

STUDENT INTERACTION AND TEXT REVISION IN A TRAINED PEER-RESPONSE ESL  
WRITING CLASSROOM

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## **Abstract**

Peer-response is an important aspect of the process approach to teaching writing which has gained increasing attention in the ESL context. It offers great opportunities for ESL student-writers to share their writing evaluate the work of their peers and discuss their observations and opinions about writing in an authentic learning environment. There are, however, gaps in current research about the student-writers' discourse in the peer-response groups, how that discourse affects their revisions and writing development. The interactive and collaborative learning theories that underlie the process writing approach to learning to write in a second language made it possible to observe the participants in the peer-response activity over a period of fourteen weeks. The sixteen ESL student-writers from a public university in Malaysia, purposefully selected, were from homogenous linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Extensive training, which focussed on affective, cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects, was provided to the participants before they participated in the peer-response activity.

The peer-response groups for this study were structured to incorporate collaborative learning. The participants worked in pairs to write the first draft of an essay of their choice and two writing-pairs in a group took turns to respond to each other's draft. The peer-response sessions were recorded and transcribed. After the peer-response sessions, the participants had the opportunity to make changes to their drafts. Participants turned in their first drafts and revised papers for analysis. Post-revision interviews were conducted to further understand the revision process.

Data for this qualitative case study consisted of the participants' first drafts and revised papers, peer-response checklists, transcripts of the peer-response and post-revision interview sessions as well as the researcher's observation entries and field-notes. A thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data. The spoken and written data of the eight writing-pairs offered a variety of indications regarding the types of interactions that occurred during the peer-response sessions, the types of feedback that produced the most positive changes and improvement to the revised papers. The participants were able to provide valid suggestions for each other's drafts, respond critically to peer feedback and incorporate high proportions of valid peer suggestions in their revisions. This improved the quality of the revised papers, facilitated autonomous writing skills and development of independent writers. The revision process improved the student-writers' critical skills and subsequently enabled them to improve their own drafts. Training the participants for the peer-response activity improved the quality and quantity of peer interaction about the drafts and revision strategies.

This study has offered some new insights into the forms, functions and effectiveness of trained peer-response in a tertiary-level ESL writing classroom. The spoken data offered some indications that this activity can be pedagogically useful in the ESL setting because it promotes interaction and negotiation of meaning among the student-writers. It also creates an authentic atmosphere in which ESL student-writers can share their written drafts with their peers and comment on their drafts.

## **Interaksi dan Penyemakan Draf Karangan dengan kaedah Maklum balas Rakan Sebaya Terlatih dalam Bidang Penulisan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua**

### **Abstrak**

“Peer-response” atau maklum balas rakan-sebaya merupakan satu aspek penting dalam pendekatan penulisan secara proses yang semakin mendapat perhatian dalam bidang pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Kaedah pembelajaran ini membolehkan para pelajar berinteraksi, bertukar-tukar pendapat dan belajar daripada satu sama lain dalam suasana pembelajaran yang berkesan. Namun, masih wujud jurang dalam kajian-kajian lampau dalam bidang ini. Antara lain, bagaimana para pelajar berinteraksi dalam kumpulan rakan-sebaya dan bagaimana perbincangan tersebut mempengaruhi semakan semula draf penulisan masih belum begitu jelas.

Para peserta dalam aktiviti penulisan secara proses dalam kumpulan rakan-sebaya ini dikaji berdasarkan kepada teori pembelajaran interaktif dan usahasama, selama empat belas minggu. Kesemua enam belas peserta, yang seragam latarbelakang sosioekonomi, linguistik dan budaya, dari sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia, telah dipilih berdasarkan pensampelan penuh azam. Para peserta menerima latihan intensif dalam bidang kognitif, sosio-budaya dan linguistik sebelum mereka mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti maklumbalas rakan-sebaya ini.

Kumpulan rakan sebaya untuk kajian ini dibentuk untuk menggalakan pembelajaran secara usahasama. Para peserta, secara berpasangan, menulis draf pertama karangan mereka dan bergabung dengan satu pasangan yang lain untuk memberikan maklumbalas terhadap draf penulisan secara bergilir. Selepas sesi

maklumbalas, mereka berpeluang untuk membaca semula dan menyemak draf masing-masing. Draft yang telah disemak semula oleh penulis dianalisa. Para peserta juga ditemubual untuk memahami dengan lebih jelas bagaimana mereka menyemak draf masing-masing selepas sesi maklumbalas rakan sebaya.

Data untuk kajian kes kualitatif ini terdiri daripada draf pertama dan kedua penulisan, senarai semak, transkrip interaksi rakan-sebaya dan temubual peserta, serta catatan pemerhatian pengkaji. Data pertuturan dan penulisan yang dianalisa secara bertema telah mendedahkan bagaimana para peserta berinteraksi semasa sesi maklumbalas rakan sebaya serta jenis maklumbalas yang menghasilkan perubahan dan penambahbaikan pada draf. Didapati para peserta dalam kajian ini dapat memberikan cadangan yang bernas untuk penambahbaikan draft dan menggunakan cadangan rakan-sebaya secara berkesan semasa menyemak draf mereka. Proses ini telah berjaya memperbaiki draf penulisan, memupuk kemahiran penulisan berautonomi tanpa bergantung kepada pensyarah. Disamping membantu rakan sebaya, para peserta juga mampu memperbaiki penulisan mereka sendiri.

Kajian ini berjaya menonjolkan beberapa dapatan baru dalam aspek bentuk, fungsi dan keberkesanan sumbangan rakan-sebaya terlatih dalam kelas penulisan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran ini dapat digunakan untuk memupuk kemahiran berinteraksi dan berunding sesama rakan sebaya di peringkat pengajian tinggi. Ia juga dapat mewujudkan suasana belajar yang baik di mana para pelajar dapat berkongsi pendapat untuk memperbaiki kemahiran menulis.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study**

### **Introduction**

Language learning is not an isolated activity that is completed by the learner alone. Instead, it is embedded in a social context in which the learner is “part of the surrounding community and the world” (Oxford, 1997, p. 447). English language is an important means of communication for students from various backgrounds (Kassim & Ali, 2010; Yamao & Sekiguchi, 2015) because a good level of English language proficiency is a significant predictor for socio-cultural issues and academic adjustment (Yu & Shen 2012). A good level of English language proficiency enables students to deal with social and academic challenges more effectively (Zhang et al., 2012). Therefore, ESL students learn the English language to improve their communication competence (Fallah, 2014).

Writing is very closely related to speaking because both require the learner to think and use vocabulary to shape sentences. When writing, learners have more time to think about the choice of words to use. As writing is a fundamentally a social phenomenon, it is best acquired by learners when involved in the dialog of social interaction (Braine, 2003). The social nature of the classroom (Chang, 2015) is an important factor for the success of peer-response. Therefore, writing instructors are now focusing on student-centred classrooms in which student-writers critically evaluate each other's written work. Writing classrooms have become writing workshops in which students work cooperatively to improve each other's written draft (Jeffcoate, 1992). A lot of interactions go on among the student-writers, working either in pairs or in small groups. Interaction is also prevalent between the writing instructor and the writers. This shift in composition theory and research has



changed traditional pedagogy in such a way that writing instructors are now more concerned about the writing process than the final product of writing.

The teaching of writing to ESL learners in Malaysia is undergoing major changes in terms of approaches, methodologies and techniques. Warschauer (2000) contends that the changing global economy has also affected the teaching of English and the way L2 learners acquire and use written English. Thus, writing instructors have begun to adapt these innovations in their attempt to further improve teaching techniques. Consequently, ESL writing classrooms are gradually moving away from the conventional teaching methods to a more student-centred approach.

Writing is a complex task that requires transforming thoughts into sentences through an ongoing control over the other facets of language skills and presenting them in an appealing and structured way, taking into consideration the audience and the purpose (Kroll, 2001). Critical thinking skills, social skills and linguistic competencies are also involved. However, the mastery of good writing skill has always been a predicament among Malaysian undergraduates (Mah & Khor, 2015). Learning to write is a demanding aspect of second language learning (Hyland, 2003) that requires extensive and specialized instruction. Due to its intricate nature, students find it difficult to learn to write in English and instructors find it very challenging to teach writing in the ESL setting.

Academic writing skills are important to gain access to colleges and universities and successfully complete the requirements in their specific field of study. Undergraduates should be able to express themselves effectively in the classroom and fully understand the language of academic communities to access knowledge (Scarcella, 2003) and when applying for jobs in the private sectors and multinational companies (Maarof et al., 2011). Thus, the approach to writing at the

tertiary level should be a process that involves meaningful exploration of attitudes, beliefs, intuitions and values essential to well-informed decisions and choices (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009). Since writing has become a measure for academic success, most students in Malaysia attempt to improve this skill (Hamid, 2012).

Academic writing skills are also necessary for course requirements at institutions of higher learning. Undergraduates need to communicate their thoughts effectively in academic situations such as report writing, presentations and responses to the progressive and summative course assessment tasks. Effective academic writing skills also enable undergraduates to achieve learning outcomes and demonstrate subject matter mastery. Academic writing is also important for higher education due to the role highly specialized writing system has at the tertiary level (Hyland, 2004). Competency in academic writing is an asset that serves them well in their quest for professional advancement upon graduation.

Despite these benefits, many undergraduates are still not competent because they think that academic writing in English is a difficult skill to acquire. Many ESL writers struggle to produce a piece of writing that is linguistically accurate. The ability to write in English is generally unsatisfactory even though English is considered a second language (Shamsudin, et al., 2010). Students in rural schools have difficulty understanding English and using it in everyday life (Ratnawati & Ismail, 2003) even though ESL writing is one of the essential components in the curriculum (Chan, 2007). L2 writing proficiency includes linguistic accuracy, linguistic complexity, content quality, textual structure and fluency (Ortega, 2003). Thus, to produce a good piece of writing that effectively communicates ideas; ESL student-writers must deal with content, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, grammar and syntax. They also carry the burden of learning to write and

speak in English at the same time. Even though some learners come to college or university well prepared to meet the linguistic and academic demands, others have little or no experience with academic English writing skills.

Interactions among students from different backgrounds help them to learn from one another, understand one another, and overcome possible social challenges (Lin, 2011). Interactions also reflect students' social skills, language proficiency and the way they fit themselves in a discourse community (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). However, ESL learners at the tertiary level face great difficulty interacting in English (Ahamad Shah & Othman, 2006; Abdul Aziz, 2007) because they lack adequate language proficiency, knowledge and awareness of audience expectations. They also have limited critical ability to aptly respond to an academic text in English (Muhammad, 2007) and lack the necessary conventions to write well in an academic discipline (Krishnakumari, Paul-Evanson, & Selvanayagam, 2010). Thus, they are ill prepared for the challenges forced on them at the tertiary level (Nambiar, 2007). Although interactions and collaborations with peers from various backgrounds may cause anxieties, this would motivate them to learn important skills to interact more effectively (Haneda, 2014).

Furthermore, ESL learners lack the fundamental writing skills such as introducing a thesis statement, adding details to support the thesis and organizing their ideas (Stemper, 2002). Writing difficulties are evident in their abilities to produce writing that is linguistically accurate, which may obstruct the readers' ability to understand and affect their perception of the writer's language ability (Ferris, 2006). According to Casanave, the biggest challenge for graduate students is to learn the "game of academic writing" (2002, p. 139). Academic writing standards, conventions, lexicon, and rhetorical structures are core components of writing in

English that present challenges for L2 writers due to the different writing traditions and pedagogic practices L2 writers belong to (Casanave, 2002).

Another concern is the fact that L2 writing theory was rigidly based on the L1 writing theory. Teachers in ESL classrooms adopted the methodology from L1 classroom practices without investigating the implications. Moreover, ESL learners do not share the same mapping process of learning L1 which requires special methodological approaches (Drucker, 2003; Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). Thus, methodologies implemented in ESL writing courses should differ from methodologies implemented for native speakers (Holiday, 1994). ESL writing instructors must also be aware of the significantly different levels of their students' knowledge, educational experience, perceptions of the English language and the challenges they face in learning to write in a second language (Jalaludin, 2011).

With these important factors in mind, this chapter will provide a rationale for studying the use of the trained peer-response approach to improve writing in a tertiary level ESL academic writing classroom.

### **Background of the Problem**

The traditional view that writing is a solitary activity has restricted the use of group activities and interactions in most ESL writing tasks. Present day researchers, however, are of the opinion that writing is a social phenomenon and pair, or group learning may generate positive outcomes (Weissberg, 2006). Writing, in the context of this study, includes the ability to express an understanding of the course, develop a thesis statement, generate and express ideas for writing by using references, past experiences as well as observations clearly and accurately. It also involves summarizing and paraphrasing, revising to improve focus and organization, as well

as editing to eliminate errors in grammar, mechanics and spelling. Moreover, the ability to consider the audience, re-examine, reshape and reconstruct as they compose, as well as control rhetorical strategies and language conventions for a variety of writing assignments (Wong, 2005) are equally important factors.

Writing is also a process that requires feedback from teachers and peers to achieve satisfactory results. Although feedback is important, opportunities to receive it are rarely available in ESL classrooms (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Peer-response plays an important part in ESL writing instruction because it provides a practical platform to help student-writing practice.

**Peer-response.** The ability to critically evaluate writing and provide effective feedback is a very necessary skill for writing improvement and academic success (Thompson, 2002). Peer-response is an activity in which student-writers read and provide feedback to their peers (Carr, 2008), to become aware of their weaknesses for future writing improvement. Peer-response has been widely used to teach writing in L1 and L2 with positive outcomes (Stanley, 1992; Min, 2006; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006). As a pedagogical activity, it has also received increasing attention from writing practitioners (Harmer 2004; Porto 2001). It is a potentially valuable aid for social, cognitive, affective and methodological benefits (Rollinson, 2005). In Malaysia, studies on peer-response in the ESL writing classroom have been conducted at the tertiary level (Jayakaran & Vahid, 2011) and secondary schools (Komathy, 2000; Sim, 1998).

Topping (1998) defined 'peer' as a student with similar educational qualifications or knowledge, who offers feedback on another student's written draft. The feedback usually involves grammar, style, content and rhetorical issues (Hansen & Lui, 2005). The student-writers engage in the collaborative activity of reading,

critiquing and providing feedback on each other's drafts to secure immediate textual improvement and writing competence (Hu, 2005). Further discussions and negotiations take place before changes are made to the revised paper. During the activity, student-writers get to practice a range of skills necessary for the development of language and writing ability, such as interaction with peers, exposure to different ideas and new perspectives (Hansen & Liu, 2005). According to Gu (2010), language users employ a variety of languages for different identification purposes, and exercise symbolic power in various ways to be heard and respected. Thus, this collaborative activity provides an ideal opportunity for them to read and critique their peers' drafts and provide suggestions for improvement (Hu, 2005).

As a result, the use of peer-response in ESL writing classes has been increasingly explored (Hewett, 2000; Liu & Hansen, 2002) because of its numerous benefits to students (Liu & Hansen, 2002) with varying language proficiency (Suzuki, 2008). Peer-response develops students' social and cognitive skills, meta-cognitive strategies (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Min, 2005; Suzuki, 2008), text quality (Suzuki, 2008) and writing ability (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). It is also an effective means to improve the academic writing skills of undergraduates (Xiao & Lucking, 2008). Despite these benefits, the question of whether peer-response can be effectively implemented in the ESL writing classroom has resulted in much debate among writing instructors.

Although teacher feedback is considered more effective, trained peer-response, may play an important supporting role to improve writing skills (Maarof et al., 2011). Teacher comments are sometimes misleading to students because they are vague or too general, causing revisions to be ineffective and imprecise (Ferris, 2003). This makes peer-response an important complementary source of feedback. Student-

writers get to interact with each other in a less threatening environment, argue and refute opinions, persuade and convince one another of the strengths in their feedback. Writing researchers and instructors are convinced that peer-response develops the student-writers' linguistic forms (Storch, 1998), grammatical accuracy (Storch, 2001), vocabulary (Berg, 1999), content and organization (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992) and a sense of audience (Lockhart & Ng, 1995). By responding to the peers' drafts, they acquire critical skills that would benefit their later writing (Leki, 1990; Mittan, 1989).

Numerous studies have also been conducted to uncover the effect of peer-response on student behaviours in ESL writing classrooms. These studies have investigated various aspects of peer-response using both quantitative and qualitative methods, such as writer stances, strategy use, language functions, role divisions and status (Carson & Nelson, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Zhu, 2001), the quality of feedback (Caulk, 1994), cultural effect on participant behaviours (Atkinson, 2001; Nelson, 1997), the impact of feedback on subsequent drafts (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Tsui & Ng, 2000), affective advantages of peer response (Zhang, 1995), students' perceptions of its effectiveness (Nelson & Carson, 1998), and the impact of training (McGroarty & Zhu, 1998; Zhu, 1995). Thus, ESL writing must be further investigated by considering a more complex and systematic perspective where teaching, learning and individual characteristics of ESL writers to demonstrate a more specific picture of writing (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Goldstein, 2004).

However, the skill of responding to their peers' writing does not come naturally to most ESL students. It is unrealistic to assume that they will be able to successfully read and respond to another student's writing. There is also a persistent belief among writing instructors that ESL student-writers are incapable of rating their peers' drafts because of their lack of language ability, evaluating skills and editing experience (Saito & Fujita, 2004). Without proper training, they might simply compliment each other's drafts, attack each other counter-productively or simply remain silent.

**Peer response training.** Getting student-writers to participate in the peer-response activity can be a challenge in ESL settings. Writing instructors encounter numerous problems getting student-writers to provide feedback on each other's written drafts (Randsell, 2001). ESL students participating in peer-response may give false comments of draft strengths or may not provide any feedback at all. Getting the student-writers to interact with one another in small groups requires guidance. Peer-response can be extremely effective in the ESL setting when students are trained to offer and utilize feedback (Min, 2006).

ESL peer-response should involve extensive training activities (Rollinson, 2004). The student-writers must be trained to read and respond to their peers' written drafts, participate in discussions about their own writing and that of their peers, react to feedback from peers and make revisions based on their feedback. Rollinson (2004) also recommends intervention training, during which the writing instructor address problems that arise in the groups. Fundamental issues, such as training students (Hansen & Liu, 2005), forming groups (Rollinson, 2005) deciding on activities to be carried out (McMurry, 2004) are all dependent on the unique needs of the students involved.



Training is a very crucial aspect in the implementation of the peer-response activity. It creates readiness in the student-writers to indulge and participate effectively. McGroarty and Zhu (1997) reported that comments made by participants who were trained prior to the peer-response activity were more specific and constructive. They offered more substantive suggestions for revision and displayed a more positive attitude. Moreover, students could provide good feedback if they know each other well (Allen & Katayama, 2016).

Training participants before the peer-response activity has great benefits for ESL writing. It can build audience awareness (Hinkel, 2004; Tsui & Ng, 2000), improve editing skills (Lundstorm & Baker, 2009; Min, 2008; Storch, 2004; Sengupta, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000) and make students less teacher-dependent (Pol et al., 2008). Stanley (1992), Zhu (1995) and Min (2005) implemented a conference method reported that the trained student-writers generated feedback in a more tactful manner, focussing and commenting on global features in greater detail. Thus, ESL writing instructors should be organizers of students' learning, rather than dispensers of knowledge (Orsmond et al., 2013). The students should be trained to work collaboratively with their peers to become better editors of their own writings. Training students to review their peers' drafts teaches them to critically evaluate their own work and become better writers.

Training should also include detecting and diagnosing problems in the written drafts to achieve greater learning benefits (Wooley, et al., 2008). Writing instructors should guide and encourage the student-writers to be responsible for their choices and decisions when engaged in the revision process, thus making them independent learners (Cohen, 2003). It is also important to provide the student-writers with guidelines which they can refer to as they consider and evaluate their peers' drafts

(Carr, 2008). This can improve writing abilities by identifying content ambiguities, structural problems and solutions to fix problems. Stanley (1992) concluded that training activities can result in a greater level of student engagement.

Thus, the peer-response training for this study was designed to address some specific areas and provide ESL students with important response skills. The training was based on recommendations in the literature, account of potential problems particular to ESL peer-response and the researcher's own experience of using peer-response in the writing classroom during a preliminary study. Training students to become effective peer-responders is important to the successful implementation of peer-response to writing in an ESL context.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Trained peer-response has attracted ample research attention from writing practitioners due to its benefits in developing writing abilities (Harmer 2004; Porto 2001; Lam; 2010; Zhao, 2014; Min, 2016). While studies on trained peer-response in the L1 setting reported enormous benefits (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006), its implementation in the ESL settings has not been as effective (Jayakaran & Vahid, 2011). ESL student-writers come from a variety of linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds that require special considerations. It is like the "blind leading the blind" (Adams, 2000, p. 54) because unskilled peer-responders guide inexperienced writers in a process alien to them.

Research on peer-response in the ESL setting has often focused on descriptions of the activities, with results indicating affective benefits like friendly classroom atmosphere and increased writer confidence (Hinkel, 2004; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Ferris, 2003). Researchers have also made many claims

about its cognitive, affective, social and linguistic benefits in the ESL classroom (Ekşi, 2012; Min, 2006; Stemper, 2002). Unfortunately, these studies did not provide detailed explanations on how participation in the activity improves the quality of revision. Many relevant issues still remain unaddressed or only partially addressed. Some researchers (Min, 2008; Storch, 2004; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Diab, 2010; Ting & Qian, 2010) reported positive outcomes while others (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Hu, 2005; Jayakaran & Vahid, 2011; Soo, 2015) highlighted potential shortcomings. They questioned the ESL student-writers' ability to offer useful feedback and utilise the peer comments in their revisions (Soo, 2015). Studies by (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Tsui & Ng, 2000) indicated that the ESL student-writers may not be knowledgeable enough to detect and correct language and rhetorical problems. Moreover, most empirical research mainly focused on commentary analyses with little attention on how the student-writers utilized the peer feedback (Fujieda, 2007).

Further studies would help to understand peer-response functions in revision strategies, variables affecting this relationship, whether it can be used to achieve positive writing outcomes, which response strategies might be more effective and the role of peer-response in shaping the revised drafts (Hu 2002; Tsui & Ng 2000). Kamimura (2006) reported that while ESL students benefited from peer-response, they differed in how they understood and utilised the feedback for revision because ESL learners prefer teacher-fronted classrooms. This prevents them from developing advanced critical evaluation skills associated with peer-response (Braine, 2003). Therefore, ESL student-writers must be trained to operate effectively within peer groups (Brown, 2001). In response, several studies (Hu, 2005; Min, 2005; Sato, 2013; Sengupta, 2000; Tuzi, 2004) have been conducted to examine the relationship between training, peer interactions and subsequent revisions.

The specific areas in trained peer-response that deserve further attention is the actual interaction that takes place during the activity. Peer-response in the ESL setting has often been criticized for the poor quality of feedback (Covill, 2010; Lin & Yang, 2011). Students' target language proficiency significantly affects the feedback they provide (Allen & Mills, 2015). Simply getting them to exchange ideas about their drafts do not guarantee success. Without proper training they will not be equipped to offer useful feedback (Min 2005) and revise their drafts according to the feedback (Liu & Sadler, 2003). Paulson, Alexander and Armstrong (2007), reported that very few empirical studies have been conducted to explore what transpires during peer-response and how they contribute to the development of writing skills. Moreover, not many studies have investigated the revisions made in response to the peer interactions. Zhu and Mitchell (2012) reported that the participants in their study had diverse motives for participating in peer-response but the motives were not clearly explained. As such, the types of interactions which can result in successful revisions remain empirically vague (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). Student motives could have direct influence on participation in peer-response activities and draft revisions (Shulin & Icy, 2015). There is a need to investigate the real function of the peer interactions and the internal dynamics of the peer-response groups to provide a clearer picture of the student-writers' attitudes, the internal dynamics of the groups and how they contribute to the development of writing and revising skills. As such, this study is an effort to fill the gap, exploring the connection between peer-response interaction and revision by ESL student-writers. This is an area that certainly warrants further research, and this will be the first focus of this study.

Secondly, previous studies on ESL peer-response focused on the cognitive, affective, social and linguistic benefits, without examining the amount of feedback

incorporated into subsequent revisions (Lundstorm & Baker, 2009). The revised papers indicated that much of the peer feedback was not utilized. Some studies (Fury, 2004; Mooney, 2004, Jayakaran & Wahid, 2011) also indicated insignificant effects on writing performance because the student-writers were reluctant to incorporate the peer suggestions. Peer feedback is only beneficial when acted upon by the student-writers during the revision process. Failure to do so is usually blamed on the responders' inability to provide concrete and useful feedback, the student-writers' lack of knowledge and skills to incorporate them into their revision (Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Tsui & Ng, 2000). While second language proficiency is an important factor in determining the student-writers' ability to provide and utilize feedback, its contribution has been relatively under-researched (Allen & Mills, 2014). Draft revision is a problem-oriented process in which the student-writers must be made aware that there are parts of the draft that need improvement. This awareness does not always result in draft improvement because it is only the first step to revision. Hence, this study investigated how the peer-response activity influenced the incorporation of peer feedback into the revisions. This will be the second focus of the study – how did the interactions influence the revision process.

Thirdly, what specific aspects of the students' writing improved? Previous studies have only focused on the students' self-reported beliefs that peer-response improved writing ability ((Baker, 2016; Ting & Qian, 2010; Hu 2005; Curtis 2001; Min 2005) without highlighting which specific aspects of the students' writing improved. These doubts need to be addressed to better understand the benefits (Allen & Katayama, 2016). It is important to know what changes the student-writers made to their drafts after the peer-response sessions and how did these changes result in draft improvement. Were the revised papers better than the earlier drafts?

Another very important aspect of peer-response in the ESL setting concerns the role of training. Instead of directly examining the issue of training students in peer-response, some studies focussed more on the quality of peer feedback (Ruegg, 2015). For peer-response to be successful, students need to learn how to participate in it (Rahimi, 2013). Convincing ESL student-writers to participate in the peer-response activity is not an easy task (Byrd, 2008) because they do not have the necessary skills to respond to writing (Hansen & Liu 2005; Hu 2006; Rollinson, 2005). It is unrealistic to assume that they can read and respond to their peers' drafts, constructively react to a response to their own drafts from peers and revise the drafts accordingly. Without appropriate training, they may not be able to offer good feedback (Min, 2005) or differentiate usable from unusable peer feedback to improve their drafts (Liu & Sadler, 2003). Therefore, they need to be trained in how to read and respond to their peers' drafts, how to be involved in a discussion about the written drafts, how to react to feedback from the peers about their own drafts and how to revise the drafts based on these feedbacks. Moreover, researchers have yet to fully discover how training the students before the peer-response activity affect their interactions, revision strategies and writing outcomes. Thus, the role of training needs further investigation.

Finally, studies on trained peer-response in the ESL contexts were conducted by employing experimental research designs (Diab, 2010; Ekşi, 2012; Min, 2016; Nguyen, 2013; Ruegg, 2015) or mixed methods approach (Min, 2005, 2006; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2014). A relatively smaller number of studies adopted a qualitative approach. More qualitative studies should be carried out to investigate this phenomenon (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Rouhi & Azizian, 2013). In response, this

study employed a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2014) to answer the research questions.

In view of these shortcomings, it is important to investigate what transpires during the peer-response sessions, what changes the student-writers make to the written drafts as a result of the peer interactions, the source of revisions in the student-writers' revised drafts and to what extent these changes result in draft improvement. As a preliminary step to better understand the relationships among peer-response training, peer interactions, revision strategies and writing outcomes, this qualitative study attempted to investigate the actual dynamics of trained peer-response among ESL learners with a homogeneous language and cultural background. Until these problems are addressed, ESL writing instructors and researchers cannot arrive at a definite conclusion about the positive shaping impact of trained peer-response on revision strategy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary concern of all ESL instructors is how to make the most out of an English language class. Zamel (1987) has challenged classroom instructors to engage in their own research and investigate the relationship between teaching practices and student writing development to develop their own teaching approach. This will challenge their assumptions and enrich their understanding of how their students learn to write (Yagelski, 1990).

The researcher of the present study has taught undergraduate ESL courses for almost twenty years. During this sufficiently lengthy period, it was observed that most undergraduates disliked academic writing in English due the difficulties that they had encountered. Academic writing in ESL is the ability to write in academic

contexts by applying the stipulated conventions, rhetorical structures, lexicon, and standards in institutions of higher education (Casanave, 2002). The Malay speaking undergraduates, who are the participants of this study, tend to translate their ideas from Malay to English when constructing sentences. They think in their mother tongue (Malay) and write in the target language (English). According to Stapa and Majid (2006), limited proficiency English learners use their mother tongue to generate ideas. They try to comprehend English texts using their mother tongue and the translation facilitates their understanding (Abdul Rahman, 2005). ESL learners in Malaysia also tend to refer to their L1 when writing in English, using direct translation and depending on bilingual dictionaries (Ambigapathy, 2002; Nambiar, 2007).

Prior to this study, the researcher conducted a preliminary survey to identify the common problems ESL undergraduates faced in academic writing. This was done to obtain a clear understanding of the situation before embarking on the peer-response training. Participants were asked openended questions on the problems faced in writing. The problems faced include inadequate practice, lack of understanding of the topic, inability to start and end a composition, inability to use correct expressions, translation from their first language into English, lack of guidance and comments for further revision, inadequate opportunities to improve and fear of writing. Linguistics differences also influenced their ability to successfully acquire English literacy (Jalaludin et al., 2008). Limited confidence when dealing in the English language is a contributing factor (Muhammad, 2007; Nambiar, 2007; Abu Hasan, 2008) and this inevitably affected the learners' performance in general (Rosemala Ismail, 2008). ESL student-writers find composing in English challenging because it involves cognitive and linguistic strategies which are alien to them (Rao,



2007). Some of the participants in this study lacked writing skills in general and were not fluent in the English language. Thus, they could not transfer the writing skills from Malay to English. Moreover, writing instructors seldom train the student-writers to engage in the intellectually demanding, aesthetically sophisticated and socially delicate process of commenting constructively on the work of peers in a systematic way (Hall, 2009). To overcome these shortcomings, an interventional programme using the process writing approach and the peer-response was utilised in this ESL academic writing course. Inspired by current theories and gaps remaining unaddressed in the literature, this study focused on one classroom of ESL writers and examined how they interacted with each other during the trained peer-response sessions and the impact of their interaction on the revision process and the revised paper.

According to Ferris (1990), getting the ESL student-writers to participate in a learning activity that focuses on drafting, editing and revising can be challenging. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study was to see if training the participants before the peer-response activity could result in a change in attitude. This study was also aimed at determining the type of training that would effectively yield success in producing commendable text revisions. In other words, this study sought to determine whether trained peer-response in an academic, tertiary-level ESL writing class is a practical classroom activity, based on the notion that such activities facilitate the students' development processes as writers and speakers in the English language. This study also aimed to determine whether a more elaborate training program would result in more fruitful interactions about writing. Finally, the study sought to determine whether such activities should be recommended for classes of similar settings, purposes and goals.

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to identify the types of interactions that transpired during the peer-response sessions, frequencies of these interactions and the extent to which the feedback offered led to changes and improvements in the revision. This study also sought to determine whether trained peer-response in an academic, university-level ESL writing class is an effective and successful classroom activity, based on the belief that such activities facilitate the students' development processes as writers and speakers in the English language. Finally, the study looked at the possibility of whether such activities could be implemented in similar settings, purposes, and goals. The following are the objectives of the study:

**Research Objective 1:** To examine what transpired in the trained peer-response groups when the ESL student-writers responded to the first drafts of their writing task.

**Research Objective 2:** To investigate the changes the student-writers made to the drafts of the writing task because of the interactions during the trained peer-response activity.

**Research Objective 3:** To identify whether the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions resulted in successful revisions in the subsequent drafts.

## **Research Questions**

ESL writing approaches and methodologies are still evolving through researches that are being undertaken to fine tune and garner the best possible results. This study was undertaken to further investigate the interactional dynamics of trained

peer-response sessions in a tertiary level ESL writing classroom on the premise of the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What transpired in the trained peer-response groups when the ESL student writers responded to the first drafts of their writing task?

**Research Question 2:** What changes were made to the first drafts of the writing task because of the interactions during the trained peer-response activity?

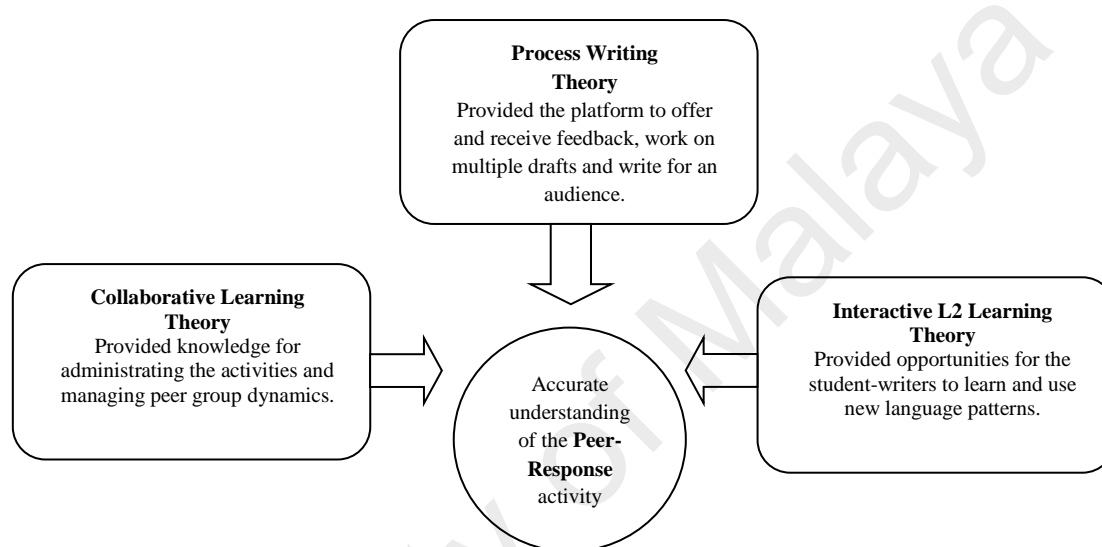
**Research Question 3:** How did the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions result in successful revisions in the subsequent drafts?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Grounded in the interactive learning, collaborative learning and process writing theories, this study attempted to understand how the interactions about the written drafts brought about changes and improvements in the writing process. Theoretical constructs of ESL writing are descriptive rather than explanatory in nature (Kroll, 2003). Therefore, combining theories can further the research agenda because ESL writing theories draw their insights from more than just its historical roots in the field of L1 writing, and a proliferation of conceptualizations and analytical approaches about what L2 writing is, how people learn L2 writing and how to teach it (Kroll, 2003).

Writing is a social phenomenon and group learning may generate positive outcomes (Weissberg, 2006), making peer-response an integral part of the process writing instruction. During peer-response, student-writers work collaboratively and get multiple feedbacks for revisions (Jun Liu & Hansen, 2005). They co-construct

knowledge with “communities of like-minded peers” (Bruffee, 1999, p. 646) by discussing their drafts to reach consensus or negotiate the perceptions, thoughts or expressions with each other (Bruffee, 1999). The use of peer-response is justified by the three theoretical stances - process writing, collaborative and interactive learning theories (Liu & Hansen 2002). The following is a detailed discussion of the three theoretical frameworks.



*Figure 0.1* Theoretical Framework

**Process writing theory.** The process-writing theory stresses meaning over form, process over product and multiple revisions over finished texts. This writing theory emerged in the late 1960s in the L1 writing setting to replace the product-oriented approach (Zhao, 2011). It was later implemented in the L2 writing context. This approach views writing as a process in which the student-writers are engaged in brainstorming, outlining, drafting, rewriting and editing activities (Liu & Hansen, 2002). As knowledge learning is a process (Bruner, 1966), the teaching of writing should involve students in the process of discovering ideas and making meaning.

This view of writing focuses on form over meaning and the finished text (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Peer-response is an important component of the process-oriented writing programme (Ferris, 2005; Liu & Hansen, 2002). It involves writing multiple drafts through negotiation of meanings, getting feedbacks from multiple audiences and doing multiple revisions. The approach raises audience awareness (Ferris, 2005), empowers student-writers to express themselves and generate ideas through peer collaboration (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

The student-writers are guided through the pre-writing, revision and editing stages. The writing instructors facilitate and assist them in a cooperative and encouraging environment (Hyland, 2003), making them more active during the writing process. At the pre-writing stage, they work collaboratively to generate ideas for the writing task and comment on the peers' drafts. At the revision stage, they comment on the clarity, relevance of ideas and coherence of the draft. At the editing stage, they review grammar and spelling errors, on their own or work with a peer-response group, before turning in the final drafts (Bello, 1997; Hyland, 2003). Thus, there is an increase in student responsibility for learning in the writing process. Most importantly the student-writers work collaboratively with their peers to generate ideas to improve on their drafts by providing each other with constructive comments and suggestions.

**Interactive L2 learning theory.** The collaborative learning theory argues that knowledge is built by learners when they participate actively in a two-way communication process. Peer interaction allows ESL student-writers to construct knowledge through social sharing and responding (Liu et al., 2001). As a cognitive learning theory, the interactive L2 learning theory highlights the potential of second

language (English) development by exposing the ESL student-writers to comprehensible input, output and negotiation of meaning. When the student-writers engage in interactions in the second language, they negotiate meaning to make their ideas in the written drafts more understandable to their peers.

Second language acquisition requires not just linguistic input but comprehensible linguistic input (Long, 1996). This input is effective for L2 acquisition because it involves language at the next level of competence (Krashen, 1985) to exert effort for the learning process. Output, on the other hand, assists in noticing, hypothesis testing and reflection, enabling the learners to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing (Swain, 1985). This prompts the learners to stretch their current inter-language to fill in the gaps, “enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge” (Swain, 1995, p. 126). When learners attempt production, they use linguistic knowledge that is available from their inter-language to test their propositions about the organization of the language system.

This noticing and prompting function of output enables ESL learners to recognize some of their language problems (Swain, 1998). According to Swain (2000), output should also incorporate collaborative dialogue. When the learners are engaged in social interactions during the peer-response sessions, they can see the gaps in their linguistic knowledge and attend to them more efficiently. This, in turn, facilitates L2 acquisition. Thus, the peer-response activity enables the student-writers to notice the weaknesses in their writing and improve them accordingly.

Negotiations often occur when there is some recognized asymmetry between message transmission, reception and when the writers and responders are willing to come to an agreement (Gass, 1997). These negotiations are considered necessary by some SLA theories (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Long & Robinson, 1998), as negative

evidence needed for learners' inter-language development. Negotiation of meaning enhances the ESL learners' comprehension of meaning and forces them to manipulate the form of their language to enhance its comprehensibility (Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). They attend to language as an object during a generally meaning-oriented activity (Long, 1996). This negotiation of meaning plays an important role in L2 learning.

Negotiation of meaning also enhances the learners' comprehension of meaning and forces them to manipulate the form of their language to enhance its comprehensibility (Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). During the peer-response activity, ESL learners negotiate draft meaning through language reformulations involving simplifications, elaborations, confirmation, clarification and reorganization (Long, 1996). Comprehensible input plays a crucial role in L2 development (Fernández-García & Martínez Arbeláiz, 2002). According to Long (1996), "language acquisition requires comprehensible linguistic input" (p. 414) and the learners must process the input, which results in a learning process. These modifications are considered necessary for interlanguage development (Blake, 2000).

When the learners are engaged in social interaction, they could see gaps that are present in their L2 linguistic knowledge (Swain, 2000). This noticing is important for providing feedback, revising the draft and facilitates language acquisition. The student-writers pool their knowledge and construct language together with their peers by providing suggestions and explanations to edit their drafts (Storch, 2007). Thus, peer-response creates opportunities for the student-writers to interact and engage in learning the second language (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Storch, 2007) in line with the interactive L2 learning theory (Long, 1996).

**Collaborative learning theory.** The interactive learning theory contends that language development is predisposed by the desire to communicate with others. The underlying belief is that knowledge is co-constructed by a group of learners during social interactions. To participate in peer-response, student-writers should work collaboratively to become better editors of their own writings. The collaborative learning theory advocates knowledge as a social construct “generated by communities of like-minded peers” (Bruffee, 1999, p. 646) and learning is “knowledge construction within a social context” (Oxford, 1997, p. 443). Learning takes place when students challenge each other’s biases and assumptions; negotiate perceptions, thoughts, expressions and feelings with peers (Bruffee, 1999). Thus, writing instructors should be organizers of learning, and not dispensers of knowledge (Bruffee, 1973).

Peer-response encourages collaborative learning and creates a favourable socio-interactive environment for ESL learners to receive social support from their peers (de Guerrero & Villamil 2000; O’Brien 2004) to improve writing. Each student-writer is a partner in the learning process and co-constructs knowledge with other student-writers in the group (Storch, 2005), instead of working independently (Freeman, 1992). They pool their linguistic resources, ideas and provide feedback to compose more linguistically complex and grammatically correct texts (Storch 2002). These interactions provide a rich collaborative learning environment that includes brainstorming, exploring ideas and processing information (Warschauer, 1999). Moreover, the more abled learners could provide support to the less able ones (Ellis, 2000; Storch, 2002). The collaborative learning theory, which is based on the spoken dialogues between learners who are usually of comparable background in the subject, is a socially constructed activity which takes place through communication with



peers (Bruffee, 1984). As the student-writers work together responding to each other's drafts, their interaction with one another creates an environment conducive for learning.

The collaborative learning theory also supports the use of peer- response in the ESL writing classroom because it provides the social framework for interaction in a community of knowledgeable peers (Bruffee, 1984). Knowledgeable peers refer to groups of learners whose work is guided by the same paradigms, code of values and assumptions (Stanley, 1992). In this collaborative mode, the student-writers interact with each other, negotiate meanings and achieve to reach a consensus and answer questions related to their written drafts (Bruffee, 1984).

Furthermore, the collaborative learning environment created during the trained peer-response sessions assists the student-writers in using language to convey ideas and develop them. According to Gere (1987), the social communities of the peer-response groups provide student-writers with a real audience for their writings and explore the effectiveness of their ideas for better understanding. They explain and test their ideas with the peers before committing them on paper or revising their drafts accordingly (Bruffee, 1973).

Some knowledge can only be effectively acquired when the student-writers are involved in collaborative interactions (Bruffee, 1993). The collaborative learning environment provides them with certain resources that are inaccessible when working individually. The student-writers indulge in constructive conversations with their peers, making it the most productive conversation in the writing process (Bruffee, 1984). According to Bruffee (1984), the value of constructive interaction on writing depends on three assumptions. First, student-writers can only write about what they can talk about with others because a demanding audience helps them

become better writers. Second, they can write effectively to people they have been with in a conversation. They gain new knowledge while helping each other. And third, writing can only be as clear, incisive and effective as their conversations, about the topic they are writing on and their conversation about writing itself (Bruffee, 1984). A collaborative learning environment created in a peer-response group helps the student-writers to address high-order composition issues (Gere, 1987). Thus, students should be trained to work collaboratively with their peers to be better editors of their own writings. Writing instructors should be non-directive and implement more collaborative group activities in the classroom. Ideally, they should assume the role of negotiators and facilitators during the peer-response group work (Bruffee, 1984). Collaborative learning moves the power from the teacher to the students, empowering them to construct knowledge, thoughts and language together (Santos, 1992).

**Interactive, collaborative and process writing theories in trained peer-response.** The interactive and collaborative learning perspectives in process writing look at how ESL learners interact with each other, influence L2 acquisition (Foster & Ohta, 2005) and achieve writing improvement. These learning theories can contribute to peer-response in the ESL writing classroom (Ellis, 2000). The interactive learning theory provides the necessary guidance for designing the specifics of the peer-response activities such as selecting tasks within appropriate language levels and creating opportunities for the student-writers to learn and use new grammatical patterns. The collaborative theory provides the knowledge for administrating the activities and managing peer group dynamics. The process writing approach provides the stage to provide and receive feedback, work on multiple drafts and write for an audience. Thus, using the interactive and collaborative theories

during the process writing activity in peer-response allowed a more accurate understanding of the relationship between group learning and individual learning growth (Abrams, 2003).

Peer-response involves the drafting and redrafting of process approaches to writing. During this process, the collaborative learning theory encourages the student-writers to pool their resources through discussions with their peers (Bruffee, 1984) and complete tasks they could not do on their own (Hirvela, 1999). The interactionist perspectives offer an important theoretical foundation by suggesting how opportunities to negotiate meaning through group work encourages more effective acquisition of the language (Long & Porter, 1985). For these reasons, the process writing, interactive L2 learning and the collaborative learning theories provided the basis and guiding premise for this study on trained peer-response in the ESL academic writing classroom.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study further extends existing knowledge of trained peer-response in ESL writing and the factors that influence its efficacy. This was achieved by merging two common practices in the ESL writing classroom: the training provided by the teacher and the formation of the peer-response groups. This relationship can reveal how they are conditioned by each other and how they work together to promote the development of writing skills.

Another significance of this study is it looked at the dynamics of training ESL student-writers to provide oral feedback in a writing classroom. As such, this study has the potential to assist ESL writing instructors to better understand their role in teaching writing and helping student-writers develop relevant skills to provide

constructive feedback for writing improvement. Furthermore, this study adds another perspective by looking at a specific population of students with the same native language and cultures. It serves as a basis for comparison for teachers who are interested in trying to discern relationships between their teaching and feedback strategies as well as understanding how the student-writers react to them. ESL instructors can incorporate peer-response to create a student-centred writing classroom with student-writers capable of critically evaluating their own written work (Braine, 2003) and improve their language competency through listening and speaking with their peers.

Finally, this study places peer-response within the context of the writing classroom and considers the factors that affect the ESL student-writers' understanding of peer-response. Instead of looking at one specific point in time in one setting, this study followed the student-writers through a semester long (14 weeks) academic writing course. The researcher examined the student-writers' reactions to trained peer-response from the beginning to the end. This included the people and learning events that influenced them in forming their ideas about the effectiveness of the trained peer-response activity. The study also took into consideration what happened in the classroom as well as the emotional, cultural and sociolinguistic themes that the student-writers brought with them into the ESL writing classroom.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this study adds on to existing knowledge on trained peer response in the ESL writing classroom, it is important to note its significant limitations. First, the findings could not be generalized to other populations as in the case with quantitative

research because of the small sample size of only sixteen student-writers. The experiences and perceptions of the participants cannot be generalized to student-writers in other contexts due to the limited number of participants, the short study period, the participants' mixed language abilities and the differences in motivation, attitude, goal, personal experiences and knowledge. The detailed observations interpreted for this study are particular to only this group of students in the setting described. Finally, due to the human and subjective nature of qualitative research, the findings and data may be subject to other interpretations.

### **Definitions of Related Terms**

For this study, the following terms are defined to clarify their usage throughout this study.

- a) **ESL:** English as a Second Language is an educational approach in which English language learners are instructed in the use of the English language.
- b) **L1:** The participants' first language – Malay.
- c) **L2:** The participants' second language – English.
- d) **Writing Process:** The sequence of stages which writers go through. The writing stages employed in this study include prewriting, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing and publishing.
- e) **Prewriting:** Prewriting takes place before writing the first draft. They include discussing, outlining and generating ideas for the writing task.
- f) **Planning:** Planning involves reflecting on the ideas gathered during prewriting to develop the paper. This involves selecting support for claims and creating a rough organizational structure.

- g) **Drafting:** Producing words to match the initial plan. Writing occurs over time and writers seldom try to produce an entire text in one sitting.
- h) **Pausing:** Refers to moments when writing does not occur. Writers read and reflect on what they have produced and how it matches their plans. Good writers consider how well the draft matches the plan and how well it meets the audience needs.
- i) **Reading:** Refers to moments when writers read what the draft and compare to their original plans. This is also crucial to the reflection process during pausing.
- j) **Revising:** Revising occurs after completing the first draft. Writers make changes to improve the match between plan and text. In this study, revising also includes getting feedback from peers.
- k) **Editing:** The purpose of editing is to give the paper a professional appearance. This is achieved by focusing on sentence-level concerns like punctuation, sentence length, spelling, subject verb agreement and style.
- l) **Publishing:** Sharing the revised paper with its intended audience – the peers and writing instructor.
- m) **Writing Process Approach:** An approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer and pays attention to the development of good writing practices.

