, a finding that is in line, in some aspects, with (Leki, 1990, Nelson and Murphy, 1992, Huang, 1995). The majority

of the Seventy-eight participants reported that their partners sometimes (%46.2) and often (51.3) mean (1.4872) told them whether their ideas were clear or not. This result is not surprising, nonetheless. Being EFL students, it is quite natural that they write essays that are not very clear, or at least to their fellow classmates. The vagueness of ideas may be attributed to the interference of their L1 writing habits to their L2 writing.

Another interesting result is that participants received comments in regard to whether their ideas were interesting or not, sometimes (%50.0) and often (%45.0), mean(1.4000). Such a result is often expected, especially if cultural dimension is taken into account. It is customary that Arab students would praise his/her classmate by saying that his/her writing is "*interesting*" to encourage him/her. Besides, the comment "*interesting*" is sometime a loose term, and thus, is often used in the Arabic culture to avoid criticism and personal offence (Nydell (1987) and safe face, where face has a great value.

Comments related to the writer's intended purpose was also a frequent comment, in that participants reported that they sometimes (%75.7), and often (%18.9) mean (1.1351), received comments from their peers regarding the purpose of

their writing, a common practice in the EFL classroom, as will be shown below. Comments related to correcting spelling mistakes, explaining ideas more clearly, and correcting grammatical mistakes, which are mostly relevant to form, rather than to the content of writing, are also frequent, shown by the mean scores of each item, (1.0500, 1.0250, 1.0244), respectively.

Less frequent comments, however, were pertinent to the content of writing. That is, students received the fewest comments on organization of the entire essays, words or sentences, relationships between ideas, organizations of ideas within a paragraph, and addition of specific ideas, as shown by the mean scores of each of the abovementioned types of comments, .5641, .7179, .7250, .7750, .7895 respectively.

To compare the means above, a one-sample t-test was performed. Table 3 below, shows the means of the statements above. The two-tailed significance is 0.000, indicating that peer responses are frequent in the Saudi EFL classroom.

Table 2: One-Sample Test of the frequency of comments participants received from their peers.

	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Lower	Upper
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended audience	.000	.97297	.8459	1.1000
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended purpose	.000	1.13514	1.0245	1.2458
My partner told me if my ideas were interesting or not	.000	1.40000	1.2694	1.5306
My partner told me if my ideas were clear or not	.000	1.48718	1.3627	1.6117
My partner suggested how I could explain my ideas more clearly	.000	1.02500	.8708	1.1792
My partner told me where I needed to support my ideas with additional information	.000	.97500	.8291	1.1209
My partner suggested specific ideas to add	.000	.78947	.6387	.9402
My partner told me what ideas I should exclude	.000	.80000	.6656	.9344
My partner suggested how I could organize the entire essay	.000	.56410	.4206	.7076
My partner suggested how I could organize ideas within a paragraph	.000	.77500	.6291	.9209
My partner suggested ways of showing relationships between ideas	.000	.72500	.5749	.8751
My partner suggested words or sentences that I could use.	.000	.71795	.5825	.8534
My partner corrected grammatical mistakes.	.000	1.02439	.8451	1.2037
My partner corrected spelling mistakes.	.000	1.05000	.8564	1.2436

Question 2: What aspects of peer responses do Saudi EFL students find useful?

The answer to this question reveals interesting findings. Table 2 below, shows that, in principle, there is almost a general consensus among the 82 participants that peer response helped them improve their writing, as shown by the total mean score 1.5803, SD (.19592), and only a few who regarded them as "not useful".

Generally, participants regarded comments that related to the content of their writing to be the most useful, with correcting mechanical errors at the bottom of their list.

The most useful comment, therefore, was (*How useful was analyzing someone else's draft in helping you improve your writing?*), as shown by the responses of "useful" (%14.6), and "very useful" (%82.9) mean (1.8049), followed by their peers' suggestion of organizing their entire essays, (%18.6) and (%80.0) for "useful" and "very useful", respectively, with a mean score of (1.7857).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the usefulness of the comments from the participants' point of view.

