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The Role of Peer Feedback in Developing Better Writing Skills: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

This research aims at identifying the effectiveness of Peer Feedback in the improvement of the writing skill of undergraduate students at Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan. The sample population is 50 students of 1st semester, department of Education. The data were collected through students' writing as well as their feedback discussions and interviews to students. The results highlight major improvement in grammar, coherence and clarity resulting from peer feedback to the students' writing. In addition, it supports collaborative learning, enhances learners' independence and enhances the development of critical thinking skills. However, some of the problems that have been found included variability of the feedback quality and the tendency of some students not to produce critical comments to the works of their fellows among others. The study emphasizes that in students peer feedback provision should be embedded in structured procedures and classroom teachers should engage and guide students as they benefit from peer feedback. The findings of this study demonstrated the importance of incorporating peer feedback interventions into writing curricula with a view of improving writing aptitude among university students writing in similar environments.

Keywords: Peer assessment, academic writing, cooperative learning, simulation

Background of the Study

That is why writing remains perhaps the most essential component of learning in college; the medium through which information is disseminated and in the light of which students' performance is evaluated. Nonetheless, learning proficient writing skills is a consistent issue with many students even when learning English as a second language. As a response to these difficulties educators have started looking into the effectiveness of collective and participatory methods, peer feedback in particular. Peer feedback is defined as social feedback, in which learners perform a critical assessment of work, of their peers and give comments and suggestions regarding the work (Miller & Brickman, 2022, Ramzan & Hafeez, 2021). This interactive method not only helps to polish the writing activity but also it improves the analytical and evaluative skills also. The importance of peer feedback has been underscored in literature in the last couple of years in different type of learning environments. For instance, in their studies, Al-Gharabally (2021) positively revealed that structured peer feedback contributed to students' enhancements on the aspect of grammar, organization, and coherence error detection correction. In the same vein, Yu and Lee (2022) pointed at the value of peer feedback in enhancing students' collaboration, self-regulation and increased level of autonomy in the writing processes. However, there remains several disadvantages including, differences in quality of feedback, cultural informalities that make it difficult to critique peers and lack of preparedness in delivering constructive criticism (Zheng & Yu, 2023).

Pakistan being a South Asian English as second language country and having writing student strength, which need intensive writing skill improvement, presents a suitable background to investigate peer feedback in undergraduate education. Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan, one of the biggest public universities in Pakistan, is a proper subject for understanding how peer feedback

might be introduced and utilized to enhance students' writing competencies. Therefore the present study aims at examining the value of Peer Feedback in improving the writing ability of under graduate students of Ghazi University. This study adds empirical knowledge to the current literature on collaborative writing, in particular, with reference to peer feedback used in ESL by exploring how it works, the advantages and difficulties connected with it, as well as how it can be incorporated into the writing curriculum.

Statement of the Hypothesis

1. Feedback from peers affirm writing quality of undergraduate students at Ghazi University by correcting grammatical mistakes, increasing coherency and order of arguments.

2. Quantitative peer feedback enhances learner independence, problem-solving skills, and cooperative learning for the writing activities.

3. The reception and assimilation of peer feedback is determined by the quality of the feedback given, the culture which the students bring with them towards the feedback given, and the level of the teacher's involvement.

Statement of the Problem and Objectives of the Study

Students of Ghazi University, underprivileged, fail to write standard academic papers which are critical in meeting day-to-day academic as well as professional requirements. Although these approaches are informative and efficient for the teacher, they are lengthy and do not include students as effective agents in the writing feedback progress. Feedback from peers has been mentioned as a suggestion that can solve this problem as it involves the group of students, excluding the individual learner, and makes them aware of their and others' achievements. Nevertheless, this topic has received scant attention in the context of Pakistani universities, particularly within Ghazi University, to understand how peer feedback can be effective and the issues associated with its applicability and use. This study intends to address this concern by examining how peer feedback

can be used to improve paradigms of writing of the Ghazi University undergraduate students.

Research Questions

1. What role does peer feedback have in enhancing the writing skills of the undergraduate students teaching at Ghazi University with special references to grammar, coherence and organization?

2. What are the participants' expectations or perceived benefits of peer feedback for students' writing improvement at Ghazi University?

3. What factors prevent the successful implementation of peer feedback in writing courses and how do students and instructors deal with these factors?

4. It raises another question, namely, how the process of peer feedback could be enhanced to achieve its highest efficacy for Ghazi University undergraduate education?