## Summary

This chapter is an overall description of the study. It includes problems remaining untangled in ESL trained peer-response research, the purpose, theoretical framework that formed the basis for the study and the research objectives as well as

the research questions. It also justifies the significance of the study. Definitions of key terms employed are provided as well. The next chapter provides the review of related literature.

University of Malaya

## **Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature**

### **Introduction**

Studies on second language writing have evolved into an area of inquiry because of the intersection of different traditions (Matsuda, 2003). Due to its interdisciplinary nature, studies on second language writing promise to uncover the multifaceted processes of writing in a second language and to support the writing process of ESL writers.

Writing is a complex task that involves converting thoughts into text through an ongoing control over the other aspects of language skills, presenting them in an appealing and structured way by considering the audience and the purpose (Kroll, 2001). Writing well means conveying ideas and facts using clear, accurate and appropriate written language (Hashim, 2011). This complex nature of writing makes it difficult for ESL students to acquire the required skills. They encounter problems due to lack of suitable skills - introducing a thesis statement, adding details to support the thesis, organizing ideas and proofreading (Stemper, 2002). They also struggle to edit their drafts due to poor revision skills. While L1 writers have the luxury of time in developing their writing skills, ESL writers often struggle with the L2 and writing skills in general (Maarof et al., 2011).

However, ESL students can become better writers by addressing the comments given to them by readers of their writing (Stanley, 1992). In teacher-fronted classrooms, the readers are the writing instructors, but peers can play that role in student-centred classrooms. However, ESL student-writers generally believe that the writing instructors are the only ones who have the authority to provide feedback for improvement (Hu, 2005; Hyland, 2000). They willingly accept teacher



feedback to determine their level of performance (Littleton, 2011) and take corrective action to improve performance (Getchell, 2011). Since process writing involves recursive stages like prewriting, drafting, revision and editing (Liu & Hansen, 2002), peer-response is a very valuable intervention to enhance quality. Learning to write has a border vision of product and process that encompasses other forms of communicative competence (Pennington, 2003). Student-writers are required to learn the process of composing, master the language used to express ideas, use varied sentence structures, suitable vocabulary and Standard English conventions of grammar, capitalization, punctuation and spelling. A more student-centred writing activity, such as peer-response, will make writing in the ESL context more challenging. The idea of peer-response brought with it numerous beneficial outcomes to ESL writing (Byrd, 2003; Min, 2006; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006). It provides the student-writers sufficient opportunities to practice and improve writing in the second language (Sasaki, 2009). Thus, peer-response is widely implemented in ESL classrooms to provide oral and written feedback to the student-writers.

Feedback plays an important role in peer-response. It refers to suggestions provided by peer responders on problematic aspects of the written drafts. The feedback provided informs the student-writers of their level of performance and helps to restructure their skill to what is desired (Narciss, 2008). According to Mory (2003), feedback can be used by the student-writers to validate or make changes to their written drafts. Feedback provided during peer-response can be divided into cognitive and affective aspects. Cognitive feedback involves summarizing, specifying and explaining aspects of the draft being reviewed while affective feedback deals with the quality of ideas in the draft and uses affective language to praise and criticise (Nelson & Schunn, 2009). These feedbacks can have positive or

negative effects on the revised paper (Musa et al., 2012). Most importantly, the feedback must be usable for the success of the peer-response activity (Walker, 2009).

Researchers have focused their attention on the benefits of peer-response and issues related to this pedagogical practice. For example, the socio-linguistic composition of the groups, the participants' first language and the impact of the feedback on revision strategies have gained more focus. The role of writing instructors in training the student-writers to participate effectively in the peer-response activity has also been investigated.

This chapter will discuss selected L1 and L2 research that has been conducted on trained peer-response to provide the background and rationale for this study. Important issues such as the instructors' roles, models of teaching writing as a process, benefits of and criticism against peer-response, cultural issues, the importance of training and peer-response interactions will be addressed.

### **Research on Second Language (L2) Writing Process**

The field of second language writing has undergone tremendous growth over the last few decades which saw a growing body of literature on peer-response (Ferris, 2003; Hyland and Hyland 2006; O'Brien 2004). Second language writing is one of the most viable fields of inquiry today because writing in a second language is a distinct area among the other basic skills of language learning (Matsuda & Silva, 2005). It involves a system for interpersonal communication using various styles of language (Jalaludin, 2011). Thus, ESL writing pedagogies have evolved significantly, and the practice and theory of writing have undergone many changes. Researchers are focusing on two major aspects of ESL writing - how writing differed

on academic and non-academic tasks and how language and writing differ among subcultures (Ball, 2006).

In most typical ESL writing classes, the student-writers are provided with prompts and are asked to write a piece of continuous text (Weigle, 2002). Students respond to the prompt per their linguistic abilities and background knowledge of the topic. Composition writing with a set time limit is used widely in ESL assessments for administrative and instructional purposes (Barkaoui, 2008) and in research as elicitation techniques to investigate L2 writing proficiency and development (HampLyons, 2003; Weigle, 2002).

These studies have drawn two major conclusions on the differences and the similarities between first language and second language learners. Firstly, the composing process in the L1 is different from the composing process in ESL (Silva, 1993). ESL student-writers transfer their writing strategies from their L1 to their L2, provided they possess grammatical proficiency in the target language (Berman, 1994). Cummins (1989) argues that as proficiency in the L1 improves, the writer “becomes better able to perform in writing in the target language, producing more effective texts” (p. 118).

The ability to write well does not come naturally. It must be practiced and learned through experience or transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings. Learning to write in L1 requires clear instruction and modelling with wide-ranging practices. However, writing in a second language can be more challenging because it requires the mastery of oral communication, vocabulary, syntax, grammar and the logical system of a new language. Therefore, some innovative methods must be introduced in the ESL writing classroom to make it more interesting (Musa et al., 2012).

Kaplan's (1966) pioneer study which examined the organization and writing styles opened the field for contrastive rhetoric and its influence in the writing performance of second language learners. Over 600 English compositions written by students from different language backgrounds were examined. The results revealed that expository paragraphs written in English followed a linear pattern that kept writers focusing on the main topic. Therefore, it is important for ESL writing instructors to be aware of the rhetorical patterns in the ESL writer's native languages which often negatively affect writing performance in a new language. Thus, ESL writing instructors should consider these differences and make sure contrastive rhetoric is explicitly taught so that writing in the target language can be improved.

Raimes (1991) outlined four approaches that dominated the teaching of writing - form, content, writer and reader. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) provided a more detailed description of teaching approaches at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of ESL proficiency. At the beginning levels, repeated and short writing activities help ESL learners build familiarity and develop vocabulary. Activities for intermediate levels are extended and made available to help students to develop complex themes and strategies. Advanced level writers need to develop a greater sense of the genres they are expected to produce in addition to the place of writing in the discourse communities. Competent writers must develop their strategies and establish their own voice in the second language.

Other researchers investigated the variables in the process oriented writing course. The findings indicated that students' perceptions about writing changed significantly after they were taught in a process-oriented approach. Moreover, the students found the feedback from peers beneficial for revision. They became better at generating ideas, drafting, processing feedback, revising and their attitudes towards

writing became more positive. Tyson's (2000) action research study with Korean college students revealed that some of the techniques used in the writing class resulted in students producing longer and better-developed writing. The student-writers were more confident and motivated.

Proficiency in a second language and the ability to write in an academic context are important for ESL learners (Hyland, 2003). To write academically, ESL student-writers must master specific rhetorical structures and conventions of writing formal essays, reflective journals and research papers required in courses across the curriculum (Hyland, 2002). Tsang and Wong (2000), who studied the effects of explicit grammar teaching on ESL students' writing, indicated that students could write with greater readiness and the revised papers were concise, coherent, clear and focussed. Sengupta (2000) also reported that explicit teaching of writing strategies had a significant effect on the quality of the students' final drafts. Cresswell (2000) added on the positive effects of learning to self-monitor writing, especially when more attention was paid to the content, process and organization.

Ferris (1997) investigated the impact of different types of feedback on writing and reported that revision made in response to teacher comments resulted in improved quality. However, surface error corrections by teachers do not contribute significantly in improving overall writing abilities (Jayakaran & Vahid, 2011). In contrast, other studies (Vengadasamy, 2002) reported that teachers' comments were useful. Peer-response, however, enables ESL student-writers to understand their strong and weak areas, creates awareness of the rhetorical structure of their own writing and facilitates the acquisition of evaluative skills (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Tuzi, 2004). Moreover, ESL students who were trained to respond to writing displayed positive effects on revision types and writing quality (Rollinson, 2005).

Thus, skills required to be an effective writer can be learned or trained. Student-writers displayed improvement because of the instruction they received. Their progress in writing is often linked to overall improvement in their language proficiency. The students' ability to write clearly and accurately depends on their overall level of proficiency in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Cumming, 1989), and other aspects of proficiency that are either specific to students' writing or that may be specifically seen to develop through writing (Weissberg, 2000).

### **Academic Writing**

Academic writing is a highly specialized genre which requires awareness and understanding of the processes and requirements (Scarcella, 2003). It comprises the abilities to use discipline-specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions to serve the purposes of the writer (Zhu, 2004). Writing academically in ESL involves different systems in the culture, language and individual characteristics of the writers which change over time (Cumming, 2002). ESL writers must understand its importance for research papers and reports in institutions of higher education to be successful (Lillis & Turner, 2001).

However, some ESL learners encounter difficulties when using unfamiliar rhetorical and language structures related to academic writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004). Academic writing goes beyond linguistic boundaries and considers a sociocultural dimension of academic literacy, which allows students to become part of specific academic discourses in their disciplines (Geisler, 1994). Moreover, academic writing is a highly specialized literacy genre (Bruce, 2008) that requires competence on the part of the student (Cummings, 2006). According to Silva (2006), second language writers make sense of the nature of academic writing by constantly

negotiating their cultural and linguistic knowledge in L1 with the nature and goals of academic writing in ESL. They interact with the academic writing system to understand and use it to produce meaning in writing. According to Mahn (2008), the interaction between the writer and writing context show the qualitative transformation of the L2 writer and academic writing. Writing academically in a second language is an active interaction between the second language writers and the process of writing in a second language by using different cultural, social and individual characteristics (Matsuda, 2003). Thus, ESL writers must be exposed to rich writing contexts in academic settings by allowing them to write using different academic genres (Atkinson, 2002).

### **The ESL Instructors' Role in Implementing the Writing Process**

The ESL instructors' perception of second language writing and how to achieve success in implementing it will affect classroom instructional practices. Teaching in second language education is a cognitive activity and teachers' beliefs greatly impact their instructional decisions (Tillema, 2000). According to Borg (2003), "teachers are active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p. 81). Casanave (2004), adds that "the most consuming of all dilemmas for L2 writing teachers is how to best help their students improve their writing" (p. 64). The effective writing teacher is one who can create an effective environment for learning, in which novice writers feel comfortable and explore the nature of writing (Richards, 1990). Numerous other studies have attempted to understand the instructors' role in the teaching of ESL writing. They provide instructors with rich resources and choose suitable approaches

to second language learning and teaching. Undoubtedly, increasing ESL instructors' understanding of these approaches is necessary and important. It is well acknowledged that cognitive and contextual methods shape the teaching and learning of writing (Flower, 1989; Silva, 1993).

To be better writers, ESL students must develop a thesis, generate ideas by using references, past experiences and observations, summarize and paraphrase, improve focus, support, organization and proofread to minimise errors in grammar, mechanics and spelling (Wong, 2005). Therefore, writing instructors must train student-writers on what to look for in their peers' drafts. Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) recommended that instructors lead the peer-response discussions because peer-response works best if used under controlled circumstances in which teachers lead and guide students on how to evaluate their peers' written texts (Ho & Savignon, 2007).

The relationship between research and teaching practices is another relevant aspect. Freeman (1996) highlighted the relationship between the instructor's knowledge of classroom practice and how research can express that knowledge. Instructors know the story of the classroom, but they "usually do not know how to share it with others in the field because they are neither called upon to do so nor have the opportunities" (p. 90). Freeman's (1996) crucial principle for promoting teachers to tell their story follows a jazz maxim: "You have to know the story to tell the story" (p. 89). Other researchers such as Zamel (1987), Raimes (1991) and Silva (1997) have contributed much to the understanding of ESL writing by highlighting the types of difficulties ESL writers face and the strategies used to overcome them.



## **Models of Teaching Writing as a Process**

Writing is a process of discovery where the writer is constantly learning from the writing (Murray, 1980). A piece of writing has something to say and the writer only discovers it after writing multiple drafts. By writing multiple drafts, the writer moves from exploration and discovering the meaning of the text, to the clarification and explanation of the ideas, both to the writer and the reader (Murray, 1980). During this stage of writing multiple drafts, four major forces evolve. They are reading, writing, collecting and connecting. While writing, the writer usually retrieves his previous knowledge and ideas and connects it to the current ideas through reading and recorded in writing. This is like the process writing approach, which is a dynamic, non-linear and recursive activity that focuses on meaning (Liu & Hansen, 2005). It is important to know how to internally and externally revise to clarify meaning for the readers. This engages the student-writers in the construction of meaning and meaningful self-expression (Pound, 2000).

Unlike Murray's model, the Flower and Hayes (1981) model focused on the behaviour of the writers when composing. According to this model, there are three cognitive processes involved in writing. The first is planning what to say and how to say it. The second is turning the plan into writing. The third is improving the existing plan. This model further divides the composing processes of a writer into three major components - the composing processor, the task environment and the writer's long term memory. Writing is a problem-solving activity in which planning, sentence generation and revision are the main operations in achieving the goals (Hayes & Flower, 1986). However, this model was criticized by Cooper and Holzman (1989) because it did not account for the activities that the writers engage in during the composing stage. In addition, North (1987) argued that the Flower and Hayes model

was too vague for sufficient understanding and stems from uncontrolled experimentation.

In response, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) proposed a model that considers the reasons for differences in writing abilities between expert and novice writers. They identified two versions of the composing process - the knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models. In the knowledge-telling model, the novice writer retrieves ideas of writing spontaneously from memory and translates them directly into the text. The knowledge-transforming model is a problem-solving method in which the writers develop a highly structured set of goals and generate ideas to accomplish them. Bereiter's and Scardamalia's (1987) observation of college students indicated that student-writers generated goals for their compositions and engaged in problem solving involving structure. The knowledge-transforming model involves a set of goals to be achieved through the writing process while the knowledge-telling model depends on retrieving ideas from memory and accepts external assistance from the teacher.

### **Peer Response in Writing**

Peer-response is an important element in the process-oriented writing classroom. It is a creative method of teaching and learning writing in which the student-writers comment on each other's drafts, receive prompt and individualized response from their peers. Reading peers' drafts, responding to them and receiving feedback from peers are important activities in peer-response. Revision plays an important role to achieve good writing, in terms of content and form. Therefore, substantial research has been devoted to further explore other revision related matters (Ferris, 2006; Goldstein, 2006; Sachs & Polio, 2007).

Peer-response is essential for the development of ESL writing skills, especially in the process-based and learner-centred classrooms that involve writing multiple drafts and self-expression. Student-writers collaboratively read, critique and provide feedback to secure immediate suggestions for improvement and develop writing competence through mutual scaffolding (Hu, 2005). ESL writing instructors are showing interest in peer-response because it meshes well with process-oriented writing instruction and provides an alternative to the teacher feedback (Hu 2005; Hyland & Hyland 2006).

The last two decades witnessed a growing body of literature on peer-response (Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; O'Brien, 2004). As a pedagogical activity, peer-response is ideal for ESL learners to negotiate meaning and develop related language skills (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004). However, these benefits alone cannot support the use of peer-response in ESL writing classrooms. Despite its instructional and socio-cognitive benefits (Ferris, 2003; Hu, 2005a; Liu & Hansen, 2002), many questions on its effectiveness in the ESL setting remain unaddressed or only partially answered. Among others, peer-response in the ESL setting did not result in much revision and improvement in writing (Leki, 1990) because the student-writers simply responded to surface errors instead of textual ones (Nelson & Murphy, 1993). Moreover, the student-writers incorporated fewer feedbacks which affected draft improvement. Miao, Richard and Yu (2006) concluded that peer feedback was less effective compared to teacher feedback. Despite these shortcomings, Mo (2005) reported that peer-response was as effective as teacher feedback and the students could provide and incorporate feedback for revision.

More empirical evidence on the effectiveness of peer-response in ESL is needed. While peer-response may be effective in the L1 setting, its implementation in the L2 setting is not encouraging. ESL writing instructors and students are not convinced of its benefits (Rollinson, 2005). However, when framed correctly, peer-response can offer as much benefit for the ESL student-writers in many areas of language acquisition. This is supported by several studies which found that peer-response can be beneficial to ESL student-writers (Hu 2005; Tsui & Ng 2000).

**Feedback.** Feedback is crucial for student-writers to internalize learning and understand the process of writing academically (Atkinson, 2004). It is an important two-way communication between teacher and student or student and student to help develop writing processes (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Written and oral feedback provides good models for the students when they reflect on their written drafts. The feedback should focus on grammar correction and provide clear guidance to the writers on the overall process of writing (Flowerdew, 2000). Hyland and Hyland (2006) contend that feedback in ESL writing is a key element of the student-writers “growing control over composition skills by employing scaffolded learning techniques” (p.1). They internalize the process of composing, exercise control over the language used to express ideas clearly and effectively, use a variety of sentence structures and appropriate vocabulary for the peers to come up with revised papers that are relatively free of errors. However, unclear feedback without explanation can be frustrating and lead to disengagement (Price et al., 2010).

**Benefits of Peer-Response.** Peer-response provides ESL student-writers with valuable opportunities to negotiate meaning and develop a wide range of writing skills (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004). The most frequently mentioned benefit is raising audience awareness. The other benefits include social, practical and

affective. Peer-response also provides ESL student-writers with valuable opportunities to negotiate meaning and develop a wide range of related language skills (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tuzi, 2004). Moreover, participating in the peer-response activity helps them to overcome writing anxiety, develop autonomy and self-confidence (Curtis 2001; Cotterall & Cohen, 2003) because they become aware that their peers also experience similar difficulties while writing. Interactions with peers provide the much needed social and affective support (Hyland, 2000).

Furthermore, peer-response is a beneficial activity in the ESL writing classroom because it provides the student-writers with a real audience and thus develops audience awareness (Harsen, 2005; Min, 2005; Paulus, 1999; Rollinson, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Multiple readers in peer-response groups enable receiving feedback in non-threatening environments (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Collaborative learning occurs in a socio-interactive environment where the student-writers receive support from peers for draft revision (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; O'Brien, 2004). They can clarify doubts, express their intended meaning (Liu & Sadler, 2003; Tsui & Ng, 2000) and develop the ability to review their own writing (Zamel, 1982). Meaning is constructed from the readers' perspectives and revised based on the needs and expectations of the intended audience (Mangelsdorf, 1992). They gradually move away from writer-based to reader-based writing (Stanley, 1992). Peer-response also facilitates the development of learner autonomy by reducing dependence on writing instructors (Tsui & Ng, 2000) and fosters learner behaviours that enhance the capacity for independent problem solving (Liu & Sadler, 2003). Most importantly, the student-writers become aware that writing is a negotiated socio-cognitive activity (Flower, 1994).

Peer-response also has social benefits because the interactions among the student-writers encourage collaborative learning (Rollinson, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000). When the student-writers negotiate draft meaning with their peers (Lockhart & Ng, 1995), they develop their communicative abilities in a non-threatening environment (Guerrero & Villamil, 1996), and practice a wide range of other relevant language skills (Liu & Sadler, 2003). Nguyen (2013) reported that peer feedback was conducive to improve ESL student-writers' performance, especially when they help each other to improve their written drafts (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). When the student-writers try to see the drafts through the eyes of the writers (Guerrero & Villamil, 1996), they can assist each other to achieve their writing goals. Moreover, peer-response enables them to see each other's strengths and weaknesses (Tsui & Ng, 2000) which facilitate the attainment of evaluative skills (Berg, 1999). A socio-interactive environment is created in which the student-writers receive social support from their peers collaboratively (Cotterall & Cohen, 2003; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; O'Brien, 2004).

In terms of practical benefits, peer-response in the ESL writing classroom can build a community of writers (Ferris, 2005; Harsen, 2005). Peer-response groups can create a friendly and secure environment for language learners (Sato, 2013) to develop their writing skills (Diab, 2010). In the non-threatening environment, they actively participate in learning and obtain feedback from multiple readers (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). As for affective benefits, the peers can be more understanding and encouraging when providing feedback. This improves writing development because the student-writers can help their peers with content and organization (Mangelsdorf, 1992). In this way, they become aware of their weaknesses and learn from their peers' strengths (Min, 2005). Furthermore, peer-response helps ESL student-writers

to develop text ownership (Ferris, 2005). Even though they receive feedback from their peers, the writers have the final say in decisions on the revisions (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Peer-response also develops learner autonomy by minimising dependence on teachers (Tsui & Ng, 2000) and by fostering behaviours that improve independent problem solving (Liu & Sadler, 2003).

Feedback during peer-response provides student-writers with more social support compared to teacher feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Hung (2015) investigated the impact of peer response and teacher corrective feedback on EFL students' writing performance. The peer-response groups demonstrated greater improvements in content, organization, grammar, mechanics and style compared to those who received only teacher feedback. Peer-response can be used to establish the social basis for the development of cognitive processes that are necessary for revision and effective writing strategies (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). Since peers are a socially appropriate audience, they provide a stronger motivation for future revision. In contrast, writing instructors provide vague and unhelpful comments (Zhang, 1995) because they must attend to many students. Peer feedback is also more informative because the student-writers understand their peers' language and knowledge abilities better (Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Paulus, 1999). Thus, peer feedback will be given careful consideration for revision (Hyland, 2000; Rollinson, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Peer response can complement teacher feedback (Hu, 2005) for writing improvement in the ESL setting.

An important aspect of peer-response that has been neglected in ESL writing research is the possible benefits to the peer responders. Critical evaluation skills enable student-writers to effectively respond to peers' drafts and identify trouble sources that affect the argument on a global level (Ferris, 2003; Thompson, 2002).

This ability makes the peer responders better self-reviewers. Nevertheless, there is a need for more studies on peer-response involving learners from different sociocultural backgrounds, especially those from cultures where providing feedback on student writing is the prerogative of the teacher (Hu, 2002; Tsui & Ng, 2000).

**Criticism against peer-response.** Despite the numerous benefits, the use of peer-response in the ESL setting has received much criticism. The most frequent criticism is the lack of quality in the feedback and the lack of trust of the peers. As reported by Sengupta (1998), ESL student-writers tend to trust teacher feedback more because peer feedback is not as effective in improving their drafts (Ruegg, 2015). Similar tendencies were also noted by other researchers (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al. 2006), who felt that cultural and social inhibitions prevented ESL writers from discussing their drafts with peers and incorporate the feedback into their revision (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990). As the ESL student-writers are still in the process of mastering the English language and its rhetorical conventions (Zhu, 2001) they did not have sufficient knowledge to detect, correct language and rhetorical problems in the peers' drafts (Leki, 1990; Tsui & Ng, 2000). They were also unable to provide feedback in English which they were struggling to learn. They are not good critics and only focus on word or sentence level problems instead of ideas and organization. Their comments and suggestions are usually vague and complimentary because they lack experience and training to participate effectively (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2006; Rollinson, 2005). Their lack communication and other related skills for successful interaction affect their active participation during the peer-response sessions. Differences in educational backgrounds, L2 proficiencies, unevenly matched grammatical competencies, reading skills and communicative abilities can affect the skill-based elements of



writing in a learner-centered classroom. In such situations, the purpose of collaborative learning is defeated and the benefits of peer-response compromised.

Furthermore, most ESL students do not have the skills to identify and correct language as well as rhetorical problems. The inability to provide oral feedback in English is another disadvantage. They are not linguistically equipped to offer valid feedback (Min, 2005) or utilize the feedback and revise their drafts accordingly (Liu & Sadler, 2003). Lack of experience and insufficient training in peer-response also contribute to the poor performance (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005). In fact, some studies have reported negative effects of peer-response, especially on the quality of the feedback provided and its impact on subsequent drafts. In short, peer-response in the ESL setting is criticized because students distrust their peers' ability and writing knowledge to be good reviewers. Besides, the types and focus of the peer-response comments and attitudes toward the peer-response activity influence ESL student-writers' perceived benefits of peer-response.

### **Relevant Issues to Consider**

It is also important to consider other relevant issues related to the implementation of peer-response in the ESL setting. Among the two most important issues are the cultural and peer-response training. The operations of writing groups in L1 might differ from those in the ESL setting. Cultural values influence Asian students' understanding of the advantages of peer-response, the interaction styles and reactions to peer feedback (Carson & Nelson, 1996). However, peer-response training has been proven to effectively improve the quality of the feedback (Berg, 1999; Stanley, 1992). Therefore, it is important for writing teachers to prepare the student-writers to participate in peer-response.

**Cultural issues in peer-response.** There has been much discussion on the relationship between culture and peer-response in the ESL setting. The cultural background of students often affects the success of ESL peer-response activity because students in teacher-centred cultures may not feel comfortable accepting feedback from peers. Peers avoid being too critical in their comments to maintain group harmony (Hu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005). Therefore, it is important to consider cultural issues when introducing peer-response activities in the ESL setting (Nelson, 1997) to prevent misunderstandings or discomforts (Allaei & Connor, 1990). Students from different cultures have different expectations about group member roles and group mechanics (Nelson & Murphy, 1993). Those from 'collectivist' cultural orientations often focus on group consensus and harmony (Nelson & Carson, 2006). Therefore, linguistic and cultural homogeneity are important for the success of peer-response. It is easier to maintain group harmony with participants of the same language and cultural backgrounds because they understand the tone of each other's comments. Their revising behaviour also varies because of differences in knowledge about revising, writing competence and the goals of the writing process (Peck, 1990).

Asian collectivist culture is known to influence the student-writers' perception of the peer-response activity (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992). The primary goal for groups in a collectivist culture is different from that in an individualist culture because the former tends to maintain group harmony, whereas the latter tends to pursue personal goals. Zhu (2001), reported that some ESL student-writers refrained from initiating comments because they did not want to criticize their peers, disagree with them and claim authority over the draft. As a result, they are more likely to provide only positive or complimentary comments to maintain group harmony.

The collectivist Asian culture also influences the interaction styles and reactions to peer-response in ESL classrooms. In Carson and Nelson's (1996) study, Asian student-writers focused more on social aspects and group harmony. In contrast, Spanish students placed more emphasis on helping group members to improve their writing. Asian students were quite reluctant to criticize or disagree for fear of hurting their group members' feelings. They were reluctant to claim authority over the drafts as they consider themselves unqualified to review their peers' drafts. They are generally passive and prefer not to voice the opinions in the peer-response groups (Carson & Nelson, 1996). Thus, peer-response may be problematic for ESL students from a collectivist culture such as Asia.

Differences between collectivist and individualist cultures have other impacts on the effectiveness peer-response (Nelson & Carson, 1998). The focus of L1 peer-response groups is to identify trouble-sources in the drafts. Negative comments from peers are more beneficial for writing improvement compared to discussing sentence-level problems and minor details of the draft which are ineffective for successful revision. However, Asian students are more likely to make changes to the drafts because of the consensus of group members.

In short, the success of peer-response groups in the ESL writing classroom is influenced by the degree of the power imbalance between a teacher and students and different communication styles between collectivist cultures and individualist cultures (Nelson, 1997).

**The importance of peer-response training.** Another important aspect of peer-response is to look at ways of improving participation in the activity. Untrained, learner-centred peer-response activities commonly practiced in L1 writing classes are effective for ESL writing classrooms because of the student-writers' low level of

competency in the English language. Common assumptions that ESL students know how to participate in peer-response activities are unrealistic (Berg, 1999). They may not be able to communicate their intended meanings in writing because they are still in the process of developing their vocabulary, sentence patterns, writing style and grammatical aspects in the target language. They also have problems detecting errors and providing quality feedback (Hyland, 2000).

In response to these shortcomings, several studies (Hu, 2005; Min, 2005; Stanley, 1992) were conducted to examine the relationship between training, the quality of peer feedback and subsequent draft revisions. Training was found to improve feedback (Stanley, 1992), quality of revisions (Berg, 1999), engage students in more active participation and interactions (Zhu, 1995), as well as enable them to produce more relevant comments on content and organization (Min, 2006). ESL students at the tertiary level who were trained for peer-response offered more feedback and were more likely to incorporate most of them into their revisions. Peer-response training enabled the participants to negotiate meaning in a more interactive manner (Zhu, 1995). Berg (1999), who explored the effect of peer-response training on the quality of revision types and writing quality, reported that trained groups made significantly more meaningful revision compared to the untrained groups. Ma (2010) investigated Chinese EFL learners' decision-making abilities during feedback and reported that the trained participants focused more on formal aspects of writing, while untrained students mainly addressed surface-level errors. Stanley (1992) also reported positive results of trained peer-response on student attitudes and interaction about writing. The results also indicated that the trained groups made significant improvement in their writing in the long run and wrote paragraphs of a much higher quality compared to the untrained group. All these studies point to a positive

relationship between training and performance during peer-response. MacArthur and Stoddard (1990) stated that direct instruction, procedural support techniques and written feedback are beneficial to revision. The positive effect of training on several language related areas have also been proven.

Providing constructive feedback can be an uphill task for ESL writers with limited linguistic and content-based knowledge. However, if the student-writers are properly trained and provided support, the interactions during the peer-response activity and the comments generated can be beneficial for draft revision (Liu & Hansen, 2005). In fact, student-writers who are specifically trained before participating in peer-response can offer useful suggestions, point out problems related to content as well as rhetoric and provide usable solutions for draft improvements (Min, 2005). Thus, ESL student-writers need explicit training to assess drafts and use the peer feedback effectively (Beach & Friedrich, 2006). Some scholars have questioned the ESL student-writers' ability to offer useful feedback and questioned the extent to which they are prepared to incorporate the peer feedback in their revisions. Therefore, peer-response should be explicitly taught to students in writing classes to avoid students trying to please the teacher through their comments to one another (Hall, 2009). Simmons (2003) suggested this requires a long-term commitment by teachers to model and scaffold feedback strategies.

The effectiveness of the peer-response activity also depends on the duration of the training. Lengthy training sessions can improve the effectiveness of the peer-response activity (Stanley, 1992). The participants become more confident and generate substantially more specific and meaning-level feedback. However, another question that remains unanswered is the most effective duration of peer response training. Zhu (1995) and Min (2005) implemented the conference method during the

peer-response sessions. Zhu (1995) focused on strategies for giving comments on peers' writing, while Min (2005) incorporated reviewer-teacher conferences into the peer-response training. Both studies revealed that training helped the participants to generate more feedback. The students were more engaged in active interactions and negotiations than the untrained students. They produced more significant, specific and relevant global-level comments such as idea development and organization. Training also generated significantly more relevant and specific comments (Min, 2005) and more meaning-based suggestions that resulted in higher quality revisions (Berg, 1999). Moreover, training benefited the peer-responders because they were able to view their own drafts from a reader's perspective (Hyland, 2003; Ferris, 2004).

These studies indicate that training participants before the peer-response activity greatly influence the effectiveness and quality of the feedback and revision. Therefore, writing instructors should train students to participate effectively in the peer-response activities. The training should include appropriate social skills to respond to the drafts. Videotapes of sample peer-response interactions can be used as models for discussion. ESL students must be provided with appropriate expressions to communicate their opinions clearly and politely (Liu & Hansen, 2005).

Positive social interaction also appears to facilitate second language learning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Mason, 2006). Writing instructors working with student-writers in groups for a longer period will have the opportunity to spend more time preparing and training the peer-response groups. This will allow the student-writers to work together on a process writing assignment and become comfortable in a student-centred environment (Miller & Endo, 2004). Initially, the participants may

have reservations but after the training, they will develop a more positive attitude towards the activity.

### **Peer-Response Interactions**

The importance of interaction in second language learning has been recognized by scholars and educators and peer-response is an effective means of interaction in the ESL classroom. The understanding of interaction has changed from a reinforcement of classroom instruction to an opportunity to learn new language items (Hatch & Wagner-Gough, 1975). According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), second language could develop from conversational interaction by providing the learners opportunities to practice the language. Learners attain comprehensible input through interaction and can focus on the meaning of that input in context (Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998). Studies that explored the interactions during the ESL peer-response sessions attempted to uncover the factors that contribute for successful interactions and reported that the interactions mainly focused on sentence level grammatical problems (Williams, 2002).

Peer-response provides an ideal platform for ESL student-writers to benefit from comprehensible input because interactions allow opportunities to learn form and content (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). When student-writers are exposed to peer feedback, they generate new output in response, which is processed accordingly to understand the meaning. If the meaning processing is not cognitively demanding, their attention will be focused on form, which is beneficial for their grammatical development (Krashen, 1985; Long & Robinson, 1998). Interactions during peer-response also enable student-writers to obtain better awareness of their writing and revision processes (Min, 2006).

Negotiation for meaning during peer-response plays important facilitative roles in language acquisition and development. Explicit suggestions during negotiations are important for higher level text-based revisions (Williams, 2004) because they enable ESL learners to notice the difference between their linguistic hypotheses and output to understand the nature of the target language. By negotiating for meaning, the student-writers learn new language forms, test existing language forms and receive feedback on their opinions. These interactions among peers in small groups can have positive effects on problem-solving ability (Storch, 2007). Moreover, such interactions offer the student-writers opportunities for language use with a focus on form (Storch, 2007), repeat knowledge (Storch, 2007) and switch between various socio-cultural roles.

Numerous studies have attempted to verify the link between interaction and language learning and the results are increasingly supportive of this relationship. Villamil and de Guerrero (2000) investigated the social-cognitive dimensions of peer-response and analysed the interactions through the lens of Vygotsky's learning theory. They investigated the types of interactions that transpired among the student-writers engaged in the peer-response activity (1994), the resulting social behaviours (1996), relationships that emerged (1994), strategies used to facilitate interaction (1996) and the nature of the "inter-psychological space" (2000, p. 51) that these strategies produce within the learners' ZPDs. These studies were designed to characterize the discourse that occurs during the peer-response sessions in the ESL writing classroom and explain how it demonstrates the learners' cognitive development. Even though the student-writers stayed on-task during the peer-response sessions, the nature of their on-task episodes varied greatly. They paid attention to form, especially during the writer-initiated revisions. In terms of the



cognitive stages of development, it was found that even though the student-writers continuously moved between stages, their “self-regulation stage was dominant” (p. 491). This was reported to be the result of extensive peer-response training as well as the use of their common L1.

During peer-response, the student-writers’ output is constantly under evaluation by the peers. This output serves as the input to elicit further meaningful interaction. While engaged in meaningful interactions, the student-writers assimilate meaning and form to be comprehensible. They pay attention to form because the accuracy of linguistic forms can directly affect the comprehensibility of the message. When there is a communication problem, the writers are notified by implicit or explicit feedback from their interlocutors and they revise the sentence structures. This allows opportunities for noticing and reflection, thus enhancing the student-writers’ awareness of their interlanguage. VanPatten (2004) asserts that the juxtaposing of output with input triggers noticing that is beneficial for form-meaning connections and discovering new knowledge to be integrated into their interlanguage system. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) identified five types of negotiations, with various subtypes. They are questions, explanations, restatements, suggestions and grammatical corrections. They reported that students from different academic fields of interest had more requests for explanations than those from the same academic field. Interestingly, the students could focus on both local and global issues. However, they also tended to focus on ideas over grammatical corrections, possibly due to the instructor’s instruction.

To what extent did these negotiated instances result in changes to the final drafts? Mendonca and Johnson (1994) reported three patterns - the student-writers used the peer-response input, disregarded the peer-response input or made changes to

their drafts without any peer-response input. Student-writers who utilised the peer input implemented more elaboration of ideas while some of the input was ignored. Those who chose not to revise their drafts despite the peer suggestions did so due to their distrust of the peers' feedback or disagreement of opinions. Some made changes which were not discussed during the peer-response sessions as they may have realised their own mistakes and made the appropriate corrections.

These findings validate interactions during the peer-response sessions as an important tool for facilitating language acquisition in all four skill areas - reading, writing, speaking and listening. The conversational interactions help ESL learners notice new language forms and notice the difference between their language hypotheses and the nature of the target language. Conversational interaction is used to provide the feedback necessary for the learners to make these connections and facilitates language acquisition.

## **Summary**

Trained peer-response in the ESL writing classroom is still at an experimental stage and much more empirical research is needed to gain further insights on the role of this learning method in ESL writing development. Training participants before the peer-response activity can generate significantly more relevant and specific comments (Min, 2005) and more meaning-based suggestions that would result in higher quality revisions (Berg, 1999). Moreover, training can benefit the peer-responders to view their own drafts from a reader's perspective (Hyland, 2003; Ferris, 2004). Further research on writing development is necessary to understand the relationships between trained peer-response and writing outcomes. It is also critical to uncover the role of training because ESL students trained for the peer-response

activity may have experiences that differ from students who were not trained for it. However, the outcome may be different, depending on the type of training provided. Thus, to have a better understanding of peer-response to writing in the ESL context, researchers have to further investigate the complex relationships of training, peer-response interactions and writing skills.

University of Malaya

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This study attempted to examine a group of ESL student-writers' experiences and perceptions of the trained peer-response activities implemented in a writing class in a public university in Malaysia. It investigated the impact of training on the ESL student-writers' performance during peer interactions, revision strategies and writing quality. Collaborative writing, process approaches, and multiple revision strategies were adopted for this writing course. It provides insights to ESL writing instructors on how to implement trained peer-response in their classes. The methodology for the study is presented in nine sections: (a) approach, (b) research context, (c) participants, (d) preliminary study (e) procedures for implementation, (f) researcher's roles, (g) sources of information, (h) procedures for data analysis and (i) trustworthiness.

### **Approach: Qualitative Case Study**

A qualitative case study approach was employed to portray an ESL writing class after training the participants for the peer-response activity. A qualitative research is an inquiry tool used to investigate a social problem or human behaviour (Creswell, 1998) while a case study approach allows a holistic and meaningful description of a real-life event which focuses on a group (Yin, 1994). A case study is bounded by space, time, participant criteria or events (Creswell, 1998). The process-oriented approach to writing incorporated in the peer-response group activity fits the notion of a bounded system with student-writers engaging in interacting and writing activities in a specific time and setting. A case study approach is also suitable for

situations in which it is difficult for researchers to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context. Furthermore, the richness and complexity of the participants' perceptions, emotional responses to peer feedback and possible conflicts during the peer-response sessions could not be analysed through statistical procedures. Another feature of a qualitative study is that the results are presented in a descriptive way by means of analytic induction procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The researcher is more interested in the process than in the product and in the meaning interpreted by the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Moreover, the qualitative research method is suitable for uncovering the meanings the student-writers assigned to their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1994).

The purpose of this study was to conduct it in a natural setting, build a holistic picture of the peer-response activity, examine the revised drafts based on the use of feedback and report in detail the participants' responses. As suggested by Creswell (2002), the researcher attempted to gain an in depth understanding by collecting multiple data in several ways - observing the peer-response activity, recording the peer-response sessions, conducting post-revision interviews with the participants to understand their perceptions, analysing the changes made to the revised paper and addressing cultural influences.

The results are presented in a descriptive manner by means of analytic induction procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The researcher reports what was seen and heard by means of observations, interviews and audio-taping the peer-response sessions. Through the process of transcribing data and coding them into categories, the researcher describes the recurring themes or patterns presented in the study. The data sources were drawn from the fieldwork of this

writing course. To observe the participants' interactions, the researcher who is also the course instructor was physically present in the field for the whole semester (Appendix P). This enabled the researcher to better describe and interpret the whole training and peer-response process in terms of the participants' perspectives. After considering the above aspects, the researcher is satisfied that this study fulfils the conditions for a qualitative case study design.

### **Research Context**

This study investigated a group of student-writers' experience and perceptions of the trained peer-response activity in an ESL writing class. The study was conducted in an ESL writing classroom at a branch campus of a public university in Malaysia. Students entering universities in Malaysia need to be proficient in English to meet the challenges of globalization (Heng & Tan, 2006). The university where this study was conducted is one of the three public universities ranked among the world's top 500 higher education institutions in the third edition of the QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2018. Like all other public universities in Malaysia, it offers various English courses to its students. These courses cover grammar, reading, writing, and speaking which aimed at improving the undergraduates' proficiency level (Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita, 2012). Thus, it is representative of other similar public universities in Malaysia in terms of the students' academic performance and attitude towards learning.

As in previous studies, an intact class was used for practical reasons. The participants were from homogenous linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It is easier to maintain group harmony with participants of the same language and cultural backgrounds because they can understand the tone of each

other's comments. Conflicts or discomforts may occur in multi-cultural collaborative peer-response groups because participants from different cultures have different expectations about the roles of group members and the mechanics of the group (Nelson & Carson, 2006). Thus, linguistic and cultural homogeneity could be an important contributing factor for successful peer-response interaction. As recommended by Ferris and Hedgecock (2005), the peer-response activity implemented in this study provided an ideal learning environment ideal for successful acquisition of English as Second Language.

The course, English for Academic Purposes (Appendix A), a one semester programme (14 weeks) is offered to the third semester diploma level undergraduates. The aim is to prepare the undergraduates to meet the demands of their respective disciplines and carry out their academic tasks. The components of the course include:

- i. Revising writing skills (thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting details, editing)
- ii. Paraphrasing
- iii. Summarizing
- iv. Analysing and Synthesizing
  - Combining relevant information from secondary sources
- v. Documenting
  - Citing sources within a text (using APA format)
- vi. Drafting, Revising and Editing

The students met three times in a week, two hours' per meeting. The writing instructor cum researcher implemented a process-oriented approach for the writing course. The students, working in pairs, wrote the first draft of an essay and

participated in a peer-response group activity and obtained oral feedback from another writing pair. They could write the essay out-of-class to prevent anxiety when composing in-class under timed conditions. The process approach was used as a possible remedy for the problems identified. Relevant literature in the field of ESL writing was examined to form a theoretical basis for the choice of an appropriate and comprehensive writing program. The process writing approach was found to be flexible for the learner's goals and pace and a non-intimidating peer-response activity was developed.

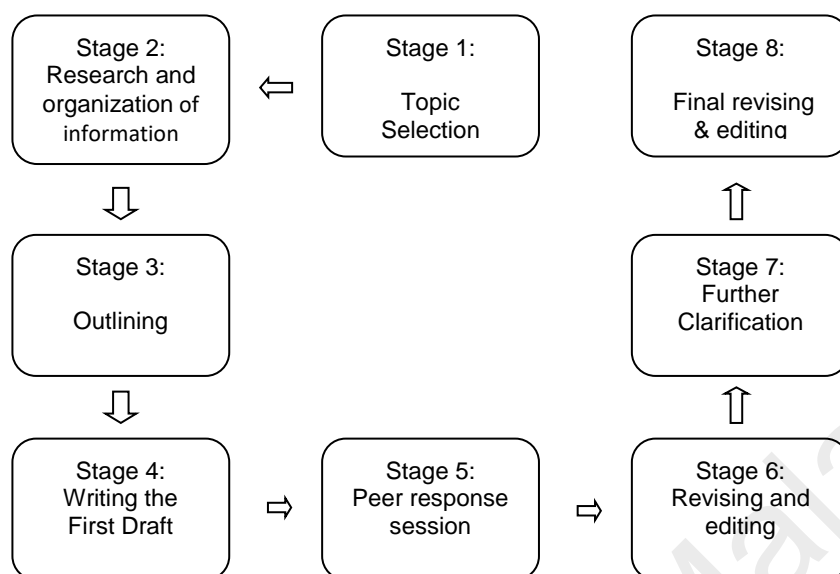
An important aspect before implementing the peer-response activity was to look at ways of improving the quality of the feedback. Stanley (1992), found that tertiary-level ESL students trained for peer-response offered not only more feedback but were also more likely to incorporate them in their revisions. Trained peer reviewers could negotiate in a more interactive manner during the peer-response sessions (Zhu, 1995). The training helped the participants to develop motivation, confidence, self-reflection, meta-awareness skills and writer autonomy. These face to face trained peer-response activities were held in the classroom during class hours.

To prevent participants' intimidation and anxiety about the peer-response activity, practice sessions were held. The participants were trained to give revision-oriented feedback during the second and third weeks of the semester. Samples of good peer-response comments as well as handouts with appropriate expressions for discussion were distributed during the in-class demonstration sessions (Appendix E). This enabled them to express their opinions in a tactful manner.

A modified version of writing cycle (Tsui & Ng, 2000) was adopted for this study. The writing cycle included brainstorming activities, writing the first drafts,



doing in-class peer-response discussions, working on the revision and getting oral or written teacher feedback.



*Figure 3.1 The Writing Process*

## Participants

The participants selected for this study comprised a group of third semester diploma level undergraduates, referred to as ESL student-writers. They were assigned into pairs and collaborated with another pair instead of working independently when drafting and revising their drafts. A total of sixteen student-writers agreed to participate in this study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years. Due to the qualitative design of the study, a relatively small number of participants were involved. The L2 proficiency of the participants was in the intermediate range. They were placed in the same class level based on the faculty placement test.

The participants were obtained by purposeful sampling which represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). It relied on the judgment of the researcher to select the participants to be

studied. As suggested by Merriam (1998), the selection assumed that the researcher wanted to discover, understand and gain insight of the participants. Therefore, the researcher selected an information-rich case strategically and purposefully (Patton, 2002), from whom the most can be uncovered to answer the research questions.

Four writing groups were involved in this study. Two writing pairs formed a peer-response group. The criteria of the sampling method to identify the sixteen participants were based on their consent to participate. The goal was to focus on characteristics of a population that were of interest and enable the researcher to answer the research questions. Therefore, the participants were selected based on having similar characteristics such as sharing the same native language and cultures. As such, cultural and language barriers that hamper peer-response activities could be minimized. There were also no restrictions as to the gender and the discipline of the participants. A study (Govindasamy & David, 2004) that examined whether different composition of gender in groups influenced student participation at a public university in Malaysia revealed that males dominated in the male-dominated class while females dominated in the female-dominated class. The gender ratio in the university where this study was conducted was not balanced. There were more females compared to males. Furthermore, the focus of this study was not gender dynamics in peer-response groups. All the participants had some prior experience with process writing in their first and second semester writing classes and have participated in collaborative group activities. They are bilingual writers, able to speak and write in English comfortably in academic and social settings. The selection of the sixteen participants for in-depth studies on the peer-response activities and writing quality was appropriate for the issue under study.

The participants composed their drafts in pairs, exchanged them with another writing pair and then participated in the peer-response activity. Pair work has certain advantages, especially affective and interactive ones, while group work can result in more varied and better-quality feedback (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994). Storch (2005) compared drafts written by pairs of ESL students with those produced by individual learners and reported that the pairs produced shorter but better texts in terms of grammatical accuracy, linguistic complexity, organization, and task fulfilment. The quality of the feedback received increased when more students were involved (Caulk, 1994). The feedback could be even richer, especially when the participants were trained to respond to their peers' writing. Therefore, to reap the benefits of both pair and group work, a dyadic format was used so that the participants will be more comfortable. Descriptions of the four groups are provided next.

**Group description.** To provide a holistic understanding of the trained peer-response activity, sixteen participants were selected for exploration. Table 3.1 provides information on the participants in relation to their groups, titles of their drafts, roles they played during the peer-response sessions (W1 – First Writer, W2 – Second Writer and R1 – First Responder, R2 – Second Responder) and the duration of their peer-response sessions. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. A total of eight peer-response sessions involving the sixteen participants were recorded and analysed. The peer-response sessions varied widely in terms of time spent on each participant's draft and the type and level of the interactions.

