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The Potential of Flipped Learning to Prepare ESL Students for Peer Review

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Peer review is frequently used in both first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) writing courses to help students develop reading and writing skills and foster interaction and collaboration. To maximize these benefits in the L2 classroom, instructors should train their students to provide feedback to their peers (Lam, 2010; Rahimi, 2013; Rollinson, 2005). However, sufficient training and practice can require considerable class time. In this teaching article, we detail how we used a flipped learning approach to prepare undergraduate international students to conduct peer review in a university-level English as a Second Language reading and writing course. First, we discuss how we used flipped learning in four course sections in the Fall 2018 semester to structure peer review training both in and out of the classroom. Then, we reflect on the benefits and considerations concerning how to implement flipped learning for peer review and conclude with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: peer review, flipped learning, feedback, academic English, post-secondary learners

Liu and Hansen Edwards (2002) define peer review as a process in which students perform the “roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other’s drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing” (p. 1). During the peer review process, students work together to evaluate each other’s papers and negotiate meaning about their writing (Liu & Hansen Edwards, 2002). Perhaps one of the most beneficial outcomes of peer review is that it provides English as a second language (ESL) learners with the opportunity to engage in meaningful communicative activities and receive feedback on their work from a reader other than the instructor.

Scholars have asserted that peer review is most effective when thoughtfully incorporated into instruction and then practiced in the classroom (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Kim, 2015). Nevertheless, training students to be successful reviewers and holding peer review sessions requires substantial time during class (Brammer & Rees, 2007; Rollinson, 2005). One way to address this challenge is to implement flipped learning, which “inverts the traditional classroom model by introducing course concepts before class, allowing educators to use class time to guide each student through active, practical, innovative applications of the course principles” (Flipped Learning Global Initiative, n.d.). Flipped learning allows instructors to facilitate analysis and evaluation, the highest skills on Bloom’s taxonomy, by moving direct instruction out of the classroom and use face-to-face class time to engage students in collaborative work based on the content learned at home (Brinks Lockwood, 2014). The result of this “flip” offers more opportunities for active learning, formative assessment, and interaction in a student-centered environment (Kostka & Marshall, 2017).

While some literature has explored how technology supports peer review (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Yu & Lee, 2016), we do not know of any scholarship that has considered how flipped learning can support instruction on peer review. In this teaching article, we aim to fill this gap by providing a reflection on how we utilized flipped learning to prepare students for peer review in an undergraduate writing class for English language learners. We begin by discussing literature on peer review in second language (L2) writing and flipped learning, and then we detail

how we implemented flipped learning for peer review in our own classes. We conclude by reflecting on our approach to offer pedagogical implications and future directions.

Literature Review

Peer Review in L2 Writing

Scholars have identified numerous benefits that peer review affords L2 writers. For instance, through peer review, L2 writers improved their own writing skills (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009); practiced critical thinking, such as analysis of work and negotiating meaning (Rollinson, 2005; Vorobel & Kim, 2014); constructed a comprehensible paper in terms of content and language (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Yu & Lee, 2016); collaborated and interacted with others (Hu & Lam, 2010; Tsui & Ng, 2000); developed learner autonomy (Hu, 2005; Hu & Lam, 2010; Yu & Lee, 2016); and practiced the writing process (Chen, 2018; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Rahimi, 2013) through mutual scaffolding (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Teo, 2006). In addition, because of the communicative nature of peer review, ESL students could sharpen their social skills (Chang, 2016; Hu & Lam, 2010; Kim, 2015; Yu & Lee, 2016), pragmatic skills (Vorobel & Kim, 2014; Yu & Lee, 2016), and critical-thinking skills in tandem with academic language to negotiate the meaning of written comments (Vorobel & Kim, 2014). All of these benefits can help students' writing development and knowledge of the writing process.

Nevertheless, several challenges can arise during peer review. For instance, students may have different communication styles, feel reluctant to challenge a peer, or not value peer collaboration (Carson & Nelson, 1996). Students may also feel that the instructor is more qualified than their peers to provide feedback on their writing (Chang, 2016; Rollinson, 2005; Yu & Lee, 2016). Additionally, students' varying proficiency levels can challenge the successful implementation of peer review in terms of both the quantity of comments (Allen & Mills, 2016) and the type of comments students provide each other (Kamimura, 2006). Finally, students' range of prior experiences with peer review may also impact their ability to fully trust their peers' feedback (Chen, 2018).

