Writer Perceptions of Reviewer Stances: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to report writer perceptions of reviewer stances before and after peer review training in an EFL writing class. Eighteen EFL students participated in peer reviewing training designed to coach them to make “revision-oriented” commentary. The 4-step training procedure was characterized by a combination of probing, prescriptive, tutoring, and collaborating reviewer stances. A qualitative analysis of the retrospective interview data revealed that before the training, student writers perceived their reviewers to be authoritative grammar checkers. After the training, they felt that their reviewers were more like collaborating partners, which may have contributed to subsequent high incorporation rates and enhanced revision quality reported in an early study (Min, 2006). The researcher concludes that this training can help improve the quality of peer review comments, which, in turn, enhance student writing in EFL writing classrooms.

Key Words: peer reviewer stance, writer perception, peer review training, EFL writing
INTRODUCTION

There has been a wealth of research reporting varied advantages of peer response/review to student writers in writing classrooms (for a review, see Ferris, 2003). Yet Leki (1990) argue that most student reviewers usually do not know what to attend to. For those who do know, they often provide vague and unhelpful feedback. In order to help students resolve the problems they encounter while performing peer response/review, researchers have started to devise training sessions to coach students to become more successful peer respondents/reviewers. Most of the peer response/review training in extant literature has involved different kinds of activities, ranging from expounding goals and benefits of peer response/review (Berg, 1999; Hu, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002) demonstrating peer response through video (Tang & Tithecott, 1999) or simulations (Berg, 1999; Min, 2006), and designing peer response sheets (Berg, 1999; Hu, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Min, 2006; Paulus, 1999), to generating collaborative response to drafts composed by former students (Berg, 1999; Hu, 2005; Min, 2006; Mittan, 1989). Very few, to date, have dealt with the “how” issue—to phrase comments in an organized and convincing manner after they follow instructions of the response sheet and locate a certain section in the composition on which they want to make written commentary (Min, 2006; Stanley, 1992). As persuasively argued by Stanley, students’ ability to convey “their perceptions to the writer” (1992, p. 221) is the key to the final success of peer response/review. Liu and Hansen (2002) also proposed that writing teachers should provide students with abundant opportunities
to practice “how to ask clarification questions and how to give suggestions” (p. 128) apart from instructing them on where to focus. Although the latter’s comments referred to ESL writing contexts, the point about providing specific instruction on the *how* issues is even more relevant to EFL writing classes where students have little prior experience with peer review practice. Unfortunately, neither suggestion has been duly heeded in most training studies.

In addition to overlooking the *how* issues, few training studies have been premised on characteristics/stances documented to have facilitated peer negotiation in extant literature. Even fewer attempted to “make a causal link to the peer feedback dynamics to explain the effects (or lack thereof) of peer response sessions on students’ subsequent writing” (Ferris, 2003, p. 85). This study attempts to bridge this gap by providing student reviewers with proceduralized peer review training after they locate a certain section of writing on which they want to comment during peer review. This proceduralized peer review training, a response to Allwright’s (2003) call for practitioner researchers to think globally and act locally, is drawn from characteristics/stances reported to have assisted meaning negotiation during peer interaction in previous research (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a, 1995b; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) and tailored to meet domestic EFL students’ needs. The present study sought to examine the results of this training on student reviewers’ comments and stances in their written commentary and writers’ perceptions of and attitudes toward such stances, a possible factor contributing to high response rate and enhanced revision quality in an earlier study (Min, 2006). In the following sections, the researcher first discusses extant
literature on peer reviewers’ stances and response behavior and then peer review training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stances Facilitating/Hindering Peer Response/Review

Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992) examined 60 ESL students’ written feedback to an essay composed by a former student in university freshman writing classes. Based on their written commentary, Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger were able to identify three different stances: prescriptive, collaborative, and interpretive stances. In addition, they also investigated the relationship of these stances to the types of issues students commented on (e.g., content, thesis, organization, etc.) and with the final grades they obtained in the class. Significant differences were reported between students adopting the collaborative stance and those employing the interpretive stance, with the former group receiving significantly higher grades than the latter.

Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger’s (1992) study suffers from criticism because of the writer’s absence during the peer review (Ferris, 2003). Modifying the decontextualized research design, Lockhart and Ng (1995a, 1995b) looked at students’ actual oral comments on each other’s writing during face-to-face peer response. Analyses of the transcripts revealed four different reviewer stances: authoritative, interpretive, probing, and collaborative. Lockhart and Ng further examined the types of language functions (summarize
essays, express intention, give suggestion, give opinion, and give information) and topics discussed (writing process, ideas, audience, and purpose) that characterized each stance. Student writers were found to reap limited benefits from peers assuming authoritative and interpretive stances and gained most from collaborative peers and those assuming probing stances.

Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) investigated the face-to-face interactions between 27 pairs of ESL student writers in a Puerto Rico university from Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory. Using a microgenetic approach, the researchers found that the most prevalent phenomenon during interaction was collaboration, contrasting the results in Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger’s study (1992) where more instances of “prescriptive” stance among their L2 students were observed. Cultural preference for teamwork and collaboration, along with students’ use of a common first language, may have contributed to their findings (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996).

However, peer respondents/reviewers from diverse cultures might not demonstrate collaboration or camaraderie. Nelson and Murphy (1992) analyzed the social dimension of a group of four ESL students in peer response and found four different roles—the attacker, the weakest writer, the best writer, and the facilitator. Although the group was able to stay on the peer response task, the confrontations characterizing the group interactions rendered the peer response dysfunctional.

In sum, ESL/EFL students adopted varied stances and engaged in different activities during peer response/review. Collaborative (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a, 1995b; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) and probing stances (Lockhart & Ng,
1995a, 1995b) were reported to help student writers most. On the other hand, interpretive (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992) and attacking stances (Nelson & Murphy, 1992) were less effective and sometimes even harmful to the functioning of peer response/review. Cultural preferences for teamwork and sharing the same first language were likely to facilitate peer collaboration during revision (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996).

**Peer Response/Review Training**

Most training studies centered on engaging students in a wide array of activities.

Mittan (1989), drawing on interviews with 40 international students in a freshman ESL composition class, recommended ESL writing instructors to model peer review techniques, including collaborative reading and commenting on the merits and demerits of student drafts, practicing how to make suggestions for revision, and occasional coaching on politeness, clarity, and specificity. In addition, he suggested paired peer collaboration on the same essay and conferencing with writers to provide revision strategies.

Tang and Tithecott’s (1999) social constructive perspective of peer response study employed a video demonstration to train 12 Asian students in the College English as a Second Language program in a small university college in British Columbia to perform peer response. The video—Student Writing Groups: Demonstrating the Process—is drawn on a model proposed by the process-writing champion (Elbow, 1973). Writers and responders were instructed to follow specific steps. For the writers’ part, they needed to read aloud their essays twice and
to self-monitor and self-correct their own drafts during the first reading. Then they read their drafts the second time. Respondents, on the other hand, needed to listen attentively during the first reading aloud and jot down general impressions of the essays during the writers’ self-correction. During the second reading aloud, they needed to write down specific responses to the essays.

Incorporating some of Mittan’s suggestions, Berg (1999) detailed 11 comprehensive activities in preparing ESL students for peer response. These activities encompassed affective, cognitive, sociocultural, and linguistic domains and ranged from creating a non-threatening atmosphere conducive to mutual trust among students, to enhancing awareness of the importance of peer response in both professional and classroom writing situations, sensitizing students to the different natures of intercultural communication and to pragmatics in expressions.

Liu and Sadler (2000), after following Berg’s guidelines in their own writing class, suggested another dimension—the procedural dimension. They accentuated the importance of providing students with abundant opportunities to practice how to make comments, ask clarification questions, and give suggestions “that are revision oriented so that peer response is facilitated across affective and cognitive levels” (Liu & Hansen, 2003, p. 128).

The only training study that incorporated readers’ stances into training was Hu (2005). Hu employed six different training activities, “awareness raising,” “demonstration,” “practice,” “reflection and instruction,” “explanation of procedures,” and “pre-response review” (p. 333). He also included teacher follow-up on marking and responding to written peer comments and considered these additional
follow-ups “crucial to bringing out the potential advantages of peer review” (p. 338).

As can be seen from the previous discussion, only once was reviewer stance considered as a factor in rating comment effectiveness. Hu (2005) discussed this issue in passing remarks in his 2002 writing class and condensed it “in the teacher summary of research findings” (p. 335) later in the 2003 class. Readers’ stances are important because they can impact the nature of reader-writer interaction, which, in turn, affect the efficacy of subsequent peer response/review. Unfortunately, research on training students to be effective peer reviewers has rarely highlighted this issue. In addition, most training studies have failed to provide novice student reviewers with a systematic procedure to make suggestions after they locate a certain section of their partner’s writing on which they want to make comments. Although some studies discussed with students the pragmatics of politeness (Berg, 1999) and demonstrated techniques how to make polite comments (Hu, 2005; Mittan, 1989), those discussions and demonstrations are neither central to revision-oriented suggestions nor proceduralized. Hu (2005) mentioned a three-step procedure, focusing on prioritizing various types of comments (e.g., responding to macro issues first and then language issues) rather than how to make organized and convincing comments. Inexperienced reviewers need to rely on observation to internalize implicitly demonstrated rules concerning what they should do when attempting revision-oriented comments.
THE PRESENT STUDY

Framework of the Peer Review Procedure

Drawing on previous studies that documented reader stances and response behavior facilitating peer response/review as well as the researcher’s prior experience with EFL writers, the researcher inductively designed a four-step training procedure for novice EFL reviewers to follow in order to generate revision-oriented comments during peer review.

