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JOURNAL OF RESPONSE TO WRITING

The Impact of Peer Review on Writing Development in French as a Foreign Language

Magda Tigchelaar
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The present study investigates learners' participation in the activities of providing self and peer review in the context of a foreign language classroom to determine which feedback type contributes to greater gains in writing development. The study also investigates whether there are target areas of improvement that are more accessible to self-assessment compared with aspects that are better identified from an outsider's perspective. Three intact classes of intermediate-level French learners ($n = 44$) were assigned to one of three conditions: peer review, self-review, and a no-review comparison group. Each group produced four texts over the course of the semester in the following ways: the peer review and self-review groups wrote drafts, provided reviews, and revised their drafts, while the comparison group completed each assignment in one draft. The texts were coded and scored by two raters to determine whether any groups improved significantly over the course of the semester, whether the revisions showed improvements over the drafts, what effect the feedback had on the final text, and which aspects the feedback targeted. Results indicate that none of the groups improved their scores significantly over time, but both treatment groups provided feedback resulting in improved scores. The peer group gave more feedback that was ignored or not useful, while self-reviewers gave more comments that resulted in positive changes. The peer group provided more organization-focused comments and

compliments, while the self group focused more on structure and cohesion. Results are discussed in terms of autonomy (Benson, 2001), perspectives on writing development (Manchón, 2012), and foreign language writing instruction.

Keywords: peer review, self-review, foreign language writing, classroom research

Introduction

Research on response to student writing in second language (L2) writing contexts has traditionally considered the effectiveness and perceptions of instructor and peer feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). While some recent research has suggested that self-review may also be a viable option for fostering writing development (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Wakabayashi, 2013), this area has not received nearly as much attention in literature on responding to L2 writing. The present study aims to contribute to this gap in the literature by further investigating language learners' participation in the activities of providing self and peer review in the context of a foreign language (FL) classroom. In particular, it seeks to determine whether peer review or self-review contributes to greater gains in writing development over the course of a semester and whether there are target areas of improvement that students are able to identify on their own compared with aspects that are better identified from an outsider's (i.e., peer reviewer's) perspective.

Background

Peer Response

Peer response (a term that is used interchangeably with *peer review* and *peer feedback*) has become a common practice in many L2 and FL classrooms. This is in part due to the widespread influence of process-oriented writing instruction (for a review, see Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Polio & Williams, 2009), which encourages the production of multiple drafts of writing with response and revision. In a review of the literature on response to student writing, Ferris (2014) highlighted that experts in the

field of L2 writing agree that students should receive feedback on multiple drafts of their writing before they submit their final production and that this feedback ideally should come from a variety of sources to provide a variety of readers' perspectives, which lends support to the use of peer review in the writing classroom. Another frequently cited pedagogical advantage of using peer review is that reviewing others' writing will allow student writers to develop a more critical eye toward their own writing, enabling them to become more autonomous (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hyland & Hyland 2006; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Autonomy is defined as "the capacity to take control over one's own learning" (Holec, 1981, as cited in Benson, 2001, p. 47). Benson (2001) goes on to describe that learners can exercise three different levels of control in developing autonomy: control over *behaviors* such as organization and evaluation of language learning, control over *cognitive processes* such as language production and comprehension, and control over the *content* to be learned. When these definitions and descriptions are applied to L2 writing, autonomy can be considered as the capacity to take control over one's writing. In order to become autonomous writers, learners can exercise control over cognitive processes (e.g., using appropriate word order), behaviors (e.g., consulting a dictionary, writing multiple drafts), and understanding the content their texts address.

Depending on one's views of text, taking control over one's writing can take on two different faces. In the view that considers texts as autonomous objects removed from a context (Hyland, 2002), this might mean mastering grammatical accuracy and textual structures. Although these abilities do have an important place in L2 writing (notably in the context of assessment), Porter (1986) points out that the lone writer and the autonomous text are idealistic concepts and that a more realistic view should consider all writers and texts as situated in discourse communities. The second perspective involves viewing texts as discourse, where language is used to communicate or achieve specific purposes (Hyland, 2013). In this view, becoming an autonomous writer is more closely related to mastering discursive or global textual aspects (e.g., organization, development, and cohesion) that communicate meaning and tie the text to a specific context or community.

In addition to a generally positive attitude toward peer review from experts in writing instruction, peer feedback has been grounded in a number of language acquisition and composition theoretical frameworks. From an interactionist perspective (as proposed by Long, 1996), peer response can be viewed as an opportunity for students to negotiate meaning when they encounter aspects in their texts that are not clear to their reviewers. Research in peer response has also come from the sociocultural tradition (e.g., Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012), as this activity provides opportunities for learners to interact socially, which may allow them to accomplish what they would not be able to on their own (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). In addition to interactionist and sociocultural theories, further support for written feedback, and specifically peer feedback, comes from L1 composition theory (Hyland & Hyland, 2006): both process-oriented instruction and collaborative learning theories (Bruffee, 1984) emphasize the importance of learner collaboration and response to peers' writing for written production and development.

