THE LINGUISTIC AND METHODOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF PEER EDITING

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ABSTRACT

Like in any other learning situation, in a second language classroom a learner essentially needs to be provided with feedback on his/her performance. Due to the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching and Learner-centered Teaching, students' active participation in language learning is now highly sought and therefore, peer correction is becoming increasingly popular among the practitioners. This paper re-views peer correction as a 'popular' technique to be used in classroom and explores several issues regarding this. It also places peer correction in the context of students of professional college and tries to find out the effectiveness of the technique particularly for the classrooms of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Key words: Communicative Language Learning (CLL), peer editing, linguistic proficiency, linguistic skill, writing process.

In fact, it is believed that text improvement during a writing activity should be done in much freer condition of peer collaborative activity. Hence, this study attempted to describe the effect of peer editing in improving student's composition. The results gained from the study described the revision priorities, types, and extent of revision of peer editing. Specifically, the study tried to explore what lexical items are revised first in peer editing activity, what types of revision are employed in peer editing activity, and to what extent, in terms of over-all quality

are the texts revised in peer editing activity.

Learner's language contains errors. That is, some of the utterances produced by the students are not well formed according to the rules of the adult grammar. However, errors are important source of information about language use and language learning because they can conclusively demonstrate that students do not simply memorize the target language and its rules, they reproduce the language in their utterance; they explore the language and try to invent it. [12, p.38] The exploration and expression of the language are integral components of foreign language acquisition in the macro skills such as in writing.

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In their discussion of accommodation and restructuring principles in language use, Abedi and Sato explain the relationships of input and the established linguistic skill. According to them, the students tend to permit new structure to their already existing structure or to restructure their existing structure based on the new input. The students tend to permit new expressions given the input. Oftentimes however, Sato et al. say that this results in a mismatch of linguistic structure and communication purpose. [1] Hence, during the accommodation and restructuring processes, errors are inevitable and error correction is required. This is commonly observed in writing composition in foreign language. In composition writing, error correction usually happens during the revision stage. Nevertheless, text editing and improvement entail error correction. General perception is that editing of students' composition is done by the teacher.

Teacher editing according to them is seen on how errors are corrected, what types of errors are corrected first and who is expected to correct the errors. A review by several foreign language education literature on error corrections reveal that (a) no current standards exist on whether when, which or how student errors should be corrected or who should correct them, (b) there are few widely accepted linguistic criteria of grammatical and lexical correction in foreign language teaching, (c) much of what has been published on error correction is speculative, and needs to be validated by a great deal of empirical experimentation, and (d) despite the limitations, a sufficient body of literature on error correction exists to merit a systematic review in the process.

In Communicative Language Learning (CLL), learning experience is considered a dynamic activity because the learner is actually participating in the process. They are learning at the same time monitoring their weaknesses and improvement. The experience becomes positive and thereby improves the self-efficacy of students in learning the language. The employment of process-product approach, according to Misak and al. follows the same cognitive and affective learning framework for it facilitates the opportunity for knowledge building and transformation. [9, p.125] Hence, emphasis on student-centered instruction and the teacher's role as facilitator as explained be considered in communicative language classroom. Specifically during the productive stages, the involvement of students in the writing process; prewriting, writing the drafts, and improving the drafts, is vital to the development of positive values towards the language learning and facilitate the learning strategies of the students.

Hence, Chaudron emphasizes the exploration of peer correction or self-correction with teacher's guidance in empowering individual student's self-efficacy for he believes that in peer editing, students feel at ease when they interact with their peers. This self-efficacy belief of the students is vital consideration in the employment of peer

editing in ESL composition class. Padilla finds significant advantages to using written peer feedback in developing students' writing skills.

Accordingly, although revisions in the peer editing addressed more the grammar and sentence construction, mechanics and word choice, the student writers attended fully to the feedback given by the peer. This provided an opportunity of confidence and trust, thus "giving room for recommendations". [10, p.65] Her study further reveals that the peers seemed to find convenience in explicitly correcting the essay. In turn, the student writers find it easy to substitute forms in their work for the option provided by the peer editors. The identified disadvantages, however, is that most students in peer editing dwell more on surface errors. Also, there are instances, however, that indirect association of some aspects of the process is used and thereby affecting the target skill. His study, for instance, found that the peer editors felt they are playing as teacher editors when they edit their classmates drafts in the manner their teacher edited they own drafts. Students at any instructional technique use linguistic modifications.

In the field of linguistics and language learning, we can underscore two objectives of error correction in student compositions in terms of theoretical and practical importance. The theoretical aspect deals with the language pedagogy used inside the classroom that looks into the learning process of the students. On the other hand, the practical aspect is concerned with the remedial action to be taken to correct the needs either on the part of the learner or the teacher. Berbache adds that the function of error analysis is both theoretical and practical as it explains eventually the sources of the errors in order to help the student writers to understand them and correct afterwards. [2] The forms and rules for their combination are what they call the grammar of the language. Insai and Poonlarp say that all languages are rule-governed. They hypothesize that selective error correction is a more effective instruction and technique - both cognitively and affectively, in internalizing the rules in the structures. [6, p.85] Accordingly, they considered high frequency errors to have top priority.

Hence, we suggest that common errors that impede meanings should be corrected first. However, linguistic proficiency alone does not seem to lead to better writing. Indeed, there is more to good writing than linguistic accuracy. Some linguists believe that one aspect to improve in student compositions is the understanding of how the language operates appropriately in the content and context. Error correction as both input and intake as a form of accommodation

and restructuring processes is not just a mere rendition but an integral part of language acquisition as shown in Figure 1 below.

