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Placing Peer Response at the Center of the Response Construct

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This article reports on a large-scale study of peer and instructor response and student reflection on response. The corpus of instructor and peer response to 864 drafts of student writing was collected via ePortfolios from first-year writing courses and courses across disciplines at 70 U.S. institutions of higher education. The following questions guided a qualitative analysis of the data: (a) What are the similarities and differences in the ways instructors and peers respond to college writing? (b) What perspectives do college students have on the feedback they receive on their writing from instructors and peers? Three themes emerged from a review of the literature on peer and instructor response and the results of the analysis of the data: (a) peer responders tend to be more focused on global concerns than instructors, (b) peer responders tend to be less directive than instructors, and (c) students learn as much from reading their peers' drafts as they do from the comments they receive from peer responders or the instructor. The findings support an argument for placing peer response at the center of the response construct, rather than thinking of peer response as merely a complement to instructor response.

Keywords: peer response, peer review, peer editing

Peer response can play a central role in helping students revise their writing and learn about themselves as writers by reflecting on the writing of their peers. Research has shown that when students are given substantial training, a thoughtfully designed script, and a clear rationale, they value peer response and are capable of providing response that is similar to instructor response (Beason, 1993; Caulk, 1994; Choi, 2013; Devenney, 1989; Hamer et al., 2015; Miao et al., 2006; Patchan et al., 2009; Patton, 2012). Despite the evidence that student and instructor response can be of equal value, in the scholarship on peer response and in *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC) faculty development guides, peer response is typically framed as complementary to instructor response. Prominent response scholars who argue on behalf of peer response ultimately warn that instructor response should remain central in the classroom, in part because students report valuing instructor response more highly than response from peers (Chang, 2016; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Despite the reluctance to place peer response on equal footing with instructor response by even those who champion peer response, a comprehensive review of the literature on peer response and my own large-scale research into response has convinced me that peer response should be at the center of the response construct. Consider, for example, the quality of the following peer responses from student ePortfolios in my corpus:

The signs of ASD needed much more detail and expansion. You scratched the surface with some of their developmental impairments, but expand on them. How do these impairments compare to regular development and what does it mean for the child in their everyday activities?

I like that you mention how the artwork's original audience viewed the painting. It would be interesting if you went into further detail about how this painting affects our contemporary audience.

Organization is one thing to look at. For example, you discuss the significance of the authors' viewpoint before you begin your summary.

I can see how that seems like a good place to put it (so that the reader knows what the authors are about when they read the summary) but I think it belongs in the evaluation, where you can evaluate their credibility.

Although each of these comments are from students, they are strikingly similar to something I would write in response to my students' drafts. In my national corpus of response to college writing, peer response was similar to, and often perceived by students as more useful than, instructor response.

In this article, I begin to address the call from writing studies scholars for more large-scale research into response to writing (Evans, 2013; Lang, 2018) and more research on how students react to instructor and peer response (Anson, 2012; Ferris, 2011; Formo & Stalings, 2014; Lee, 2014; Sommers, 2006; Zigmond, 2012). My research corpus includes 864 pieces of student writing from student ePortfolios (445 instructor responses to drafts in progress and 419 peer responses to drafts in progress) and 128 portfolio reflection essays in which students reflect on peer and instructor response. The portfolios represent first-year writing courses and courses from across disciplines at 70 institutions of higher education across the United States. I analyze this data to explore the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: What are the similarities and differences in the ways instructors and peers respond to college writing?
- Research Question 2: What perspectives do college students have on the feedback they receive on their writing from instructors and peers?

To investigate these questions, I apply a constructivist framework and methodology. A constructivist approach to response takes into account the prominence of social-epistemic theories in recent response research (Anderson, 1998; Askew & Lodge, 2000; Evans, 2013; Price & O'Donovan, 2006; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006) and emphasizes the learner's central role in constructing response, including student self-assessment and peer response.

Review of the Literature on Peer Response

As part of a larger monograph project on response, I undertook a comprehensive review of the literature on responding to undergraduate college

writing, including research from writing studies, ESL/EFL, WAC, and international scholarship published in English. I used a snowball approach and reviewed over 1,300 books and articles on instructor and peer response, focusing on the most prominent themes regarding the similarities and differences between instructor and peer response.