Training students to engage in peer review can help address the potential challenges. Providing a purpose for peer review and carefully considering its implementation can ensure a more effective and efficient process (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Min, 2016; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012) and foster positive attitudes among students (Brammer & Rees, 2007). In particular, training can improve the types of comments that are provided and incorporated in papers (e.g., clarifications, suggestions; Lam, 2010), allowing students to prioritize meaning and avoid focusing feedback on grammatical errors (Min, 2006). By explaining how peer review works and guiding students through a linguistically and cognitively demanding task, students develop a solid foundation to successfully complete a review (Lam, 2010; Min, 2006; Rahimi, 2013; Rollinson, 2005).

Flipped Learning

Flipped learning provides an effective method of ensuring that students have the time and instructional support they need to be effective reviewers. When content that is less cognitively demanding is introduced outside of class, the instructor spends more time in class on cognitively demanding tasks—that is, applying what students learned—when peers and the instructor are present to help and collaborate on those tasks. This approach differs from a traditional one in which content that requires skills lower on Bloom’s taxonomy (e.g., remembering, comprehension) is introduced during class, and students work outside of class to apply their knowledge on tasks that require higher-level cognitive skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Brinks Lockwood, 2018).

Both traditional and flipped approaches to peer review training have the same objectives: Teach students about what peer review is, why it is done, and how to provide valuable feedback. However, achieving these objectives differs in terms of where and how learning occurs. In a traditional approach, students likely learn about peer review through direct instruction, which is “any teaching technique in which information being taught is presented in an organized, sequenced way by a teacher, explicitly directed towards the student” (Talbert, 2017, pp. 11–12). For example, an instructor discusses the steps in the process and the types of comments to give; then, students apply what they learned in class to read each other’s papers. Direct

instruction thus takes the form of a lecture or similar teacher-led activity. In some cases, students learn the content through instructional videos that mirror teacher-led classes (Allen & Mills, 2016).

When the peer review lesson is flipped, direct instruction about the peer review process is moved out of the classroom, so students have more time in class to ask questions and apply what they have learned. This approach differs from studies that have used instructional videos to teach students about peer review in class (Allen & Mills, 2016; Min 2016) because students learn about peer review outside of class, where they work at their own speed and review materials as often as they need. In class, instructors assess students' understanding of peer review before the actual reviewing begins, ensuring that all students have understood the content. We see the flipped learning approach as particularly beneficial for ESL students because it allows them ample time to digest the content and ask the instructor questions before applying what they have learned to peer review.

The Approach

Both authors taught and developed the curriculum of an academic ESL reading and writing course, which was offered in a two-semester pathway program for undergraduate international students at a large urban university in the United States. In the Fall 2018 semester, we each taught two sections of the course and collaborated to develop course syllabi, teaching materials (e.g., handouts, vocabulary worksheets), assignments, and assessments. Students enrolled in the course were primarily from China, but there were also students from South America, Europe, the Middle East, and other Asian countries; class sizes were between 12 and 15 students. One of the primary objectives of the course was to familiarize students with the fundamentals of academic writing, such as how to identify and adjust writing to different audiences, integrate outside sources into texts, and write for different purposes. Throughout the semester, students read academic papers on a wide range of topics, studied academic vocabulary and collocations, and wrote three source-based papers.

In our flipped peer review lesson, students learned about the basic principles of peer review by watching a video outside of class and engaging with its content. Flipped learning scholars note that videos are not needed to deliver direct instruction outside of class (Bergmann & Sams, 2014;

Brinks Lockwood, 2014; Talbert, 2017), but we prefer to use videos because they provide additional listening practice for students. While watching the videos, students practiced note-taking, received authentic listening input, practiced summarizing without borrowing too heavily from the source, and identified main ideas, all of which reinforced skills students were learning across their English language classes.

For this particular peer review lesson, we assigned three instructional videos from YouTube. We both assigned a video created by the Ohio State University entitled “Constructive Peer Editing” (OSU flipped ESL, 2015), and Catherine chose two supplementary videos: “Peer Review: Commenting Strategies” (umnWritingStudies, 2013) and “Otis College: Peer Writing Review Process” (OtisCollege, 2011). The OSU video is less than 10 minutes long, and the other two videos are each less than five minutes long. Keeping the length of videos under 15 minutes aligns with flipped learning best practices and helps students remain engaged (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The language level in each video is also appropriate for our students, and we made sure that closed captioning was available in all three videos to support listening comprehension.