(input processing)   (accommodation/restructuring)

Input ⟶ intake ⟶ developing system

Figure 1. Accommodation and restructuring processes

Aside from the identification of error, another important aspect in peer editing is the priority of error correction. According to him, priority of error correction entails which structure/s or category/categories be corrected or revised first. He further explains that the priority of error correction is deemed important for it will not only help the student writers to correct errors but also will provide instructional clue of presenting lessons of structures. [3] Research found that verbs and prepositions are most problematic in the student composition. These are followed by modifiers and pronouns; the least is the nouns. In verbs, common errors committed by the students are S-V-A, time sequencing (tenses). The strongest argument for systematic group work in text editing is that it generates spontaneous interaction between or among the members of a group, creating opportunities for the development of their emerging internal system. Yugandhar explains that peer groups provide a mutually supportive environment for students that is less threatening than the direct editing with the teacher. [14, p.27] Rosnida and Zainal propose a language pedagogy that is based on the use of group work. [11, p.95] They enumerated advantages of such strategy such as group work generates interactive language and at the same time offers an embracing effective climate. Also, because group work is a step toward individualized instruction, it promotes learner's responsibility and autonomy.
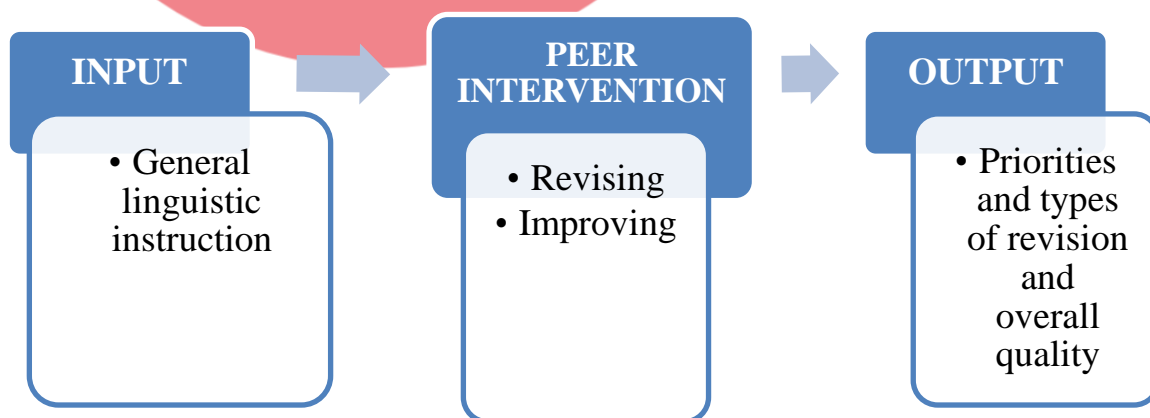
INPUT
- General linguistic instruction

PEER INTERVENTION
- Revising
- Improving

OUTPUT
- Priorities and types of revision and overall quality

Figure 2. The conceptual framework showing the relationship input and output under the peer intervention

Figure 2 shows the process of accommodation and restructuring has been an integral part of text editing and text improvement. Freeman – Larsen and Long have emphasized that input is comprehensible through an interaction process where students clarify, confirm and repeat features of foreign language which they do not really understand. In the process, they somehow depend on the manner of revision and available feedback for improvement. [8] Though these instructional modifications, linguistic adjustments such as accommodation and restructuring are provided to the improvement of organization and the comprehensibility of the texts.

A study on peer error feedback by Yeh focuses on finding the extent that the students can correct their language errors in collaboration with peers. According to him, peer editors have preferences of editing such as the local errors rather than the global errors.

Specifically, peer editors focused more on a specific lexical category to edit first, like nouns first before verbs, modifiers etc. But as Yeh emphasizes, these are not errors in competency but are performance mistakes out of carelessness. [13, p.885] Evan and Ferris report that peer editors made both text-based and surface revisions. [5, p.135] Further, he classifies the types of revisions employed by the Japanese EFL students as (1) addition when the peer editor adds information to the paper, (2) deletion, when the peer editor deletes information, (3) substitution, when the peer editor substitute information, (4) permutation when the peer editor rephrases information, (5) distribution when the peer editor rewrites same information in larger chunks, (6) consolidation when the peer editor combine separate information together, and (7) re-order when the peer editor moves information. Finally, Bermudez & Prater's study reveals that over-all quality of composition after the peer editing activity yielded reliability and significant relationship. Over-all quality and number of units (words, idea unit and sentences) qualify the importance of peer editing technique. [4, p.50]

The process approach is considered a framework for writing process. Through this, students are able to get sufficient feedback. Studies support the idea that error correction facilitates communicative and linguistic proficiency in a target language, more than if these errors remain uncorrected. However, there is no general consensus on what categories are to correct in students drafts. Also, studies have quite a hint on when to correct these categories so as to conclusively identify how the corrections improve the drafts. Hence, it is emphasized that teachers should create a kind of classroom environment where students can confidently express their ideas, feelings, aspirations and meanings. However, as seen in the results of many studies, this is usually hindered by the perceived imposition of teacher's authority during the

editing and correction process, more the embarrassment and threat of being singled out by classmates brought by errors committed during the composing stage.

Though many educators propose priorities on error corrections like those errors that carry a high degree of stigma, and those seriously impair comprehension, the local errors vs. the global errors. Kyle proposed strongly that in the productive stages teachers should directly involve the students in all the writing stages; prewriting, writing the drafts and editing and proofreading. [7] In the editing and proofreading stage, it is encouraged to try out how students react on group editing and conferencing to lessen the impact of teacher's correction; hence, this study. Much has been found on teacher's authority in students' effort of improving their drafts, but there is a dearth of studies on peer editing.

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