Peer response is becoming more common in college courses across the curriculum, and WAC researchers have found that peer and instructor comments are similar in courses in the disciplines. Patton (2012) studied peer and teacher response in a large history course and found that students using the Scaffolded Writing and Rewriting in the Discipline (SWoRD) rubric-based system for peer response gave feedback that was “quantitatively and qualitatively similar to instructor feedback” (p. 139). In a study of a large engineering course, Hamer et al. (2015) also found that students gave feedback that is similar to instructor feedback. Beason (1993) studied peer and instructor comments in four WAC/WEC courses and found that 90% of the instructors’ concerns in their comments were addressed in student comments (p. 413). Patchan et al. (2009) coded more than 1,400 comments from undergraduate students, a writing instructor, and a content instructor in 29 categories and found students’ peer review comments were similar to instructor comments. The WAC research on peer response shows that students often made similar content-focused comments as instructors made and were capable of providing effective feedback on global features of writing.

In many studies of ESL/EFL courses, researchers have found that peer response is often nearly equivalent to and sometimes even more helpful than instructor response. Miao et al. (2006) compared a group of students at a Chinese university who received feedback from the instructor and a group who received feedback from peers and found that the peer feedback group made more global and meaning changes. Similar to Miao et al.’s findings, in a study of 39 University of Hawai’i ESL students and 13 instructors, Devenney (1989) found that teachers were much more likely to be directive and to focus on grammar, and that overall student comments were similar to instructor comments in tone and substance (p. 86). In a self-study of an ESL course in Germany, Caulk (1994) noted that 40% of instructor comments were reinforced in peer response papers

that received responses from at least three students (p. 184). Research has also shown that peer response, when implemented with rigorous training, is a highly effective pedagogy in mainstream first-year writing courses (Diab, 2011; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Tannacito & Tuzi, 2002; Zhu, 1994).

Perhaps the most important benefit of peer response is its support of student metacognition: Giving feedback to peers helps students improve their own writing. Nicol et al. (2014) note that 68% of students in an engineering course reported that participating in peer response “resulted in their reflecting back on their own work and/or in their transferring ideas generated through the reviewing process to inform that work” (p. 111), a result that Purchase (2000) also found in the implementation of peer response in a large engineering course. In a study of nine intensive English writing courses and 91 students, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) found that students who only gave peer feedback made more significant gains in their writing than students who only received peer feedback. Ballantyne et al. (2002) collected a questionnaire about peer response from 939 students, and the students reported that “peer assessment was an awareness-raising exercise because it made them consider their own work more closely” (p. 434).

Although the literature provides more evidence than is often acknowledged by writing instructors that peers can respond as effectively as instructors, some studies have found less-than-positive results for peer response. Researchers studying sheltered ESL/EFL courses have found that nonnative English speakers can struggle to respond to sentence-level issues (Choi, 2013; Diab, 2010; Ruegg, 2018; Wang, 2014). English language learners in sheltered courses may be skeptical of the value of peer feedback and may value teacher feedback far more than peer feedback (Amores, 1997; Berger, 1990; Leki, 1990; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Paulus, 1999; Saito, 1994; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zhang, 1995). Studies indicate that writers who had less experience with English were less likely to make substantial revisions based on response from peers (Allen & Mills, 2016; Van Steendam et al., 2010) and needed more training and direction to be able to make useful comments on the content of their peers’ writing (Guardado & Shi, 2007). Among most of the research studies that found

less-than-positive effects of peer response, one common feature is that each study involved a peer response treatment without any, or with very little, training (Amores, 1997; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Covill, 2010; Guardado & Shi, 2007; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992) or the use of peer response by instructors was not frequent enough for it to be taken seriously by students (Brammer & Rees, 2007).