	Statement	N	NU %	USF %	VU SF %	Mean	SD
1	How useful was analyzing someone else's draft in helping you improve your writing?	82	2.4	14.6	82.9	1.8049	.59570
2	My partner suggested how I could organize the entire essay	70	1.4	18.6	80.0	1.7857	.44698
3	How useful was peer response sessions in helping you discover new ideas and view points?	82	2.4	17.1	80.5	1.7805	.47204
4	My partner told me if my ideas were clear or not	76	0.0	25.0	75.0	1.7500	.43589
5	In general, how useful was peer response in helping you revise your draft?	82	4.9	17.1	78.0	1.7317	.57198
6	My partner suggested how I could organize ideas within a paragraph	70	4.3	21.4	74.3	1.7000	.54772
7	My partner suggested ways of showing relationships between ideas	68	4.4	25.0	70.6	1.6618	.56278
8	How useful was reading someone's draft in helping you analyze your writing?	82	12.2	9.8	78.0	1.6585	.68888
9	My partner suggested specific ideas to add	66	1.5	31.8	66.7	1.6515	.51118
10	My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended audience	74	1.4	32.4	66.2	1.6486	.50835
11	My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended purpose	76	1.3	44.7	53.9	1.5263	.52849
12	My partner told me where I needed to support my ideas with additional information	76	5.3	38.2	56.6	1.5132	.59985
13	My partner corrected spelling mistakes.	68	20.6	8.8	70.6	1.5000	.81954
14	My partner told me if my ideas were interesting or not	82	12.2	26.8	61.0	1.4878	.70700
15	My partner corrected grammatical mistakes.	70	20.0	14.3	65.7	1.4571	.81090
16	My partner told me what ideas I should exclude	72	4.2	47.2	48.6	1.4444	.57870
17	My partner suggested how I could explain my ideas more clearly	76	0.0	35.5	64.5	1.3158	.48177
18	My partner suggested words or sentences that I could use.	72	22.2	52.8	25.0	1.0278	.69144

Not18e: NU= not useful, USF= useful, VUSF= very useful

Discovering new ideas and viewpoints was also regarded as "useful" (%17.1), and "very useful", (%80.5), mean (1.7805). This finding is not surprising, however, for EFL students, due to their limited writing ability, appreciate suggestions in relation to the development of new ideas that would enrich their compositions.

Students also viewed the comments related to the clarity of their ideas very useful. In response to the statement *"My partner told me if my ideas were clear or not"*, the majority of the participants answered "useful" (%25.0) and "very useful", (%75.0), mean (1.7500). It is worth noting that students encountered this particular comment most frequently and viewed it as the most useful, as shown in both tables 1 and 3 above.

In answering the question *"In general, how useful was peer response in helping you revise your draft?"*, only (%4.9) of the participants viewed peer response as "not useful", as compared with (%17.1), and (%78.0) for "useful" and "very useful", respectively. Such a finding is a strong piece of evidence that, despite the fact that the most frequent comments were mostly on mechanical errors, they did value comments pertaining to the content of their essays. Furthermore, such an appreciation of peers' comments in this regard, may be an indicator that such participants are calling for help with the most difficult part of writing, due to the differences between their L1 and L2 writing systems.

In a similar vein, organizing ideas within a paragraph and the relationship between ideas were also of an importance to the majority of the participants, in that

(%21.4) and (%74.3) answered "useful" and "very useful", respectively, for the former, and "useful" (%25.0) and "very useful" (%70.6) for the latter.

Students also took heed in reading their peers' drafts and valued it as a helpful tool in analyzing their own writing. The statement "*How useful was reading someone's draft in helping you analyze your writing?*", was answered by 82 students as follows: (%9.8) "useful", (%78.0) "very useful".

It may be summarized that students found a great benefit in peer responses. Looking at the above table, it may be noticed that the statements 13, 15, and 18 are all related to the form, and hence, are not viewed as "useful" as statements 1 through 8, which pertain more to the content of writing.

To compare the means of the statements above, a one-sample t-test was performed. The 2-tailed significance is .000 indicating that students found the comments and responses from their peers useful.

Table 4: One-Sample Test of the usefulness of comments participants received from their peers.

