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The Effects of Affirming and Constructive Peer Editing Feedback On High School Student Perceptions and Essay Revisions

Lorin Koch

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THE EFFECTS OF AFFIRMING AND CONSTRUCTIVE PEER EDITING FEEDBACK
ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND ESSAY REVISIONS

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who always supported me in my educational pursuits.

To my grandparents, who have all passed away, but even in death, have made it possible for me to have the means of pursuing higher education.

To my wife, Katrina, for always being intrigued by whatever I was studying, and for reading my papers even when they were long and, let's be honest, pretty dry. We always thought you would be the one to pursue a doctorate, and I'm probably more surprised with this development than you are.

To my two daughters, to whom I hope to pass down the love of learning that has been a source of interest and joy for me.

Soli Deo Gloria.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a novel strategy for peer editing of student essays in a high school English language arts classroom. The peer editing method used in this study provided more positive feedback to lower-level writers and more negative feedback to higher-level writers, with grade-level writers getting a blend of both positive and negative feedback. Incorporating an action research design, this study included data collection through student standardized test scores, student writing samples, comments left on other students' papers, responses to peer editing sessions, and individual interviews. Qualitative data were collected over the course of 8 weeks of class time, with students writing and peer editing three essays. Participants consisted of six students in Grades 11 and 12 at a private Christian high school in Oregon. The results of the study demonstrated that students appreciated positive feedback, although most said they did not expect or need positivity in tone. Results also included a complex picture of the benefits and challenges of the social aspects of peer editing. The results informed an action plan to help more students get more useful feedback from their classmates through peer editing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MKO.....More Knowledgeable Other

ZPDZone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant skills students are expected to master in high school is writing (National Commission on Writing, 2003, 2004, 2005). The 2003 National Commission on Writing suggested that students would benefit from an increase in the amount of writing they complete in high school across all subject areas. In a 2009 study, the authors discussed the National Assessment of Educational Process results from 2007, 4 years after the 2003 recommendations, which stated that only 56% of students in grades 8 and 12 scored at the basic level on writing skills. These students only partially mastered writing skills needed to work proficiently at the current grade level (Kiuvara et al., 2009).

Students who struggle with writing face a number of challenges: Low-quality writing can cause negative perceptions of the writer's intellect, creativity, work ethic, trustworthiness, and moral character (Johnson et al., 2017; Elliot, 2005). Lists of skills needed by students and adults in the 21st century tend to overlap with that list, including such elements as creativity, communication, initiative, collaboration, and personal responsibility (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Writing is also an excellent way for students to access their authentic voice to become activists and encourage societal change (Assaf et al., 2014). Given these

factors, the clear conclusion is that students should have a lot of writing experience and training to thrive in the 21st-century work, school, and social world (Johnson et al., 2017; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012).

To improve their writing and have the skills to succeed in the 21st century, students need feedback on what they did well and what they did poorly (Kiuahara et al., 2009). Dawson et al. (2019) studied the characteristics teachers and students expect in order for feedback to be effective. Teachers expected the feedback to be timely and closely connected to the task. Students said that feedback should be usable, detailed, personalized, and aware of how it comes across. This study illustrates the significance of teachers providing extensive, individualized feedback on student writing. Teachers want feedback to be as close to the writing task as possible, both in time and in subject matter, so that students can improve their writing. Students want feedback to be as specific as possible to their individual writing strengths and weaknesses.

English teachers are presumably the experts in the room at providing feedback to their students, as they likely have the most knowledge and experience of the skills being assessed (Hovardas et al., 2014; Gielen et al., 2010). But one teacher cannot provide the volume of support needed to provide high-quality feedback (as defined by Dawson et al., 2019) for each student. The other in-class option is to have the students provide feedback on each other's writing,

but the feedback from peers in the classroom will not be as meaningful as suggestions from the teacher (Nilson, 2003). Furthermore, students may be concerned that their peers will provide them with low-quality suggestions on their papers (Deni & Zainal 2011; Kaufman & Schunn, 2008). The increased number of suggestions from peer editing does not make up for lower quality compared to teacher editing (Schunn et al., 2016; Nilson, 2003).

This action research study, therefore, uses peer editing as a class component to provide extensive timely and pertinent feedback on student writing. The study attempts to institute a strategy for peer editing that amplifies the strengths of the practice while mitigating its weaknesses (Schunn et al., 2016; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Gielen et al., 2010; Strijbos et al., 2010; Nilson, 2003).

Statement of the Problem of Practice

Writing is important. Educators and families have understood this principle for a long time, describing the basic curriculum of schools as consisting of the three R's (Reading, wRiting & aRithmetic), and it is still true today, in the digital age. Learning how to write well is one of the most important experiences of a student's time in school. Writing is the main medium of information transfer in numerous areas of life.

As a high school English teacher, I am frequently amazed by the growth students experience in their writing from their freshman year to their senior year.