Though I believe the research shows that in most contexts peers can provide feedback similar to instructor feedback, I do not argue that peer response should replace instructor response. In extensive reviews of the literature on response, Chang (2016), Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), and Hyland and Hyland (2006) found that studies strongly indicate that students preferred to receive both peer and instructor response. In a study of 250 students in 10 courses across six universities, Kauffman and Schunn (2011) found that students had more positive views of peer response when instructors also responded. Instructors bring a great deal of useful knowledge about genres, discourse communities, and disciplinary conventions to their responses to student writing. However, I believe that we should think of these assets of instructor response as a complement to peer response rather than thinking of peer response as a complement to instructor response. As my review of the literature indicates, a number of predominant themes point to the value of peer response:

- Theme 1: Peer responders tend to be more focused on global concerns than instructors.
- Theme 2: Peer responders tend to be less directive than instructors.
- Theme 3: Students learn as much from reading their peers' drafts as they do from the comments they receive from peer responders or the instructor.

In this article, I apply these themes to my corpus of instructor and peer feedback. My findings reinforce the value of making peer response central to the response construct.

Research Methods

As Evans (2013) observes, most studies of response “are small scale, single subject, opportunistic, and invited” (p. 77). To collect data on peer and instructor response that was unsolicited and that was on a larger

scale than most prior response research, from 2018–2019 I located all the undergraduate college student ePortfolios on the internet I could find, using key term searches such as “teacher comments,” “peer feedback,” and “peer response” with the term “portfolio.” Most of the 248 ePortfolios I collected include multiple artifacts of both peer and instructor feedback. I was initially surprised to find this large a quantity of student and instructor feedback available online, but it appeared that instructors asked students to include drafts with comments in their portfolios because students were required to refer to this feedback in a final portfolio reflection essay.

The ePortfolios represent first-year writing courses and courses from across disciplines at 70 institutions of higher education across the United States (see appendix for a list of the institutions). In the present study, I excluded instructor response to final drafts to make a parallel comparison between peer response to drafts in progress (419 responses) and instructor response to drafts in progress (445 responses). The ePortfolios were primarily from individual courses, but a handful were undergraduate career ePortfolios. Seventy percent of the responses are from first-year composition courses, and 30% are from courses across disciplines.

All of the artifacts I collected were published on the internet without password protection and were publicly available, so I did not seek out IRB approval for the research or ask for consent from each student. The students who published these portfolios knew their work would be publicly available on the internet, and many of the portfolios had an introduction page in which the students introduced themselves to a potential broader readership beyond the class. However, it is important to note that these portfolios were published to meet a course requirement, and in the interest of protecting the privacy of the students and instructors, I did not identify them by name. I used “X” in place of student and instructor names when quoting responses and reflections. I also refrained from making references to any of the institutions when I cited individual portfolios. In some ePortfolios, students displayed graded work, which is technically a violation of FERPA, and I did not include drafts in progress that were graded in my corpus.

Rutz (2004) argues that “piles of student papers may bear thousands of fascinating teacher comments, but at least half of the story remains untold as long as student writers are not part of the conversation” (p. 122). I was especially interested in studying how students react to response from their instructors and peers. I found useful qualitative data in the cases of student reflection on instructor and peer responses in process memos, web page introductions, and midterm and final portfolio reflection essays. Most of the portfolios contain at least some student reflection on peer and teacher comments, and a little over half of the portfolios (128) include extended portfolio reflection essays that reference peer and/or instructor feedback.

I took a deductive approach when analyzing the data in my corpus. I believed a deductive approach was appropriate, given that I conducted a comprehensive review of the response literature prior to analyzing the data and noted prominent themes from that literature. My process of analyzing the data consisted of three cycles. In the first cycle, I read the portfolio artifacts quickly, noting in a spreadsheet the extent to which they connected to or differed from the themes established from the literature review. In the second cycle, I read the artifacts more closely, saving both representative and discrepant example comments and making brief analytic memos in the spreadsheet. To peer check the reliability of my analysis and to check my own reliability over time, I engaged in a third cycle of analysis six months after the first two cycles. I shared a sample of twenty portfolios with two graduate students pursuing a doctorate in education at the University of California, Davis: Amy Lombardi and DJ Quinn. Amy and DJ had been students in a graduate seminar on response taught by Dana Ferris, which seminar I had audited. I provided Amy and DJ each with a stipend to participate in a three-hour reliability “sense-checking” activity. In the activity, I asked them to check the validity of my findings by reading a stratified sample of 10 portfolios each (seven first-year composition portfolios and three WAC course portfolios randomized within each strata, for a total of 170 peer and instructor responses to student writing). During this activity, I reread all 20 portfolios. We then did a 30-minute “peer debriefing” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192) and discussed the extent to which they perceived the themes from the literature and where my analysis

matched the data. Amy and DJ were in broad agreement with my analysis of the data in relation to the themes. They also noted additional discrepant examples and pointed out additional findings of interest.

