

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter involves discussions of past empirical studies and reviews on collaborative writing and peer response group; peer interaction during peer response sessions; peer feedback and teacher feedback in composition writing; role of teachers in peer response group; role of peers in peer response group; types of teacher and peer scaffolds; cultural factors influencing L2 composition writing; other factors influencing L2 composition writing; effects of training students for peer revision; and types of revisions.

#### **2.1 Collaborative Writing and Peer Response Group**

A review of past research shows that there is a distinction between collaborative writing and peer response group although both involve peer interaction. Collaborative writing involves “two or more writers working together to produce a joint product” (Harris, 1992, p. 369). In peer response group, “the group members work in turn with different individuals on their individually owned products” (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, p. 120).

There are two ways in which collaborative writing works. Firstly, it can involve students working together throughout the whole writing process of planning, composing, revising and editing a text (Montero, 2005). Co-writers (as termed by Saunders, 1989) can also be responsible for undertaking different parts of a text but they will reach collective decision on the final product. Secondly, collaboration can occur independently at each stage in the writing process, whether during collaborative planning, composing, revising or editing stage.

In collaborative planning, students can work collectively through brainstorming to generate ideas, as well as share knowledge and experience on a task given to them. Collaboration can also occur during the individual composing, revising or editing stage in which combined efforts of the students will lead to a shared final product.

In collaborative composing, students are engaged in oral composing in which they talk, listen and decide on potential words, phrases and sentences for their joint text. Taylor (1981) equates writing to a “two-way street – a dynamic, creative process of give and take between content and written form” (p. 6). During revising or ‘reviewing’ (as termed by Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Saunders, 1989), students read and check for clarity and smooth flow of ideas, and whether the text suits its audience. In doing this, they are shaping and refining their thoughts (Taylor, 1981). Revising and editing can occur at the same time. In the editing stage, peers examine the correct usage of surface features, such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

In peer response group, students read and discuss each others’ writing. This can occur at the planning, revising and editing stages in the writing process. During the planning stage, the reader can respond to the writer’s text by suggesting ways to generate ideas. In the revising stage, the readers can respond on the clarity and appropriateness of content, question the writer on the purpose of the composition, clarify confusing statements, check on the proper organisation of points, and propose suggestions and alternatives for revision. The revision process is defined as “a sequence of changes in a composition – changes which are initiated by cues and occur continually throughout the writing of a work” (Sommers, 1980, p. 380). There is back-and-forth conversation and readers can provide scaffolding to assist the writer to explore and improve his or her revision. There is collaboration, trust and respect among the peers (Bosworth, 1994) even though sometimes there may be peer disagreements (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988). During the revising stage, editing can also occur concurrently in

which the reader examines and gives feedback on the usage of surface features of the writer's text.

The term peer response group is adopted by some researchers, such as Berg (1999), Carson & Nelson (1996), Connor & Asenavage (1994), Denyer & LaFleur (2001), DiPardo & Freedman (1988), Freedman (1992), George (1984), Hansen & Liu (2005), Harris (1992), Lockhart (1994), Lockhart & Ng (1995, 1996), Nelson & Carson (1998), Nelson & Murphy (1992), Newkirk (1984), Tsui & Ng (2000), Zhu (2001), Smagorinsky (1991). Peer response is also referred to as "peer conference" (e.g. Hittleman, 1983; Mohd. Sofi bin Ali, 1994), "peer revision" (e.g. De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996), "peer review" (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994), "peer discussion" (e.g. Cotterall & Cohen, 2003; Sim, 1998), "peer collaboration" (e.g. Daiute & Dalton, 1993), "peer feedback" (e.g. Chaudron, 1984; Hyland, 2000; Jacobs et al., 1998; Paulus, 1999; Zhang, 1995) and 'peer editing' (e.g. Karengianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum; 1980). The review of the related literature in this chapter will adopt the definitions of "collaborative writing" and "peer response" as well as the term "peer feedback" as mentioned earlier.

In short, peer response group is a student-centred approach in which group members collaborate through interaction. Peer response group provides a social context for peers to be engaged in dialogue and negotiation (Harris, 1992), to offer each other support and feedback (Berkenkotter, 1984), to sharpen the writers' sense of audience (Gebhardt, 1980; Gere & Abbott, 1985; Smagorinsky, 1991), to foster critical reflection (Bell, 1991) and to help improve each others' writing. This means to say that through peer response group, students can enhance their cognitive skills (Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996), learn to become critical readers (Nelson, 1994), and consequently they can become self-reliant writers who are self-critical and have the necessary skills to self-edit

and revise their own writing (Rollinson, 2005). Each member in the response group plays an important role in working together through meaningful interaction to help one another improve their revision. Oja & Smulyan (1989) described the function of each member in the peer response group as “a cog in the group machine, acting in ways which allow the machine to function smoothly and complete the task” (p. 174).

## **2.2 Peer Interaction during Peer Response Sessions**

In the last 15 years, there has been a growing interest among researchers to examine interaction during peer response sessions. This section will discuss past empirical studies and reviews pertaining to patterns of interaction in peer response groups, peer conference, peer revision, peer discussion, tutoring discourse, and peer evaluation.

Among those studies that examined the interaction during peer response sessions include Lockhart’s (1994) study that investigated the features of the written text discussed and the language functions used during the peer response sessions of four pairs of students enrolled in a pre-academic writing course at a tertiary institute in Hong Kong. Each of the students wrote two expository essays with two peer response sessions per essay and each essay went through four drafts before final submission. Findings in this study showed that peer response helped students to focus their attention on ideational aspects of a draft and to consider audience and purpose. However, although it was found that the peer interaction in this study gave students the opportunity to be engaged in joint construction and discovery of meaning, the discourse tended to be reader-dominated. Based on the findings and observation of this study, Lockhart (1994) concluded that the content of the peer discourse reflected what the students were taught in class and learnt from textbook. In other words, the classroom serves as the social context which shapes the pattern of the interaction and the content of the talk. This study indicates that students need to be exposed to the purpose of peer

response and they need to be given training on how to conduct peer response. This implies that teacher's instruction is also important as it sets the framework to guide students to develop their writing. However, it is also noted that the subjects in this study worked in pairs, and therefore the dialogue between the partners would be rather limited as compared to having interaction among a group of four to five students in which ideas and comments shared would be more diverse.

In another study, Lockhart & Ng (1995) examined how students responded to each other during peer response sessions by analysing the oral peer interaction of 27 pairs of ESL peer response groups from a tertiary institution. The subjects were given training and a list of questions to guide them in analysing peer interaction to improve their revision. This study identified four (4) categories of reader stances (authoritative, interpretive, probing and collaborative) which were found to provide different benefits to the writers. The authoritative and interpretive readers operated in an 'evaluative mode', whereas the probing and collaborative readers in a 'discovery mode' (Lockhart & Ng (1995, p. 646). The findings revealed that the collaborative stance allowed the opportunity for active negotiation between the reader and writer to discover meanings and build ideas to improve the revision of text. This study showed the relationship between peer interaction and writing; and that for effective peer revision, both the reader and writer need to work together to reflect on his or her writing.

As an extension of their earlier study (1995), Lockhart & Ng (1996) analysed deeper into the nature of the discourse when four pairs of ESL university students gave their opinions and suggestions during peer revision. This study identified two (2) major patterns of development that emerged in the peer discussion – the "evaluate-suggest" pattern and the "observe-discover" pattern. The readers in the authoritative and interpretive stances were found to follow the first pattern as they tended to initiate the topics for discussion, whereas the probing and collaborative stances followed the second

pattern as the writers were active in initiating topics. The findings in this study showed that the “observe-discover” pattern engaged both the reader and writer in collaborative reflection in which the reader “help[s] the writer crystallize these[the] verbalized thoughts and realise their potential in revising the text” (Lockhart & Ng, 1996, p. 79). Since studies done by Lockhart (1994) and Lockhart & Ng (1995, 1996 as mentioned above) yielded positive relationship between dyadic interaction and writing, it would be interesting to investigate whether peer response group (consisting of about four to six members) would be able to yield the same findings.

Similarly, Mohd. Sofi bin Ali (1994) examined the nature of the interaction between peers. Three groups of teacher trainees (Advanced, Intermediate, and Lower-intermediate language proficiency groups) totalling 28 participants made up the subjects in this study. The instruments used in the data collection included the teacher trainees’ narrative essay which underwent multiple-draft (three drafts) revision, taped protocols of the trainees’ two peer conference sessions in the classroom, and the trainees’ attitude questionnaire. Results in this study showed that 12 categories of speech acts were employed by the teacher trainees in peer conferences one and two. During peer conference one, the most common categories of speech acts used by the lower-intermediate proficiency group included elicitation (30.3%), reply (24.2%), and comment (18.2%); the intermediate group used elicitation (19.4%), evaluation (19%), reply (17.8%), comment (17.4%) and acceptance (10.7%); and the advanced group used elicitation (24.4%), comment (20.5%), reply (14.8%) and acceptance (11.5%). In peer conference two, the most common categories of speech acts used by the lower-intermediate group were the same as in peer conference one, but the frequency of usage of those categories concerned were reduced, that is, elicitation (22.3%), reply (21.9%) and comment (19.2%). During this second peer conference, the intermediate group also employed similar categories of speech acts as in their first peer conference, except that

the frequency of the usage differed, that is, comment (25.3%), elicitation (14.7%), acceptance (14.7%), evaluation (13.9%) and reply (12%). In peer conference two, the most common categories of speech acts employed by the advanced group included comment (20.2%), evaluation (18.2%), elicitation (18.2%) and reply (14.8%).

A closer analysis of the results in Mohd. Sofi's (1994) study as mentioned above revealed that unlike the lower-intermediate group, the intermediate and advanced groups were able to evaluate their peers' drafts. This is perhaps due to the fact that this study used homogeneous grouping of the subjects. As a result, the pairs in the lower-intermediate group were unable to help one another much because they could only function within their own 'zone of proximal development'. As such, there is a need to examine how peers of mixed-proficiency level can help their group members to function beyond their current developmental level which is the focus of this study.

Likewise, Mendonca & Johnson (1994) investigated the negotiations that occur during ESL students' peer reviews and the ways these negotiations shape students' revisions. The subjects in this study included 12 advanced non-native speakers of English enrolled in a writing class for international graduate students at a large university. Four pairs of the students were of the same field of study while two pairs of the students were of different fields of study. This study employed three sources of data: transcriptions of peer review sessions, students' written texts, and post-interviews with the students. The teacher provided questions to guide the students during the peer reviews. The students' first draft and second draft were collected and analysed to identify evidence of revisions in the written texts. Results showed five different types of negotiations occurred during the peer reviews: explanations (36%), restatements (28%), questioning (24%), suggestions (11%), and grammar corrections (1%). It was found that questions that requested for explanations enabled writers to know what needed further elucidation. Besides, through explanations of opinions, explanations of unclear

points in the texts, and suggestions, students could exchange their ideas and knowledge about written texts. All the reviewers were also found to participate actively as they initiated all types of negotiation except explanations of content. The findings in this study revealed that during the peer reviews, the students emphasised more on ideas rather than grammatical accuracy. However, it is noted that this study only examined the negotiations that occurred among advanced ESL learners. Thus, this present study intends to investigate the peer interaction among high and intermediate-proficiency level students to find out how they helped one another in their revisions.

Akin to that, Komathy (2000) examined the talk and negotiations of two average Form Four students during two peer feedback sessions in a writing class. The instruments used in the data collection included a multiple-draft (three drafts) narrative composition, taped protocols of the students' peer feedback sessions, and taped protocols of students' interview sessions. Similar to Mendonca & Johnson's (1994) findings, this study identified five different types of negotiations (suggestion, restatement, grammar correction, explanation and the use of questions) were used by the two students during the two peer feedback sessions. Among the five different types of negotiations identified, students were found to make more suggestions (28%), restatement (27%) and grammar correction (23%).

