

Web-based peer feedback in first-year English writing class



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CLASSROOM SALON



Traditional Peer Review



- Pair work or peer response groups
- In-class or take-home
- Paper-and-pencil
- Often unguided or sometimes guided with a worksheet (content, organization, cohesion, style, and grammar)
- Fill in the worksheet and exchange
- Optional verbal sharing after exchange
- It allows students to have at least a reader who helps with detecting more *visible* and *obvious* problems in a draft before submitting it to the instructor.

Issues



- Often times peer review is not as effective as what we want it to be (Leki, 1990, Ts & Ng, 2000).
- Students tend to respond to surface errors instead of semantic or textual ones.
- Students have difficulties deciding whether their peer's comments are valid.
- Students may not trust their peers' responses to their writings.

Issues



- Students often have difficulties in transferring peer feedback to revision.
 - “I think this essay has some problems with its organization. I don’t think it flows well”* → Not good localization of problems → Not enough elaboration of the problem
- Some students may misinterpret peer review as “peer critique” or even “peer criticism”.
 - not healthy, supportive classroom dynamics
- Rely on teachers (heavy workload)



Exploratory Question



- Can the use of web-based annotation tools help to target the problems identified in the traditional peer review activities?

Methodology



- Participants: 13 students in the first-year writing course at the Department of English CUHK
- 8 English majors, 5 ELED students
- Language background:
 - 9 Cantonese
 - 2 Cantonese and Mandarin bilingual
 - 1 Mandarin
 - 1 Pilipino (near-native English proficiency)

The Writing Class



- First-year writing course: “Communication Skills for English Majors I”
- Components: 60% writing, 40% spoken
- Two writing assignments:
 1. Persuasion paper (argumentative)
 2. Short story analysis paper (literary analysis)
- Procedure: 1st draft → teacher conference → 2nd draft → salon annotation (a week) → in-class verbal feedback sharing (10 minutes per student) → last draft

The tool: Classroom Salon



Landfills - A Waste of Space

Hong Kong, despite each day-- these include apartment buildings-- the case. Even though apartment buildings-- again. What we should in-- the landfills of Hong expansions or development of, and it is not surprising have protested back in demands of increasing should not be the only

The Hong Kong government as it is a comparatively recycling has proved to gathered being able to nowadays. (Woo, Par. rather than going through disposed at the landfill fuel can reused-- this another alternative, though Incinerators are effective in another area. However ash that would be produced citizens' attitudes towards

With the dense population continue adding landfills

Structure

Vielen | over a month ago | 0 votes

The essay is a well-structured one, beginning with background information and then the thesis statement. The body contains counter-argument. And then the conclusion and implication using Singapore as an example. However, I don't think your argument and counter-argument talks well with each other, the argument about efficiency of counter-argument about many limitations of Hong Kong. Also, I think it would be better if you could narrow down your points, for example just discuss the landfills in terms of those which will make your essay more specific and consistent.

[upvote](#) | [bookmark](#) | [see context](#) | [reply](#)

Relative clause

Ross Ng | over a month ago | 0 votes

It is better to use non-defining relative clause, which is "...waste produced, which is not the case".

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Sentence structure

Ross Ng | over a month ago | 0 votes

To me, "expansions or development of new landfills" means "expansions of new landfills or development of new landfills" to say that new landfills are expanded. I think what you mean is the expansions of original landfills or development of new