Though I located qualitative patterns from the themes deduced from the literature, I made a conscious choice not to create a taxonomy of types of response and code discrete comments. Ferris (2003) warns that “counting schemes” may not capture the complexities of the response construct (p. 36), and other prominent response scholars have emphasized that coding and interpreting instructor comments in isolation can be reductive (Fife & O’Neill, 2001; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Newkirk, 1984; Phelps, 2000). In light of my constructivist framework, and because I did not have the benefit of member checking coded responses with the instructors and students in my research, I elected to focus on broader qualitative patterns deduced from themes in the literature rather than use a taxonomy to code discrete comments. In this qualitative and constructivist methodology, “labelling is done to manage data rather than to facilitate enumeration” (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 278). As Creswell (2013) notes, quantitative coding may not always work in a qualitative and constructivist research project because “counting conveys a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research” (p. 185). However, I did attempt to provide enough qualitative evidence from the ePortfolios to establish the patterns in my corpus and their connection to the themes from the literature.

Despite the size of my corpus, I cannot generalize these themes to all college response to writing in the United States, especially given the portfolio/process pedagogy bias of my sample. However, I believe the themes in my study confirm prior research on a larger scale and have implications for peer response in college writing, which I discuss in the conclusion. A study of this scale cannot include the level of context of smaller-scale, ethnographic research. In this way, my research is similar to other large-scale studies of response, including the studies by Connors and Lunsford (1988, 1993) of comments in 3,000 essays solicited from writing instructors across the United States, the analysis by Dixon and Moxley (2013) of 118,611 writing instructors’ comments on 17,433 essays at one institution, the lexical-based index by Ian Anson and Chris Anson (2017) of 50,000 first-year writing students’ peer response comments at one institution, the

analysis by Lang (2018) of five years of comments by first-year writing teacher assistants on 17,534 pieces of student writing at one institution, and an analysis by Wårnsby et al. (2018) of 50,000 peer reviews at three institutions. As was true for these researchers, I did not know the instructors' or students' intentions behind their comments or observe classroom interactions. However, unlike prior large-scale studies of response, I did have a degree of triangulation of data, given that I had the responses and students' reflections on response.

Findings

Theme 1: Global Concerns

The first theme I found in my review of the literature was that peer responders tend to be more focused on global concerns than instructors. Research has shown that many college instructors focus heavily on sentence-level concerns, even on drafts in progress (Anson, 1989; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Dohrer, 1991; Ferris et al., 2011; Glover & Brown, 2006; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Lee et al., 2018; Rysdam & Johnson-Shull, 2016; Snymanski, 2014; Stern & Solomon, 2006). The focus of the instructors' responses in my corpus ranges widely, but instructors did frequently make comments on global concerns, contrary to the findings of much prior research. The following excerpts from instructors' end comments are representative:

For the revision, you might consider evaluating a number of hate speech cases that have already been decided to see if you think Posner's formula can be applied to determine the correctness or incorrectness of these decisions.

As I note in the one of the bubbles above, the dog's paintings could present a real challenge to Rosenberg and other fans of abstract painting. Do you think that the dog's art delegitimizes the value of abstract art?

If you agree with Caruth's descriptions of trauma, then how does applying that description to these texts help us understand the texts in a new way, or how does the use of the texts expand or change Caruth's claims?

When the students in my study reflected on the global revision suggestions they received from instructors, they tended to talk about re-envisioning their work and growing as a writer. This appreciation of instructor's global comments and the discussion in students' reflective writing of specific revisions the students made in response to global comments, is prevalent in my corpus:

Dr. X proposed that I take a more argumentative position in my final draft, as well as suggesting possible positions. I ended up editing this part of the essay and my argumentative position as a result.

X felt the same way as she writes in the comments, "I'm not sure exactly what your thesis/problem statement/significance are going to be, so make sure you clarify." I took this comments into deep consideration and focused on significance and clarity to make sure my point came across more clearly in peer edits and the final draft.