The usefulness of peer negotiation was also confirmed by a study done by Yang et al. (2006) which investigated whether peer feedback may provide a resource in students' writing development. This study involved two groups of Chinese students in two separate EFL writing classes taught by the same teacher in a university. One group received teacher feedback while the other group received peer feedback. The data collected included students' first drafts and final drafts, students' feedback sheets, questionnaire, teacher's field notes, and transcripts of the peer interaction as well as interviews. Both classes wrote three rounds of multi-draft composition writing for the



same writing tasks. The teacher feedback class comprised 41 students while the peer feedback class comprised 38 students. In the teacher feedback class, the teacher provided written feedback on the students' final drafts, and oral feedback to the whole class while returning the drafts. The students were required to revise their drafts after the teacher had returned to them the marked scripts. In the peer feedback class, the teacher modelled giving feedback based on the peer feedback sheet. Then, the students were asked to work in pairs by using the peer feedback sheet. The students were given one week to read the draft and complete the peer feedback sheet. This was followed by peer response activities in the peer feedback class. Several days later, they handed in their final products. Results of this study reaffirmed the findings of earlier studies conducted by Lockhart (1994), Lockhart & Ng (1995), Lockhart & Ng (1996), Mendonca & Johnson (1994), Komathy (2000) which indicated that peer interaction helped in the negotiation of meaning to enhance mutual understanding. In addition, Yang et al.'s (2006) study revealed that peer-initiated revisions were more successful as compared to teacher-initiated revisions. This is because peer interaction provided an avenue to clarify misinterpretation and miscommunication. This signifies the value of peer interaction in developing students' writing.

There were also studies which investigated the role of peer interaction. For instance, Sim (1998) conducted a case study of four students in a Form Four ESL classroom to examine the role of peer interaction during the composing process, and the relationship between the peer interaction and the text produced. Findings in this study showed that at the macro level, peer interaction played a role in the writing process. Three macro concerns, that is assisting peers (34.2%), constructing sentences (21.2%) and generating ideas (16.6%) were the main characteristics portrayed by the students during peer interaction. At the micro level, it was found that through talk, students could work collaboratively to generate ideas and points which they could not have done individually

prior to the group discussion. This study revealed that the students were involved in the process of composing as shown in the collective functions of utterances in which students were engaged in repeating (31.8%), elaborating (23.9%) and suggesting parts of the sentence structures (17.6%). However, it must be noted that the sample size used in this study is too small and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population.

De Guerrero & Villamil's (1994) study which used a Vygotskian social-cognitive perspective analysed the interaction of 27 pairs of Spanish-speaking intermediate ESL college students in Puerto Rico. The students were given training and a checklist to guide them during the peer revision of 17 narrative and 23 persuasive essays. This study found that the pairs were highly interactive during the peer revision and they also interacted with the teacher. Results showed that collaboration existed between the pairs as 77% of the on-task episodes were reader-writer interactive revisions. De Guerrero & Villamil (1994) also examined the social relationships of the subjects' cognitive stages of regulation. It was found that the subjects exhibited three types of cognitive development: self-regulation, other-regulation, and object-regulation. However, self-regulation was found to be more dominant among both the readers and writers. In other words, the learners were able to solve-problem independently and provide scaffolds to the less-regulated member during the revision process. In analysing the social relationships that existed between the participants, it was found that the participants demonstrated more asymmetrical (69%) than symmetrical (31%) relationships. The social situation that existed in the asymmetrical relationship concurs with Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' as the more skilled peer assisted the other in tackling problems in the texts.

As an extension to their earlier study (1994), Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) analysed the interaction of the same 27 pairs of Spanish-speaking intermediate ESL

college students in Puerto Rico engaging in narrative and persuasive writings. The findings in this study yielded seven types of social-cognitive activities that the students were engaged in (reading, assessing, dealing with trouble sources, composing, writing comments, copying, and discussing task procedures), and four significant aspects of social behaviour (management of authorial control, affectivity, collaboration, and adopting reader/writer roles). Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) concluded that the results revealed 'an extremely complex interactive process' (p. 51) which portrayed the pertinent role of social interaction in activating the cognitive processes to enhance L2 writing. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this study only analysed the peer interaction but not the impact of the final product generated as a result of joint revision. As such, this present study will analyse the teacher-student and student-student interactions as well as compare the first drafts and final drafts of the students' writings to investigate how scaffolding during the teacher-student and student-student interactions can improve the students' writings.

Studies were also carried out to probe the value of peer collaboration. For example, a study done by Dauite (1986) to explore the value of collaboration as a direct model for developing individual composing processes yielded interesting findings. The subjects were from two classes in a suburban Boston public school. The students were asked to compose six creative texts which comprised one pre-text, four intervention samples, and one post-text. The students were given the chance to choose their partner for the writing tasks. The writing tasks assigned to the students concerned facts about animals in their habitats. All the students wrote the pre-text and post-text individually. Collaborative writing was the intervention in which half of the students in the class wrote four texts with their partners. The other half of the students in the class wrote individually on all the six sample texts. For an in-depth analysis, the compositions of two co-authors (Brian and John) from the fourth grade were chosen to represent the general findings

from a larger population of 43 fourth- and fifth-grade writers. The students were also interviewed for their views on collaborative composing. This study found that collaborative writing provided students the opportunity to share and exchange their writing strategies and skills. For instance, in the case of Brian, his post-test was found to be longer and had more complex sentences but more errors. In addition, he used more complex punctuation and he incorporated quotations which were not found in his pre-test.

In John's post-test, he included new elements, incorporated alliterative naming convention used during collaborative work, and he employed different story structure. The students also learnt from each other as they were engaged in a dialogue about rules and rhetorical structure. These findings suggest that collaborative composing had an influence on the subsequent text composed by the students individually.

Likewise, the findings in a later study conducted by Cotterall & Cohen (2003) on scaffolding for second language revealed that peer discussion was well received as a form of collective inquiry in which learners exchanged their views and comments, shared information and developed self-confidence in their writing. Eight of the sixteen university students in this study mentioned that through their experience in the writing process, they have learnt the 'essay structure' and 'linking and organising ideas' which were initially confusing to them (Cotterall & Cohen 2003, p. 163).

Similarly, Storch's (2005) study which investigated the product, process, and student reflections on collaborative writing yielded promising results. Specifically, this study compared the texts produced by students working in pairs with those produced individually. The subjects in this study were 23 students from two parallel in-tact ESL classes taught by the researcher herself in an Australian university. Majority of the subjects were from diverse language background from different countries in Asia. Out of the 23 students, 18 chose to work in pairs while five chose to work individually. The

data collected from this study included completed students' compositions, transcripts of pair talk and transcripts of interviews with the students after the completion of their collaborative writing. Results indicated that students who worked in pairs tended to compose shorter but more grammatically accurate and linguistically complex texts. Majority of the students were positive about their experience of engaging in collaborative writing. 12 students perceived that collaborative writing provided them the opportunity to generate and compare their ideas, learn from each other the different expressions used in conveying ideas in their writing, co-construct texts, as well as to improve their grammatical accuracy and build vocabularies. There were only five students who had reservations about collaborative writing which is due to their lack of confidence in their own language skills. This implies the need for teachers to train students to use appropriate interpersonal skills to enhance interaction with their group members.

Other studies were conducted to investigate the dynamism of peer interaction. For instance, Cumming & So (1996) analysed the dynamics of problem-solving through spoken discourse in one-to-one tutoring of second language writing to determine if the interaction process is affected by the instructional approach or the language of communication used by the tutors. Twenty adult ESL learners received four individual tutoring sessions – two sessions were in English, two in their mother tongue, two used procedural facilitation, and two used error correction. Seven graduate students and one professor acted as tutors. All the tutors were experienced ESL instructors. Results showed that the tutoring discourse followed the transactions of problem identification, negotiation, and resolution. Tutors and students tended to focus primarily on local levels of the compositions (that is, grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation), guided mainly by the tutors' decision making. However, it is interesting to note that the structure of the discourse transactions in tutoring ESL writing varied among the tutors to

provide students the opportunities to negotiate and solve textual problems independently. The variation ranged from tutors patiently encouraging students to seek resolutions to textual problems, to tutors rapidly providing answers to correct textual problems for students. This calls for future studies to investigate the impact of tutoring on ESL students' writing which this study did not analyse.

In another study, Stanley (1992) examined the effectiveness of coaching fifteen L2 students for peer evaluation of six essays. Findings in this study showed that coached students were engaged in intense interaction about their drafts by providing specific response types such as pointing, advising and collaborating. There were high occurrence of announcing and clarifying responses during the peer evaluation among the coached students. Coached students were also aggressive in requesting for comments from the evaluators.

In contrast to the above studies that yielded positive findings on peer response groups, George's (1984) observation of her peer response groups revealed mixed findings. Her study identified three groups that existed in the class. They were task-oriented group, leaderless group and dysfunctional group. The task-oriented group was highly successful in their peer interaction as they were self-starting and self-perpetuating. On the contrary, the leaderless group was quiet, often dominated by a judgemental member and the members failed to assimilate suggestion from the peers. The dysfunctional group was not self-starting and faced difficulty in beginning even the simplest task. It is noted that these findings may mirror the actual classroom scenario in which some response groups may function effectively while others may not. Therefore, the issues raised here are: Why do some groups work while others don't? What roles should the teacher and peers play in the success of a peer response group? What effective scaffolds can the teacher and peers provide for their group members to

facilitate learning? In this current study, the researcher will address some of those concerns.

There were also studies which analysed students' interaction in mixed peer response groups. For instance, Zhu's (2001) study examined student interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups by investigating participants' turn-taking behaviours, language functions performed during peer response, and written feedback on each others' writing. This case study involved 11 students in three mixed peer response groups of two freshman composition classes. Each group consisted of a non-native speaker and two or three native speakers. The classes were taught by two different instructors who both practised the writing process. Modelling was given in which students were exposed to a video session on how peer response group worked. The data collected included transcripts of tape-recordings of peer discussions of six papers and students' comments (recorded on the response sheets) on their peer writing. Results showed that fewer turns were taken and fewer language functions were produced during oral discussion of writing by the non-native speakers when assuming the writer's role. The fewer turns they took in responding revealed that the ESL students were in less control of the discussions of their own writing. The non-native speakers responded to peer feedback, but did not clarify their writing for the readers as compared to the native speakers. As readers, the non-native speakers faced difficulties in competing, sustaining and regaining interrupted turns as compared to the native speakers. This hindered their efforts to contribute to the peer discussion. Native speakers provided suggestions through advising; while non-native speakers used to point out through announcing, and imply through questioning the troubled areas. The non-native speakers performed limited language functions, such as announcing, reacting, questioning, advising, and justifying, with announcing (30%) and questioning (40%) being the two major functions. On the other hand, the native speakers demonstrated a wider range of

language functions such as confirming, pointing, hedging, elaborating, and eliciting; with reacting (22%), advising (24%) and announcing (17%) as the most frequently occurring. This study also found that written peer response could supplement oral peer response for mixed peer response groups in providing effective peer response to aid composition writing. Since this case study involved mixed-proficiency groups of native and non-native speakers, it would be interesting to investigate the pattern of peer interaction among students of different proficiency levels in an ESL context.