That process, though, is not automatic, or guaranteed. Students need a lot of structured support to improve their writing. The English teacher is the resident writing “expert” and is tasked with raising the writing ability levels of all students. The number of students needing individualized writing help is always larger than the number of hours I have available to proofread and tutor.

In my observation of students who struggle with writing, I can see how they will experience difficulty in their future life if they are unable to improve their ability in high school. If they do not have the ability to write effectively, students often miss out on opportunities to advance in their careers and respond to challenges in life.

Students entering high school writing classes are not completely without writing ability. They generally have experience with writing in a variety of formats, but as discussed above, they need significant support and structured collaboration to improve their ability and get closer to professional writing. In my high school English Language Arts classroom, I always have more student needs than hours in the day. If I alone cannot provide enough writing support, due to time constraints, I must find ways of presenting additional support.

Peer feedback can be a valuable strategy for increasing the number of suggestions students receive on their writing. But peer editing can cause several challenges in the classroom. Students may perceive feedback from their

classmates to be lower-quality than teacher feedback. Students may also put up barriers to receiving peer feedback due to its tone (Hovardas et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010; Deni & Zainal, 2011). These factors may cause students to give feedback that is superficial or unfocused, in an attempt to alleviate the appearance of inaccuracy or criticism (Vanderhoven et al., 2012). Teachers report that peer feedback appears to be too focused on surface-level errors such as grammar, while missing larger-picture issues in ideas and meaning (Nilson, 2003). For all of these reasons, situating feedback within a community of students may create barriers to students providing useful suggestions to each other (Deni & Zainal, 2011). This problem is especially concerning, as several 21st-century skills, such as communication, collaboration, and bias awareness, focus on social aspects of personal interactions (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012).

In past years, I have had students proofread each other's essay drafts in an effort to provide a greater quantity of, and timelier, suggestions to each student than they would receive just from me. I generally suggest specific types of feedback for the students to give to each other. I have found that students typically fit into two categories, which I call the Nitpicker and the Groupie. The Nitpicker spends the entire editing time trying to correct all the minuscule editing errors, such as comma use and extra spaces between words. The Groupie solely responds with affirming comments such as "Flawless essay!" and will not

provide any critical suggestions. Neither of these methods is extremely helpful in providing useful suggestions to classmates, but both may be useful from a broader view. The instinct to provide positive or negative feedback may actually be a result of what feedback each student desires. Most students appreciate “Groupie” feedback—they like to be told they did a good job—but some really crave “Nitpicker” feedback. Matching up the needs of the writers and the skills of the peer editors is difficult to implement.

The need for a large amount of proofreading presents a compelling problem in which a teacher struggles to provide effective feedback to a classroom full of students with diverse writing abilities, including students with learning disabilities, students with language fluency challenges, and students who come from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. If the teacher cannot give enough feedback to everyone, student peer feedback appears to be a good option to increase the quantity of useful feedback. I am interested in exploring formats for peer editing that will decrease the negative effects while providing the greater quantity of feedback students need.

Theoretical Framework

Educational theories highlighting the social aspects of learning (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) form the framework for this study. The combination of theories addresses the process of going from observation to action through social

cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and sociocultural theory, which describes how humans learn by interacting with each other (Vygotsky, 1978). Social cognitive theory is a theory of motivation (Driscoll, 2005), and thus addresses students' behavior in relation to their desire to perform well and what causes students to feel good about the work they did (Hodges, 2017). Sociocultural theory is a theory of development, and involves the factors that most effectively promote growth and understanding (Hodges, 2017; Driscoll, 2005).

Bandura's social cognitive theory informs aspects of writing that include meaning-making, self-understanding, and observing others (Hodges, 2017). Meaning-making is a person's process of creating an understanding of how to successfully do something, which is often accomplished by first observing that action being done successfully (Bandura, 1986). When students understand how their current ability relates to the goal of an activity, and believe they can reach the goal, they have self-efficacy. Students who have a low level of self-efficacy are unlikely to succeed at a task, but this self-efficacy can accumulate through support and practice (Bandura, 1997, 2001).

A notable application of social cognitive theory is in the use of modeling (Bandura, 1986 & 1997), in which students look at someone engaged in a similar activity, which motivates them to complete the activity on their own. A teacher can model the writing process to students by showing examples of student

writing (Hodges, 2017), and students can model writing success for each other by interacting over their papers (Fong et al., 2018; Pajares et al., 2007).

Working with social cognitive theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is a developmental theory based on the idea that students learn when they actively create meaning for new information (Clark, 2018). Sociocultural theory holds that cognitive processes work best, perhaps even work at all, after social interaction. Instead of telling students exactly what the answer to a problem is, instructing students to interact and use resources enables them to find the answer. From this view, writing is a collaborative activity (Hodges, 2017). Through collaboration with teachers and peers, students construct greater understanding of the writing process and different approaches to the task.

Vygotsky's theory also discusses the topic of the more knowledgeable other (MKO), a person with greater understanding who can guide the student toward successfully mastering a skill (Clark, 2018). This person's role is to provide information that a student does not know but which applies to the specific situation a student is in at the time. The teacher in a classroom clearly fills the role of the MKO.