My professor pushed me throughout the semester asking questions such as, what in the piece made me feel that specific emotion. . . . When considering all of these aspects of art, my analyses became more deep and well thought out.

Instructors in my corpus focused on global concerns more frequently than the results of previous research would have led me to expect; however, many instructors in my study did focus their response almost exclusively on local concerns. Sometimes these comments held a tone of frustration or even anger:

You did no editing?

You MUST correct your format.

You MUST put your Works Cited list in proper MLA format to receive a grade on the essay!!!

You should not make the same technical mistakes—citation, formatting, grammar, punctuation, and syntax errors—that you made in Major Essays 1 and 2.

This harsh tone and this focus on error is almost never true of the peer response in my corpus. The following excerpt from a script and peer response is representative of the tone and global focus of most of the peer response in my corpus:

What is the problem (write it here)? Do you believe it is truly a problem? How could the author be more convincing?

The problem is overcrowding on the Singapore transportation systems, and the inconvenience this causes its riders. I fully believe this is a problem because the author includes personal touches that make me feel as if I can experience the cramped buses too. I think the author could potentially expand upon the inconvenience that a cramped transportation system creates, other than just talking about the awkwardness of being ‘packed like sardines.’

Does the essay propose workable, realistic, well-thought-out solutions? What are some solutions the author hasn’t thought of?

The solutions proposed are workable and realistic. However, I do think they could be more well-thought out. By this I mean to say that the solutions need a little more backing them. They have a great general framework, but there needs to be more details. A potential solution the author has not thought of might be to run more buses. Although this is not the best option since it would not be environmentally friendly. The author suggested that there be an incentive to riding the buses at dead hours, and I think this idea is great but could use a little more backing it.

Does the essay demonstrate sound reasoning and logic with well-supported documentation?

I would say that it does! I think that the author could potentially draw from other cities and their successes (or even failures) in the realm of transportation. This may help him to gather more information, and also increase the credibility of his paper.

Does the conclusion motivate the reader toward action? Provide a suggestion or an alternative suggestion for a call to action from the audience.

The conclusion is good, but not as strong as it could be! I believe that the call to action could be much stronger than it currently is. I would suggest that the author review the problem, emphasize the MAIN proposed solution and then call directly to the transportation system make the change.

Just under half of the peer responses were guided by scripts like the one above. Additional examples of student comments illustrate the global feedback that was a common result of carefully scripted peer response:

5th paragraph does not address why some found Mapplethorpe's work offensive.

You should definitely have a paragraph about Liz and how she contrasts with the idea of traditional gender roles because I think this is essential to the understanding of Alfie.

She can discuss more about the product's con instead of just the pros. This can help the reader see what's the up and down side of the product so they can help make a judgment for themselves on the product.

In their reflective writing, students frequently comment on the ways peer response helped them to rethink their topics, develop their ideas, and reorganize their entire essays:

I received some critical feedback from my peers and I decided to change my topic to something I could describe fluently in more detail. Once I had my new topic, my story came to life.

Similar to the first assignment, my peer reviewer's comments dramatically helped me to better my essay and structure it to be more successful. While I had expressed all of my ideas in my paper, the paragraphs were not in a logical order and I did not go into detail on my main point enough. It helped me realize that although I had briefly stated my idea

about the film, I spent too much time summarizing and not addressing my main point.

The insight that my reviewer had difficulty distinguishing my thesis from the problem statement, meant that I needed to go back and rework my thesis statement.

There were two exceptions to this pattern of global comments in peer response. When peer response scripts had questions that could be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” students often gave a one-word response (e.g., “Is the organization of the visual argument clear and logical?” “Yes”). Another exception was an observation made by one of the graduate students who participated in the sense-checking activity. DJ noted that when students responded by writing directly on a draft, they were more likely to note grammar, syntax, and punctuation issues (93 of the 419 peer responses were images of handwritten responses written directly on hard copies of drafts).

Despite these exceptions, the example peer response and student reflections on peer response I’ve cited illustrate that with carefully designed scripts that focus students’ attention on content, students in my corpus are adept at providing global comments. Conversely, the instructors in my research sometimes focused solely on sentence-level issues and often responded in harsh and unforgiving tones regarding typos and misspellings on drafts.