Interestingly, in an earlier study done by Tudge (1990) which involved 154 children of age between five to nine years old to examine the impact of being paired with a more capable, less capable, or an equally capable peer revealed that unless a child confidently applied his or her high level of thinking during the peer interaction to assist his or her partner, no learning would occur. In another study involving 180 children aged six to eight, Tudge (1990) found that peer collaboration could also lead to regression when a child worked with a partner whose thinking is at the lower level domain. Thus, this implies that teachers when engaging students in peer collaboration need to ensure that the students within the group are interested in the task and that they share a common goal of solving it. Another implication from these two studies is that teachers need to be careful when pairing or grouping students in the writing classroom. In order for peer response groups to be effective in aiding students' revision, a more skilled peer needs to be included in the pairing or grouping. This is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning that with guidance from an adult or more capable peers, a learner would be able to function beyond his or her current developmental level.

Likewise, Daiute & Dalton's (1993) study explored the nature of the peer collaboration process among low-achieving seven pairs of seven to nine year old third graders. All the participants wrote four stories individually and three stories collaboratively with a partner over a three-month period. Findings from this study



revealed some similarities in the support provided by the young peers with that of expert-novice pairs. The young peers in this study were engaged in generative and reflective processes. The children used a range of interaction patterns which included initiating, contesting, and repeating. Initiating the flow of the text served as modelling by the young peers who acted as teachers. A popular peer collaboration strategy employed by these young peers was play. Through play, they engaged in disagreeing, arguing and contesting. These cognitive conflicts helped them to sharpen and reflect on their thinking, thereby enabling them to pose alternatives and to question each other. The peer interaction engaged a lot of repetitions of words or phrases and this helped them in the internalisation of concepts. This finding collaborates with DiCamilla & Anton's (1997) study as mentioned in Section 2.6.2 that repetition is the means for students to attain joint understanding of a text. The findings in this study indicated that "novices can be masters" (Daiute & Dalton, 1993, p. 322) as each child brings different skills and experience to strengthen writing through peer collaboration. However, one difference as shown in this study when comparing the 'expert-novice role' to that of 'peer collaboration' is that in the former, the adult tended to be in control over the child's activity, but in the latter, peers felt more at ease with each other of equal social status which enables productive communication. This implies that in writing, children still need adults as mentors and facilitators but peer collaboration would engage them in cognitive processes to master the writing skills. Thus, this present study is keen to investigate whether 'novice' (students) can play the role of a 'master' (teacher) during peer interaction to assist their group members to improve their revisions.

However, Denyer & LaFleur's (2001) study found that one of the students was reluctant to make changes by adding details that were recommended by his peers. Nevertheless, this finding showed that although disagreement happened during discussion in the peer response group, it provided the opportunity for students to

explore, to apply their knowledge of writing learnt in class and to learn to work within a community of writers to become better writers. Like Daiute & Dalton's (1993) study, the finding in this study on the presence of disagreement of one student concurs with Piaget's theory that social interaction among peers is essential as differences in ideas and arguments help stimulate their thinking (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rogoff, 1990). Even though Piaget's theory is in contrast to Vygotsky's (1978) theory which emphasises internalisation, both Piaget and Vygotsky recognised the importance of social interaction to develop higher cognitive skills. Cazden (1988) stressed that "Confrontation with alternative ideas, whether from adults or peers, cannot be expected to produce immediate change" (p. 128). Students may accept or resist ideas given by others during social interactions based on the social meanings they associate to their writing tasks (Cazden, 1994). This is because learners will process the feedback given by adults or peers and then they make their own decision as to accept the change or not in their writings. In other words, working in a peer response group enables students to use their higher order reasoning skill to become critical thinkers and to make their own decision in their writing.

In a related study, Nelson & Carson (1998) investigated Chinese and Spanish-speaking students' perceptions of their interactions in peer response groups in an ESL composition class. This micro-ethnographic study involved three peer response groups in an advanced ESL composition class which were observed for a period of six consecutive weeks. There were three groups with four participants; and one group with three participants. Data was collected systematically through video-taping, audio-taping and observing the peer response sessions. In addition, three Chinese and two Spanish-speaking group members were interviewed to gather their perceptions of the peer response sessions. The findings indicated that both the Chinese and Spanish-speaking students favoured negative comments that identified problems in their drafts.

Similarly, Mitchell's (1992) study which examined how students collaborate to summarise related tasks from the course to their final project yielded positive results. This study involved students from an advanced writing class. In the writing task, the students were required to choose a context for expression, search for models of writing, synthesise what they have learnt about writing from their peers and relate it to their specialisation. The students provided feedback to their peers' initial drafts while the teacher responded to their final draft which was in turn revised for the portfolio. This portfolio was submitted at the end of the course for a grade. Findings in this study indicated that the teacher provided a series of prompts to assist the students in their writing; monitored how the students designed their writing projects and the progress of their writing project; organised workshops and peer reviews for the students' writing; and empowered students with the freedom to respond to each others' initial drafts. Besides that, the students were found to be comfortable with each other as they worked collaboratively in providing critical peer reviews. In other words, they learnt from their peer feedback.

Likewise, Smagorinsky's (1991) study which investigated the role of peer response groups revealed promising results. The subjects were high school juniors who were assigned to write college application essays. The students submitted their rough drafts to be evaluated by the role-playing peer-response groups consisting of about four students each. Prior to forming the evaluation committee, the class evaluated a sample composition together to ensure that students understand their tasks. Following that, the students submitted their essays and the teacher distributed about four to each committee. Each committee utilised the guidelines determined during the class discussions to evaluate the essays and judge the candidates. Findings showed that students play an important role in improving their peers' writing while developing critical thinking skills to guide and take control of their own writing. An interesting finding gathered from this

study is that in criticising others' writing helped the responder to learn evaluative skills which in turn made them "more autonomous critics of their own work" (Smagorinsky, 1991, p. 38). The conclusion drawn from this study is that peer response session helped to "make writing an important means of expression and growth" (Smagorinsky, 1991, p. 40).

Akin to that, Freedman (1992) examined the interactions of peer response groups during key instructional activity in two ninth-grade English classes taught by two different teachers (Glass and Peterson) using two different approaches. Glass' class emphasised whole-class activities and peer response groups, while Peterson's class focused on teacher-student conferences. On the whole, 95 group meetings were observed and audio-taped during a 17-week period. The data collected included daily field notes, tape recordings of class activities, interviews with teachers and students, and some samples of student writing. Results showed that within the groups, 60% of the students' talk were focused on the response sheets. Some students discussed the topics raised on the response sheets, but in most of the talk students avoided negative evaluation, collaborated with one another to complete the response sheets in order to get the work done. In the other 40% of the talk, students took their own initiative to discuss the content of their writing. In Glass' class, the students were able to be engaged in self-response when they read their writing aloud to their peers. However, students in both classes faced difficulty discussing matters of form or mechanics and they even made up their own rules to help their peers correct those errors. The peer-listeners were found to be unable to help the writers when the latter requested for assistance. This finding indicates that the students may not be equipped to provide the help needed in the creation of a text. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this study only examined the oral interaction of the peer response groups and not the students' written work which would

provide a better understanding of how interaction during peer response groups can contribute to learning to write.

In another study, Nelson & Murphy (1992) carried out a case study of four university students in an intermediate ESL writing class to examine the task and social dimensions of the L2 writing groups. The students were expected to produce eight focused and coherent paragraphs over a ten-week writing course that met five days a week for 45 minutes. Prior to the study, the students were given a practice session on writing reader-based responses on draft and were guided by the teacher and a list of guiding questions. The students' utterances during the group work were divided into thought groups which were coded according to five (5) categories: study of language, life general knowledge, life personal knowledge, procedure, and format. Results showed that the task dimension of the group was successful as the most number of thought groups that occurred across the six sessions were the study of language (73%), followed by procedure comments (12%), life personal comments (9%), life general knowledge (3%), and format (2.3%). However, the social dimension of the group was less successful and was described by Nelson & Murphy (1992) as a 'duel'. One of the group members was characterised as the attacker due to her critical and negative comments and this affected the social dynamics of the other group members who either withdrew from the interaction or became defensive and later criticised the attacker's writing. These findings indicate that critical comments can impede students' discussion on improvement of their writing. Besides, findings in this study also point to the need for proper training to establish trust and commitment, to develop the communicative skills for giving constructive comments to help students improve their writing.

There were also studies which examined the effectiveness of training students for peer revision. For instance, McGroarty & Zhu (1997) carried out an experimental study on the effectiveness of training students for peer revision. This study was conducted in

a Southwestern university and majority of the 169 participants were native speakers of English. Four instructors also volunteered to participate in the research. The participants were given training on techniques of responding critically to their peer writing on global concerns (focus on development of ideas, audience, purpose and organisation). Findings in this study revealed that training for peer revision helped to improve students' peer responding skills and attitudes for peer revision but did not significantly improve students' writings. Nevertheless, the positive effect of peer revision training was shown by the better performance of the experimental group in their cumulative writing development as evidenced in the improved grades of their portfolios. The effectiveness of the peer revision training is also revealed by the 'reader-writer sharing' pattern in the experimental group as compared to the 'reader-reporting' pattern in the control group. Unlike the peers in the control group, peers in the experimental group were actively engaged in group discussion and negotiation of meaning through seeking, clarifying and providing information as well as giving suggestions for improvement in the revisions.

Thus, findings from the above studies on peer interaction revealed that peer response can lead to development and even regression. However, it must be noted here that it is not the amount of talk that occurs among the students that matters but rather what works during the talk which is central to collaborative writing. It is also noticed that most of the past studies as discussed above only investigated peer interaction in relation to the revision of texts and few studies explored both the teacher-student and peer interactions in relation to the revision of texts. As such, the present study will investigate what transpires in the interactions of both the teacher-student and student-student during peer response sessions to help group members revise the individual first drafts of their compositions. The importance of teacher instruction also needs to be taken into account as according to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning, instruction needs to be ahead of

development for learning to occur. This present study also addresses the issue of ‘What makes a peer response group works?’

### **2.3 Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback in Composition Writing**

A substantial amount of research has also been done on the effectiveness of peer feedback and teacher feedback in writing compositions in L1 and L2 context and the findings were contradictory. This section will discuss past studies related to peer feedback and teacher feedback, peer conferencing, peer review, pair work, group work, and peer editing. This section also discusses studies done to investigate students’ preference for peer conference, students’ preference for feedback by ESL peers or native speakers, as well as teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the usefulness and popularity of pair work versus group work.

Hittleman (1983) conducted an experimental study to investigate the effectiveness of peer conference as an aid to the revision of the students’ first drafts. Analysis of the first drafts and the revised drafts indicated that there was a difference between the first draft scores and the revised draft scores for the subjects in both the experimental and the control groups. An analysis of the taped peer conference and the revised products indicated that the students were able to use peer conference. The subjects were able to make improvement to their first drafts when they were given enough time to progress through the writing process. Hittleman (1983) concluded that the effectiveness of peer conference technique was comparable to the teacher written comments in aiding revision.

In another study, Chaudron (1984) carried out an experimental study on the effectiveness of peer versus teacher feedback on two classes of students’ composition writings. One class consisted of 14 ESL students from the advanced writing class, while another class consisted of 17 ESL students of a high-intermediate composition class. In

each class, there was an experimental group (with peer treatment) and a control group (with teacher feedback treatment). Results showed that there was no significant difference between the amount of improvement in the students' revisions as a result of teacher feedback and peer feedback. However, it must be noted here that since the feedback given by both the teacher and peers were in written form, the student writers have no opportunity to discuss and negotiate meaning with the peer readers. Hence, the revisions made by the student writers may have shown improvement but may not reflect their intended message. In other words, the student writers in this study have limited control when revising their texts. This implies that student writers need to be given the opportunity to be engaged in teacher-student and student-student interactions so that they can negotiate meaning and improve their writing.

