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## A Study on Students' Attitudes towards Peer Review in Online Writing Classes

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**Abstract.** Online peer review has been applied in Academic Writing classes, and it has had a positive impact on the students' writing skills. Further study was done to determine the students' attitudes toward online peer review in online writing classes. A questionnaire on students' attitudes was distributed to 43 students in Academic Writing classes who are practising online peer review. The statements in the questionnaire cover their attitude towards online peer review in three aspects: affective strategies, writing processes, and interaction ability. The findings show that the students have a positive attitude towards online peer review. They have a positive attitude toward the aspects. However, the students have a negative attitude, one of the statements in social interaction ability. The average students do not see that online peer review helps them learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.

**Keywords:** Students' Attitude; Peer Review; Online Writing Class

### Introduction

Writing is a basic language skill for language learners which needs attention as it covers five aspects of writing; organization, contents, language use, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Therefore, teaching writing needs serious consideration. One of the ways to improve students' writing skills is by having peer reviews. This can be done online using Google Docs. This online peer review has been done in writing classes, and it has been proven that these activities positively impact students' writing skills. Peer feedback or peer review has been seen as essential for providing feedback to students in process-based second-language writing programs. It is widely acknowledged as an efficient strategy for assisting teachers in helping students improve their writing.

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Providing written feedback to students and offering individualized attention, among the most significant responsibilities of an ESL writing instructor, is unlikely to occur under typical classroom circumstances (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). However, some studies have been done to find a better way to teach so that students will achieve better writing competence by doing a peer review. Peer review can be defined as “a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards” (Liu & Carless, 2006). The practice of peer review is a form of collaborative learning where students evaluate and provide feedback on one another's written work. (Pearce et al., 2009). Review or feedback has its functions as praise, criticism, and suggestions (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Further, they define "Feedback as the communication of a response to a student's performance concerning a given task. This response can be written, oral, electronic or a combination of all or any of these”(Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In this paper, I use the term peer review instead of feedback as these two terms are reversible as it can be defined as communication between students on their writing performance.

By having a peer review activity, learners will interact with the peer who will provide them with constructive criticism to help them develop their writing skills. Some studies on peer review have found that peer review can improve students' writing abilities (Gielen et al., 2010); (Bijami et al., 2013);(Farrah, 2012); (Baker, 2016). Additionally, the purpose of the writer's peer review is to encourage the writer to reconsider the entire piece (Chisholm, 2006). Besides, students' own feedback to their peers performs a further potentially socializing function, reinforcing those values (Hafner & Yu, 2020). Thus, having peer review may develop students' abilities in expressing their ideas. L2 learners were able to effectively use peer feedback that resulted in better text quality by getting feedbacks from a trained L2 peer and integrating a greater number of peers' comments in revising their text (Sánchez-Naranjo, 2019). Apart from focusing on how students can review a text, it is essential for teachers to be aware of students' motivations and to promote positive goal orientation in students when providing peer feedback training (S. Yu & Lee, 2014). Teachers can explore with pupils their potential contributions as a reviewer and writer, as well as a peer feedback provider and receiver

A study on the effectiveness of peer review done in Iranian proves that training in peer review gave such a beneficial impact on the following improvements the students made to their work (Esmaeeli, Hadiseh ;Abasi, Maasumeh ;Soori, 2014) As it gives positive impacts, it also needs to know their attitude towards the online peer review. Training is a critical component in developing an open atmosphere for peer feedback discussions. There are many different reasons for this. Training can lessen the impact of unfavourable attitudes brought on by peer review. Students can have unfavourable responses to feedback from their peers if the reviewers on the evaluation are either overly defensive or not receptive to receiving constructive criticism. Additionally, cross-cultural concerns that may emerge concerning contentment may be associated with the student's native culture. When students receive peer feedback instead of straight corrections from the teacher, they reply more reflectively and positively, they debate the topic they are working with, and they make major modifications in their writing(López-Pellisa et al., 2021). Demmans Epp et al. (2019) found in their study that students employed neutral affect more than any other strategy in giving

their feedback. However, students may find difficulty as what Yu, (2021) Because of their inadequate knowledge and abilities, along with a lack of training and competence. students experience challenges offering feedback.