Theme 2: Less Directive

The second theme I found is that peer responders tend to be less directive than instructors. Research has shown that students prefer feedback that is not overly directive (Arndt, 1993; Scrocco, 2012; Straub, 1997), but instructors often focus their response on directives and rewriting students’ sentences and words (Ferris, 2014; Ferris et al., 2011; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Rysdam & Johnson-Shull, 2016; Stern & Solomon, 2006). The instructors in my study frequently took control of students’ work; they deleted and rewrote phrases and passages as a form of response. Figures 1 and 2 are screenshots of paragraphs from two students’ papers with examples of this directive approach to response from two instructors.

Overly directive response can reinforce students' common misconception that an instructor's purpose in responding is to correct students' writing. One student in a reflection memo said, "I made the corrections the professor suggested," and another student said in a reflection on instructor comments, "Dr. X does a very good job of pointing out what is wrong in a draft so that we know exactly what needs to be fixed." Another student stated in their portfolio reflection essay that they prefer the instructor's comments to peers' comments because the instructor "always gave me the feedback I needed to understand the mistakes I made in order to make them right."

The instructors in my research who were less directive tended to be those that focused on asking questions, such as "Why should savers compromise? Doesn't an investment of \$1mm or \$2mm deprive them of an opportunity to create more wealth?" and "What is the prevailing scholarly interpretation of the film? How does your own analysis fit alongside these others?" Open-ended questions that are focused on developing content are sometimes present in the instructor response in my research, but this type of question is ubiquitous in the peer response. The following examples typify how students use open-ended questions in peer response:

What is the background on this quote? What point does it prove?

Elaborate here. . . . Why is it a secret? What would society think if they found out?

Has your mom's wisdom affected or influenced your ability to write?

Why did you decide to start with the negative aspects here rather than say your positive experiences you've had?

Even though peer responders are less directive than instructors and ask more open-ended questions, their comments are rarely vague or generic. Just as I have countless examples of useful global peer feedback in my corpus, I have countless examples of specific peer feedback. The following examples of peer response illustrate specific feedback from peers:

When you begin to talk about the different subjects within your paper make sure you take some time to go a little more in depth with the

Figure 2

Directive Approach to Response Using Handwritten Notes

Writing 100, B2
6 February 2010

Individual Importance
Mernissi's Character Development Subjugates Orientalism

Edward Said wrote Orientalism to undermine the every hegemonic ideal Westerners had about Eastern society. What he did not anticipate was the effect that the metacognition of this new school of thought would have on the cultural development of Eastern societies. The awareness Orientalism directly influenced the purpose of writing in the Middle East. Women are unable to present work without acknowledging its impact on a Western audience and find themselves tasked with presenting views that acknowledge their culture without edifying the social binary that leads to cultural stereotyping.

Authors who write in English must be the most conscious about this presentation. Lila Abu-Lughod criticizes Fatima Mernissi's Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood as a work that presents Islamic culture in binary, "pit[ting] her mother's strong wish for modernity...against all the restricting forces of tradition and the harem. (108) But Abu-Lughod mistakenly acknowledges the axes of influence which only exist in Mernissi's environment as the dominant portrayal of modern life in the novel. However, the ambivalent voice of young Fatima views the world with a mind that doesn't adhere to any particular ideology. Through introspective reactions to her environment we are able to discover a voice that is individual, though she does acknowledge some binary thoughts, her indefinite conclusions are

Handwritten notes:

- This is not that important unless more closely connected to common ground*
- Start with this!*
- summary of common ground?*
- Are you saying that there are different axes of influence?*
- good*
- What are these conclusions?*
- What reactions? give one or two specific instances, explore them in your paper*
- argument needs to make a claim about what these are → or what her lack of an ideological meaning → is it a form of abstraction? give specific example*

arguments that you are making. ‘Integration is necessary in order to save education systems from falling even further into the impersonal abyss of meaningless knowledge before it is too late.’ This sentence is very broad which generalizes integration and leaves it up to the reader’s imagination to think up of how the integration should take place. I suggest going a little more in depth with the topics that you bring up. In this case integration needs to be explained a little bit more.

She should describe the Chinese traditions in full detail and maybe even have a separate paragraph for each benefit the goji berry gives to people. If she does this, the audience will have an extremely clear mindset and will be able to learn many new things about the goji berry.