Despite the many benefits of peer review suggested by second language learning theory and writing instructors, empirical studies investigating peer review have not clearly demonstrated that this activity is beneficial in and of itself. Early studies on the utilization of peer feedback showed that students were hesitant to incorporate the feedback they received from their peers. For example, Mendonça and Johnson (1994) found that students were selective in their use of peer feedback, choosing not to incorporate certain suggestions. Both Connor and Asenavage (1994) and Paulus (1999) assessed the use of peer and teacher feedback in English as a Second Language (ESL) student writers' revisions and found that students incorporated far less peer feedback than teacher feedback. Studies of students' perceptions of peer feedback have also yielded unconvincing results. Yoshida (2008) found that learners in an EFL context do not always trust or understand feedback received from their peers.

The above-mentioned studies have been helpful in advancing the field of L2 writing, as they have identified issues of perceptions and the use of peer review, pointing research and practice in the direction of training student writers to more effectively review each other's texts. Both Berg (1999) and

McGroarty and Zhu (1997) found that students who received training were able to provide a greater quantity of feedback than an untrained control group. This finding was similar to Min (2005), who trained a group of students in how to respond to their peers' writing and found that the students were able to provide more comments, and specifically more relevant comments, on global aspects of writing. In comprehensive reviews of peer response, several researchers suggest that in order to maximize the potential of peer review in the language classroom, instructors should provide training and guide the students' review with the use of rubrics or peer response sheets (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Rollinson, 2005). Furthermore, Ferris (2014) recommends that students should be held accountable for the reviews that they provide. One way to ensure this is by way of grading the comments or review given by students. Polio and Williams (2009) conclude that instruction in peer response can help students improve their writing.

Although peer review feedback has become a commonplace activity in most writing classrooms, important questions remain unanswered, specifically regarding the role this type of feedback can play in developing autonomous writers (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). One contribution to answering this question was made by Lundstrom and Baker's innovative and important study (2009). This was the first study on peer review that teased apart the two key aspects involved in the activity of peer review: the act of reviewing peers' texts and that of utilizing peer comments to make revisions. They found that students trained in providing peer review saw greater improvements in their own writing than those trained to receive feedback to incorporate into subsequent revisions. Their results also suggested that novice and intermediate writers were able to improve more on global aspects such as organization, cohesion, and development than on local aspects such as structure, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Self-Review

While not directly trying to investigate the potential for self-review, several studies have found that in addition to peer and teacher feedback, writers revise their texts based on self-review as well. Connor and Asenavage (1994) traced the source of revisions made in students' writing and found

that across the groups they studied, 5% of the revisions were based on peer review, 35% were based on teacher review, and 60% came from another source, which they identified as self/other review. Thus, peer and teacher feedback resulted in far fewer revisions than self/other review. Similarly, Paulus (1999) traced more revisions (65.4%) generated from self/other feedback than from peer revisions (32.3%) or teacher revisions (2.3 %) from first draft to second draft of a writing assignment. For the final draft, 56.7% of revisions came from instructor feedback and 1% came from peer feedback, while self/other feedback accounted for the remaining 42.3% of the revisions. These studies both indicate that while peer and instructor feedback can have an impact on student writing, the individual review process also plays an important role. This was echoed by Ferris (2003), who advocated that by simply rereading their texts, students may be able to identify weaknesses and improve the quality of their writing. Instructional approaches describing how to help L2 writers develop into independent editors have also been documented (Ferris, 1995). What remains unclear, however, is which aspects (e.g., local vs. global) writers are able to identify in their own writing as needing improvement and which aspects they need feedback from outside sources to improve.

Building on Lundstrom and Baker's (2009) findings, Wakabayashi (2013) further pursued the benefits of training students to review texts. She compared two groups of students, one trained to review their own texts, the other trained to review peers' texts, and measured improvement in writing by testing the quality of their writing before and after the intervention and participation-in-review activity over the course of the semester. She found that students who were trained to review their own texts had greater gains in score on the ESL composition profile (based on content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics; Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormouth, Hartfiel, & Hughey, 1981) from the pretest to the posttest, suggesting that self-review may in fact be more beneficial to writing development than peer review and therefore ultimately more sustainable in the goal of developing autonomous writers. While this finding is intriguing, one of the obvious limitations of the study was that the self-review and peer review groups did not have the same proficiency level, making it difficult to judge whether the gains in score were due to the self-review process or whether their

proficiency level played a significant role in the observed improvements. Although Wakabayashi (2013) and Lundstrom and Baker (2009) were on the right track by considering both types of review and improvement in one's own writing, one piece of the puzzle is still missing, namely whether there are differences in the aspects that peer and self-reviewers are better able to identify in their review of texts.

Motivation for the Study

The current study responds to calls from experts in the field of Second Language Acquisition for more replication studies (Porte, 2012; Porte & Richards, 2012) by partially replicating Wakabayashi's (2013) design while correcting for some of the design issues common to research on written feedback (Guénette, 2007). It also extends the line of research on peer review to languages other than English by examining a foreign-language or L2 learning context where the reviewers all share the same L1. Further, it aims to provide a more in-depth analysis of self-review, which is an understudied practice in the L2 writing literature.