Literature Review

Writing is fundamental in scholarship and work related scenarios, however, it unveils a prominent trial to the learners most especially those in ESL class. Peer feedback is one of the most recent innovations in learning that has been developed to overcome these challenges. It stems from the concept of learning by cooperation, whereby students pass their work to their colleagues and get feedback together with recommendations for modification (Yu & Lee, 2022). This section defines what peer feedback is, its purpose, the advantages and limitations of using peer feedback and its application in ESL classes. Peer feedback: a theoretical perspective Many experts' opinions correspond to Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory that envisages a great importance of social relations. By working together, students can proceed within their ZPD, and collectively solve the issues of writing.

Nicol et al. (2022) stated that peer feedback promotes providing an assessment for learning whereby learners get to appreciate the quality of their work in light of

the set standards and criteria as they work on the work of their peers. Benefits of Peer Feedback Research evidence has shown how Peer feedback enhances the skills of writing among the learners. For instance, Yu and Zhang (2023) affirm that peer feedback enhanced the grammar, coherence, and organization of students' works, and likewise their capacity for autonomous evaluation of their works as well as revision. More than that, peer feedback enhances critical thinking since students have to analyze and explain how to provide the feedback. Another strength in its application is the aspect of learner autonomy as the students become more personally responsible for individual learning as well as the learning of others (Lee et al., 2021).

In the case of ESL students, it enables learners to learn from others different ways of expressing an idea and different writings styles. In the survey conducted by Al-Gharabally in 2021, students who are learning English as the second language saw a real improvement in their writing skills after the implementation of structured peer feedback sessions. Challenges in Peer Feedback However, there are some difficulties involved with peer feedback process. There is the central problem of peer feedback insufficiency, as it depends on students' language skills and their ability to perform a critical analysis of the text (Zheng & Yu, 2023). Then, there are ability issues, for example, the culture of not wanting to offend peers will hinder the effectiveness of the feedback process (Yu & Lee, 2022). Faculty members also experience some difficulties in applying peer assessment into the classroom, especially in offering sufficient preparation and supervision to give constructive criticism. Peer feedback in Pakistani Perspective Specifically, the delivery of feedback from peers in Pakistani higher learning institutions has not been researched sufficiently. Research on collaborative learning in the context of Pakistani universities, for instance by Mahmood Jabeen in 2023 had revealed that learners from Pakistan fare well in models that are current and present students with successive intercommunication chances. However, the new research also

shows the major issues that should be addressed when using the peer feedback in this context, including the large number of students in classes and the limited preparation of teachers for effective implementation of common strategies. Analyzing the application of the peer feedback in writing courses at a large public university situated in Pakistan is therefore most appropriate in the case of BZU. The scholarly research points to peer feedback as a promising practice in writing activities as well as group learning. Nevertheless, there is still lack of knowledge about how the peer feedback works in certain contexts for instance, the context of the Pakistani universities. This research will attempt to fill these gaps by exploring the paper feedback process as a means of improving the writing abilities of the students in Ghazi University, and providing recommendations for the practical application of the concept in other educational environments.

Research Methodology

This research work uses both qualitative and quantitative data to look at the effectiveness of peer feedback in enhancing students writing skills of the undergraduate students of Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan. The research design adopted in the study enabled the capturing of perceiving experiences from the participants in a given educational setting. The target population includes all undergraduate students of 1st semester session 2024 in Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan. Data Pre and Post-test Measures Writing tasks were taken place in the subjects before and after introduction of peer feedback. These tasks involved basic skills such as Grammar, Coherence and Organization of the writing skills. The students were engaged in peer assessment activities that was span for six weeks. In those sessions they were peer assess each other according to a checklist that was provided by the instructor. Questionnaires were structured and participants' perceptions of peer feedback were sought. It contained structured questions as well as unstructured to generate both quantitative data and qualitative data. Commenting on the usefulness of peer feedback, the first set of interviewing

questions were semi-structured and given to a selection of participants and instructors who revealed more details about the perceiving, experiencing and functioning outcomes of peer feedback as well as its bearings on participants' writing skills.

Data Analysis

Among quantitative findings, the researchers present the demographic of the participants, key themes identified in the data, and findings related to contraceptive use. Data collected from pre-test and post-test assessment and questionnaires are analyzed using statistical descriptive and inferential measures. Quantitative data from closed-ended responses are analyzed numerically, while data collected from interviews and focused group discussions are content analyzed thematically.

Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Writing Aspect	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Mean Improvement	t-value	p-value
Grammar	6.2	8.4	2.2	5.21	< 0.001
Coherence and Unity	5.8	8.1	2.3	5.57	< 0.001
Organization	6.0	8.5	2.5	6.02	< 0.001
Vocabulary Use	5.9	8.0	2.1	4.85	< 0.001
Overall Writing Score	6.0	8.3	2.3	5.88	< 0.001

The results of table 1 shows enhanced features in every aspect of writing skills. The mean response values above the first baseline are 2.2 for grammar, 2.3 for coherence, 2.5 for organization and 2.1 for the use of advanced vocabulary to show

the of the enhanced peer feedback sessions. The t-values of all the aspects are significant, at the 0.05 level of confidence, therefore ruling out the chances of by chance having obtained the observed differences.

Table 2: Questionnaire Responses on Peer Feedback Perceptions

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Peer feedback improved my grammar	55	35	7	3	0
Peer feedback enhanced my critical thinking	60	30	5	5	0
Peer feedback fostered collaborative learning	65	25	8	2	0
I felt motivated to improve through peer feedback	50	40	5	5	0

Nearly all participants to some extent had perceived that the peer feedback had positively affected their grammar comprehension (90%) and critical thinking skills (90%). The study also shows that 90 % of the students said that peer feedback encouraged collaborative learning as well as motivation. Those with neutral or negative attitudes were very few in the entire exercise.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Themes Identified from Interviews

Improved Writing Awareness:

Participants reported that reviewing peers' work helped them identify common errors in their own writing.

Example Quote: "I noticed issues in my peers' essays, which made me realize similar problems in my own work."

Increased Confidence in Writing

Students expressed feeling more confident about their writing after receiving and providing feedback.

Example Quote: "The feedback sessions gave me a clearer idea of how to improve my essays."

Challenges in Giving Feedback

Some students felt unprepared to provide constructive criticism due to their limited language proficiency.

Example Quote: "I was hesitant to correct others because I wasn't sure if my suggestions were accurate."

Table 3: Overall Summary

Theme	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Improved Writing Awareness	18	60
Increased Confidence	15	50
Challenges in Feedback	12	40
Collaborative Learning	20	67

Quantitative results are seconded by qualitative data meaning that, students agree on the importance of peer feedback for enhancing writing awareness 60% and collaborative learning 67%. Low percentages being achieved in the challenges of providing feedback (40%) indicate that there is room for the institution to engage staff and students in extra training on how to give feedback on peers work. This

paper proves the hypothesis that peer feedback improves the quality of the written work among the undergraduates of Ghazi University. Qualitative results give qualifiable evidence of enhancing students' experience along with the effectiveness of the techniques and the need for structured feedback training to leverage peer feedback. Discussion of Major Findings in light with these considerations the outcome of the present study gives important understanding towards the contributions of peer feedback to the enhancement of undergraduate students writing proficiency in Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan. The outcome of the research is presented against the backdrop of the research questions, literature, and theoretical review. Effects of Peer Feedback on Writing Performance Through the quantitative results, the overall and significant enhancement in students' writing skills was seen in the post-test score mean for all the aspects of writing that includes; grammar, coherence, organization and vocabulary. They confirm the findings of previous research showing the benefits of peer feedback in improving the creators' writing skills (Ferris, 2014; Liu & Carless, 2006). It is clear from the positive increase in the coherence and organization with the highest mean gain of 2.5 indicate that peer-feedback enhances structuring of ideas and flow in writing. This can best be explained by the fact that feedback is a joint enterprise of feedback givers and takers, and students gain insight to their writing deficiencies, thus fulfilling the Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) formative feedback model criterion.

In this section, the study presents students' perceptions of peer feedback. The findings from the study showed that students had positive attitude towards the peer feedback in the survey. The majority of participants appreciated the aspect of the critical thinking improvement due to peer feedback (90 %) and the promotion of the collaborative learning (90%). These findings also verify Vygotsky's (1978) socio cultural theory stating that development is derived from social interaction. It was possible for students to not only gain feedback for their

own work but also analyze other students' papers to develop better understanding of successful writing strategies. The difficulties of Peer Feedback Most participants had positive feelings towards peer feedback, however, some of them stated the difficulties such as giving constructive feedback if they do not understand language very well. This result aligns with Hyland and Hyland (2006)'s study which pointed out that when students have not undergone any training, they will be in a very poor position to offer feedback that can be implemented. Thus, to overcome this challenge, it is possible to integrate preparatory activities dealing with peer constructive feedback for giving and receiving constructive feedback in group sessions into learning activities. Tracing the Significance of Peer Feedback in Accumulated Learning.