In their reflections on peer response, students frequently stated their appreciation for specific feedback and articulated the substantial revisions they made based on their peers’ advice:

X in particular, was specific. For example, he told me to describe my observation more, and to explain what different exercises were going on at that time. I was able to look at my paper from the reader’s perspective, and realize that if I were reading my paper, the thoughts appeared to be vague.

In X’s peer review of my analysis, he stated: ‘Every detail you give about a section should be backed up with analysis. Try not to describe what a certain tab entails just for the sake of making sure you describe every bit of the website’ An example X provided was related to the paragraph in which I explained the ‘issues’ tab. When looking back at my paper, I noticed that the whole paragraph only provided a description of the tab.

In most cases, the students in my research who received feedback from three or four peers received more helpful questions and specific, but not overly directive, feedback on a broader array of revision concerns than the students who only received instructor feedback.

Theme 3: Learning From Peer Drafts

I cannot emphasize enough the degree to which my research confirms prior research regarding the value students see in reading and responding to their peers' drafts (Guilford, 2001; Mulder et al., 2014; Nicol et al., 2014). This third theme is one of the strongest patterns I noted in my corpus: Students learn as much from reading their peers' drafts as they do from the comments they receive from peer responders or the instructor. Students in my corpus often reflected on how much they learned from reading their peers' drafts and how they were able to apply what they learned to improve their own drafts:

Peer review definitely changed the way I write. When I read over a classmates essay and edit it, I start to think about my essay and if I have that same problem.

Likewise, reading the work of my peers has helped me see the good and bad in my own writing as well.

Having someone who is doing the same assignment read and critique my paper helps give me new insight into what I need to improve, and reading someone else's draft often helps me think of improvements I need to make in my own paper.

I can see techniques a classmate use, and look for ways to apply them to my papers.

Students articulated revisions they made to their own writing based on their analysis of their peer's writing. One student wrote in a reflective essay, "When I reviewed one commentary about underage drinking, I saw how she used a lot of pictures to support her argument, and I realized this would be a good idea for my paper too." Another example of a revision based on peer response comes from a different student's reflection on peer review:

Peer reviewing my classmates' papers have also helped me learn to clarify my own ideas. When I read X's paper about her dorm she had a very clear proposal and solution. After reading hers I went back into my own

paper and clarified my proposal and solution. I did not copy her, but the process of peer review helped me learn how to be a better writer.

Even students who were at first skeptical of peer response acknowledged that they learned to improve their own writing through the act of reading and responding to their peers' drafts. An excerpt from one student's midterm reflection is representative of a pattern I saw in students' reflections regarding their shifting attitudes about peer response:

I personally do not care for peer review because none of my peers are accomplished writers. They are just like me, still discovering the writing world. However what I do like from peer review is reading others papers, especially when having the same prompt. Reading the paper gives me ideas for my own paper or inspires me to write about another topic that is similar. Reading these papers also can show me what does not work too well, which then I reevaluate my own paper to see if I made some of the same mistakes.

Even more than the comments they received from peers, the benefits gained from reading peers' work persuaded even the most resistant students in my corpus to see value in peer response.

Discussion

The results of my national study of peer and instructor response reinforce on a large scale the three predominant themes deduced from my comprehensive review of the literature on response:

- Theme 1: Peer responders tend to be more focused on global concerns than instructors.
- Theme 2: Peer responders tend to be less directive than instructors.
- Theme 3: Students learn as much from reading their peers' drafts as they do from the comments they receive from peer responders or the instructor.

These three themes connected to strong patterns in all three cycles of my analysis of the corpus, including the final reliability sense-checking activity with the two PhD candidates. Although my constructivist, qualitative methodology did not lead me to apply a taxonomy of comments and enumeration of comment types, the evidence cited from student

and instructor comments—triangulated by students' reflections on peer and instructor comments in portfolio reflection essays—supports the strong presence of the themes from the literature review in my corpus. These themes have important implications regarding the value of shifting our focus in the teaching of writing to place student self-assessment and peer response at the center of the response construct.