As peer review has become more common in L2 writing classrooms, research in this area has shown that students can be trained to provide effective feedback to their peers and that the act of providing feedback can be beneficial to the reviewer's own writing. However, perhaps the ultimate goal of peer review is to develop autonomous writers, which may be more directly achieved by instructing students how to review their own writing. This classroom-based study, like Wakabayashi (2013), will investigate the impact of self and peer review on the development of global writing aspects over the course of one semester in a French as a foreign language (FFL) class. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Do FFL students who participate in one type of review improve the quality of their writing over the course of a semester (long-term change) more than those who participate in another review type?
2. Do the revised texts that students produce as a result of peer and self-review show improvement over their drafts (short-term change)?

3. On which aspects do reviewers provide feedback in peer and self-review? How is the focus of their review similar or different?

Method

Participants

The participants in the study were students drawn from three intact sections of an intermediate-level university French course that met for 4 hours per week at a large Midwestern university in the U.S. The focus of the course was on the development of writing skills, in addition to aural comprehension, speaking, and reading. The total number of students enrolled in the three sections was 55, but students were only considered for participation in the study if (a) their L1 was not French and (b) they had no study abroad experience in a francophone setting. To ensure that the above criteria were met, a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) addressing native language and study abroad experience was included with the consent form. The data from heritage speakers and students who had studied abroad were excluded from the analysis.

Two sections of the course served as the treatment groups for the present study: students in section 1 ($n = 17$) participated in peer review and students in section 2 ($n = 13$) did self-review. Both treatment sections were taught by the same instructor to control for differences in instruction. Section 3 ($n = 14$) served as the no-review comparison group. The students in both treatment groups participated in feedback training provided by their instructor, in addition to in-class drafting and review sessions. The training for both groups was given at the beginning of the semester and addressed how to assess a written text using a rubric and how to provide appropriate comments.

Due to pedagogical practicalities, the groups were not randomly assigned and therefore the design of the study was quasi-experimental. The participants were all in their fourth semester of study, and no independent proficiency test was administered. However, the instructor of the course rated the students' writing proficiency in all three groups as intermediate-mid (according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency Guidelines; ACTFL, 2012). In addition, a

Kruskal-Wallis test¹ revealed that there was no difference in writing scores on the first piece of writing between any of the groups ($\chi^2(2) = 0.24, p = .887$) with a mean rank score of 19.14 out of 20 for the comparison group, 17.42 for the peer group, and 18.90 for the self group. From this we can infer that each group was starting at a similar overall writing proficiency level at the beginning of the semester.

Materials

Two rubrics, one for each of the two types of writing assignments, were developed by the course coordinators and formed the basis for the feedback training, review phase, and grading of student writing in the course. These scoring/feedback rubrics ranged from 0 to 3 and focused on global aspects of writing, namely organization, development, and cohesion (see Appendix 2 for descriptors and their corresponding scores). Following Lundstrom and Baker (2009), novice and intermediate writers have been shown to be able to improve more on global aspects than on local aspects such as structure, vocabulary, and mechanics, so the rubrics were designed to focus on the former. In addition, the best practices as defined by experts in the field of writing instruction indicate that in the initial stages of writing, comments on global features are more useful than comments on local aspects (Ferris, 2014).

Classroom Procedure

Over the course of the semester, the students studied two written genres: character descriptions and plot summaries. They produced four paragraph-length written assignments at an interval of one per month. The context for each writing assignment was provided by a film that they watched over the course of the semester: the first two assignments were character descriptions of the main characters and the final two were plot summaries of important moments in the film. As suggested by Rollinson (2005), in order to avoid any potentially negative effects of peer review, such as tactless or overgenerous comments or a focus on surface problems rather than content, students in both treatment groups received training

¹ A nonsignificant value for Levene's test, $F(2,33) = 1.138, p = .336$ indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances for score increases was not violated.

in using the rubrics to review each other's or their own work. Students were exposed to sample comments that they analyzed as a class for appropriateness with the guidance of their instructor. They also reviewed sample paragraphs as a class with a range of organizational, developmental, and cohesive strengths and weaknesses.

The peer review group produced four written texts in the following way: for each assignment, they first wrote a rough draft during a class dedicated to drafting. Once they had finished the draft, they uploaded their paper onto an online peer interaction platform (<http://elireview.com/>), which was accessible to the instructor and to their peers. In cohorts of three, students accessed their peers' writing on the platform and reviewed each other's work using the rubric. They were instructed to provide comments to each other in either English or French, using the following prompt:

Please leave at least three specific comments/suggestions for the author. At least one of these comments should address a strength of the paragraph. These comments should be directed towards the content of the paragraph. Type your comment in the box provided and then highlight the specific area of the paragraph (above) that you wish to attach the comment to. Then click save. Repeat for each comment.

A final prompt asked the students to give a general comment:

What should the author be most focused on during the next revision?

Following the best practices of writing instruction outlined by Ferris (2014), the comments that students provided each other were graded as a means of holding peers accountable for providing quality suggestions in their review. Using the feedback they received through peer comments, students revised their first drafts in the following class and submitted a final draft to the instructor, who provided comments and a grade.

