

Training Students for Successful Peer Response in Writing Classes

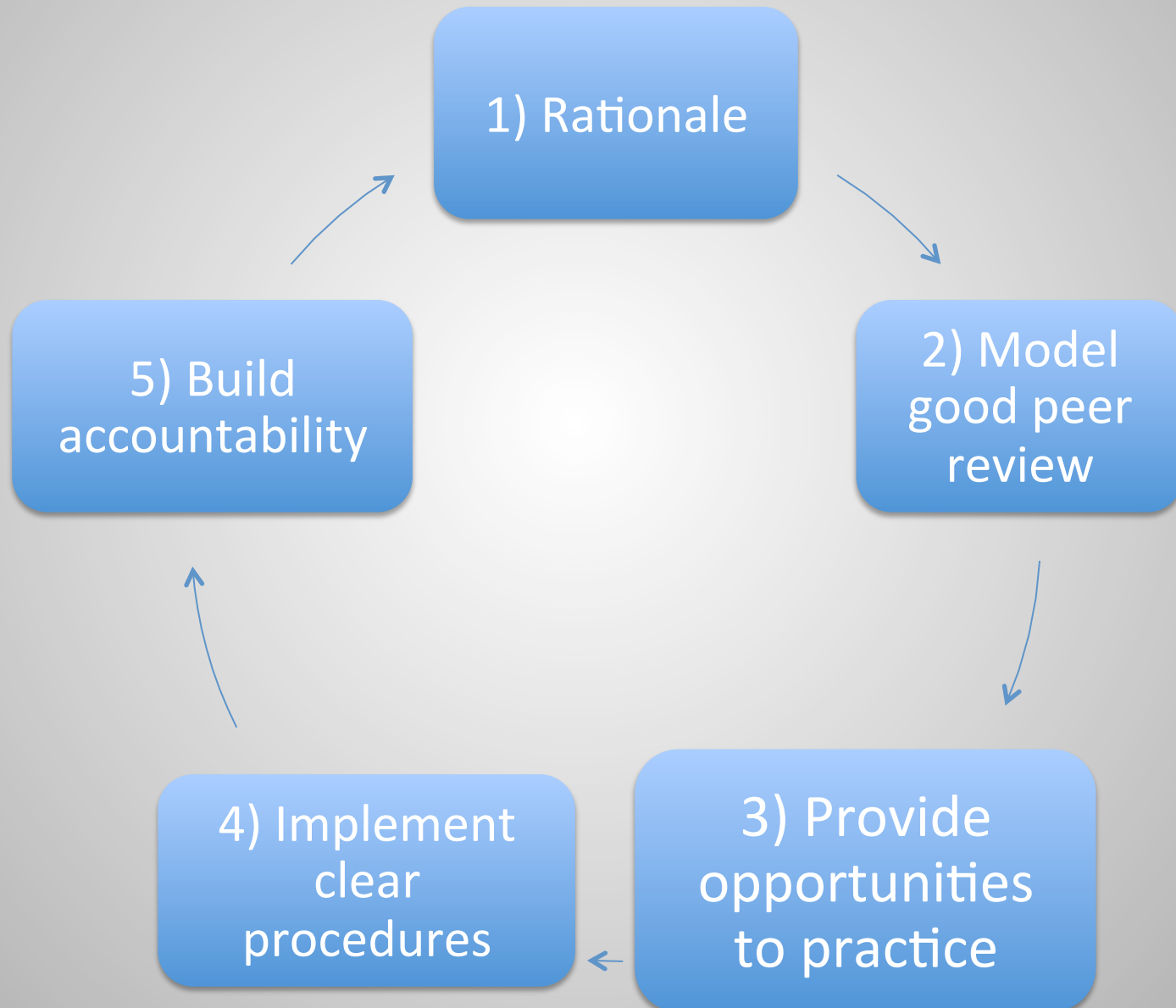
Heidi Evans and Gail Ibele

University of Wisconsin-Madison

For discussion

- What are 2-3 benefits of peer response for teachers? For students?
- What are the most important challenges teachers and students face during peer review?