Interacting with the MKO in Vygotsky's theory is the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), a term for the abilities a student is *almost* ready to achieve, and can achieve with assistance from an MKO (Clark, 2018). Students

learn skills and knowledge a bit at a time, and classrooms are designed to give the students the next step in the sequence, which is slightly more difficult than the previous step. The ZPD encompasses all of those next steps that the students are capable of understanding with help from an MKO.

The common ideas between social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory point toward the interpersonal interactions that precede and sustain a learning activity (Clark, 2018; Hodges, 2017; Bandura, 1986). Both theories have a social focus, but social interactions are more important than just the focus. In both theories, social interactions are essential to growth and development. Social cognitive theory emphasizes social interactions for modeling and building self-efficacy (Pajares et al., 2007). Sociocultural theory indicates that students need social interactions for scaffolding and developmental support (Hodges, 2017). These two functions support each other: Although they each have their own goal and focus, the modeling in social cognitive theory and the scaffolding in sociocultural theory are related. Modeling (sociocultural theory) is one of the most effective ways to act as an MKO (social cognitive theory) for another learner. Additionally, succeeding in completing a task in one's ZPD (sociocultural theory) provides a boost to self-efficacy (social cognitive theory).

Pairing these two theories addresses this study's problem of practice. Interpersonal interactions between students can promote motivation and

scaffolding if they are supplied at the right time and in the right way. For social interactions to result in increased self-efficacy, they need to model something that helps the learner understand the task better, and provide encouragement that the learner is capable of accomplishing the task (Bandura, 1986). And for the interactions to increase students' ability (in this case, to improve their writing), feedback must relate to tasks the students are individually able to accomplish with help (Vygotsky, 1978). Directed interpersonal interactions of peer feedback can serve all of those functions.

Research Questions

This action research study is an intervention intended to better develop students' essay writing and revising and 21st-century skills, including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, through the process of giving and receiving peer editing feedback. Through peer editing feedback, students received a greater number of suggestions for improving their writing. This process is beneficial for both the giver and receiver of feedback.

To provide useful suggestions to each other, and to best use peer feedback suggestions, students need practice in the process of peer editing. I instructed students in methods to provide each other with feedback that is efficient and helpful, and more directly focused on their demonstrated individual needs. This supplied them with more scaffolding regarding how to both give and receive

feedback, and how to put the suggestions into practice. Through the scaffolding and practice, the students became more adept at providing feedback of different types. In this study, I assessed student feedback before, during, and after it was given, in an effort to determine how this feedback would influence writing. Following the tenets of sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory, this process also helped them become better writers. With that process and goal in mind, I looked to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What impact will peer editing feedback on student essays have on the revision process of high school upperclassmen in an English 4 class?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do high school upperclassmen have of the peer editing process in an English 4 class?

These research questions specify several significant aspects of the study. The process of peer feedback was studied from both the giver's and the receiver's perspective. The aim of this process was to demonstrate how peer feedback suggestions altered the final product of an essay and the understanding of the students. This was shown by studying peer feedback suggestions from the point they were made to the point they were implemented (or disregarded). In addition, the end goal of this course is the improvement of student writing skills and other 21st-century skills. This goal necessitates a broader look at the overall

effects of the intervention on the students' ability and understanding. These aspects of the study, and the research questions, situate this learning process within my classroom, the location where I observe the problem of practice. These factors make my classroom an effective context to study peer editing.

Researcher Positionality

A teacher planning an action research study needs to communicate the effects of their place in the context of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This study is designed as interventional action research, in which I included my own students as participants. Because I performed this study at my school, I am considered an insider to the setting of the study. As an insider, I aimed to better understand the students' growth within the specific context I share with my students (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Traditional approaches to research require an objective researcher positioned outside the research setting, but in action research, the researcher is already working the research scenario (Efron & Ravid, 2013). An action researcher aims to understand the unique context and how the specific perspective of the participants affect this understanding. The researcher being a member of a school community makes action research collaborative; the researcher and participants are all aware of the research goals (Herr & Anderson,

2015). My students were aware of the goals of this study, and as such, collaborated with me in the process of constructing their understanding.

I am a White male teacher at a small private Christian school in a medium-sized town in Oregon. I have been a secondary teacher for over 15 years, mostly teaching classes in English language arts. As the teacher for the English 4 class, I personally provide feedback through one or more of three methods: physical editing, computer suggestions, and student conferences. Physical editing happens on paper with a pen. Computer suggestions occur through an online interface, such as Google Docs, where editors can provide suggestions and comments for students to consider later. The student views these comments and suggestions one at a time to work through them. Student conferences are one-on-one meetings in which teacher and student read through the student's writing together. This method is the most useful for student understanding, but also the most time consuming. It also makes class time more difficult to plan, since the other students in the class must have activities to complete on their own during the individual conferences.