Implication 1: Peer Response on Drafts in Progress

One implication concerning the shift in focus of the response construct is that peer response has the potential to be as valuable as instructor response on drafts in progress. The peer reviewers in my research were more focused on global concerns and less directive than instructors. The hallmarks of effective response to drafts in progress are the peers' emphasis on global issues and the lack of wrestling control of the writing from the author. Peer response based on a script provided by the instructor yielded the most global and least directive comments in my research, and students who received guided feedback on a draft in progress from at least three peers were given more global and specific feedback than students who only received feedback from the instructor.

Implication 2: Deciding Whether to Implement Peer Response

Another implication is that the quality of peer comments should not be the deciding factor in whether or not to implement peer response. My research provides large-scale evidence of an under-appreciated theme from the literature on peer response: Students learn as much from the simple act of reading their peers' drafts as they do from any comments they receive from peers. Perhaps in some classroom contexts, peer response may not always result in feedback as valuable as instructor response, such as preparatory sheltered courses for nonnative English speakers or basic writing courses at open-admission institutions. But in any classroom context, students can find value in reflecting on the ways that their peers have responded to an assignment prompt.

Implication 3: Instructor Response as a Complement

The third implication is that peer response should be the primary mode of responding, and instructor response should serve as a complement to

peer response. Thinking of peer response as merely complementary to the instructor-student dyad in the design of the response construct fails to acknowledge and take advantage of the empirical evidence for the benefits of peer response. Instructors should shift the primary labor of response from the instructor to the students. This change requires that instructors now focus their primary labor on designing the response construct rather than responding to student drafts. In some contexts, instructor response may be more integral—for example, on an assignment that asks students to compose in a complex disciplinary genre that the students are unfamiliar with. However, in most contexts, instructor response can serve to reinforce and supplement peer comments rather than peer comments being thought of as supplement to instructor comments.

Implication 4: Designing Peer Response and Training Students

The final implication is that instructors should devote less time to responding and more time to designing peer response and training students to respond to each other. Designing the response construct for a shift in focus from instructor response to student response means requiring frequent peer response, designing scripts to guide student response, creating some degree of accountability for peer responses, and presenting a rationale to students as to why peer response is valuable and central. It also means devoting substantial time to training students in responding to their peers. This might involve asking students to reflect on their prior experiences with peer response, having students collaboratively create class guidelines for responding to their peers, practicing response on a student draft as a class before engaging in the first peer response, sharing examples of good responses after the first peer response workshop, and asking students to reflect on the feedback they received from peers in process memos and revision plans.

Conclusion

In Writing Studies, ESL/EFL, and WAC scholarship and practice, we have successfully made the argument for teaching writing as a social process and including peer response as a part of the response construct. In my research and experience as a writing instructor, I have found that peer response can accomplish more than we often give it credit for. It is time

to trust what we have learned from research and practice and move peer response to the center of the response construct.

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Appendix

Institutions Included in the Research

Alvin Community College
Alverno College
Arizona State University
Bloomsburg University
Boise State University
Boston University
Brigham Young University
California State University–Long Beach
California State University–Fullerton
California State University–Northridge
College of Southern Idaho
College of Southern Maryland
Colorado State University
Dartmouth College
DePaul University
Elizabethtown College
Fairfield University
Ferris State University
Fresno State University
Grand Canyon University
Iowa State University
Kingsborough Community College
Lewis and Clark College
Manhattanville College
Mercy College (NY)
Miami University
Mississippi State University
Mount Mary University
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University
Norwalk Community College
Ohio State University

Oregon State University
Otis College of Art and Design
Penn State University
Rowan Cabarrus Community College
Rutgers University
Sacramento State University
Salem State University
Salt Lake Community College
Santa Clara University
Seton Hall University
Skidmore College
South Piedmont Community College
Southern Illinois University–Carbondale
St. John’s University
Texas Wesleyan University
Texas Tech University
University at Buffalo SUNY
University of California–Irvine
University of California–Los Angeles
University of California–Merced
University of California–Santa Barbara
University of Central Florida
University of Kentucky
University of Hawai‘i–Mānoa
University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina–Charlotte
University of Rhode Island
University of Richmond
University of South Florida Polytechnic
University of Tennessee–Martin
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point
Utah State University
Wake Forest University

Weber State University
West Valley College
York County Community College

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