To encourage engagement with the content instead of passively watching the video, students completed specific tasks while watching (Voss & Kostka, 2019). For instance, Ilka asked students to take handwritten Cornell notes on the video’s main ideas, and Catherine chose to give students a more structured handout. Figure 1 provides instruction and question samples from the worksheet that students were asked to complete in Catherine’s class. These tasks allowed students to listen actively and identify key concepts, both of which supported individual students’ learning of content outside of class (Voss & Kostka, 2019).

Figure 1*Questions to Foster Learning Outside of Class*

Instructions	Watch the following three videos and answer the questions associated with each. Summarize what you learn; you <u>cannot</u> copy directly what you hear in the video. Don't forget to include a reference!
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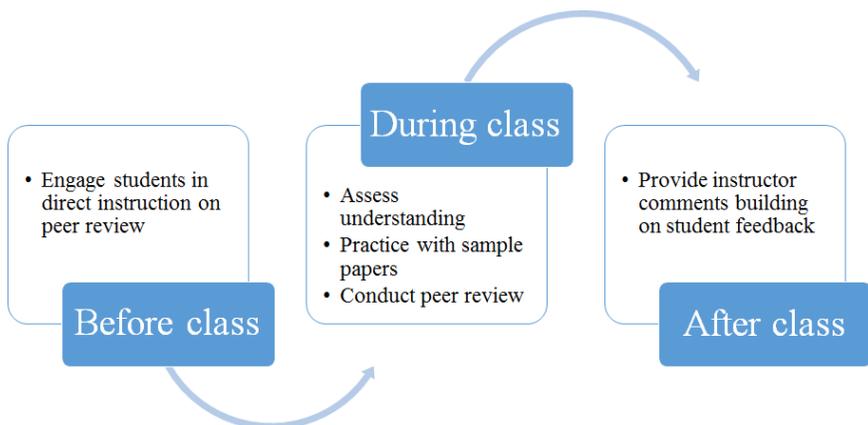
Questions	<p>What is the difference between global and local aspects of feedback?</p> <p>When do you focus on global and local aspects when completing peer review?</p> <p>Name four things you should and should not do during peer review.</p> <p>What is the purpose of peer review? Why is it important?</p> <p>a) What is something you learned about peer review?</p> <p>b) What questions do you have about peer review?</p>
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In class, checking students' comprehension of the material learned outside of class and holding them accountable for doing the work are critical in flipped learning (Voss & Kostka, 2019). Different types of formative assessments can be used to measure how much students understand, such as entrance tickets that contain basic comprehension questions, short multiple-choice quizzes, one-sentence summaries, or game-based polling software (Voss & Kostka, 2019). Catherine and her students discussed the handout they completed for homework and then completed a practice review together as a class. Alternatively, Ilka gave students a brief, ungraded quiz to quickly check comprehension before moving forward in the lesson. The main objective of these formative assessments in both classes was to ensure that all students had understood the content provided to them outside of class so that more higher-level activities could follow.

We then gave each student a copy of the peer review worksheet (see Appendix), which included categories for both global issues (e.g., paragraph structure, organization) and local issues (e.g., topic sentences, grammar), as well as space for students to write general comments about strengths and areas to improve. We also gave each student an example paper from a former student. We then reviewed the worksheet questions as a class and completed a practice review. As Berg (1999) states, by reading a sample paper together, "students come to realize that there are

many possible ways to revise and improve writing, and that they understand the distinction between revision and editing” (p. 22). During this practice review, we focused on helping students identify strengths and areas to improve, and we were also able to answer any questions about the paper. Finally, we showed students our own manuscripts with reviewer comments to help them understand that peer review is an authentic and common academic practice (Berg, 1999); students are usually delighted to see that instructors also benefit from feedback, writing multiple drafts, and sharing our work with other readers.

Once our practice session was completed, students engaged in peer review of each other’s papers. While they read and discussed each other’s work, we circled the room to answer questions, check in with pairs, encourage discussion, and address any concerns that arose. After class, we collected students’ papers and peer review feedback forms, read through all comments, and added our own feedback on top of the students’ feedback. By combining our feedback with that of the peers, we hoped to minimize the time students would need to read through peers’ comments (Lam, 2010) while also supporting the feedback that peers provided (Chang, 2016). We included our own summary of two to three strengths and one to two areas to improve for the next draft. To reinforce training provided during the first paper, each time students completed peer review over the semester, we briefly reviewed the process students were expected to follow and the same (or similar) during and after steps of the training. Figure 2 describes the steps we took to train students to complete peer review before, during, and after class.