Table 3.1 *Participant Information*

**GROUP A** (2 Female Pairs)

SESSION	WRITERS	ESSAY TITLE	READERS	DURATION
1	W1: Amira	Causes and Effects of	R1: Hanieza	90 minutes
	W2: Aqila	Face Book Addiction	R2: Ummi	
2	W1: Hanieza	Causes and Effects of	R1: Amira	90 minutes
	W2: Ummi	Early Marriages	R2: Aqila	

**GROUP B** (2 Female Pairs)

SESSION	WRITERS	ESSAY TITLE	READERS	DURATION
3	W1: Aishah	Suicide among	R1: Ain	75 minutes
	W2: Kamalia	Teenagers	R2: Azira	
4	W1: Ain	The Impact of Reality	R1: Aishah	95 minutes
	W2: Azira	Programmes on Television	R2: Kamalia	

**GROUP C** (2 Female Pairs)

SESSION	WRITERS	ESSAY TITLE	READERS	DURATION
5	W1: Farina	Causes and Effects of	R1: Shahira	110 minutes
	W2: Azmina	Credit Card Use	R2: Rozaidah	
6	W1: Shahira	Teenage Shopaholics	R1: Farina	65 minutes
	W2: Rozaida		R2: Azmina	

**GROUP D** (1 Female and 1 Male Pair)

SESSION	WRITERS	ESSAY TITLE	READERS	DURATION
7	W1: Naqiba	Obesity among	R1: Izuan	100 minutes
	W2: Siti	Children	R2: Ibrahim	
8	W1: Izuan	Pre-marital Sex	R1: Naqiba	70 minutes
	W2: Ibrahim	among Young Adults	R2: Siti	

**Preliminary Study**

A preliminary study was conducted with a different set of participants with similar characteristics to identify personal bias and assumptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The preliminary study examined the appropriateness of the main aspects of the study design, including the tasks and topics, the amount of time allowed for the tasks and the effectiveness of instruction. Furthermore, the

preliminary study enabled the researcher to determine the smooth flow of the entire data collection procedure.

The findings of the preliminary study indicated that the participants generally enjoyed the peer-response activities. The idea of giving feedback to their peers' written drafts was well accepted by all the participants. However, the outcome was not as satisfactory. A focus group interview with eight students whose English proficiency was average, revealed that some participants faced problems providing specific feedback to their peers. Even though they were appreciative of the peer feedback, the revised drafts did not display much improvement due to the student-writers' inability to analyse and interpret the feedback provided by the peers.

In view of these short-comings, a more systematic training programme was developed for the actual study to better facilitate incorporation of peer feedback into the revised papers.

### **Procedures for Implementation**

The peer-response activity for this study was designed to enable the student-writers to draw from their group members' expertise at the revision stage of the writing process. A seven-stage procedure was used to implement the trained peer-response activity. They are described in the following sections.

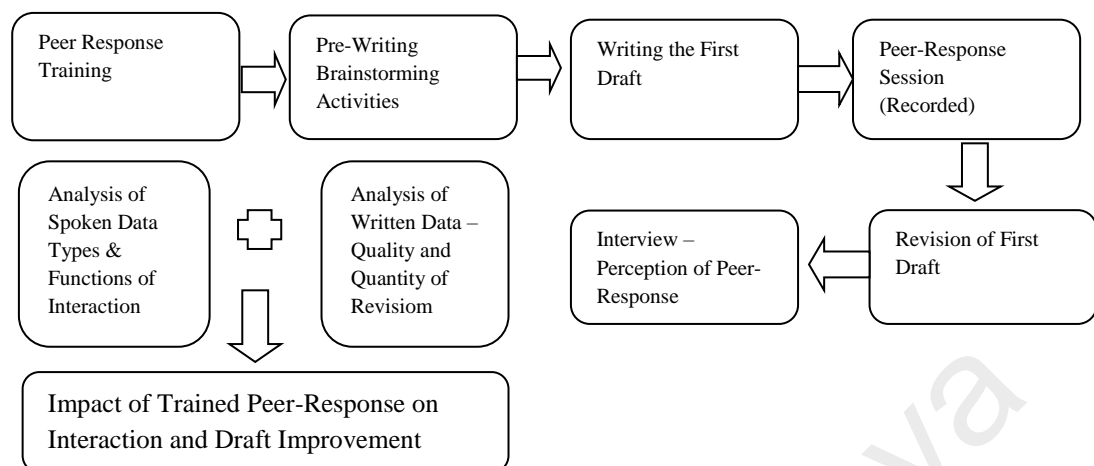


Figure 3.2 Procedure for Implementation

### Stage 1: Getting Started

#### *a) Introducing peer-response activities and writing tasks:*

During the first week of the semester, the objectives of the peer-response activity and the writing tasks were introduced. The participants were informed that the peer-response activities will be integrated into the writing curriculum.

#### *b) Forming Peer-Response Groups*

The peer-response groups for this study were structured to incorporate collaborative learning. The groups were formed based on Lensmire's (2000) criteria for collaborative groups. The groups shared material and intellectual interests which enabled them to interact with each other. The groups were formed by merging two writing-pairs together. The ideal was for each group to consist of two males and two females but due to lack of male participants, three were all-female groups and only one mixed-gender group.

An effective peer-response group should establish patterns that it feels comfortable with (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Therefore, the instructor explained the

grouping options to the participants and allowed them to form their groups to prevent unsupportive social climates (Nelson & Murphy, 1992). The instructor explained the advantages and disadvantages of the different grouping options: self-initiated groups - students form groups based on their needs or convenience; assigned grouping - students are placed into groups by the instructor either randomly or purposefully; task-based grouping - involves switching students among groups across assignments and long-standing grouping or stabilized groupings throughout the semester (Liu & Hansen, 2002). The participants reflected on their prior experiences with grouping options before deciding on their choice. Self-initiated grouping was chosen to maintain group harmony and work collaboratively.

**Stage 2: Peer-Response Training Strategies.** Training for peer-response is a necessary element for improvements in writing and revisions skills (Min, 2005, 2006; Stanley, 1992; Zhu, 1995). Before the peer-response activity, the participants should be provided with clear procedures, guidelines, and checklists and modelling on how to give, receive and utilise feedback. The training activity for this study was based on claims in the literature that coaching participants prior to peer-response can ensure success in the ESL setting (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Lam, 2010; Min, 2016). The training component was tested during the preliminary study and the researcher concluded that preparing students for peer-response had a positive effect on their interactions, negotiation skills, revision strategies and writing.

The training focused on four important requirements - affective, cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic (Liu & Hansen, 2002). The first step was to create a favourable learning environment to establish trust, encourage support and allow time for the participants to familiarize with the procedures and format. The second step involved explaining the purpose of peer-response, importance of peer-response for

revision by using sample drafts to demonstrate the effects of peer-response on revision the use of checklist as guidelines. The third step is to increase the awareness of group strategies such as turn-taking, interaction and respecting peers' opinions. Finally, the participants were exposed to useful expressions in peer-response.

The participants' language proficiency, motivation, interests and needs were taken into consideration when designing the training. The goal was to train the participants to perform effectively during the peer-response activity and revision. Peer-response activities must be socially, culturally and pragmatically fitting. To meet these objectives, the participants were trained in four important areas - reading and responding to peers' drafts, participating in a group discussion, reacting to peer feedback and revising their drafts based on the feedback. Revision strategy instruction focused on how the student-writers could make their writing more reader-friendly in terms of appropriateness, sufficiency and organization of information by adding, deleting, re-ordering and substituting information.

The participants were also trained on how to use appropriate language when responding to the drafts such as asking questions, using specific words and stating ideas as opinions effectively. They were told to concentrate on discourse-level meanings rather than sentence-level meanings. The training was also aimed at inculcating awareness that peer-response activities are an important way to improve their writing skills. To address the issues of unclear feedback and misinterpretation of writers' intentions in the written drafts, the participants were coached in a three-step procedure - clarifying writers' intention, identifying trouble-sources and offering specific suggestions revision.

The training was aimed to:

- a) convince the participants that peer-response is a beneficial activity



- b) get the student-writers to participate in group discussions
- c) help the participants focus the discussions on trouble sources
- d) suggest appropriate language to be used in their responses
- e) help the participants to react constructively to a response
- f) teach the participants to effectively evaluate the peer feedback
- g) train the participants to integrate the peer feedback into their revision

The training took place during the first five weeks of the 14-week semester. The review of peer-response principles was still offered during the remaining weeks of the semester, when the student-writers put the strategies they had learned during the training into practice.

**Stage 3: Peer-Response In-Class Modelling and Demonstrations.** In-class modelling and demonstrations were held to familiarise the participants with the peer-response activity. The in-class modelling included a four-step-procedure - clarifying writer's intentions, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems and making suggestions by giving specific examples. The participants were given self-evaluation worksheets (Appendix B) to guide them analyse sample drafts. The student-writers made necessary revisions before exchanging it with their peers. Next, the participants were trained on how to give specific and revision-oriented feedback for revision (Appendix G). The Peer Evaluation Checklist (Appendix I) was used to provide guideline on how to be good peer-responders. The participants were encouraged to communicate English, as the syllabus requires all the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing to be taught in English.

Another important aspect of the training was on how to provide feedback and utilise the feedback in the revision. For this, the groups were given sample student essays at their proficiency level. Sample drafts were used instead of the participants'

own writings to control the differences. Different drafts would have wide variations in how well they were written and the types of changes needed. This trained the participants on how to provide feedback and utilize it to improve the sample drafts. Using the same drafts also helped to ensure that the writing-pairs received the same instructions.

Research in group work suggests that student-writers need direct training to respond effectively, before assigning them to small groups (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The participants in this study were trained to respond as a whole class to several sample drafts before embarking on the actual task. This practice taught them effective ways of thinking and talking about their drafts. Modelling also enabled them to realize that the activity was important enough to devote substantial class time to the task.

Previous studies suggest that classroom demonstration alone is inadequate for the successful implementation of peer-response skills. Peer-response training that involved video or teacher demonstration in class does not ensure a high rate of incorporating peer feedback into revision (Connor & Asenavage, 1994) or a positive training effect on shaping revision quality (Tang & Tithecott, 1999) because students lack opportunities to transform their declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge when problems arise. Thus, additional assistance inside and outside of the classroom is needed, so Connor and Asenavage (1994), recommended more extensive and specific training with follow-up activities. The inclusion of intervention training in this study is a direct response to their call. The peer-response groups were encouraged to meet the instructor for further discussion, especially when they faced problems.

After the in-class modelling and demonstrations, the instructor showed samples of students' peer-response comments. Participants were asked to discuss whether the comments were useful for making good revisions. If the feedback were thought to be useful, the participants were taught how to incorporate them into the revision. If they decided not to, they should give reasons why the feedback was not useable. The participants were also trained to ask more specific questions to improve the quality of the feedback.

**Stages 4 -7: Writing Essays and Giving Peer-Response Comments.** From the sixth to the seventh week, the class adopted the process writing approach to work on the writing assignment. The participants were to write a 450 to 600-word essay over a period of one week, with the draft to be submitted no later than two days before the next class. They were also required to finish giving peer feedback to one another in the same group one day before the writing class. During these weeks, they had regular peer-response in-class group discussions for thirty minutes to provide them with more opportunities to clarify unclear comments and negotiate with their responders. Meanwhile, the instructor had whole class peer-response discussions to solve any problems that were raised by the participants. The instructor also randomly showed some of the student-writers' responses during the peer-response sessions as examples. As stated by Lockhart and Ng (1995) the participants displayed four types of stances during the peer-response sessions:

- a) **Authoritative** - The responders dominated and directed the discussion while viewing the session's purpose as the transmission of knowledge.

- b) **Interpretative** - The responders gave their personal reaction of both the good and the bad aspects of the drafts. These responders still controlled the discussion.
- c) **Probing** - The responders asked questions to discover the writers' purpose and meaning.
- d) **Collaborative** - The responders negotiated with the writers to discover the writers' intention and build meanings.

Teacher guidelines for preparing students for peer-response (Appendix F) and procedural student guidelines for peer-response (Appendix G) for this study were modified from Berg (1999a) and Hafernik (1983).

### **The Researcher's Role in the Study**

The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research and analysis, through the contact and interaction with the participants (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The researcher went to the participants in the site to observe behaviours and phenomena in their natural setting when the study needed to be probed in detail (Creswell, 1998). The decision to be the instructor of the class that was the focus of this study was made after considering the benefits. The instructor/researcher could exert enough control over the activities to allow for regular peer-response meetings with group members. The researcher would become a participant in the context of the classroom and not a participant of the group under study. In this study, the researcher trained the participants, observed the peer-response sessions, audio-taped the peer-response interactions, examined the student-writers' drafts and feedback from the peer-response sessions and interviewed the participants.

Based on feedback from the preliminary study, the researcher was convinced that it would be possible to keep these two roles separate. Peer-response is an activity that does not require the instructors' presence. Participants are less inhibited and interact more actively when the procedure is conducted without supervision. The choice of observational method of the groups to be audio recorded without direct personal observation made being an instructor no different from being a researcher. However, the researcher was scrupulous in recording and made sure that all the instructions regarding peer-response activity were adhered to strictly. Being the researcher and instructor allowed freedom of choice in forming the groups, determining writing tasks and deciding the duration of training necessary for the groups to participate effectively. It also allowed flexibility in scheduling the peer-response sessions.

Researchers using qualitative strategies need certain characteristics (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Merriam's "tolerance of ambiguity" (p. 37) is needed to compensate for the lack of set structure to a case study, where decisions must be made at all stages of the process. According to Yin (1984), this requires adaptiveness and flexibility. Merriam also stressed the importance of researcher sensitivity at the data collecting and analysis stages. Other pertinent qualities of researchers involve their communicative skills and ability to establish rapport with the participants. The instructor had always strived to create a classroom atmosphere that was conducive, friendly and open for discussions. Participants will be best motivated when the instructor was always approachable.

In all the research designs that guided this study, the researchers were also the class instructors. For example, Stanley (1992) taught the class that received extra training in her comparative study of highly-trained and barely-trained peer-response

groups. The researcher did not report any difficulties caused by their dual researcher/teacher role.

### **Sources of Information**

Six sources of data were collected and utilized to answer the research questions in this study. They include the (a) participants' written drafts, (b) transcripts of peer-response sessions, (c) transcripts of post-revision interviews, (d) researcher's classroom observation entries (e) researcher's field notes and (f) participants' first draft and revised paper scores. The following are detailed descriptions of the sources of information utilized in this research study.

**Participants' written drafts.** The participants' first drafts and revised papers were collected after they had discussed and made changes to their drafts. These drafts formed the main source of data as the interactions during the peer-response sessions may have influenced the changes made to the revised paper. Analysis of the drafts enabled the researcher to answer the second and third research questions.

**Transcripts of the peer-response sessions.** The peer-response sessions were audio-taped and transcribed to examine the interactions among the student-writers. Oral interactions are bound to appear disorganized when removed from the speech context and transcribed on paper because real-life dialogues contain false starts, interruptions and grammatical errors. Moreover, the participants may not have the time to untangle disorganized thoughts, reword unpolished phrases and present their ideas clearly. However, thorough listening enabled the researcher to make sense of these interactions without much effort. There is no other way to get back at that moment in time and know what was going on without having a transcript (Cazden,

2001). The transcription for this study was guided by Ochs' (1999) rule that the transcript should reflect only the particular interests to be examined.

During the peer-response sessions, the participants discussed, negotiated and justified their opinions. These responses were used to analyse the frequencies of comments, types of comments by sources, reader stances and other characteristics of peer-response interactions. Analysis of the transcripts provided answers to what transpired during the peer-response sessions (RQ 1) and the changes made to the revised papers because of the interactions (RQ 2). The written data also revealed how the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions resulted in successful revisions (RQ 3). Most importantly, these data enabled the researcher to assess under what circumstances the peer interactions proved valuable in helping the student-writers revise their drafts.

**Transcripts of post revision interviews.** Interviews are used to co-construct meanings, interpretations and narratives (Creswell, 2003). Conducted at the end of the study, interviews are effective to gather information to answer the research questions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Post-revision interviews are also useful to understand the participants' beliefs, attitudes and experiences. As stated by Seidman (2006), the post-revision interviews conducted with the participants in this study constituted an avenue for gaining further insight into the importance and meaning of peer-response training. They enabled the researcher to plan the line of questioning, triangulate data and obtain information about the participants' opinions about the peer-response activity. With these in mind, the interviews were conducted with each of the groups during the last week of the semester to develop a detailed description of the peer-response activity and learn how events were interpreted by the participants (Weiss, 1994). The interviews were scheduled after the peer-response sessions and

revision so that the participants could express their actual opinions about the activity. This took place after the researcher had collected the participants' drafts and read them to prepare questions to stimulate responses based on the revised papers. The interviews were largely based the observation and document analysis which led to a richer collection of data.

During the post-revision interviews the participants related their experiences as writers and responders. This enabled the researcher to understand how they dealt with the feedback offered by their peers. Since the purpose was to understand their revising experiences, this method allowed them to focus on expressing their opinions with more details and reflections (Atkinson, 1997). The researcher was then able to corroborate and augment evidence (Yin, 1994) from the field based observation notes. An interview protocol for the participants (Appendix K) with general, open-ended questions related to the research questions and some specific follow-up questions were used. Some improvised questions were also included in case the responses of the participants were worthy of further probing.

The participants also talked about how the training and peer-response activity improved their interacting and revising skills, developed confidence to learn from one another and facilitated self-revising strategies. The interview questions were semi-structured and participants were encouraged to answer them in English. The following are examples of questions asked to ascertain the participants' perceptions of integrating peer-response in the writing classroom and their preferences for the types of feedback.

- a) How did you feel about participating in the peer-response activities?  
Why? Can you give some examples?



- b) What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving and receiving peer response in the writing classroom? Why? Can you give some examples?
- c) What difficulties did you encounter when giving and receiving feedback? Can you give some examples?
- d) What types and aspects of peer feedback do you prefer? Why? Can you give some examples?
- e) Do you have any comments on the peer-response activity integrated in our writing classes this semester?

The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Several follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify the researcher's interpretations. These focused on reasons for incorporating or not incorporating the peer feedback into the writing. This information enabled the researcher to compare the participants' responses which enhanced data organization and analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The follow-up interviews also provided answers to the changes made to the first drafts of the writing task as a result of the interactions during peer-response sessions and how they resulted in successful revisions. The following are some of the questions asked for this purpose:

- a) What type of feedback did you expect from your peers?
- b) What type of feedback did you get from your peers?
- c) Did you incorporate the feedbacks provided into your draft?
- d) Why did you incorporate the suggestions into your draft?
- e) Why didn't you incorporate the suggestions in your revision?
- f) What were the problems you faced when revising your drafts?

- g) Which part of the peer-response activity was beneficial to your revision?  
Why?
- h) Which part of the peer-response activity was not beneficial? Why?

**Classroom observations.** Classroom observations provide first-hand information of activities, events or situations (Merriam, 2008). They allow the researcher to record information as it happened in the setting and capture the actual behaviours of the participants (Spradely, 1980) based on the specifics of the research questions. This enabled the researcher to make clear interpretations of the data and facilitated data triangulation. The classroom observation focused on the nine issues proposed by Spradley (1980) - space, activity, actor, object, act, event, goal, time, and feelings (Appendix J). The classroom observations enabled the researcher to achieve a broad vision of the peer interactions during the peer-response sessions. The descriptive notes were used to compare the results of draft analysis and interviews with the participants.

**Field notes.** Field-notes formed another important source of data. Extensive field notes were obtained during the peer-response sessions and post-revision interviews. Notes taken during the peer-response sessions focused on the themes and patterns which emerged from the discussions while the classroom observations reflected the researcher's thoughts and what transpired during the peer-response sessions. They included details of attitudes, behaviours and beliefs about the peer-response activity. These qualitative results were accurately reported in an unbiased way for data analysis and interpretations.

**Participants' writing scores.** Two sets of written drafts were collected from each writing pair - the first draft and revised paper. The scores for the first drafts

were rated based on the scoring guide (Appendix H) adapted from Hansen and Liu (2005). The revised papers were assessed using the same scoring guide to measure the quantity and quality of changes between drafts. Based on Alderson's (2005) description of direct holistic assessment, this scoring guide met the criteria for the study because it identified the strengths and weaknesses in content and language. Four descriptors - idea development, sufficiency, organization of information and grammar, were used to identify the changes made during revision. The scoring guide, which focused on writing abilities and second language proficiency, allowed for a detailed analysis of the responses to specific elements of the writing task in the form of error tally and editing logs. The drafts and the revised papers were analysed to identify the participants' writing proficiency level and the progress they made after the revision. Expert ratings of quality were used to avoid biasness. Two senior ESL writing instructors from the faculty rated the first drafts and the revised papers according to the criteria in the scoring guide.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data for this study was analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within the collected data as well as organise and describe the data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It focuses on identifying themes across a dataset that provides answers to the research questions. A theme captures important information from the data in relation to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, this theoretically-flexible method was used to answer the research questions involving the participants' experiences, views and perceptions.

As suggested by Creswell (1998), the data analysis process for this case study consisted of constructing a detailed description of the case and its setting. In *Doing Conversation Analysis* (1999), Paul recommended that the general outline for data analysis should include the following phases:

- getting recordings of natural interactions
- transcribing the tapes in whole or in part
- analysing selected episodes
- reporting the findings (p. 48).

According to Donaldson (1979), conversational rules apply when (a) two or more participants are involved, (b) take turns to interact, (c) deal with the same subject, (d) exchange information (e) no one person is the authority in the situation and (f) discussions have a high degree of spontaneity (p. 291). These conversational rules matched the characteristics of the peer-response activity. Each peer-response group in this study was made up of two writing pairs who responded to each other's first drafts. They had equal roles, not predominant during the interactions and the negotiations were generally spontaneous.

The phases of conducting thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed closely in this study. They include (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes. Finally, the findings were validated for accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2002) before producing the report. The researcher kept to these five phases to record the peer-response and post-revision sessions, transcribed and analysed selected episodes and reported the findings.

Data analysis for this study was an on-going, dynamic and thorough process carried out immediately after data collection. It involved three steps:

**Step 1: Preparing and organizing the data.** The researcher carefully browsed through the transcripts and made notes of the impressions gathered from them. A coding list was developed to investigate potential themes and sub-themes for later interpretation. Relevant information such as words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs were labelled. This process also included the participants' actions, activities, differences of opinions and other details which the researcher thought were relevant to the study. Information that was repeated, surprised the researcher, like those found in other studies or explicitly stated as important by the participants were considered relevant to code. The researcher kept an open mind and used preconceived theories as well as concepts.

**Step 2: Creating Categories.** The researcher then went through all the codes and created categories by bringing them together. New codes were also created by combining them while codes that were redundant or not relevant were dropped. Those considered relevant or important were grouped together to create categories or themes. These categories were about the peer-response processes or differences of opinion among the participants found in the transcripts. The researcher was unbiased, creative and open minded during this important stage that involved conceptualizing the data.

**Step 3: Labelling according to relevance.** Finally, the categories were labelled according to the relevance and how they connected to each other. For example, seeking information was labelled as a category while talking to peers was labelled as a sub-category. Similarly, problem solving was labelled as category,

while locating and fixing problems were labelled as a sub-category. The researcher then described the connection between them. (Appendix P – Screen Capture).

### **Instruments**

Two types of instruments were used to analyse the data. The first was designed to train the participants and the second was used to collect data. The tools used to acquire skills in academic writing and peer-response are: (a) training module for peer-response (b) self-evaluation checklist (Appendix B) and (c) peer evaluation checklist (Appendix I). The training module included academic writing skills and skills to participate effectively in the peer-response activity. Checklists were also used to provide the participants with guidelines to become good peer responders and writers as well as to train the participants to focus on the holistic techniques of writing while providing constructive feedback. The qualitative software, ATLAS.ti, was used to analyse the peer-response interaction transcripts and post-revision interview data. This data analysis instrument is designed to deal with unstructured data that cannot be meaningfully analysed by formal, statistical approaches (Muhr & Frieze, 2004). It is an instrument for knowledge management aimed at transforming data into useful knowledge. The following section will address how the three research questions were answered.

**Research question 1.** What transpired in the trained peer-response groups when the ESL student writers responded to the first drafts of their writing task?

To answer the first research question - what transpired during the peer-response sessions, the peer-response sessions were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed for categorization based on the comments made by the responders and writers. The transcripts of the interactions, the first drafts of the writing task and

post-revision interviews were analysed to examine how the participants interacted in the group when responding to the first drafts of their writing task. The researcher's field-notes and classroom observations were used to triangulate the findings.

To describe what transpired during the peer-response sessions, the interactions were divided into three categories: (a) establishing the peer-response sessions, (b) developing the peer-response discussions and (c) ending the peer-response sessions. This division provided a better understanding of what transpired at each stage of the peer-response activity. Under the first category, establishing the peer-response sessions, five sub-categories were identified. They include creating group rapport, reading to gain focus, taking notes, referring to peer-evaluation checklist and guiding the discussion. For the second category, developing the peer-response discussions, eight sub-categories were identified - localizing and dealing with trouble-sources, asking questions, explaining and restating, offering solutions, staying focused, switching roles, bringing in outside voice and dealing with grammatical issues. The sub-categories identified for the third category were ending the peer-response sessions, assessing the drafts, going over the feedback and finalizing the task. A straightforward coding system for categorizing the peer interactions was used to capture most of the interactions that were of interest to the researcher.

The focus of the data analysis was also on other speech acts such as asking for clarification, making confirmation, repetition, suggestion, agreement, identification and correction of trouble-sources, grammar correction and negotiation to investigate whether the participants achieved an inter-subjective understanding of the tasks. Attention was also paid to check whether the peer-response sessions remained focussed on the task. A major concern in previous studies was the

unproductive interactions and providing incorrect or partially correct comments. So, the last focus was on episodes unrelated to the task in which some participants went off-tangent and discussed matters unrelated to the task. These aspects provided a comprehensive description of what transpired during the peer-response group activities. Textual analysis of the student-writers' discourse within the groups has great potential in providing a clearer picture of their attitudes towards peer-response, the writing process and the role of training.

The findings for this research question was discussed within the framework of interactive theory and then examined from the perspective of collaborative learning theory. Similarities and differences between the current findings and that of previous studies were also emphasised.

**Research question 2.** What changes were made to the first drafts of the writing task because of the interactions during the trained peer-response activity?

To answer the second research question, the changes made to the drafts after the peer-response activity, the peer-response transcripts were compared with the first drafts and revised papers to see what changes were made after the interactions during the trained peer-response activity. The post-revision interview transcript was referred to identify the participants' reasons for incorporating or not incorporating the peer feedback into their revision. The incorporation of the peer feedback into the revised drafts was used to examine the participants' responses to the peer-response activity.

The first step was to analyse the changes made to the draft after peer-response and identify the initiator of the changes. Two categories of changes were identified - peer-initiated and writer-initiated. Second, the changes in the length of the drafts were analysed. Eight sub-category that contributed were identified - addition, deletion, substitution, permutation, distribution, consolidation and re-order. Third,



feedback which could be used for revision was categorized as ‘usable feedback’ while those which simply offered positive reinforcement were categorized as ‘unusable feedback’. The reasons for not using feedback and signs of participants initiating own changes were also taken into consideration.

Next, as suggested by Faigley and Witte (1981), the changes made to the drafts were categorized into ‘local changes’ and ‘global changes’. Local changes are those which did not affect meaning or bring new information to the draft. They included proof-reading changes such as spelling, tense, punctuation and paraphrasing existing concepts without altering the meanings. Global changes affected concepts and meanings by bringing new information such as adjustments or elaborations made to the draft without affecting the overall gist of the text. The written drafts were also analysed to identify the functions of changes. Five sub-categories were identified, namely grammatical, cosmetic, texture, unnecessary expressions and explicator. These methods provided a clear detail of the changes made to the drafts after the peer-response sessions.

A rubric was used to check the incorporation of the feedback into the revised papers. Four descriptors, namely idea development, sufficiency, organization of information and improved grammar, were employed to investigate the amount of peer feedback incorporated into the revision. The changes made were analysed by looking at three aspects: Types of Revision (Appendix M), Size of Revision (Appendix N) and Functions of Revision (Appendix O). For data analysis, three code lists (Appendix L) were developed per the researcher’s examination of the collected data, as well as theories and empirical studies.

**Research question 3.** How did the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions result in successful revisions in the subsequent drafts?

Finally, to answer the third research question, a multiple-trait approach was used to assess how the interactions during the trained peer-response group activity resulted in successful revisions. Revision was classified into ‘successful revisions’ and ‘unsuccessful revisions’ (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Successful revisions solved problem areas in the draft while unsuccessful revisions did not improve the draft or made it worse. Revisions were also classified in terms of the initiator of the revisions. Revisions induced by peer feedback were classified as peer-initiated while those that could not be traced back to the peer-response sessions were classified as self-initiated. These classifications enabled understanding the efficacy of peer-response. To determine the effectiveness of peer feedback to draft revision, textual analyses was employed to present a much clearer picture of overall draft improvement as well as the parts of the drafts that saw improvement.

Based on the recommendations by Min (2006), three criteria were considered to determine draft improvement, namely idea development, sufficiency and organization. Three different checklists were used to identify the types of revision (Appendix M), size of revision (Appendix N) and functions of revision (Appendix O). The Taxonomy of Revision Change (Faigley & Witte, 1981) was referred to (Appendix Q) during data analysis. Another criterion, improved grammar, as suggested by Min (2006), was added to the list of draft improvement because the participants were still in the process of language development. Grammar played an important role in communicating their intended meanings in writing.

For draft improvement, three aspects of the revised paper were considered. They include paragraph development, transitions between paragraphs and

organization around a main idea. The drafts were also evaluated on appropriate evidence and whether the conclusions were relevant. This measure of draft quality matched the goals of the course and the writing assignment. The purpose of applying these three criteria was to understand the text development and to evaluate draft improvement. As for the organization of information, the features considered were: (a) good introduction with attention seeking device and thesis statement, (b) precise topic sentences and well developed supporting details, (c) direct expression of viewpoint, (d) logical order, (e) paragraph coherence and transitions, and (f) restatement of main ideas in conclusion (Min, 2006). It also examined the specific areas in which the student-writers made improvements and whether those areas were at global or local writing aspects.

Eight language aspects we identified to analyse the improvements in the revised papers - development, grammar, organization, cohesion, vocabulary, transitions, mechanics and content. The post-revision interview transcripts were used to identify what contributed to draft improvement. The participants' frequently used expressions were noted. The nine frequently used expressions were – gaining new ideas, learning from mistakes, looking from multiple perspectives, broadening of horizons, selective implementation, reorganization of information, writing for an audience, writing multiple drafts and responding to peer drafts.

Post-revision interviews were conducted to better understand the socio-educational issues in the ESL writing classroom through the experiences of the participants. This established an avenue for gaining further insight into the importance of peer-response training. The participants' first drafts, revised papers and the peer-response session transcripts offered rich information to determine the impact of the training and the peer-response activity in draft revision.

## **Trustworthiness**

The credibility and dependability of this study relied on prolonged participation at the study site, peer debriefing, triangulation, continuous collection of data and conducting member checks. These are strategies relative to Maxwell's (1992) criteria for validity and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. The following is a detailed description of this process.

**Member check.** Member check refers to the sharing of researcher notes with the participants to determine whether they agree with the research record (Carspecken, 1996). The participants in this study were allowed to read their transcriptions and the researcher's interpretation. There were a few instances where the researcher had misinterpreted what the participants actually meant. Misinterpretations like these were clarified and immediately corrected. In addition, the researcher entrusted the task of data checking to instructors in the faculty to detect possible faults. This process enhanced data accuracy and consistency.

**Triangulation.** The data collected was triangulated with different sources including interviews, classroom observations, participants' written drafts, peer-response comments and the researcher's own field notes. They were employed to corroborate evidence and shed light on themes or issues that emerged. The peer-response transcripts were compared with the post-revision transcripts to have a better understanding of what transpired during the interactions. The researcher's field-notes also came in handy for data analysis.

**Peer debriefing.** Peer-debriefing was done with other ESL writing instructors in the faculty who were familiar with the qualitative research methodology. The faculty has three instructors who are familiar with qualitative studies and ESL writing. They were invited to read the descriptions of the coding

categories, data analysis and interpretations of the findings. This additional information was beneficial for the researcher to clarify doubts. In this way, the researcher established the credibility of the data interpretation.

**Ethical Issues.** All recommended research etiquette (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) was followed in undertaking this study. Before embarking on the study, the researcher submitted the research design to the faculty for approval. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the research results would be used. A consent form was signed by the participants after the researcher explained the purpose of the study, requirements and their rights (Creswell, 2003). The participants were assured that their comments would not affect their grades and their identities will be protected. In the process of data analysis, the researcher used pseudonyms for individuals and places. Ethical issues in the research problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, data collection, data analysis and interpretation and in writing and disseminating the research were strictly followed (Creswell, 2003).

## **Summary**

The qualitative methodology of a case study approach was employed in this study to portray the participants' perceptions and experiences about the trained peer-response activity in an ESL writing classroom. A detailed explanation on the approach, research context, participant details, information on the preliminary study, implementation procedures, the role of the researcher in the study, sources of data, instruments and efforts taken to ensure trustworthiness are provided. The need for a qualitative case study design, purposeful sampling and types of instruments used are explained and justified.

The data analysis process included two parts. The first was to analyse the peer-response session and post-revision interview data by means of the software ATLAS.ti 5.5. The second was to evaluate participants' first drafts and revised papers by using a rubric to check incorporation of the peer feedback into the revisions.

Ethical considerations for the process of data collection, analysis and presentation as well as triangulation used to increase the trustworthiness and consistency of this study are also explained in detail. Member checks, triangulation and peer debriefing were used to confirm data as well as to establish trustworthiness and consistency of this study. The findings and interpretations will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

## **Chapter 4 Findings**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study based on the three research questions. The discussions draw attention to the effectiveness of the trained peer-response activity from the perspectives of the participants as well as their opinions about the utilization and implementation of peer feedback in their revised papers. The findings for each research question are presented in separate sections. They are presented qualitatively and triangulated with the relevant sources of data to gain an inclusive view of the use of trained peer-response in the ESL writing classroom. Participants' feedback during the post-revision interviews are also presented and compared with the findings from the spoken and written data to determine how the peer-response training correlated to the interactions during the peer-response sessions and to subsequent changes and improvements to the written drafts. The following codes are used to identify the sources of data: Peer-response Sessions (PR), Post-Revision Interviews (PRI), Field Notes (FN) and Classroom Observations (CO). The First Drafts and Revised Papers are labelled accordingly.

A thorough analysis of the peer-response session transcripts revealed how the participants interacted. Their involvement in the peer-response activity was measured by the quality and quantity of the interactions. To uncover how the participants utilised the feedback during revision, the feedback they chose to incorporate and which they chose to ignore, were examined. A careful analysis of the student-writers' first drafts in relation to their revised papers revealed the extent to which they utilized the peer-feedback for draft revision and improvement. The post-revision

interviews provided these data. The three research questions that guided this study are:

- a) What transpired in the trained peer-response groups when the ESL student writers responded to the first drafts of their writing task?
- b) What changes were made to the first drafts of the writing task because of the interactions during the trained peer-response activity?
- c) How did the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions result in successful revisions in the subsequent drafts?

Peer-response enables ESL learners to participate in communicative interaction (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009) to develop new knowledge by restructuring their already existing knowledge. This, per Ranta and Lyster (2007), enables self-correction among ESL learners. Moreover, training students for the peer-response activity improves the quantity and quality of the feedback (Min, 2005, 2006; Stanley, 1992). Therefore, ESL students need explicit training to assess writing and use the feedback effectively (Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

The participants in this study were trained to work collaboratively to explore and probe the intentions or meanings in the drafts. The training also focused on providing specific and revision-oriented comments to improve the global concerns of the drafts. As suggested by Seow (2002), the participants were also trained to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the draft. This was achieved by pointing out ideas that needed more support and elaboration. They were also trained to identify parts of the draft that failed to hold the readers' interest, confusing, and vague. As recommended by Brown (2001), the training also focused on providing suggestions to make arguments clearer and more convincing. These included improving the thesis statements, topic sentences, concluding sentences and supporting details (Liu



& Hansen, 2005). As suggested by Liu and Hansen (2005), the student writers were given a list of probing questions that helped them to focus on content and organization. Most importantly, the participants were trained on how to effectively incorporate the peer feedback into their drafts.

**The peer-response groups.** The peer-response sessions were held in traditional classroom settings involving the sixteen participants who composed their drafts in pairs. Each group was made up of two pairs of writers. A total of eight peer-response sessions involving the sixteen participants were recorded and analysed. The participants composed their drafts in pairs, exchanged them with another pair and then participated in the peer-response activity. In small groups of four, they read and commented on each other's drafts. The composition of each group and the topics of their drafts are provided in detail in the following section.

**Group A.** In this group the two pairs, Amira and Aqila as well as Hanieza and Ummi first discussed the former's draft – "The Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction". All four participants were friendly and courteous, had good study skills and could be termed as dedicated students. Amira and Aqila were quite vocal in providing feedback. They highlighted their personal experience on the topic. This interactive session took almost 90 minutes. The group then discussed Hanieza and Ummi's draft on "The Causes and Effects of Early Marriages". Ummi was a good listener but did not provide as many suggestions as the others. She said, "*They can see a problem right away, but I can't. I need more time to think*" (PRI 2). However, she did not hesitate to seek help from the group. This session also went on for almost 90 minutes. The group members had a good grasp of the quality of their writing, which made it possible for them to collaboratively. This group also prided itself in its ability to accept suggestions freely to improve the drafts.

**Group B.** Group B consisted of Aishah, Kamalia, Ain and Azira. Aishah was the unofficial group leader who managed the flow and redirected the group whenever the discussion was not focussed. The group first discussed Aishah's and Kamalia's draft on "Suicide among Teenagers". The writers felt teenagers nowadays face a lot of problems and should be exposed to stress management courses. This discussion went on for about 75 minutes. This was followed by response on Ain and Azira's draft. Ain loved to sidetrack while discussing issues related to the drafts and the others had to constantly put her on track. However, she brought a lot of cheer to the group, which contributed to group harmony. Ain and her partner wrote an interesting essay – "The Impact of Reality Programs on Television" because watching reality programs was a popular leisure activity among many teenagers. This discussion went on for about 95 minutes. This group had a good understanding of the accademic writing format.

**Group C.** Farina, Azmina, Shahira and Rozaida made up Group C. This group worked very well together. Farina was the 'think-tank' for the group because she could recognize trouble sources in the drafts. Farina and Azmina wrote on "The Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use" which discussed the reasons people used credit cards and how it affected their lives. Even though they did not have credit cards, they researched the topic thoroughly. This session lasted almost two hours as the participants were engaged in lengthy discussions. However, the second session which discussed Shahira and Rozaida's draft on Teenage Shopaholics lasted only 65 minutes. This pair was not very defensive and agreed to most of the suggestions provided by the responders, thus the shorter duration. Shahira was aware that she did not provide as many suggestions as the other group members because "*I can't see a problem as fast as they could. They can see the problem right away*" (PRI 6).

However, that did not stop her from seeking help from the responders. She asked the group members to define difficult words and constantly asked them to help her with idea elaboration. She also did not hesitate to contribute whenever she could.

**Group D.** Group D comprised Naqiba, Siti, Izuan and Ibrahim. This was the only mixed gender group in this study. This mixed-gender group spent relatively more time on the tasks and were perceived by the other groups as better than the same-gender groups. During the post-revision interview, Naqiba stated that *“the girls are better at identifying sentence and grammar problems, while the boys are good at content, like improving the supporting details”* (PRI 7). Izuan was very jovial while Ibrahim enjoyed being part of the group. However, he was quite sensitive to criticism, especially when references were made to his incorrect usage of the English language. The female pair, Naqiba and Siti, was a good match. Naqiba liked writing. *“I think it is fun to write because I can talk about anything I want”* (PRI 7). Siti loved discussing her ideas although she had some difficulty expressing herself clearly. She took time to formulate her ideas and frequently repeated words when giving opinions. This prevented her from communicating her viewpoints clearly to the group. This pair wrote on “Obesity among Teenagers”, which they felt was becoming a serious problem today. Izuan and Ibrahim were knowledgeable on the topic and contributed effectively during the discussions. This session took almost 100 minutes as the responders were quite thorough. The male pair, Izuan and Ibrahim, wrote on “Pre-Marital Sex among Young Adults”. They felt it was a serious problem affecting the younger generation and needed attention. This session lasted 70 minutes, and many issues were raised. One characteristic of the interaction in this mix gender group was that unrelated statements were often intermingled between the flows of ideas.

**Peer-response group sessions.** All the peer-response sessions functioned well and in the way the participants were trained, in terms of the focus and depth of the discussions. The sessions were mostly focused on the tasks and the participants constantly probed into what their peers had written. They also exhibited positive expectations because they were aware of the benefits of the peer feedback to their revision. They engaged in the collaborative activity of reading, critiquing and providing feedback on each other's drafts, to secure immediate textual improvement and develop a stronger writing competence (Hu, 2005). They also got along well with each other because they chose their writing partners and the pair they preferred to work. This group formation had a positive impact in how the groups functioned. An unsupportive social climate can lead to defensiveness or withdrawal (Nelson & Murphy, 1992).

During the post-revision interviews, the participants commented on the importance of strong rapport within the groups which led to more comments and suggestions. Ibrahim and Izuan said, "*During the training, we got to know each other better, so we were able to give our ideas without feeling shy*" (PRI: S7). However, this contradicts with the findings of Dawes, Mercer and Wegerif (2000), who reported that "friends working together tend to agree with each other's suggestions, without critical consideration" (p. 6) which might affect the quality of the feedback. The participants in this study acknowledged the contribution of the members and frequently gave supportive comments. The researcher's classroom observation entry (CO S5) revealed that there were no evidences of hostility among the members. Everyone participated in the discussions but not in each debate. Overall, the groups were cordial and effective in terms of exploring ideas and giving suggestions.

With this brief understanding of the training, group formation and the peer-response activity, the next section will describe the actual discourse within the groups. What transpired during the peer-response sessions? A close analysis of the interactions that took place within the groups revealed specifically what the participants said to each other and how that discourse functioned. The following section will discuss the findings of the first research question.

**Research Question 1: What transpired in the trained peer-response groups when the ESL student writers responded to the first drafts of their writing task?**

The importance of this research question lies in the rationale for conducting peer-response activities in the ESL writing classroom. Researchers have yet to fully discover the exact characteristics of peer-interactions and their relationships to revision strategies and writing outcomes (Rollinson, 2005). Therefore, to better understand these relationships, it is important to first identify what transpired during the peer-response sessions. This made it possible to determine the source of the changes and revisions. The findings for the first research question are discussed within the framework of the interactive L2 learning theory and examined from the perspective of collaborative learning theory. Similarities and differences between the current findings and previous studies are discussed. The section ends with a summary of the answer to research question one.

To identify the nature of the interactions, the participants were observed and recorded during the peer-response sessions. Behaviours and selective verbatim from their interactions were noted. A close analysis of the interactions revealed specifically what they discussed and how that discourse functioned. This involved close listening of the interactions and identifying the speech events. The interactions

were described per content and function. Content refers to the aspects of the writing which the participants discussed while function refers to how the responders provided feedback and how the writers responded to it. In ESL peer-response, the content of the interaction is a major concern to instructors and researchers. The level of participant involvement was measured in terms of quality, such as talk about text meaning, and in terms of quantity, that is the number of meaning instances of interaction about the drafts.

During the peer-response sessions, each group had the opportunity to interact and discuss their drafts. No time limit was set, and participants were free to end the session when they had completed the task. The researcher did not intervene in any of these sessions. Various activities took place and most of them corresponded to the peer-response training provided beforehand (CO S3). The participants had a clear understanding of what they had to accomplish and the researcher's field-notes (FN 2) revealed that all of them were willing participants. This, per Liu and Hansen (2002), is an important prerequisite. As reported by Brown (2001), the participants in this study focused on what they liked most about the writing, the main ideas and the purpose of the essay. The responders paid attention to the details which the writers used and provided suggestions on how to make them more convincing. Most responders could identify areas in the drafts that seemed unclear and gave suggestions on how to revise them.

Peer interactions in the context of this study refer to how the participants provided and received feedback. From a cognitive perspective, peer-interaction refers to conversational exchanges in which communication breakdowns trigger negotiation for meaning (Gass, 2003). As stated by Adams (2007), when ESL student-writers interact with one another, they tend to engage in negotiations, which benefited their

L2 development. They also self-correct while interacting with their peers (Sato, 2007). This helps the student-writers to build declarative knowledge and develop procedural strategies to improve their own writing (Launspach, 2008). Hence, peer-interaction provides optimal conditions for language development. The participants also exercised the language knowledge they already had and gained new knowledge of the target language demonstrated by the more capable peers (Gass & Mackey, 2006). The different attitudes which they exhibited reflected their linguistic abilities, content-based knowledge and personal experiences. As reported by Rollinson (2005), this enabled the participants to offer their peers constructive feedback for draft revision.

Data from the researcher's field-notes and classroom observations also revealed that the interactions involved several discourse moves. The student-writers talked about their drafts, clarified ideas and considered new perspectives. They also provided alternatives to think of different ways to improve their drafts. Whether it involved clarifying confusions, asking questions, paraphrasing sentences or directing the writers to specific revision, these moves were the core of the trained peer-response sessions. While attempting to help the peers improve their drafts, the responders utilized these discourse moves to convey their intentions clearly and meaningfully. The following sections discuss the three moves during the peer-response sessions: establishing the session, maintaining the session and ending the session.

**Establishing the peer response session.** A well-established peer-response session is important for effective interaction and collaboration. It is one in which all members have a chance to speak, express their ideas and feelings freely. The group members should feel safe to test their ideas as well as receive and respond to

constructive criticism. The feedback could be positive, negative, clarifying or correcting information. The participants were made aware during the training that all arguments must be based on the content of ideas and opinions, not on personalities. Even in disagreement, there must be an understanding that the group is working together to help identify problems in the drafts and find ways for improvement.

All four peer-response groups started the sessions in a friendly and cordial manner. They were comfortable and eager to participate in the activity. The following excerpt is an example of how a typical peer-response session was established:

- W1: *Hi everyone!*  
R2: *Hi. So, you and your partner are ready?*  
W1: *Oh, yes. We are ready. What about you guys?*  
R1: *Okay, we have read your draft. So, we can talk about it.*  
W2: *Oh, good. We have also read your draft. I brought some sweets for us.*  
R1: *(Laughter) Because our draft is on obesity! And we brought some water. So, can we start?*  
(PR Session 7: Obesity among Children)

The participants in this excerpt established the session in a very jovial manner (CO S3). They talked about the peer-response activity, like clarifying instructions, establishing turns, assigning responsibilities and making decisions on how to carry on with the task. The responders and writers participated in establishing the group discussion. They started by creating group rapport, reading to gain focus, taking notes, referring to the peer-evaluation checklist and guiding the discussion.

***Creating group rapport.*** Group rapport determines the success of the peer-response group activity. ESL students who are accustomed to a teacher-fronted classroom may feel uncomfortable working with peers in a student-centred environment. They may even resist the peer-response activity. This may prevent development of advanced critical evaluation skills associated with peer-response (Braine, 2003). Therefore, the participants were specifically trained to allow free-



flowing interactions in an environment in which they contributed and felt empowered to make decisions. Ideally, peer-response group members should have diverse perspectives and experiences, similar academic abilities and at least one member with leadership skills to serve as a mediator and keep the group on task (Tseng & Tsai, 2006). Classroom observation (CO S8) revealed that despite some initial hesitations, the participants grew comfortable with the peer-response activity. It was informed during the training that the main goal was to find ways to improve the drafts and not judge writing abilities.

The participants also made use of affective language or statements reflecting emotions, which enhanced the interactions. Praise, an important element that was stressed during the training, was commonly included while providing feedback. For example, the responders would start by saying *“Your essay on suicide among teenagers is really interesting”* (CO: S3). In yet another episode, this took place: *“You guys provided a lot of statistics to support your claim. Very good”* (CO: S7). As stated by Tseng and Tsai (2006), praise enhanced interactions and flow of ideas. In all the peer-response sessions, the responders began the session by praising the writers on some aspects of the draft being discussed.

Praise also assured the writers that the responders were impressed with their draft. The responders made use of the “sandwich feedback approach” when commenting on the drafts. Positive statements were used to buffer a negative feedback that was to follow such as *“Your first paragraph was good. It got us interested right away. The only thing we are not happy is your thesis statement”* (PR Session 2). This softened the tone of criticism and made the proposed comments more acceptable. The responders not only provided verbal comments but also expressed their reactions through gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions and

overall body language (CO: S6). Zhang (2008) stated that participants in peer-response groups take note of what the group members say and observe their body language.