In my position as English teacher, I have the desire to provide my students with tools to use in editing each other's papers so they can address more of the substantive aspects of a paper, and provide more useful suggestions to each other. In the position of MKO, I will have the opportunity to scaffold my

students' understanding of the editing process as they work to gain the background knowledge and experience to provide more useful suggestions to each other.

The small school where I teach has around 50 students in Grades 9 - 12. Because of the size of the school and classes, almost all the students have had me as a teacher in the past, which makes me quite a bit closer to the students in the study than most researchers, even others involved in action research. A result of this positionality is that my students already know what to expect from me, and the rapport I have built with them in the past increases their willingness to participate in learning activities. This relationship fits well with the design of an action research study. Action research in education is principally focused on student learning (Dana, 2013), which means that action researchers in education always seek to improve practice in their classrooms (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Research Design

The background discussed above, including the characteristics of my problem of practice and my positionality as classroom teacher, present an issue well-suited to an action research study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Researching in their own context, teachers can implement an intervention with a goal of directly applying a strategy within the classroom, rather than attempting to generate

traditional research with the goal of generalizing to other situations (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This study is designed as mostly qualitative action research.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) cite several methods for increasing internal validity in qualitative research, which include prolonged engagement (establishing rapport with participants), persistent observation over time, and progressive subjectivity (researchers examining and recording their perspective at various points before, during, and after the research). These elements were an essential part of this research study.

This study took place at a small Christian school located in a medium-sized city in Oregon. My school has one section of English 4, which includes both junior and senior students, and all the students in the class participated in the study to some degree, especially at the outset of the study. Specific students' experiences became the focus of research, based on their performance on class activities and responses to early surveys. I assigned several essays over the course of the semester, which provided an effective setting for examining students' growth and change in perceptions over time. The students and I reflected on the feedback process as each essay was edited and revised.

Feedback is a mechanism by which people gain greater understanding of their ability level in relation to a goal or objective (Stone & Heen, 2015). Both beginners and experts at a particular skill can benefit from feedback, but the type

of feedback that is most beneficial to each group is different: Novices seek out and respond better to positive feedback, while experts seek out and respond better to critical (negative) feedback (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). High school students are somewhere between novice and expert. They are not beginners, but neither are they professional writers, and most need structured feedback to gain proficiency for the types of writing done in college and in many careers. As a result, high school students may benefit greatly from receiving both affirming (positive) feedback and critical (negative) feedback.

Stone and Heen (2015) broke feedback down into three types: appreciation, coaching, and evaluation. Appreciation acknowledges a person's accomplishment, connects with them, and motivates them. Coaching helps a person expand knowledge and/or sharpen skills. Evaluation rates or compares a person's performance to a set standard. I connect Stone and Heen's appreciation with positive feedback most sought by beginners and coaching with constructive, negative feedback sought by experts, although all students need both appreciation and coaching to some degree. Some students need more positive, affirming feedback, and some need more negative, critical feedback. The type of feedback the students need may not correspond exactly to the type they are skilled at giving. The third type of feedback, evaluation, for the teacher

to provide. It is solely the teacher's task to measure the students' performance against the standard set for the class.

Through this framework, I engaged students in an educative process that gave them more appreciation and coaching from multiple sources, which enabled me as the teacher to focus more on summative evaluation, maximizing my impact in an area that is exclusive to me, the teacher. Instructing students to provide appreciation and coaching helped develop their 21st-century skills of providing and utilizing feedback, skills which students need in my classroom and beyond. Over the course of the school year, I gradually implemented strategies based on the skills and needs of each writer.

To get a basic idea of each student's writing ability, I gathered their scores on the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment, which gave me an idea of the type of feedback each student would likely prefer. I checked these assumptions by collecting student comments about their own writing and what type of feedback they would like to receive. Students responded to questionnaires before and after going through the editing process, which qualitatively gauged their understanding and perceptions regarding feedback. I produced my own observations of the process as it happens, and also inspected the final essays to determine which peer editing suggestions they incorporated into the final versions of the essays.

Significance of the Study

Scholarly literature supports the use of peer editing in the classroom as an educational activity. Previous studies have addressed the practice of peer editing from elementary grades through postgraduate degrees (Wu & Schunn, 2020; Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Hamilton, 2018; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Yang, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Moffet & Wagner, 1991; Karegianes et al., 1980). Earlier studies have also shown that peer editing has clear benefits, but also has some negatives, especially in relation to social interactions between students (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Johnson et al., 2017; Hovardas et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2013; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Kaufman & Schunn, 2011; Strijbos et al., 2010; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Nilson, 2003; Hughes, 2001).

In my study, I investigated how a specific format of peer editing, providing positive and negative comments variously to students who would benefit from each style, impacts the revisions and perceptions of students in an English 4 class. This format for peer editing is based on the research of Finkelstein & Fishbach (2012), who found that experts and novices seek different types of feedback. More experienced people seek and use more negative (constructive) feedback, and less experienced people seek and use more positive (affirming) feedback. If students at different ability levels received the type of

feedback they desired, they may improve more quickly than when receiving general feedback that is not specifically tailored to their ability level.