Students in the self-review group followed a similar procedure; after receiving the same training as the peer review group, for each of the four writing assignments, they produced a first draft in class. Outside of class, they were instructed to review their own texts using the same rubric and prompts as the peer group, and they documented their review on

a feedback sheet in order to leave a written trace of which aspects they identified as needing revision. They also received a grade for the comments that they produced. The following day they revised their texts in class using their feedback sheets and submitted them to the instructor, who provided comments and a grade.

The comparison group produced texts that were graded by the instructor after the first draft and received no further revisions.

Data Collection

All participants completed the first writing assignment in class without any feedback. This text was considered the pretest and was collected for analysis after students received their grades. Assignments 2–4 were collected in the same way for the comparison group. The treatment groups completed the remainder of their assignments following the progression of draft, feedback (peer or self), and final revision. The draft of the final assignment for the treatment groups was considered as the posttest.

Scoring and Analysis

The students used the rubrics to assess each other's drafts (peer group) or their own draft (self group), evaluating whether they had fulfilled all of the requirements (3), most of the requirements (2), some of the requirements (1), or none of the requirements (0). The requirements are detailed in the Rubric in Appendix 1. They based their comments on the above evaluation. After the students made changes to their drafts, the instructor and researcher graded their final submissions using the same rubric. A subset of 25% of the texts was coded by both the researcher and the instructor. Reliability was found to be good, Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$.

To address the short-term effect of reviewing peer and self texts from first draft to second draft, the mean scores of the drafts and revisions were analyzed using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine whether the revised drafts were an improvement over the first drafts. In order to determine whether group membership influenced increase in writing scores over time, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine any significant differences between groups on scores from their first assignment to the draft of their final assignment. A nonsignificant value

for Levene's test, $F(2,32) = 0.472$, $p = .680$, indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances for score increases was not violated; therefore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was appropriate for the data analysis.

In addition, an analysis was conducted to determine to what extent and what effect students responded to their own feedback versus peer feedback. The feedback and texts were coded according to Ferris's (1997) typology of revisions in response to comments, which included no change, minimal change, or substantive change with positive, mixed, or negative effects. One category was added to this typology to account for comments that resulted in no effect because they were not worth responding to (i.e., feedback gave poor advice). A subset of 25% of the comments was coded by both raters, and reliability was found to be good ($\alpha = .78$). Finally, in order to determine which aspects self-reviewers and peer reviewers addressed in their feedback, a thematic analysis of the comments given in each group was conducted. This included the global aspects targeted by the rubric (e.g., organization, development, and cohesion), in addition to any other themes that were commonly addressed in the comments.

Results

The results that follow examine the group differences in score improvement over the course of the semester and the improvement from draft to revision. The results also investigate the types of aspects addressed in students' feedback in order to provide a more detailed picture of the peer and self-review process.

RQ1. Do FFL students who participate in one type of review improve the quality of their writing over the course of a semester (long-term change) more than those who participate in another review type?

Writing improvement was operationalized as improvement in scores, and the mean score for each assignment in each group was calculated, as shown in Table 1. A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to evaluate group differences in mean score increases from Assignment 1 to Assignment 4. It should be noted that the number of observations in the peer and self groups for each writing time was not consistent, due to missing data. In particular, only five observations were collected for the self group's third

assignment, meaning the results for this writing time need to be interpreted with caution. This limitation in the data is reflected in the non-parametric analysis reported below.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for all assignments for the comparison, peer, and self groups.

	Comparison Group		Peer Group		Self Group	
	n	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)
Assignment 1	14	2.46 (0.36)	12	2.38 (0.43)	10	2.45 (0.28)
Assignment 2 Draft	14	2.39 (0.56)	15	2.17 (0.52)	13	2.12 (0.65)
Assignment 2 Final	-	-	17	2.32 (0.50)	12	2.25 (0.62)
Assignment 3 Draft	14	2.46 (0.31)	17	2.21 (0.47)	5	2.20 (0.45)
Assignment 3 Final	-	-	17	2.65 (0.42)	13	2.42 (0.53)
Assignment 4 Draft	14	2.50 (0.39)	16	2.31 (0.36)	13	2.35 (0.32)
Assignment 4 Final	-	-	17	2.59 (0.44)	13	2.65 (0.38)

Note. Assignment 1 = character description 1; Assignment 2 = character description 2; Assignment 3 = plot summary 1; Assignment 4 = plot summary 2.

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that there was no difference in increase in writing scores among any of the groups ($\chi^2(2) = 0.48, p = .788$), with a mean rank increase of 0.04 for the comparison group, -0.05 for the peer group, and -0.14 for the self group. The result of this test indicates that membership in one of the treatment groups or the comparison group did not influence a long-term change in scores.

RQ2. Do the revised texts that students produce as a result of peer and self-review show improvement over their drafts (short-term change)?