The participants also saw their friendship leading to positive group environment. Amira from Group A said, *"I think what made our group active was that we are all good friends and we wanted all of us to get good marks for this assignment."* Her writing partner Aqila added, *"We were honest with our comments and I think that made our discussions better"* (Session 1: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction). The friendship enabled the groups to get started right away and sincere with their comments, which were always in the best interest of the peers.

In the following Group A episode, the participants started the discussion by creating the rapport before discussing the draft written by W1: Hanieza and W2: Umami while R1: Amira and R2: Aqila were the responders. They created the rapport by discussing the writers' decision to choose the topic.

- W1: *Umami and I wrote on the causes of early marriages in Malaysia.*  
R2: *Yes, very nice topic.*  
R1: *I liked it too. Why did you decide on this topic?*  
W2: *Sir (instructor) told to write on current issues. We read in the newspaper about a young couple getting married in Kelantan. So, we became interested in the topic.*  
R2: *Okay, that's good. What about the points?*  
W2: *We got some from newspaper articles and some from the internet. Sir (instructor) said okay.*  
R1: *Did you discuss the topic with anyone else?*  
W1: *Yes, we talked about it to some of our friends whose friends are already married.*  
R2: *Really! When did they get married?*  
W1: *After SPM. Already have a baby now.*  
R1: *Really...*  
(PR Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

The tone of the feedback was positive, and the comments were explicit. They highlighted what was good and what needed to be revised. Since they got along well, a feeling of trust developed within the group. Trust is essential successful peer-

response groups (Brice, 2002; Dossin, 2003) because when the relationship was cordial, more attention was spent on issues related to the drafts instead of other trivial matters.

Good rapport is also important in peer-response. Shahira and Rozaida from Group C had this to add on the importance of group rapport: *"We must be comfortable with the other pair before we can start to discuss the draft. If not, we will not be able to talk nicely and give good ideas"* (PRI 5). There were also instances of mitigating language used by some of the participants. The use of mitigating language during feedback increased the writers' agreement to the comments made by the responders (Tseng & Tsai, 2006). Analysis of the peer-response transcripts showed that groups that managed to develop a good rapport had a fruitful session compared to those that did not. This, according to Brooks and Donato (1994) is essential in verbal interactions because it enables learners to define the situation, set goals and share orientation throughout the task.

Furthermore, group rapport had an impact on the operation of the group as well as on the quality of the feedback that the participants provided. When the group members got along well, they were comfortable in giving feedback and getting their points across. Even though they were not familiar with the group member's style of writing, they were comfortable enough to offer and accept criticism. Some participants described their peer-response experience as fun and beneficial because they could joke and laugh as they discovered, recognized and corrected each other's mistakes. Thus, the responses were honest, detailed and valuable to the revision process. After establishing the group rapport, the participants concentrated on the drafts.

**Reading to gain focus.** Another important activity that transpired during the peer-response sessions was the participants read the drafts aloud before starting the discussion. The writing pairs read aloud the paragraph which they were going to discuss. According to Bruffee (1993), reading aloud turns writing into face-to-face conversation. This involved silent reading, reading aloud, rereading parts of the draft before and after corrections and occasionally reading instructions and guidelines on the checklist to emphasize a point. The participants found it useful because they could see clearly where their writing had gone wrong. In the following example, Group C started the discussion with the responders requesting the writers to read aloud the draft:

- R2: *Come, let's get started. Shall we discuss paragraph by paragraph?*  
R1: *Yes, that's a good idea. We did that way during the training. Can one of you read the first paragraph?*  
R2: *Yes, in that way we can know what we are talking about. I can't remember what I read in your draft.*  
W1: *Okay, I'll read the first paragraph. (Farina reads the introductory paragraph)*  
(PR Session 5: Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use)

In all the groups, no participant was assigned to do the reading. Either partner read, sometimes taking turns to do so or both read the draft together. Such activities were also reported in other studies (Liu & Hansen, 2002) on peer-response in ESL writing. Hanieza from Group A, pointed out: *"Even though we had read the draft before, reading it aloud before starting the discussion was helpful because we knew what we were talking about"*. Naqiba from Group D, added *"Reading aloud before the discussion made us remember what we wanted to say about the draft"*. The student-writers also found reading their drafts aloud enabled them to spot mistakes which they were not aware of while writing. Izuan and Ibrahim from Group D said: *"When they were reading our draft, we noticed some mistakes which we did not see earlier"*. Reading aloud also occurred when the responders located trouble-sources or

sensed dissonance in the drafts or when both the responders and the writers used the written draft to support a point, respond to a criticism and make suggestions or justifications. Thus, reading the drafts aloud enabled the student-writers to do what they cannot effectively do by themselves. This is demonstrated in the following example:

- R1: *Can you read your thesis statement again?*  
W1: *Why?*  
R1: *I think there's something wrong in your thesis statement.*  
W1: *Okay, okay, (reading aloud) Teenagers commit suicide because of relationship problems,*  
R1: *Stop! Stop! Here, the relationship problems ... What kind of relationship are you talking about?*  
R2: *Relationship problems with family or friends or like couple problem?*  
W2: *Oh, we wanted to write about all types of relationship problems. Here, we explained in the next paragraph ...*  
R2: *I think you should mention that clearly in the thesis statement.*  
(PR Session 3: Suicide among Teenagers)

In this episode, the writers made a general statement in the thesis statement - one of the causes of suicide among teenagers is relationship problems. After reading, the responders told the writers to be more specific by mentioning the type of relationship - *"usually they commit suicide when they have relationship problems with their lovers"*. This led to a ten-minute discussion about the lack of clarity in the thesis-statement and the responders suggested a possible correction.

Reading aloud and commenting on the peers' drafts also served as a model for the responders on how to read the draft through the eyes of the writers. It taught them to read their own drafts from the perspective of an audience and systematically examine their own drafts for revision. Responding to peers' drafts created self-reviewers who were capable of effectively identifying problem areas that need to be revised (Rollinson, 2005). Izuan and Ibrahim's comments represent a typical response to the benefits of reading the drafts: *"When they read aloud our drafts during the peer-response activity, we were able to identify our mistakes. However,*

*when we reread our own draft, we couldn't see any problems (PRI 8).* Tyson (2000) also reported that reading the peers' drafts aloud before the peer-response session was very useful. The initial reading aloud of the draft was extremely important because it initiated revision and provided the writers with a sense of audience. The occasional silent reading of the draft indicated that the responders needed to interact with the draft before responding to the draft.

***Taking notes and referring to peer-evaluation checklist.*** Writing notes and checking the Peer Evaluation Checklist was another regular feature during the initial stages of the peer-response activity. The participants made written comments of the peer feedback to have a written record. Otherwise, much of the suggestions would be forgotten. These included evaluative judgments, opinions and reminders of what to do during the revision, such as adding, deleting or modifying. Some comments were very specific like *"Change this part to past tense"* while others were more general such as *"Make this part clearer"* or *"Add more examples for this point"*. The Peer Evaluation Checklist was used to guide the discussions. In this study, the checklist was designed to ensure that the drafts complied with the writing prompt, the standards for the rhetorical pattern being reviewed and APA requirements such as titles, in-text citations and references. During the early stages of the peer-response sessions, the participants were quite dependent on the peer-evaluation checklist for guidance.

R1: *I like your topic. Early marriages. Nice.*

W2: *Thank you. We wanted to discuss a current issue. Newspapers always talking about this young couple in Kelantan.*

W1: *They stop schooling to get married.*

R2: *Okay. But look at number 1 (pointing to item 1 in peer evaluation checklist and reads aloud) Does the writing hold the readers' interest?*

R1: *I think it's okay. They talked about the early marriage case in Kelantan.*

R2: *Yes, but only one case. I think you must say something more interesting.*

W2: *Like what?*

R2: *May be ...in other states? Johor, Melaka ...?*

(Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

However, during the training, the participants were told that they were free to decide on how their discussion sessions would be and were not obligated to follow the checklist rigidly. Interestingly, most of the participants used the checklist as a guide for the discussions.

The checklist also played an important role to establish the discussions. The participants came for the peer-response activity with a very clear sense of what they to do. There were no hesitations in starting the peer-response sessions. One writing pair, Amira and Aqila said: *"We read their draft and made our comments on the checklist. So it was easier for us to comment during the peer-response activity"* (PRI 1). The participants immediately started talking about the overall impression of the draft, which was the first item on the checklist. Another reason for the smooth start was that the participants had already experienced the peer-response activity during the training.

It was also observed that when reading their drafts aloud, the participants paused to note problems of form, clarity and vocabulary. This was important for revision purposes. Azira, pointed out, *"If we don't write down the feedback, we will forget. Then we cannot do the revision"* (PRI 4). The other group members were also seen marking on the draft where a suggestion made was negotiated and accepted. Referring to the checklist took place at various points as the responders used the questions as prompts to begin and maintain the discussion.

***Guiding the discussion.*** A clear pattern of turn-taking emerged in all the groups. One of the responders would start the interaction while the writers listened.

Then the second responder would speak, with the writing pair listening. There were also instances before one participant could say something; the others had already started giving their opinions. Shahira from Group C related her experience: *“Sometimes I am only trying to think of some suggestions and when I’m about to say it, the others have already started talking about it.”* As can be seen in the example below, before W1 (Shahira) could give the reason for not writing about shopaholic adults, her partner (W2) Rozaida, started giving her opinion.

- R1: *Your essay is on shopaholics. Why did you focus on teenagers?*  
 R2: *Ya, teenagers do not have money. Why didn’t you write about adults?*  
 W1: *Well, we actually ...*  
 W2: *We wanted to talk about teenagers who misuse their PTPTN and also borrow money to go shopping.*  
 W1: *Yes, they also involve in bad activities to get money ...*  
 W2: *Some of them are involved in sex to get the money for shopping.*  
 R1: *Mmmm ..., ya, I have heard about that.*  
 (PR Session 6: Teenage Shopaholics)

Nevertheless, minor instances like this did not hinder the flow of the discussions. Participants were trained on the importance of social norms for the success of the peer-response activity. The groups that engaged in multi-speaker pattern had more feedback compared to the one-speaker-at-a-time groups. Their overlapping interactions produced very rich responses. The participants were more engaged, and the responses were more detailed. Interactions with multiple speakers overlapping their opinions and collaboratively building on the ideas were rampant in many of the episodes. The responders not only interacted with the writers through their response, they also defended the ideas of their fellow responders. Sometimes, one responder supported another, more than just agreeing with the first responder.

The combination for collaboration in the four-member groups were responder with responder, writer with writer, responder with writer and all four together. At times, both the responders would work together to ask for explanations, make



criticisms or develop suggestions. In a typical episode, one responder would locate a problem and the other responder would provide suggestions for correction. These would be challenged by the writers and counter-challenged by the responders. Brice (2002) described this as deliberative discourse, where the participants interact within the group in a generative manner. An example of such a multi-speaker conversation is seen in the following excerpt, when Naqiba and Siti responded to Izuan and Ibrahim's draft on the causes of pre-marital sex among young adults.

- R1: Your first reason for pre-marital sex among teenagers is parents are busy.*  
*W1: Young adults, not teenagers.*  
*R1: Oh, sorry. Young adults... Now, how are parents involved in this problem?*  
*R2: Ya, why just blame the parents?*  
*W2: Parents are busy working. So don't spend time with children.*  
*R1: But you said young adults. How old?*  
*W1: Like we all la... about 20?*  
*R2: So you always want your parents to look after you?*  
*W2: No la. What we say is parents are busy. Father working. Mother working. Come home late.*  
*R2: So they do sex?*  
*W1: Confusing la. What you all suggest?*  
*R1: You must explain what happens when parents are busy. Like not enough love and care.*  
*R2: Yes. Children can go out ...when they like. Mix with wrong group.*  
*W2: No religious education at home.*  
*W1: and parents give so much money to them.*  
*R1: Yes, must explain like that. Baru best.*  
 (Session 8: Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults)

This episode is a typical example of the turn taking pattern involving the responders and writers. The group got along well and focused on the task. The writers were very open to the comments and were not overly defensive. The issues raised were responded with explanations, proposing changes and accepting suggestions. The writers understood the need to write for an audience and revise the draft when the intentions were not met. The writers and responders clearly understood this responsibility and retained text ownership.

The term collaboration refers to the interaction when the group members worked together to achieve draft improvement. Non-collaborative interventions are characterized by an authoritative attitude or resistance to collaboration. Non-collaborative interventions happen when the responders controlled the discussion and imposed their views on the writers which resulted in a struggle for control, especially when the writers were equally authoritative. Resistance to collaboration also occurred when the responders and writers demonstrated passive behaviours like unwillingness to participate in the revision process. Feedback by multiple responders is instrumental in stimulating revision because peers interacting in a cooperative manner generate more feedback.

This initial examination of the speech events provided a first glimpse into how the participants in this study interacted with each other to establish the peer-response session. Cragan, Kasch and Shields (2009) refer to this phase of the discussion as the orientation stage which helps the groups create the environment for the peer-response session. It also enables the groups to familiarize themselves to the task. The following section will provide a discussion on how the participants managed the peer-response group activity.

**Developing the peer-response discussion.** How did the participants address the bigger task of the peer-response activity? Some writing pairs went through the drafts in a systematic way, starting from the introduction, moving down to the conclusion. This involved reading and revising sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. Other groups focused on discrete points within the draft which they had read prior to the peer-response session. Even though the approach varied, the participants generally developed the discussions in the following ways: identifying

trouble-sources, asking questions, explaining and restating, offering solutions, managing disputes, staying focused, switching roles, bringing in outside voice and dealing with grammatical issues.

While establishing the peer-response sessions, the comments were general and positive. Then, the responders gradually included criticisms on both content and form. When the actual discussion gained momentum, the writers became more defensive of the criticisms and justified what they wrote. They also clarified their ideas so that the responders understood them. The writers also responded to the suggestions offered by accepting, rejecting, explaining or justifying them. They also put forward counter-suggestions for revision and engaged the group in a discussion. They made use of the peer-response session to explain what they really wanted to say and defended their ideas.

At times, the writers provided further information about their intended meaning in the draft such as “*We wrote about Facebook Addiction*” or “*The title of our essay is ...*”. Before the responders asked a more specific question or provided a suggestion, they tried to engage the writers in a discussion which created collaborative learning opportunities. The initial interaction about the draft led to a longer exchange on the lack of clarity in the thesis, and the responders making suggestions to the writers about how they believed the thesis should be written. Whether it was a short exchange, involved a couple of sentences or a longer discussion, each of these exchanges functioned as a speech event, to be referred to as episodes. The following sections will offer an insight into how the groups developed the peer-response session.

***Identifying and dealing with trouble-sources.*** After establishing the peer-response session, the responders started making evaluative comments to draw the

writers' attention and have them think about the issues raised and come up with responses. First, the groups focused on the organizational patterns of the drafts which was stressed during the training. Discussions on organization involved the location of the thesis statement, the order of paragraphs according to the items in the thesis statement and the conclusion. The following example shows how the participants dealt with this aspect:

*R1: Your essay on the "The Impact of Reality Shows on Television" is interesting. However, I think the attention getting device in the introductory paragraph is not suitable.*

*W2: Why do you say that?*

*R1: You didn't show how serious the problem is and your example of reality show .... is not suitable.*

*R2: Remember, Sir (instructor) said the problem must be stated clearly in the first paragraph and it must be from general to specific.*

(PR Session 4: The Impact of Reality Shows on Television)

After addressing the organizational issues, the responders focused on other aspects of the drafts by localizing the problems to the writers. Localization in the context of this study refers to pinpointing the exact location of the problem in the draft. Localization is particularly relevant when there are many parts in the draft where problems occur. When the feedback included the location of the problem and a solution provided, the writers were more likely to implement the feedback.

As the peer-response session progressed, the writers were constantly confronted by the responders' who had problems in understanding some parts of the draft. They alerted the writers to trouble-sources in the draft where the writers' intentions were not clearly met or where there was a breakdown in communication. Trouble-sources are also parts of the draft which student-writers choose to discuss because they have problem understanding (Nystrand, 1986). They are perceived as errors or defects in the drafts such as errors related to grammar, mechanics and other concerns such as organization and content. Matsumura (2002) stated that identifying

the problem explicitly to the writers may increase feedback implementation. If the problem was not explicitly stated, the writers may not know how to revise them. A typical episode involving localizing is provided below:

R1: *Look at this sentence (reads aloud): Some teenagers are involved in pre-marital sex because of peer pressure. According to a study, they are easily influenced by their friends and the mediamassa.*

W1: *Yes. That is our second point.*

R1: *Which one is your topic sentence?*

W2: *(reads aloud) Some teenagers are involved in pre-marital sex because of peer pressure.*

R1: *Then why did you add media massa?*

R2: *That's Malay. Must be mass media.*

R1: *Mmmm... Yes, that's a Malay word. I didn't see that. And you shouldn't have two ideas in your topic sentence.*

(Session 8: Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults)

Before making appropriate revision to the drafts, the participants were able to sense the dissonance between their intended meaning and what they expressed in their writing. Verbal instructions such as *"Look at this sentence..."*, *"Take a look at this ..."* or *"This sentence in the first paragraph ..."* were used to pinpoint unclear aspects of the drafts and draw the writers' attention to problems. Furthermore, when the responders pointed out the exact location of a problem in the draft, the writers could focus on problems that may have been overlooked during the writing stage. Izuan from Group D, said: *"When they just told us that there were some problems in our second paragraph, we didn't know what they were. But when they pointed it to us, we knew exactly where and what the problems were"* (PRI 8). The responders' confusion was mostly caused by poor organization and explanation of ideas in the drafts. Much time was spent discussing these two aspects of the writing.

Paulson, Alexander and Armstrong (2007) reported that ESL learners were usually tentative in their feedback because they lacked confidence. However, the participants in this study could identify trouble-sources in the drafts that offered feedback potential. Such findings were also reported by Matsumura (2002). Since the

participants in this study were trained to convey their ideas explicitly during the peer-response sessions, their comments and suggestions were clearly understood by the writers, who either accepted them or challenged the feedback and justified their stand. Moreover, proper identification of trouble-sources increased feedback implementation. In contrast, if the problem was not explicitly stated by the responders, the writers may not understand the issue, and this would affect revision. It was also observed that long discussions or debates related to trouble-sources were always filled with challenges and counter-challenges. In the end the groups arrived at new ideas to be used in the revision of the drafts. The following excerpt shows how participants dealt with trouble-sources:

R2: *We see a problem here ...*  
W1: *Oh ... where ...*  
R2: *You said your essay is ... problem solution, right ...*  
W1: *Yes, yes ... problem solution ... problem is teenage shopaholics ... and how to solve*  
R2: *You say here ... this problem affects teenagers mentally ... that is the first problem ...*  
W1: *Yes ... cannot study ... like that la ...*  
R1: *But the solution ... what solution you gave ...*  
W1: *mmmm (pause) mana? (where)*  
W2: *This one ... However, this matter can be solved by parents giving more attention to their children ...*  
R2: *Is that a solution to that problem ... what can the parents do ...*  
R1: *Yes, sir said the problem and the solution must be related ...*  
W1: *Ya tak ya jugak ... (I agree) (laughter) ...*  
R2: *We think it is better to change la ...*  
R1: *Like see a counsellor, or ... apalagi (what else) ...*  
W2: *Yes ... they see counsellor to solve the problem ...*  
W1: *Ya, better ...*  
(PR Session 6: Teenage Shopaholics)

This episode transpired the way the participants were trained to respond to the first drafts. The responders stated explicitly what they liked and disliked by carefully organizing each of their negative comments with something positive. They gave the writers encouragement by telling them what needed to be improved and why. Although the suggestions were all relevant and conveyed with a directness that

suggested authority, the responders were careful to point out that the suggestions were their personal opinions such as “*we think it is better to change la*”. They were straightforward but polite and spoke with authority and humility. They provided feedback on content and form without overwhelming the writers with too many comments. However, some participants were not thorough and missed out a few typo and grammatical errors. In some sessions, the responders pointed out some problems in the draft without giving feasible suggestions to the writers for revision. In other cases, the responders had a rough idea that something was wrong in the paragraph but were unable to point out exactly where the problem was and how to revise the errors. They just provided vague and general comments. In the following episode, the responders were unable to offer concrete suggestions to the writers and explain how to correct it. This could have a negative effect on the revision.

- R1: *Here, look at this sentence ... (reads aloud) Some parents married their children early because they are scared of premarital sex.*  
W1: *Yes, that is one reason for early marriage. Why?*  
R1: *I know. But the sentence ... something wrong la ...*  
R2: *Ya, like parents marry their children ... funny ... how to say it?*  
(PR Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

In this case, the responders pointed out that something was wrong with the sentence even though they were unsure whether the problem was in sentence structure or usage. The responders’ inability to offer suggestion can be attributed to their lack of language proficiency. This example indicates that even though the responders could identify the problem, they must have sufficient language proficiency to provide useful suggestions. Wooley, et al. (2008), stated that student-writers must be trained to detect problems in the draft and provide solutions for revision for greater learning benefits in peer-response.

When unable to solve the problem, the student-writers either abandoned it or asked for outside help, such as consulting with another group or the instructor. In some cases, they deliberately ignored revising the trouble-source. Assessing and dealing with the trouble-sources sometimes resulted in composing new sentences or missing parts, such as a conclusion or supporting paragraph. Quite interestingly, some responders provided content in Malay while the writers translated the suggestions for revision into English as they made notes.

***Questions, explanations and restatement.*** While discussing the trouble-sources in the drafts, the responders and writers frequently asked questions, offered explanations and at times restated something that was mentioned earlier. This discourse move was regularly used when the responders wanted clarifications and confirmations. Explanations provided further clarifications for feedback and as the complexity of the task increased, explanations became more necessary. For example, when the responders simply suggested, “*Delete the second sentence in this paragraph*”, the writers did not accept it because they did not know why it was necessary. However, when the responders explained that the sentence interrupted the flow of ideas in the paragraph, the writers agreed to implement the change. Feedback that included explanations had a better chance of being implemented into the revision. In the following excerpt, the participants employed this technique:

R1: *Look at this sentence in paragraph one. (Reading aloud) “Reality shows cause a lot of people to spend a lot of money. It is like gambling”. Why do you say it is like gambling?*

R2: *Ya, I don’t understand. Is it gambling?*

W2: *Oh, sometimes there is SMS competition. If you send many SMS you have more chance to win the prize.*

W1: *They have grand prize, like an expensive car.*

R2: *Okay, I understand. But how can it become gambling?*

R1: *It’s just participating in a competition. Not gambling!*

(PR Session 4: The Impact of Reality Programs on Television)



In this example, the responders asked the writers questions to better understand the meaning of an aspect of the draft. Questions increased the student-writers' awareness that a problem existed but were not sure how to revise it (Ferris, 1997). The writers sometimes asked questions to elicit solutions to specific problems in their own drafts to get further explanation or what was unclear to them. This was either an explicit question or a statement saying that something was not clear.

W1: *What do you mean competition? They spend money SMSing to win the car prize. Isn't that gambling?*

R2: *I don't think so.*

R2: *If it is gambling, surely the government will ban the program. Do you understand what we are trying to say?*

The responders, on the other hand, asked the writers if they understood the meaning of a comment, question or suggestion, like "*Do you understand what we are trying to say?*" Understanding is the ability to know the meaning or cause of something. It is important for draft revision because without proper understanding, the writers could not incorporate the suggestions into their revision. Moreover, the student-writers constantly asked each other if they understood what was discussed for comprehension check. Understanding influenced problem solving and the decision to implement a suggestion. Therefore, increased understanding raised the likelihood of implementing the feedback during revision.

Asking questions also increased the student-writers' awareness that a problem may exist, but they were not sure how to revise it (Ferris, 1997). In response to the questions, the writers would explain the meaning of a sentence or an idea that was not clear to the responders. In this study, the responders frequently explained why they thought an idea or a sentence was clear, unclear, relevant or irrelevant and why it should or should not be revised. Statements like "*I think you have to add more details here because the idea is not very clear*" achieved the purpose. Writers also

explained why they thought the content should or should not be revised. *"We have already given an example here. We feel it is enough. We do not want the essay to be too long"*. This is useful because ESL student-writers generally do not elaborate the ideas in their drafts. They take it for granted that their audience will understand what they are trying to convey.

Restatement of ideas occurred frequently during the peer-response sessions. The responders and writers restated what had been written or said to show that they understood or had read their peers' drafts. They summarized or rephrased the original sentence. *"You guys mentioned in the topic sentence that unhealthy eating habits are the main cause of obesity among children"*. This restatement was either an explicit description or just a statement repeating the sentence, the content or the organization of the essay. Sometimes the restatement was done to praise the writers. *"You guys have discussed a lot about the unhealthy eating habits and even provided examples. That's very clear and nice. Good"*.

Apart from restatement, suggestions were also made to revise the content. The responders suggested ways to improve the content, like giving examples or adding details. *"You said sitting on the sofa and watching TV for a long time also causes obesity. You guys can also say that the kids eat while they watch TV. They usually eat junk food"*. Suggestions were also made for revising the organization. *"However, there's no restatement of the TS (Thesis Statement) in the last paragraph. You must include that, I think"*. There were also instances when suggestions were made to revising sentence structure. The following episode depicts these moves. The draft "Teenage Shopaholics" written by Shahira (W1) and Rozaida (W2) underwent some thorough scrutiny by the responders Farina (R1) and Azmina (R2) during the following episode.

R1: *Your first point – Teenagers become shopaholics due to peer influence. What do you mean?* [Questioning]

W2: *They are influenced by friends. When their friends go shopping, they also want to go.* [Explaining]

R2: *But, if they have no money?* [Questioning]

W1: *That is the problem. When they have no money, they borrow or sometimes steal. So it is a problem.*

R2: *Okay, now I see your point.*

R1: *What about the examples? Not very clear la...*

W2: *Which one?*

R1: *Here, you say they borrow money from their parents or friends.* [Restatement] *Is that an example?*

W2: *Oh ... What do you think?* [Questioning]

R2: *Your example must be strong, like mmm ... Take from a newspaper article. I remember a young boy stole money from his grandmother to buy new shoes.* [Explaining]

W1: *Okay, that's interesting.*

R1: *And also another Form 5 girl takes money from Form 3 students.*

W2: *Really!*

R1: *Yes, was in the newspaper.*

W1: *Oh, thank you. So we put the examples like teenagers borrow money, steal or even ... what is that ... perasugut (extort)* [Restatement]

R2: *(Checking dictionary) Extort money ... from other students.*

(PR Session 6: Teenage Shopaholics)

The questioning and explaining done during this episode enabled the writers to understand the reason teenagers become shopaholics. The understanding would be beneficial during revision. At times, when a responder asked: *“Do you know what I mean?”* the writers did not always seem confident when they said: *“Yes.”* The responders sensed their uncertainty and rephrased the explanation to improve understanding.

Most of the episodes were dominated by questions by the responders and responses from the writers. This desire to understand the intended meaning of the drafts displayed the importance placed by the participants on clarity of meaning. As reported by Jacobs (1998), peer-response encouraged collaborative learning and provided opportunities for the student-writers to receive support from their peers. These examples are representative for many similar feedbacks that the responders

offered to the writers. However, some responders gave surface error feedback as these were easily spotted compared to textual change.

**Offering solutions.** A solution is a suggestion to address a problem in the draft. Once a problem in the draft was identified and the writers were convinced, the responders offered solutions for revision. Agreement occurred when the suggested solution matched the writers' belief that it would improve their draft. Increased understanding and agreement increased feedback implementation during revision. Solutions provided during peer-response sessions helped to improve writing performance (Sugita, 2006). Therefore, participants should understand the problem, understand the solution, agree with the problem and agree with the solution for successful revision. The following episodes clearly show these three moves. Group A discussed the draft 'Causes and Effects of Early Marriages' written Hanieza (W1) and Ummi (W2). Amira (R1) and Aqila (R2) were the responders.

R2: *You guys are actually discussing the causes and effects of early marriages.*

W2: *Ya la.*

R1: *Sorry, just want to confirm.*

R2: *I think your points are mixed up.*

W2: *What? Mix up!*

R2: *Here! In this paragraph, you are talking about child marriage. That's not your topic. (Localization)*

R1: *Yes, this is confusing. Suddenly talk about children forced to get married. You must only talk about early marriage, like getting married after SPM. Seventeen or eighteen years old.*

W1: *Oh, yes ... mistake.*

W2: *What to do now?*

R2: *Take out this paragraph. Put new effect of early marriage – like not enough money or not ready to have baby. (Offering Solution)*

W2: *Not ready to have baby is better. We take that point. (Agreement to Feedback)*

(PR Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

This group was effective in terms of exploring ideas and offering solutions. The responders made their proposals understood by the writers so that they can be

utilized in the revision. After pointing out the problems in the drafts, the responders directed specific solutions for the writers' revision process. When student-writers collaborate to solve a problem, they achieve inter-subjectivity (Wells & Wells, 1992). Compared to the other discourse moves, revision directions were more specific because the responders pointed to very specific parts of the draft and urged them to make specific changes. Suggestions like *"Maybe you guys should add another paragraph here to explain the effect of Facebook addiction on academic performance"* (Group A. Session 1) functioned to strengthen content and argument. Thus, understanding the problem and agreement to the solution can increase the amount of feedback implemented because understanding and agreement connected the identified problems and provided solutions. The following episode displays these four moves: understanding the problem, understanding the solution, agreement with the problem, and agreement with the solution. Amira (W1) and Aqila (W2) who wrote the draft received feedback from Hanieza (R1) and Ummmi (R2). All four were on Facebook but claimed they were not addicted to it.

W2: *Okay, what about the causes, any comments?*

R2: *Ya, your second cause, Facebook addiction is caused by the attraction of the Facebook itself. You talk about easy access to Facebook because Wifi is available everywhere.*

R1: *We feel that is not a good supporting detail. Like ... that's not the attraction la ...*

W1: *But if no Wifi, people cannot use Facebook, cannot check status ...*

R2: *But the attraction must be the Facebook ...*

W2: *Like what ...*

R2: *Like can upload pictures, share video, music ... macam to la (something like that)*

W1: *I see you point. What you think Qila?*

W2: *Okay, we change that.*

R2: *Ya, we think it will be better.*

(PR Session 1: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction)

The responders urged the writers to change the supporting details which to them were not appropriate and the writers agreed. The responders were very specific when they said, “*Your second cause ...*” This enabled the writers to know exactly where the problem was in the draft. Initially, they were reluctant to accept the solution but after some clarification, the writers agreed to make the change. Thus, the possibility of incorporating feedback was greater when the responders directed the revision suggestions.

The participants offered both global and local level solutions. Global issues involved organization and content. Local-level issues involved word-level problems, punctuation, sentence-level problems such as connecting two sentences into one and writing conventions (Min, 2006). Lack of form-related meaning negotiations were due to several factors. Some participants felt that grammar-related errors did not affect understanding of draft meaning. Farina and Azmina said: “*We did not focus on grammar mistakes because we could understand the draft when we read it*” (PRI 6). These participants did not have sufficient language proficiency to identify and correct grammatical errors. The ability to notice and correct errors is a difficult task for ESL learners (Williams, 2001). In the following episode, the writers benefited from “global-level” suggestions:

- R2: *Look at this sentence ... (reading from draft) “These young girls who are married early do not have fond memories of their teenage years”. What do you mean by this?*
- R1: *Yup ... not clear. I cannot understand also ... what are you guys trying to say ... huh ...*
- W1: *... because the girls get married when they are very young, they cannot enjoy life with their friends ... / okay ... okay, you imagine you are married now (laughter) ..*
- W2: *...kan dah kahwin (aren't you married) (laughter) okay, okay .. I must speak in English ... because they marry early, they cannot play with their friends anymore ... they have family ... many children ... how to play ... (laughter)*
- W1: *serious sikit la ... (come on, be serious)*

- R1: *okay... okay ... I see your point ... but your sentence here is not clear la ...*
- W1: *... so, what to do now ... (laughter)*
- W2: *Help la ... want to ask sir, tak?*
- R2: *Kan sir dah kata ... (the lecturer has told us) try to solve your own problems first ...*
- W1: *... how to solve?*
- R1: *not sure ... mmm ... okay, okay ... listen to this ... “Since these girls marry at a young age, they cannot enjoy life with their friends. Then you give example la ...*
- R2: *Ya, they cannot go for ... movies, shopping with their friends ... because they have to take care of the husband and children ...*
- (PR Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

This example shows negotiation of meaning during the interaction. The responders advised the writers to restructure an unclear sentence in the draft. Initially the responders had difficulty understanding the sentence and provided suggestions on how to improve it. The writers were clearly writing for the audience, as required by the process writing approach. Such episodes featured prominently during all the peer response sessions.

From these episodes, several conclusions can be drawn. The participants offered a lot of suggestions and solutions, while still incorporating local-level and global-level feedback. The suggestions were largely interactive and most of them were negotiated. They also sought to build meaning and clarified misunderstandings.

**Managing disputes.** Peer-response groups are an opportunity for social interactions that can support and inspire, but these social interactions are also openings for conflict (Lensmire, 2000). The interactions during the peer-response sessions in this study were not always smooth flowing. There were disagreements, passivity, authoritativeness and some minor unproductive behaviours displayed by the participants. During such disputes, there were disagreement and individual decision making either by the responders or the writers. Fewer attempts were made to offer constructive suggestions for draft revision because some participants were

more interested in displaying knowledge and differences of opinions were not resolved amicably. In fact, some participants were defensive, and the more proficient ones strived for control. Fortunately, these disputes were handled well by the groups, due to the training and the group formation method employed. The following episode highlights an example of the disputes among the participants. In this episode, the responders, Ain (R1) and Azira (R2), provided feedback on the draft ‘Suicide among Teenagers’ written by Aishah (W1) and Kamalia (W2).

- R1: *I think your example here is not suitable.*  
W2: *Where? Which one?*  
R1: *Here. (Reads aloud) The Biggest Loser.*  
W1: *Oh, okay. Why not suitable?*  
R2: *Remember, you are talking about negative impact. But Biggest Loser is positive. The program helps obese people lose weight. It's good.*  
R1: *Yes, we can lose weight by watching this show. Stop obesity. So it is good.*  
W2: *No. In the program, the obese people lose weight suddenly. Apa ... in a short time. That is bad. Here ... our citation. (Reads aloud) Doctors do not recommend quick weight loss. Dangerous.*  
R2: *But this program is for 6 months. Not quick weight loss.*  
W1: *But they exercise 8 hours a day. That is bad.*  
W2: *And eat very little food.*  
R1: *Well, that is how you lose weight. The program got a doctor to check the participants.*  
W2: *I don't think so. Anyway, we will think about it.*  
(PR Session 4: The Impact of Reality Programs on Television)

The dispute was about the reality show ‘The Biggest Loser’. The writers felt this show has negative effects on the viewers while the responders felt otherwise. The writers offered valid justification for including that example. However, this dispute turned out to be beneficial for the revision as the writers had more ideas to support their argument after the peer-response session.

This frequent pointing out of mistakes also reflected the participants’ openness to criticism. ESL students prefer negative or critical comments because it would be beneficial for them revise their drafts later (Hyland, 1995). Hanieza and Umami from Group A said: “*We are more interested in knowing what is wrong with*



*our draft so that we can revise it. Sometimes they say everything is okay. So, we don't learn anything"* (PRI 2). Another writing pair, Amira and Aqila, added: *"When we wrote the draft, we thought it was good. But our responders told us that something was wrong. So, we tried to correct it"* (PRI 1). Some participants even used a comparative approach to identify errors: *"We compared our drafts with theirs, especially to check our grammatical mistakes"* (PRI 8). This important quality of the group resulted in significant changes and improvement to the revised drafts.

Another feature that was observed during the peer-response sessions was a genuine concern among the group members not to hurt each other's feelings. This was obvious when the responders congratulated the writers on a job well done. Comments such as *"This paragraph is quite good"* and *"Your essay does not have many mistakes"* were frequently uttered by the responders. The writers also praised the responders by saying *"Wow, you guys know how to give good suggestions"* and *"You are good at correcting our grammar mistakes"*. Praises and comments like these enhanced the social relationship in the group and made the participants less hesitant when giving feedback. This cordial relationship also resulted in fruitful discussions about the task.

Data from the peer-response transcripts, researcher fieldnotes and classroom observations also revealed that participants in this study were considerate while providing feedback, an aspect that was stressed during the training. They understood the writers' rights over their drafts and the importance of preserving the original meaning. The members of Group C said, *"When giving comments, we tried our best not to disturb their original idea. We didn't ask them to change the whole thing because they may not like it"* (PRI 5). The student-writers were also aware that they had the final say in the revision of their drafts and helped to cultivate writer-

autonomy among the participants. Miao et al. (2006) also reported that the participants accepted the peer feedback with a certain amount of reservations. As reported by Mendonca and Johnson (1994), participants were selective in accepting peer feedback. This is clearly demonstrated in the following episode. Naqiba (W1) and Siti (W2) who wrote the draft received feedback from Izuan (R1) and Ibrahim (R2).

- R1: *Your first solution to the problem ... mmm ... parents must make sure their children eat healthy food ... is good. But your second point ... this one.*
- R2: *Yes... Parents must make sure children do not watch too much television.*
- W2: *Sitting at home and watching television will make the children fat.*
- R1: *Yes, you're right, but what must they do? You should give some suggestions.*
- W2: *Like what? Any ideas? Tolong la ... (Please help).*
- R2: *You guys can suggest some outdoor activities ...*
- W1: *Oh! Ya, ya, ya ... like parents must take children to playground ... mmm ... go picnic, fishing, camping ...*
- R2: *Yes, outdoor activities the children will enjoy.*
- W2: *So they won't always watch TV at home ... so not obese anymore*  
(PR Session 7: Obesity among Children)

The responders, Izuan and Ibrahim, started the discussion by mentioning praiseworthy strengths of the draft to gain the writers' trust. This was to soften the tone of criticism and make the suggestions more acceptable. For example, when the responders engaged in a dialogue with the writers before offering a suggestion, the writers agreed to consider them. The way this episode was conducted preserved good will in the group. The responders displayed great care in articulating the suggestion and the writers were grateful and encouraged by the suggestions. They even asked for clarification for better understanding of the problem and suggestions for improvement.

However, some participants preferred negative comments because positive comments were not as helpful for draft revision. Rozaida, said: *"What can we do*

*with the comments like 'Good job!' and 'Well done!' It would be better if they told us where our essay went wrong so that it will be easier for us to revise it"* (PRI 6). Nelson and Carson (1998) also reported that participants preferred negative comments that identified mistakes in the drafts. Positive feedback may facilitate discussion, but negative comments are needed for revision. The participants did not mind the criticisms and were willing to revise the drafts where necessary. Shahira and Rozaidah said: *"Sometimes the responders criticize our work. Like grammar and organization. Then we know something is wrong with our draft. So, we accept it. The corrections they suggest will improve our draft. They are our friends"* (PRI 6). The use of praise and mitigation enhanced the writers' perception of the feedback and increased the chance of implementation. Other forms of mitigation, such as downplaying problems raised, could decrease the likelihood of implementation. Such positive attitude augurs well for peer-response and revision.

***Staying focused.*** One of the most frequent criticisms of the peer-response activity is that the participants are not focused on the task. They discuss matters related to the drafts, which Min (2006) refer to as "on-task" episodes and matters irrelevant to the drafts. At times, the participants discussed issues not directly pertaining to the draft. This included interactions about the peer-response activity, task management or elements in the checklist. There were also instances when they strayed away from the task and discussed completely unrelated matters. However, classroom observation (CO 7) entry revealed that peer-response interactions in this study were mostly focused on the task. Participants were focused when discussing the draft by offering positive feedback and constructive criticism. In the following episode, the writers W1: Amira and W2: Aqila were justifying the reasons for Facebook addiction. The responders are R1: Hanieza and R2: Ummi.

- R1: *Your first point, (reading from the draft) one of the reasons why ... errr people become addicted to Facebook is because ... it has a lot of attractions/*
- W1: *Yes, it is because of the attractions, people become addicted. Don't you agree?*
- R1: *But you say here ... gadgets such as iPads, cell phones and broadband phones have applications that make it easy to connect to the internet. Is this an attraction?*
- R2: *Ya la ... I think ... you should not say that, the attraction must be ... other things ... benda lain ... about ... meeting new friends, downloading music and games and stuff like that... you know ...*
- R1: *Yes, that is the one that causes addiction. Bukannya (not) the latest ... gadgets... ooops ... sorry ...*
- W2: *You may be right, but the gadgets make Facebook more exciting. For example, you can do it anywhere you like ... hostel, café ... mana lagi...(where else)*
- W1: *Yes.*
- R2: *Kalau gitu (in that case) ... okay la ... but you should also include the attractions of the Facebook itself, like updating your status, gossiping ... (laughter) that's what we all do ... right!*
- W1: *I see what you mean. We'll include that suggestion.*
- (PR Session 1: Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction)

This discussion was focused and centred on elaboration - making the supporting details more relevant. This discussion was interactive and involved a lot of negotiation. The writing pair believed modern gadgets are responsible for Facebook addiction while the responders insisted that the activities related to Facebook causes addiction. In the end, there was a compromise, and the writers maintained their opinion and accepted the suggestion made by the responders. This type of interactions could improve the draft. In the model of the interaction process, Gass and Mackey (2007) pointed out that L2 learners' engagement with negotiations with language (input) and feedback on their own L2 production are essential elements to cognitive changes and learning.

Other than issues of content, the participants also talked about other aspects of the writing, yet remained focused. In the following example, the same group discussed the APA citation format.

R1: *Okay, look at this citation in paragraph 3... mana ya ... (where is it) ... It is easy to connect with the internet such as at cyber-cafes or other places that provide Wi-Fi facilities. Your citation just say (Izwan, 2008). Who is Izwan?*

W2: *He wrote the article, la ...*

W1: *Here, this is the article. We took it from here. Izwan ... ah...*

R2: *Yes, but Sir (the instructor) said you must mention who the person is, like ... a counsellor, or Facebook expert... not just Izuan... who is he?*

R1: *Authority ... Sir said the citation must be from an authority in that ... how to say bidang (field) ...?*

R1: *Apa tu (what do you call it) ... area ... field... ya, ya, ... field.*

W1: *Oh... we don't know. He is the one who wrote the article. Apa lagi ... (what else you want)*

W2: *I think it's ok la ...*

R2: *Ingat tak (do you remember) ...Sir said you must mention who the person is.*

W2: *Yes.... We know that. But the article didn't say who he is. What can we do?*

R1: *Simple ... don't use that citation (laughter). Look for something else ...*

R2: *Jangan gitu ... (don't say that) ... emmm .... You can say – According to Izwan (2008), a journalist ...*

W1: *Journalist ...*

R2: *Wartawanlah ...*

*(Session 1: Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction)*

This episode demonstrated two functions - identifying problems and giving suggestions. The interaction began with a suggestion followed by an explanation. This pattern of identification of problem followed by an explanation occurred several times in this session. The main concern of the responders was the lack of a clear citation in the paragraph. This clearly reflected the responders own writing strengths. The responders displayed awareness of academic writing and clearly understood their role as responders. Even though they did not discuss the content or language aspects, the discussion focused on the correct APA method to cite in academic writing. When the responders referred to what the instructor had mentioned about citation, they were recalling what they learned during training. The writers defended their decision by providing evidence without easily giving in to the responders, demonstrating writers' stance. Eventually, the responders provided suggestions to

improve the citation. Interactions during peer response push L2 learners to experiment with language forms and structures in order to produce comprehensible output (Ariza & Hancock, 2003).

Even though the participants remained focused, they did make use of the peer-response group activity to discuss issues of interest that were sparked off by the ideas in the drafts. Some participants used the peer-response sessions to solve real life problems experienced by them and discussed ideas that emerged from the issues they had written about for the assignment. At times, they gave partially correct comments, not addressing the problem directly or pointing out problems without providing suggestions for revision. Ideas related to the topic but not directly affecting the drafts were also discussed. These episodes did not distract the discussions but made the interactions more lively and interesting. This is evident in the following episode:

- R2: *Ya, there was a man who killed his two children and then hanged.*  
R1: *Hanged himself la ...*  
W1: *Why?*  
R2: *Not sure ... family problem kot?*  
W1: *What about the wife:*  
R2: *Not sure also ... terrible ya.*  
W1: *Hey ... that is not teenage suicide la ...*  
R1: *Oh ... your essay is teenage suicide kan ...*  
R2: *What about the children ...*  
W2: *Itu bukan (that's not) suicide lah ... pembunuhan ... (murder)*  
W1: *killing ... murder. Yes ... the father yang (is the one who) killed the children ... bukan (not) suicide pun ...*  
(PR Session 2: Suicide among Teenagers)

Even though the draft was on suicide among teenagers, one of the responders side-tracked by mentioning a suicide and murder case that was not directly related to the draft. When the group realized it was not suicide and did not involve teenagers, they decided to abandon that talk. Some of the participants displayed the tendency to shift topic or give unrelated comments (CO 5). They diverted from the topic due to

lack of ideas, even though they were aware that it was unhelpful for draft revision. However, such interactions were negligible. Even though there were no benefits in terms of content, such episodes resulted in some language benefits. Peer-response activities help ESL learners develop their overall language abilities through the negotiation of meaning that took place during the interactions (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Even though there was occasional lack of focus, most of the episodes addressed trouble-sources in the drafts. Most of the feedbacks were relevant for revision. The training was beneficial in making the participants stay focused most of the time during the peer-response sessions. The responders gave the writers more suggestions, examples and details to support the main ideas and enhance clarity of intended meanings. The peer-response groups in this study displayed focused interaction that was expected of them.

**Switching roles.** To be effective peer-responders, the student-writers must play the role of readers to comprehend the peers' drafts and the role of writers to revise errors, improve content and organization in their own drafts. The participants recognized the roles assigned to them and kept to this assigned function efficiently. When playing the role of responders, they critically read the peers' drafts and provided suggestions for draft improvement and as writers, they were receptive to the feedback and audience needs. Their general impressions of these roles are reflected in responses such as the following:

*"The group members were able to find mistakes in our draft that we were unable to find. When they read our draft, they could tell which parts were not clear and needed improvements. They had different understandings about our draft. The responders read our draft carefully and explained to us. In the same way, when we read their draft it helped us to learn more about writing" (PRI 4).*

Adopting the responder and writer roles was characterized by two striking behaviours. Firstly, the participants were aware of their dual roles as responders and

writers and kept to the assigned role during the interactions. When playing the role of responders, they critically read the draft and provided effective suggestions for improvement. Similarly, when their draft was discussed, they were receptive to the feedback. The differing roles did not restrain them from carrying out their assigned duties effectively. It was also observed that the writing pairs adopted specific patterns in the use of these strategies. For example, the writers elicited, and the responders reacted to the elicitation or the responders advised and writers responded to advice. Sometimes, the responders requested for clarification and writers either offered clarification or justification. Most importantly, they were aware of their roles as composers and final decision makers. This resulted in a balanced discussion, ideal for peer-response because effective output needs to be bidirectional (Swain, 2000). Because of the training and practice sessions, the participants were able to carry out their dual roles with ease. In the following excerpt, the writers Ain and Azira were engaged in a productive discussion with their responders, Aishah Kamaliea.

*R1: Your second point – Reality Programs encourage gambling among youth.*

*W2: Yes, they have competition for the audience at home.*

*R2: You mean the SMS?*

*W2: Like you can win a car or motorcycle. So, people will send many SMS to win the prize.*

*R1: Is that gambling?*

*W1: Not serious, but still gambling. The Ustaz (religious teacher) said that last time.*

*R2: Okay, I agree, but still not serious gambling. Maybe you guys can say it starts the gambling culture among teenagers.*

*R1: Yes, because some people send SMS because they want to vote for their favourite candidate.*

*W2: Yes, but this SMS is expensive. About 50 sen. You send 10 SMS, it is RM5.*

*R1: So, maybe instead of gambling, you can say people waste a lot of money on SMS to win the prize.*

*W1: Okay, we will improve the explanation.*

(PR Session 4: The Impact of Reality Programs on Television)



Aishah and Kamaliea were competent responders and active participants who worked closely with the writers. As writers, they gave up their earlier role and allowed the responders to comment on their draft. They participated in the interactions, defending or justifying their ideas in the drafts. This change of character when switching roles was productive for draft development. The writing pair, Ain and Azira, said: *"First we commented on their draft. Then they commented on our draft. We learned many things in this way"* (PRI 4). According to Tsui and Ng (2000), peer-response can be very informative when the peers can understand their roles better.