Limitations of the Study

One possible limitation of this study is the limited number of participants in a small classroom setting. The study involved six students in a high school English 4 classroom to investigate the impact of a novel peer editing strategy on the students' essay revisions and perceptions of the process. As a result of the small number of participants in a localized setting, this study may not generalize to the greater population of high school students in every classroom (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Another possible limitation is my positionality as the teacher of the classroom being studied. I know all of the students in this class, and it may affect my understanding of their experiences and perceptions in this study. This insider positionality is an aspect of action research that makes the findings richer, but may introduce bias into the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As this is an action research study, these possible limitations can be seen from another angle as a benefit. The subjectivity of my positionality and the small scale enabled me to closely study the impact of the intervention and discuss the study with my students in a way I could not as an outside observer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). And while the findings may not be generalizable to every other classroom, the

findings are transferable to other settings, both in classrooms and other social situations where people receive feedback on their work (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Definition of Terms

Appreciation, coaching, and evaluation are terms for different types of feedback (Stone & Heen, 2015). Appreciation is affirmation that a person is doing satisfactory work. Coaching is giving specific suggestions that a person can implement. Evaluation is measuring a person against a standard.

Feedback literacy is students' understanding of taking information and using it to improve their work or learning (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Peer editing is a classroom strategy that uses students to give feedback to each other on their writing, in place of teacher editing or in tandem with teacher editing (Moffet, 1968).

Positive and negative feedback are defined as giving editing suggestions with a tone that focuses on either the successful aspects of the writing or the unsuccessful aspects. Positive editing comments confirm what a writer did well and affirm them for their quality of work. Negative editing comments critique the work and suggest modifications with no attention to softening the tone (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012).

Self-efficacy is a concept from Bandura's (2001, 1997, 1986) social cognitive theory. It is a person's belief in their capability of succeeding at a task.

Zone of proximal development (ZPD) and more knowledgeable other (MKO) are concepts from Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) sociocultural theory. The ZPD refers to the tasks a person is capable of completing with help from others. An MKO is a person who can serve in a capacity of providing help to someone due to greater knowledge or ability.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this action research study is to implement a structure for providing feedback in a high school English classroom to make the best use of peer editing of student writing, while mitigating the negative effects commonly associated with peer editing. Peer editing is not a new concept: It has been used for decades, in numerous classrooms of various academic disciplines (Moffett & Wagner, 1991). As a high school English teacher, I have used peer editing many times to provide more feedback to students on their essay writing. This practice is effective for providing students with more feedback, but it carries some potential negative effects with it.

The literature review in this chapter presents the theoretical and historical background behind the strategy of peer editing. The review begins with a look at my problem of practice and research questions, followed by the theoretical background related to the use of social strategies for improving writing, with a particular focus on how peer editing relates to sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Following this overview, the literature review discusses historical perspectives on the significance of students receiving feedback on their writing. This section explains the need for feedback

and feedback literacy in secondary writing instruction, and how peer editing is helpful in addressing this need in the classroom, especially for students whose writing ability is lowest. Next, the review addresses current research that relates to the use of feedback. The related research includes a discussion of a variety of issues characteristic of the provision of feedback on student writing, including the source of feedback, the potential issues with peer editing, and an explanation for the structure of feedback used in this study.

Purpose of the Literature Review

The literature review is a critical component of a dissertation, for the purposes of situating the study within the historical literature and theory, integrating current scholarship on the topic, and guiding the design of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Efron & Ravid, 2013). With those goals in mind, this literature review serves as a starting point to frame understanding. The review of literature also continues as the study progresses (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

This review has the aim of situating the practice of peer editing within the historical literature. Understanding the intentions of peer editing and the theoretical background of the practice is important when setting out to use the strategy in the classroom. Recent studies on topics related to peer editing suggest a variety of possible solutions for my problem of practice.

In building this review, I searched literature using several terms for what is largely the same process. The term peer editing and other related terms (peer feedback, peer assessment, peer revisions, peer commenting, and peer review) all describe the practice of having students provide writing feedback to each other. I use the term *peer editing* throughout this literature review to refer to the act of students' providing feedback to each other on their writing.

Background of the Problem and the Research Questions

In 2003, an organization called the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges found that writing instruction was not receiving as much of a focus as it had in previous decades. The commission's main explanation for this reduced focus was that the process of teaching writing in the high school classroom is an immense task, as teachers interact with dozens of students every week and have competing objectives that vie for classroom time.

Students need feedback on what they did well in their writing, and on what they can change (Gielen et al., 2010; Kiuahara et al., 2009). Many teachers use peer editing, a process in which students comment on, and respond to, each other's work, because it provides students with more comments in a timelier fashion than the teacher alone can provide (Gielen et al., 2010). Peer editing as a classroom strategy goes back at least as far as 1968, when Moffett mentioned it in the first edition of *A Student-centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13*.