The researcher first made a list of the facilitating roles and stances taken by student writers during peer response/review in previous studies (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a, 1995b; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Stanley, 1992; Tang & Tithecott, 1999; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). Roles/stances were examined recursively and grouped into categories by stance of response. For example, Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992) identified three stances (interpretive, prescriptive, and collaborative) in their study and Lockhart and Ng (1995a, 1995b) observed four (interpretive, authoritative, collaborative, and probing). Given the similarity between prescriptive and authoritative stances, both demonstrate preconceived ideas of what an essay should be like and propensity for trouble shooting, the researcher collapsed them under one category, prescriptive stance.

With regard to response types, Stanley (1992) identified seven different functions of talk on the reviewers’ part in peer response groups. Among the seven, advising (outlining the changes that they think the writer should make, either general or specific) and collaborating (paraphrasing the writer’s words or composing their
own sentences for the writer) both showed the reviewer’s purpose of making suggestions, despite the differing degrees of involvement of the reviewer’s part in the subsequent text revision. So the researcher combined these two into the category, making specific suggestions. Similarly, substrategies— instructing and giving directives—identified by Tang and Tithecott (1999) during peer scaffolding sessions were also combined into the same category (making specific suggestions) due to their similar nature.

Finally, the researcher chose those response types that could be specifically adapted to the context of EFL peer review and excluded those that were inapplicable (e.g., reading aloud and vocalizing private speech). Through constant comparison and contrast, the researcher identified the following four steps, which characterized four different stances reported to have benefited peer response/review in differing ways: clarifying writers’ intentions (probing stance), identifying problems (prescriptive stance), explaining the nature of problems (tutoring stance), and making specific suggestions (collaborating stance).

A training procedure requesting reviewers to assume different kinds of stances simultaneously is not unrealistic, given the observations of readers that “manifest features of both a dominant stance and a minor one” and “shift from one stance to another when giving feedback” (Lock & Ng, 1995a, p. 632). Although extant studies on reviewer stances facilitating peer response/review concurred on probing and collaborating stances, researchers also acknowledged the benefits of prescriptive and tutoring stances (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). The researcher’s prior experience with novice EFL writers revealed that prescriptive and tutoring stances

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were necessary because most EFL writers constantly grappled with format, organization, and linguistic issues while composing academic essays. In actuality, in the four-step procedure the prescriptive, tutoring, and collaborating stances were all premised on the probing stance. Reviewers clarify and solicit writers’ intentions first, point to and explain to writers the perceived problems or confusing parts that fail to achieve the intended meaning, and collaborate with them to work on different words, phrases, or ideas. The combination of four different stances reflects the researcher’s view of writing as both a process and a product. Confusing ideas are questioned and discussed so that more refined ideas or new ones emerge through negotiation. These ideas are then finalized in accurate forms and acceptable format through collaboration.

Figure 1 shows a detailed description of each stance and its corresponding step, along with the definition and examples. A step-by-step procedure may appear prescriptive to most native English or ESL writers who are accustomed to peer response groups where ideas and doubts can be exchanged and clarified during dynamic face-to-face interaction. Yet it provides novice EFL peer respondents with clear instructions on how to organize their commentary in a coherent manner. These proceduralized steps are especially important to EFL peer reviewers who are not accustomed to peer review practice but are required to perform it in class under time pressure.
Table 1
Definitions and Examples of the Four Proceduralized Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance: Step</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Behavior with similar intentions reported in other studies</th>
<th>Examples of comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probing: Clarifying the writer’s intention</td>
<td>Reviewers try to get further explanation of what writers have said or what is not clear to them in the essays (e.g., an unknown term, an idea)</td>
<td>-Pointing (Stanley, 1992)</td>
<td>What do you mean by ‘college-graduate society freshmen?’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Request for explanation (Mendonca &amp; Johnson, 1994)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Requesting clarification (Tang &amp; Tithecott, 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prescriptive: Identifying the problem</td>
<td>Reviewers announce a problematic word, phrase, sentence or cohesive gap</td>
<td>-Trouble sources (Tang &amp; Tithecott, 1999; Villamil &amp; de Guerrero, 1996)</td>
<td>I think on this point, the description of the two cultures is not parallel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring: Explaining the nature of the problem</td>
<td>Reviewers explain why they think a given term, idea, or organization is un-clear or problematic, which should or should not be used in the essay</td>
<td>-Explanations (Mendonca &amp; Johnson, 1994)</td>
<td>You should put some phrases before you make this quotation because the last paragraph is unrelated to the fourth paragraph.a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborating: Making specific suggestions</td>
<td>Reviewers suggest ways to change the words, content, and organization of essays</td>
<td>-Suggestions, Grammar corrections (Mendonca &amp; Johnson, 1994)</td>
<td>If you’re trying to say many people have more than one cell phone, maybe you can say it in this way → “The majority of people have a cell phone with them, some even with more than one.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Advising, Collaborating (Stanley, 1992)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Giving directives, Instructing (Tang &amp; Tithecott, 1999; Villamil &amp; de Guerrero, 1996)</td>
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</table>