In order to measure whether the revisions made in response to peer and self-feedback resulted in improvement over drafts, a series of Wilcoxon signed-rank non-parametric tests were used to compare peer and self groups' scores from draft to final production, summarized in Table 2. The tests revealed that there was no significant improvement from draft to final on Assignment 2 for the peer ($z = -1.22, p = .222$) or self group ($z = -0.71, p = .480$), with small effect sizes for both groups (peer, $d = .294$; self, $d = .205$). For Assignment 3, there was a significant improvement from draft to final in the peer group ($z = -2.76, p = .006$), with a large effect size ($d =$

.99). For the self group, while improvement did not reach significance ($z = -1.63$, $p = .102$) and only five data points were available for analysis, the medium effect size ($d = .40$) indicated a change for the better. For the final assignment, both the peer ($z = 2.52$, $p = .012$) and self groups ($z = -2.31$, $p = .021$) showed a trend toward significant improvement, supported by a large effect size ($d > 0.70$).

Table 2

Results of Wilcoxon signed-rank test comparing improvement from draft to final text.

	Peer Group			Self Group		
	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Assignment 2	-1.22	.222	.29	-0.71	.480	.20
Assignment 3	-2.76	.006**	0.99	-1.63	.102	.40
Assignment 4	-2.52	.012	0.70	-2.31	.021	.85

Note: ** $p < .01$

These results indicate that the only group to see a significant improvement from draft to final was the peer group, on Assignment 3. It is unclear whether the self group made comparable improvements on the same piece of writing due to the limited number of observations. Both groups had final drafts that trended toward significant improvement over their first drafts on the final assignment, a finding which merits replication to see if similar findings would be observed in a study with more data points collected over a longer period of time. While neither group showed improvement in scores from Assignment 1 to the draft of Assignment 4, development was observed in the writing process where self-reviewers and peer reviewers showed improvements from draft to final on a smaller timescale.

In order to determine the effect of comments on revisions in both treatment conditions, Ferris's (1997) typology of revisions in response to comments was used to show which type of comments were provided by each group and how effective the comments were. Figure 1 presents

the percentage of each type of feedback for the peer and self groups. The categories included how much change was observed (substantive, minimal, negligible, or none) and what effect the change had on the revision (positive, mixed, or negative).

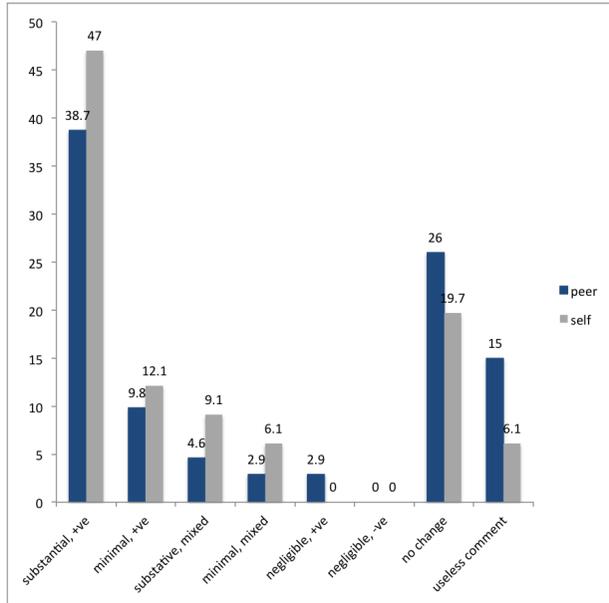


Figure 1. Percentage of types of revisions in response to comments and their effect. Note: +ve = positive; -ve = negative.

For the two treatment groups, the greatest proportion of feedback resulted in substantive changes with positive effect: 39% for the peer group and 47% for the self group. Overall, the peer group provided longer and more detailed comments. However, this group also provided more feedback that had no change (26%) or was useless (15%) than the self group (with 20% and 6%, respectively). In general, the feedback provided by the self group was shorter, and more critical. The effect of these comments was generally positive or mixed, resulting in substantive (47%) or minimal revisions (12%).

RQ3. On which aspects do reviewers provide feedback in peer and self review? How is the focus of their review similar or different?

In order to address the final research question, a thematic coding of the comments provided by both treatment groups was implemented. Supplementing the categories addressed in the rubric (organization, development, and cohesion) with an inductive approach in which themes and patterns were distilled from the data, six themes were identified in the students' comments. Figure 2 presents the percentage of each type per group. Examples and explanations of each theme are shown below.

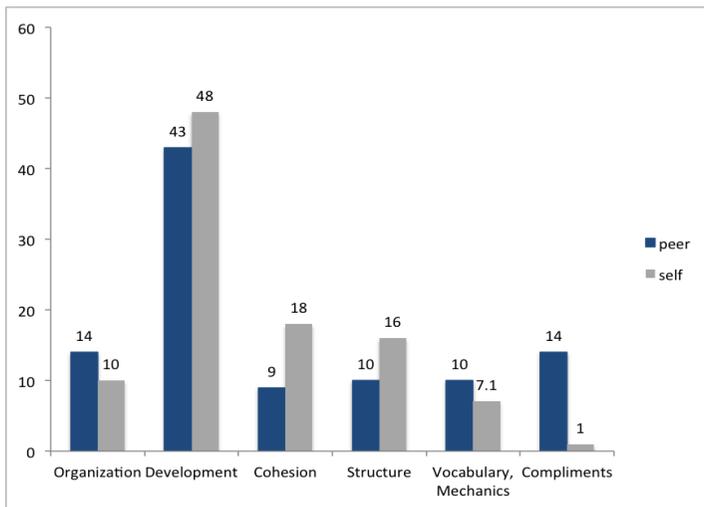


Figure 2. Aspects addressed in peer and self comments.