Playing dual roles also promoted mutual respect for authorship, which was constantly expressed when the participants acknowledged the writers' rights. The responders were careful not to offend the writers. They used polite expressions such as: *"We think if you make this change, the paragraph will be more interesting"* (PR Session 3) or *"Why don't you guys add another example. This one is not very clear"* (PR Session 4). These clearly reflected respect and tactfulness. There were also occasions when the writers voiced their disagreement to suggestions for changes, such as: *"No, we don't think so. We like our example better"* (PR Session 6). Audience awareness and ownership of text were of great importance to the student-writers. When the responders played the role of audience for their peers, they gained a better understanding of the draft. When responding critically to their peers' drafts, they gained writing knowledge which they applied to their own draft. To understand the influence their writing has on others, the writers need to experience and examine closely the impact of others' writing on them (Mittan, 1989).

Similarly, when the writing pairs' draft was being reviewed, they automatically gave up their rights as text authors. They listened to the peer responders' suggestions, even though at times it meant losing their own voice in the draft. Suggestions like "*We think this example is not suitable. You must change it*" (PR Session2), clearly shows the responders' authority over the draft. There were also instances when the responders dictated feedback such as "*The word urge here is not suitable. Change it to desire*" (PR Session 8). Due to the role switch from responders to writers, the latter were at the receiving end in the discussion of their own draft. The writers too were aware of their responsibilities on the need to write for an audience and make changes if the readers did not understand the intended meaning. Even though the student-writers were getting feedback from their peers, they could retain ownership of the draft. This was done by defending their ideas and at the same time making every effort to be clear to the responders. However, the participants were not compelled to adopt all the peer comments (Tsui & Ng, 2000).

***Bringing in Outside Voice.*** The peer-response discussions were not always centered on personal experiences of the participants. Occasionally, opinions of outsiders were brought into the discussions for support. This allowed outside influence into the discussions. In particular, some participants occasionally brought the instructors' voice into the discussion. For example, a participant said: "*Sir (the lecturer) said that examples must be related to the content*" and "*Sir said we should provide statistics to show that the problem is serious*". These references to the instructor were deliberately brought in to support and add weight to the claims. There were also instances when the participants brought the voice of other subject lecturers to support their argument. The following episode shows this aspect during one

particular peer-response session. Group A was discussing “Causes and Effects of Early Marriages” written Hanieza and Ummi. Amira and Aqila were the responders.

- R2: *Your second paragraph is good. We didn't spot any errors.*  
R1: *Ya, nice. Ideas good. Very touching. Parents getting their teenage daughters married to money-lenders to settle their loans.*  
W2: *Yes, this problem mostly happens in Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.*  
R2: *But you guys did not have any citation to support that the problem happening in Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.*  
R1: *Yes, if you put in a citation, it will be better. Sir (lecturer) said if you include facts, like the name of countries, must have citation. [Bringing in outside voice].*  
W2: *I think we forgot la ...*  
W1: *Yes, we will take from the article.*  
(Session 1: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

In this episode, the responders highlighted the lack of citations in the paragraph. They said it would be better to cite because the writers had mentioned that early marriages happen in certain countries. To add weight to their suggestion, they added that the instructor had reminded them to provide citation for factual information. During the post-revision interview, the responders, Amira and Aqila said “*We told them that the lecturer had mentioned about the citation so that they (the writers) would believe us*” (PRI 2). Clearly, the participants brought in outside voice to add credibility to their suggestions.

***Dealing with grammatical issues.*** The participants were advised to avoid grammatical issues because they could get side-tracked and would not offer optimum assistance to the writers. However, some episodes displayed successful negotiation on grammatical issues. The participants helped each other with grammatical issues such as pronouns, subject verb agreement and tenses. When the responders were aware that the writers had concerns with language and grammar, they avoided directly telling them what they should do. Instead, the responders employed a non-directive approach to engage the writers to focus more on the content than the

language issues. The following excerpt shows how a typical negotiation episode unfolded and how negotiation mechanisms worked to empower the writers and reassure their linguistic uncertainties.

- R1: *Your last paragraph ... the conclusion ... is good.*  
R2: *Yes ... restatement of thesis statement ada (is there) ...*  
W1: *Okay ... so no problem la ...*  
R2: *But can improve grammar a bit la ...*  
W2: *Which one ...*  
R2: *Look at this ... (reading from draft) to conclude, reality programmes are more of a bane than a boon. It gives bad effects to the community, especially to the participants themselves and among teenagers.*  
R1: *You start with "to conclude" ... transition signal for last paragraph ... good ... but ... the second sentence ... (reading from draft) "It gives bad effects" ... this is wrong.*  
W1: *Salah! ... Why wrong?*  
R2: *At the first sentence ... here ... you said "reality programmes" ... plural kan (right)?*  
W1: *Reality programmes ... ya ... plural. So?*  
R2: *Arrrr .... So, the next sentence must be ... they give ... not it gives ... betul tak (right)?*  
W1: *What you think ...*  
W2: *Macam betul aje ... (Looks correct)*  
R1: *First sentence kau orang kata (you said) ... "reality programmes" ... here ... this one ...*  
W2: *Yes ... plural*  
R1: *Now look at second sentence ... It gives bad effects ... what is the "it"?*  
W1: *Errr ... Reality programmes ... la ...*  
R2: *So must be plural kan (right) ...*  
W2: *Ohhh ... okay ... okay ...*  
(PR Session 2: The Impact of Reality Programs on Television)

This excerpt is typical of the types of interactions that the participants had about grammatical concerns. They spent a significant amount of time pointing to very specific aspects in the draft. Suggestions were made to improve grammar and the flow of ideas. In attempting to help their peers improve their writing, the responders navigated to what it was they wanted to say and these discourse moves allowed them to convey their response in a meaningful and clear manner.

Another important strategy used by the participants to gain control of the discussion was by expressing their opinions in Malay. Besides English, the participants' mother tongue (Malay) provided a verbal medium for the interactions. However, English predominated the discussions and was used to refer to specific parts of the text or during reading and note taking. In some cases, explanations of the meaning of the words or phrases were made in Malay either by the writers for the responders to understand or check their understanding of the draft. Sometimes, it was necessary for the participants to think about a word in Malay first to secure meaning and then retrieve the English equivalent from memory, the dictionary or the peers. The use of the participants' L1 during the discussions is clearly demonstrated in the following episode:

- R2: *Here ... ah, kat sini ... you say early marriages emerge due to the urge (laughter) of the parents who want to maintain their family honour and gain respect from society.*
- W1: *Hmmmm... yes, here. What's the problem ... Nampak okey aje (looks okay).*
- R2: *Do you think the word "emerge" is right?*
- W1: *Ya ... emmmm... Not sure la. I think we translated that sentence.*
- W2: *Yes, we also checked Look Up (meaning checking feature of Microsoft Word) and replaced that word.*
- R2: *What is the original word... perkataan asal yang kau orang tukar tu... (the original word that you changed)*
- W1: *Not sure la ... dah lupa ... eh ... eh ... forgot ... ya forgot ... forgot ...*
- W2: *Can't remember...*
- R1: *I also think it's not suitable. It should be ... early marriages are caused by ...*
- R2: *... caused by ... mmm ...yes, that is better.*
- W2: *Okay, we'll change that.*
- R1: *and also ... this one ... due to the urge of the parents ...*
- R2: *urge is funny... macam nak gi tandas (laughter) like going to toilet ...*
- W1: *Hey, look here ... it means keinginan (must be referring to a bilingual dictionary)*
- R2: *Then, why don't you just say ... early marriages happen because parents want to ...*
- W1: *mmmm ... what do you think?*
- W2: *Ya, that is good. Pandai jugakau orang ni (you people are smart) ... thank you ... thank you (laughter)*
- (PR Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

The tendency for the participants to code-switch was obvious in this episode. The participants' L1 (Malay) was used to stress a point such as "what is the original word... *perkataan asal yang kau orang tukar tu ...*" and to tease the responders such as "*pandai juga kau orang ni*" meaning "you people are smart." However, since the participants were reminded to discuss in English, they tried to correct themselves whenever they said something in the L1 (Malay), such as this example - Not sure la ... *dah lupa ... eh ... eh ... forgot ... ya forgot ... forgot ....*" Initially, the writer mentioned "*dah lupa*" but later corrected herself by repeating the word "forgot". The mother-tongue was carefully used to make meaning of text, retrieve language from memory, explore and expand content, guide the interactions and maintain the discussion. Most of the participants had a bilingual (English-Malay) dictionary with them during the peer response sessions.

This section had focused on several important aspects of the participants' interactions during the peer-response sessions. The processes that emerged within their peer-response groups were highlighted. This is essential in understanding how the participants shared their ideas with each other and what they said to each other. Each of the moves that emerged functioned to provide feedback that subsequently helped the writers improve their drafts. The following section will look at the how the peer-response activity was concluded.

**Ending the peer-response session.** Bringing the peer-response discussion to an end was a responsibility assumed by the writers and the responders. All the groups ended the peer-response session by assessing the drafts, going over the suggestions, clarifying confusions and finalizing the task. The following episode is an example of the final stage of the peer-response session:

R1: *Wow! Look at the time. Almost 12pm.*

W2: *Yes, so almost 2 hours. We started at 10am.*

W1: *Really! Two hours. So long. But I enjoyed it.*  
 R2: *Yes. That's what Sir said... that we'll like it.*  
 R1: *Okay, what to do next? I think we have already given the comments to each other.*  
 W1: *Yes, we also enjoyed it. I think you guys were good. I like your suggestions.*  
 W2: *Ya, you helped us a lot. I can see our problems now.*  
 R2: *Oh... that's good. But I think your essay was good. Not many mistakes.*  
 R1: *Yes, it was easy to read.*  
 W2: *Oh... Thank you. We also liked reading your essay.*  
 (PR Session 5: Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use)

After making some general statements about the peer-response session and praising the group members for a job well-done, the participants moved on to reassess the drafts based on the feedback provided. Through spoken interaction in the target language using genuine texts, they used appropriate linguistic expressions, revision-oriented sentences and language collaboratively. This contributed to positive social interaction with their peers and to revise their drafts.

**Assessing the drafts.** The drafts were assessed in the form of evaluative comments on the quality and other textual elements, which varied among the groups. Some judged the draft in general: *"This is a good essay"* while others assessed the task: *"This activity has enabled us to correct the mistakes by ourselves"* or made evaluative comments about their peers: *"Wow, you're really good at spotting errors. You made so many corrections for us"*. The following excerpt is an example of how the participants assessed each other's drafts:

W1: *Thanks for all your suggestions. I think it will make our essay better.*  
 R2: *Really! Good. We did our best to help. But your essay was good.*  
 R1: *Yes, really interesting. If you include our suggestions, will be better, I think...*  
 W2: *Yes, I like the examples you gave us. If not, it will be boring.*  
 W1: *True. You all know more about our topic.*  
 R1: *You guys also provided good comments to help our essay.*  
 R2: *Yes, you guys helped a lot. Corrected many grammars for us. Without your help, surely many mistakes.*

(PR Group D: Obesity among Children and Premarital Sex among Young Adults)

The above episode represents a typical example of how the participants assessed each other's drafts before ending the session. This was done with a preliminary assessment before moving to specific points in their drafts. The participants also talked about the benefits of the peer-response activity.

***Going over the feedback.*** After assessing the drafts, the participants went over the suggestions made during the peer-response sessions. This was based on the comments made in the peer-evaluation checklist and the notes made in the draft. This enabled the participants to remember the feedback provided by the peers for revision.

The following episode shows how this was done.

- R1: *Wow! Quite a lot of revisions to make ... banyak betul.*  
R2: *Yes, quite a lot la ...*  
W1: *Ada problem tak? (Any problems?)*  
R2: *Ya... so many ... takut (afraid) cannot remember.*  
W2: *Better to check one by one. After that we can check our draft.*  
R1: *Good idea. Let's check our first paragraph.*  
R2: *Okay. You said our thesis statement was not clear.*  
W1: *Yes, better to write the thesis statement in one sentence. Just join it.*  
W2: *Ya, that's the only suggestion for the first paragraph.*  
R1: *Okay, got it here. Next paragraph "yang pening ni" (gives the headache).*

(PR Group C: Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use and Teenage Shopaholics)

Going over the feedback at the end of the peer-response sessions increased the possibility of feedback incorporation into the revision. Confusions regarding the feedback were also clarified. The following episode shows how going over the feedback was used to clarify confusions:

- R1: *You guys commented on our second point here. (reads aloud) Facebook addiction creates problems in family relationships.*  
R2: *Yes, here. We said (reads aloud) This will also result in late marriage problems.*  
R1: *What's the problem? You told us to delete this sentence. Not sure why.*



W2: *Oh...kenapa ya (why)*  
 W1: *You said the young wife will chat with her friends. This will cause problems in the family. But... next you say about late marriage... why... not suitable la...*  
 R2: *Oh... yes... when the friends hear about her (the young wife's) problems, they will not get married.*  
 R1: *Takut kahwin ... (Afraid to get married)*  
 W1: *But your topic sentence (reads aloud) Facebook addiction creates problems in family relationships.*  
 W2: *So why are you talking about the friends ... and ... late marriage?*  
 R1: *Oh ... ya... we discussed that just now. We forgot.*  
 R2: *Didn't understand just now.*  
 W2: *Okay now?*  
 R2: *Ya, thank you. Sorry.*  
 (PR Group A: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction and Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

Without these clarifications, there is a strong possibility that the feedback may not be implemented. Clarifying confusions also enabled the student-writers to better understand the problem and the need for revision. The peer-response activity provided the student-writers with an extra set of eyes and fresh perspectives through which they were able to analyse their own writing. The participants used the peer-response sessions to achieve greater clarity of ideas and got involved in constructing knowledge collaboratively. Thus, they came up with clearer thesis statements, more detailed supporting ideas, stronger arguments and a more critical analysis of the writing.

***Finalizing the task.*** All the four groups ended the discussion with a happy note. This is an indication that the writing pairs may use the comments and feedback provided during the peer-response sessions to revise their drafts. The following Group B episode is a typical example of the interactions before finalizing the peer response activity:

R1: *Wow! I think we can stop. Nearly 2 hours.*  
 W2: *Ya, we have done both the essays. Macam mana? Okay tak? (How? You feel okay?)*  
 R2: *Yes, very tired. But we have completed the ... apa (what)...*

- R1: *Peer-response.*  
W1: *Masa training tak penat sangat (Wasn't this tired during the training).*  
W2: *So, now we know the problems in the draft. You guys have given us the feedback.*  
R1: *Comments.*  
R2: *Sama lah. (It's the same).*  
W1: *Ya, so Kamalia and I will discuss and revise our draft.*  
R2: *We also. We'll ask you if we have any problems.*  
W2: *Yes, Sir said can check if got problems.*  
(PR Session 3: Suicide among Teenagers)

The peer-response session ended after both pairs responded to each other's drafts. After assessing the drafts and going over the feedback, they ended the session with a commitment to further discuss the feedback before implementing them into their drafts. They also agreed to meet for further clarification if the need arises.

During the peer-response session, it was not possible for the participants to every aspect of the draft. Nevertheless, they provided enough feedback, some of which were used in revision while others ignored or discarded. Moreover, the feedback from their peers, when used accordingly, may result in successful revisions. Apart from revisions suggested by the peers, the student-writers sometimes initiated revisions by themselves. These were triggered by self-discovery, learning from peers' drafts or other variables. Both peer-initiated and self-initiated revisions led to development in writing.

### **Summary**

The peer-response activity implemented in this study provided the stage for the ESL student-writers to learn to cope with different types of personalities with different abilities and points of view, as well as to regulate their own behaviour accordingly. It also provided them a unique opportunity to discuss and formulate ideas about their drafts, assist each other in the development of writing skills and

discourse strategies. By exchanging ideas during the interactions, the participants enhanced their own writing knowledge. The cognitive activities, negotiating strategies and social behaviour which they displayed suggest that trained peer-response promotes collaboration and cognitive processes.

This research question has highlighted several important aspects of what transpired during the peer-response activity. It offered the participants opportunities for bilateral rather than unilateral participation and benefits. The responders and the writers gave, received and learned how to use feedback for revision. It also enabled them to explain, defend and clarify their points of view. Some researchers (Leki 1990; Nelson & Murphy, 1993 Mendoca & Johnson, 1994; Hyland, 2000) reported that ESL student-writers have problems detecting errors and providing quality feedback. However, the participants in this study could identify content ambiguities and structural problems in the drafts. The feedback provided was related to introduction, thesis, analysis, evidence, organization, grammar, vocabulary, paragraphing and transitions. Their collective brainstorming proved to be effective in finding solutions to problems within their specific writings.

Various processes emerged when the participants worked together to establish, maintain and conclude the discussion. This include several discourse moves, each functioning to provide feedback that would help improve the drafts. The interactions promoted communicative behaviours, from reading and composing to making meaning and realizing that they had at their disposal a wide range of strategies to achieve task goals. As reported by Liu and Sadler (2003), the peer-response activity in this study created a favourable environment for the student writers to negotiate meaning and practice a wide range of language skills. They provided a higher rate of responses that were specific in nature, such as pointing to

problem areas, making suggestions for improvement and negotiation. The peer-response training resulted in a greater level of participant involvement in the peer-response activity. Moreover, as reported in previous studies (Williams, 2002) the interactions in this study focused on improving the drafts. However, some participants were not actively involved in eliciting feedback, which is considered a major role of the writers during peer response. Thus, these participants did not perform their writer roles effectively. Like the conclusions made by Stanley (1992), some participants also tended to respond but not clarify.

The post-revision interviews revealed that the student-writers liked the peer-response activity and felt motivated to write. It provided an authentic opportunity to discuss the problems in the drafts and talk about them. This made them aware of their mistakes and find ways to correct them. They were also happy working with their peers, identifying problems and solving them before submitting their essays. They also found working in groups, sharing ideas, receiving comments from peers during the revision stages of the writing beneficial. However, some participants admitted that at times they felt discouraged and annoyed when they received negative comments from their peers. As stated by Chen and Lin (2009), difference between the expectations of the writers and the feedback provided by the peers lowered the acceptance and implementation of the peer feedback into the revision process.

The next important step it is to examine the changes made to the drafts to gain a better understanding of how the interactions contributed to the revision. In other words, what happened to the writing processes as the participants moved from the peer-response sessions to revision. This cross-text analysis is presented next in this chapter.

**Research Question 2: What changes were made to the first drafts of the writing task because of the interactions during the trained peer-response activity?**

The first research question established what transpired during the trained peer-response group sessions. What did the student-writers do next? They employed different strategies to deal with the feedback provided by the peers. The writing pairs first discussed between themselves to determine the usability of the feedback. When dealing with confusing or puzzling comments, the writers went back to the responders for clarifications. Most participants could deal with problems on their own by assuming a positive attitude towards the task. What are the changes that were made to the drafts after and because of the peer-response sessions? This question is pertinent to the study because the success of trained peer-response in the ESL writing classroom is determined by the participants' ability to determine usable feedback to be incorporated into the revised paper.

In Stanley's (1992) study, only 26 percent of peer-feedback was incorporated into the revised paper, indicating that the participants did not trust their peers' ability to provide valid suggestions for draft improvement. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) reported that while the participants acknowledged the benefits of peer feedbacks, they were selective in incorporating them into their revision. Tsui and Ng (2000), reported less than 50 percent of the peer suggestions were incorporated. Therefore, there is a clear need to further analyse how the interactions influenced the writers to accept or reject peer-feedback. Min, (2006) determined this by analysing whether new information was added to the draft and existing information removed after the peer- response sessions.

In view of this, research question two searched for the links between the participants' interactions and the changes made to the revised paper. This was done by comparing the peer interaction transcripts, the participants' first drafts and revised papers. The researcher's field-notes and classroom observation entries were also examined. The written data from all eight writing pairs were evaluated for the changes caused by the interactions. These changes were coded according to whether they were 'peer-initiated' or 'writer-initiated' and 'local level' or 'global level' changes. Writer-initiated changes are those not discussed during the peer-response activity but initiated by the writers. It is possible that the participants incorporated suggested changes that one writer wrote on the checklist but were not discussed during the peer-interactions. Even though these changes were not discussed, they still reflected the effects of the peer-interaction and were within the bounds of the study. Since the objective of this research question was to investigate how the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions resulted in changes to the next draft of the writing task, it did not involve a full discourse analysis. An examination of the extent to which the participants utilized the peer- feedback and implemented the suggested revisions in the final versions of their essays is presented next.

**Changes made to draft after peer-response.** The analysis of data indicated that the participants implemented all, some or none of the peer suggested revisions in the revised paper. Most of them acknowledged incorporating the peer feedback in their revisions. One writing pair, Aishah and Kamalia, said: *"We included most of the feedback and suggestions because they were good. They gave us better examples"* (PRI 3). Moreover, the use of praise and mitigation, like compliments, made them feel more comfortable and resulted in the incorporation of the feedback. However, questioning or downplaying problems raised, decreased the likelihood of

feedback implementation. In the following episode, Group A discussed the issue of paragraph organization in the draft. The writers, Amira and Aqila, later made some changes to their draft per the suggestions provided by the responders, Hanieza and Ummi.

Title	Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction
First Draft	Another effect of Facebook is it creates <del>problem</del> in family relationships. According to Bialik (2011), a journalist, through Facebook, some people will express <u>her</u> feelings which relate to family sensitivity. For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends who are not married and tell <del>their friend</del> about her problem may affect the family. In addition, this will also result in late marriage problems. Furthermore, this will strike new relationships that lead them to stray from their marriage vows which can cause divorce. Sometimes, family problems can be exposed via the Facebook. This will lead dispute amongst family members.
Feedback	<i>R1: In this paragraph, you guys are explaining the effect of Facebook on family relationships.</i> <i>W1: Yes. The second effect.</i> <i>R1: Nice, but ... too many points.</i> <i>R2: Ya ... think you must elaborate.</i> <i>W2: How?</i> <i>Like ... provide more examples ... statistics ... like that la.</i> <i>W1: Okay.</i> (PR Group A – Session 1)
Changes made to the draft	Another effect of Facebook is it creates <u>problems</u> in family relationships. According to Bialik (2011), a journalist, through Facebook, some people will express <u>their</u> feelings which relate to family sensitivity. For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends <u>may inform them about her unhappiness, such as the husband not caring, not enough money. When the husband comes to know, there will be fighting.</u> <del>In addition, this will also result in late marriage problems.</del> Furthermore, <del>this</del> Facebook addiction will also strike new relationships that lead them to stray from their marriage vows which can cause divorce. Many married women put their status “single” and make the husband angry. Statistics (NSTP, 2011) show that divorce rate is increasing among young couples in Malaysia. <del>Sometimes, family problems can be exposed via the Facebook. This will lead dispute amongst family members.</del> So, it is clear that Facebook addiction will destroy family relationships.

Analysis of the peer-response transcripts and the revised drafts revealed that most of the changes made during the revision were influenced by the interactions

during the peer-response. Contrary to Leki's (1990) study which found participants only responding to surface errors instead of semantic or textual ones, the participants in this study made changes at the word, sentence and organizational levels. In this example, the writers removed two sentences from the paragraph because the responders said there were too many points. The writers also provided a better elaboration for how sharing personal information on the Facebook may cause rifts in the family. *"For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends may inform them about her unhappiness, such as the husband not caring, not enough money. When the husband comes to know about this, there will be fighting"* (Revised Paper 1). In addition, the writers also provided statistics on divorce rate in Malaysia, which improved the paragraph.

The writers also made grammatical changes which were not discussed and ended the paragraph with a new concluding remark. The writers claimed, *"We realized these problems when we were revising the draft after the peer-response session"* (PRI 1). The peer suggestions acted upon resulted in changes in the revised paper because some new information was added, existing information was removed, and a point was further elaborated. In making changes to the draft, the writers transformed their own understanding. They enhanced their understanding of the writing, making peer-response ideal for learning writing. Sharing ideas with peers provided them the opportunity to know what their peers write about, thus, improving their own writing (Ray, 1999).

The decision to incorporate the feedbacks were based on the student-writers' agreement to do so and also the accuracy. Aqila, from Group A said, *"We did not include all their suggestions. We listened to all their comments first and wrote them down. Then we sat down to discuss whether the comments were good for our*



revision". Her partner, Amira, added, *"Sometimes, when we were not sure, we asked them explain to us again. They gave us their comments again. We listened and discussed it again before deciding whether to make the change"* (PRI 1). Therefore, the feedback incorporated into the revised papers depended on the writing pairs joint decision. The following sections will discuss how these changes came about. In other words, who initiated the changes?

**Initiator of changes.** The changes made to the drafts were analysed to determine whether they were made during the peer-response sessions or initiated by the writers. All the revised papers in this study contained both peer-initiated and writer-initiated changes. The post-revision interview data offered the student writers' opinions as to why they made certain changes and not make some of the changes even though they agreed to do so. Apart from making changes suggested by the peers, the student-writers also initiated changes by themselves. These changes were triggered by self-discovery, learning from peers' drafts or other factors. One writing pair, Izuan and Ibrahim, said *"After the peer-response session, we tried to revise our draft based on the feedback provided. We also made some changes on our own"* (PRI 8). All the participants felt that the training had helped them to be more thorough as writers. Table 4.1 offers a breakdown of the changes made to the revised drafts in relation to their likely origin, whether writer-initiated or peer-responded.

Table 4.1

*Initiator of Change*

Essay	Initiator of Changes	
	Peer-Initiated %	Writer-Initiated %
Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction	78	22
Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	69	31
Suicide among Teenagers	73	27
The Impact of Reality Programs on Television	71	29
Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use	68	32
Teenage Shopaholics	74	26
Obesity among Teenagers	76	24
Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	70	30

The changes made to the revised drafts were mostly related to feedback provided during the peer-response sessions. Peer-initiated feedback ranged from 68 to 78 percent while writer-initiated feedbacks from 22 to 31 percent. Unlike the participants in Fei's (2006) study, who were doubtful about the quality of peer suggestions and hesitated to use the peer-comments in the revision, the participants in this study were generally receptive of the suggestions offered by the responders and incorporated them into their revision. Nelson and Murphy (1993) reported that ESL student-writers distrust the peers' ability to offer usable feedback and thus are reluctant incorporate them into their revision. The following section will demonstrate how changes were made to the drafts after the peer-response sessions.

**Types of changes.** Instances of participants incorporating feedback into their subsequent drafts are benefits of trained peer-response. Feedback from peers influenced the revision process, although some revision went beyond the scope of the

peer-response session. The significance of the writers' response to the responders' feedback lies in the fact that the comments were implemented selectively and cultivated a sense of autonomy.

**Peer and writer initiated changes.** Analysis of the peer-response transcripts, the first drafts and revised papers revealed that the changes made were influenced by interactions during the peer-response sessions. Contrary to Leki's (1990) study which found the participants only responding to surface errors, the participants in this study made changes at the word, sentence and organizational levels. In the following episode, Group A discussed paragraph organization. The writers, Amira and Aqila, later made some changes to their draft per suggestions provided by the responders, Hanieza and Ummi.

Title	Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction
First Draft	Another effect of Facebook is it creates problem in family relationships. According to Bialik (2011), a journalist, through Facebook, some people will express <u>her</u> feelings which relate to family sensitivity. For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends who are not married and tell <del>their friend</del> about her problem may affect the family. In addition, this will also result in late marriage problems. Furthermore, this will strike new relationships that lead them to stray from their marriage vows which can cause divorce. Sometimes, family problems can be exposed via the Facebook. This will lead dispute amongst family members.
Feedback	<i>R1: In this paragraph, you guys are explaining the effect of Facebook on family relationships.</i> <i>W1: Yes. The second effect.</i> <i>R1: Nice, but ... too many points. So... very confusing.</i> <i>R2: Ya ... think you must elaborate sikit (a little) la.</i> <i>W2: How?</i> <i>R2: Like ... provide more examples ... statistics ... like that la.</i> <i>W1: Okay.</i> (PR Session 1)
Revised Paper	Another effect of Facebook is it creates <u>rifts</u> in family relationships. According to Bialik (2011), a journalist, through Facebook, some people will express <u>their</u> feelings which relate to family sensitivity. For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends <u>may inform them</u> about her unhappiness, such as the husband not caring, not enough money. When the husband comes to know, there will be fighting. <del>In addition, this will also result in late marriage problems.</del>

	Furthermore, <del>this</del> Facebook addiction will also strike new relationships that lead them to stray from their marriage vows which can cause divorce. Many married women put their status “single” and this makes the husband angry. Statistics (NSTP, 2011) show that divorce rate is increasing among young couples in Malaysia. <del>Sometimes, family problems can be exposed via the Facebook. This will lead dispute amongst family members.</del> So, it is clear that Facebook addiction will destroy family relationships.
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After the peer-response session, the writers removed two sentences from the paragraph because the responders complained of too many details. The writers also provided better elaboration on how sharing personal information on the Facebook caused rifts in the family. *“For example, a young married woman chatting with her friends may inform them about her unhappiness, such as the husband not caring or not enough money. When the husband comes to know about this, there will be fighting.”* In addition, the writers also provided statistics on divorce in Malaysia, which improved the quality of the paragraph. Furthermore, the writers made some grammatical changes which were not discussed and ended the paragraph with a concluding remark. The writers claimed – *“we realized these problems when we were making changes to the draft”* (PRI 1). The implemented suggestions changed the revised paper because new information was added, existing information was removed, and points further elaborated. The peer-response activity improved the participants understanding of the writing, making it an effective means of learning. Ray (1999) reported that sharing work with peers enables them to know what their peers write about, thus, improving their own knowledge.

The participants in this study only accepted the feedback provided by the responders when they were certain it would improve their drafts (CO 3). *“We only included the peer-suggestion when we were sure it improved our draft”* (PRI 5), said Farina and Azmina from Group C. When a suggestion or feedback was extensively

discussed and agreed upon by the responders and writers, the probability of acceptance was higher. Naqiba and Siti from Group D added: *“During the peer-response session, we discussed the suggestions with the responders. We wanted to be very sure of their ideas before making the changes”* (PRI 7). Thus, a good understanding of the suggestions provided and agreement of both the writers increased the amount of peer-feedback incorporated into the drafts. In short, the acceptance and incorporation of the feedback depended on the understanding and agreement of the problem as well as understanding and agreement with the solution.

Further analysis revealed that most of the suggestions provided by the participants were directed at trouble-sources or problematic areas of the drafts. The participants also attended to content and language aspects. Notably, most of the suggestions were incorporated into the drafts. In the following example, Farina and Azmina, made several changes to their draft “Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use”.

First Draft	The advantage of credit card is it is easy to carry and also use. The user can used it in different countries. They do not have to change their money before going. The credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). So they can do online shopping at <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> .
Revised Paper	<u>One benefit</u> of credit card is it is easier to carry and use <u>compared to cash money</u> . The credit card allows the user <u>to use</u> it in different places. <u>For example, when they go to Australia for a holiday, they do not have to change their money.</u> The credit card <u>is accepted in Australia</u> . Other than that, the credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> . Without credit cards, they cannot do this.

By adding the phrase *‘compared to cash money’* the writers provided more details to their claim. They also provided an example: *‘For example when they go to Australia ...’*, and *‘Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as*

*mudah.com and Zalora*’ to effectively elaborate their point. The paragraph was ended with a new sentence: ‘*Without credit cards, they cannot do this*’. Finally, the grammatical change of ‘*can used*’ to ‘*to use*’ reflects subject-verb agreement correction. Clearly, the peer-response activity trained the participants to become better writers. In discussing their own and the other pairs’ drafts, the participants actively applied their knowledge about thesis statement, development of ideas and different types of organizations. The peer-response experience enabled the student-writers to put into practice the ideas about academic writing presented in textbooks. Discussion of ideas and language aspects helped them to discover alternatives to unclear aspects of their own drafts. This enabled them to read their own drafts from the perspective of an audience and how to examine their drafts for the purpose of revision (CO 8). All these resulted in self-revision.

Further analysis indicated that the changes made to the drafts were a combination of peer-initiated and writer-initiated. Trained peer-response enabled the student-writers to make changes that went beyond the scope of the peer feedback. The writers adopted the peer feedback selectively, indicating their sense of autonomy and having a right to decide what to revise. The training developed a social context within the groups to achieve independence of thought and the freedom to express. The participants were free to accept or not to implement a peer-suggestion, which could be the reason for not fully incorporating the feedback into their revision. This concurs with the view Dewey (1966), that one of the goals of collaborative learning is to prepare students for liberation. With this understanding of the sources of the changes to the revised drafts, the following section deals with how these changes affected the revision.

***Local and global changes.*** During most of the peer-response episodes, the participants offered criticisms or made suggestions about trouble-sources in each other's drafts (CO 5). These suggestions were either at global or local levels. Global and local level feedbacks have been associated with writing improvement (Miller, 2003). Global-level suggestions are related to organization and content problems in the drafts while local issues are concerned with word level problems - semantic or syntactic, punctuation, sentence-level problems like using correct transitions, combining sentences and other matters related to academic writing conventions such as punctuation, spacing and citations. Global feedback had a greater effect on the overall quality of the revised paper when implemented. There were a higher percentage of global-level suggestions than local-level suggestions in this study. About 30 percent of the changes made correlated with local-level changes while 70 percent correlated with global-level changes. Thus, global level suggestions correlated to a higher number of positive changes than did local level suggestions. Table 4.2 provides the breakdown of local and global changes that were made to the revised drafts by the student-writers after the peer-response sessions.

Table 4.2

*Local and Global Changes*

	Essay	Level of Changes	
		Local %	Global %
1	Cause and Effects of Face Book Addiction	25	75
2	Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	30	70
3	Suicide among Teenagers	20	80
4	The Impact of Reality Programs on Television	35	65
5	Cause and Effects of Credit Card Use	30	70
6	Teenage Shopaholics	25	75
7	Obesity among Teenagers	30	70
8	Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	20	80
	Total	26.8%	73.2%

The participants focused mainly on global-level aspects during the revision process. This is because they were told to focus on the major problems in the drafts and leave the editing to the final stage. Paulus (1999) reported more global changes compared to local changes. Miao, Richard and Yu (2006) claimed that the student-writers' poor linguistic abilities resulted in lower global level changes. In the following episode, the responders offered the writers local-level suggestions:

Title	The Impacts of Reality Programs on Television
First Draft	Firstly, the producers of reality programmes should <u>have</u> guidelines for the competitors. This will avoid unhealthy competition among the <u>participants</u> . For example, they can invite motivators to their shows to <u>give some talk</u> to the competitors. By having the talk, the competitors are exposed to the <u>affects</u> of unhealthy competition.
Feedback	<i>R1: Okay, here ... "should <u>have</u> guidelines", I think must be set guidelines.</i> <i>R2: Yes, I checked in article ... must be "set".</i> <i>W2: Okay. Ada lagi? (Any more?)</i>



W1: Ain W2: Azira	<i>R1: Sometimes you gys say competitors, sometimes say “participants” (laughter)</i> <i>W1: Ooops... Okay! Okay! Mistake.</i> <i>R2: And here ... “give some talk” ... betul ke? (Is it correct?)</i> <i>W2: Maybe advise?</i>
R1: Aishah R2: Kamaliea	<i>R1: Yes, yes... advice. This one pulak ... is effects, not affects.</i> <i>W1: I don’t know which one is right? (laughter)</i> (PR Session 4)
Changes made to the draft	Firstly, the producers of reality programmes should <u>set</u> guidelines for the competitors. This will avoid unhealthy competition among the competitors. For example, they can invite motivators to their shows to advise the competitors. By having the talk, the competitors are exposed to the <u>effects</u> of unhealthy competition.

The participants discussed problems at both the local and global levels through ongoing engagement and interaction. The writers in this example benefitted from the local-level suggestions. Even though the revised part of the paragraph did not display major changes, the local-level suggestions improved the flow and minimized errors. They also built meaning and clarified misunderstandings. They incorporated the suggestions into their revisions after careful considerations. When uncertain of the effectiveness of the suggestions, they just ignored them, even though they may have accepted it during the peer-response sessions. *“They gave a lot of suggestions. We accepted them during the peer-response session, but later decided not to add them into our revision”* (PRI 4), said Ain and Azira when asked why they did not incorporate some of the peer feedback. Thus, it is evident that the participants took the peer-response activity seriously and made good use of the learning opportunities it created to develop their understandings, not only of the peer response process but also of the writing itself.

The student-writers also benefited from global-level suggestions, such as the one that the following group discussed. This episode, an example of a global-level interaction, negotiated suggestions as the participants attempted to analyse the draft. They debated the overall organization of ideas.

Title	Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use
First Draft	The advantage of credit card is it is easy to carry and also use. The user can used it in different countries. They do not have to change their money before going. The credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). So they can do online shopping at <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> .
Feedback  W1: Farina W2: Azmina R1: Shahira R2: Rozaida	<p><i>R2: This point ... you just say easy to carry and use ... not very clear</i></p> <p><i>W1: Huh ... not clear?</i></p> <p><i>R1: Clear, but ... what to say ... add some more la</i></p> <p><i>W2: Add what?</i></p> <p><i>R2: Kan sir dah kata (the lecturer has said)... apa ... make it concrete.</i></p> <p><i>W2: How?</i></p> <p><i>R2: Like easie to carry and use compared to money ... then we ubderstand ... easy.</i></p> <p><i>W1: Ohhh ... okay ... okay. Ya, better. Thank you.</i></p> <p><i>W2: Thank you, thank you.</i></p> <p><i>R1: And also give some examples.</i></p> <p><i>W1: Where?</i></p> <p><i>R1: This part, where you say "different countries". Give example. Will be better.</i></p> <p>(PR Session 5)</p>
Changes made to the draft	One benefit of credit card is it is easier to carry and use <u>compared to cash money</u> . The credit card allows the user <u>to use</u> it in different places. <u>For example, when they go to Australia for a holiday, they do not have to change their money. The credit card is accepted in Australia.</u> Other than that, the credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> . Without credit cards, they cannot do all these activities.

The changes made to the draft improved the paragraph. By adding “*compared to cash money*” the writers provided more details to their claim. They also provided an example: “*For example when they go to Australia ...*”, and “*Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as mudah.com and Zalora*” to effectively elaborate the point. Furthermore, the writers ended the paragraph with “*Without credit cards, they cannot do all these activities.*” Paulus (1999) stated that global level changes play a more important role than local-level

changes in overall draft improvement. Furthermore, the grammatical change of ‘*can used*’ to ‘*to use*’ reflects a subject-verb agreement correction. These findings show that global changes were more frequent in the revisions. Results on local and global changes show that in Connor and Asenavage's (1996) and in this study, the student writers’ did indeed focus on both global and local aspects when revising their drafts. This is another benefit of the comprehensive training provided to the participants before the peer-response activity.

**Changes in length of draft.** The most significant change to the revised papers after the peer-response and revision process was an increase in length. This confirms the findings of previous studies (Abrams, 2003) that peer-response enhanced L2 production. In this study, the increase in the length of the revised drafts due to peer-response and self-revision. Haniza and Umami from Group A, who wrote on the causes and effects of early marriages said, “*After the peer-response session and revision, our essay became longer. This is because we added more ideas. We got most of the new ideas from our peers*”. The interactions during peer-response improved the participants language skills and this increased their confidence in writing. However, analysis of the post-revision data revealed that the participants did not incorporate all the peer feedback. Some were implemented while others were disregarded because they altered the writers’ intended meaning. Naqiba and Siti said, “*We did not include all their suggestions because they sometimes spoil our essay*” (PRI 7). Moreover, some of the feedback was confusing and not helpful for draft revision. Clearly, the peer-response activity provided the participants with an extra set of eyes and fresh perspectives through which they analysed their own drafts. They used the peer-response sessions for greater clarity of ideas and constructed new knowledge together. Caulk (1994), reported that 60 percent of the participants in his

study provided valid suggestions during the peer-response sessions. The table below provides details of the first drafts and the revised papers:

Table 4.3

*Changes in Length of Drafts*

Essay	First Draft		Revised Paper			
	Para	Words	Para	Changes	Words	Changes
Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction	6	839	6	Nil	966	+127
Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	6	883	7	+1	990	+107
Suicide among Teenagers	7	652	8	+1	852	+200
The Impact of Reality Programs on Television	7	834	7	Nil	1167	+333
Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use	7	851	7	Nil	743	-108
Teenage Shopaholics	6	615	7	+1	892	+277
Obesity among Teenagers	7	1054	6	-1	1132	+78
Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	5	671	5	Nil	767	+96

The writing task assigned to the participants required them to write an essay between 650 and 850 words. Most of them kept to the number of words, except for one pair that exceeded the word limit. There was no specific requirement for the number of paragraphs, even though participants were exposed to the ‘five-paragraph essay’ format during the training session. Only one writing-pair wrote a five-paragraph essay, three pairs wrote six paragraphs and the remaining four pairs wrote seven paragraphs. There were minimal changes in the number of paragraphs after the peer-response sessions. Three pairs added another paragraph while one pair reduced it from seven to six paragraphs. The others maintained the same number of paragraphs. As for the number of words, all the revised papers showed significant

increase. Seven out of the eight revised papers displayed an increase in the number of words ranging from 96 to 333. Only one revised paper had a slight reduction, from 851 to 743 words. This indicates the incorporation of new information into the drafts and reflects the participants' rethinking of the writing based upon the peer-feedback.

What caused these changes? Analysis of the written data revealed that the changes were caused by seven major categories, namely addition, deletion, substitution, permutation, distribution, consolidation and re-order. Addition is when new information was added to the drafts, deletion is when some of the existing information were removed, substitution is when some information is replaced with new ones, permutation is when the writers rephrased some information, distribution when the writers re-wrote the same information in larger chunks, consolidation is when writers put separate information together and re-order is when the writers moved some information in the revised paper. The following are examples of the types of changes made to the drafts after the peer-response sessions.

**Addition.** Most of the participants added new information to the revised papers based on the feedback provided during the peer-response sessions. Meaning changes, including micro or macro structure changes, affected the concepts and meaning by bringing new information to the draft. Microstructure changes were simple adjustments or elaborations made to the draft without affecting the overall gist of the text.

Title	<b>Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction</b>
First Draft	Facebook addiction has become a serious problem in Malaysia. Facebook users are teenagers, children and old folks. Facebook enables users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's pages and view each other's profile. According to Anderson (2011), ...
Feedback W1: Amira	<i>R1: You started by explaining about Facebook... errr .. like who uses it and mmm... what they do. Then you have the citation. But... we think you should explain more.</i>

W2: Aqila R1: Hanieza R2: Ummi	R2: <i>Ya, like put in more information to make it interesting.</i> W2: <i>Add what ah ...</i> R1: <i>There is no argument. You just saying the problem.</i> R2: <i>Maybe can add how people should use Facebook... the right way.</i> W2: <i>Oh, okay.</i> (PR Session 1)
Changes made to the First Draft	Facebook addiction has become a serious problem in Malaysia. Facebook users are children, old folks and most of them are teenagers. <u>Based on a study by Reynaldo (2011), 60 percent of teenagers spend an hour daily on Facebook.</u> Facebook is popular because it enables users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's pages and view each other's profile.

In this example, the writers were reminded that their supporting details had to be revised by adding more concrete details. Talking through the issues of finding appropriate concrete details seemed to make all the difference and the writers made significant changes in this area. The responders also pointed out to the lack of argument in the paragraph because the writers did not mention why Facebook addiction was a serious problem. In response, the writers included findings of a study that claims, “*Sixty percent of the teenagers spend an hour daily on Facebook*” which resulted in some changes. The responders highlighted the lack of argument without providing any suggestions. It was the writers who came up with the appropriate citation, making it a writer-initiated revision. One of the writers said, “*They told us our paragraph lacked argument. We agreed. So, we added some new information*” (PRI 1). New information was usually in the form of examples, further explanations and citations.

**Deletion.** However, not all the changes to the revised papers resulted in addition. Even though the peers provided additional information to the writers, there were also instances when they deleted some information. In the following example, the writers deleted some information on the advice of the responders.

Title	Causes and Effects of Early Marriages
First Draft	These parents are afraid their children will be involved in immoral activities <del>as they are exposed to premarital sex and pregnancy in society every day. Going to parties excessively, smoking and drinking are examples of what a social person can be.</del> Young adults these days cannot differentiate between <u>sin and good deeds</u> . Ratna Osman (2011) acting Executive Director of Sisters in Islam said that parents marry off their young daughters to prevent them from committing sins.
Feedback  R1: Amira R2: Aqila W2: Ummi	<i>R1: Look at this sentence ... Going to parties excessively, smoking and drinking are examples of what a social person can be. Why explain about the social person?</i> <i>R2: You have already said ... here ... they are exposed to premarital sex and pregnancy in society every day. That's enough what.</i> <i>W2: We wanted more examples ... to make it better.</i> <i>R1: Well, your decision. But we feel it's enough.</i> <i>(PR Session 2)</i>
Changes made to the Draft	These parents are afraid their children will be involved in immoral activities. They are exposed to premarital sex and teenage pregnancy in society every day. Moreover, teenagers these days cannot differentiate <u>between good and bad</u> . Ratna Osman (2011) acting Executive Director of Sisters in Islam said that parents marry off their young daughters to prevent them from <u>immoral activities</u> .

In this example, the responders felt that the definition of a social person – ‘*Going to parties excessively, smoking and drinking are examples of what a social person can be*’ was not necessary because the writers had already mentioned it earlier in the paragraph. Therefore, the writers deleted this information and the result was an improvement in the flow of ideas in the paragraph. The rest of the comments were related to accepting or rejecting peer feedback, doing self-evaluation, or simply talking about the draft. Information in the first draft that was deleted involved unrelated examples, repetition of information and citations that were not relevant.

**Substitution.** The student-writers also substituted some existing information in the draft with suggestions provided during the peer-response sessions. They included new information into the draft. Min (2006) reported that the participants

brought in some new information to the revised text and at the same time, some existing information was removed after the peer-response sessions. These types of changes are considered surface changes. Typically, the order of a sentence is rearranged without involving any meaning changes or a tense aspect changed from the present to the past tense. Text-based changes have more impact on meaning and consequences for the overall text.

Title	Suicide among Teenagers
First Draft	Some teenagers come from broken homes. Their parents maybe divorced or <del>not living together</del> . <del>As a result, the teenagers feel depressed and embarrassed towards their friends and community, especially when they see other happy families. Therefore, they resort to suicide.</del>
Feedback: R1: Ain R2: Azira W1: Aishah W2: Kamalia	<i>R1: Topic sentence short and clear ... nice.</i> <i>R2: But, the reason you guys gave here is not logical. Parents divorce, so children commit suicide?</i> <i>W1: They feel depressed and embarrassed.</i> <i>R1: But not a strong reason to commit suicide. Maybe you guys must think of something. Like ...</i> <i>R2: Child abuse?</i> <i>W2: No, like parents get married again ... how? You guys like?</i> (PR Session 3)
Revised Paper	Some teenagers come from broken homes. Their parents maybe divorced or <u>living separately</u> . In some cases, the mother may get married again. The step- father may not be a loving person. He may abuse the step-children. Even sexual abuse. The teenagers cannot adapt to the new relationship and may commit suicide.

Farina and Azima responded with a positive feedback by praising the topic sentence “*Some teenagers come from broken homes*” which was short and clear. Then they got down to what had to be improved. They started by giving suggestions on improving the examples to make the paragraph more interesting. As the discussion progressed, they softened the impact and directness of their criticism by adding, “*How? You guys like our suggestion?*” Because of the feedback, the writers substituted the supporting detail - “*As a result, the teenagers feel depressed and embarrassed towards their friends and community, especially when they see other*



*happy families.*” to the one suggested by the responders. Substitutions were common in most of the drafts. When the writers were convinced that the suggestions provided by the responders would improve their draft, they willingly made the changes.

**Permutation.** Permutation resulted in changes to the drafts. After the feedback sessions, the writers rephrased some information in their drafts to improve cohesiveness and unity. This was done in response to the suggestions provided by the responders. It involved the rearrangement of words or phrases but retained the original meaning. *“When they read out our draft, they said the sentence was not nice. So, we changed it the way they suggested”* (PRI 4). While reading the drafts, some responders were not comfortable with some of the words or phrases and advised the writers to rephrase them. The following example shows how the responders commented on a sentence because *‘it did not sound nice to them’*. However, they did not offer any suggestions for revision.