a This example can be coded as an attempt both at explaining the nature of the problem and making suggestions.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An earlier quantitative analysis of the same study revealed that a group of EFL students were able to generate more specific and relevant written feedback on global features of their peers’ compositions after peer review training, which contributed substantially to subsequent student revision and enhanced revision quality (Min, 2006). Both analyses focused on quantifying figures. Neither examined student writers’ perceptions of reviewers’ stances, which are likely to be the key to the high acceptance of peer comments among student writers. The purpose of current study is to bridge this gap by interviewing student writers to gain their perspectives. The research questions addressed in this study are: (1) What did you think of your peers’ comments and stances prior to peer review training? (2) What did you think of your peers’ comments and stances after peer review training?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Subjects were 18 sophomores—16 females and 2 males—in the instructor/researcher’s writing class, with an age average of 19. Some were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and others Taiwanese. All were English majors and had passed the Intermediate Level English Test of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) administered by the Language Training & Testing Center in Taiwan before being admitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the
researcher’s university. Their English proficiency was between 523 and 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. None had had experience with peer review practice prior to the study.

**The Writing Class**

The focus of this yearlong writing course was to develop students’ expository essay writing skills. This course met twice a week for 18 weeks each semester. The instructor/researcher employed a process-product approach to writing. While properly formatted essays were required, brainstorming, discussion, drafting and peer review were all parts of the writing cycle. The “writing cycle” was modeled after Tsui and Ng’s (2000) except for the shorter duration (4 to 5 weeks v.s. 6 weeks), the omission of outlining and feedback to outlining, and the addition of an oral presentation after revising the first draft (See Min, 2006 for details). Peer review dyads were employed throughout the year. The reason for using written feedback was based on the assumption that it gives reviewers more time to think about how to clearly phrase their comments. It would also help the writers because they could review the comments as many times as they wanted while making revisions. The reasoning for conducting peer review in a dyad was to maximize the use of class time so that every student would receive comments from two reviewers during each peer review session.

Students were required to look for credible information and quote it to substantiate their opinions in their essays. Topics assigned included “The advantages/disadvantages of _____ (a new technical invention),” “How to Prevent Environmental Pollution,” “Factors
contributing to X’s success,” and “An Analysis of an Incident of Cross-Cultural Misunderstanding.” Although the instructor/researcher provided students with a guidance sheet (see Appendix A) during the peer review for the first topic, most of the students appeared not to understand how to comment given that most chose to correct grammar and some even answered the prompts of the guidance sheet with yes or no responses. Noticing the students’ confusion of how to make comments, the instructor/researcher embarked on a training session.

Training

The researcher conducted two-month peer review training. The training was in two parts: in-class training and after-class one-on-one conferences. The in-class training was to model to the students the techniques of using the four-step procedure, and the after-class one-on-one conferences were to address individual problems while employing the four-step procedure (see Min, 2006 for details in training).

Data Collection Procedure

After the peer review training, the researcher collected the students’ journals. The purpose of journal writing was to provide students with another means of private dialogue with the researcher regarding issues related to the writing class, including their opinions on the peer review training. After reading students’ journals, the researcher also conducted a semi-structured interview with each student for 20-30 minutes to further understand how they thought of peer comments and stances before and after the peer review training.
Each semi-structured retrospective interview with students included the following questions:

(1) What comments did you get most frequently from your reviewers prior to peer review training? What did you think of those comments?
(2) What comments did you get most frequently from your reviewers after peer review training? What did you think of those comments?
(3) What comments did you hope to receive, but did not usually get from your reviewers, prior to peer review training?
(4) What comments did you hope for but did not usually get from your reviewers after peer review training?
(5) In what tone and language did your reviewers phrase their comments prior to and after training? How did you feel about the tone and language?
(6) Did you incorporate peers’ comments into your revision prior to and after training? Can you give me an example in which you incorporated your peer’s comments and another in which you didn’t and explained why/why not.
(7) Did the tone and language of peer comments have an impact on your decision to respond to their comments in your revision prior to and after training?