The first aspect addressed in the comments, organization, tended to focus on the introductory and concluding sentences of the texts. While students from both groups struggled with these components of their writing, organization-specific feedback was somewhat more common in the peer group (14%) than the self group (10%). For example, the peer reviewer in Example 1 suggests reorganizing the text by using a sentence from the middle of the paragraph to create a stronger conclusion.

Example 1. *“Perhaps make this a new sentence. On its own, with a bit more*

detail, I think it would have more weight and would be a good concluding sentence” (Renée, peer group).

The second aspect, development, was by far the most common type of comment in both groups. This is not surprising, given that students were prompted to direct their comments toward the content of the text. However, the self group made slightly more (48%) of this type of comment than the peer group (43%). For example, the self-reviewer in Example 2 recognizes the need to develop her character description by adding more than just physical traits.

Example 2. *“Need to add more details about Alexis’s personality”* (Inès, self group).

One difference observed in the types of development-oriented comments between the peer and self groups was audience. In Example 3, a peer reviewer makes reference to the discursive nature of the text by reminding the author to consider who her audience is. Although the students were not informed who their audience was, everyone who read their papers (e.g., the instructor and peers, in the case of the peer group) had seen the film. It is possible that simply being in the peer group made students more aware of who they were writing for (i.e., others who had seen the film) than the self group, since the latter was only writing texts that would be read by the instructor.

Example 3. *“I think here you can be less vague, because we have all seen the movie, so you can just say, ‘well, we know she took care of Claire’s cat Emile and watched her apartment”* (Laure, peer group).

The third theme targeted in the feedback was cohesion; the proportion of self feedback (18%) was double that of peer feedback (9%) in this regard. Particularly, many students commented on the use of discourse connectors (e.g., *en conclusion/in conclusion, cependent/however*) in their feedback. For example, the following excerpt illustrates a self-reviewer noticing the lack of discourse connectors in her text.

Example 4. *“I need more transition words for a smoother paragraph flow,*

especially between the last three sentences" (Kathleen, self group).

The self-review group also made more comments (16%) targeting grammatical structures in their texts than the peer group (10%). Example 5 represents a common observation amongst the self-reviewers, which was that they suspected they had used English wording to express their thoughts. Though they were aware that the phrases were not grammatical or idiomatic, this type of comment was not typically resolved.

Example 5. *"I think some of the things I'm trying to say don't make sense in French, at least the way I've tried to say them"* (Claire, self group).

Other students targeted specific grammatical structures, such as pronouns (as in Example 6) and verb conjugation. Interestingly, these structural difficulties tended to be resolved in a grammatical form in the revision.

Example 6. *"I still struggle with reflexive still. [For example] his tomb tells us—sa tombe dit nous . . . I feel this is incorrect"* (Hélène, self group).

The final theme that emerged from the analysis of the comments was compliments. Approximately 14% of the feedback provided by the peer group fell into this category, compared to a mere 1% of self-comments. At times, these compliments were overgenerous (e.g., when reviewers provided nothing but compliments in their feedback) and very general, as in Example 7. On the other hand, some compliments were very detailed and highlighted strengths worth noting in the writing, as in Example 8.

Example 7. *"Nice work, homie"* (Clémence, peer group).

Example 8. *"I think it's very good! You have a good balance of giving characteristics and explaining them without it derailing to be too much about Claire"* (Céline, peer group).

Discussion

The aim of this research was to compare peer and self-review and

to investigate how each practice relates to writing development (positive change over time) and writing improvement (positive change over drafts). A second aim was to analyze the types of comments provided in peer and self-review and to determine whether there are target aspects that students notice especially in their own writing and whether there are others that peers are better at highlighting.

Recent research has suggested that the act of reviewing texts is more beneficial than receiving feedback (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). This result is intriguing because it implies that by simply training students to review texts (either their own or others'), they may see improvement in their writing. Furthermore, recent research has found that students who reviewed their own texts saw greater gains in writing scores than did those whose texts were reviewed by peers (Wakabayashi, 2013). These findings come from experimental and classroom research and merit further study to validate the results and move the conversation about responses to L2 writing forward.