In a related study, Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1992) investigated whether foreign language (FL) learners who were engaged in an oral/aural revision procedure performed better than learners who received only teacher's written feedback. The subjects in this study were 30 native speakers of English enrolled in an accelerated first-year French course at Michigan State University. The experimental group had 14 students whereas the control group had 16 students. Students carried out two oral revisions on their draft writings based on revision guidelines given. The outcomes of the study showed that the peer oral-revision group and the control group (which received teacher written feedback) were on par in their performance. Nevertheless, the question posited here is: During oral-revision session, how do peers help their group members to revise their writings?

Paulus' (1999) analysis of the multiple-drafts written by 11 undergraduate ESL students and the recording of the students' verbal reports during revision found that although students used more teacher feedback to improve their revision, the peer feedback also contributed to the improvement of the students' revision.



These findings in Paulus' (1999) study were in agreement with the findings of Tsui & Ng (2000). Tsui & Ng (2000) investigated the roles of teacher and peer comments in facilitating the revision of writing among secondary L2 learners in Hong Kong. The subjects were 27 Chinese students in Secondary 6 and 7 (Grades 12 and 13: Pre-university years in Hong Kong). The students were divided into nine groups with three to four members each. They were engaged in four 'writing cycles'. Each writing cycle was conducted for a period of six weeks. Each writing cycle started with a whole-class brainstorming session leading to the production of a first draft. This was followed by the teacher giving feedback to common problems found in the students' first drafts. Then, the students read and provided written comments to the first drafts of their peers. Ensuing that, the students discussed the peer comments during the peer response session. After that, the students produced their second drafts based on the written and oral peer comments. Then, the teacher gave her comments on their second drafts. The drafts and comments collected for analysis were from the last two writing cycles to ensure that the students were familiar with the process writing approach and in providing comments. The data collected consisted of a questionnaire answered by all the 27 students after the completion of the fourth writing cycle, interviews with six students who were randomly selected, audio-taping of all the peer response group discussions and teacher comments given on the second drafts. Although the results of this study suggested that the students favoured and incorporated more teacher comments as compared to peer comments in the revision of their writing, the students perceived that both the teacher comments and peer comments served their own roles in contributing positively to their revisions. The teacher comments were found to enhance the revision of macro-structures of a text; whereas peer comments played four roles in enhancing a sense of audience, raising the students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in their writing, encouraging mutual learning and developing a sense of the

writers' ownership. In other words, both the teacher comments and peer comments complemented each other. The implication from the findings of this study is that instead of playing the role as an evaluator, the teacher needs to collaborate with the students in negotiating meaning to assist them in clarifying their thoughts. Another implication is that teachers need to seek ways to help learners to develop strategies to generate ideas, revise, and edit their writing.

Likewise, a recent study done by Yang et al. (2006) which was mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 also indicated that although the students valued the teacher feedback, they also reckoned the importance of their peer feedback. The outcome of this study revealed that although the teacher feedback had greater impact on the students' revision, the peer feedback also led to improvement and helped enhance student autonomy. Besides that, the teacher and peer feedback had different impact. The peer feedback resulted in greater meaning-change revision while the teacher feedback resulted in more surface level change. Moreover, students found the usefulness of reading their peers' writing and giving peer feedback. This implies that peer feedback plays a role in students' revision of their writing.

Besides studies which were conducted to examine the impact of oral peer response, there were also studies which analysed the impact of written peer response. For instance, Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger's (1992) study investigated how 60 ESL freshmen students responded in writing to an essay written by an ESL student. This study examined the stances taken by the students toward a writer's essay, the characteristics of these stances, and what these stances suggest about the students' perceptions of the purpose of peer reviews and compositions. Results showed the presence of three (3) stances in the students' reviews: an 'interpretive' stance, in which students appropriated the text for their own understanding; a 'prescriptive' stance, in which students identified weaknesses in the text and expected the writer to fix them

based on a prescribed form; and a 'collaborative' stance, in which students made suggestions to meet the needs of the same audience as the writer. Majority of the students in this study embraced the prescriptive stance as they emphasised the importance of grammatical accuracy rather than content. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the finding in this study is only limited to the analysis of one ESL writer's text; and therefore the findings cannot be generalised. Besides, this study would have been more meaningful if the researchers had looked into how the student writer revised his writing based on the peer reviews. In addition, since the peers responded in writing which is similar to Chaudron's (1984) study, there was no negotiation of meaning between the reader and writer. Without the opportunity of negotiation, the writer would lose the ownership of his or her writing as he or she would be merely revising his or her text based on the peer written reviews.

Besides that, studies were done to identify the types of comments given by reviewers and students' perceptions of the helpfulness of those comments. For instance, Cho, Schunn, & Chamey (2006) examined the types of comments given by reviewers and the perceived helpfulness of those comments. This study involved the collection of comments from two undergraduates and one graduate-level student as well as an experienced instructor of a psychology course at the University of Pittsburgh. The graduate-level student had received considerable training in critical thinking in her own discipline. This graduate-level student had also been practising giving feedback to her peers as part of their coursework. The writing task assigned to the 88 undergraduate from a Large Undergraduate Course and 23 graduate students from a Graduate Course included an expository essay with the topic chosen from a list of topics. The other 30 undergraduates from a Small Undergraduate Course wrote the introductory section of a report on a research project. Each of the reviewers gave different comments on each paper on each of the three dimensions (prose flow, argument, and insight). The

reviewers' comments were divided into feedback segments (idea units). Each feedback segment was assigned to one of six comment categories: *directive*, *nondirective*, *praise*, *criticism*, *summary* and *off task*. After the submission of the final drafts, the students evaluated the helpfulness of the reviewers' comments in assisting them in their revisions. Results from this study showed that the students' comments were shorter as compared to the instructor's. The undergraduate comments which were mostly directive and praise were found to be the most helpful. The undergraduate peers found directive and praise comments to be helpful. The usefulness of the directive comments was substantiated by the writing instructor who also provided mostly directive comments for all three dimensions. On the other hand, critical comments which were mostly given by the graduate-level student have negative influences on perceived helpfulness of comments in argument and insight. This implies that students need to be trained to provide more directive and praise comments rather than critical comments.

Other studies have explored the use of praise, criticism and suggestion as feedback in students' writing. For instance, Hyland & Hyland (2001) investigated the feedback provided by the teachers in terms of its functions as praise, criticism and suggestion. The participants included six ESL writers from different language background enrolled in a 14-week full-time English proficiency course at a New Zealand university. The six ESL writers were from two different classes taught by two different experienced ESL writing instructors. One class was preparing students for the admission to undergraduate studies (Class A) and the other preparing students for postgraduate studies (Class B). 10 pieces of work for Class A and seven pieces of work for Class B were collected. Out of these, three pieces of writing in both classes involved the revision process, starting with the writing of a draft, followed by written feedback, and then a revised version in response to the feedback. In this study, the data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, analysis of texts, observation of classes, and verbal

reports. These various methods of data collection were triangulated. Findings from this study indicated that praise was the most often employed form of feedback of the two teachers, but this was usually used to soften criticisms and suggestions instead of simply responding to good work. Many of the criticisms and suggestions were also toned down by the use of hedging devices, question forms, and personal attribution. It was found that the teachers' use of indirectness in their criticisms resulted in "incomprehension and miscommunication" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 185). These findings implied that teachers need to look critically at their written feedback to ensure that they are clear to their students. Another implication from the findings of this study is that praise needs to be specific and sincere as "Students ... are adept at recognizing formulaic positive comment which serve no function beyond the spoonful of sugar to help the bitter pill of criticism go down" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 208).

However, a recent study done by Smith-D'Arezzo's (2004) study yielded mixed findings on the perceptions of a class of college students and a class of sixth-graders on collaborative writing. In this study, each of the college students was paired with a sixth-grader to score each other's writing. This study was carried out over a period of five semesters and the seventh-graders were involved in the study during the second semester. In giving scores to their partner, the students followed the format of six traits of writing (ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions) from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). The college students were trained to work on samples of children's writing and taught the social skills of speaking to children about their writing. They also practised role-playing in class to give positive comments and constructive criticism on children's writing. The students met twice per semester to discuss and share ideas on their writing. Findings showed that on one hand, the college students felt uncomfortable scoring the young students' papers; on the other hand, the young students were empowered to score the writing papers of the college

students. Due to the limited meeting sessions, the students only discussed their writing superficially and they did not manage to discuss on ways to improve each other's writing. The students (especially, the young students) felt that they needed to meet the college students more often to discuss their writing. This unpleasant feeling experienced by the college students was perhaps due to differences in social institutions as the older students were from college while the young students were from elementary school. This implies that for effective collaborative writing, systematic and careful planning has to be taken into consideration to allocate sufficient time for partners or group members of equal status to discuss and provide constructive feedback to each others' writing.

In addition, there were studies which compared teacher comments with peer comments and these yielded contradictory findings. For instance, Connor & Asenavage's (1994) study revealed negative findings of peer group response. This study investigated the impact of peer response on subsequent revisions as compared to comments from the teacher and other sources. The subjects in this study were eight freshmen ESL students who were divided into two groups (four members in each group). It was found that although students made many revisions, few of these revisions were made as a result of direct peer group response. It is noted that this study only analysed the students' first draft, second draft, and the peer interaction. For more substantial results, interviews with the students need to be conducted to find out more about their perceptions of the importance of peer comments, teacher comments and comments by others on the subsequent revisions.

Likewise, Zhang's (1995) investigation into whether the affective advantage of peer feedback in L1 writing is applicable to the ESL writing yielded negative response. The findings showed that a great majority of the 81 ESL students in this study preferred teacher feedback over peer feedback and self-directed feedback. This implies that

teacher feedback which is claimed to be threatening and usurping students' ownership to their writing is not so much of an issue in this ESL context of learning. Nevertheless, Zhang (1995) mentioned that her results could be due to the influence of the cultural background of the participants as 86.4% of them were from Asia.

This is in contrast to the findings of Hyland's (2000) study which investigated the effects of peer and teacher feedback on ESL writers. The finding yielded from this study indicated that teacher feedback sometimes stifled students' creativity in their writing. As Hyland (2000) mentioned "... teacher sometimes override student concerns and decisions on the use of feedback, even when peer feedback, which appears to allow for more student participation, is involved" (p. 33). Teachers do not realise that by exercising autonomy in their written comments, they have in fact turned students into "containers" and "receptacles" to "be filled" by teachers" (Freire, 1972, p. 45). Hyland's (2000) case study consisted of six ESL students (three from each class of English Proficiency Programme Course [EPP]) and two teachers working on the EPP. The students were from different cultural backgrounds and of varying levels of English proficiency. The teachers in this study tended to focus on the immediate product while the students focused on the language learning process. Written peer feedback was found to have a marginal role in students' revisions. Nevertheless, this study suggested the need for teachers to allow students to make their own decisions about their source of feedback and to let students exercise ownership of their own writing.

Interestingly, in an earlier study done by Karengianes et al. (1980) to examine the effects of peer and teacher editing on the writing achievement of students in L1 context yielded promising findings. The subjects were 49 low-achieving tenth graders in an intensive ten-week programme. This study involved an experimental group using peer editing and the control group using teacher editing of the students' writings. Training using prepared rating sheets was given to the peer editors during the first four-week

session. Two independent raters were engaged in evaluating the pre-test and the post-test essays of the two groups holistically. The results in the study revealed that the peer editing groups showed significantly higher writing proficiency than the teacher editing group. It was concluded from the findings that peer editing was highly effective. This study also showed that not only the more skilled and average students were capable of peer editing, but the less skilled students were also able to edit their peers' work.