Although students prefer teacher review to peer review, the attitude may be somewhat positive toward the online per review activities. Peer reviews assist learners in proofreading and detecting errors and defects, such as classmates assist in reviewing the writing, when the group may not be able to discover the issues (Ma, 2020). However, a larger percentage of teachers stated difficulties with peer review due to a lack of confidence, a lack of appreciation for peer criticism, and a reluctance to make critical comments (Ahmed, 2021). Due these facts students may feel reluctant to do peer review. This study aims to investigate the students' attitudes toward online peer review in Academic Writing classes, specifically towards the affective strategies, the writing process, and social interaction ability.

### **Writing Process**

Writing is mainly a chance to practice linguistic abilities, and the process of writing development takes place when teachers help students use their writing talents (Badger & White, 2000). Regarding feedback, this process-based approach can help the students improve their writing skills. For example, according to Berg (1999), Zhang (1995), and Keh (1990), cited in (Grami, 2010), peer response is truly a component of the process approach to teaching writing, and feedback in all of its forms is a key component of this approach. The process method allows students to comprehend the significance of each step of the writing process, including peer evaluation, which will help them become better writers by teaching them that writing is a process. It covers prewriting, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing (Langan, 2010). Peer review activities are done to help the writer in the process of revising. The input they get from their peers can be used to revise their essays. Yastibaş & Yastibaş (2015) found that the use of peer feedback in writing classes reduced their writing anxiety in terms of cognitive, somatic, and avoidance anxiety

### **Affective Strategies**

When writing, students may use some strategies. One of them is effective strategies which include identifying others' feelings and becoming aware of the learning circumstances of the tasks. They can gain better control over their attitude and motivation in learning a language by being aware. These strategies can make the learners feel secure in doing their writing tasks. Oxford (2017) mentions that there are main strategies that cover nine strategies. They are lowering anxiety, encouraging themselves, and taking their emotional temperature. To lower anxiety, students can use progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, using music or laughter. Meanwhile, making positive statements, taking risks wisely, and rewarding themselves can encourage them. To take their emotional temperature, they can listen to their body, use a checklist, write a language learning diary and discuss their feeling with others.

## Social Strategies

Writing is one of the ways to communicate. There is an indirect relationship between the writer and the readers. Besides, in peer review, other people's involvement is also involved. There will be communication between the writer and the one the partner who gives the review. Therefore, appropriate social strategies are needed. There are three sets of social strategies. They ask a question, cooperate, and empathize with others (Oxford, 2017). In peer review activities, there will be communication between the student who writes and the peer who reviews. There will be a discussion between them. They also need to cooperate with peers to obtain feedback. In giving feedback, they need to develop cultural understanding and become aware how others' thoughts and feelings. They need to sense the feelings of their peers while giving feedback.

## Method

The participants of this study is 43 students who join Academic Writing class. To get the data, the writer modified the questionnaire with nine questions on the student's attitude towards online peer review in Academic Writing class. The first three statements are on the affective strategies, the second three are on the writing process, and the last three are on social interaction ability. The evaluation process used a four-point Likert scale with the categories "strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree" to examine the students' attitudes toward online peer review in an Academic Writing class. The statement labeled strongly agree received a weight of 4, whereas the statement marked strongly disagree received a weight of 1. After completing tasks, including online peer evaluation, the participants were given a questionnaire to fill out.

Five students administered the questionnaire. The validity level was determined by the writer using the R table. The value obtained from the survey of five people is 0.8054. If the significance value is greater than the value in the R-table, then the statement can be deemed true. The researcher conducted this pilot study involving 5 individuals, which implies that the sample size was  $df = 5 - 2 = 3$ , and the significance level was 5%. The significance level of 5% is utilized as the majority of social studies feature a significance level of 5%. Cronbach's Alpha was the method that the researcher utilized when performing the reliability analysis. If the value is more than 0.70, the instrument is regarded as reliable. It was found that all the items are valid. It is also reliable as Cronbach's Alpha is .804.

## Findings and Discussions

The results of three aspects, including nine questionnaire statements, are presented respectively. It will see the mean of all the aspects to see their attitude. The following are the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	43	3.00	3.00	3.0000	.00000
VAR00002	43	2.00	4.00	3.1860	.45018

VAR00003	43	3.00	4.00	3.5814	.49917
VAR00004	43	3.00	4.00	3.4419	.50249
VAR00005	43	1.00	4.00	2.9302	.70357
VAR00006	43	3.00	4.00	3.6744	.47414
VAR00007	43	3.00	4.00	3.4884	.50578
VAR00008	43	2.00	3.00	2.7674	.42746
VAR00009	43	3.00	4.00	3.1628	.37354
Valid N (listwise)	43				

The mean of eight out of nine questions is above 3, which indicates that the students have a positive attitude toward the peer review activities. However, the ninth statement *Online peer review activities helped me learn about maintaining harmony in pair work* got less than 3, meaning that the students are not favorable of this item. When calculating all the mean and dividing it into nine to get the average, it was found that the average of all the items is 3.248. It means that the participants favor the online peer review activities in the Academic Writing class. The following will see each item.