The first research question of the present study revealed that, unlike Wakabayashi (2013), who found that students that did self-review improved more than those whose texts were reviewed by peers, neither the peer, self, or comparison groups significantly improved their scores over time. However, it should be noted that comparing the improvement from first to final assignment may not be a suitable comparison because the first assignment was a character description and the final assignment was a plot summary. Without controlling for topic or counterbalancing the writing assignments across groups, it is not possible to measure the influence of time on writing development. Furthermore, writing tends to develop over a longer period than a single semester, and therefore a longer study design is more likely to show significant change. However, a comparison of groups revealed that neither the peer, self, nor control groups increased their scores significantly more than another group. This suggests that belonging to a certain review group does not influence improvements in scores over the course of a semester. While a significant change in scores over time was not observed, some change in the students' writing process did occur, as students in the peer group showed significant improvement on Assignment 3, and both treatment groups trended toward significant improvement on

the final assignment.

Furthermore, it could be argued that their knowledge of different genres (character description and plot summary) increased over the course of the semester as well, based on their regular exposure to these genres in their training and assignments. These changes in writing process and genre knowledge over time constitute one example of writing development (Polio, in press). From this we can deduce that writing development may not always be marked by improvements in score and that a variety of factors should be taken into account when measuring development over time. Further research should continue to refine our understanding of areas that develop over time in written textual production and the paths that each type of development follows. This is important for researchers to be able to determine whether or not practices or teaching interventions are contributing to writing development.

With regards to the second research question, it was found that both of the treatment groups began to improve on their drafts, with the peer group showing significant improvement on Assignment 3 and both groups showing a trend toward significant improvement on the final assignment. This finding suggests that future research might show a similar pattern of writing improvement, namely where peer reviewers begin to improve their writing sooner than self-reviewers, but with time both types of reviewers can experience significant writing improvement. In order to corroborate this finding, future research should include more fine-grained rubrics to measure writing quality, larger sample sizes with complete data sets, and a longer timescale.

The third research question showed that the self-reviewers were responsible for more feedback that resulted in substantive revisions with positive effect. Although it may not seem natural to leave a written trace of comments during self-review (as opposed to simply revising one's text), this was done for comparability with the peer review condition. An additional potential advantage of self-review is that the act of reviewing texts and providing feedback may be more beneficial for writing development than the act of revising texts (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). While writers often revise their own texts without this extra review step of providing comments, setting the text aside, and coming back to it to revise, this technique proved

to be beneficial in the present study, since students' final productions showed improvement over their drafts. Learning how to review one's own texts may require more time and training, but this initial investment may plant the seeds for more effective development of autonomous writers. Further research should delve deeper into the practices of self-evaluation and individual revision, as some L2 writers may prefer to learn how to review their own texts effectively in lieu of participating in peer review. By training students in multiple feedback practices (i.e., different learning management behaviors), instructors can provide novice writers with more opportunities to develop autonomy, or control over their writing.

Individual preferences are supported by perception studies (e.g., Yoshida, 2008) that show that some students do not trust their peers' input and are therefore hesitant to participate in peer review. While peer feedback did prompt improvement in scores in the present study, this group also received more comments that were ignored, useless, or resulted in negative revisions. Considering these findings and the fact that there is no way to guarantee being paired with a helpful peer reviewer in instructed writing contexts, one area that merits further exploration is how novice writers interpret feedback that is not useful and how they subsequently revise their texts.

The final research question looked at which aspects were targeted by peer and self-reviewers in the feedback they provided. As instructed, both groups focused primarily on content and development. This shows that writing instructors can direct the focus of students' feedback and indirectly supports the assertion that feedback instruction can promote writing development (Polio & Williams, 2009). The differences that emerged from the analysis of the comments may add insight into which aspects are more accessible to self-assessment and which aspects require outside feedback to improve (see Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Without being explicitly instructed, the self-reviewers provided more structure-oriented comments. Attention to these form-based, textual features may indicate that self-review can promote autonomy in the sense of control over the cognitive processes required to produce written language. The self group also gave a greater proportion of cohesion-related comments, suggesting that they were more conscious of the discourse connection within their texts. These insights are

encouraging for independent written production, such as in the context of writing assessment.

In the case of the peer group, more feedback was focused on the organization of the text. Difficulties with introducing (i.e., drawing one's readers into what is to follow in the text) and concluding (i.e., restating the main point while signaling to readers that they have reached the end) may be more obvious from an outsider's perspective. This discursive feedback, connecting the text to the outside world, was also reflected in some of the peer group's development-directed comments (Example 3), where peers pointed out connections between what the audience already knew and what was being communicated in the text. This points to the importance of raising students' awareness of how participating in peer review can help them to develop a discursive understanding and that this practice may strengthen their autonomy by developing strong learning management strategies.

The analysis of the comments also revealed that the peer group gave substantially more compliments than the self-reviewers. While some of these comments were detailed and targeted specific strengths (Example 8), many of them constituted empty compliments, as has been observed in previous studies (Ferris, 2003). While writing instructors tend to agree that student writers should receive encouragement in addition to constructive criticism (Ferris, 2014), overgenerous amounts of praise are not useful for writing improvement. These observations further support the call for ample feedback training for developing writers (Min, 2005; Rollinson, 2005).