Similarly, Newkirk (1984) examined possible differences between instructor and peer evaluations. The subjects were one group of 10 instructors in Freshman English at the University of New Hampshire and another group of 10 students taking the course. The 10 students were selected from a group of 20 student volunteers. The subjects were given ample time to read, reread and review four papers. After that, they were interviewed to explore their evaluation. The findings concluded that the students were willing to utilise their background knowledge to "identify with a text and 'read in' details that the writer has not included; ... the instructors ... expect greater explicitness" (Newkirk, 1984, p. 310). The findings also indicated that correction symbol will only be successful if instructor and student understand what constitutes detail and what constitutes adequacy. This study pointed to the importance of the role of the instructor in providing illustration and demonstration to expose students to what goes on when they read or write.

Other studies investigated the influence of teacher comments on students' revision. For instance, Ferris (1997) examined the characteristics of teacher commentary that influenced students' revision. The subjects in this study comprised one teacher and 47 students enrolled in three sections of an ESL freshman composition course at a large public university in California. The data collected included 110 pairs of first and revised drafts from two essays. The first drafts contained teacher commentary (both marginal notes and endnotes). Results of this study indicated that the teacher employed



a lot of questions in marginal comments, provided positive and text-specific feedback, avoided imperatives, and focused primarily on students' ideas. It was found that positive comments which appeared mostly in the endnotes did not lead to much change in the students' revision. However, marginal requests for information (whether in question or statement form) and summary comments on grammar led to the most substantive revisions. Likewise, long comments and text-specific comments led to positive revisions. On the other hand, hedges in comments did not inhibit effective revisions. The conclusion drawn from this study is that simultaneous feedback on content and form may improve the end products. This study implies that teachers need to be careful in their responding strategies and in constructing questions which can help students to process feedback successfully.

In a recent related study, Sugita (2006) investigated whether teacher comment types have an apparent influence on students' revisions, and the types of comments which encourage students to make substantive effective revisions. The subjects in this study were one group of 25 students from Year 1 Practical English 2 class; and two groups of 25 students each of Year 2 Practical English 4 class. All the subjects were native speakers of Japanese and their English proficiency levels were pre-intermediate or intermediate. The subjects were assigned to write a multiple-draft essay on their opinion about a social or environmental problem. Three types of teacher commentary (that is, statements, imperatives, and questions) were applied to each group of students to examine their reactions to those comments. Data were collected from 71 pairs of second and third drafts from the 75 students; while four students were discarded as the second drafts were missing. The findings showed that imperative comments led to the most substantive revisions; whereas, questions and statements produced minimal substantive changes. This suggests that imperatives were more influential on revisions as compared to questions or statements. Sugita (2006) explained that teachers'

imperative comments seemed to be direct instructions which had a sense of authority but at the same time provided clear direction to writers on how to revise their errors. Thus, students paid attention to the teacher feedback to revise their drafts.

There were also studies that investigated students' preference for peer conference (Mohd. Sofi bin Ali, 1994); students' preference for feedback by ESL peers or native speakers (Chaudron, 1984; Jacobs et al., 1998); students' preference for both their peers' and teacher's feedback (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994); students' preference for teacher feedback as compared to peer feedback (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Zacharias (2007); as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of the usefulness and popularity of pair work versus group work (Peacock, 1998).

For instance, Mohd. Sofi bin Ali's (1994) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 found that the teacher trainees favoured peer conference as a strategy in writing composition. They reported that through peer conferencing, they have discovered new techniques to begin writing a composition. They accepted their peers as audience for their writing, and have a better view of the process of revision and editing. Mohd. Sofi (1994) concluded that the findings in this study showed that peer conference could be an alternative and effective strategy to improve the quality of composition.

On the other hand, Chaudron (1984) investigated 23 ESL students' feelings about being evaluated by ESL peers and by native speakers (NSs). It was found that although the students appreciated the assistance from their peers, they have a strong preference to be evaluated by NSs.

In a later study, Jacobs et al. (1998) examined ESL students' preference for peer feedback. A total of 121 first- and second-year undergraduate ESL students from lower intermediate to high-proficiency levels participated in this study. Out of the 121 participants, 44 were from a university in Hong Kong and 77 were from a university in Taiwan. The participants were asked to complete a one-item questionnaire by choosing

between the two options (prefer to have peer feedback or do not prefer to have peer feedback on their writing) and to write a brief explanation of their selection. The teachers supported the students' peer feedback by providing feedback guidelines and models of constructive feedback. The findings in this study indicated that 112 (93%) of the students preferred to receive peer feedback as one type of feedback on their writing. Among the reasons for the participants' preferences of the peer feedback were that the peers were informative; peers could identify problem areas; they could learn both the strengths and weaknesses in their peers' writing; as well as the peers were more understanding, less threatening and they supplied more feedback. In addition, the students also reckoned the importance and the necessity of receiving the teacher feedback.

Likewise, Mendonca & Johnson's (1994) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 indicated that the students recognised the importance of both the peers' and teacher's feedback. The students were found to be selective in incorporating the peer comments in their revisions and they could decide for themselves what to revise in their own texts.

In contrast, the findings in Nelson & Carson's (1998) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 revealed that the students preferred their teacher comments as opposed to their peer comments. They were in favour of their teacher whom they deemed as 'expert' in finding problems. However, they felt that feedback on surface level errors (such as grammar and sentence-level comments) as ineffective.

This finding was echoed in a recent study conducted by Zacharias (2007) to explore the students' attitudes toward teacher feedback. This study utilised a combination of quantitative method (questionnaires) and qualitative method (open-ended questionnaire and interviews) to gather data from the participants. A total of 100 students completed the questionnaire but 21 of them were interviewed. 20 teachers filled in the questionnaire while 10 of them were interviewed to gather the necessary data to support

this study. Findings from this study suggested that the teachers and students have a high preference for teacher feedback. The reasons for the preference were that the teacher feedback provides security for the [poor] students and they believed that “teachers are the source of knowledge” (Zacharias, 2007, p. 43). They considered teacher feedback as “more ‘qualified’, ‘experienced’, ‘accurate’, ‘valid’, ‘reliable’ and ‘trustworthy’” (Zacharias, 2007, p. 51). Compared to feedback on content, the students perceived that feedback on form was considered to be more helpful. They resented teacher feedback which were too general and vague. It was found that the teachers’ control over the grades is one of the determining factors which made the students’ preferred teacher feedback over their peer feedback. This study showed that the teacher feedback has a great influence on the students’ emotional states. In other words, the teacher feedback had stifled the students’ creativity and ownership of their own writings. Thus, the question posited here is: Should students be encouraged to write for a single audience (the teacher) or for a variety of audience in order to develop their writing skills?

Other studies examined teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the usefulness of pair work and group work. For instance, Peacock (1998) investigated teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the usefulness and popularity of pair work versus group work (working in threes). Students of eight ESL classrooms in a Hong Kong university were involved in this study. It was found that pair work was more useful as learners tend to work harder than those working in groups. Besides, results in this study revealed that group work was more popular among the teachers and students. In addition, the results also showed that there was a link between the levels of on-task behaviour and linguistic progress. However, it must be noted that this study only analysed data collected through in-class observations, a tally sheet to record the learner on-task behaviour, and semi-structured interviews to gather teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the usefulness of pair work versus group work. The findings of this study would have been more

convincing if students' written tasks (both through pair work and group work) were analysed and triangulated to support the claim on the usefulness of pair work versus group work.

To conclude, the above studies revealed contrasting findings on the effectiveness of peer feedback and teacher feedback, peer conferencing, peer review, pair work, group work, peer editing, students' preference for peer conferencing, students' preference for feedback by ESL peers or native speakers, as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of the usefulness and popularity of pair work versus group work.

## **2.4 Role of Teachers in Peer Response Group**

In a peer response group, the teacher plays multiple roles – as a facilitator, clarifier and scaffolder (Denyer & LaFleur, 2001; Reid, 1994; Shahrina & Norhisham, 2006) to encourage students to think. As a facilitator, the teacher can create a social discourse community in the ESL writing classroom. Shahrina & Norhisham (2006) also stressed that by acting as a facilitator, the teacher can help learners to realise their potential in order to enhance their writing skills. The teacher can direct questions back to the group to give students the opportunity to help each other to think about the issue concerned. The teacher can also ask questions which help learners to relate their knowledge of writing learnt in class to the present writing task (Denyer & LaFleur, 2001; Mitchell, 1992).

Prior to writing a first draft, the teacher can let students study effective models, such as good papers written by students of previous year and even the teacher's own model essay. For instance, the teacher in Mitchell's (1992) study provided models of students' writing to assist the students in their writing. As a class, the teacher and students can discuss the unique qualities of the model essays so that students can have a better understanding of how to compose a good essay of their own.

Besides that, Reid (1994) highlighted the teacher's role as a resource and an expert to help empower students in their writing. As a writing expert, the teacher can intervene when necessary in order to educate the students.

In addition, a teacher needs to monitor the progress of the peer response group in order to identify problems, listen critically and openly to peer comments, and try to clarify and rectify those problems before they become critical. There are two ways in which a teacher can fit into the peer response group. First, the teacher can act like a participant-observer, moving students into discussion but refrain from taking control over the group. A second way is having individual conference with students who request it. The use of response groups does not exclude teacher input (Barron, 1991). However, the students are given the opportunity to indicate the assistance they need and when they require those input. In other words, the teacher provides advice and guidance, and the extent of the intake of those input is for the students to decide.

In Mitchell's (1992) study which was mentioned earlier in Section 2.2, the job of the teacher was to 'orchestrate' (p. 400). The teacher probed to find out the students' needs, helped to search for model samples of students' writing, discussed writing style, used questions to prompt students to have a deeper reading of model samples, commented on students' drafts, monitored how the students designed their writing projects and provided guidance to ensure that they were on the right track, organised evaluative workshops to point out common patterns of errors in students' writing, empowered students to write their own project and provided encouragement for students to improve their writing.

Moreover, in a peer response group, the teacher also needs to act as a scaffolder to assist students to be engaged in higher mental functioning. The types of teacher scaffolds will be described in Section 2.6.1.

Other than that, the teacher plays the role of an evaluator and an examiner. As an evaluator, the teacher provides comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the writer (Shahrina & Norhisham, 2006). As such, the remarks given by the teacher will help the writer to rectify his or her errors so that he or she can compose more effectively in the future. Furthermore, by playing the role of an examiner, the teacher assesses the writing proficiency of the learners (Shahrina & Norhisham, 2006).

To conclude, the teacher plays a crucial role in the success of a peer response group and to steer students in the journey to explore and discover meanings in their writing. As mentioned above, a teacher must undertake multiple roles and handle students' problems tactfully as "teaching writing is, in itself, a chore" (George, 1984, p. 323).

## **2.5 Role of Peers in Peer Response Group**

Similar to that of the teacher's roles as mentioned in Section 2.4 above, past studies also revealed that peers play multiple roles in ensuring the success of peer response groups. For instance, in Mendonca & Johnson's (1994) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2, the reviewers assumed the role of a tutor or teacher whereas the writers assumed the role of a student. In De Guerrero & Villamil's (2000) study, the student readers took the role of a mediator.

In an earlier study conducted by Daiute & Dalton (1993) as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 yielded interesting findings related to the role of peers. The findings in this study indicated that the young peers modelled as 'teachers' or 'experts' during the peer discussion. Similarly, as discussed earlier in Section 2.2, Mitchell's (1992) study revealed that the students learnt to be 'experts' in a particular type of writing for their final project. The students learnt from each other through the peer reviews in which they provided feedback and critiques for each others' initial drafts.

Besides that, Reid (1994) advocated that students as writers play multiple roles as “readers, responders, coaches, and expert members of the academic discourse community” (p. 289). Thus, this shows that peers also play pertinent roles in assisting their group members to improve their writing skills.