Figure 2*Overview of a Flipped Learning Approach to Peer Review Training***Discussion**

One of the greatest advantages of flipped learning is the ability to reorganize time spent on learning both in and outside of the classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). Indeed, we have found that we can control the pace of class more effectively when we move direct instruction out of class (Brinks Lockwood, 2014). In a previous version of the course, when we used class time to teach students about peer review, they would either have insufficient time to review their peers' work or finish too quickly. Another advantage of flipped learning was that we could address homework questions more effectively because we conduct formative assessments before peer review begins and answer students' questions at the start of class. When we used to discuss peer review for the first time during class time, answering questions and completing the peer review felt rushed. With flipped learning, we were also able to address individual questions that students may not have felt comfortable asking in front of the class. For instance, in entrance tickets, students have asked what they should do if they disagree with their classmates' comments or feel that their classmate's feedback is inaccurate. We could answer these important questions without compromising students' anonymity.

We have also found that we have more in-class time to devote to peer review itself. When we tried to fit teaching about peer review, answering questions, and conducting peer reviews in one class, students were often left with less time to work on peer reviews. With direct instruction moved outside of class, we found that students had twice as much time to collaborate. Students could take their time on each review, read papers multiple times, and then discuss feedback with each other, focusing on content and quality of feedback. We also had more time to visit peer groups to clarify issues as they arose, which helped us mitigate students' concerns that peers did not provide adequate or good-quality feedback (Chang, 2016; Hislop & Stracke, 2017; Kim, 2015). We have noticed that students seem more motivated to incorporate their peers' feedback knowing that we would also review it, address any misguided comments, and offer our own comments and suggestions. Nonetheless, we have found that with sufficient training, students' feedback is much more accurate, and we rarely need to mediate changes.

Finally, we have found that using a flipped learning approach helped students overcome perceptions that their or their peers' proficiency level inhibited them from providing sufficient feedback (Chen, 2018; Hu & Lam, 2010; Kim, 2015). While students enrolled in our program had an average Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 86, there was a range of proficiency levels in our classes. We have found that moving direct instruction about peer review outside of class helped students to "work at their own pace and work for as long as they want or need in any way they want in order to comprehend the content" (Brinks Lockwood, 2014, p. 5). Students who had either higher proficiency or knowledge of the content could watch a video once and comprehend the necessary information; students who had lower proficiency benefitted from watching a video multiple times, pausing to look up words, and listening with closed captions. When students arrived in class, we were much more confident that they were adequately prepared for engaging in peer review and recognized that the process was beneficial for their writing (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

Nonetheless, we anticipated challenges when we implemented the flipped learning approach. First, we were concerned that students would not complete their out-of-class work. Indeed, a successful class depends on

the preparation students complete before class (Talbert, 2017), though this concern is not specific only to flipped learning. Fortunately, we found that students were rarely unprepared for class, as the work they completed at home was neither too advanced for their language level nor too time-consuming. Nevertheless, if students were unprepared, we typically either gave them time in class to complete their homework (i.e., time to watch the videos and complete the handout) or paired unprepared students together to learn the content while reducing their participation grade for the day. Talbert (2017) discussed other ways to minimize the likelihood that students come unprepared for class, such as clarifying expectations for homework, providing support for students as they learn outside of class, and assigning a manageable amount of work for students to complete.

Another challenge was the extra time we spent searching for appropriate materials to support learning outside of class. We wanted to find videos that were appropriate for the course, students' proficiency levels, and learning objectives; however, we both needed time to watch several videos and find ones that adequately fit these criteria. The videos we used were lecture-based, and they described what peer review was and illustrated how to conduct peer review. One of the videos included a brief role play of students reading each other's papers. However, we would have preferred to assign just one video that addressed all of these topics. In the future, we plan to create our own video content for students to watch at home. We would then have the opportunity to include all necessary and helpful content, embed interactive elements into the video (e.g., built-in questions to assess comprehension as students watch), make delivery more streamlined (i.e., assign only one video instead of multiple videos), and align the video content with specific writing assignments in the course. All of these improvements can make out-of-class learning more engaging for students and help us maintain a personal connection to students while they learn outside of class (Bergmann & Sams, 2014).