Steps in Peer Review



Rationale supporting the value of peer response

- Research show peer response **benefits the writer.**
 - Bijami, M., Kashef, S. & Nejad, M. (2013). Peer feedback in learning English writing: Advantages and disadvantages. *Journal of Studies in Education* 3 (4), 91-7.
 - Tsui, A. & Ng, M. (2000). Do secondary L2 writers benefit from peer comments? *Journal of Second Language Writing* 9 (2), 147-170.
- Peer response also **benefits the reviewer.**
 - Lundstrom, K. & Baker, W. (2009). To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 18 (1), 30-43.
- Evidence suggests **peer feedback can be as helpful as teacher feedback.**
 - Ruegg, R. (2015). The relative effects of peer and teacher feedback on improvement in EFL students' writing ability. *Linguistics and Education* 29,73-82.

Model and clarify expectations

- Begin with short assignments.
- Model with example work (not from students in the class).
- Clarify expectations so students understand assignment objectives and your expectations.

Role play

- Use peer response role play to model good (and poor) peer review.
 - Develop a role play for your context. Write parts for the following roles:
 - Writer
 - Reviewer who focuses on content and organization
 - Reviewer who focuses on mechanics and grammar
 - Reviewer who offers only praise (e.g. I think it's good)
 - Students act out role play. Ask students which reviewer they would like to have in their group.

Example role play

Read the role play with your group.

- Writer: Do you think the thesis statement is OK?
- Reader 1: If the rest of your essay follows the thesis statement, then it is OK. Let's see if your organization follows the thesis statement or not.
- Reader 2: Well, in the title, you should capitalize the words "of" and "in."
- Reader 3: I think it's fine.

How might you adapt/create a role play for your context?

Identifying what to comment on

- To be effective, **peer response** involves knowing:
 - what to comment on
 - how to frame comments effectively

Guided Peer Review

- For short assignments or lower level students: Tell students specifically what to comment on.

Getting feedback (adapted from *Sourcework*):

1. In a small group, one student shares their paraphrase.
2. Each group member comments on one characteristic of a good paraphrase:
 1. Does it have the same meaning as the original?
 2. Is it different enough from the original?
 3. Does it refer directly to (or cite) the original source?
 4. Does it use correct grammar and vocabulary?

Original: “Countries are likely to indulge in romance if they are wealthy and value individualism over the community.”
– Robert Levine, 1993

Paraphrase: Rich, individual countries are more likely to think love is important (Robert, 1993).

Peer Review Practice

- For longer assignments or higher level students: Train students on what to look for and how to comment.

Training students to identify what to comment on and what to ignore

Sort the items into “most important” and “least important” for a persuasive source-based essay:

- spelling
- insufficient introduction of evidence
- punctuation
- lack of connecting explanation after evidence
- verb tense
- title
- relevance of evidence
- order of main ideas
- thesis statement
- too many quotes
- thesis statement
- YOUR idea

Training students to frame comments

- Effective peer review comments are specific, clear, and tactful.
- Rephrase the “less effective” comments making them more effective.

Less effective	More effective
This is wrong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>I'm not quite sure what you mean.</i>▪ <i>I did not quite understand your point here. Could you please rephrase the sentence?</i>
This thesis statement is bad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>I'm not quite sure what your focus is.</i>▪ <i>It's difficult to identify your position here. Could you try to make it clearer?</i>▪ <i>Your supporting point #2 seems a little short and unclear. Could you explain it more clearly?</i>
This paragraph isn't good.	
I thought this was supposed to be a 4 page essay. Why is it so short?	
I don't think your 4 th paragraph has a main point. I don't understand anything you're trying to say.	
Your idea	

Forming groups for essay peer review

- Ideal size: 3-4
- Ways to form groups:
 - Self initiated
 - Randomly assigned (playing cards, numbers, etc.)
 - Assigned groups
 - Topic
 - Level
 - Country

Preparing for essay peer review

- Exchange work (paper, email, GoogleDocs, content management system, etc.).
- Conduct “interviews” with group members: What’s your topic? Why did you choose it? What are 2 things you would like me to focus on?
- Read essays and complete peer review forms and write comments directly on the essays outside of class.
- Bring completed peer review forms and essays to the next class for the peer review (or return electronically to read in advance in order to prepare for discussion).