## **2.6 Types of Scaffolds**

### **2.6.1 Teacher Scaffolds**

Closely linked to Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of “zone of proximal development” is the use of scaffolds. Cazden (1988) defined the term ‘scaffold’ as “support that is both adjustable and temporary” (p. 107) given to the learner to assist him or her to perform a given task. This definition of the term ‘scaffold’ will be adopted in this current study. With this support given, either by an adult or more capable peers, eventually the learner will be able to perform on his or her own without the need of the scaffolds. In other words, after having discovered new ideas, learners can progress beyond the information given (Bruner, 1978 as cited in Sinclair, Jarvella, & Levelt). It is noted that some researchers use the term ‘strategies’ to refer to ‘scaffolds’.

Scaffolding features for writing can be provided beginning from the pre-writing stage during classroom interaction. With proper scaffolding given to learners, it can lead to effective learning as it provides opportunities for discussion about learning. For instance, Cotterall & Cohen (2003) suggested a number of scaffolding features to support the development of writing which include assigning topics linked to existing study themes, having a predetermined essay structure, identifying appropriate texts to assist learners, staging instruction to enable peers to manage and focus on one section of the writing task at a time, modelling of the composition process, focusing on language used to signal the relationship between ideas, and constant feedback from peers and tutors.



Besides that, Applebee and Langer (1983) stressed the importance of 'instructional scaffolding' which can be given either through "direct interaction with individual students or in group-oriented instruction" (p. 169). Through direct interaction, the more skilled reader or writer can provide scaffolding in the form of questions and modelling of appropriate forms (through 'recasting' or 'expanding' the learner's phrase) which gradually will be internalised by the novice; and thus eventually the latter would be able to perform similar tasks independently in new contexts. This implies that scaffolding through social interaction act as a mediating tool to help nurture the learner who is still in the process of maturing to work within his or her 'zone of proximal development', and this eventually according to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning will lead to the higher mental functioning in which the child would be able to operate on his or her own. Another method of providing 'instructional scaffolding' is through group-oriented instruction. In this approach, scaffolding provided can be in the form of "the structure of the lessons, the framing of exercise and textbook material, and the focus of the teacher's comments and discussion" (Applebee & Langer, 1983, p. 169). In fact, instruction, as a form of scaffolding is crucial for learning as in accordance to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning, instruction needs to precede development in order for learning to take place.

Scaffolds employed by teachers in response to students' writings can also include the use of leading questions (Denyer & LaFleur, 2001; Lim, 1994; Sim, 1997) and giving explanation of errors (Lim, 1994; Sim, 1997). Besides, teacher comments which included brief imperative comments (four to five words in length) directed at surface-level errors, general positive comments, statements and exclamations were found to have led to successful revision of essays by beginning L2 students in Gascoigne's (2004) study. Likewise, Sugita (2006) found that teacher's imperative comments were more influential on revisions as compared to questions and statements.

In addition, Palincsar (1986) advocated the use of scaffolds in ‘reciprocal teaching’. This reciprocal teaching involves an adult teacher and a group of four to five students taking turns to lead a discussion by employing scaffolds such as questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. She explained that modelling can also be initially provided by the teacher. As the lesson progresses, teacher modelling is reduced and the teacher will act like a coach in providing corrective feedback and encouragement, promote self-evaluation, and reintroduce explanation and modelling when required. Boyle & Peregoy (1990) mentioned that scaffolding can also include “repetition” and “modelling linguistic and conversational patterns through natural social interactions” (p. 195) between an adult and a child.

Moreover, Cazden (1988) in a study on children’s language development using videotapes of infant-school classrooms found two interactive strategies (‘preformulating’ and ‘reformulating’) were commonly used by many teachers to guide pupils to answer questions. In the ‘preformulating’ strategy, the teacher phrases the question with one or more utterances to direct the learners to the related area of experience needed to answer the question. In the ‘reformulating’ strategy, when the initial answer is wrong, the teacher can reformulate the question using more specific term directing at the task, use antonyms or synonyms for words, give alternative answers or use question tag.

‘Reconceptualization’ is also one of the scaffolds used to enhance learners’ understanding of a particular text or topic under discussion. Reconceptualization involves the use of a ‘frame of reference’ by the speaker to help the learner create meaning in context (Wertsch, 1985). Cazden (2001) mentioned the use of ‘recontextualization’, a synonym to the term ‘reconceptualization’ to help a learner make sense of a word(s) in context.

To conclude, there are a variety of scaffolds as mentioned above which teachers can employ to assist students in the revision of their texts.

### **2.6.2 Peer Scaffolds**

The success or failure of peer response groups also depends on the types of scaffolds provided by the peers and how the peers scaffold the learning process. There were studies which found various types of scaffolds or strategies which are effective in assisting students to improve their rewrites.

Bejarano, Levine, Olshtain, & Steiner (1997) recommended the use of Skilled Use of Integrated Strategies (SUIS) to facilitate peer interaction. These strategies are made up of the Modified-Interaction Strategies and Social-Interaction Strategies. The Modified-Interaction Strategies include checking for comprehension and clarification, appealing for assistance, giving assistance and repairing. The Social-Interaction Strategies include elaborating, facilitating flow of conversation, responding (e.g., agree or disagree), seeking information or opinion, and paraphrasing. Bejarano et al. (1997) carried out an experimental study over a period of eight weeks to examine whether such strategies can actually be taught and whether such training would alter the learner's interaction behaviour in small-group work in a foreign language classroom. The subjects in this study were 34 high school students in two EFL classes in a regional high school in Israel. Students in the experimental group were trained in the use of the interaction strategies as mentioned above and assigned to work in groups of four to five members each. Results showed that the experimental group used more Modified-Interaction and Social-Interaction Strategies as a result of the training in the skilled use of interaction strategies as compared to the control group. It was also found that the students' communicative interaction in small groups improved due to the increased use of interaction strategies. In view of the encouraging results of this study, Bejarano et al.

(1997) advocated that students be trained in the use of the above interaction strategies to enhance interaction in small groups.

Another effective scaffold is repetition which plays a role in facilitating peer discourse interaction. DiCamilla & Anton's (1997) investigation into the role of repetition in collaborative interaction of five dyads second language learners while performing a writing task in L2 (Spanish) found that repetition provided the means for students to attain 'intersubjectivity' (shared perspective between the learner and speaker). At the same time, repetition is a device which helps to hold the peer scaffolds in place, creating a cognitive space for students to 'think, hypothesize and evaluate' issues discussed during the collaborative discourse and thereby generating more ideas. Repetition can be in the form of 'self-repetition' or 'allo-repetition' (that is, repetition of what others say). This self-repetition is similar to Vygotsky's (1978) notion of private speech. In other words, repetition is one of the means to achieve successful collaboration within the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). This means that the dialogic interaction within the collaborative group needs to achieve the functions of scaffolding and establish intersubjectivity in order to attain development within the ZPD which according to Vygotsky (1978) is important to lead to higher mental functioning of the learner.

Besides that, effective scaffolding also includes the ability of the reader to play the role of a mediator and the presence of mutual scaffolding between the reader and writer. An interesting study done by De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) employed a microgenetic approach to observe the scaffolding mechanisms in the interaction between two L2 learners as they worked collaboratively in revising a narrative text. Analysis of the interaction showed that during the first half of the revision session, the reader skillfully played the role of a mediator in giving instruction and minilessons to the writer on surface-level errors and modelling. In addition, the reader also demonstrated two

important scaffolding behaviours during the collaborative interaction; that is, ‘contingent responsivity (ability to sense the writer’s cue and respond tactfully) and ‘psychological differentiation’ (ability to allow the writer to establish ownership of his own writing by giving the writer the freedom of voice). Mutual scaffolding between both the reader and writer was also found to exist during the later part of the interaction in which they became active partners in the negotiation of meanings as they worked within the ZPD.

In addition, Hyland’s (2000) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.3 revealed that students valued the support of their peers during peer interaction which included seeking peers’ help in understanding task requirements, asking peers (and for one case, seeking help from spouse) for help with language and vocabulary problems, as well as seeking peers’ help on issues of genre and academic conventions.

In an earlier related case study conducted by Sim (1998) as discussed in Section 2.2 found that the pragmatic functions of repeating, questioning, elaborating, and suggesting ideas during peer interaction resulted in the changes made to the individual sentences constructed. Those who sought more assistance from their peers benefited as their problems were solved.

Moreover, Villamil & De Guerrero’s (1996) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 found that 27 pairs of students employed five different mediating strategies to enhance the revision process. These five mediating strategies included employing symbols and external resources, using the L1, providing scaffolding, resorting to interlanguage knowledge, and vocalizing private speech. In yet another study done by Stanley (1992) as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 revealed that the coached students could provide specific response types such as pointing, advising, collaborating, announcing and clarifying during peer evaluation.

Furthermore, Holt's (1993) case study of a Hispanic engineering student found the value of written peer criticism in his writing class. The findings in this study revealed that the peer critiqued the writer's essay by using strategies such as written argument, suggestions and even drew upon his own experience. It was found that by arguing and giving suggestions, the peer reader helped the writer to strengthen his argument. The strategy of drawing upon the peer reader's experience helped the writer to reframe his own argument by using his experience. In other words, these peer criticism strategies were found to help the writer made his intended message clearer to the audience.

To conclude, there are various types of useful peer scaffolds as mentioned above which students can utilise to help their group members to develop their writing skills and to improve their revisions. Benson (2001) mentioned that the success of a writing task depends upon the scaffolding structures that support learners in the decision-making processes.

## **2.7 Cultural Factors Influencing L2 Composition Writing**

This section will discuss past studies on cultural differences that can pose as one of the factors that influence the success or failure of peer response groups. This is because differences in the cultural rhetorical patterns and readers' background can affect the evaluation of composition.

Hiroe & Carol's (1996) study investigated the influence of cultural rhetorical patterns in the evaluation of EFL writing. Findings in this study indicated that the topic assigned significantly affected the overall evaluation of the writing quality; and the readers' background also affected the assessment of the rhetorical patterns of the topic analysed. This study also revealed that Japanese teachers and experienced students valued both the Japanese and English rhetorical patterns.

Another study done by Hyland (2000) as discussed in Section 2.3 to investigate the effects of peer and teacher feedback on ESL writers found that the subjects' diverse cultural background made them "feel uncomfortable with the peer response situation" (p. 52) and this hindered them from providing critical feedback to their peers.

Besides that, Carson & Nelson's (1996) study investigated the Chinese students' interaction styles and reactions to peer response groups in ESL composition classes. Findings in this study revealed that the Chinese students preferred to maintain positive social relationship and group harmony rather than providing their peers with suggestions to improve their essays. They tried to avoid criticism of their peers' work as they perceived that they lacked the authority as teachers, and they also avoided disagreeing with their peers' comments. However, it should be noted here that this is a case study that merely involved eleven students and this study only analysed the interview sessions with two Chinese students involved in the peer response sessions. Another point to note is that there is individual variation within cultures and therefore the pattern that emerged in this study may not apply for other individuals of the same culture. In other words, the findings have limited generalisability.