A research assistant transcribed each audiotaped interview in Chinese, which was later translated into English by the researcher.

Analysis

The researcher employed a qualitative approach to analyzing students’ journal entries and interview data. Descriptive statistics were presented to give an overall picture of the writers’ general perceptions of stances assumed by peer reviewers prior to and after peer review training. In addition, the researcher and two independent raters also read the students’ responses in their journals to code and categorize their perceptions. First, the researcher and the two
Independent raters carefully read students’ journal entries to identify comments on and reflections of the peer review training. Next, they coded and labeled each comment. Then they screened all the codes and grouped together instances labeled with the same or similar codes, which was followed by a careful examination of the relationships between and among different codes. Codes with similar nature were then grouped into major categories to suggest emerging patterns. Finally, the researcher and the two independent raters reexamined each pattern to ensure its accurate reflection of the nature of its supporting data, and example(s) representing each pattern were selected to illustrate the nature of the pattern.

RESULTS

Writers’ Perceptions of Peer Comments and Stances Prior to Training

When interviewed about the comments received by writers, 83% \((n = 15)\) of respondents expressed that they most frequently received comments on grammar/word usage, followed by format and content, substantiating the highest frequency of occurrence of problem identification (44%) in reviewers’ comments reported earlier. Although all expressed appreciation of grammar and lexical correction, they also desired to have received more detailed suggestions on composing a fitting topic sentence and thesis statement and more concrete examples to support their ideas. To their regret, most writers considered reviewers’ comments on format and content too vague to offer any substantive help. Very few comments focused on clarifying
ideas. The following one was recalled by a writer during the interview.

I usually got two kinds of comments from my classmates. One was grammar correction, and the other was about format. I knew how to correct my grammatical error, but I sometimes didn’t know how to compose a thesis statement, because they [my classmate] just reminded me that I needed a thesis statement for my introduction paragraph. I wished they could [have] give[n] me some idea on how to compose a thesis statement, [even] just a word or something. (Ariel)

Another writer recalled an instance in which she was confused about her reviewer’s generic comments, “You need more examples.” She asserted that she gave an example already and did not understand why her reviewer could not see it; she wondered what other examples she could have offered. Perhaps due to the dichotomy between explicit correction on grammar and vague comments on content, 78% (n = 14) of the students acknowledged that they mostly responded to grammar/lexical correction in their revision. Only 22% (n = 4) attempted revision on content by adding, revising, reorganizing thesis statements and ideas according to peer feedback.

When asked about their perceptions of and feelings toward reviewers’ comments, 89% (n = 16) indicated that they felt like they were reading corrections from their teachers. The researcher’s observation also concurred with their perceptions. As demonstrated in the following comments, the reviewers appeared to issue commands to request full compliance when stating problems and making suggestions. “You should put some phrases before you make this quotation because the last paragraph is unrelated to the previous paragraph [sic].” “You need to rearrange the order of the sentences in
this example to make your description clearer.” “Add ‘off’ and delete ‘why’.”

Yet none expressed negative attitudes toward the prescriptive stance in comments. Most \((n = 15)\) desired a friendlier tone and collaboration from reviewers. They stated that addressing writers by their first names in commentary could reduce writers’ insecurity about their writing and lowered their defense mechanism, which helped them deal with reviewers’ comments much more easily. A dire need for reviewers’ collaboration was also pronounced in most interviews, as revealed in the following quote.

Sometimes I knew that I needed a thesis statement or a sentence to bridge the gap, but I couldn’t think of anything appropriate. It’s like a writer’s block. So I hoped that my reviewers could help me out. But they usually just pointed out the problem that I had already known without giving me concrete ideas to work on. (Claire)

When asked if the correcting language and impersonal tone in reviewers’ comments would affect their decisions to incorporate them into subsequent revision, all of the writers answered “no” regarding the language used in comments. In actuality, the decision to respond to peers’ comments did not depend on as much the language and tone as the clarity and convincingness of comments.

If I thought my reviewers had a point, I would follow their advice regardless of the tone or language, although a friendlier tone would [have] make [sic] me feel better when I first read the comment. But if I didn’t think the explanation was clear or convincing enough, I probably would ignore their suggestion. (Ted)
The following excerpt demonstrated the writer’s response to his reviewer’s suggestions despite her commanding tone.