Peer editing has been studied as a technique in improving student writing and understanding in a variety of research at different levels of education, including university (Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Yang, 2010), high school (Hovardas et al., 2014; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Karegianes et al., 1980) and middle school (Gielen et al., 2010; Hamilton, 2018). While these studies generally show an improvement in student writing due to peer editing, many of them also demonstrate some negative outcomes, such as the lack of useful suggestions due to the relative unskilled nature of students' understanding, a negative perception of classmates' ability, hurt feelings, and the teacher giving up control of the task (Gielen et al., 2010; Panadero et al., 2013; Graner, 1987).

This background informs my desire to institute peer editing in a way that maximizes the benefits for students while attempting to reduce the undesirable effects. In this effort, I identified two research questions to guide my study:

Research Question 1: What impact will peer editing feedback on student essays have on the revision process of high school upperclassmen in an English 4 class?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do high school upperclassmen have of the peer editing process in an English 4 class?

Theoretical Framework

The practice of having students provide feedback to one another on their writing is based on constructivist and social theories of learning (Clark, 2018). Constructivism holds that students learn new information better when they contribute to the process of making meaning (Clark, 2018; Carless & Boud, 2018; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017). In doing so, students actively participate in the learning process, rather than passively receiving information (Clark, 2018). Social constructivism is an application of that process, in which students interact socially to construct meaning together (Carless & Boud, 2018). This section of the literature review examines the social constructivist aspects of two educational theories, Bandura's (1986, 1997, 2001) social cognitive theory and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

The primary contribution of Bandura's (1986, 2001) social cognitive theory that relates to writing instruction is the concept of self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to successfully complete a task or gain new information. This theory applied to learning focuses on a student's motivation to succeed, as Bandura (1977) indicates that self-efficacy is a greater predictor of student success than previous success. While a student with low self-efficacy is unlikely to succeed, self-efficacy can increase through implementing a social support

system, modeling (or observing others), and assessing and interpreting the results of earlier academic efforts (Hodges, 2017; Pajares et al., 2007).

Bandura's approach to building self-efficacy has several connections to the practice of peer editing (Hodges, 2017), including the process of editing itself.

Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy comes about through achieving success in an endeavor, but achieving success too easily is not advantageous. A person who persists through a challenging process builds self-efficacy much more effectively. Persisting through a challenging cognitive process is an effective way to describe the process of editing, which involves putting forth effort, receiving feedback, and then renewing focus and effort on adapting in order to succeed.

A second aspect of social cognitive theory that applies to peer editing is the use of modeling, which Bandura (1986, 1997) defines as a process of comparing oneself to others engaged in similar activities. Students engaged in writing are all performing similar functions, and there are social benefits to seeing other students succeed (Hodges, 2017). For example, a teacher can show examples of student writing (Hodges, 2017), or invite students to read each other's papers, such that they essentially become models for one another (Fong et al., 2018; Pajares et al., 2007).

Finally, social cognitive theory states that self-efficacy is responsive to social persuasions (Bandura, 1997). Effective social persuasion provides

encouragement and a belief that the person can succeed at the task (Pajares et al., 2007). Teachers can provide social persuasion, but messages that are perceived as too critical may have the opposite effect pertaining to the desired increase in self-efficacy (Fong et al., 2018, Pajares et al., 2007). In this way, students may perform a role for each other that may alleviate some of the negative effect of a teacher's "red pen" on a student's self-efficacy (Pajares et al., 2007).

Connected to Bandura's social cognitive theory in my study is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978, 1986), which adds elements that further explain how learners function in relation to other people in the environment. Sociocultural theory is a constructivist theory, expressing the viewpoint that people cognitively construct their own understanding of information as they take it in (Vygotsky, 1978; Clark, 2018). This learning process happens best when it follows social interaction (Hodges, 2017).

Central to sociocultural theory is the concept of the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978 & 1986), which Vygotsky (1986) defined as the discrepancy between problems people can solve on their own and problems they can solve with assistance. This concept illustrates that all students are capable of learning more with assistance than on their own, but the size of each student's ZPD is different—some students are capable of accomplishing more than other students, even with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). From another angle, this concept insinuates a limit on

what a student can learn, as the ZPD includes the totality of everything a student is capable of learning, even with assistance (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

The assistance provided within a learner's ZPD can come from a variety of sources, not just from the teacher, but from parents, peers, texts (Hodges, 2017), and even computers (Clark, 2018). Researchers guided by Vygotsky's theory have come to refer to a person serving in this assistant role as an MKO (Hodges, 2017). The MKO must have more mastery of subject matter than the learner (Vygotsky, 1978; Hodges, 2017). However, the MKO does not need to be someone who knows more than the learner in every aspect of the task: The MKO can be someone who is similarly inexperienced to the learner (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). For example, two students who are relative novices working on a task together are often able to perform well through their social interaction even without assistance from an "expert" if the task is within both of their ZPDs (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In theory, the students working together each have their own areas in which they are able to provide assistance, which results in both of them succeeding.