Title	The Impact of Reality Programs on Television
First Draft	<u>Last time young children loved to watch cartoons.</u> However, nowadays they are changing from cartoons to watching reality shows. This brings negative impacts on the children and teenagers.
Feedback W1: Ain W2: Azira R1: Aishah R2: Kamalia	<i>R2: I get your idea, but the sentence ... not nice la ... What do you think?</i> <i>R1: Yup, like not clear. May be you guys must refer to your articles for some ideas.</i> <i>W2: But what's wrong? Change what?</i> <i>R1: Yang last time tu... Pelik sikit (A little odd)</i> <i>W1: Oh, so we change that ...</i> <i>R2: Join the sentence, maybe ...</i> (PR Session 4)
Changes made to the draft	Young children nowadays are quickly switching from watching cartoons to watching reality shows. As a result, they are involved in unhealthy activities such as bullying and violent behaviour.

The responders commented on the first sentence *‘Last time young children loved to watch cartoons’*. Even though they found it odd, they were unable to

provide suggestions for correction. The writers, Ain and Azira, understood the responders' concern and tried to make some changes. They replaced that sentence with '*Young children nowadays are quickly switching from watching cartoons to watching reality shows*'. Ain said, "*We too found that sentence a little odd – especially the 'Last time'. So, we changed it*" (PRI 3). According to Paulus (1999), meaning-preserving changes paraphrase existing concepts without altering the essential meanings. By including new information, the writers effectively improved this paragraph in terms of content and structure.

**Distribution.** In some drafts, the student writers included too much information in one sentence which resulted in confusion. The responders suggested to the writers to break up the long sentences to make them easily understood. In the following example, the writers revised some information in larger chunks in order to make it clearer.

Title	Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use
First Draft	Credit card companies will charge an enormous amount of interest on each balance they do not settle at the end of the month and this is how most people in the world get into debt and even bankrupt (Economy Watch, 2009). Based on Bank Negara report (2007) 47 people are declared bankrupts every day.
Feedback W1: Farina W2: Azmina R1: Shahira R2: Rozaidah	<i>R1: You have 2 citations one after another. Maybe you should add more information here.</i> <i>R2: Ya ... macam (like) explain in your own words. And Sir (lecturer) said don't end the paragraph with a citation.</i> <i>W2: Oh ... banyak ni (that's quite a lot to change).</i> <i>R2: Make it simple lah ... easy to understand.</i> <i>W1: Okay.</i> (PR Session 5)
Changes made to the draft	Credit card companies will charge high interest on the balance which the user does not settle at the end of the month. This is how most people in the world get into debt and even bankrupt (Economy Watch, 2009). <u>This problem is already happening in our own country, Malaysia.</u> Based on Bank Negara report (2007) 47 people are declared bankrupts every day. <u>This is very serious and can affect the economy. Besides, it will also cause social problems such a domestic violence and divorce will rise.</u>

In this example, the writers provided two citations, one after another. Therefore, the responders advised them to include their own explanation in between the two citations. The revised version appeared much clearer. There were also instances when the responders provided suggestions in the form of questions like *“How about explaining this in your own words?”* At other times, a simple response like *“Okay”* would be given but nothing was incorporated in the final draft (CO 4). When the writers were questioned about not making the change, they explained: *“the responders merely told us to change the word without giving any suggestions”* (PRI 4). This type of episodes did not result in many changes to the drafts.

**Consolidation.** Based on the feedback provided, some of the writers merged separate pieces of information together to improve the flow and sense relationship in a sentence. For example, the elements from two text segments were combined into one complex sentence instead of two simple sentences. Some drafts had too many short and simple sentences because the writers were not good at using sentence connectors. In the following example, the writers, Shahira and Rozaida, used too many short sentences in their first draft. Because of the feedback, they combined some of the simple sentences into compound or complex sentences.

Title	Teenage Shopaholics
First Draft	To begin with, addiction to shopping affects the teenagers mentally. They always thinking of shopping. Due to their addiction to shopping they tend to find ways to get money. They don't think of the consequences. Like they borrow from other people to go shopping. As students they should use the money to buy books and others.
Feedback	R2: <i>In you second paragraph, you have too many short sentences. Look at this part ...</i> R1: <i>Join using sentence connectors.</i> W2: <i>How?</i>
W1: Shahira	W1: <i>Help la ... (laughter)</i>
W2: Rozaida	R2: <i>Macam mana ya (Let's see...)</i>
R1: Farina	R1: <i>This 2 sentences – “They always thinking of shopping. Due to their addiction to shopping they tend to find ways to get money”.</i>

R2: Azmina	<i>Can join what!</i> <i>W2: Mmmmm ... As they are always thinking of shopping, they find ways to get money... boleh? (Can?)</i> <i>R2: Boleh kot ... (Sounds okay).</i> (PR Session 6)
Changes made to the draft	To begin with, addiction to shopping affects the teenagers mentally. <u>Shopping is always in their mind</u> and they find ways to get money without thinking of the consequences. <u>For example</u> , they borrow from other people to go shopping. Studies show that some are even involved in prostitution (Serdang OCPD, 2011). As students they should just focus on their studies like doing assignment and studying for exam.

The first draft shows incompetence in writing. The writing is disorganized, underdeveloped, has very few details and numerous errors in sentence structure. The revised draft demonstrated some changes to the sentence structure. Although some parts were still inadequately organized, most of the paragraphs were well organized and used some additional details to support the main idea. However, the revised draft still had some inappropriate choice of words and errors in sentence structure.

**Re-order.** Some writers moved information from one part of the draft to another at the request of the responders to improve the flow of ideas. However, such reordering did not result in changes in meaning and length of the drafts.

Title	Obesity among Children
First Draft	Firstly, parents must set good example for the sake of their children. They must show a good eating behaviour that children can <del>copy and</del> learn from their parents because children will make their parents as their role model. During meal time they must show what healthy food to eat.
Feedback W1: Naqiba W2: Siti R1: Izuan R2: Ibrahim	<i>R2: In this paragraph, you are giving suggestion to solve obesity.</i> <i>W2: Yes, we want parents to become role model.</i> <i>R1: Okay but ... in paragraph 3, you said parents should cook healthy food at home. Here ... This point must go here ... how ... okay or not?</i> <i>W1: Maybe okay, we try later.</i> (PR Session 7)

Changes made to the draft	Firstly, parents must set good example for their children. They must show a good eating behaviour that children can learn from them. All children will make their parents as their role model. During meal time, they must show what healthy food to eat. <u>Furthermore, parents must cook healthy food at home instead of buying fast food like burger or hotdog.</u>
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In this Group D discussion, the responders told the writers that they had to improve the organization, in accordance with the problem-solution nature of the essay. This was a very important piece of feedback that would have resulted in significant changes to the draft. The responders emphasized several times that the writers should implement this change. Since the responders could explain explicitly where the paragraph should be moved to, the writers could implement it. Thus, their final draft had six body paragraphs that were well connected.

Microstructure and macrostructure changes also affected concepts and meanings by bringing new information to the draft. Microstructure changes are simple adjustments or elaborations made to draft without affecting its overall gist, while macrostructure change involve the overall direction and gist of the draft. The incorporation of feedback into the revised drafts generated changes in idea development, sufficiency, organization of information and grammar.

Other changes made to the revised drafts were also analysed. They involved punctuation, word, phrase, sentence and paragraph. The results of the proportions of peer-feedback incorporated into the revisions by the participants yielded the following distribution:

Table 4.4

*Types of Change*

Essay	Number of Changes Made					
	Punctuation	Word	Phrase	Sentence	Para	Total
Cause and Effects of Face Book Addiction	5	14	8	10	2	39
Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	8	12	12	7	0	39
Suicide among Teenagers	7	13	9	8	2	39
The Impact of Reality Programs on Television	8	12	11	12	2	45
Cause and Effects of Credit Card Use	5	11	8	9	0	33
Teenage Shopaholics	7	15	9	8	2	41
Obesity among Teenagers	9	17	8	10	0	44
Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	6	25	10	9	0	50
<b>Total</b>	55	119	75	73	8	330

In all the revised papers, the most frequent change was at the word level, involving choice of words in context. Participants using the Microsoft Word while drafting the essay could be a reason for this. As one participant, Amira, said: “*When paraphrasing, we use the “Synonyms” or “Look Up” functions to look for other suitable words*” (PRI 1). Changes made to transition words also came under this category. This was followed by phrase and sentence level changes. Changes to symbols involved punctuation marks. Only eight changes were made at the paragraph level. This involved reorganizing paragraphs, adding new paragraphs and removing existing paragraphs. This indicates that the participants were thorough in their feedback and considered all aspects of writing during the peer-response sessions. The next section will look why the student-writers decided to incorporate some feedback and discard others during the revision process.

**Used and unused feedback.** Hyland (1998) divided feedback offered during the peer-response sessions into usable and unusable feedback. Feedback which could be used in their revision was categorized as usable feedback while evaluations or positive reinforcement statements were categorized as unusable feedback. The responders provided both usable and unusable feedback, some of which were used in the revision and some were ignored. Unusable feedback usually transpired during “off-task” episodes, when participants discussed issues not directly related to the topic. The more constructive the feedback, the more likely the writers considered them as useable. However, some writers reported not getting sufficient feedback to revise content and form aspects due to the responders’ insufficient writing competence. In the following example, Sahira and Rozaidah used the peer-feedback to make changes to their draft “Teenage Shopaholics”. The responders raised the problem of unclear focus through requests for clarification, non-comprehension and suggestions to make the draft clearer. The writers responded by explaining and offering their own solutions, mostly concerning organization. Most of the suggestions were implemented in the revision because the student-writers felt they would improve their draft.

Title	Teenage Shopaholics
First Draft	Many teenagers are becoming shopaholics. Sales at mall really make them happy. Nothing will stop them from buying any item they want. However, sometimes they bought things which are not necessary. A survey by Seventeen Maganine in 2009, revealed that only 22 percent of teenagers said that the economy has little to no effect on their shopping behaviours. This problem affects teenagers mentally and lack of self-control in spending. However, this problem can be solved by parents giving more attention to their children; teenagers should learn how to shop with limited allowance and giving priority to moral and also religious education.

Feedback W1: Shahira W2: Rozaida R1: Farina R2: Azmina	<i>R2: I think you guys must give definition for “shopaholic”. Make it clear.</i> <i>W1: Oh, okay. Where to put ... errr?</i> <i>R2: Here, after the first sentence.</i> <i>W2: Yes, good. We forgot.</i> <i>R1: Thesis statement ... very long la ... confusing.</i> <i>W1: Yes, we actually wanted to change, but forgot.</i> <i>W2: Yes, we will change that.</i> <i>R1: Like just say it is a problem but can be solved. Easier that way...</i> (PR Session 6)
Changes made to the draft	Many teenagers are becoming shopaholics. <u>Shopaholics are individuals who engage in the act of compulsive shopping because it fulfils a need which rarely has anything to do with the items they have purchased (Webber, 2011).</u> [Teenagers nowadays are attracted to branded items that they think they must have, even though they are not necessary.] A survey by Seventeen Maganine in 2009, revealed that only 22 percent of teenagers said that the economy has little to no effect on their shopping behaviours. <u>Being a shopaholic affects teenagers in several ways. Therefore, action must be taken to solve this problem.</u>

In response to the suggestions to improve the attention getting device, Sahira and Rozaidah made changes to their introductory paragraph and made the thesis statement clearer. This example represents a change in the structure of the thesis statement that would enable the readers to have a better idea of what the writers were going to discuss in the essay. The writers also included a definition for the word ‘shopaholic’ which improved the quality of the paragraph. However, they also deleted two sentences in the paragraph: ‘Sales at malls really make them happy’ and ‘Nothing will stop them from buying any item they want’. During the post-revision interview, the writers, Sahira and Rozaidah, said: *“When we put in the definition of “shopaholic” we felt this was not necessary any more. It was like over-explaining”* (PRI 6). The discussion influenced the writers to make the changes to improve the paragraph. As Gass and Mackey (2006) pointed out, the participants were able put into practice their existing knowledge and the new knowledge acquired from the



more capable peers in the group. When a suggestion or feedback was extensively discussed and agreed upon by the responders and writers, the probability of acceptance was higher. A good understanding of the suggestions provided and agreement of both the writers increased the amount of peer feedback incorporated into the drafts. However, the acceptance and incorporation of the feedback depended on the understanding of the problem, understanding of the solution, agreement with the problem and agreement with the solution.

As for the quality of the feedback, the responders tried to provide usable suggestions. Analysis of the peer-response transcripts revealed that most of the suggestions were directed at trouble-sources or problem areas. Most of these suggestions turned out to be positive because the revisions could improve the drafts. Furthermore, the participants attended to both content and language use in their response. The peer-response activity established the social context for the development of cognitive processes necessary for revision (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) and developed revision strategies which crucial for the development of writing skills' (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992).

***Reasons for not using feedback.*** Collaborative learning prepares students for liberation (Dewey, 1966). This goal was achieved by developing a social context within the groups that encouraged independence of thought and freedom of expression. The participants were trained to be independent even though peer-response is a group activity. They were free to accept or decline a peer-suggestion. This could be the reason some participants were selective in implementing the feedback during revision.

Despite the positive attitude shown by the participants towards the activity and the value of the feedback, analysis of the peer-response transcript and the written drafts revealed that some writers did not act upon the peer suggestions. Min (2006) reported lack of time as a possible reason. However, the participants in this study had one week after the peer-response sessions for revision. Moreover, some of the problems raised during the peer-response sessions were simple issues that could have been revised easily. So, why was some of the peer suggestions not incorporated into the revised drafts?

The post-revision interview revealed several reasons for not acting on the suggestions for revision. Firstly, as stressed during the training, the student-writers knew that they had the final say on this matter. Farina and Azmina, who wrote on the Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use, made this point clear during the post-revision interview. They said: *"Just because they suggested something, doesn't mean we have to put it in our draft. Sometimes we didn't like the suggestion. So, we did not include them in our revision"* (PRI 5). Secondly, during the post-revision interview, some participants said they did not have enough time to make the changes because some of the changes required further research and were time consuming. To solve the problem, some participants removed the part that required changes. Hanieza and Umi said: *"Their suggestion was good, but we couldn't just put it in. We had to change the whole paragraph. So, we did not do it"* (PRI 2). Other reasons given were the suggestions did not make sense, too difficult to incorporate or because one of the writers disagreed to the suggestion. Aqila said *"I liked the suggestion, but my partner, Amira, didn't like it. So, we decided not to implement it"* (PRI 1). When given a suggestion to add a more technical vocabulary into the draft, Azira expressed her reluctance. *"I didn't change the word because I couldn't find anything suitable.*

*The responders did not give us any suggestion*” (PRI 4). Her partner, Ain, expressed a similar feeling: *“We didn’t know where to put them. I was also afraid I would put it in the wrong place and spoil the meaning”* (PRI 4). Since the participants had no prior experience working on multiple drafts, they did not see the need for revision.

The most common reason for not acting on a suggestion was a difference of opinion. For example, when Ummi suggested one of the sentences in the draft was too long, the writers, Amira and Aqila reasoned: *“We didn’t make the change because we wanted to put in more information”* (PRI 1). Clearly, the writers kept that sentence long on purpose and refused to make the change that was suggested. Amira also emphasized the importance of choice: *“I didn’t want to change the sentence because I wanted a variety, a mix of long and short sentences in my essay. That’s what we learnt during the training”* (PRI 1). Interestingly, the problem of hurting or offending the responders’ feelings did not arise.

In some episodes, the writers received some helpful feedback but did not make the necessary changes. It was found that these groups did not negotiate the feedback and there was not much interaction. Such groups had a tendency for not implementing the suggestions that were offered. In contrast, groups that made significant changes had discussed the suggestions thoroughly with the group members. When the writers received constructive comments, they were more inclined to view the feedback as beneficial and incorporate them into their revision. Writers who did not receive enough concrete feedback to revise content and form due to their responders’ low language competence were reluctant to do so. Aishah and Kamalia who wrote on ‘Suicide among Teenagers’ made the following comments: *“We used their suggestions because they were useful and constructive. For example, they corrected many of our sentence connectors. Also, we had some*

*misspelled words which the computer did not highlight. We also had some punctuation problems. All these were discussed during the peer-response session”* (PRI 3). To provide usable feedback, first, the responders detected a problem in the draft. Then they diagnosed the problem and discussed ways to fix it. This was described clearly to the writers. Evidence from Wooley, et al. (2008) supports the need to practice detecting and diagnosing problems for students to receive greater learning benefits.

In some groups, the participants’ average language proficiency hindered proper understanding of suggestions for revision offered by their peers. They could not effectively incorporate the peer-feedback into their revision. They needed longer time to effectively benefit from the peer-response activity. Some participants reported that the limited amount of time available for interaction affected understanding the intended meaning of the feedback (Wang, 2014). However, some writers could make significant changes to the major issues in the drafts. They addressed real issues in the drafts and the feedback provided was relevant and beneficial for revision. Feedbacks that were implemented resulted in changes and some unused feedback could have made the draft better.

Some participants were unable to keep track of the feedback provided during the peer-response sessions. They engaged in long discussions about a draft and made several suggestions, but realized that they could not remember some of them. *“We know they said something. We talked about it. But later, we forgot”* (PRI 7). To overcome this problem, some groups wrote down the suggestions in their drafts but still forgot to implement them. Moreover, some suggestions were unclear and troublesome to be implemented. *“We were unable to include their suggestions because they were very complicated. So, we just left them”* (PRI 4). Thus, some

writing pairs made very minimal changes or refused to make any changes to their drafts. Nystrand (1986) termed this as “inertia about discourse”, where the writers did not seem interested in the suggestions provided. However, most of the participants were receptive to the suggestions and made the changes.

The implementation of feedback into the revision also depended on whether the participants negotiated the item actively. The negotiation process reinforced understanding, which is a crucial factor for revision. As one participant put it “*Our responders could identify the problem but could not tell us how to make revisions. For example, they tell us that a sentence must be rephrased but could not tell us in detail how to do it*” (PRI 5). Such comments did not induce any changes to the drafts because a one-time meaning negotiation did not allow a strong retention of the lexical item.

**Initiating own changes.** Not all the changes made to the revised paper were due to peer-feedback. Some participants initiated their own changes and they occurred at various levels. In the following example, Farina and Azmina made several changes to their draft Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use:

First Draft	The advantage of credit card is it is easy to carry and also use. The user can used it in different countries. They do not have to change their money before going. The credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). So they can do online shopping at <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> .
Revised Paper	<u>One benefit</u> of credit card is it is easier to carry and use <u>compared to cash money</u> . The credit card allows the user <u>to use</u> it in different places. <u>For example, when they go to Australia for a holiday, they do not have to change their money. The credit card is accepted in Australia.</u> Other than that, the credit card allows a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2010). Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as <i>mudah.com</i> and <i>Zalora</i> . Without credit cards, they cannot do this.

The changes made to the revised paper improved the quality of the paragraph. By adding '*compared to cash money*' the writers provided more details to their claim. They also provided an example '*For example when they go to Australia ...*', and '*Nowadays, most people are interested in online shopping, such as mudah.com and Zalora*' to effectively elaborate their idea. The writers also ended the paragraph with an extra sentence: '*Without credit cards, they cannot do this*'. Finally, the grammatical change of '*can used*' to '*to use*' reflects subject-verb agreement.

Peer-response enhanced writing ability because in discussing their own and their group members' drafts, the student-writers were exposed to different writing styles. The peer-response experience provided an opportunity to put into practice the ideas gained during the interactions. These discussion of ideas enabled the student-writers discover alternatives to unclear aspects of their own writing. Providing feedback also taught them to read a draft through the eyes of an audience. This helped to develop a better sense of how to read their own drafts from the perspective of an audience, what questions to ask and how to examine their drafts for revision. All these resulted in self-revision.

**Functions of revision.** What functions did the changes play in reshaping the revised drafts? Five different functions emerged during the data analysis, namely (a) grammatical; (b) cosmetic; (c) texture; (d) unnecessary expressions and (e) explicator. Table 4.5 shows the number of changes made to each of the functions in the revised paper.

Table 4.5

*Functions of Revision*

Essay	Number of Changes Made					Total
	Grammar	Cosmetic	Texture	Unnecessary Expressions	Explicator	
Cause and Effects of Face Book Addiction	7	2	7	2	3	21
Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	11	1	5	1	1	19
Suicide among Teenagers	8	3	5	0	3	19
The Impact of Reality Programmes on Television	8	0	6	0	2	16
Cause and Effects of Credit Card Use	12	2	4	1	4	23
Teenage Shopaholics	10	1	6	2	1	20
Obesity among Teenagers	8	1	8	1	3	21
Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	11	1	4	0	2	18
<b>Total</b>	75	11	45	7	19	157

**Grammatical.** This refers to changes made to the drafts to make them grammatically correct. Grammar revisions predominated in all the peer-response interactions and revised drafts. They involved correction of articles, spelling, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, missing words, singular and plural, wrong word form, wrong word order, unnecessary words, preposition, conjunction, parallelism, run-on sentence, fragment, punctuation and capitalization. However, these changes did not alter the direction, overall structure or substantial content of the revised drafts. The following example illustrates the type of peer-feedback on grammatical errors:

Title	Causes and Effects of Early Marriages
First Draft	In nutshell, there are advantages and disadvantages of early marriages. The parents and the teenagers must know the effects of early marriages, before they carried on their plans. Early marriages these days occur for morality and honour of the family reasons. Also for the protection of the girls. However, there are some negative effects. Psychological effects, emotional effects and domestic violence are some of the negative effects. Therefore, parents must think carefully because it will affect the daughter's future. She must get married when she is ready.
Changes made to the draft	In <u>a</u> nutshell, there are <u>many</u> advantages and disadvantages of early marriages. <u>Firstly</u> , the parents and the <u>teenage girls</u> must know the effects of early marriages, before <u>they make the decision</u> . Early marriages these days take place for <u>moral reasons</u> and <u>family honour</u> . <u>It is also done</u> for the protection of the girls. However, there are some negative effects such as <u>psychological, emotional and physical</u> . <u>Domestic violence is the most serious negative effect</u> . Therefore, parents must think carefully because it will <u>affect</u> the daughter's future. She must only get married when she is <u>physically and mentally</u> ready.

Even though the focus was on grammatical mistakes, interestingly, this episode also displayed other changes, some as a result of peer-feedback while others were writer-initiated. The writers initially had difficulty with the correct tenses and prepositions until the responders provided the correction. “*We accepted most of their suggestions because they were good like correcting our punctuation and grammar mistakes*” (PRI 2), said Umami, one of the writers. Grammatical changes were common because it related to issues or problems in the drafts.

**Cosmetic.** Cosmetic changes are changes made to the drafts to make it look better in terms of its organization and presentation. The importance of appropriate organizational patterns in academic writing was the focus of the teaching in this course - English for Academic Writing. Organization was also stressed during the training and included in the Peer Evaluation Checklist. Therefore, it was not surprising that the participants focused on this aspect in their discussion. They



included location of thesis statement, topic sentence and order of paragraphs in relation to the thesis statement and conclusion.

Title	Suicide among Teenagers
First Draft	Suicide among teenagers appears to be a serious problem in our country. According to <del>PDRM</del> , suicide is at seventh place <del>in</del> social problems <del>among youngsters</del> (NST, 2012). The other social problems are illegal racing, drug abuse, vandalism and others. Suicide rate among teenagers has increased drastically. Suicide is one of the ways for teenagers to overcome problems in life. When they can't face it, they commit suicide. Teenagers commit suicide for several reasons. However, the problem can be easily solved.
Revised Paper	Suicide among teenagers appears to be a serious problem in our country. <u>It is one of the ways for teenagers to overcome problems in life. When they can't face the problems, the commit suicide.</u> According to the <u>police record</u> , suicide is at seventh place <u>among</u> social problems <u>involving teenagers</u> (NST, 2012). The other social problems are illegal racing, drug abuse, vandalism and others. <u>The suicide rate among teenagers in Malaysia has increased drastically. It has increased by 60 percent in the last 50 years. Teenagers commit suicide due to relationship problems and high expectations from parents. However, the problem can be solved if teenagers taught how to manage problems and parents understand their children.</u>

The focus of the participants' interaction in this episode was on organization and ideas. The responders advised the writers to rewrite the thesis statement which did not provide enough details. They also wanted the attention grabber to be more interesting, such as providing recent statistics on suicide cases in Malaysia. This pattern, common in academic writing, was stressed during the training session. The responders also reminded the writers about the pyramid form for the introductory paragraph – from broad to narrow. *“Remember, sir asked to imagine the pyramid shape, from general to specific. So, you must discuss the general issue first, then move to specific, like the thesis statement”* (PR Session 3), said Azira to emphasize her point to the writers. The writers also sought the help of the readers on the

translation for PDRM. The other aspects included texture, that is making the text more coherent, removing unnecessary expressions such as too many examples or citations. The suggested changes, if implemented, would make the information in the drafts more explicit and improve clarity.

**Texture.** ESL student-writers focus on words and sentences instead of the whole discourse (Ferris & Hedgecock, 1998). Thus, their writing usually lacks cohesion and unity. Texture refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text which connects sentences to form a text instead of a series of statements. Texture enhances writing proficiency. They include pronouns, substitutions and conjunction. Interestingly, some of the participants in this study could identify parts of the draft that lacked cohesion and unity and provide suggestions for improvement, as can be seen in the following episode:

Title	Teenage Shopaholics
First Draft	Some of the teenagers are influenced by the advertisements they see. The teenagers are exposed to many advertisements every day. They see the advertisements on television, newspapers and magazines. So the teenagers want to buy what they see in the advertisements. And they go shopping every day.
Feedback W1: Shahira W2: Rozaida R1: Farina R2: Rozaidah	<i>R1: In this paragraph you guys are discussing the influence of advertisements.</i> <i>W2: Yes, teenagers are influenced by the advertisements. They become shopaholics.</i> <i>R2: Ya, good point. But ...</i> <i>W1: But what? (Laughter)</i> <i>R2: Ya, macam tak sedap baca (Not nice to read).</i> <i>W1: Ya ka? (Is it?) Why?</i> <i>R1: I think the word teenagers, repeated many times. Use they la ...</i> (PR Session 6)
Revised Paper	Some of the teenagers are easily influenced by the advertisements on the mass media every day. For example, they watch advertisements on television, see in newspapers and magazines. As a result, they are influenced. They want to buy what they see in the advertisements. So they become shopaholics.

The responders highlighted the lack of coherence and unity in the paragraph. They commented on the frequent use of the word ‘teenagers’ and lack of transition words. They advised the writers to use pronouns and conjunctions to improve the paragraph. “*After they told us about the problem, we also felt the paragraph was not nice to read*”, said Shahira, one of the writers. Her partner, Rozaida added, “*They told us to use “they” and also corrected some sentence connectors*” (PRI 6). Since both the writers understood the problem in the draft and accepted the peer suggestions, they implemented the changes.

**Unnecessary expressions.** Some student-writers used unnecessary expressions that did not contribute much to the draft. They did not have the readers in mind while drafting. For example, they used details that were obvious to the readers. They also used additional words or phrases that did not add meaning to the sentence. Such words and phrases, even though meaningful in the appropriate context, could be easily eliminated. Sometimes, they also repeated words with similar meanings that were not necessary. The following episode shows how the responders addressed this issue in the draft that was being discussed:

Title	Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults
First Draft	Some of these young adults do not have good religious studies. For example, in Islam pre-marital sex is sin or “haram”. They can be punished. In hudud, the punishment is they are killed by throwing stones at them. So it is important for all parents to teach religion to their children because it is against the religion to have sex before marriage. Those who have sex before marriage can be punished. So parents must know that teaching the children about religion when they are young is important.
Feedback	W1: We talk about the religious education to prevent pre-marital sex. R2: Ya, good. But you repeated some points. Here (reading aloud). R1: You have already said that before. So no need to say again. Take off. W2: Can, but our paragraph will be shorter. R2: You can add other points. Boring to read when you repeat the same point.

	<i>W2: Okay, we'll correct that part.</i> (PR Session 8)
Revised Paper	Pre-marital sex among young adults is caused by lack of religious education. In Islam pre-marital sex is a sin and can be punished. Under the hudud law, they can be killed by throwing stones at them. This punishment will be able to prevent pre-marital sex among the young adults in Malaysia.

In this interactive episode, the responders successfully convinced the writers that they must get rid of some unnecessary details, especially repetitions. Siti, found it difficult to read the draft because the writers were repeating the points about religious education. Even though the responders could highlight this problem in the draft, they were unable to provide a solution to the problem. They merely said “*take off that part*” and “*add other points*”. Thus, the revised part did not display significant changes. Blake (2000) stated that ESL learners may not be competent enough to provide solutions at the global-level. Despite the language constraints, this episode resulted in some positive changes to the revised paper.

**Explicator.** The message in a piece of writing should be conveyed in a clear and meaningful manner. If the readers can understand the message, the writer has succeeded in communicating it clearly. Similarly, ESL writers should also be able to share their thoughts effectively with their peers. Analysis of the data revealed that the participants in this study could convey simple messages clearly. However, when it involved complicated tasks, such as paraphrasing and summarizing information from multiple sources, they were unable to do so. In the following peer-response episode on obesity among children, the responders had difficulty understanding what the writers were trying to convey.

Title	Obesity among Children
First Draft	According to Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) fast food is the main cause of obesity among children. Fast food out-lets can be found everywhere. From the big cities to small towns.

	Children eat a lot of fast food nowadays. We can see KFC, PizzaHut, McDonalds and many more. Children love to eat pizza, burger and fried chicken. So children who eat fast food become obese. Fast food is also found in school canteens.
Feedback W1: Naqibaa W2: Siti R1: Izuan R2: Ibrahim	<i>R1: This paragraph (reading aloud the first sentence) is not very clear.</i> <i>R2: Ya, you guys say fast food make children obese. But you didn't explain how.</i> <i>W1: We gave the citation. CAP said that.</i> <i>R2: Ta, tapi (but) you must say why fast food causes obesity among children ... like ...</i> <i>R1: ... say fast food contains a lot of carbohydrates, fat and sugar. Your citation must be from a doctor, not CAP.</i> (PR Session 8)
Revised Paper	Children eat a lot of fast food nowadays. Fast food outlets can be found everywhere, from the big cities to small towns. We can see KFC, PizzaHut, McDonalds and many more fast food outlets everywhere in Malaysia. Some school canteens also sell fast food. Children love to eat pizza, burger and fried chicken. So parents give them money to buy the fast food. Fast food contains a lot of fat, carbohydrates and sugar. There are no vegetables or fruits. According to Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) fast food is the main cause of obesity among children.

The responders told the writers that the message in the first draft was not clear. The writers simply said that fast food causes obesity among children without explaining how. Therefore, to strengthen the argument, the responders suggested the writers to provide further support, such as: “Fast food contains a lot of fat, carbohydrates and sugar. There are no vegetables or fruits”. The writers made these changes so that their idea can be easily understood by the readers. However, they decided not to change the citation as suggested by the responders. “*We checked our article and found that CAP (Consumers’ Association of Penang) actually made that statement. So, we did not want to make the change. Besides, we didn’t have the time to look for another citation*” (PRI 7), said Naqiba, one of the writers. The participants worked collaboratively to ensure the draft was grammatically correct, appear better, more cohesive as well as coherent and get rid of unnecessary information.

## Summary

The interactions during the peer-response group sessions supported learning and engagement with the writing. Interactive, collaborative learning and process writing theories enabled the researcher to investigate the participants' interactions and how the process brought changes to the drafts. Analysis of the peer-response transcripts, written drafts, classroom observations, researcher field notes and post-revision interviews indicated that the trained peer-response activity resulted in the student-writers making significant changes to their written drafts. The activity created awareness of revision strategies among the participants, an important component in the development of writing skills. The peer-response sessions provided opportunities for the participants to explain and defend their writing.

The feedback provided during the peer-response sessions enabled the student-writers to think about the problems in the drafts and ponder over the errors. After further discussion and consideration, the participants made their own decisions on incorporating the peer feedback into their drafts. Some writing pairs incorporated more feedback than the others because their drafts needed more improvements, while others incorporated less due to fewer errors and problems. They used various strategies to deal with the lack of clarity in the feedback, which included further discussion with the peers.

The changes made to the drafts involved content and form. The participants commented on idea development, organization, grammar, mechanics and word choice. When incorporating the peer feedback into their revision, they accepted suggestions to improve idea development, sufficiency, organization of information and grammar. The reluctance to incorporate some of the feedback was due to dissatisfaction with quality. The degree of satisfaction with the quality of the

feedback co-related to the amount of peer feedback incorporated into the revised papers. The student-writers were also selective in incorporating the peer feedback. Interestingly, some writing pairs initiated their own revision after the peer-response session.

The next important question is whether the changes made to the drafts after the peer-response sessions actually resulted in successful revision.

**Research Question 3: How did the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions result in successful revisions in the subsequent drafts?**

This research question attempted to determine whether incorporation of feedback offered during the peer-response sessions resulted in successful revisions. The answers to this research question are supported by excerpts from the first drafts and the revised papers, writing scores as well as the participants' opinions. The effectiveness of the revision process was also determined by analysing the participants' thoughts on revising the draft and the possible factors that made their revision successful. A multiple-trait approach, similar to the one used by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), was used to assess the improvement to the revised papers after the peer-response sessions.

The first and second research questions revealed that during the revision process, most of the writing pairs relied heavily on their cognitive strategies. This involved reading the notes made during peer-response, remembering keywords, using mental planning, writing down new ideas, organizing existing ideas, drafting, rereading the draft and revising. Apart from making revisions according to the peer suggestions, the participants also initiated revisions by themselves, which might have been triggered by self-discovery, learning from peers' drafts or other factors. Most of

the participants felt that peer feedback was a source of inspiration for fresh ideas that enabled them to revise effectively. They also learned from their mistakes and were careful to not repeat the same mistakes while revising the final paper. Improving their writing, having a better understanding of their drafts, learning from their mistakes, getting more ideas and different points of view from their peers were among the benefits reported by the participants. A brief description of the participants' first draft and revised writing scores will indicate if the student-writers benefitted from the trained peer-response activity.

**Writing scores.** To determine if feedback during peer-response influenced the revision process, a difference score was calculated for each writing pair. The score obtained for the first draft was deducted from the final score to determine the overall writing quality that was rated with a modified testing instrument "Writing Scoring Guide" (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The components of the writing rubric measured included content, organization, word choice, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics. The first draft and the revised paper were marked for a total of 50 points each. Table 4.6 shows the participants' first draft and the revised paper scores.

Table 4.6

*Writing Score*

	<b>Essay</b>	<b>First Draft</b>	<b>Revised Paper</b>	<b>Difference In Score</b>
1	Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction	35	42	+7
2	Causes and Effects of Early Marriages	37	43	+6
3	Suicide among Teenagers	35	40	+5
4	The Impact of Reality Programs on Television	39	42	+3
5	Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use	33	38	+5
6	Teenage Shopaholics	31	37	+6
7	Obesity among Teenagers	32	38	+6
8	Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults	35	43	+8



The revised papers displayed improvements in overall quality, language, content and organization. These improvements correlated to the feedback incorporated into the revision. Min (2006) as well as Lundstrom and Baker (2009) also reported that when trained peer-response was instituted in an ESL composition course, the students' writing ability improved. All the writing pairs in this study increased their scores between three and eight marks. This suggests that the participants could provide and receive constructive feedback and make the necessary changes to improve their drafts. Hu (2005) also reported that ESL student-writers can provide very useful feedback on language, content and rhetoric. Some participants even felt that if they were given more time to work on their revision, they would have made further improvements to their drafts. One of the writing pairs, Farina and Azmina said: *"After the peer-response session, we had a lot of new ideas but did not have enough time to make all the changes. We had to submit the final draft after one week"* (PRI 5). Despite the time constraints and inability to implement all the feedback, the participants showed various levels of improvement in their revised papers.

Several factors contributed to the improvement in the writing scores. Since the participants were still in the process of learning English and their language skills were not well developed, there was much room for improvement. Moreover, the new skills they "picked-up" (as mentioned by one of the participants) during the peer-response training and peer-response sessions contributed to the improvement in their writing ability. One writing pair, Naqiba and Siti said, *"We learned a lot of new things about writing during the training and peer-response sessions. The responders also helped us a lot"* (PRI 7). Participants with a higher proficiency level had more experience with writing and editing, resulting in more improvement. This is because

during the peer-response activity, they stepped out of their own comfort zones to see what they had written through the eyes of the responders (Brown, 2001). They also discovered the impact of their writing on the thoughts of the readers (audience) and used the knowledge to further improve their drafts. This was possible because the participants were specifically trained to provide usable feedback and incorporate them into their revision.

All eight revised drafts exhibited various types of changes. While the participants benefited from the peer-response activities, they differed in how they understood and used the peer-feedback (Kamimura, 2006). Therefore, the changes made to the drafts were analysed based on whether they correlated to suggestions made during the peer-response sessions or whether they were writer-initiated. As discussed in Research Question 2, a large percentage of the changes were initiated during the peer-response sessions. There were also writer-initiated changes. However, the quantity of peer-responded and writer-initiated changes alone did not determine the quality of the revision. Therefore, the changes were rated according to the effect they had on the revised draft and whether they resulted in writing improvement. The following section provides an insight into the aspects of the writing that showed improvement.

**Improvement in the revised paper.** All the revised papers exhibited improvements in all areas of writing. They began with attention grabbers that captured the readers' interest and the content was adequate with suitable in-text citation and references. The writers provided ample elaboration for the points raised in the thesis statement and topic sentences in an interesting manner. However, according to the external raters recruited for this study, some ideas needed further clarification for better understanding and there were not much language gains. To

better understand the types of revisions that resulted in draft improvement, eight aspects related to writing improvements were individually analysed.

**Development.** Writing is concerned with developing a structure of meaning. What writers want to say become clearer and more complete in the actual writing and revising of the text for a purpose and audience (Haneda & Wells, 2000). Peer-response can have a positive effect on writing development because the student-writers can understand themselves as writers and feedback providers (Hu, 2005; Curtis, 2001). In this study, draft revision after the peer-response sessions led to greater clarity of ideas as the participants worked together to construct meaning. The student-writers came up with better thesis statements, more detailed supporting ideas, a stronger voice, and more critical analysis of their own writing and that of their peers. This was due to collaborative learning that flourished in the peer-response setting. The idea of using more and better examples was raised by several participants. Azira from Group B said, *“We were not good at explaining our ideas clearly, but they helped us to add more details which made our ideas better,”* while her partner, Ain, said: *“We used to have problems with giving good examples, but they helped us a lot”* (PRI 4). The ability to express ideas clearly was another aspect of writing development. Ummi said, *“When doing the revision, we could think of explanation and examples ...”* Hanieza added, *“Yes, I can express my ideas better now. I can add more information in the paragraph”* (PRI 2). The following excerpts from the first draft and revised paper on ‘Suicide among Teenagers’ explains this:

#### **First Draft:**

Teenagers commit suicide because parents have very high expectation of them. Being a parent is not a simple thing. Parents love their children and want the best for them. For instance, parents force their children to excel in academics. However, some children are not good in their studies and feel disappointed because they cannot make their parents proud.

### **Feedback:**

R2: *Your topic sentence... the controlling idea is 'parents have very high expectation(s) of them (their children)' but your supporting details are not clear.*

R1: *Yes, you must talk about the high expectations. Like force the children to be the best.*

R2: *Like scold them when they don't get As in all subjects.*

(PR Session 3: Suicide among Teenagers)

### **Revised Paper:**

Teenagers commit suicide because parents have very high expectations of them. Even though parents love their children and want the best for them, some parents put too much pressure on them. For instance, the parents want their children to excel in academics, sports and other activities. However, some children are not good in their studies or sports. When they cannot do what their parents want, they feel sad because they cannot make their parents proud.

The first draft lacked clarity in the topic sentence. Revising the controlling idea in the topic sentence improved the development and the information was presented in a more organized manner. The writers were also able to improve the paragraph by providing additional supporting details. Although not perfect, this example represents an improvement in the structure of the topic sentence and supporting details. By adding the expectations of parents, the readers (audience) will have a better idea of the effect on the children. This revision gave a much clearer picture of the writers' intentions.

**Grammar.** Another category of improvement identified in the revised papers was in sentence-level issues, especially morphology and syntax. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992), considered improved grammar as characteristics of improved text quality. Studies investigating the relationship between feedback and writing improvement have relied on the degree to which the revised draft was free from grammatical errors (Chandler, 2003).

All the revised papers in this study saw some grammatical improvement. Kamalia's comment best summarizes this point: *"We used to make a lot of grammar mistakes, almost in every other sentence. But they helped us to correct the problem"* (PRI 3). The correct use of verb-tense was the most specific grammar issue in the first drafts. Aishah said, *"During the peer-response session, the responders focused on our tenses. Most of the time we used the present tense, even though we were writing about something that had already happened. When revising, we changed all to past tense and present perfect tense"* (PRI 3). From Ain and Azira came this response, *"They helped to correct our mistakes. We made many 'have' and 'had' mistakes. Now less mistakes because they explained to us the difference"* (PRI 4). Shahira and Rozaida also felt their subject-verb agreement improved after the peer-response sessions. *"We didn't add the 's' for singular verbs. After they corrected our mistakes and explained to us, we make fewer mistakes"* (PRI 6). Farina and Azmina pointed to improvement in their knowledge of syntax. *"We learned to write longer sentences by joining ideas using sentence connectors"* (PRI 5). They further added *"Our responders also taught us how to make some of the sentences simple. So now we have variety in our paragraphs"* (PRI 5). The participants felt that grammatical revisions led to improvement and accuracy in the revised papers. The following first draft and revised paragraph from the essay "Obesity among Children" show the changes in terms of morphology and syntax improved the quality of the paragraph.

### **First Draft:**

The first cause of obesity among children is the easily availability of food. ~~This is because urbanization affects the eating style of people in some places.~~ Children who lives in the cities has so many food choices ~~such as snack, junk food and soft drinks.~~ According to Data Monitor (2005), all junk food can cause higher possibility of obesity among children. In addition increased fast-food outlets in some area make people become lazy ~~to eat nutritious food at~~

~~home~~. The outlet become popular among children because it is easy to have saving times. McDonald's and KFC are easily found everywhere. Fast food with high fat content could partly be responsible for the condition of the overweight (Mela & Rogers, 1993). Snack foods contain substantial amount of sweeteners, preservatives and other appealing ingredients such as chocolate and peanuts (Data Monitor, 2005). All this make children obese.

#### **Revised Paper:**

The first cause of obesity among children is the *easy availability of junk food*. Fast-food restaurants are found everywhere in Malaysia, especially in big towns and cities. McDonalds and KFC are easily found everywhere. Children who live in the cities have so many junk food choices. According to Data Monitor (2005), all junk food can cause higher possibility of obesity among children. In addition, increased fast-food outlets in some areas make people become lazy to cook food at home. These outlets become popular among children because they can buy food anytime. Fast food with high fat content could partly be responsible for the condition of the overweight (Mela & Rogers, 1993). Snack foods contain large amounts of sweeteners, preservatives and other appealing ingredients such as chocolate and peanuts (Data Monitor, 2005). All these make children obese.

In the revised paper, the writers made several corrections, involving tenses and subject-verb agreement. These minimised the number of grammatical mistakes and thus improved the quality of the paragraph. Grammatical revisions were found in all the revised papers, even though the participants were advised not to focus too much on this aspect. The responders corrected grammatical errors even though they did not affect the intended meaning. Thus, there were fewer grammatical mistakes in the revised papers.

**Organization.** Organization of information is an important criterion in determining text quality (Greene & Wiemelt, 1993; Sato, 1991). There were marked improvement in organizational aspects of the participants' revised drafts, which included a suitable title, introduction with a thesis statement, body paragraphs with topic sentences and a good conclusion. The participants closely followed the organizational structure of the writing assignment, which they were exposed to

during the training sessions. The revised papers also had in-text citations and references. The following introductory paragraph from the draft ‘Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction’ shows such improvement in organization:

### **First Draft**

Facebook addiction has become a serious problem in Malaysia. Facebook users are teenagers, children and even old folks. Facebook enables the users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other’s profile. People become addicted to Facebook because it has a lot of attractions and it is user-friendly. However, it affects their health and causes problems in family relationships. According to Anderson (2011), the writers of the book “Spending Hours Updating Your Status? You may be a Facebook Addict?” the average Facebook user spends one hour a day on the side and there are more than 500 Facebook addiction groups on the social networking site, where members discuss their affliction.

In this introductory paragraph, the writers, Amira and Aqila placed the thesis statement (*People become addicted to Facebook because it has a lot of attractions and it is user-friendly. However, it affects their health and causes problems in family relationships.*) in the middle of the introductory paragraph. This was highlighted during the peer-response session.

R1: Your intro(duction) is good. But you should explain why Facebook addiction is a serious problem. Like give some statistics.

R2: Where is your thesis statement?

W1: Here ... this one ... (reading).

R2: Why here ... must be last ... here.

R1: Yes, thesis must be the last sentence. Not the citation.

(PR Session 1: Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction)

The responders provided some valid suggestions to improve the organization of the introductory paragraph and the writers readily accepted them. They improved the organization by moving the thesis statement to the end of the paragraph. They also moved the definition to the top and provided some statistics to support their claim that Facebook addiction is becoming a serious problem in Malaysia.

## Revised Paper

Facebook enables the users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's profile. Facebook addiction is becoming a serious problem in Malaysia. More and more people like teenagers, children and even old folks are becoming addicted to it. This is affecting their lifestyle and health. According to Anderson (2011), the writers of the book "Spending Hours Updating Your Status? You may be a Facebook Addict?" the average Facebook user spends one hour a day on the side and there are more than 500 Facebook addiction groups on the social networking site, where members discuss their affliction. People become addicted to Facebook because it has a lot of attractions and it is user-friendly. However, it affects their health and causes problems in family relationships.

These changes improved the organization of the paragraph and made it more appealing. The responders comprehended the content of the paragraph and then suggested how to revise the problem. They focused on the organization aspects and not merely on surface structure. The writers also appeared to initiate their own changes which occurred at various levels of the draft and led to further improvement. These findings suggest that good organization can contribute effectively to overall writing improvement. Hansen and Liu (2005) reported that training students on organizational issues can increase the incorporation of valid suggestions into the revision.

**Cohesion.** The importance of coherence and cohesion were also focused during the peer-response training. The participants were aware of the different kinds of cohesive devices, namely reference, unity, conjunctions and repetition. They were also trained to identify lack of coherence and cohesion in the drafts and correct them to improve the writing. This is made clear in the following example on "Suicide among Teenagers".



### **First Draft:**

Next, teenagers can engage in activities that they enjoyed in the past even if it takes some effort to do so. If they were active in sports, they just have to get active back although it may need some time to get along with the environment. Teenagers who have depressions or feel like committing suicide can overcome their problems by making themselves busy such as doing interesting activities. It indirectly helps them to forget their problems. Dr. Kevin Caruso further adds that, endorphin or “happy” hormones will be released by doing such activities. Thus, this will lead them to think in positive ways and prevent suicide.

### **Revised Paper:**

Next, teenagers who have problems can engage in activities that they enjoy. It takes some effort but it will make them forget their problems. For example, if they are active in sports, they just have to get active by playing football or any other games. When they play games with their friends, they make themselves busy. Teenagers who have depressions or feel like committing suicide can overcome their problems by making themselves busy such as doing interesting activities. It indirectly helps them to forget their problems. Dr. Kevin Caruso further adds that, endorphin or “happy” hormones will be released by doing such activities. Thus, this will lead them to think in positive ways and prevent suicide.

The first draft was given a lower score because it reflected incompetence in writing. It was flawed by disorganization, underdevelopment, limited details and frequent errors in sentence structure. The revised draft received a much higher score because it demonstrates some competence at rhetorical and syntactic levels. Although some parts were inadequately organized, the paragraph was well written with concrete details to support the main idea. However, it still lacked details to support and illustrate the points. There are inappropriate choice of words and errors in sentence structure. The peer responders also focused on the use of transitional signals to link sentences and paragraphs to create unity and cohesiveness draft. During the post-revision interviews some responders made the following comments:

*“There was a lack in the use of transition signals and were sometimes wrongly used. For example, the writers began paragraphs two and three with “furthermore”. We*

*advised them to use other transition word like “moreover” or “in addition” (PRI 3).*

Most of the revised papers showed significant improvement in this aspect.