**Example 1**
First draft: Cell phones cause problems in many ways. First of all, according to John A. Pica, an attorney at Angeles’s law firm, he says that “If these companies knew about the dangers of cell phone radiation, they should be punished dearly.” Based on the correlated reports, using cell phones constantly will make the brain diseased. People may even die because [of] the radiation. (Ted)

Comment: You should write down the specific disadvantage of cell phones first and then use the quotation [suggestion] — I think it’s much clearer, because I don’t know what is the first disadvantage you want to say at first [explanation]. And I think the quotation didn’t have a concrete report to show the seriousness [problem].

Revision: Cell phones cause problems in many ways that we can’t neglect. First of all, it is dangerous to be exposed to the cell phone radiation too long. If you use a cell phone constantly, your brain will be diseased. According to John A. Pica, an attorney at Angeles’s law firm, he says that “If these companies knew about the dangers of cell phone radiation, they should be punished dearly.” So it is better to decrease using cell phones.

As can be seen from the revision, the writer incorporated his reviewer’s demanded suggestion by describing the disadvantage first and substantiated it with a quote, although the quote did not elaborate much about the danger cell phones might inflict on users.

**Writers’ Perceptions of Peer Comments and Stances after Training**
When asked about the comments received by writers after the peer review training, 78% \((n = 14)\) stated that they received more probing questions about their intentions as well as concrete ideas and
suggestions about their content and organization, although they still received grammar/lexical feedback. All welcomed such a change as they wanted feedback on both global and local features. One student reflected, “Sometimes my thinking jumped too fast, and my reviewers’ questions prompted me to reconsider my logic and refine my ideas in a more coherent way.” The following excerpt about a cultural misunderstanding of a Japanese student attending a Taiwanese wedding ceremony illustrates his point. In the first paragraph, he described how astonished and angry the bride and the groom were when the Japanese student handed them a white envelope. Then he attempted to explain the cause of this misunderstanding in the following paragraph.

Example 2
First draft: Taiwanese have an idea rooted in mind: Red symbolizes good luck to people. So traditional marriage makes use of red in almost everything to pray for luck. Taiwanese also use red envelopes to express their congratulations to couples that get married. This Taiwanese custom has been handed down since a long time ago. (Daniel)

Comment: Is “red” the real cause of this misunderstanding? I think that the real cause is Taiwanese and Japanese different notions about “white.” What do you think? You can analyze when the white envelope is used in Taiwan and then add a bridge to link what kinds of situations people will use red envelope and then talk about the traditional wedding ceremony.

Revision: Taiwanese have an idea rooted in mind: Red symbolizes good luck to people. They always give red envelopes to people during merry events. So traditional marriage makes use of red in almost everything to pray for luck. Nevertheless, white envelopes are unfortunate and usually used in funerals in Taiwan. In Satoshi Tsumabuki’s case, it is no doubt that the couple was angry because the white envelope means cursing them to die.
Obviously preceding probing questions in his peer’s comments helped the writer clarify and refine his ideas.

In addition to probing questions, 89% \((n = 16)\) of the students found that their peers provided them with more specific feedback. Some even composed their sentences for the writer. One student writing about the “cultural misunderstanding” recalled that her reviewers gave her many concrete ideas to work on.

They advised me to talk about the Turkish table manner first and then talk about the American’s attitude toward it to make my explanation easier to understand. I revised according to their suggestions and found that the content was richer and more organized.

The following excerpt demonstrated that the peer’s suggestions prompted the writer to discover new ideas and organize them in a more coherent way.

**Example 3**

First draft: In Turkey, it’s impolite for a guest to accept the serving of food at first. Turks think that guests must refuse each offer of food for at least two times to be polite. But for the American host, he didn’t know that Hakan [a Turkish] was really hungry and felt troubled that which expressive way of asking more food could be allowed by Americans. There might be only two ideas in the host’s mind: Hakan was already full or Hakan didn’t like the taste of the dishes. (Mary)

Comment: The last sentence belongs to the American’s point of view. You could put this sentence in the next paragraph where you talk about their views. Here you can describe Hakan’s misunderstanding of the American host’s behavior. For example, “Hakan might consider the American host impolite because he didn’t sense his hunger…” In the third paragraph, you could describe more about the host’s possible misunderstanding about Hakan such as the two ideas—Hakan was full or Hakan didn’t like the taste of the dishes. Or you could describe more about American way of expressing themselves—directly.
Revision: In Turkey, it’s impolite for a guest to accept the serving of food at once. Turks think that guests must refuse each offering of food for at least two times to be courteous. So when Hakan refused the offer the 1st time, he didn’t know that his host would take his “no” seriously and stopped asking him if he wanted more. He just struggled in his mind whether he should ask for more food because he believed that guests should not receive the serving of food without saying “no” at first. He also felt that the American host was insincere and stingy because she did not offer food to him again.