Statement						
	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differen ce	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended audience	27.898	73	.000	1.64865	1.5309	1.7664
My partner discussed my writing in relation to my intended purpose	25.178	75	.000	1.52632	1.4056	1.6471
My partner told me if my ideas were interesting or not	19.056	81	.000	1.48780	1.3325	1.6431
My partner told me if my ideas were clear or not Usefulness	35.000	75	.000	1.75000	1.6504	1.8496
My partner suggested how I could explain my ideas more clearly	29.762	75	.000	1.64474	1.5346	1.7548
My partner to me where I needed to support my ideas with additional information	21.991	75	.000	1.51316	1.3761	1.6502
My partner suggested specific ideas to add	26.247	65	.000	1.65152	1.5259	1.7772
My partner told me what ideas I should exclude	21.179	71	.000	1.44444	1.3085	1.5804
My partner suggested how I could organize the entire essay	33.425	69	.000	1.78571	1.6791	1.8923
My partner suggested how I could organize ideas within a paragraph	25.968	69	.000	1.70000	1.5694	1.8306
My partner suggested ways of showing relationships between ideas	24.349	67	.000	1.66176	1.5255	1.7980
My partner suggested words or sentences that I could use.	12.613	71	.000	1.02778	.8653	1.1903
My partner corrected grammatical mistakes.	15.034	69	.000	1.45714	1.2638	1.6505
My partner corrected spelling mistakes.	15.093	67	.000	1.50000	1.3016	1.6984
In general, how useful was peer response in helping you revise your draft?	28.750	81	.000	1.73171	1.6119	1.8516

How useful was reading someone's draft in helping you analyze your writing?	21.802	81	.000	1.65854	1.5072	1.8099
How useful was analyzing someone else's draft in helping you improve your writing?	35.804	81	.000	1.80488	1.7046	1.9052
How useful was peer response sessions in helping you discover new ideas and view points?	34.156	81	.000	1.78049	1.6768	1.8842

In sum, participants, as has been clearly shown in Tables 1 and 2, have shown a great interest in and appreciation of their peer responses, in general, and in the ones that pertain to the content of writing, in particular. On the other hand, comments that dealt with mechanical errors, such as correcting spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes, addition or deletion of certain words or sentences, though they were viewed by some students as useful, they were not regarded as useful as the ones that relate to the content.

Conclusion, recommendations and Implications:

The present study sought to answer the following two questions: 1- How often is peer response employed in the Saudi EFL writing classroom. 2-What aspects of peer responses do Saudi EFL students find useful? Overall, peer response was not only an accepted practice by the Saudi EFL classroom, but also a desired activity. Unlike what the researcher had expected, the concept of

peer response was known to students and frequently used by the EFL writing teachers. Students' reactions to the comments they received from their peers were, in general positive.

The success of peer response, however, may well be achieved by a joint effort exerted by both the teacher and students.

Teachers:

- 1- While peer response may seem to be a bit challenging at the outset for some EFL students, dedicated teachers can persistently try to create a supportive and collaborative community inside the classroom, so that inhibited students can feel more secure about their writing in such a friendly environment.
- 2- Peer response groups need to be carefully planned, and structured by teachers. Such steps involve providing the necessary guidelines, instruction, encouragement, and above all, ongoing patience.
- 3- Teachers should assume the role of facilitators, who establish the ground rules for the implementation of peer work. That is, they need to guide students through the different stages of peer response groups. In sum, providing a clear and focused guidelines for

students throughout peer review sessions will help create successful outcomes.

- 4- Teachers need to be familiar with all the obstacles (listed below) that are associated with peer review and provide for solving them.
- 5- They need to model peer response; that is, by showing students the proper ways to critique their peers. For example, they can help students learn to identify and examine gaps in text, in a positive rather negative light.
- 6- Teachers should be aware of their students' cultural background, and thus should appreciate the cultural constraints in relation to the comments provided by students to each other. Arab students, for instance, perceive criticism differently from students from other cultures. An innocent comment from a classmate may be interpreted as a personal offence to an Arab student and, by the same token, an ingenuine positive comment is, sometimes, meant to only compliment or encourage a classmate.