**Vocabulary.** Researchers have also examined lexical accuracy - the degree to which a composition is free from errors in word choice (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Learning new words during the peer-response resulted in improvements to the revised papers. Most of the participants mentioned vocabulary as an area of significant improvement. Hanieza and Umami said, *“We learned many new words related to our topic during the discussion. We try to avoid using the same words in the paragraph.”* Umami observed that, *“The words we used to revise the draft are more suitable for the topic” (PRI 4).* This is demonstrated in the following excerpt from the draft “Causes and Effects of Early Marriages”:

#### **First Draft:**

Apart from affected emotionally and psychologically, early marriages also cause domestic violence. According to Help Guide (2009), the husband abuses his spouse as a way to gain and maintain control over the victim. The husband will feel not have the power if the wife does not follow what he says at home. As a result, the husband will use physical to control his spouse. Physical harm is abuse which involves pain, injury or other physical suffering. Furthermore, the abuser also forces his spouse to engage in a sexual act. Even though married people can have sexual intercourse, as a wife, she can refuse sex and file a police report. However, as a young adult who married early, the young wife may not know how to handle the case and continue to face it.

#### **Revised Paper:**

Apart from emotional and psychological effects, early marriages may also lead to physical violence. According to Help Guide (2009), the husband abuses his wife to gain and maintain control over her. He will feel threatened if the wife does not follow his instructions. The husband uses physical harm such as pain, injury or other bodily harm as a way to control the wife. Furthermore, he may also use physical force to force her to engage in a sexual act. Even though it is legal for married couples to have sex, the wife has the right to refuse. However, as a young bride, she may not know how to deal with this physical violence and might continue to live with it.

In this example, the revision involved the formation of new sentences and also the rearrangement of content that already existed in the first draft. Even though the revision involved simple addition words, it had great consequence for the overall draft improvement. Information was moved from one place to another and the message in the revised paper became clearer, thus giving the paragraph a new direction. The revised paper also showed improvement in the appropriateness of word choice and sentence structure. These improvements resulted in higher ratings for this component in the revised paper.

***Transitional words and phrases.*** Transitional words and phrases refer to the appropriate use of signals that show how sentences and paragraphs of the drafts are linked together. Almost all the revised papers displayed satisfactory improvement for this aspect. The writers used different transition words and phrases to show sense relationship. Good use of transition words made it easy to read the drafts, moving from one idea to another effortlessly. However, there were some weaknesses, as mentioned by the responders during the interview. The following are some of their comments:

*“Some of the writers did not use any transition signals and preferred to start new sentences or paragraphs without transitional words”.*

*“They must use different transition signals. ‘For example,’ was repeated many times”.*

*“The writers tried to use transitional words, but these were used incorrectly.*

*“So, that” was used instead of so”.*

*“The writers didn’t use transitional words and phrases for a smooth connection of paragraphs. For example, in addition, in fact, moreover...”.*

The excerpt below from the “The Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use” shows improvement made by using appropriate transitional words and phrases:

**First Draft:**

Although the credit card have a lot of disadvantages but it also have an advantage such as it is easy to carry. The credit card allows the person to use

it in different places. At times, we can go to different countries without having to convert the currency because credit cards can be used all over the world. Other than that, credit card provides a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2011) and they are also useful in carrying out business transactions for electronic funds transfer. They come in handy in ideas of doubt of what currency to be used and how, since this is a problem that can be sorted out by the company or organization, and the bank involved in issuing the credit card.

In the first draft, the writers started the sentence with '*although*' and used the connector '*but*' in the same sentence. This was highlighted by the responders. Moreover, the paragraph did not flow smoothly due to limited use of transitional words. The sentence connector '*and*' was frequently used, sometimes repeated in the same sentence. These flaws in the draft were revised, as shown below:

#### **Revised Paper:**

One of the advantages of the credit card is it is easier to carry and use. The credit card allows the owner to use it in different places. For example, they can even go to different countries without having to go and convert the currency because the credit card can be used all over the world. In addition to that, credit cards provide a convenient payment method for purchases made on the internet and over the telephone (NSTP, 2011). They are also useful when carrying out business transactions or electronic funds transfer. They are also useful when people have doubts of what currency to use. This is a problem can be sorted out by the company or bank involved in issuing the credit card.

The writers, Farina and Azmina revised the paragraph according to the suggestions provided by the responders, Shahira and Rozaida. The responders advised the writers to improve on their use of transitions, especially when starting a new paragraph. This was a very important piece of feedback and if implemented would result in a significant improvement to the revised paper. The responders emphasized several times that the writers should implement this change (PR Session 5). The revised paragraph showed improvement in fluency and accuracy, while no distinct improvement was found in terms of grammatical complexity and lexical

complexity. By commenting on each other's drafts, the participants were able to practice the appropriate language expressions and revision-oriented sentences (Dinapoli, 2000).

***Mechanics.*** Error-free writing involves good grammar and correct mechanics of writing. Mechanics of writing specify how words should be used while grammar reflects the form of words and their relationships in a sentence. The participants' limited knowledge of the target language and its conventions affected revision to a certain degree. The ESL student-writers had some difficulty in critiquing the drafts written by their peers (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). At times, they were unable to differentiate between usable and unusable feedback (Stanley, 1992; Tsui and Ng, 2000) which affected their ability to revise the drafts accordingly (Liu and Sadler, 2003). Even though most of the revisions made by the participants resulted from the peer feedback, not all were successful in improving the revised papers. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt from Suicide among Teenagers:

**First Draft:**

To begin with, personal relationship problems are the most reasons why teenagers commit suicide. Mostly teenagers have their partner. Teenagers will share experience and problems that they encounter everyday with their partner. Thus, the partner is the first important person after their parent and family members. They put too much love and willing to fulfilled their entire partner's needs. Hence, teenagers disposed and brave to do suicide when they have problem with partners.

**Revised Paper:**

To begin with, the main reason teenagers commit suicide is because of personal relationship problems. Mostly teenagers today have boyfriends or girlfriends. These teenagers will share their personal experience and problems that they encounter everyday with their partners. Thus, the partner is the most important person for them, after their parents and family members. They love their partners very much and are willing to do anything for them. Hence, when they have problems with their partners, the teenagers commit suicide.

The revised paper displayed general improvements related to the mechanics of writing such as word choices, sentence structures, organization and transitions that yielded higher scores. The peer responders commented on errors in mechanics, which included punctuation, paragraph indentation, spelling, use of appropriate font size, margins, line spacing, and capitalization. Some of the comments made by the responders during the post-revision interview are listed below:

*“The writers made mistakes in mechanics, especially punctuation and capitalization and a few words were wrongly spelled”.*

*“The writers’ main mechanic mistake was line spacing. The single line spacing that the writer used made the editing process difficult”.*

*“Some writers did not have the correct margins, line spacing and capitalization of the title”.*

*“Some writers need to pay more attention to the mechanics, especially commas”.*

The slight increase in the score for mechanics coincided with improvements the participants made to the general layout and overall format of their drafts. However, the peer-responders were more regulated to the mechanical errors they found in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. This clearly shows that when trained to respond to each other’s drafts, participants could help each other improve their writing abilities. They identified content ambiguities and structural problems in the writings. Furthermore, the interactions and negotiations proved to be effective in helping the participants find solutions to problems within their specific writings.

Since the training also focused on the mechanics of academic writing, the participants gained more opportunities to develop their linguistic ability and build confidence in themselves through in-class demonstrations of writing and revising. At the same time, the encouraging environment established in the classroom induced much feedback, although most were of surface-level.

**Content and details.** ESL student-writers can provide useful feedback that deals with content, rhetoric and language (Berg, 1999; Stanley, 1992). However, content and details rated low on the first drafts and revised papers in this study. This indicates that the student-writers' point of view, ideas and the main points of the essay were not clearly and logically stated. There was also a lack of factual details and evidence to support the claims and convince the readers that the writers knew enough about the topic. The following are some of the comments made by the responders: *"The topic needed more supporting details to give the readers a clear"*. *"The writers did not support the topic sentence"*. The following excerpt from "Premarital Sex among Teenagers" is a good indicator of this aspect:

**First Draft:**

To overcome this problem, parents should be aware of their children's activities. For example, parents should monitor the children's internet usage. This is to avoid pornography that might influence their behaviour. Furthermore, parents can use religion to cope this problem. They must make sure the children pray regularly. This will make sure they will behave well. It will also make sure they do not get involved in sex.

While discussing this paragraph, the responders, Siti and Naqiba, made several suggestions for content improvement. First, they highlighted that it was important for the writers, Izuan and Ibrahim, to inform the readers what parents can do to overcome the problem of premarital sex among teenagers. Siti asserted that *"if you don't include this, the readers may not get a clear picture of the problem"*. This suggestion helped the writers to incorporate concrete details into the revised paper. Secondly, the responders also commented on the lack of citation that affected credibility. *"There wasn't any citation to support what they said"*. The incorporation of additional details and relevant citations improved the paragraph in terms of content. These revisions helped to strengthen the overall argument. The following is the revised version of the same paragraph:

### Revised Paper:

To overcome this problem, parents should be aware of their children's activities. For example, parents should monitor the children's internet usage. This can be done by having the computer in the living room so that parents can see what their children are doing. This is to avoid pornography that might influence their behaviour. Furthermore, parents can use religion to tackle this problem. They must make sure the children pray regularly and prayer time must be given importance. Parents can also bring their children for religious talks. Furthermore, parents should know who their children's friends are by observing them. They can also speak to teachers in school. This will make sure parents know about their children. This will improve their relationship and the children will not be involved in bad activities like sex.

The revised paragraph had enough factual details and evidence to support the topic sentence and inform the readers about the role of parents in addressing the problem. The writers provided adequate information about the role of parents. A lot of new details were added in the paragraph that gave a clearer picture to the readers. The idea of using better or more examples as suggested by the responders was accepted and implemented. One of the writers, Ibrahim, said, *"After the peer-response sessions, we added more details to all our paragraphs"*, while his partner, Izuan, said: *"Yes, we used to have problems with examples but they helped us out"* (PRI 8). Another improved aspect was ease of expression. *"We could express our ideas better after talking with the peers. Our first draft had short paragraphs but now they helped us to add more... like examples and citations. I think we have improved the paragraph"* (PRI 8). Such testimony from the writers is a clear indication of writing improvement.

These findings indicate that the participants recognized the usefulness of the peer feedback and were willing to revise their drafts based on their ideas and suggestions. The feedback dealt with content, rhetoric and language. Apart from improvements to the various aspects of the writing, the ESL student-writers developed themselves to be better writers. According to de Guerrero and Villamil



(2000), these abilities improved the quality of the revised drafts and facilitated autonomous writing skills that would make them independent writers. These examples are representative for a lot of similar feedback that the peer-responders gave to the writers. The various factors that contributed to this are explained in the following section.

**Contributors to draft improvement.** The post-revision interviews conducted after the peer-response sessions focused on how the participants viewed the peer-response experience and how they benefitted from it. Most of the participants responded with positive comments and mentioned several benefits of the peer-response activity that contributed to their writing improvement. The eight benefits highlighted are discussed next.

***New ideas from peers.*** All the participants talked about new ideas obtained from the peers during the peer-response sessions as one of the main factors that contributed to their draft improvement. Ideas for a specific topic were generated during the peer interactions. One participant, Farina, referred to the reading of other participants' drafts to improve the draft "*because everybody has different ideas and styles*" (PRI 5). Her writing partner, Azmina, added, "*Our draft improved because we got a lot of different ideas from them*" (PRI 5). The following excerpt from the draft on the effects of credit card use explains this point:

**First Draft:**

Like cash, sometimes credit cards can be stolen. They may be physically stolen or someone may steal our credit card number from the receipt, over the phone or from the web site and use our credit card to rack up debts. We will not realize our credit card number has been stolen until we receive our monthly statement. Most credit card companies do not charge you and only charge a small fee even if the thief charged thousands of dollars to our card. Credit card can get a lot of people in trouble. According to Bank Negara report, the total amount of credit card fraud in 2010 was around RM68 million.

### Feedback:

- R1: *Mmmm ... this paragraph is not so clear. All mixed up.*  
W1: *Ya, we are not happy with this paragraph. Not sure how to explain.*  
R1: *Topic sentence is not clear and supporting details... problem ...*  
R2: *You must talk about how credit card can get stolen ... and what happens after that.*  
W2: *Like what?*  
R1: *Mmmm ... Like they clone the card. The person goes shopping; buy expensive things ... watch, jewellery ...*  
R2: *Eat at expensive restaurants.*  
W1: *Oh, okay. Then ...*  
R1: *Then you get the bill ... too late ... have to pay.*  
(PR Session 5: Causes and Effects of Credit Card Use)

### Revised Paper:

Credit cards can also be stolen. Someone may steal our credit card when we leave it somewhere like on the counter. They may get the number from the receipt and clone the card. With the card, they will start spending like buying expensive things. For example, they buy expensive watches and jewellery. We will only realize our credit card number has been stolen when we receive our monthly statement. Suddenly we see that someone used our card to buy things. We cannot do anything because it is our card. So, we have to pay the money. The credit card company will also charge interest. So, credit cards can cause a lot trouble for people. According to Bank Negara report, the total amount of credit card fraud in 2010 was around RM68 million. So, we must keep the credit card carefully.

The idea on credit card cloning provided during the peer-response sessions was incorporated into the revision. This improved the quality of the revised paragraph, along with the examples and explanations. The writing pair appreciated getting this idea from the responders. Shahirah said: *"I really like their ideas because they made our paragraph more interesting"*. Her partner Rozaidah added: *"I also got to see how they wrote their essay and learned from them"*. This writing pair took advantage of the of the peer-response sessions in various ways to get ideas: *"...we shared ideas about our drafts and thought of better ideas to improve our drafts"* (PRI 6). They also integrated more concrete details into their paragraphs. Further analysis

of the drafts revealed that in some cases, the participants produced a completely new revised text after peer-response.

Several participants used the expression *“getting new ideas”* in the specific context of revising their drafts on a topic. It was like brainstorming during pre-writing sessions in class. *“We shared ideas before starting on our revision. It is good to work in a group because we could get new ideas from them”* (PRI 6). Rozaida also admitted using the drafts of other participants to get ideas about writing style. *“I enjoyed reading their drafts to get new ideas on how they write, especially the style, and then write like them”* (PRI 6). Another participant, Ummi, referred to the reading of peers’ drafts as a benefit of peer-response *“because everybody has different ideas”* (PRI 2). On the same note, her partner, Hanieza said, *“I like working in this group because they help us and we help them. And we can get new ideas for our essay”* (PRI 2). Both participants appreciated getting *“new ideas”* as a general benefit of the peer-response group activity. Amira said: *“I really like how they wrote their draft because they had some really good ideas”* Her partner, Aqila added: *“I want to hear what other people think, the way they write. I want to know what is in their mind”* (PRI 1). Aishah and Kamalia took advantage of the peer-response group activity to gain ideas: *“...we can share ideas about the writing and help each other”* (PRI 3). Thus, the peer-response activity provided a unique platform for the student-writers to talk about their drafts and get new ideas. They not only shared ideas but also had fun talking about subjects related to their topics. This proved to be beneficial for revision.

However, some of the participants reported having difficulties deciding whether their peers’ comments and ideas were valid and can be implemented. Azira and Ain said that they were sometimes unsure of their peers’ comments. *“Sometimes,*

*we think their suggestion is wrong. But we just listen to them” (PRI 4).* Thus, they did not use the feedback in their revision because they were unsure if it would improve their drafts. This is in line with the findings of Leki (1990) and by Lockhart and Ng (1993) that student writers sometimes do not trust their peers’ feedback. Some participants felt dissatisfied because the responders could not provide them with constructive ideas for draft revision. This view contradicts Berg’s finding (1999) which reported that trained peer-response helped the less competent writers to be capable feedback providers. In other words, the difference in the level of writing proficiency did not influence the revision quality. Similarly, Min’s (2005) finding also reported that the training helped the less competent writers gain confidence in viewing themselves as capable reviewers.

***Learning from mistakes.*** The participants also frequently mentioned “*learning from mistakes*” when asked how the peer-response sessions helped them to improve their drafts. They talked about the mistakes they made in the first drafts that involved grammar, sentence structure or organization and indicated that the peer-response group experience had helped them. Their responders could highlight their mistakes and offer suggestions to correct them. Umami and Haneiza, made the following comments on learning from mistakes: “*Having the group members read our work was a good way to know our mistakes. We made a lot of mistakes, like using wrong tenses and prepositions. Their suggestions and comments helped us to learn from our mistakes and revise our drafts*” (PRI 2). Another writing pair, Naqiba and Siti added, “*It was very helpful because most of us made the same type of mistakes. So, when we read other students’ drafts we could see the mistakes*” (PRI 7). Aishah and Kamalia said, “*Having the group members read our draft was a good way to know our mistakes. Their feedback helped us to revise our drafts. Simple*

*mistakes in our first draft which we didn't realize were identified by the responders"* (PRI 3).

Some participants also reported that the peer-response group activity helped them identify mistakes in the drafts that they read. Naqiba said, *"I liked reading their drafts with my partner because in that way we could look for their mistakes"*. Siti responded in this way: *"Peer-response is good for us to spot mistakes in the drafts. We learn better in this way"* (PRI 7). In the following example, Amira and Aqila who wrote on the causes and effects of early marriages, learned from their mistakes and made several corrections to their draft:

#### **First Draft:**

These young girls who are married early did not have fond memories of their teenage years. According to Forward (2011), these young girls were forced to carry big responsibilities behind their back. They need to look after their children as well as house chores. Furthermore, there are cases the husband restricts the wife from mixing with her friends and having fun with them.

In the first draft, the topic sentence did not provide the readers with a clear controlling idea. The responders were not able to understand the purpose of the paragraph. In the revised paragraph, this part was deleted and a better controlling idea, *forced to marry at an early age do not get to enjoy*, was added.

#### **Revised Paper:**

These young girls who are *forced to marry at an early age do not get to enjoy* their teenage years. According to Forward (2011), these young girls were forced to carry big responsibilities behind their back. *At a very young age, they become mothers* and *need* to look after their children. They also have to do other work at home *such as washing and cooking*. Furthermore, the husband restricts the *young* wife from mixing with her friends.

The correction improved the quality of the paragraph. By correcting *'did not have fond memories of their teenage years'* to *'do not get to enjoy their teenage years'* and by adding *'At a very young age, they become mothers'*, the writers,

Hanieza and Umami, clearly improved the paragraph by correcting the mistakes, thus, making it more appropriate to the topic. Also, by inserting examples, *such as washing and cooking*, the writers made the information more specific. The correction from *'needs'* to *'need'* minimised subject-verb agreement errors.

Critically examining a peer's draft and explaining the errors provided opportunities for the participants to learn from each other. *"We often do not see our own mistakes because we know what we are trying to say. But when someone who does not know what we are trying to say, read our draft, they will be able to show us the problem and suggest how to improve that part"* (PRI 4). *"When we learn how to revise and edit our peers' work, we actually learn how to revise and edit our own draft"* (PRI 3). The peer-response activity helped the participants understand their mistakes, get new ideas, share tips and learn how to revise their drafts. It also made it easier for them to edit grammar, correct sentence structure and respond to their peers' comments. Such discussions helped the student-writers understand and remember what they have learned so that they can revise on their own later.

Moreover, the references to *'getting new ideas'* and *'learning from mistakes'* made during the post-revision interviews pointed to the participants' preference for criticism. As Hyland (1995) pointed out, ESL students prefer critical comments to improve their drafts. The following comment from Izuan and Ibrahim during the post-revision interviews supports that opinion. *"Sometimes they criticize our drafts. Because we want to know what is wrong with our draft, we take it"* (PRI 8). When writing the draft, the student-writers tend to include everything they know without being selective. They think everything is good. Thus, the peer-response activity provided them the opportunity to learn from their mistakes in order to improve the drafts. A level of deep reflection and critical thinking is a vital strategy for

autonomous learning (Benson, 2007) that can help learners in the acquisition of new second language writing skills.

However, some issues concerning the poor quality of feedback were raised during the post-revision interviews. Several participants spoke about the difficulty they faced understanding what their peers were trying to communicate to them. *"Sometimes we couldn't understand their ideas in the draft"* (PRI 2). The more competent participants said the feedback was often not up to their expectation: *"Some responders did not give helpful feedback"* (PRI 5). Overall, most of the participants admitted benefitting from the pointing of mistakes in their drafts by the peers.

***Looking from multiple perspectives.*** The next contributing factor frequently mentioned for draft improvement was looking at the draft from different perspectives. The peer-response group activity trained the participants to look at the drafts from various angles and obtain new perspectives of their own writing, which opened possibilities for improvement (Ray, 1999). One writing pair, Farina and Azmina, said: *"Peer-response enabled us to get advice from others to revise our draft. It is important to know what others think about our draft. We like to have different points of views"* (PRI 5). The comments from another writing pair, Shahira and Rozaida, showed that they held the same view: *"It's a good idea to get feedback from others because they may see our topic from a different angle, so their ideas can help us"* (PRI 6). Farina and Azmina agreed to this opinion: *"The peers tell us what they think about our points in the draft and we get different point of views from them"* (PRI 5). Ain and Azira also commented on the benefits of getting different points of view. *"We want to know what our peers think of our draft. If two other students look at our draft, we get more ideas and it is good"* (PRI 4). The following

excerpts of the first draft and revised paper from the essay Obesity among Children by Aishah and Naqiba explains this:

**First Draft:**

Unhealthy eating behaviour among children is another cause for obesity. Children today prefer to eat fast food. This is because the parents always take them to fast food restaurants. For example, if the mother does not have time to cook, she will buy fast food or prepare instant food at home like nuggets canned soup for the children. As a result, the children begin to like fast food because it is tastier. When the children go to school, they like to bring fast food. They do not like to bring rice from home. This makes them addicted to fast food. According to Mela and Rogers (1993), this fast food may contain addictive substances.

**Feedback:**

R1: *Instead of talking about mothers preparing fast food at home, why don't you guys focus on fast food sold at school canteens?*

R2: *And also advertisements on TV!*

(PR Session 7: Obesity among Children)

**Revised Paper:**

Unhealthy eating behaviour among children is another cause for obesity. Children today prefer to eat fast food. This is because of the effect of fast food advertisements on television. During children's program, they show advertisement on KFC and McDonalds. So, the children ask the parents to always take them to fast food restaurants. In addition to that, school canteens also sell many fast foods like nuggets and burger. As a result, the children begin to like fast food because it is tastier. When the children go to school, they prefer to bring fast food. They do not like to bring rice from home. This makes them addicted to fast food. According to Mela and Rogers (1993), this fast food may contain addictive substances.

The writers improved their draft by looking at the issue of obesity among children from a different perspective. Instead of the frequently used examples of blaming parents for their children's eating habits, the writers talked about the availability of fast food at school canteens and also advertisements on television that exposed the children to the fast food culture. *"When we wrote the first draft, we thought we had good ideas but after the peer-response session, we realized our ideas were very boring. The responders told us something more interesting"* (PRI 7). The



writers clearly understood the expectations of the responders. *“When they told us about our example, we knew it was not interesting. So, we made sure they like reading our draft. That is very important”* (PRI 7). The writers also had the opportunity to read a variety of writing styles and expressing ideas and were able to improve their own drafts by expressing ideas from a different perspective. Peer-response improved the participants’ abilities to self-monitor their own writings, especially in the areas of clarity of ideas and organization.

***Broadening of horizons.*** Interaction with the peers also played an important role in broadening the writers’ horizon on the topic. Farina and Azmina said, *“We got some extra ideas from them, like different opinions on the topic. They told us that we must include other examples. This additional information helped a lot in our revision”* (PRI 5). As stated by Min (2005), through peer comments, the writers broadened their horizons and refined their ideas by approaching a specific topic from multiple perspectives. The discussions during the peer-response sessions broadened the participants’ outlook and helped them to obtain further knowledge on content and writing. The following excerpt from the draft ‘Causes and Effects of Facebook Addiction’ explains this clearly:

**First Draft:**

Facebook addiction also creates problems in family relationships. Because of Facebook addiction, young married women tend to neglect household chores. This may affect relationship because the husband may get angry with the wife for not cooking, washing and taking care of the children. Quarrelling every day may lead to divorce.

**Feedback:**

R1: *I think you guys must talk about real problems, like husband finding out about wife’s Facebook friends ... male friends ... and he becomes jealous.*  
(Session 1: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction)

### **Revised Paper:**

Facebook addiction also creates problems in husband and wife relationships. Some married couples maintain their status as single in the Facebook. They may have many friends from the opposite sex. For example, the wife may have many male friends and the husband may have many female friends. When they know about this, they become jealous and start to suspect. This may lead to divorce.

As a result of the feedback from the responders, the writers' knowledge on the effects of Facebook on family relationships improved. Instead of discussing trivial matters like neglecting household chores, the writers' horizon in this matter broadened. They incorporated more serious issues such as '*jealousy*' and '*suspicion*' which clearly improved the content and argument in the paragraph. As reported by Bayer (1986), the peers were more effective than the teacher in explaining new concepts. In small group discussions, the participants collaboratively expanded and clarified each other's horizons.

***Selective implementation of feedback.*** In all the groups, the participants' knowledge on the topic and their language proficiency determined the decision to incorporate the feedback into their revision. Even though there is a common belief that ESL students are not knowledgeable enough to detect and correct errors in the target language (Tsui & Ng, 2000), the participants in this study did not blindly implement all the suggestions provided during the peer-response sessions. They were selective in the implementation, which resulted in draft improvement. One writing pair, Izwan and Ibrahim, who admitted to incorporating the peer suggestions selectively into their revision said: "*When the group members tell us something about our draft, we listen to them and make notes. Later we discuss between ourselves and decide whether to incorporate their suggestion. We only put in good ideas from them*" (PRI 8). This indicates the writers sense of text ownership (Tsui & Ng, 2000), the right to revise the draft the way they wanted. This also cultivated

writer autonomy among the participants. Miao et al. (2006) also reported that ESL student-writers are capable of selectively incorporating peer feedback into their revision. In the following example from the draft ‘Premarital Sex among Young Adults’ the writers Izwan and Ibrahim did not incorporate the change suggested by the responders into their revision because “*we were quite sure what we wrote was correct. So, we did not want to make the change even though we agreed to do it*” (PRI 8). The following example demonstrates this:

**Revised Paper:**

Premarital sex leads to baby dumping. Most of the unmarried pregnant teenagers will not take care of the babies because they are not ready for the burden they have to carry. Instead of giving the babies to the related organizations, these young girls will just put the babies into the dustbins.

**Feedback:**

R2: *Your topic sentence - Premarital sex leads to baby dumping – is not suitable. I think it must be – Premarital sex leads to teenage pregnancy.*

(PR Session 8: Pre-marital Sex among Young Adults)

Even though the responders suggested a change in the topic sentence from ‘baby dumping’ to ‘teenage pregnancy’, the writers decided against it. During the post-revision interview, the writers explained: “*We had already mentioned teenage pregnancy in the earlier paragraph. So, we did not want to repeat that point*” (PRI 8). This selective incorporation of feedback resulted in maintaining the quality of the draft. This writing pair evaluated the feedback offered by the responders before deciding to accept or reject them. Interestingly, during the process, they got fresh ideas for revision.

The post-revision interview also revealed that the participants could differentiate between good feedback and not so good feedback. “*Sometimes, when we revise the draft according to their suggestions, it doesn’t sound nice. So, we don’t*

*make the change*” (PRI 3). However, without appropriate training, ESL students may not be able to offer useful feedback as responders or differentiate usable from unusable feedback and revise their writing accordingly (Liu & Sadler, 2003). This means the more constructive comments the student-writers receive, the more likely they are inclined to incorporate it into their revision. When they do not get enough concrete feedback to revise the content and form of their drafts, due to their peers’ insufficient writing competence, the revision ends up being unsuccessful. As Zhu (2001) pointed out, ESL student writers are still in the process of mastering the target language and its rhetorical conventions. As such, they are unable to detect and correct problems in the target language (Tsui & Ng, 2000). It was also observed that there were instances of vague comments provided during the peer-response sessions (CO G4). Such comments rarely translated into effective revision.

A few participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the feedback they received. One writing pair mentioned that some of the feedback could not be used to revise the draft. *“The feedback they gave was not related to our essay”* (PRI 5). Another writing pair said: *“Sometimes they’re not right. They just say something because they have to”* (PRI 6). The different attitude exhibited by the participants could be due to their linguistic abilities, content-based knowledge and experiences. This, according to Rollinson (2005), could prevent the participants from providing constructive feedback on the drafts and from revising them based on the peer suggestions.

***Reorganization of information.*** Some participants explained that the revisions were focused on reorganization information. This included adding more appropriate words to describe ideas more effectively and deleting vague information to make meanings clearer. Reorganizing also involved rephrasing thesis statements

and topic sentences to make it easier for the readers to understand what the writers were trying to convey. Sometimes, paragraphs were rearranged to emphasize the importance of main ideas and to achieve coherence.

Once the ideas became clearer and organized, the writers fine-tuned their drafts by rearranging phrases or substituting unsuitable words with something more appropriate and precise to make their work look more academic. In the following example, Amira and Aqila who wrote on the causes and effects of Facebook addiction used the peer suggestions to improve the attention grabber and thesis statement of their essay.

#### **First Draft:**

Facebook addiction has become a serious problem in Malaysia. Facebook users are teenagers, children and old folks. Facebook enables users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's pages and view each other's profile. According to Anderson (2011), .... People become addicted to Facebook because it has a lot of attractions and it is user friendly. However, it affects their health and causes problem in family relationship.

#### **Feedback:**

*R2: You start with "Facebook addiction has become a serious problem in Malaysia." I think the second sentence "Facebook enables users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's pages and view each other's profile" will be better.*

*R1: Yes, I agree. Tell what Facebook is first. Then only the problem.*  
(Session 1: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction)

#### **Revised Paper:**

Facebook enables users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate friends who can post comments on each other's pages and view each other's profile. According to Anderson (2011)... However, Facebook addiction is becoming a serious problem in Malaysia, *not only among children and teenagers but also among adults*. These people become addicted to the Facebook because it has a lot of attractions and also user friendly. However, it causes problems to their health and family relationship.

In accordance with the responders' suggestions to identify the argument in their draft, and to put the argument at the beginning of his paper, Amira and Aqila made positive changes to their introductory paragraph. They heeded their responders' advice to reorganize the points to make the paragraph more interesting. As stated by Hansen and Liu (2005), the organizational changes contributed to the overall draft improvement.

This writing pair used almost all the suggestions provided by the peers because they found them beneficial for revision. They added new information to their draft, such as citations, concrete details and examples. They were satisfied with the outcome of the changes. They said, "*We added a new paragraph because the responders advised us to add another solution. We had three problems but only two solutions in our problem solution essay*" (PRI 1). The writers acknowledged the problems pointed out by the responders and corrected them accordingly. They felt more information would make their draft better.

**Writing for an audience.** Some participants admitted working hard on the revision to impress their peers. "*We wanted our draft to be good so that they will like to read it*" (PRI 6). The peer-response activity enabled the participants to write for an audience (Paulus, 1999; Rollinson, 2005), an important aspect of process writing. Shahirah and Rozaidah, said the peer-response activity made them realize the importance of writing for an audience and this inspired them to revise their draft a few times. "*We added some of their suggestions in the revision so that they will understand our essay. It is important for us to know how they feel about our essay. If they like our essay, it means our essay is good*" (PRI 6). One of the roles of peer-response is to enhance a sense of audience among the student-writers (Tsui & Ng,

2000). The following paragraph from the essay ‘Teenage Shopaholics’ shows the changes made by the writers to make the draft clearer to the responders (audience):

**First Draft:**

Secondly, addiction to shopping is caused by lack of control in spending. Shopping malls have huge impact on teenagers as they offer many things to choose from. They also have special offers like ‘buy one free one’ and special discounts during the Mega Sales. As a result, the teenagers will be attracted to the offers.

**Revised Paper:**

Secondly, addiction to shopping is caused by lack of control in spending among the teenagers. Most teenagers enjoy shopping and the shopping malls are the perfect place for them. Shopping malls have huge impact on teenagers as they offer many things to choose from, such as clothes, accessories and electronic items. They also have special offers like ‘buy one free one’ and special discounts during the Mega Sales. As a result, the teenagers will be attracted to the offers.

In the revised paper, the writers included the sentence “*Most teenagers enjoy shopping and the shopping malls are the perfect place for them*” because the responders were not clear about “*lack of control in spending*”. Even though the writers were sure about what they intended to say, they added this phrase to make it clearer for the responders. They also provided examples of items on sale at shopping malls that attract teenagers to go shopping. Thus, by adding information at the request of the responders, the draft saw some improvement. As reported by Stanley (1992), this enabled the participants to move away from writer-based to reader-based writing.

Tsui and Ng (2000) also claimed that peer-response raised the participants’ awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in writing, enhanced their sense of audience, encouraged collaborative learning and promoted text ownership. Since the student-writers faced problems in writing, the peer-response activity gave them the much-needed confidence. It was easier for them to get good advice, revise mistakes

and edit their drafts when they were among friends. This could be due to the group composition of this study - the participants were of homogeneous L1 and cultural backgrounds. As stated by Nelson and Carson (2006), linguistic and cultural homogeneity played a key role in making the peer response activity successful.

Even though the student-writers concentrated on writing for an audience, they tried to maintain text ownership. This was stressed during the peer-response training. Respect for authorship was constantly expressed, especially when the responders acknowledged the writers' rights over the draft. They could balance their role as feedback providers while being careful not to offend the writers. They used polite expressions such as: "*We think if you make this change, the paragraph will be more interesting*" or "*Why don't you guys add another example here. This one is not very clear*". All these clearly reflected respect and tactfulness. There were also occasions when the writers voiced their disagreement to suggestions for changes, such as: "*No, we don't think so. We like that example better*". Analysis of the drafts and revised papers revealed that disagreements during the interactions did not result in major revisions. The writers' insistence on maintaining their ideas in the drafts clearly reflected their text ownership. They had the final say to the changes made. Tsui and Ng (2000) also found that peer-response helped to foster text ownership, especially when the participants explained, defended and clarified their ideas.

**Writing multiple drafts.** Another factor that contributed to draft improvement was the participants' self-revision skills. Most participants admitted to learning these skills because of the peer-response activity. Student-writers in peer-response groups develop more positive attitudes towards the writing process (Nystrand, 1997). They dealt with errors and became more critical of their own writing. Peer-response fostered a sense of text ownership (Tsui & Ng, 2000) by



providing the student-writers opportunities to explain, defend and clarify their opinions in the writing (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996).

The participants improved their own writing ability after evaluating the peers' drafts. When they received feedback about one aspect of their writing, they used that knowledge to work on other aspects of the draft. Aishah and Kamalia who wrote on suicide among teenagers described the editing stage after the peer-response session as the most helpful. *"After the peer-response session, we clearly understood the problems in our draft. We also learned a lot from giving feedback to them. So, we knew what we were doing during the editing"* (PRI 3). Ain and Azira from Group B, also pointed to self-revising when they said, *"when we were revising the draft after the peer-response session, we really understood the mistakes we made and learned how to correct them. We really felt great"* (PRI 4). Excerpts from Ain's and Azira's revised draft on the negative impact of reality programmes on television show evidence of significant revision of parts that were not the focus of the peer-response session.

#### **First Draft:**

To conclude, reality programs on television are more of a bane than a boon. It gives bad effects to the community especially to the participants themselves and among teenagers. The producers should be responsible on their shows. Apart from that, parents should monitor and control their children well.

#### **Revised Paper:**

In conclusion, reality programs on television bring more disadvantages than advantages. It gives negative effects to the society, especially to the younger generations. They are easily influenced by what they see in the shows and waste money in the SMS competition. They also become addicted to the program and neglect their homework. Therefore, the producers should be more responsible and make sure there are no negative effects. Apart from that, parents should also monitor what programs their children watch on television. In this way, the negative effects of Reality Shows can be reduced.

With the feedback that the writers received, they continued to revise their drafts to keep improving them. *“They wrote ‘in conclusion’ in their draft, so we changed ours. They didn’t understand the meaning of ‘bane and boon’. So, we changed to ‘advantages and disadvantages’.”* The writers also effectively implemented what they learned about restatement of the thesis statement and included other information into their conclusion. By doing so, they transformed their drab concluding paragraph into a very interesting one.

An important issue to consider here is whether the draft improvement was because of self-revision skills or effective feedback. Most likely, their self-revision skills had an impact on their writing because some of the changes in the drafts did not come from the peer-response session. *“We revised the conclusion because the responders told us to restate the thesis statement. Then we added other things to make the conclusion better”* (PRI 4). This pair evaluated the feedback from the responders before deciding to accept or reject them. During the process, they got fresh ideas and incorporated them into their own draft. Revising the drafts after the peer-response sessions made the participants’ aware of their writing strengths and weaknesses (Tuzi, 2004), understands the rhetorical structure of their own writing (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992) and improved their evaluative skills (Berg, 1999).

***Responding to peers’ drafts.*** Responding to the peers’ draft was beneficial to the development of the responders’ own writing skills. In getting feedback from peers, the student-writers did not blindly accept and revise the draft. Instead, they considered the feedback, questioned its suitability and weighed it against their own background knowledge before deciding on the revision to be made.

The opportunity to read a variety of writing styles from another writing pair enabled the participants to understand more about effective writing. They improved

their revision skills by developing a clearer sense of audience and self-monitor their own drafts in the areas of clarity and organization. Interactions in the peer-response groups enabled the responders to build declarative knowledge and procedural strategies (Launspach, 2008) which they used to improve their own writing. The following opinion explains this clearly:

*“We learnt a lot from the other participants’ mistakes. So, we try to avoid them when revising our own paper. Usually, after the discussions, we understood something about grammar better. So, we made corrections to our own drafts” (PRI 3).* This is evident in the following excerpt from the draft obesity among children:

**First Draft:**

In this modern age, most parents no longer care about their children’s diet. This can be seen when the parents are busy with their work they will let their children eat everything even though it is not nutritious. For example, parents today will grab something for their children’s breakfast on the way to school and that something is mostly junk food. Thus, the problem of obesity among children in this world is becoming very serious. According to the World Health Organization report (2011), an estimated 2.2 million children under the age of five are obese. Children who are over-weight will have more problems that what they expect in future. There are several reasons for obesity among children. Easy availability of food, children’s life style itself and unhealthy eating habits are the main causes of obesity. To overcome this problem, parents must set a good example, make exercise fun for children and bring children to a paediatrician regularly.

**Revised Paper:**

Most parents today work outside the home. They are busy and cannot spend time with their children. The children are on their own most of the time. The parents give them money to buy food such as for breakfast in the canteen. The mother has no time to make breakfast. When the parents are busy with their work, they will let their children eat anything they like even though it is not nutritious. For example, parents will grab something for their children’s breakfast on the way to school. That something is mostly junk food such burger or hotdog. These types of junk food will cause obesity. As a result, the problem of obesity among children in this world is becoming very serious. According to the World Health Organization report (2011), an estimated 2.2 million children under the age of five are obese. Children who are obese will have more health problems in future. Obesity among children is caused by easy availability of junk food, unhealthy life style and unhealthy eating habits. To overcome this problem, parents must cook good food for their

children, make the children exercise regularly and bring children health checks regularly.

Analysis of the drafts revealed that the participants could produce a completely transformed paragraph. The underlined parts in the revised paragraph were not raised during the peer-response sessions. The first three sentences improved the introduction. According to the writers, Naqiba and Siti, they revised the attention grabber because *“it looked quite messy when we were revising. So, we decided to keep it simple and straight to the point”*. Siti added: *“I remember saying the same thing to the responders when we were commenting on their draft”* (PRI 7). The experience of responding to the peers’ drafts resulted in the participants becoming good self-reviewers. They looked at their own drafts and located problem areas which needed further improvement. Providing feedback to peers helped the participants improve their own writing (Min, 2005). Training students to incorporate feedback into revision had a significant impact on their writing quantity (Miao, Richard & Yu, 2006). Further analysis of the revised paper revealed that among the writer-initiated revisions, microstructure changes ranked first, followed by meaning-preserving changes and formal changes. This indicated that during self-revision, these participants focused more on meaning-level aspects.

Furthermore, when the feedback from the peers was not up to their expectation, some participants took the initiative to do self-revision. All the eight writing pairs initiated some revisions by themselves. Two pairs made limited self-initiated revisions, while the other six pairs made a satisfactory amount of self-revisions. More encouraging is that these participants made mainly meaning changes when doing self-revisions. Some of these revisions were successful while others were not.

These findings add up to the positive impact of peer feedback on the quality of revisions and revised drafts produced by the participants. In a further attempt to investigate the effectiveness of trained peer-response, the participants were interviewed to find out which specific aspect during the peer-response activity caused successful revision.

**The four-step revision process.** All the groups in this study admitted to following a common pattern during the peer-response activity. They observed a 4-step revision process which according to most of them facilitated successful revision. The four steps included the following: localization, explanation, solution and summarization. The next section will provide brief descriptions of each step followed by examples.



Figure 4.1 The Four-Step Revision Process

**Localization.** The post-revision interview data revealed that for successful revision, the peer-responders first identified the exact location of the trouble-source in the draft. This increased the student-writers' understanding of the problem and resolved possible ambiguity. *"When they pointed exactly where the problem was, we could understand it clearly"* (PRI 2), said Umami, one of the participants. However, some responders simply stated that there were problems in the drafts without stating where they were in the draft. General statements like *"I think you guys should check some of the transitional words in your draft to improve the flow"* did not contribute much to the revision. When the writers had difficulty identifying the problem, they ignored the suggestion and did not attempt any revision. Therefore, highlighting the

exact location of the problem enabled the student-writers understand the nature of the problem and revise it accordingly. The following example shows how localization resulted in successful revision:

**First Draft:**

In addition, Facebook addiction can cause backbone problems. They sit in front of the computer for very long and do not do exercise.

**Feedback:**

R1: *You guys have so many short sentences la. Must join up. Use sentence connectors.*

R2: *Yes. Look at this part. First you say Facebook addiction can cause backbone problems. Next sentence you say it is because they sit too long and lack of exercise. How can lack of exercise cause backbone problem?*

(PR Session 1: Causes and Effects of Face Book Addiction)

**Revised Paper:**

Facebook addiction can also cause backbone problems because the users sit in front of the computer for a very long time. Furthermore, they do not exercise often because they are addicted to Facebook.

As the problem area was clearly identified by the responders, the writers used different transitions words and phrases to show the sentences are related. Four transition words were used. Some were repeated but they were acceptable and did not affect the quality. The use of the transition words made the reading easy and improved the paragraph.

**Explanation.** As stated by Bitchner (2005), the participants' writing performance improved when they received clear explanations from the peers. Clear explanations as to why a particular part was a problem and how to revise it contributed greatly to draft improvement. Azira and Ain who wrote on 'The Impact of Reality Programs on Television' said they benefitted from feedback that clearly explained the problem. *"We used their suggestions because they explained clearly what was wrong in our draft. They also told use how to correct it clearly. The*

*suggestions were very useful for revision. For example, our topic sentence for paragraph five was too long and had two ideas. They explained why it was not suitable and gave some good suggestions” (PRI 4).* The following excerpt from “The Impact of Reality Programs on Television” explains the importance of explanation for draft revision:

**First Draft:**

Furthermore, parents should monitor and be more attentive to their children’s form of entertainment to curb negative behaviour among teenagers.

**Feedback:**

*R2: I think there is a problem with your topic sentence.*

*R1: Ya, not very clear. Sir said must keep it simple.*

*W2: Why? Okay what!*

*R1: No, confusing. Just say parents must monitor the type of programs the children watch ...*

*R2: Ya, no need to say other things. You’re just repeating the point.*

(PR Session 4: The Impact of Reality Programs on Television)

**Revised Paper:**

Furthermore, parents should monitor the types of programs their children watch on television.

Because of the clear explanations from the responders, the writers managed to revise the topic sentence which was not only long but also confusing. However, some responders in this study were unable to provide clear explanations and these affected understanding of the problem. Thus, the writers were unable to revise them successfully. Tseng and Tsai (2006) also reported that unclear and confusing explanations hurt writing performance. Aishah and Kamaliea who wrote on ‘Suicide among Teenagers’ expressed their frustrations due to unclear feedback: *“They told us something about the problem in our draft, but we could not understand. So, we did not revise that part”* (PRI 3). This clearly shows that peer-responders must give simple and clear feedback on how to improve early drafts. Even though not every

participant succeeded in doing so, many did. Most of the peer-responders gave feedback that was useful and explicit in most cases.

**Solution.** A feedback was more likely to be implemented if the problem was explained and understood by the writers. The student-writers were more likely to understand a problem if the location of the problem was identified, explained and a solution for revision was provided. Problem understanding is different from solution understanding. Thus, it is not possible for them to implement the feedback if they did not understand the problem. Understanding a problem in the draft during the peer-response session enables the student-writers to develop a mental model of the task (Kieras & Bovair, 1984). This understanding of the problem and solution increased their ability to revise the trouble-source in the draft for successful revision. The following example on “Suicide among Teenagers” explains this.

**First Draft:**

Besides that, depression is also one of the reasons teenagers commit suicide. Depressions happen because of chemical imbalance in the brain. It is an illness that is highly treatable. Those who do not receive treatment for depression are at risk of suicide. Teenagers who experience depression will show some symptoms such as unable to concentrate while studying and feeling guilty. According to Dr. Kevin Caruso (2001), founder of Suicide Organization, untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide among teenagers. Depressions that happen due to low self-esteem and horrible disappointments result in teenagers committing suicide.

**Feedback:**

R2: *Your paragraph does not have examples la ...*

R1: *You want to talk about depression kan... but you did not say much about it.*

R2: *Like you guys must talk about what causes depression among teenagers.*

W2: *Oh, like ... relationship problems ...*

R1: *Yes, must talk about break up with boyfriend or girlfriend, ...*

R2: *Bullying... can't get along with teachers ... like that la ...*

(PR Session 3: Suicide among Teenagers)



### **Revised Paper:**

Besides that, depression is also one of the reasons teenagers commit suicide. Depressions happen because of chemical imbalance in the brain. It is an illness that is highly treatable. Those who do not receive treatment for depression are at risk of suicide. The main reason for depression among teenagers is caused by relationship problems. Sometimes they cannot get along with friends in class. The friends may boycott him or her for some reasons. Also, some teenagers are bullied in class. So, they become scared and depressed. Another factor is breakup with their partner like boyfriend or girlfriend. They feel terrible. Teenagers who experience depression will show some symptoms such as unable to concentrate while studying and feeling guilty. This will affect their studies. According to Dr. Kevin Caruso (2001), founder of Suicide Organization, untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide among teenagers. Depressions that happen due to low self-esteem and horrible disappointments result in teenagers committing suicide.

In this example, the participants revised the draft based on the solutions provided by the responders. The revision improved the quality of the paragraph. However, some of the participants did not have the confidence and ability to decide which aspect of the feedback to use, resulting in simply implementing everything they received from their peers. This contributed to some of the unsuccessful revisions in their revised paper.

**Summarization.** After discussing the solution to the problem that was localized and explained, the responders provided a summary of the solution to the problem. A brief explanation on how to revise the problem increased the student-writers' understanding for revision. It enabled them to understand the responders' overall comment and use the suggestions to revise the draft using their own words. Summarization created the opportunity for the student-writers to incorporate the feedback using their own words. As a result, the writers were able to put the feedback into context and better understand the problem. The example below shows how the solution in the form of a summary resulted in a successful revision.

**Feedback:**

R1: *I think you should explain more clearly why parents are too protective of their young daughters.*

W2: *Ya, we have said parents don't let their daughters go out at night, follow them when the daughters go shopping ...*

R1: *That's not enough. Must say why parents are over protective.*

R2: *Ya ... like talk about crime ... rape ... so parents are afraid.*

(Session 2: Causes and Effects of Early Marriages)

**Revised Paper**

The other reason for early marriages these days is that parents are too protective over their daughters. They act in such behaviour to ensure the protection of their daughters. This is due to the many cases of rape, sexual harassment and also kidnapping that often happens in the society today. According to PDRM statistics (2011), crime involving rape, sexual harassment and kidnapping has increased by 38 percent. So the parents are afraid their daughters might be the next victim. So, when their daughters get married, they will be protected by their husbands.