Although this article offers a pedagogical reflection on peer review training for ESL students, there are multiple considerations for future research. To understand whether flipped learning provides a benefit to students' learning of peer review, several variables should be compared between student performance and peer review in a nonflipped lesson

versus a flipped lesson. First, it is crucial to examine whether the extra time provided by flipping results in more comprehensive, appropriate, and varied feedback. For ESL students who are learning the process within the United States education system, the effect of their motivation, perspectives, and other factors (e.g., language proficiency, first language background, cultural norms, and ideologies) on peer review should be studied. Finally, for pedagogical purposes, a robust analysis of student feedback regarding the flipped learning approach and peer review, as well as their thoughts on what they learned, is necessary to understand what the strengths and weaknesses are of training and how to develop the lesson in the future.

Conclusion

By flipping our preparation for peer review, we have applied a unique pedagogical model to a commonly used approach in writing classrooms. We believe the greatest advantage of flipping peer review is that it allows students more time to learn and understand the basics at their own pace, practice and ask questions, and work with their peers during review. Anecdotally, we find that students engage more with peer review and are more motivated to provide focused, quality feedback to their peers. Students also learn to see each other as part of a broader community of writers, which includes academics and professionals in a field. We believe that training students, making the peer review process student-centered, and not undermining their feedback to one another provides students with the tools and confidence needed to participate in peer review. When we are able to take special care to maximize the success of peer review, as supported by flipped learning, students can overcome their reluctance to become successful reviewers and writers.

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Appendix

Sample Peer Review Worksheet for Summary and Response Paper

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

Introduction

1. Is the main topic of the paper clearly introduced? YES NO
 - a. If no, which important ideas are missing? Which details aren't necessary?
2. Is the author name and year of the article provided in the introduction? YES NO
3. Does the introduction lead the reader towards a clear thesis statement? YES NO
 - a. If not, *how* and *where* could the writer include an effective and clearly written thesis statement?
4. Does the thesis have information about what the paper will be about?
YES NO

Summary

1. Do you have a general understanding of what the article is about?
YES NO
 - a. If not, which important ideas are missing?
2. Is the summary objective? YES NO
 - a. If no, which part of the summary sounds like the writer's opinion? Please mark it on the paper.
3. Are there correctly formatted citations throughout the entire summary? YES NO

Response

1. Is it clear which ideas from the article the writer is responding to?
YES NO
 - a. If no, where is it unclear?
2. Does the writer support his/her critique with examples from the article? YES NO

- a. If no, which point(s) need more support and explanation?
3. Does the writer evaluate the author's claims (as opposed to simply summarizing) the article? YES NO
4. Does each response paragraph contain a topic sentence containing the paragraph topic and idea? YES NO
 - a. If not, help the writer with ideas for a topic sentence by writing next to the paragraph that is missing a topic sentence.
5. Are there correctly formatted citations throughout the response? YES NO
6. Do the response paragraphs contain one idea per paragraph? YES NO
 - a. If no, indicate on the paper which paragraphs include too many ideas.
7. Are the response paragraphs logical (i.e., do they make sense in the order they are written)? YES NO
8. Is it clear why the writer has responded the way they have? YES NO
9. Are all sentences and ideas in each paragraph related to the topic sentence? YES NO

Conclusion

1. Does the writer briefly summarize their response points at the beginning of the conclusion? YES NO
2. Does the writer provide one or more of the following: the main message of the paper (the "so what" aspect), suggestions on the topic, or future ideas? YES NO

Other

(If you answer NO to any of these questions, please briefly explain how the writer could make improvements)

1. Does the paper have a references page? YES NO
2. Are the references formatted correctly in APA style? YES NO
3. Is the paper formatted correctly (e.g., font, spacing, margins)? YES NO
4. Is the paper cohesive? YES NO

5. Does the paper have an informative title? YES NO
6. Review the paper for spelling and punctuation. Correct anything that needs to be corrected.
7. Review the paper for grammar. List 2–3 specific types of areas to improve (e.g., verb tenses, adjective clauses).

Name 1–2 specific strengths of the entire paper.	Name 1–2 specific areas that need improvement.
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Showalter, C. E., & Kostka, I. (2020). The potential of flipped learning to prepare ESL students for peer review. *Journal of Response to Writing*, 6(2), 147–165.