Despite an obvious satisfaction with peers’ thought-provoking questions and specific comments, 40% ($n = 7$) of the writers said that they would like to have received comments on the overall organization of their essays or ways to conclude their essays but conceded that such requests were only likely to be met by teachers’ expertise. “I want comments on the organization of my composition but seldom get any. Only Amy (the writing instructor/researcher) would give me suggestions on the overall organization of my composition.” This finding corroborated Tsui and Ng’s (2000) finding that usually teachers could provide comments on the macro-level feature such as organization.

When inquired if they detected a change of tone and language in peers’ comments, 78% ($n = 14$) of the writers gave an affirmative answer. One student substantiated his perceptions of changes with the following statement,

…my reviewers used to give me suggestions by using “you should” or “you need to” in their comments. But I noticed that they use “you might want to” or “one way is to” in giving me advice after the training.
The following excerpt, a conclusion to a cultural misunderstanding caused by an English professor’s crossing legs during a lecture in Egypt, revealed the friendly tone discussed above.

**Example 4**
First draft: We should know the culture when we want to get in contact with this country [Egypt], and should know the different meanings of different postures in different countries. The posture considered proper in some place may not be suitable to the other one. We shouldn’t make the same mistake as the English professor, and we should understand that we should not only know how to speak a foreign language, but also foreign culture lest cause offenses. That is, we should all know the importance of different meanings of posture in different cultures. (Silvia)

*Comment: I like your content, but the way you construct your sentence can be more varied. I’ve noticed that you used a lot of “We should...” in this essay. Maybe you can use some other words to replace them, just to prevent monotony.*

Revision: We should know the culture when we want to get in contact with this country [Egypt], and know the different meanings of different postures in different countries. The posture considered proper in some place *may* not be suitable to the other one. *It is very important that we know* not only how to speak a foreign language, but understand its culture to avoid embarrassment and offenses.

When asked about their feelings about this tone change, all student writers expressed positive attitudes because they felt their peers were really trying to collaborate with them to express their ideas. Collaborative comments like “If you’re trying to give foreigners some ideas about funerals in Taiwan, maybe you can talk more about …” and “I can see in the 1st two sentences that you’re going to introduce the main purpose of this essay, it might be better for your audience to understand your idea if you...” abounded in peer feedback after peer
review training. Although all writers said that they incorporated peers’ comments into their revision at their own discretion (Mendonca, & Johnson, 1994), mostly relying on the convincingness and clarity of peers’ comments, they found that they received much more clarified and explicitly explained suggestions in a friendlier tone than before. Therefore, they incorporated more comments into their revision.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined the writers’ perceptions of reviewers’ comments and their stances prior to and after peer reviewing training. Retrospective interviews with student writers and perusal of their journal entries revealed that writers perceived peer comments to be more empathetic in perspective and more explicitly explained in a friendlier tone. Before the training, most students considered peer review as a task to correct grammar and format rather than an opportunity to exchange and discover ideas with the writers. Leaning toward the evaluating mode (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a), most students stayed on the task and faithfully recorded their answers to the guiding questions on the peer response sheet. The suggestions they offered were more like opinions from their perspectives rather than from the writers’ perspectives. Although this prescriptive stance could alert writers to the potential problems of their writing and provide them with reasons for revision, it tended to treat writing as a finished product rather than a springboard for exchanging and furthering ideas as the text is reviewed.
After the peer review training, student reviewers started to understand that the purpose of peer review was to assist writers to express their intended ideas in a way that is easy for the audience to comprehend. They viewed the text through the writers’ eyes and their comments reflected more collaborative stance post peer review training. Comments reflecting the probing stance revealed that reviewers operated in a discovery mode (Lockhart & Ng, 1995a), attempting to bring the confusing parts to the writer’s attention and expound the sources of confusion, thereby encouraging the writer to clarify, refine and shape their intended meaning. Furthermore, student reviewers often negotiate ideas or even construct sentences to help writers express their intentions after peer review training (See Examples 2 and 3). The willingness to expend time and effort in understanding writers’ intentions and collaboratively generating ideas or sentences was rare prior to peer review training.

This research partially answers the question of why there was such a high response rate to peer comments and enhanced revision quality in an earlier study (Min, 2006). A likely factor may be the effect of the peer review training on reviewers’ comments and stances. Post training, peer comments were frequently revision-oriented, engaging writers in clarifying intentions, reflecting on ideas, and puzzling out meanings in collaboration with peer reviewers. Some might argue that simply practicing peer review without any form of training would lead to a similar result. Possible as it may, this argument runs counter to what research evidence has shown. Students, both native speakers of English and learners who study English as a second/foreign language, are
usually unable to provide concrete and useful feedback (Leki, 1990; Tsui & Ng, 2000) and need teachers’ intervention.