Example peer review form

ESL 117: Essay 1 Peer Review

Peer Reviewer's Name _____

Writer's Name _____

Read the entire essay, and then answer the following questions on another sheet of paper. Make sure you mark suggestions and changes on the essay so that you can explain your suggestions by referring to specific parts of the essay.

1. What do you like best about the essay?
2. Thesis statement and topic sentences:
 - Is the thesis statement perfectly clear?
 - Is the topic sentence in each paragraph logically connected to the thesis statement?
 - Do the topic sentences express the idea of the supporting point in a slightly different way?
3. Using evidence:
 - Is each piece of evidence appropriate for the point the writer is making?
 - Is there an introductory sentence for each piece of evidence?
 - Is there an explanation of how the evidence is related to the topic?
 - Has the evidence been cited correctly?
4. Give the author one suggestion for the introduction, conclusion or both.
5. Are there any parts of the essay you don't understand? What are they?
6. What other suggestions do you have for the writer's next draft?

In-class peer review

- Appoint a time-keeper for each group. Group can't move to next person until the timer rings.
- Remind students that they are making comments about the *writing*, not the *writer*. And that they should focus on the big picture, not typos or mechanics.
- Clarify writer's and reviewers' responsibilities and provide some structure: Writer expresses target concerns. Reviewers discuss the essay. Writer recaps and asks questions.
- (teacher involvement?)

Enhancing accountability (of the reviewers)

Writer “grades” peers.

Peer evaluation of your group members

Name: _____

Did both members give you feedback on time (by the beginning of class)?

group member #1 name: _____ yes no

peer review grade: A AB B BC C F

group member #2 name: _____ yes no

peer review grade: A AB B BC C F

Answer the questions below for both group members.

Group member #1 name: _____

Did you feel the student took the time to carefully read your paper? Why or why not?

Did you feel the student made thoughtful comments on your paper? Why or why not?

Did you feel that the student helped improve your paper? Why or why not?

Enhancing accountability (of the writer)

- Using peer feedback: Encourage the writer to carefully consider the peer feedback and decide which comments to use and which to ignore.

The final draft

- Have peer review groups sit together and read their final drafts to identify what has been changed and appreciate the final product.

Questions?

Thank you for listening!

heidi.evans@wisc.edu

gail.ibeles@wisc.edu

Sources consulted

- Best, K., Jones-Katz, L., Smolarek, B., Stolzenburg, M., & Williamson, D. (2015). Listening to our students: An exploratory practice study of ESL writing students' views of feedback. *TESOL Quarterly*, 6(2), 332-357.
- Bijami, M., Kashef, S. & Nejad, M. (2013). Peer feedback in learning English writing: Advantages and disadvantages. *Journal of Studies in Education* 3 (4), 91-7.
- Dollahite, N. & Huan, J. (2012). *Sourcework: Academic Writing from Sources*, 2nd edition. Boston, MA: Heile Cengage Learning.
- Ferris, D.R. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Liu, J & Hansen J.G. (2005). *Peer response in second language writing classrooms*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Lundstrom, K. & Baker, W. (2009). To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 18(1), 30-43.
- Ruegg, R. (2015). The relative effects of peer and teacher feedback on improvement in EFL students' writing ability. *Linguistics and Education* 29,73-82.
- Tsui, A. & Ng, M. (2000). Do secondary L2 writers benefit from peer comments? *Journal of Second Language Writing* 9(2), 147-170.
- Williams, J. (2005). *Teaching writing in second and foreign language classrooms*. Chicago: McGraw Hill.