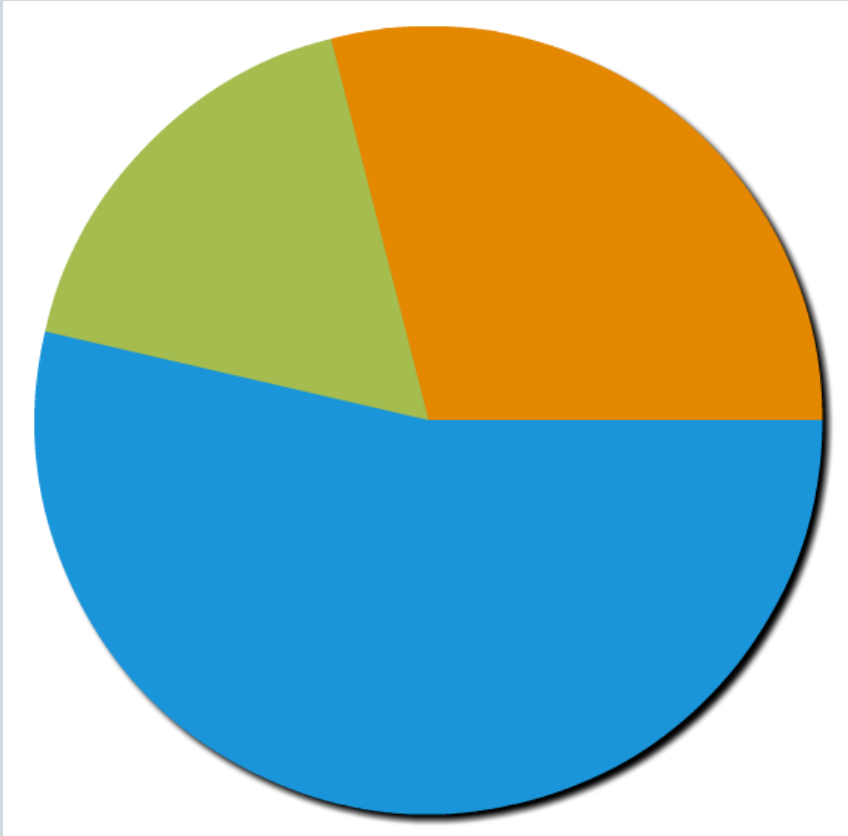
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Thesis statement

Vielen | over a month ago | 0 votes

I'm sorry to say that I don't find this thesis statement a very effective one, because it seems to me from this sentence that stress on the other solutions, if not more than, the landfills. And firstly you don't actually talk about other solutions, secondly





Student writer



Student Review 1



Student Review 2

Data Collection: Instruments



- Writing drafts
- Salon annotations
- Audio-recording of verbal feedback sharing in class
- Student reflection journals over the semester
- Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with all the 13 students in the class
- Their Michigan English Proficiency Test scores (2 students missing)

Preliminary results



- Participants' English proficiencies:

Scores	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent	Band
56	1	9.1	9.1	Borderline/Basic
75, 75, 75, 76, 77	5	45.5	54.6	Good
80	1	9.1	63.7	Very good
88, 88, 89	2	18.2	90.9	High command
95	1	9.1	100	Near-native

Preliminary Findings



- Overall user experience: Students had a positive experience with salon and the peer review activities structured around it.
- Students reported that the classroom dynamics supported by salon was positive and collaborative.
- Students reported that they felt the class was more student-centered rather than teacher-centered.
- Students reported that they felt they had received **sufficient** amounts of information from peer review (salon annotation + verbal feedback sharing) that they needed for revision.

Preliminary Findings



- Students recognized the need of having readers for writing.
- Students had a better understanding of the rationale of adopting the writing-as-a-process approach in writing instruction.
- Students could better understand the importance of the requirements of a writing assignment.
- Students got exposed to different styles of writing. This exposure helped them to reflect on their own writing.

Salon annotation vs. Verbal feedback



- Salon annotation gave students the space to exhaustively comment on all aspects of writing.
- Verbal feedback sharing, due to the time pressure, pushed students to shift their focus of comments from grammar to macro-features of writing (organization, logical coherence, clarity of ideas, Logical connection between evidence and arguments, sufficiency of evidence in support of arguments, quotation and paraphrase)
- There was less amount of grammar comments in the second round of salon annotation in the semester.

Students' preference of feedback



Students preferred feedback on:

- Clarity of ideas
- Organization
- Logical connection between evidence and arguments
- Sufficiency of evidence in support of arguments
- Feedback that focused on text description (rather than communicating subjective judgments)
- Feedback that were agreed by both peer reviewers

Limitations of application



- Students with higher English proficiency and more review experiences may benefit less than others.
- Students with lower English proficiency may not be able to be equipped with the metalinguistic knowledge demanded by the practice.
- More training and scaffolding is needed before asking students to use the tool for peer review.
 - E.g., teach categories of annotations with exemplar comments; limit the number of comments on surface errors to avoid information flooding
- Course schedule is prolonged due to intensive peer review activities.

Conclusion



- The peer review activities in the current study enhanced audience awareness and enabled students to see egocentrism in their writings.
- Students learned more about writing and revision by reading each other's drafts critically. Their metacognitive awareness of writing was enhanced.
- Combining salon annotation with in-class verbal feedback sharing pushed students to move away from limited comments on surface errors. They learnt to focus more on large issues in writing.



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Questions and comments?

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