The concepts of the ZPD and MKO support the use of peer editing in the classroom (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Cooperation between students about their writing provides the social interactions and cognitive processes required in constructing new understanding (Clark, 2018). This is especially clear when

connected to Bandura's concept of modeling, in which people learn from seeing other people perform similar tasks (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Students who edit each other's papers see the other students performing similar functions, which provides reciprocal modeling for all the learners in the environment. These students are also able to interact about suggested revisions to their writing, which allows students to serve as MKOs in ways that both assist each other and model the process to each other (Fong et al., 2018; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Pajares et al., 2007).

Historical Perspectives

This section discusses the historical origins of the practice of peer editing (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Schiro, 2013; Murray, 1972; Moffett, 1968; Elbow, 1973; Macrorie, 1976; Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Kiuahara et al., 2009; Nelson & Schunn, 2007; Topping et al., 2000). First, I situate peer editing within a larger shift in teaching writing, as more learner-centered theories became dominant in the late 1960s (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007; Schiro, 2013). Next, I quote several of the contemporary educators to specifically endorse the practice of peer editing (Murray, 1972; Moffett, 1968; Elbow, 1973; Macrorie, 1976). Following that is a brief glimpse at the ways teachers have used feedback in writing literacy (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Kiuahara et al., 2009; Nelson & Schunn, 2007; Topping et al., 2000).

From Product to Process

The practice of peer editing has its roots in the late 1960s and 1970s, when learner-centered theories were becoming more popular in education (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007). The 1970s saw explosive growth in constructivist and holistic methods of teaching reading and writing (Schiro, 2013; Cambourne & Turbill, 2007). One of the notable shifts during that period was in the focus of writing instruction: Where writing teachers had previously emphasized the end product, scholars of the late 1960s and the 1970s began to stress the process of writing (Murray, 1972; Rohman, 1965). Murray (1972) suggested that the teaching of writing should be geared toward unfinished writing, involving three stages: prewriting (Murray said this stage takes up to 85% of the writer's time), writing (the quickest stage, producing a rough draft), and revising (time-intensive and difficult). Murray further emphasized the importance of the teacher's getting out of the way, or as Murray puts it, "shutting up" (p. 5). This allows the students to find their own subject, use their own words, and discover their own voice (Murray, 1972; Rohman, 1965). This focus on writing as a process illustrates the growing prominence of constructivist processes in the study of writing at the time (Schiro, 2013; Murray, 1972; Moffett, 1968).

Historical Background of Peer Editing

Within this constructivist environment, the use of peer editing in schools dates to at least 1968, when Moffett (1968) mentioned it in the first edition of *A Student-centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13*. This book, and its subsequent editions, provided a variety of techniques for teaching language arts in ways that focused more on the students' specific needs (Moffett, 1968; Moffett & Wagner, 1991), which aligned with contemporary efforts to emphasize learner-centered education (Schiro, 2013). Some of the applicable characteristics of the period's learner-centered focus include self-directed learning, the importance of each student's subjective understanding, and the role of the teacher as a facilitator of growth (Schiro, 2013). Moffett and Wagner (1991) state in their introduction that learner-centered techniques, such as peer editing and writing response groups, were considered "radical" (p. 2) when Moffett's first edition came out in 1968. But by the time their fourth edition was printed in 1991, techniques such as process-oriented writing workshops and peer editing were commonplace, and referred to those activities as "collaborative learning at its best" (Moffet & Wagner, 1991, p. 202).

This period of learner-centered education was ascendant through the mid 1970's, influencing writing theorists of the era (Elbow, 1973; Macrorie, 1976). Elbow (1973), a longtime writing theorist and pioneer, was a proponent of the

process of peer editing, going so far as to title a work on the subject *Writing Without Teachers*. This book, while not intended as a lesson planning guide for secondary teachers, offers many suggestions for improving writing through the practice of peer editing. One suggestion emphasizes having regular people (not teachers or experts) read and respond to someone's writing. Another suggestion recommends feedback that is specific and direct, although Elbow does propose that readers should avoid negative feedback at first.

Macrorie's (1976) book *Telling Writing* agreed with many of Elbow's ideas, including a notable section on a "feedback circle," which emphasizes that everyone involved in peer editing receives a benefit: both the editor and the writer. Macrorie's (1985) fourth edition of *Telling Writing* retitles this group interaction as a "helping circle," putting even more emphasis on the role that peers play in helping each other clarify and improve their writing. According to Macrorie, peers' comments are not to be taken as law, but as perspectives different from the author's, which is extremely helpful in figuring out what works and what needs revision. Macrorie also states that this peer interaction provides writers added encouragement to keep writing.

The Changing Features of Feedback

Although the learner-centered constructivist focus did not remain in the forefront of education after the 1970s (Schiro, 2013), the practice of peer editing

stayed relevant in the ensuing decades, and is still commonly used today (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Kiuhara et al., 2009; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Topping et al., 2000). The common element uniting the constructivist theorists of the 1960s, writing instructors of the 1970s, and current researchers in the field is that feedback is essential in improving students' writing.