Finally, the differences that emerged in analysis of the comments and revisions provide insight into the differences that were observed in the writing process of the peer and self groups. The peer group made more significant improvements from drafts to final productions than the self-review group. The self-reviewers started to show improvements after the peer group and only saw a trend toward significant gains in score. Analysis of the comments showed that the peer reviewers focused more on discourse-level aspects, while the self-review group tended to direct their comments toward structural issues in their writing. Bearing in mind that the scoring rubric targeted organization, development, and cohesion (i.e., discursive features), it is not surprising that the peer reviewers made more

gains in score than the self-reviewers, who were generally more focused on textual aspects that were not targeted in the rubric.

In L2 writing theory, peer review is seen as contributing to promoting autonomous writers (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The findings of the present study contribute to the field of L2 writing by shedding light on how different feedback practices can lead to different levels of autonomy. They also respond to the call from Hyland and Hyland (2006) for further research into peer and self feedback by investigating what aspects “seem more accessible to self-assessment” or “what aspects students can revise without help from their teachers” (p. 96). A second contribution of this study to research in L2 writing is the investigation of peer review in a context other than ESL/EFL, namely an instructed foreign-language context. The study of an intact, foreign-language class and the use of authentic grading materials (e.g., holistic rubrics) over the course of a semester provide a longitudinal view of writing development in an ecologically valid context. Furthermore, a mixed methods design brings methodological strength to the study and provides support for a movement toward more holistic views of development in L2 research. It also supports calls for broadening measures and definitions of writing development (Manchón, 2012; Polio, in press). Finally, the findings of this research add empirical support for the use of both peer and self-review in FL and L2 writing classrooms.

Conclusion

This study has yielded a number of observations about the use of peer and self-feedback as practices for promoting writing development in an instructed foreign language setting. Findings confirm previous research showing that training in peer review can improve student writing and that writing development can also be achieved through self-assessment. Further, the study provided insights into the link between participating in peer and self-review and developing as an autonomous writer; self-review may lead to more control over cognitive processes, while peer review may help students to develop autonomy in the sense of learning management strategies.

As is often the case in quasi-experimental research conducted in intact classes, with the strength of ecological validity comes the limitations

of less-than-ideal design and missing data. Not all of the participants completed all of the assignments, which made comparing gains in score difficult. As mentioned above, one avenue for future research would be to corroborate the finding that the peer group may have begun to improve their writing sooner (Assignment 3) than the self group, as the missing data and limitations in the study design of the present study prevent any conclusions to be made about this pattern of writing improvement. Second, given that participants in the comparison group did not revise their texts, it is not possible to distinguish the effects of feedback from the effects of revision in this study. Future research could attempt to disentangle feedback from revision by assessing whether the quality of comments received in peer review was a factor in writing improvement or whether students improved their writing regardless of the quality of comments received.

Although neither of the treatment groups saw more significant gains than the other throughout the semester, and although only a trend toward significant changes was observed from draft to final productions, students in both conditions did use these practices to improve their writing over the course of the semester. Neither peer nor self-review proved to lead to superior writing improvement. The pedagogical implications of the study, then, are that course developers have options to tailor feedback practices to student and instructor preferences. An important consideration is that while self-review may require more time and training, this practice can ultimately use less class time than peer review and may be better for developing students' control over independent text production. The good news is that both paths seem to carry the potential for writing development, providing instructors and students more options for tackling the challenge of training and becoming effective L2 writers.

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Appendix 1: Background Questionnaire

- a) Name (for identification of writing samples): _____
- b) First language: _____
- c) Experience in French study abroad? Yes/No (if Yes, how long?) _____
- d) Have you taken FRN 101 and FRN 102 at [the university]? Yes/No

Appendix 2: Rubrics

a) Plot description

RUBRIC	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student was within the word limit • The student has a clear introductory statement that is appropriate • The student has a clear concluding statement that is appropriate • The student has selected appropriate main ideas for inclusion in the composition • The student has selected appropriate supporting ideas and details • There is a logical flow of ideas • There are clear/overt and appropriate discourse connectors
2	The student has successfully fulfilled most of the requirements for a 3, but one or two items are not accomplished in the writing task
1	The student has not successfully fulfilled the requirements for a 3, but fulfills one or two of the requirements. Mostly, the student chooses wrong content and does not overtly and logically connect ideas.
0	The student's attempt did not fulfill any of the requirements for a 3 and did not follow any of the feedback given in order to earn a better score.

b) Character description

RUBRIC	
3	<input type="checkbox"/> The student has a clear introductory statement that is appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> The student has selected appropriate main ideas for inclusion in the composition. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a logical flow of ideas and/or appropriate supporting ideas and details. <input type="checkbox"/> There are clear/overt and appropriate discourse connectors. <input type="checkbox"/> The student has a clear concluding statement that is appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> The essay is written in the present tense. <input type="checkbox"/> The student was within the word limit (100 words).
2	The student has successfully fulfilled most of the requirements for a 3, but one or two items are not accomplished in the writing task
1	The student has not successfully fulfilled the requirements for a 3, but fulfills only two or three of the requirements. Mostly, the student chooses wrong content and does not overtly and logically connect ideas.
0	The student's attempt did not fulfill any of the requirements for a 3 and did not follow any of the feedback given in order to earn a better score.

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