The writers, Umami and Hanieza, revised their first draft based on the summary of solution to the problems provided by the responders. The summary of the solution to the problem in the draft, was '*you should explain more clearly why parents are too protective*'. This summary increased the writers' understanding of how to revise the paragraphs. Moreover, the writers provided additional information such as '*talk about crime ... rape ... so parents are afraid*'. This further enhanced understanding and resulted in a successful revision.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the interactions that took place during the peer-response activity and how the drafts were revised. This relationship relates to the peer-response training. Training the participants before the peer-response activity resulted in more interactions about text meaning. This led the participants to make more meaning changes in their revision, which resulted in more improved writing.

## Summary

Revision is an important aspect of process writing. To what extent it leads to draft improvement depends on the quality of the feedback received from the peer responders and student-writers' ability to incorporate the feedback into their drafts (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992). The purpose of this research question was to determine whether improvements to the revised drafts were due to the interactions during the trained peer-response sessions and incorporation of the peer feedback into their revisions. The results indicate that the participants incorporated a significantly high percentage of peer feedback into their revisions which enhanced the quality of the revised papers. The revised papers showed improvement in terms of overall quality and individual components such as language, content and organization. Positive changes linked to peer-feedback were higher than that of the writer-initiated revision. The writers produced a greater number of positive revisions due to the peer responders' constructive suggestions and comments. Peer-response training significantly influenced the likelihood of revisions resulting from peer interactions. However, some of the participants were unable to provide feedback that could change the direction, overall structure or substantial content of the drafts.

Rereading and rewriting the drafts helped to improve the quality of the revised papers. Most of the participants reported that rereading and rewriting their drafts a number of times and paying more attention to the peer feedback helped to improve the quality of their drafts. *"When we rewrite, we can see our mistakes and make corrections to improve our writing. Our writing became better after rewriting several times"*. While rereading and rewriting, the student-writers incorporated more information, ideas and removed unnecessary aspects from their drafts. This helped to improve writing quality. There was improvement in organization, language

expression, content and grammar. Reinforcement took place when they paid attention to individual aspects of the writing.

The peer-response activity also enabled the student-writers to consider and develop fresh ideas. They became aware of the expectations of their audience. The interactions enabled them to rethink and reorganize their thoughts into supportive sentences and logical paragraphs. Content and organization were the main areas that displayed significant improvement after the peer-response revision process. The student-writers also became critical of their own drafts. Revision became more effective when input was obtained from the peers and the writers themselves. Peer-response made them more independent and critically evaluate their own writing.

## **Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion**

### **Introduction**

This study investigated a group of ESL student-writers' experiences in trained peer-response writing activity, focussing on how they interacted and revised their written drafts. The participants, working in small groups of four, were trained to engage effectively in discussions, give and receive productive feedback and revise their drafts accordingly. They developed favourable attitudes, actively discussed each other's drafts and mostly stayed focused during peer-response discussion sessions. They tried hard to provide constructive yet critical feedback for draft improvement. Most of the suggestions provided were directed at trouble-sources in the drafts that called for revision. They attended to local and global level issues and their feedback constituted a valuable source of information which supplemented the ideas in the drafts. The interactions helped the student-writers to discover possible alternatives to unclear aspects of their writing. Contrary to general beliefs, the findings of this study indicated that the ESL student-writers are capable of providing useful feedback and incorporating them into their revisions.

ESL student-writers do not accept peer-response readily (Byrd, 2008) and it is challenging for writing instructors to engage them in a learning process that involves drafting, editing and revising. However, the peer-response training made them aware of its value in improving writing abilities. Most of them rated the peer-response activity as 'very useful' in improving their communication and writing skills. They also learned more about writing by reading each other's drafts and giving feedbacks for draft improvement. An important objective of ESL peer-response is focussing on global aspects of the drafts and the participants in this study

accomplished this satisfactorily. Having peers to read their drafts was motivating and made them understand the importance of writing for an audience.

The following sections will present the general conclusions of the study, revisit the research questions, discuss the pedagogical and theoretical implications, acknowledge limitations and provide suggestions for future research.

### **General Conclusions**

This study investigated the benefits of trained peer-response on tertiary level ESL students' interacting revising abilities. It looked at the cognitive activities of responding to peers' written drafts and revision strategies. As recommended by Cohen (2003), the peer-response training served as a mechanism through which the student-writers were guided and encouraged to take responsibility for their choices and decisions when engaged in the writing process to become independent, life-long learners. Several important conclusions can be drawn about the participants' interactions, revision strategies and writing improvements. The data provided support to the findings and highlighted some of the complexity of the peer-response revision process. The gaps in literature have been the focus of this study, and the results have indicated some important contributions to the body of research.

The participants in this study were initially sceptical about the benefits of the peer-response activity but later found it very beneficial. The peer-response training brought to surface the positive and negative perceptions the ESL student-writers had about this collaborative group activity (Hefferman, 2006). The participants were also overwhelmed by the dual roles they played - as writers and peer responders. Most of them indicated that the peer-response activity provided opportunities to share ideas, exchange opinions, thoughts and information about their written drafts. It made them

aware of the different understandings the audience can have about their drafts and realize the need to write for an audience. The following are the conclusions drawn from the study:

**Peer-response training.** The findings indicate a positive relationship between training and the student-writers' performance during the peer-response sessions and revision process. What exactly about the training that resulted in a higher frequency of peer interaction about text meaning, an increased number of meaning revisions and improved writing quality?

The participants who were extensively trained prior to the peer-response activity displayed positive effects on their interactions, revision strategies and writing outcomes. These were evident on language related areas and attitudes towards communication about writing. They knew where in the drafts revision was needed and how to revise them. They could draw the writers' attention to trouble-sources, ranging from individual words to organization of text that did not make sense to them. The student-writers developed a better understanding of their own writing processes and improved their writing competence. Thus, a carefully designed training programme can minimise problems and maximize benefits in the ESL writing classroom.

The participants in this study indicated strongly that participating in the training for the peer-response activity improved their communication and revising skills. *"I think without the training we will not know what to do. The training helped us a lot"* (PRI 3). It also increased their ability to convey and negotiate opinions and engage in critical evaluation of the drafts for revision. They could express their views logically and persuasively, negotiate with peers on draft meanings, settle conflicting issues amicably and make their comments more acceptable. The training that

focussed on affective, cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects resulted in more revision-oriented feedback for meaningful revision. Thus, future peer-response training procedures should focus more on content and organization and also incorporating valid suggestions.

Even though all the participants received the same training in playing the role of writers and feedback providers, the less competent ones were incapable of playing the role of peer-responders effectively because of their language proficiency and learning abilities. They needed extended training to effectively benefit from the peer-response activity. Lack of experience in working with peers and rewriting their drafts resulted in lack of interest among some participants. This validates the view by Brown (1994) that it will take time for ESL student-writers to participate actively in peer-response activities. ESL student-writers who are accustomed to a teacher-fronted classroom may feel uncomfortable working in a student-centred environment (Kamimura, 2006). However, resisting peer-response activities may prevent them from developing the advanced critical evaluation skills associated with these activities (Braine, 2003). For peer-response groups to produce results, they require careful and detailed training. Thus, writing instructors should plan the task carefully, set the parameters and monitor group progress.

**Group formation.** Group formation is an important aspect of the peer-response activity. The participants in this study displayed positive behaviours favourable for peer-response groups, enjoyed working in the collaborative group setting and getting feedback from their peers. Most of them reported that group rapport and synergy played an important role for the success of the peer-response activity. As the participants in this study were homogeneous, there were no cultural differences that affected the flow of the interactions. Nelson and Carson (2006)



reported that linguistic and cultural homogeneity may play a key role in successful peer-response activities. Working in pairs also enabled the student-writers to discuss between themselves the feedback provided by the peers before incorporating them into their drafts. Instead of blindly accepting the peer feedbacks for revision, the writing-pairs considered them, questioned the validity, and weighed them against their own knowledge and ideas before making a joint decision on changes to be made. The participants also expressed overwhelming preference for peer feedback.

However, there were occasional refrains from initiating negative comments and the reluctance to criticize peers who were their friends. These prevented them from disagreeing with their peers and claiming authority as responders. The lower proficiency student-writers working with higher proficiency peers in the same group gained from the exposure of reading better examples of writing which improved their own writing skills.

The findings from this study point to the ideal peer-response group as one in which the members have diverse perspectives and experiences; have similar academic abilities and leadership skills to keep the group on task. Group members with a good understanding of each other and comfortable in the peer-response activity will motivate each other to improve their communication and writing skills in English. Thus, peer-response groups, if set up carefully, can determine the success of the peer-response activity.

**Group synergy.** ESL student-writers provide rich feedback when there is strong rapport within the group. This study has demonstrated that strong group synergy is important to generate rich and constructive responses. Positive rapport that developed within the groups had an impact on the quality of the interactions and feedback. The feedbacks were honest, detailed and valuable for revision. The student-

writers were pleased with the feedback they received. Moreover, the feedback moved beyond superficial comments that some researchers have previously reported. They focused on clarity of ideas, structural problems, quality of the supporting details and transitions that improved flow and coherence. The training provided prior to the peer-response activity resulted in the participants responding to the drafts constructively and improved their confidence in participating in the peer-response activity.

However, some participants were too critical and their responses were sometimes destructive for group harmony. They were not honest in their comments as they were afraid that providing negative comments may hurt their peers' feelings and affect their interpersonal relationships. Even though the transcripts revealed some hesitations during the interactions, most participants shared ideas with confidence. As stated by Bruffee (1985), the peer-response writing groups enabled the student-writers to learn how writers behave and become productive members of a community of effective writers

**Pair-work.** This study also investigated the benefits of pair-work by analysing interactions within the writing pairs during the peer-response activity. Small group and pair work are common features in learner-centered classrooms and have strong pedagogical and theoretical support. From a pedagogical perspective, the use of small group and pair-work supports the interactive and collaborative approach to ESL instruction and its emphasis on providing the student-writers with opportunities to use the L2 (Savignon, 1991). The two writing-pairs in each peer-response group engaged actively in the discussions. Pair-work within the peer-response groups led to greater accuracy in draft revision by providing ESL learners with additional opportunities to use the second language. Through collective

scaffolding (Storch, 2005), the student-writers pooled their linguistic resources to solve content and language-related problems. They actively made suggestions and counter-suggestions, offered explanations and repeated the suggestions. These language functions played an important role in draft revision because the act of providing an explanation forced the learners to clarify and organize their own knowledge and understanding (van Lier, 1996). Student-writers working in pairs led to greater accuracy in completing the task.

By having two writing pairs in a group, this study also addressed the issue of who benefits from peer-response - the responders, the writers or both. This information is beneficial to writing instructors. When two novice writing-pairs were put together in a group, they supported each other's learning and responders benefited from the peer-response activity. The experience of learning to effectively respond to their peers' drafts led to the creation of self-reviewers. They could revise their own drafts after the peer-response sessions. The improvements in the revised papers are an indication that the participants implemented the feedbacks effectively. There were more peer-responded changes than writer-initiated changes and the participants also made more global-level changes than local-level changes. The writing-pairs discussing the peer suggestions between themselves during revision resulted in a higher percentage of positive changes. Pair-work within small group discussions provided the participants more opportunities to give and receive feedback for draft improvement.

**English language competence.** The participants' competency in the English language had an impact on the quality of interactions, revision strategies and writing quality. It also affected the percentage of successful revisions. Interestingly, their selective use of L1 (Malay) also influenced the outcome. Some participants used the

Malay language to communicate their ideas when they had difficulty doing so in the in the target language. Despite this, their participation in the interactions was not affected. ESL student-writers, regardless of their language proficiency, can be trained to participate effectively in the peer-response activity. The quality of the feedback and revisions also depended on the topic of the writing. Some participants had more knowledge about a topic as the Internet provided them with a lot of fresh ideas and information. Thus, they were more active during the peer-response sessions.

The more competent writers revised more on global-level while writers who were not very competent revised more on local-level such as grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. Both global and local level revisions contributed to draft improvement. However, poor command of the English language resulted in some participants not providing enough feedback and uncertain about revising their drafts per feedback provided. They did not have sufficiently developed learning skills and reasoning abilities to help them absorb new information. Their low English language proficiency hindered them from understanding suggestions for improvement offered by their peers. Thus, they could not effectively incorporate the feedback into their drafts. Some of the participants could not think of ideas or did not have enough information to write. Being in the same level of proficiency, some peer responders were not helpful to their peers. They were struggling with grammar and lacked confidence in expressing themselves in English. Clearly, the student-writers' English language proficiency determined the quality and quantity of the feedback provided and the effective implementation of the peer feedback into their revisions.

**Off-task episodes.** Another frequent criticism of peer-response in the ESL context is the participants' lack of focus. However, in this study, most of the interactions were related to issues in the draft. The participants provided valid

suggestions for draft improvement, responded critically to the feedback provided and incorporated most of them into their revisions. Even “off-task” episodes prompted the revision process. The off-task interactions influenced language learning and social development, which resulted in self-revision. When the writing pairs exchanged and shared information, not everything they talked about was relevant to the task but it was important to them personally and socially. They learned important language aspects and gained ideas which became relevant for revision. In fact, the “off-task” episodes in this study added fun to the peer-response activity.

**Self-revision.** The benefits of providing and receiving feedback have been acknowledged by many researchers (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; van den Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2006). Previous studies on peer-response focused primarily on the benefits for writers (Lundstorm & Baker, 2009; Min, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000) and reported that the student-writers learned more about writing by receiving feedback on their drafts. This study on the other hand, focused on the activity of responding to the peers’ drafts, a cognitive activity to develop critical evaluation, and self-revising skills. It enabled the participants to make changes that went beyond the scope of the feedback provided by the peers. This is because the participants in this study played the dual role of writers and responders, reaping the benefits associated with both roles. This enabled the tasks of giving and receiving feedback to be seen together. In fact, it is one of the few studies that investigated the impact of peer-response on the responders' own drafts using qualitative data.

The student-writers who responded to the peers’ drafts and later revised their own drafts showed significant writing improvement. This is because during the peer-response activity, the student-writers had the opportunity to practice a range of skills necessary for language and writing development, such as exposure to different ideas

and new perspectives of the writing process (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The student-writers who evaluated their peers' drafts became better writers themselves because they brought the revising skills to their own drafts. Thompson (2002) stated that the skill of critically evaluating the peers' draft is very important for writing improvement. It provided them the opportunity to encounter greater diversity of perspectives (Pearce, Mulder & Baik, 2009). The peers offered the much-needed diversity for writing improvement. Thus, the revised papers were well organized and had more relevant details to support the main ideas. The paragraphs addressed the topic adequately and were satisfactorily developed. Collaboration during the interactions strengthened the participants' revision skills, by helping them to self-monitor their own drafts. Furthermore, development of their internal sense of audience awareness enabled them to revise their own drafts independently.

**Maintaining authorship.** Another frequently mentioned drawback of peer-response to writing is that it deprives students of text originality (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Rollinson, 2005). Peer-response is said to result in the student-writers losing ownership of their writing. The conflict between writer autonomy and responsible dependence on peer feedback to help improve writing quality is frequently highlighted by the critics because the revised paper is said to belong to the peer-response group, not the individual writer. However, the peer-response activity implemented in this study enabled the participants to foster a sense of ownership of the revised paper. The spoken and written data revealed that the participants were selective when incorporating the peer suggestions into their revised papers. Instead of blindly incorporating the peer feedback, the participants accepted them with a certain amount of reservations. Moreover, the writing-pairs were involved in further discussions before deciding to implement the feedback. In other words, the peer

suggestions were adapted and not adopted. This helped to cultivate writer autonomy among the participants.

**Self-confidence.** The peer-response activity helped the participants to boost their self-confidence. They were responsible for their own learning, worked on their writing weaknesses and improved on their writing strengths. They also reflected on their writing skills such as sentence construction and paragraph development. Interacting with the peers minimised grammatical errors in the drafts. Significant improvements in the revised papers indicate a clear association between revisions and writing improvement. Peer-response got the students to interact with each other in a way that may not have taken if they worked individually. They noticed problems in the draft that they themselves did not see earlier.

All in all, the participants in this study underwent a different form of writing experience. They got used to the idea of reading and commenting on their each other's drafts, promoting higher order thinking about writing. Even though the participants were anxious at first, they later found the peer-response activity a very pleasant experience.

### **Revisiting Research Questions**

The use of peer-response in the ESL writing classroom is an essential part of the composing process that deserves renewed attention by both researchers and instructors (Paulson, Alexander & Armstrong, 2007). The need for additional research and the researcher's own classroom use of peer-response spurred the interest for this study, which attempted to investigate the impact of training on the participants' interactions during the peer-response sessions, revision strategies and writing outcomes.

**RQ 1: Interactions during the Peer-Response Group Activity.** The process writing, interactive and collaborative learning theories allowed for an accurate understanding of pair and group interactions during the peer-response activity. The student-writers worked collaboratively to generate ideas for draft improvement. They commented on clarity, relevance of ideas, grammatical aspects (Hyland, 2003b) and took responsibility for their learning. As stated in the collaborative learning theory, knowledge is a social construct generated by communities of like-minded peers (Bruffee, 1999).

The participants developed favourable attitudes towards the peer-response activity and established a positive atmosphere in which social relationships developed naturally. Managing the discussions, collaborating with peers, adopting reader/writer roles and establishing joint responsibility were significant aspects of social behaviours displayed. They exchanged and shared experiences, developed ideas and linguistic resources. These positive environment encouraged rich interactions, active negotiations and generation of useful feedback for draft revision.

The interactions involved seven distinct socio-cognitive revision activities - reading, assessing, dealing with trouble-sources, composing, writing comments, copying and discussing task procedures. Each activity had an important role in the revision process. However, at times, the collaborative interactions were affected when some participants attempted to gain control. Though respectful of authorship, some responders became overly involved and assumed the writer's role. Even though the writers initially relinquished authority over their drafts, they usually gained it during the interactions. The more capable participants provided support to the group members by managing the overall discussion, which created a more conducive environment to contribute ideas freely.



Despite concerns that participants in peer-response groups are frequently not focused on the task (Cragan, Kasch, & Shields, 2009), the participants in this study were largely focused and the discussions centered on ways to further improve the drafts. The discussions were generative. The peer evaluation checklist, completed before the peer-response activity, resulted in the participants having a very clear sense of what they wanted to say without much hesitation. The checklist also served as a framework around which the participants interacted, ensuring greater focus on the task. However, they did not follow the guidelines checklists rigidly, operating independently most of the time. Each group interacted differently, even though they all underwent the same training and referred to the same checklist. As writing is essentially a social act (Hyland, 2002; Weissberg, 2006), participating in the peer-response activity enabled the student-writers to write for an audience, which is favourable for the development of L2 writing skills.

The participants' overall engagement in the task was high. Their comments and suggestions demonstrated a clear purpose to provide useful feedback for draft revision. This commitment moved the peer-response activity from surface-level praise or general criticisms to a deeper-level of feedback to be incorporated into the subsequent drafts. The suggestions put forward by the responders were usually negotiated before being accepted or rejected. Interestingly, most of them negotiated for more feedback on grammatical accuracy because they believed that grammar was an important aspect of revision. Successful peer-response fosters language development (Hansen & Liu, 2005). However, due to insufficient editing knowledge (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Hu, 2005), some participants were not able to provide meaningful feedback. They offered general comments and surface error corrections rather than content-based corrections. The quantity and quality of the feedback (Oliver, 2000)

were some of the concerns of the participants. These were due to uncertainty about the feedback and overly critical comments from peers who lacked background knowledge of the topic (Liu & Hansen, 2005).

The use of the participants' mother tongue (Malay) highlighted the distinctive nature of peer discourse in a homogeneous ESL context. For the Malay-speaking participants, their mother tongue came naturally as they interacted with each other. The participants used their L1 to retrieve information from memory, make meaning of the draft, and generate ideas (Cumming, 1990) to improve the quality of writing. They were also able to successfully focus on their dual roles as writers and responders. In each role, they located trouble-sources, explained and offered suggestions for corrections and learned to self-correct their own drafts.

The peer-response training sessions certainly contributed to effective interactions and valid feedback to improve the written drafts. The interactions improved the student-writers' communicative ability (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994) to effectively convey and negotiate their opinions. Although they initially appeared to lack confidence, they gradually gained valuable experiences from the peer-response activity. The ability to provide feedback for draft improvement is an important skill for writing improvement (Thompson, 2002). As suggested by Hyland and Hyland (2006), the interactions laid the foundation for the next stage of the writing task – the draft revision.

Some of the major concerns were lack of logical argument, concrete details, clarity in intended meaning, real life examples and paragraph development. Identifying areas for improvement in the drafts was the most challenging aspect for some participants. Drury, Kay and Losberg (2003) reported that even after explicit

training on group work skills and structured discussion, a small percentage of students reported negative experiences of peer-response.

All in all, these findings indicated that the peer-response activity presented an effective collaborative learning environment, facilitated an interactive and collaborative relationship among the participants. The interactions during the peer-response sessions benefited the student writers, in line with the L2 interactive theory. The student-writers worked collaboratively with peers who could empathize with them and obtained different perspectives and ideas for drafts revision. Consistent with Warschauer (1997), the interactions provided opportunities for the ESL student-writers to generate the output needed for draft revision.

**RQ 2: Changes made to the written drafts.** Another interesting aspect is the changes the student-writers made to their drafts after the peer-response sessions. Most of the suggestions offered by the participant during the trained peer-response sessions were implemented and resulted in changes to the revised papers. The decision to accept or reject the peer suggestions required the student-writers to think critically as the proposed suggestions may improve or harm the draft. Negative feedback that highlighted parts of the draft had to be corrected resulted in more revision compared to positive feedback. However, positive feedback helped to boost the student-writers' confidence level, even though they had no effect on the revision.

There was an effective transfer of information from the peer-response sessions to subsequent drafts which involved vocabulary, sentence structures, ideas and organizations. A good portion of changes implemented in the revised papers were from peer-response interactions. This is a clear indication that the peer suggestions were well understood and subsequently used to make changes to the drafts. Lengthy negotiations enabled the participants to retain most of the suggestions

offered by the peers and used in the revision. This adds new information to the interactive theory. Clearly understood feedbacks allowed for easier processing of information for revision. As pointed out by VanPatten (2004), comparing one learner's output with another learner's input prompted them to discover new knowledge that was integrated into their own interlanguage system.

The student-writers in this study seriously attempted to incorporate the peer suggestions into their revisions after careful considerations. When uncertain of the suitability, the writing pairs usually discussed between themselves before deciding on its implementation. Some feedbacks were not incorporated due to breakdown in communication. Some writing pairs initiated a follow-up discussion with the group members when they were unclear of the feedback provided. Some participants also made their own changes. The peer-response activity helped to develop an internal sense of audience among the participants, an aspect frequently missing among ESL learners.

The acceptance level of the feedback provided varied and depended on how the student-writers responded to the suggestions. Sometimes, when a suggestion was offered, it was accepted with very minimal negotiation or challenged. Thus, the quality of the suggestion and clarity of the explanation influenced the writing pairs' decision to make changes. Not incorporating the feedback into the revision, did not always mean that the feedback was not helpful. As reported by Min (2005), vague feedback by the responders and misinterpretation of the writers' intentions were two major reasons why the peer suggestions were not always adopted. As reported by Allen and Mills (2015), the participants' English language proficiency determined the quality of the interactions and the incorporation of the peer suggestions into the revised papers.

Some participants in this study never thought of writing as a process that had to be revised several times before good quality writing could be accomplished. Peer-

response helped them understand that academic writing in ESL classes requires a process approach that includes revision based on feedback. Participants who revised their written drafts after the peer-response sessions appeared to value the feedback provided by their peers. The training also helped the less competent writers gain confidence in viewing themselves as capable readers and writers. They broadened their horizons and refined their ideas by approaching a specific topic from multiple perspectives.

**RQ 3: Peer-response interactions and successful draft revisions.** The trained peer-response activity had a positive effect on the participants' writing development. As reported in previous studies (Curtis, 2001; Hu, 2005), the student-writers understood their roles as writers and feedback providers. Writing multiple-drafts emphasised in the process writing theory made the student-writers become aware that writing is a process of discovering ideas and making meaning (Jun Liu & Hansen, 2002).

The revised papers showed improvements in organization, language and content. There were significant gains in all areas, including grammar. However, the level of writing improvement differed among the pairs. Peer-response enabled them to understand problems in their drafts and obtain clear guidance on how to revise them. The corrective feedback allowed them to better acquire and construct in the second language (Duff, 2000; Lantolf, 2006; Storch, 2007). They interacted collaboratively and incorporated the feedback in a selective manner. They clearly understood that writing quality could not be accomplished at the first draft stage.

Peer feedback made the participants understand their mistakes and how to correct them. They practiced and learned more about revising and how to avoid similar mistakes. This knowledge was put to good use during draft revision. It served

important social and cognitive functions (Duff, 2000), indicating that the writers had acknowledged implementing the suggestion given. It also facilitated the acquisition of new language forms and consolidated the structures already learnt (Lantolf, 2006). Moreover, writers understood the importance of writing for an audience and self-monitoring their drafts for content and clarity. As reported by Tsui and Ng (2000), peer-response enabled the student-writers to see the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing. There were more global level changes involving content and meaning compared to local level changes such as spelling, punctuation, grammar and formatting. Microsoft Word functions that provide writers with spell checks lessened spelling mistakes. The more proficient participants made more significant gains in organization, cohesion and vocabulary. In contrast, participants who were not that proficient in their overall writing ability did not benefit as much from self-revision.

There was a positive relationship between the number of meaning revisions and the level of improvement from the first draft to the revised paper. Rich interactions led to more meaning changes in the drafts, and improvements in the revision. Working in pairs and groups also enhanced the participants' sense of autonomy and responsibility. The collaborative peer-response activity made the participants critical readers and writers. Hansen and Liu (2005) stated that peer-response activities are not only a stage in the writing process but also fundamental components of fostering language development in the ESL writing classroom.

Interestingly, the act of providing feedback also improved the student-writers' abilities to revise their own drafts by becoming more conscious of their writing. They developed declarative knowledge and procedural strategies that were beneficial in improving their own drafts. The feedback provided also created opportunities for them to consider different perspectives and think about their own

writing in new ways. Rereading and rewriting the drafts improved writing quality (Ferris, 2003). Using the self-monitoring technique, the student-writers further examined their own drafts (Benedetti, 2005) and improved unclear and insufficiently supported ideas, which produced positive outcomes. As reported by Cresswell (2000), the peer-response activity enabled the student-writers to receive peer evaluations and self-evaluate their own drafts. Self-evaluation enabled development of more precise consciousness of the writing quality based on the same dimensions used by their responders (Cho & Cho, 2007). The writing pairs compared their self-evaluation with the peer-evaluation on their drafts, resulting in further improvement. One writing pair said, *"The group discussion was very good. We got a lot of ideas from the group members. We reorganized our ideas and corrected the mistakes before rewriting the draft"*. This was another benefit of pair work implemented in this study. Thus, ESL student-writers can improve their own writing by transferring skills they learned when reviewing their peers' drafts. They critically self-evaluated their own drafts and made appropriate revisions. As stated by Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick (2006), commenting on the peers' written drafts enabled the participants to better understand what to write and how to write, which they later transferred into their own drafts. However, compared to writer-initiated revisions, peer-reviewed revisions produced a higher percentage of positive outcomes. Self-evaluation skills are beneficial in other aspects of L2 learning (Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002).

The participants clearly valued the peer feedback and used them to revise their drafts. *"I like interacting and commenting on each other's work. We can know if the readers understand our writing or not and what information we have to provide. We corrected a lot of mistakes in the first draft"*. Participants were also comfortable in not incorporating some of the suggestions that their responders

provided, maintaining authority over their drafts. Their level of proficiency in the target language also proved to be a significant variable in the peer interactions and revision strategies. Other factors that may have caused draft improvement were the participants initial writing abilities, past writing experience as well as their attitude towards the peer-response activity.

Another interesting finding was that the participants observed a 4-step revision process which facilitated successful revision. The four steps were localization, explanation, solution and summarization. When describing problems in the drafts, the exact location of the problem must be clearly identified. This can avoid confusion and resolve possible ambiguities of the feedback. Localization was followed by clear explanations on how to revise the drafts. Writing performance improved when the writers received clear explanations on why that part of the draft was problematic. Clear explanations on how to revise problems contributed to draft improvement. Understanding was affected when responders were unable to provide clear explanations. The feedback did not stop at the identification of a problem but included a potential solution to the problem. Implementation of feedback was enhanced when a solution was provided, especially if the solution was understood and accepted by the writers. This understanding increased the writers' ability to revise the problem in the draft which resulted in successful revision. Lastly, a summary of the solution to the problem in the draft further increased the writers' understanding of the problem. It enabled the writers to use the suggestions to revise the draft using their own words. Thus, the writers could put the feedback into context and better understand the problem. The writers were more likely to implement revision when the location of the problem was given, an explanation was provided, a solution was offered and the feedback included a summary.



As reported by Kroll (2001), the peer-response activity provided the student-writers more options to consider when revising their drafts. These findings concur with previous studies which reported that ESL learners see their peers as learning resources (Sato, 2013) and did not mind peer feedback because it improved their written drafts (Ekşi, 2012; Sato, 2013; Zhao, 2014). The training had a positive impact on refining feedback, interactions and revision strategies. Thus, suggestions for draft improvement were more readily incorporated into the revised papers. Improvement in the revised papers was due to the training provided prior to the peer-response activities.

### **Implications of the Study**

While confirming the findings of previous studies on trained peer-response, this study extends knowledge by providing a more complete description of what transpired during the peer-response sessions, how the interactions influenced the revision strategies and draft improvement. The peer-response activity was based on the process writing, interactive and collaborative learning theories. The following sections will provide a description of the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study.

**Theoretical implications.** The findings of this study have various theoretical implications for research in trained peer-response and ESL writing pedagogy. These implications are discussed based on the process writing, L2 interactive and collaborative learning theories. Combining these theories was beneficial because the peer-response activity drew its insights from what L2 writing is, how students learn L2 writing and how to teach it (Gregg, 2000; Kroll, 2003). The process writing approach provided a positive learning environment when looked at from the

interactive and collaborative learning perspectives. It played a positive role in restructuring the ESL writing classroom for the social use of language learning. This can be understood within the framework of the three learning theories.

Peer-response is an integral part of process writing instruction. It highlights the importance of the process in which the student-writers draft, revise and rewrite (Liu & Hansen, 2002). This approach provided the groundwork for the peer-response activity by emphasizing meaning over form, process over product and multiple revisions over finished texts. With a focus on receiving feedback from peers, doing multiple drafts and revisions, process writing is a very important element of peer-response activity (Ferris, 2005). Thus, writing, which is often considered to be an individual act should be socially situated (Weissberg, 2006). Collaborative and interactive learning generate the cognitive skills needed for the development of ESL writing ability (Hamdaoui, 2006).

Interaction and collaboration play important roles in the process writing classroom. They result in improved writing abilities because the skills acquired during the interactions and collaborations determine the qualities of the writing (Bruffee, 1984). The psychology of human development and the pedagogy of writing are linked (Bruffee, 1984). Peer-response supports interactions and co-construction of knowledge (Storch, 2005), providing ESL student-writers working in pairs and small groups have more opportunities to learn the target language, instead of working independently (Freeman, 1992). They pool their linguistic resources and ideas to provide feedback and to compose more linguistically complex and grammatically accurate pieces of writing. They also provide their peers with appropriate support for knowledge development (Ellis, 2000). A rich, collaborative learning environment for

brainstorming, exploring ideas and processing information is created (Warschauer, 1999).

Meaningful learning is collaborative and finds its origins within social interactions in the classroom (Launspach, 2008; Parker, 2006; Wells, 2006). Providing feedback promotes collaboration and interaction among peers, which leads to learning (Ekşi, 2012). Moreover, process writing raises audience awareness (Ferris, 2005) and empowers idea generation through interaction and collaboration (Liu & Hansen, 2002). As suggested by Hyland (2003), the student-writers in this study were trained to interact and work collaboratively with like-minded peers (Bruffee, 1999) and obtain constructive feedback for draft revisions. Knowledge was constructed through active two-way communication in small learning communities. This enabled the student-writers to improve their writing abilities by working on multiple drafts. Since writing and speaking are mutually informing (Sperling, 1996), the student-writers learned from each other.

Moreover, the writing-pairs working collaboratively created genuine opportunities for language learning. Pair-work enabled them to engage in discourse moves hypothesized by the theory of interaction (Long, 1996) and provide each other explicit feedback which facilitated second language learning. Working in pairs made them more receptive to feedback, which they incorporated into their revision. They analysed and worked out problems, edited and revised their written drafts. Furthermore, working collaboratively in pairs first and in small groups later enabled them to think critically and learning more effectively than doing it alone. It trained them to work effectively when the stakes were comparatively low and work together when the stakes were high (Bruffee, 1999). As stated in the collaborative learning theory, the L2 learner is a partner in learning and co-constructs knowledge with other

learners. The more proficient learners provided the less able ones with appropriate level of assistance to further enhance their knowledge (Storch, 2005) and improve their writing skills.

Academic and developmental benefits of classroom interactions are well documented. Peer interactions play a pertinent role in developing social, cognitive and writing skills. When student-writers are engaged in interactions, they recognize deficiencies in their developing English language and address the problem areas collaboratively. This facilitates language development and writing improvement. The students became creators of language and help one another revise the written drafts (Brown, 2001). Interactions during the peer-response activities involve interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues. Interpersonal interactions occur when the participants respond to each other's drafts and come up with peer-initiated revisions. Intrapersonal interactions take place within the minds of the writing-pairs, when they work independently on their own drafts after the peer-response sessions, thus resulting in writer-initiated revisions. Thus, both interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions are significant for successful draft revisions.

Interactions during the peer-response sessions also enable student-writers to take control of their learning. Learning takes place when they challenge each other's biases and assumptions, negotiate perceptions, thoughts, expressions and feelings (Bruffee, 1999). Learning also occurs when they are engaged in two-way communications (Oxford, 1997). These social interactions are essential components of language learning that encourages the construction of new knowledge collaboratively to be utilized for draft improvement. Moreover, peer interactions enable the student-writers to practice revising skills within a social setting, by exchanging, sharing and co-constructing new ideas. As a cognitive learning theory,

interactive learning during peer-response highlights the potential of L2 improvement by exposing the students to comprehensible input, output and negotiation of meaning. The input and output during the peer interactions are constructed collectively in a social context, making draft revision an interactive process.

Thus, the interactive and collaborative perspectives look at the process in which ESL student-writers interact with each other and how that process results in writing improvement, as stipulated in the process writing approach. The peer-response experience enables student-writers to practise a wide range of skills important for the development of language and writing ability, such as meaningful interaction with peers, a greater exposure to ideas and new perspectives on the writing process (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

There are also strong pedagogical and theoretical support for the use of small group and pair-work in the ESL setting. The act of two writing pairs working in small groups is supported by the interactive and collaborative theories of language learning (Donato, 2004). They pool their linguistic resources to solve language-related problems and complete the writing task more accurately (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007). Forming groups with two writing pairs provides more opportunities to practice the target language and consolidate existing knowledge. Interactions between the writing-pairs for confirmation checks and clarification requests facilitate second language learning, by providing the necessary comprehensible input (Long, 1996). These inputs raise the student-writers' awareness of trouble-sources in their drafts and respond to the feedback by making the necessary revisions.

Interactive and collaborative theories have also shown that peer-response activities can help student-writers confront the writing tasks more effectively

compared to doing it alone (Liu & Hansen, 2002). This is because peer-response promotes social interaction, negotiation and meaning construction, which are crucial for language learning and writing improvement. In fact, the ability to critically evaluate written drafts is important for writing improvement and academic success (Thompson, 2002). These critical evaluation skills enabled the student-writers to effectively respond to their peers' drafts and identify trouble-sources that weakened the content on a global level (Ferris, 2003).

Therefore, ESL writing instructors must create more opportunities to engage the student-writers in conversations among themselves during the writing process. The way the student-writers interact with each other determines the way they think and the way they write (Bruffee, 1984). Active participation in the learning community is essential for student-writers to incorporate the peer feedback into their revision. Using the process writing, interactive and collaborative learning theories resulted in a more accurate understanding of the relationship between peer interactions and writing development. Interactive and collaborative learning empowered the student-writers to construct knowledge, thoughts and language together.

**Pedagogical implications.** Many valuable pedagogical insights can be derived from this study on trained peer-response in the ESL writing classroom. As suggested by Storch and Aldosari (2013), writing instructors should consider appropriate training components, students' L2 proficiency and relationship issues before implementing peer-response in the writing classroom. This is because the student-writers enter an unaccustomed experience of reading and responding to each other's drafts - something they have not done before. Combining this knowledge

with their own experience and self-reflection, ESL instructors should develop a training program to create comfortable and effective learning environments.

Most ESL student-writers must be trained on how to be constructive members of the learning community. They must be specifically trained to analyse each other's drafts, incorporate peer feedback during revision, write for communication, revise for better products and work with peers at the revision stage. The training should focus on what to critique and how to convey the comments appropriately. This includes responding to sample drafts before beginning their task in the peer-response groups. Getting the whole class to collaboratively respond to sample student essays will train them to be effective peer responders. Effective feedback must be very detailed and capable of improving the drafts. When the student-writers are appropriately trained, they know what to look for and how to constructively respond to content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics of their peers' written drafts. They can work efficiently as writing-pairs, interact actively with group members, direct the interactions to problem areas of the draft and utilize the feedback provided for draft revision. They will understand that a good piece of writing requires working on multiple drafts with peers. Engaging in peer-response activities develops problem solving and reflection skills, which enables them to consider new ideas for draft revision (Pearce, Mulder & Baik, 2009). It also increases their sense of responsibility, promotes independent learning and reduces dependence on the instructor. Moreover, discussing the benefits of peer-response will raise their awareness on the effectiveness of this collaborative and interactive activity (Hu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005).

Contrary to popular belief, a difference in the participants' English language proficiency is not a crucial factor. Some studies have indicated that peer-response

can be used with varying language proficiency participants (Suzuki, 2008). What really matters is their attitudes towards the peer-response group activity. So, the training must also focus on developing positive attitudes among the participants. By concentrating on problem areas of the draft, instructors would be able to maximize opportunities to produce effective revisions. Thus, proper training and careful monitoring of the peer-response activities are important to ensure the success of the peer-response activity.

ESL writing instructors should also identify problems that interfere with successful group work and develop practical solutions for some of the common problems associated with collaborative learning. Group maintenance and rapport are important considerations for the success of the peer-response activity. The participants must be given some authority in group formation. However, good friends may not be ideal group members because their ability to stay focussed on the task and give honest feedback might be compromised. Problems may also arise in peer-response groups due to differences in the participants' English language proficiency levels such as unevenly matched grammatical competency, reading skills and communicative abilities. There may not be many improvements in the drafts if participants do not have a good grasp of the target language. In such cases, the purpose of collaborative learning and the benefits of peer-response will be compromised.

Linguistic and cultural homogeneity are important contributing factors for successful interactions (Nelson & Carson, 2006). The peer-response success rate may be higher if the participants were working in a culturally and linguistically homogeneous group. Thus, writing instructors should be aware of the differences among the participants, in terms of cultural background, prior writing experience and



English language proficiency. It is also important for peer-response group members to develop a high level of trust to ensure that they do not feel uncomfortable. The group composition must be maintained throughout the activity so that trust can be developed and nurtured over time. Some students may not feel competent in peer-response groups, so instructors should train them to be good team players. It may also be beneficial to address turn-taking behaviours to facilitate equal participation because in a knowledgeable community, everyone is positioned on an equal footing to engage in negotiation of meanings (Bruffee, 1984). Therefore, instructors should provide sufficient guidance and instructions so that the group members can be equal participants when engaging in the peer-response activity. Without proper training, the student-writers may not produce positive outcomes (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005).

Peer-response should be started at an early stage to familiarize the student-writers with the strategies. To enhance effectiveness, the peer-response activity must be implemented as a two-part revision process. First, the writing-pairs should be allowed to meet and respond to each other's drafts. After negotiating problem areas, the student-writers should be given the opportunity to revise the drafts based on the peer feedback and their own ideas. In this way, the peers' comments and the writers' existing inclinations to make changes to the draft would work together for further draft improvement. Since writer-initiated and peer-responded revisions have been shown to produce positive changes, combining both would be very effective for draft improvement and used to complement the student-writers existing revision process. Moreover, when participants are focused during interactions and negotiations, they produce more positive feedback that is beneficial for revision. By staying focused,

they could negotiate problems or concerns that the peer-responders may have about the draft. Such interactions have great potential for facilitating language acquisition.

Peer-response is essential for ESL student-writers at the tertiary level. It is certainly more effective than students working on their own. Therefore, writing instructors must introduce peer-response in the ESL writing curriculum. This can be done by restructuring the ESL writing curriculum to include adequate time for peer-response as part of their ongoing written academic development. ESL writing instructors should also constantly check to see if their strategies can be modified and improved and their students' needs are being met. If the student writers are trained to discuss their drafts with peers and make changes to their drafts per feedback provided, trained peer-response has the potential to be a supplement to the ESL student writers' revision process.

### **Limitations**

Despite the positive indications on the effectiveness of the trained peer-response activity in study, there were several limitations. Among the shortcomings are limited number of participants, time constraints, the number of peer-response sessions and draft revisions.

The first limitation was the number of participants involved. Although the class was made up of 30 students, only eight writing pairs (16 students) participated in the study. Naturally, more participants would have allowed greater validity. Furthermore, this study reflected the performance and reactions about trained peer-response of one group of students at one place and time. Unlike previous studies, the participants' backgrounds in this study were not diverse. It was a homogenous group that shared the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is possible that a different

set of student-writers in a different setting would have provided different experiences and reactions to the trained peer-response activity. Therefore, a larger scale study would be able to provide more substantive results and discover more precisely what takes place during the peer-response sessions and revision process.

Moreover, all the participants in this study were enrolled in the class taught by the researcher at the time of the study. The researcher was the subject instructor. It is possible that the participants' behaviour may have been affected because they were aware that the instructor would be analysing their recorded speech and written work. Recording the participants during the peer-response sessions could have also affected the quantity and quality of their interactions. The participants may have thought that their participation in this study would influence their assignment grade.

This study was also limited by time. The peer-response training, writing of the first drafts, peer-response sessions on the first drafts, the post peer-response revision and interviews took place within fourteen weeks. Due to time constraints, data collection and analysis only involved the first drafts and the revised papers. Since it was a 14-week semester, it was not possible to have the participants engage in another round of peer-response and work on a third draft. Thus, not all aspects of the trained peer-response sessions were observed by the researcher. It is possible some potentially important aspects of the participants' behaviour during the peer-response activities may have been missed out or overlooked by the researcher.

Furthermore, the data gathered for this study was compiled and analysed after the 14-week semester. As the participants were not in the same group anymore, it was difficult for the researcher to communicate with them. Thus, it was not possible for certain aspects of the data to be considered and analysed thoroughly for the study. Some potentially influential aspects of the collected data may not have been analysed

due to this. This included clarification of participants' notes on the peer-evaluation checklist and the participants' reactions to the writing process. For example, the changes which the participants made to their drafts, the number of changes made to the drafts and the number of episodes each group had outside the class hours. These data, while interesting, were considered too detailed and not specific enough to the research questions of this study. Analysis of the data was limited to only those which would best answer the research questions.

A more comprehensive analysis of data would have required a research team. However, the data analysis for this study was limited to the knowledge and intuitions of one researcher. If this study had involved a team of researchers, the spoken data transcripts as well as the written drafts would have been more thoroughly analysed. A research team would also have resolved doubts by coming to an informed consensus on the data. It may have had sufficient time to carry out more extensive analysis than that which is presented in this study. To overcome this, the academic staff of the faculty was constantly consulted to verify and resolve difficult issues in the data. Despite these limitations, this study makes important contributions theoretically and pedagogically.

### **Future Research**

The findings of this study have indicated that peer-response is beneficial for ESL student-writers at the tertiary level. However, further research is needed to fine-tune and improve its implementation in the ESL setting.

Firstly, further research that examines transfer of learning is much needed in the field of ESL trained peer-response. Since this study was limited to one writing assignment right after the participants underwent training, it was not possible to

determine how the training affected the participants' revision strategies in subsequent writing assignments. Very little is known about what is involved in transferring writing skills from one task to another. Thus, the long-term effects of trained peer-response on ESL student-writers' revision strategies have to be further investigated. As DiPardo and Freedman (1988) pointed out, even if the student-writers make measurable improvement on a piece of writing that can be connected to the interactions during the peer-response sessions, the student-writers may not have learned concepts that they can apply to a new writing situation.

Secondly, the role of trained peer-response in helping ESL student writers sense dissonances in the drafts remain unanswered. Did the peer-response training enable the student-writers acquire the dissonance sensing skill to be applied to their own writing in future? To answer this question, the peer-response training should focus on teaching the student-writers what to critique and how to convey the feedback effectively. Feedback on content and organization contributed most to overall improvement of the revised papers in this study. Therefore, ESL writing instructors should consider appropriate training procedures that can guide the student-writers to focus on content and organization issues in the drafts. This can further increase the incorporation of peer feedback.

It would also be useful to consider other pertinent aspects of the peer feedback such as which component of the training had what effect on the interaction and revision, how extensive the training must be to achieve the desired outcomes on peer interactions and subsequent revisions. Research of this nature will provide valuable input for the designing of training activities that will enable ESL student-writers to benefit more from peer-response as a learning activity.

Moreover, in mixed ability group situations, it may also be beneficial to address effective turn-taking behaviours to facilitate the peer-response discourse and maximize equal participation. It will be worthwhile to train the participants, especially the passive ones, on how to compete for turns during the interactions. Most importantly, the student-writers must be trained to become active participants so that they could play a more significant role during the peer-response activity.

Finally, it is important to compare ESL students' behaviours in the peer-response groups. In this study, the participants were of the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It would be interesting to find out how the participants will behave in different groupings. Such findings will be useful in determining the role of cultural and linguistic homogeneity in the success of peer-response. All these will further improve the effectiveness of trained peer-response in the ESL setting.

## **Conclusion**

This study complements, extends, supports and at times contradicts previous findings on trained peer-response in the ESL writing classroom. The findings substantiated the views expressed in the literature that training is important for the success of peer-response in the ESL context. The results provide sufficient evidence about the positive impact of training on the quality of interactions, revision strategies and the revised drafts.

This study also supports the idea that responding to the peers' drafts is an important activity to improve ESL students' writing skills. By participating in the peer-response activity, the student-writers developed the ability to critically examine not only the peers' but also their own writing. In fact, self-revision played an important role in improving their writing skills. Instead of focusing solely on formal

accuracy and the final product of writing, the process writing approach instilled a greater respect for individual writers and for the writing itself (Hyland, 2003).

Receiving guidance from the peers stimulated the ESL student-writers' interests in revision. They put more effort in the task when they saw their peers helping them at every stage of the revision process. Participants who were competent in the language displayed a more positive attitude towards the peer-response activity and showed greater progress. Some participants tried very hard but did not show much success. They needed more time to master their language skills in a second language to benefit from the peer-response activity. Yet, the trained peer-response activity developed skills necessary for the participants to effectively evaluate their peers' written drafts as well as use the feedback they received from their peers to revise their own drafts. Even though training participants for peer-response activities can be time consuming, they can be very effective in developing ESL students' communication and writing skills.

Given these findings, trained peer-response should be considered an effective activity for tertiary-level ESL students in the writing classroom. Specifically, trained peer-response can be used to supplement ESL students' writing activities and help them develop skills in evaluating, critiquing and revising their own written work. These skills are not only useful for undergraduates as they revise their written work but also could help them in all other related areas of their academic activities. Since feedback can motivate and improve writing, it is important for ESL student-writers to be provided with effective, timely and appropriate feedback. As stated by Boud and Molloy (2012), peer-response at the tertiary-level should be repositioned as a practice that has a positive and sustained influence on learning.

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