### Affective strategies

The students can apply these strategies in writing class through peer review activities. They can gain a positive atmosphere through this activity. One of the results of using strategies is self-esteem, a sense of self-value and efficacy that can be reflected in their attitude toward peer review activities in Academic Writing class.

**Table 2. The aspects of effective strategies**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00001	43	3.00	3.00	3.0000
VAR00002	43	2.00	4.00	3.1860
VAR00003	43	3.00	4.00	3.5814
Valid N (listwise)	43			

Regarding effective strategies, the mean is 3 or more, and the average mean is 3.255. This shows that they have a positive attitude towards the aspect of effective strategies. The following is the data for each statement. The affective side of a student may be one of the sides that have a significant influence on the student's success (Oxford, 2017). Students may feel pleased when they have positive emotions, motivation, and attitude so that the learning process can be effective.

Three questions are used to know whether students have positive emotions, motivations, and attitudes. The first is to know whether the peer review activities lower their anxiety, the second is whether peer review activities can encourage them so that they can increase their self-confidence and the last one is whether peer review activities make them take their emotional temperature that, leads to their positive feelings.

**Table 3. First Affective Strategy**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	43	100.0	100.0	100.0

The first statement is *that my anxiety level was lower when I delivered online peer reviews of my peers' work*. As has been explored before, one of the effective strategies is lowering anxiety. All of the students (100%) agreed, meaning that they believed they were not really anxious when doing the online peer review activities.

When doing these peer review activities, they will see their peer's essays. They may find that their peer also needs to produce perfect essays as they may find mistakes in their partner's essay. This can make them less anxious. They may not feel worried or ashamed as they see that their friends also make similar or the same mistakes.

**Table 4. Second Affective Strategy**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	2.3	2.3	2.3
	3.00	33	76.7	76.7	79.1
	4.00	9	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Almost all participants agree with this statement: *I was more confident in giving online peer reviews of peers' work*. There is only one who stated that he or she disagreed. Maybe they feel convenient because it is done online, or they know what to do. The writing teacher gives the instruction on how the peer review and the template that the students can follow while doing the peer review activities make them feel confident that they can do peer review. They may feel sure that they can handle this assignment. Thus, peer review activities make them more confident in writing.

**Table 5. Third Affective Strategy**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	18	41.9	41.9	41.9
	4.00	25	58.1	58.1	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants, 41.9% agree and 58.1% strongly agree with the statement: *When I was doing online peer review, my positive feelings enabled me to deal with the pressure and anxiety I was experiencing*. This shows that they all have positive feelings toward this activity and feel positive about doing it. Their positive feelings enable them to handle their pressure and anxiety. One of the strategies to take their emotional temperature is using a checklist. In doing peer review, the students have the checklist, so they may feel sure they can do this. They know that they can handle this task.

**Table 6. The aspects of the writing process**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00004	43	3.00	4.00	3.4419
VAR00005	43	1.00	4.00	2.9302
VAR00006	43	3.00	4.00	3.6744
Valid N (listwise)	43			

On the aspect of the writing process, the mean is 3.348. and there is only one item that gets less than 3(question 5), while on the other aspects, all students agree or strongly agree with the statement. This shows that they have a positive attitude towards the aspect of the writing process. The following is the data for each statement.

**Table 7. The first aspect of the writing process**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	24	55.8	55.8	55.8
	4.00	19	44.2	44.2	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All students, 55.8% agree and 44.2 strongly disagree with this statement: *I received worthwhile experiences from doing online peer reviews*. This proves that doing online peer review is considered beneficial. Writing covers some aspects from prewriting to writing the final draft. By doing peer review, the students get experiences that they can apply to their writing tasks. Through their activities in reviewing their peers, they will learn something, and they can apply what they get while reviewing their friend's essay. They may be aware of the mistakes their friends have made, and later on, they will be able to avoid similar mistakes.

