

Thyme room
2.40-3.05pm

Engaging students using peer feedback

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Instructors' feedback to students is, indeed, an integral part of instruction as it helps improve students' performance, particularly in writing (Ahmadi, Maftoon & Mehrdad, 2012; Parr & Timperley, 2010). Top quality student feedback must inform learners of where they are at, highlight key features of the desired performance so students would notice the 'gap' in their work, and point out what needs to be done to achieve the desired performance (Parr & Timperley, 2010). The depth of the explanations must enhance independent learning, higher order thinking skills and, more importantly, enable students to actively engage in the learning as they would feel a stronger sense of connection to the course and the instructor (Cook, 2016).

Furthermore, substantial research shows that peer feedback is another crucial part of the teaching and learning, as well as the assessment process in a writing course. Peer feedback, like writing and learning, is a social process and allows students to receive feedback in a non-threatening environment (Hyland, 2002). Students see value (and are motivated) in getting feedback during process writing practice (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; DeGuerrero & Villamil, 2000; Ferry, 2009; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Paulus, 1999). Instructors also see value in providing students with valuable learning experience in gaining and transferring knowledge (Fink, 2003) and evaluative experience (Fink, 2003; Hawe & Dixon, 2014).

However, students must be carefully prepared for peer feedback. This means instructors should train students in the way they should give and receive feedback because the training itself can give students a very positive learning experience. If adequate training is done, students would even welcome the opportunity to discuss their response to the peer feedback on their draft which encourages them to take the peer exercise seriously, and engage with the comments and suggestions made by their partner (Seviour, 2015). Further research must explore the effectiveness of using feedback as a platform for students to learn in a writing course.

This presentation reports on the effective implementation of a peer feedback process that can engage students and reinforce taught skills/knowledge in the teaching/learning process, how student writers view the value of the 'evaluative experience' of the peer feedback process, which aspects of that experience students might benefit from the most, and the degree to which students can utilize evaluative practices learned.

The results show that instructors must be aware that “teaching” does not necessarily lead to comprehensible input and students may not be able to correctly demonstrate skills in formative and summative assessments immediately after receiving input. Students should be given opportunities to improve through process writing and peer and instructor feedback. This process allows students to build confidence, improve their writing performance, and prevent student disengagement because the task is perceived as so challenging that students cannot see how they can improve, and promote higher-thinking skills and knowledge of academic writing skills. Feedback is indeed an effective platform for students to explore their learning. At the heart of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course is the instructors’ guidance. The EAP instructors play a vital role in facilitating students’ improvement in the EAP and their ability to transfer. Thus, instructors must also be conscious about being able to provide samples well-structured texts to students and familiarise them with the texts.

Note

This is a Teaching Enhancement Grant (TEG) project supported by the Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL).

Keywords

Feedback, peer feedback

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