

Japanese L2 student writers' translingual practice in written peer feedback

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Incorporating peer review into an English as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL) writing curriculum is commonly practiced. While a line of research examining the effects of peer review claims that it generally affects student writers' performance in a positive way, there are studies suggesting that those from non-Western cultural backgrounds tend to exhibit difficulty in providing negative feedback for cultural reasons that value group consensus over verbal negotiations. Since these studies were conducted in an ESL setting (the USA) with a relatively small number of participants, this study set out to verify and extend the previous observations. Sixty-four Japanese EFL learners from four English writing classes participated in the study. Throughout the 14-week semester, they engaged in peer review in both face-to-face and anonymous conditions. Their perception toward peer review and preference for either review mode--if any--were explored by surveys administered at the outset and end of the experiment. After all peer-review sessions were completed, semi-structured interviews were additionally conducted to solicit in-depth responses about their experiences and perspectives. Analysis of the collected data did not support the previously held views that Asian students are predisposed to be reluctant peer reviewers. Rather, it was indicated that Japanese EFL students' preference for a certain peer-review mode interacts closely with various factors such as reviewer's English proficiency level, familiarity with the activity, and perceived value of peer review in the writing process. Pedagogical implications are discussed in relation to the findings, and suggestions for organizing peer-review sessions in ESL and EFL settings are made.