**Table 8. The second aspect of the writing process**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	2	4.7	4.7	4.7
	2.00	6	14.0	14.0	18.6
	3.00	28	65.1	65.1	83.7
	4.00	7	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Some students disagree with the statement *I am aware of the writing strategies for making a written paragraph while providing online peer review*. More students (81.4%) agree. It can be interpreted that most participants feel they understand writing strategies while giving online peer reviews. They may be able to learn the way to write an essay as they can learn from their peer whose essays they review. It can be an example for them of how to write an essay appropriately,

if not perfectly. However, some students (8 out of 43) disagree with the statement. Giving online peer reviews does not help them understand the writing strategies. They may be unaware they can learn the writing strategies their peer has applied in the essays.

**Table 9. The third aspect of the writing process**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	14	32.6	32.6	32.6
	4.00	29	67.4	67.4	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 shows that all participants, 32.6% agree and 67.4% strongly agree with this statement *I was able to recognize the paragraph structure of the genre., during the process of providing an online peer review of my classmates' essays.* One aspect that the students have to check in peer review activities is the paragraph structure. They must comment on whether their review essay has the appropriate paragraph structure. By doing this, they feel that their ability to identify paragraph improve. Through this process, they recognize the structure of the genre. For example, when they have to review a comparison essay, they automatically learn its structure, whether point-by-point or block structure.

### Social Strategies

When doing online peer review, they will need to apply social strategies such as asking a question, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. There are three items in the questionnaire covering these three aspects.

**Table 10. The aspects of social strategies**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VAR00007	43	3.00	4.00	3.4884
VAR00008	43	2.00	3.00	2.7674
VAR00009	43	3.00	4.00	3.1628
Valid N (listwise)	43			

On the aspect of social strategies, the mean is 3.139. This shows that they have a positive attitude towards the aspect of social interaction ability. However, the mean of item 8 is less than 3 (2.76), meaning they do not have a favorable attitude toward it. The following is the data for each statement.

**Table 11. The first aspect of social interaction ability**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	22	51.2	51.2	51.2
	4.00	21	48.8	48.8	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

All participants, 51.2% agree and 48.8% strongly agree with this statement:

*My social interaction skills were improved by having discussions with my peers.*

This means that they believe they can interact well with their peers by discussing the result of online peer reviews. This shows that they use the asking question strategy, as in doing the online peer review, they will ask for clarification or asking for a correction. Through this communication, they apply social strategies. They know how to give comments to their peer and also discuss the essay.

**Table 12. The second aspect of social interaction ability**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	10	23.3	23.3	23.3
	3.00	33	76.7	76.7	100.0
Total		43	100.0	100.0	

Table 12 shows that 23.3% chose to disagree, making the average 2.76 with the following statement *Online peer review activities helped me learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.* Some students do not believe that online peer review activities can make them maintain harmony in pair work. They may feel that giving a review is a criticism, so they may need to build better peer cooperation. However, more than half of the students still feel that they can maintain harmony in pair work while doing the online peer review.

**Table 13. The third aspect of social interaction ability**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	36	83.7	83.7	83.7
	4.00	7	16.3	16.3	100.0
Total		43	100.0	100.0	

All participants agree with this statement *I became aware of the variations between individuals in terms of their writing abilities through participating in online peer review activities.* 83% agree, and 16.3% strongly disagree. This shows that they apply one of the social strategies to empathize with others. They become aware of others' feelings. Perhaps, they realize that they are at the same level of writing ability, but they have different strengths. Some students may be good at organization, while others may master structure or have a good vocabulary.

## Conclusion

This study has been conducted to know students' attitudes toward online peer review activities in Academic Writing classes. There are three aspects under the study: affective strategies, writing process, and social strategy. The data was collected using a questionnaire with four options. The result of the study shows that they have a positive attitude toward the three aspects. However, there is one statement, *Online peer review activities helped me learn about maintaining harmony in group work,* one of the statements for a social strategy that does not show a favorable attitude. The average students need to see that this online peer review helps them learn about maintaining harmony in pair work.

Overall, in doing online peer review, they have used learning language strategies as they agree that they do the affective strategies doing online peer review. They feel that they can lower their anxiety, encourage themselves, have more self-confidence, and take their emotional temperature. In terms of social strategies, they also apply them in their peer review activities. They ask questions, cooperate with their peers, and can empathize with them.

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