To add to this, McCafferty (1992) investigated the influence of cultural background on how adult second language learners of English from two different cultural backgrounds (Asian and Hispanic) attempted to gain self-regulation in a communicative task in their L2. In this study, 15 of the subjects were from countries with Hispanic backgrounds and another 15 from Asian backgrounds. Out of these 30 ESL students from either University of New Mexico or a community college; 10 students were from low-intermediate, 10 students from intermediate and 10 students from advanced proficiency levels. The task given to these students was to construct a narrative based on a story depicted through a series of six sequential drawings which were shown one at a time. The data collected were analysed based on Frawley & Lantolf's (1985) three

categories of private-speech: object-regulated, other-regulated, and self-regulated. Results showed that all the three proficiency levels of Asians used more past tense than the progressive aspect. On the contrary, Hispanics at the low-intermediate and intermediate levels used less past tense than the forms of the progressive aspect. The advanced Hispanic subjects used both forms at equal levels of frequency. The Hispanic groups used more other-regulatory utterances, combined utterances, and the progressive aspect more than the Asians. The higher frequency of the use of other-regulation by the Hispanic subjects reflected the cultural difference. This study showed that cultural background has an influence on L2 learners' use of private speech.

Unlike the above studies, Roskam's (1999) study on the attitudes of 217 Chinese students to extended pairwork and peer assessment in eleven task-based ESP business classes in a Hong Kong university revealed favourable results. Findings in this study showed that despite upholding a culture that recognised teacher authority, majority of the students also valued the usefulness of peer feedback. Except for five percent of the students in this study, the rest reported that they enjoyed the collaborative learning activities with their partners. This indicates the general belief that "... Asian cultures is constrained by fear of mistakes, politeness norms, and the belief that peer feedback lacks credibility" (Roskam, 1999, p. 79) does not apply in this study. Besides, there was positive overall response to the peer assessment as the students regarded it as 'a learning process' (Roskam, 1999, p. 100). However, it must be noted that this study only analysed the students' perceptions of extended pair work and peer assessment. Perhaps, the students' written work needs to be analysed to justify their claim. Nevertheless, this study suggested the need to provide pre-training for the students in collaborative skills to ensure effective interaction during group work.

To conclude, based on the above contradictory findings, it is not necessary that the Asian culture will result in a negative influence on peer response sessions. There are



also other factors which need to be considered in determining the success or failure of peer response sessions.

## **2.8 Other Factors Influencing L2 Composition Writing**

Past studies have found that there are several factors that influence L2 composition writing. These factors included the influence of the second language proficiency (e.g. DiCamilla & Anton, 1997), first language writing ability (e.g. De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; DiCamilla & Anton, 1997; Sim, 1998; Yeong, 2001), metaknowledge (e.g. Sasaki & Hirose, 1996); centripetal factors and centrifugal factors (Sim, 1998), as well as pedagogy adopted by the teacher in the classroom (e.g. Samuel, 1992).

Sasaki & Hirose's (1996) study found several factors that influenced Japanese university students' expository writing in English. In this study, the quantitative analysis indicated that second language (L2) proficiency, first language (L1) writing ability, and metaknowledge significantly influenced the L2 writing ability of the Japanese students. The qualitative analysis showed that in contrast to the weak writers, good writers paid more attention to overall organisation and were more fluent in L1 and L2 writings, demonstrated greater confidence in L2 writing for academic purposes, and had experience in writing English composition beyond a paragraph while in high school. Sasaki & Hirose (1996) explained that the weak writers' lack of concern with organisation in L2 writing could be due to their lack of L2 proficiency.

Findings in DiCamilla & Anton's (1997) study also revealed that one's language (whether L1 or L2) functioned as a 'socio-cognitive tool' which served as the scaffold needed to assist one another in the collaborative group to understand and perform a given task. Likewise, studies done by De Guerrero & Villamil (1994, 2000) and Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) found that L1 (Spanish) was used as the mediating tool during the peer interaction between the reader and writer to help facilitate L2 learning.

In Sim's (1998) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2, the students translated words together during the peer interaction. It is noted that 69.8% of the total utterances made to generate ideas were in the Malay language and only 23.3% of the utterances were in the English language. At the micro level, it was found that through talk, students could work collaboratively to generate ideas and points which they could not have done individually prior to the group discussion. Sim's (1998) study also found that contextual factors affected peer interaction. The centripetal factors that promoted peer interaction included class discussion of outlines, teaching of organisational structure of text, teacher monitoring of collaborative work, the students' positive perception of group work, students' use of their first language, and the use of bilingual dictionaries. The centrifugal factors that hampered peer interaction included students' lack of linguistic knowledge of the target language, students' overdependence on the use of the first language, and the overall teaching focus in the classroom.

In another case study, Yeong (2001) examined the composing processes of five Malaysian pre-intermediate ESL students in their first language (Chinese) and the English Language. This study exemplifies how thought and language developed and eventually led to learning for the students. It was found that the subjects in this study resorted to the use of their L1 as the main language to think when composing in their first language and the English Language as they reported that "thinking in Chinese enabled them to express their ideas better" (Yeong, 2001; p. 58). This shows that the use of the L1 acts as a mediating tool to provide a social context for shared meaning and understanding of the group's culture. In other words, through social interaction, a learner learns at the social plane and then works at the psychological plane to appropriate his mental capacity. Thus, this implies that voice "is a means to transform social relations in the classroom, and to raise awareness about relations in the society at large" (Shor & Freire, 1987; p. 11).

Interestingly, an earlier case study carried out by Samuel (1992) revealed the influence of two different pedagogies on the social construction of texts. This study was conducted in two college composition classes at Boston Community College. In this study, one of the teachers adopted the product approach while the other emphasised the process approach to writing. However, the interaction between the students and the researcher during an interview revealed that learning occurred even when the students experienced different pedagogies. This was evident when two students who were taught by the teacher who emphasised the product approach to writing were able to transform the rules and concepts taught by the teacher. This indicates that learning had occurred first in the 'interpsychological plane' (between the teacher and students), followed by the students attaining the 'intrapsychological plane' (students' own understanding and internalisation of the rules and concepts learnt). A closer analysis through the researcher's observation found that although one teacher placed strong emphasis on form, he did not ignore the meaning aspects. Likewise, the other teacher who focused on the discovery of meaning also attended to the importance of form in her class. Therefore, the findings in this study revealed that the pedagogies adopted by the teachers did have a certain influence on the learning outcomes. It would be interesting to investigate if this finding is applicable to the Asian context, particularly in the state of Sarawak. As such, this current study investigates how the teacher-student and student-student interactions work during the peer response sessions to help group members revise the first drafts of their compositions. In relation to this, the current study also investigates if the pedagogy adopted by the teacher does have an influence on the peer response groups and in the revision of the first drafts of the students' compositions.

## 2.9 Effects of Training Students for Peer Revision

Past empirical studies and reviews have found that pre-training for peer response group yielded contrasting results. This section will discuss reviews and studies done on the effectiveness of training students for peer response (Berg, 1999; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Lockhart, 1994; Lockhart & Ng, 1995, 1996; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Paulus, 1999; Rollison, 2005; Roskams, 1999; Tsui, 2003; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996).

Hansen & Liu (2005) perceived that peer response is not merely giving comments on grammar or style of writing, but it also helps to enrich the content and rhetorical issues, promotes intercultural understanding and enhances interaction among the peers. They developed guiding principles for effective peer response. The guiding principles emphasised by Hansen & Liu (2005) included the importance of teacher planning and student training which are to be considered *before*, *during*, and *after peer response*. Rollinson (2005) also mentioned three (3) areas that pre-training can focus on: awareness raising, productive group interaction and productive response and revision.

A study was conducted by Berg (1999) to investigate the effects of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. This study involved 46 ESL students who were divided into two groups, one trained on the techniques in responding to peer writing while the other group untrained. Results in this study showed that trained peer response has a positive effect on ESL students' revision types and writing quality, regardless of the students' writing proficiency level. Another interesting finding is that trained students made more meaning revisions as compared to the untrained students. Berg (1999) stressed the role of peer response as "an important learning tool in a writing course because it helps student writers do what they cannot yet do for themselves, and that is to detect incongruities in their texts ..." (p. 232). The implication of this study is that training is essential for the success of peer response. It

should be noted that this study only analysed the meaning revisions of one writing assignment right after students were trained. Thus, the effects of training on subsequent writings are not known.

Likewise, De Guerrero & Villamil's (1994) and Villamil & De Guerrero's (1996) studies as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 found that their ESL students who were given training and a checklist to guide them during the peer revision of narrative and persuasive essays revealed favourable results. The peer pairs in these two studies were highly interactive and displayed abilities in self-regulation.

Similarly, Lockhart & Ng's (1995, 1996) studies as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 also indicated that students need to be given proper training and modelling to engage them in collaborative response.

Besides that, Tsui (2003) conducted case studies of four ESL teachers from a secondary school in Hong Kong to explore the concept of expertise in teaching as a process among expert and novices. The case studies were carried out over a period of one and a half years and the data were collected through observations, interviews and questionnaires. Students in the expert teacher's class were trained on how to provide peer comments based on a Reader Comment Form. Findings in these studies revealed that both the teacher comments and peer comments were well-received by students. Teachers' comments were perceived to be useful, encouraging and helpful in providing ideas to improve the students' writing. It was found that after undergoing the process approach to writing, one of the teachers had a better understanding of process writing as "a continuous process in which new meaning was being assigned and reassigned" (Tsui, 2003, p. 239). The teacher also pointed out that process writing helped her to communicate better by providing more specific guidance to help her students to re-express themselves. On the other hand, peer comments were found to make students aware of their own mistakes, and good writings served as models for them to emulate.

An interesting finding yielded from these studies was that good students could also learn from the weaker ones. This is evident in the expert teacher's class in which a good student mentioned that he benefited from working with weaker students as the latter could detect something that the former could not. Another student felt that peer comments provided by a group of students were richer as compared to comments given by the teacher as the latter had to rush through all the students' compositions in a limited time. In other words, it was found that peer comments helped students to gain confidence and to develop ownership of their own writing as they had to analyse their own writing based on the peer comments and to decide on ways to improve their drafts. The findings from these case studies indicated the importance of training students on how to provide useful comments and how to revise their writings based on the peer comments. Besides, teachers also need to be able to engage in "conscious deliberation and reflection" (Tsui, 2003, p. 259) on their teaching, as well as to provide specific guidance to assist students to develop their writing through process writing.

In addition, Paulus (1999) analysed the multiple-drafts written by 11 undergraduate ESL students and the recording of the students' verbal reports during revision. Participants in this study were given training and modelling on appropriate language usage and techniques for providing feedback on each other's writing. This study found that although students used more teacher feedback to improve their revision, the peer feedback also contributed to the improvement of the students' revision. The results in this study also revealed that although majority of the revisions made by the students were surface-level revisions, the students made more meaning-level changes as a result of peer and teacher feedback rather than self-revision. The implication is that even though students are given training and modelling on providing feedback, the way how the teacher and peers provide the feedback during the actual peer response session is vital to help students improve their revision.

Moreover, Stanley's (1992) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 examined the effectiveness of coaching fifteen L2 students for peer evaluation of six essays. The students were given seven hours of extensive training during the first four weeks of a 15-week semester. The coaching focused on studying the genre of student writing, role-playing, analysing evaluation sessions and giving effective responses to each other. Findings showed that the coached groups provided specific and clear guidelines to help writers improve their drafts. This indicates the worthiness of providing thorough coaching to students in order to yield quality peer interaction.

In contrast to the above positive outcome of peer feedback and peer evaluation as a result of training given to the peer response groups, Connor & Asenavage's (1994) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.3 to investigate the impact of peer responses on subsequent revisions as compared to comments from the teacher and other sources revealed that only a few of the students' revisions were made as a result of direct peer group response. The subjects in this study were introduced to methods of giving collaborative response through modelling. Students were given a 'peer review sheet' to guide them during the peer response sessions. The implication is that not only peer responses are useful in helping students to improve their revisions, but teacher comments also need to be taken into account.