CONCLUSION

The four-step procedure peer review training is a time-consuming and energy-exhausting job, yet student writers attested its impact on reviewers’ stances, proving that it is worth the researcher’s time and energy investment. If carefully designed and incorporated into the first year EFL writing curriculum, both EFL students and writing instructors can reap the harvest from the second semester on. The findings in the present study, along with other successful experiences (Berg, 1999; Liu & Sadler, 2000; Stanley, 1992) provide an incentive and a means to writing instructors who are interested in incorporating peer review into their writing instruction. For those who are interested in examining the impact of this four-step peer review training procedure, more research can be done with other EFL college students or different age groups (e.g., primary, secondary, or graduate levels) to see if similar impact on reviewers’ stances, writers’ perceptions, attitudes and subsequent revisions can be found. Further research is also needed to examine the impact of peer review training on the teacher’s own written commentary.
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Appendix A

Guidance Sheet

1. Read the introduction paragraph. Is there a thesis statement toward the end of the introduction? Does the thesis statement contain main ideas? How many main ideas are there? Please underline the thesis statement and mark 1, 2, or 3 on each main idea. Are these main ideas at the same level of generality? Are they sequenced in accordance with importance? If you can’t find a thesis statement, drawing on what you have read so far, what do you expect to read in the following paragraphs? Summarize it in one sentence and show it to your partner.

2. Now read the first few sentences in the second paragraph. Did the writer write according to your expectation(s)? If not, what did the writer write instead? Do you think that writer was sidetracked? Go back to the thesis statement to make sure that you understand the main ideas. Did the author talk about the first main idea in the thesis statement? If not, remind him/her that he/her should. Are there any concrete examples or explanation in this paragraph to support the main idea? Are they well balanced (in terms of sentence length and depth of discussion)? Are they relevant and sequenced properly? Is there any direct quotation or paraphrased information in this paragraph? Is the quotation supporting the argument the writer has made? Check the original source if your partner wrote a paraphrase to make sure that the paraphrase reflects accurate information.

3. Read the first sentence of the third paragraph. Did your partner use any transitions to connect this paragraph with the previous one? If
not, can you suggest one? Is there a topic sentence that corresponds to the second main idea in the thesis statement? Make a suggestion if there is not. Are there any concrete examples or explanation in this paragraph to support the main idea of this paragraph? Are they well balanced (in terms of sentence length and depth of discussion)? Are they relevant and sequenced properly? Is there any direct quotation or paraphrased information in this paragraph? Is the quotation supporting the argument the writer has made? Check the original source if your partner wrote a paraphrase to make sure that the paraphrase reflects accurate information.

4. Read the first sentence of the fourth paragraph. Does this paragraph connect well to the previous one? If not, can you suggest a sentence connector? Is there a topic sentence that corresponds to the third main idea in the thesis statement? Make a suggestion if there is not. Are there any concrete examples or explanation in this paragraph to support the main idea of this paragraph? Are they relevant and sequenced properly? Did your partner use pronouns and paraphrase to avoid repetition? Is there any direct quotation or paraphrased information in this paragraph? Is the quotation supporting the argument the writer has made? Check the original source if your partner wrote a paraphrase to make sure that the paraphrase reflects accurate information.

5. Read the conclusion. Does it begin with a restatement (but different wording) of the thesis statement? If not, suggest one. Does the conclusion move to more general statements on the topic as a whole? Does the conclusion contain too much irrelevant information to the thesis statement? If yes, make a suggestion.
外語寫作者對同儕評論者立場的看法：
一個質性研究

摘要
本研究旨在從寫作者的觀點檢視以英語為外語之大學
生在接受同儕寫作評論訓練前後，其評論時所採取的
立場是否有何差異。十八位學生參加為期兩個月之同
儕評論訓練，訓練包含四步驟：要求學生在評論時需
採取詢問、規範、指導、合作四種立場。經過研究者
訪談分析，結果顯示寫作者認為同學在接受訓練之
後，對寫作者的文章經常採取詢問的立場，受訓前較
常採取的規範者立場減少許多。此一立場之轉變，可
能有助於寫作者接受同儕評論者之意見，亦有助於作
文修改後的品質。本文作者認為此一訓練模式，在運
用同儕評論技巧以提升學生英語寫作能力的課程中，
可提供教師作為參考。

關鍵詞：同儕評論者立場 寫作者觀感 同儕評論訓練
英文寫作