



L1 and L2 peers: who is “more peer” in L2 writing?

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Life at our universities

- International exchange and L2 students are welcome
- However:
 - Cultural differences in academic writing
 - Linguistic problems in getting thoughts across
- High number of L2 students quit university (41% in Germany, 2012)

Further problems

- Too little lecturers for too many students
- Still, relatively low number of writing centres/
writing teachers
 - Cologne University: 60 slots or writing support per week for more than 42,000 students
 - One class on academic writing for international students per semester
 - Often no cooperation between course lecturers and writing lecturers

Cooperation

- High need of students supporting each other, but tendency of L2/FL students to stay inter-alia
- However: L2/FL students are better able to understand each other, and this might be of help in supporting each other (Hülmbauer, 2007; 2009)
- Still: knowledge about target-audience/conventions might be missing

Collaborative Writing

- Common practice in many universities, in which “two or more authors combine efforts to develop a single writing project” (Keen, 2007: 386)
- Feedback leads to restructuring of knowledge
- Motivation higher (social and fun factor)

Peer feedback

- Special form of collaborative writing
- Collaboration 'reduced' to giving feedback to a text written by one of the students
- Feedback takers and feedback givers profit from this process
- Acquiring competencies in analysing, synthesising, and evaluating texts

Positive factors

- Higher cooperation and possibility of revising the text *before* handing it in
- Discussion of feedback rather than just accepting it (without understanding it)
- Learning together how to understand tasks
- Non-directive feedback leads to better revision
- Expert feedback often too general, too automatic

Critical points

- Students might not accept the feedback (no experts, so criticism is unfounded)
- Strijboss, Narciss, and Dünnebier (2010):
 - Students are well able to evaluate fairness, competency and usefulness of feedback, and react to how feedback is given
 - Better revision processes after feedback from a peer on a low competence level

L2/FL peer feedback

- Possibility of discussing
 - Language/linguistic problems
 - Genre aspects
 - Cultural aspects
- Both can learn from each other (experiences, feedback, etc.)

Study (1/2)

- Analysis of peer feedback sessions for FL students
- Case study
- Different settings of participants
 - FL (Ukraine) – L1 feedback giver
 - FL (Ukraine) – FL group feedback (Bulgaria, Russia, Mexico)
 - FL (Chile) – FL feedback giver (Ukraine)
- All on C1 level
- Single feedback givers participants of classes on writing support

Study (2/2)

- Participants had 2 hours time to write an essay
- Topic chosen from a list of 3 topics
- 1 hour feedback session
- Feedback givers had a list and oral guidelines for evaluating the text before giving feedback

Result: L1 feedback (1/2)

- L1 feedback giver asks about focus of session
- Katarina answers
- L1 feedback giver reads, then
 - Feedback on type-setting, and discussion
 - Goes on reading, corrects orthography (without comments)
 - Asks about how to be referenced, and discussion
 - Reads, corrects, comes to the end
 - Reads again, asks for meaning, and corrects language

Result: L1 feedback (2)

- More discussion on what is to be done than in cooperative feedback
- Hardly any discussion on the 'real' problem: that Katarina does not really discuss the question
- Lecturer evaluates text after revision as being better in linguistic matters

Result: FL feedback (1/2)

- FL feedback giver starts 'classical': "How did you feel about writing the text?"
- Takes on remark that writer felt insecure and uses it for creating a 'team spirit' and for stressing the positive aspects of having a 'non-German' approach to academic texts: "else it would be boring".
- Discuss their cultural backgrounds
- Bring it in relation with Germany

Result: FL feedback (2/2)

- Discuss structuring and apply this to the text
- Wording only discussed when meaning does not become clear
- Feedback giver guides the session but FL writer actively participates and offers solutions herself
- Results are much better

Conclusion

- Cooperative feedback needs guidance by lecturer (or trained peers)
- Focus on language in L2 group and L1 feedback
 - L1 readers are less flexible in reading L1 texts
 - L2 students concentrate on linguistics because of former feedback?
- L2-L2 trained feedback giver: Real peer-setting
 - Focus on ‘important’ aspects
 - Language is seen as means to convey meaning not as ‘the Holy Grail’

I never know what I think about something until I read what I've written on it. (William Faulkner)

Thank you.

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