There were also studies on the effectiveness of training students to give responses to their peers that yielded mixed findings. For instance, McGroarty & Zhu's (1997) experimental study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 found that training for peer revision helped improve students' peer responding skills and attitudes for peer revision but did not bring much improvement to students' writings. The experimental group followed the 'reader-writer sharing' pattern and were actively engaged in group discussion and negotiation of meaning to improve their revisions, while the control group followed the 'reader-reporting' pattern.

To conclude, the contradictory findings of the above studies show that training given to students on the peer response groups does not guarantee positive outcomes. The role of the teacher and students during the interaction is pertinent to the success of peer response sessions.

## **2.10 Types of Revisions**

Numerous studies have investigated the types of revisions of student writers and experienced writers (e.g. Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Faigley & Witte, 1981; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Jacobs, 1989; Lockhart, 1994; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mohd. Sofi bin Ali, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Pennington & So, 1993; Sim, 1998; Sommers, 1980). This section will discuss these past studies which yielded conflicting results.

Sommers (1980) investigated the revision strategies of 20 freshmen writers and 20 experienced adult writers. The experienced adult writers included journalists, editors and academics. Each writer wrote three essays (expressive, explanatory, and persuasive), and reviewed each essay twice. Each writer suggested revisions for a composition written by an anonymous author. The first draft and the final product of all the essays written by the subjects were analysed by counting and categorizing the changes made. The findings were supported by interviews with the writers who explained their concerns in the revisions. It was found that the student writers focused on word, phrase and sentence level revision, while the experienced writers focused on form or shape of their argument and their audience during the revision process. The experienced writers defined revision as a recursive process of the “discovery of meaning” (p. 385) in a holistic manner of the whole essay, while the freshmen defined the revision process as a “rewording activity” (p. 381) and “eliminating words that are



not needed” (p. 382). In other words, the freshmen writers only viewed revision as a process of reworking the drafts on the lexical level and not on a textual level.

It must be noted that in Sommers’ (1980) study as mentioned above, the selection of subjects needs to be looked into as it would be unjust to compare the two extreme groups (one group consisted of freshmen writers, while the other group was made up of experienced adult writers) as the difference in the language proficiency level between the two groups is too great. As such, the findings would definitely differ as according to Vygotskian’s perspective, a child only works within his ‘zone of proximal development’. This means that what experienced adult writers can do would differ from what freshmen writers can do. Besides, the question raised here is: What causes the writers to revise?

Likewise, Faigley & Witte (1981) carried out two studies to investigate the types of revisions of experienced students and inexperienced students. Their first study investigated the types of revisions of six inexperienced student writers, six advanced student writers, and six expert adult writers. The subjects were assigned a writing topic which they wrote the next day. Altogether, three stages of revisions of the writers were analysed. Stage 1 revisions consisted of the changes that the writers made while composing the first drafts. Stage 2 revisions consisted of all changes made on the first drafts and the differences between the first and second drafts. Stage 3 revisions consisted of in-process revisions on the second drafts. The second study was conducted to confirm the results of the first study. In the second study, copies of the first drafts written by three inexperienced writers were given to the expert adult writers to revise. Results from these two studies concur with Sommers’ (1980) study in that inexperienced students attended to surface changes whereas the experienced writers attended to content while revising their drafts.

However, it must be noted that the two studies conducted by Faigley & Witte (1981) occurred in a contrived situation and therefore the results may not be applicable to the naturalistic classroom environment. Thus, the question posited here is: In the real classroom context, can teachers just assign students a writing topic and leave them to revise the drafts individually? Due to this concern, this current study will use a naturalistic classroom environment to investigate the types of revisions made by high- and intermediate-proficiency level students on their texts as a result of teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions.

A later study done by Ferris & Roberts (2001) yielded similar results as the studies done by Faigley & Witte (1981) and Sommers (1980). Ferris & Roberts (2001) investigated the extent of the explicitness of error feedback in helping students to self-edit their texts. This experimental study involved 72 university ESL students of different abilities to self-edit their texts across three feedback conditions. One group had the errors in the text marked with 'codes' from five different error categories. The second group had the errors in the same five categories underlined but were 'not coded'. The third group had no feedback at all from the teachers. Two teachers participated in this study; one teacher taught two classes while the other taught one class. Results revealed that both groups that received teacher feedback significantly outshined the no-feedback group on the self-editing task. There were no significant differences in editing success between the "codes" and "no codes" groups. Besides, the students were found to make the most errors in verbs, followed by sentence structure, word choice, noun endings, and articles. However, students were more successful in editing errors in the 'treatable' category (verbs, noun endings, and articles) than the 'untreatable' category (word choices and sentence structure). The conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that less explicit feedback appeared to be as useful as corrections coded by error type in helping the students to self-edit.

This contradicts the findings in Conrad & Goldstein's (1999) study which examined the relationship between teacher written comments and students' subsequent revisions. This study involved one teacher and three students in an advanced ESL composition course. The students were assigned four expository essays but data was collected from two of the essays. The data collected from this study comprised teacher's comments, the students' drafts before and after the comments, and transcripts of discussions during the teacher-student conferences. Results drawn from this study indicated that the students tended to be successful in revising problems (e.g., adding examples, increasing cohesion, paragraphing, purpose or lexical items), but were unsuccessful in revising problems related to explanation, explicitness, and analysis. The results yielded from this study suggested that several factors (e.g., content knowledge, personal beliefs, the course context, and pressure of other commitments) contributed to the success or lack of success in the students' revision of their drafts. In addition, it was found that the students could not comprehend some of the teacher's comments and this resulted in unsuccessful revision of some parts of the text. The findings of this study imply the need to have teacher-student conferences instead of just having teacher written comments. Another implication is that teachers need to discuss with the students on how to interpret their comments.

Other studies revealed that students were selective in accepting peer comments. For instance, a recent study conducted by Komathy (2000) as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 found that although the two students recognised the importance of revision in writing, they were selective in accepting peer comments which they regarded as useful in their revision. They tended to focus on correction of surface features (spelling, vocabulary and grammatical errors). Their revised compositions showed only slight improvement. The findings in this study pointed to the need for teachers to coach students in giving text-specific comments to help their peers improve their revisions.

In another study, Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1992) investigated whether foreign language (FL) learners engaged in oral/aural revision could correct the surface errors on their own during the peer revision sessions as compared to learners in traditional circumstances. The subjects in this study were 30 native speakers of English enrolled in an accelerated first-year French course at Michigan State University. The experimental group had 14 students whereas the control group had 16 students. Results showed that the peer-feedback group made more positive changes in the areas of content, organisation, and vocabulary, whereas the control group which received teacher feedback attended more to grammatical accuracy. This implies that peers are capable of giving useful feedback to their group members.

Similarly, Lockhart's (1994) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 revealed that peer response helped students to focus their attention on content, audience and purpose in their revisions. Besides that, Lockhart & Ng's (1995) study as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 also found that peer interaction helped the writer to discover meanings and build ideas to improve the revision of text. Likewise, Sim's (1998) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.2 revealed that the more capable students rather than the less capable students were able to make changes and produce comprehensible sentences at the individual level. However, all the students including the more capable ones could not rectify most of the grammatical errors made in the collaborative texts.

A later study conducted by Zhu (2001) as discussed earlier in Section 2.2 also echoes the findings in studies done by Lockhart (1994) and Lockhart & Ng (1995) as mentioned above. Zhu's (2001) study not only examined student interaction and feedback in mixed peer response groups, but also the written feedback on the native and non-native speakers' writing. Findings in this study revealed that both the non-native and native speakers provided similar amount of global feedback which focused on content. The findings in this study showed that written peer response could supplement

oral peer response for mixed-proficiency groups in providing effective peer response to aid composition writing.

Likewise, the findings in Mohd. Sofi bin Ali's (1994) study also corroborate with that of studies done by Lockhart (1994), Lockhart & Ng (1995) and Zhu (2001) as mentioned above. Mohd. Sofi bin Ali (1994) examined the effects of peer conference on the quality of written compositions of three groups of TESL teacher-trainees. It was found that the lower-intermediate proficiency group showed significant improvement in only content and organisation. On the other hand, the intermediate proficiency group showed improvement in content, organisation, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The advanced group demonstrated significant improvement in the areas of vocabulary, organisation and language use.

It can be concluded from Mohd. Sofi's (1994) study as discussed above that the group which improved the most is the intermediate group. However, all the teacher trainees from the three homogeneous groups may have benefited more if their group members were of mixed-proficiency level. This is because with members of mixed-proficiency level, the more skilled ones would be able to help the less capable ones.

In a related study done by Connor & Asenavage (1994) as discussed earlier in Section 2.3 found that with peer group response, teacher comments and comments from others, those students who made the most number of changes made more text-based changes; whereas those who made fewer changes made more surface changes.

Other than that, Paulus' (1999) study as mentioned earlier in Section 2.3 revealed that although the students made a lot of surface-level revisions, they made more meaning-level changes as a result of the peer and teacher feedback rather than self-revision. It was also found that multiple-drafts writing helped to improve the quality of the students' writing.

In contrast to the above findings, Jacobs' (1989) yielded conflicting results. Jacobs' (1989) study of 18 third year English majors examined miscorrection of writing activities in group. The findings of this study indicated that even though the students made changes, the quality of the draft was unaffected due to substitution of a correct form for another correct form or the substitution of an incorrect form for another incorrect form. Nevertheless, it was found that corrections made by the students from the correct to the wrong form were minimal. Interestingly, these miscorrections only involved one student's paper pertaining merely to 'articles'. Jacobs (1989) suggested further studies to examine miscorrection in other aspects besides form and to include audio-taping feedback discussions, as well as having prior training for students on group writing activities. This study concluded that peer feedback is not "a case of the blind leading the blind" (Jacobs, 1989, p. 74).

There were also studies carried out to investigate the relationship between the writer's process skill and the quality of the written product. For instance, Pennington & So (1993) examined if there is any relationship that exists between a writer's process skill and product quality in two languages. This study involved six Singaporean university students engaged in producing written texts in L2 (Japanese), and in their L1 (English or Chinese). Findings showed that there was no clear relationship between the writing process and written product of the Japanese L2 subjects. It was found that the pattern of the writing process and the level of writing skill of each individual subject were similar in both the L1 and L2. The skilled writers were skilled in both L1 and L2 writing process, whereas the unskilled writers were not skillful in writing in both languages. Likewise, this study showed a relationship between the students' general level of proficiency in Japanese and the quality of their written products in the L2. Besides, the findings revealed that those subjects who demonstrated high quality writing process skill were those who had high level of interest and experience in writing.

However, it must be noted that the findings in this study cannot be generalised to a larger population as the findings are based on only two writing sessions (one written in L1 and the other written in L2). As such, future studies should consider analysing several L1 and L2 essays.

Thus, in conclusion, this chapter has discussed past studies on collaborative writing and peer response group, peer interaction during peer response sessions, peer feedback and teacher feedback in composition writing, role of teachers in peer response group, types of teacher and peer scaffolds, cultural factors influencing L2 composition writing, other factors influencing L2 composition writing, effects of training students for peer revision, and types of revisions. It is noted that from the review of the related literature as discussed above, most of the past studies have examined only peer interaction during peer response sessions. Studies that examine both the discourse of teacher-student and student-student during peer response sessions to identify how and to what extent it can help students in their rewrites have yet to be carried out. As such, the current study will analyse in-depth the teacher-student and student-student interactions to investigate how teacher and peer scaffolds help facilitate students' rewrites, whether there is any difference between the roles of the teacher and the peers, and whether students have really internalised the necessary skills needed to be able to perform at a higher level on their own. This current study will also address other issues raised by the researcher in this chapter. The issues raised are: What makes a peer response group works? and What effective scaffolds can the teacher and peers provide the group members to facilitate collaborative learning?