The study also pointed out peer feedback as a way of promoting shared understanding among the students. Students noted that peer work helped all participants teach and learn from each other as well as develop motivation for a better quality of work. This is true to the assertion made by Rollinson (2005) that peer feedback fosters the construction of the classroom community where students take responsibility of the class. Based on this, the study is aligned with the following theoretical frameworks: These findings are in close alignment with the study theoretical framework. Another notion that can be traced to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the zone of proximal development is how the students' learned from each other's strong areas, to achieve a level of progress that they could not otherwise have realized individually. In the same way, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) formative assessment principles were evident when the students wrote and reflected on their peers' comments by making relevant corrections on missing content or changes.

Discussion

This way teachers are able to have structured student feedback sessions as part of the curriculum to enhance critical thinking and team work. It is also possible to

minimize the challenges and maximize the results of peer feedback by creating the rubrics and guidelines. Comments from peers provide improvement in academic writing, as well as confidence and motivation, which are essential to receive good outcome. The study results reaffirm the previous studies about the positive role of peer feedback in teaching writing. For instance, a research by Topping (2018) and Ferris (2014) showed positive effects on the writing ability of students and students' participation to the group lessons through the use of peer reviews. This study adds to the body of work by examining Pakistani undergraduate students, a relatively uninvestigated group, and establishing the transferability of peer feedback as a teaching intervention. The major innovations of this research show the close correlation of peer feedback to improved writings among the undergraduate students. All these point to positive findings However, addressing the challenges by availing proper training and implementing implemented well-structured frameworks can provide a shot to enhance the peer feedback aspect. Therefore, this study can be used as the basis for further research in analyzing the effects that occur in the course of the academic year and analyzing the possibilities of implementing feedback based on peers in other aspects of learning language.

Conclusion

The current study aimed at identifying how constructive peer review could be useful in the development of the writing skills of the undergraduate students of Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan. The results show that peer feedback greatly enhances production of crucial aspects of writing such as grammar, coherence, organisation and vocabulary. The research shows that quantitative as well as qualitative data substantiate the thesis that peer feedback enhances critical thinking, collaborative learning, and develop awareness of best practices in writing. Increased in students' performance as evidenced by the findings showed that there were statistically significant gains to students' writing performance after peer feedback practices were implemented further affirming the effectiveness of

such practices in writing instruction. Also, the positive attitude regarding the peer feedback discovered among students proves that, along with increasing the level of writing proficiency, the motivation and confidence levels may also be developed. Concerns, for example, the problems of offering constructive feedback, demonstrate the require for extra development and resources to enhance on the peer reviewing procedure. Building on the principles of Vygotsky's socio-constructivist view and formative feedback principles, the research suggests that students' learning achievements and cognitive development can be bolstered by directed peer learning in effective academic setting.

Implications of the Study

In order to enhance students' participation in the course, teachers need to assign peer feedback sessions as a part of writing classes. There are ways in which the obstacles to feedback might be overcome as well as student training to give and receipt constructive feedback. Teachers should manage peer feedback and their interactions to make sure those feedbacks are valid and helpful. More to that, through peer feedback, the students feel empowered to develop a sense of ownership on their written work. Critique of work carried out by other students helps in the enhancement of the quality of work in an academic period. Assuming that the program constantly declines an environment of constructive feedback, the guidelines and rubrics for peer review should be elaborated and made quite clear. Integrating partner-aided content development including peer assessment strategies in the writing classes is consonant with the progressive learning paradigms that are based on learners' participation. Practical skills should be taught to the faculty members through conducting training sessions and workshops for the purpose of successful establishment of peer feedback mechanisms in the universities. • Research and Innovation: It is suggested that institutions should facilitate new studies in terms of peer feedback processes in

different educational levels and cultural settings to develop better approaches and to evaluate the potential and sustainable effects of peer feedback processes.

Future Directions

Thus, this study opens up opportunities to examine the effects of peer feedback on other aspects of L2 development for speaking and reading and investigate the method's efficacy across fields of knowledge. Longitudinal investigations could also explore how its outcomes apply to the organisational sustainability of the improvements attained from peer feedback. Moreover, literature on technology adoption, for instance, incorporating extend AI formal peer review, could provide more distinctive solutions for peer feedback. This way, educators and institutions will be ready to reveal latent potential of peer feedback as a tool as well as to prepare students for further academic achievements and life challenges.

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