References:

- Amores, M.J. 1997: A new perspective on peer-editing. *Foreign Language Annals* 30 (4): 513-22.
- Chaudron, C. 1984: The effect of feedback on students' composition revisions. *RELC Journal* 15 (2):1-14.
- Jacob, G. 1987: First experiences with peer feedback on composition: Student and teachers reaction. *System* 15 (3): 325-33.
- Jacob, G.M., Curtis, A., Braine, G. and Huang, S.Y. 1998: Feedback on students writing: taking the middle path. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 7:307-17.
- Hofstede's Four Dimensional Model of Cultural Differences" *International Education*, 26 (1), 56-76.
- Huang, S., 1995: EFL university students' perception of their performance in peer response sessions. ERIC document
- Lockhart, C. , Ng, P. How Useful is Peer Response? *Hong Kong Journals Online*, vol 5, spring 1993 sunzil.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/10/1000051.pdf, Document URL:
<http://www.jalt-publications.org/tlt/files/97/apr/connor.html>: April 16, 1997

- Nelson, G. 1997: How cultural differences affect written oral communication: The case of peer response groups. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 70 summer.
- Nelson, G.L., El Bakary, W. 1996: Fathi, M.: A Cross-Cultural Study of Egyptian and U.S. Education Based on
- Nydell, M. K. 1987: *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westreners*. Yarmouth, Maine: International Press.
- Villamil, O., & Guerrero, M. 1996. Peer revision in the L2 classroom: Social-cognitive, mediating and aspects of social behavior. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 51-75.
- Villamil, O., & Guerrero, M. 1998. Assessing the Impact of Peer Revision on L2 Writing. *Applied Linguistics* 1998 19(4):491-514.
- Wolfegang, P. (9.2000) *Writing in the 4th year EFL classes: Limits and Possibilities*. Internet Document .University of Birmingham, Center for English Language Studies.
www.cels.bham.ac.uk/resources/essays/petter1.pdf
- Zhang, S. 1995: Reexamining the affective advantage of peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 4 (3): 209-22.

Appendix 1: General Peer Evaluation Guidelines

NOTE: As peer evaluator:

Your job is not to change the author's writing. Rather you are supposed to make it clearer.

You are the audience, as such; you should give him your reaction.

Respond:

- 1- You need first to respond to the overall message.
- 2- Respond to the grammar, sentence structure, and spelling.
- 3- Give specific reactions to specific parts of the written piece (NO RESPONSE IS WRONG)

How to respond:

Make positive and negative comments.

Types of Responses:

Summarizing: Can you sum up the main point of the piece of writing?

Can you tell the author what you think he is saying?

Pointing: Point to the parts that you think are good.
Points to the weak parts, parts that are ineffectual.
Point to where it seems to wander.
Point to where it seems to be unclear.

Telling: Tell the author how you felt as you read his work.
Be subjective, but stick to the paper in hand.

Remember: Take your time critiquing.
Be honest
Be specific

Peer Response to Draft:

- 1- State the question which this draft addresses? Are there any sections that seem unrelated to the question or unnecessary?
- 2- Is adequate context provided? Does the focal question seem important?
- 3- Describe the organizational pattern of the draft.
- 4- What is the best feature of the draft?
- 5- Are there parts that you did not understand?
- 6- What else would you like to know about the topic? What questions would you like to ask the writer?

Appendix 2: PEER EDITING QUESTIONS:

Author's Name: _____

Reviewer's Name: _____

1. What I like about this piece of writing is

_____.

2- These words or lines are particularly effective:

WORD or LINE

I like it because:

3- Your main point seems to be

_____.

4- But something is not quite clear to me. These lines or parts could be improved (meaning not clear, supporting points/details are missing, order seems to be mixed up, writing is not lively)

PART

Needs Improving because

5- The one change you could make that would make the biggest improvement in this writing

is _____

_____.

6- Other comments:

During the peer response sessions, my partner(s):

Effectiveness	Frequency					
	0= never	1= Sometimes	2= often	0= Not useful	1= Useful	2= Very useful
1- discussed my writing in relation to my intended audience	0	1	2	0	1	2
2- discussed my writing in relation to my intended purpose	0	1	2	0	1	2
3- told me if my ideas were interesting or not	0	1	2	0	1	2
4. told me if my ideas were clear or not	0	1	2	0	1	2
5. suggested how I could explain my ideas more clearly	0	1	2	0	1	2
6. told me where I needed to support my ideas with additional information	0	1	2	0	1	2
7. suggested specific ideas to add	0	1	2	0	1	2
8. told me which ideas I should exclude	0	1	2	0	1	2
9. suggested how I could reorganize the entire essay	0	1	2	0	1	2