For many years, teachers believed that feedback was something they gave to students, and the students then used the teacher's feedback to know what to change in their work, and hopefully improve it. This belief led to research on what type of feedback was most helpful and what students and teachers thought about feedback (Dawson et al., 2019; Nelson & Schunn, 2009). More recent research in the field has moved away from the model focused on teacher-provided feedback to a process in which students are a part of the operations (Dawson et al., 2019).

One essential but sometimes overlooked aspect of the feedback process is the students' ability to receive and use feedback and (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017). Carless and Boud (2018) refer to "feedback literacy" as a student's capacity for making sense of information and using it to enhance work. The need for feedback literacy adds another step to the feedback process: Where previously teachers may have given feedback and not

checked for understanding, teachers must ensure that students have feedback literacy before they can actually use feedback effectively (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Feedback Effectiveness

Hattie (2009) synthesized over 800 meta-analyses of which practices benefit student learning and determined that feedback was one of the strongest factors in aiding achievement. Stone and Heen (2015) documented the importance of feedback in workplace and home situations, yet their insight is also applicable in a school setting. They state that feedback plays an important role in growing workers' ability, enhancing morale, getting people to work together more effectively, and solving problems. Each of these outcomes is desirable in a well-functioning classroom as well.

To maximize these potential benefits in the classroom, feedback should have characteristics conducive to student learning (Dawson et al. 2019; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Gielen et al., 2010). Different studies present different lists of those characteristics, and as a result, a complete picture must take a lot of qualities into account.

A 2010 study by Gielen et al. focused on improving the effectiveness of peer editing, and in so doing, synthesized three similar studies to determine characteristics of feedback that are generally seen as "good." These characteristics include the feedback's appropriateness (comments that clearly

relate to the criteria for assessment) and justification (an explanation of meaning on the part of the feedback provider), the presence of numerous suggestions for improvement, both positive and negative comments, and speed. A similar study by Forsythe and Johnson (2017) focused on students who were more or less likely to accept feedback based on certain characteristics of the feedback and feedback provider. In their study, they studied three characteristics from an earlier study (Boudrias et al., 2014), which explicated three characteristics of feedback that made it most likely to be accepted: face validity (the extent to which the feedback matched the students' perceptions of their work and effort), source credibility (their trust in the individual giving the feedback), and message valence (how positive or negative the feedback is).

These two studies, both providing research on feedback from the receiver's perspective, shared several similar characteristics of feedback. Both talked about the positivity or negativity of the feedback and the suitability of the feedback to the situation (Gielen et al., 2010; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017). Forsythe and Johnson (2017) added an element, indicating that the identity of the feedback provider is also important in how acceptable the feedback is to the receiver.

A third recent study about feedback had a broader focus, comparing the characteristics of feedback from the perspective of both students and teachers (Dawson et al., 2019). Dawson et al. found that students and teachers all

preferred that feedback be usable (explaining what knowledge or skills were the focus of the feedback), and specific/detailed (closely focused on the task, and thoroughly explained). Many students felt that being specific/detailed was the *only* important characteristic of feedback (Dawson et al., 2019).

Past those two general characteristics, students and teachers diverged somewhat on their impressions of what made feedback effective. Students were more likely than teachers to want feedback that was nice/positive/supportive and personalized/ individualized. Teachers also thought individualized feedback was helpful, but were less likely to believe in the value of nice/positive/supportive feedback (Dawson et al., 2019). Synthesizing all three of these studies, effective feedback characteristics according to students include its focus on the assessment task, its positive tone, and its clarity (Dawson et al., 2019; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Gielen et al. 2010).

One feature of the above lists that stands out is students' emphasis on the positivity of the feedback message (Dawson et al., 2019; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Gielen et al. 2010). This is especially meaningful because teachers in Dawson et al.'s (2019) study were less likely to see the importance of positivity. Finkelstein and Fishbach's (2012) study may shed light on this difference. The major finding of their research is that beginners tend to prefer positive feedback, while experts tend to prefer negative (critical or corrective) feedback.

Finkelstein and Fishbach's (2012) findings also relate to the characteristics of effective feedback mentioned above. Beginners want to be reassured that they are doing OK at something, and if they do not receive the encouragement of positive, affirming feedback, they may believe that extra effort is not worth expending, and eventually give up. On the other side, however, experts may find that overly-positive feedback does not provide enough information about what they need to change, and therefore is not appropriate or usable (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Dawson et al., 2019; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Gielen et al. 2010).

Related Research

Peer editing as a teaching strategy has appeared in a variety of research in the last 40 years (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Hovardas et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Hughes, 2001; Topping et al., 2000; Karegianes et al., 1980). This section of the review presents the findings of these and other studies. First, I compare the three in-class sources of feedback: the teacher, peers, and technological sources. Next is an in-depth look at the benefits of peer editing, and the common drawbacks that arise when students edit each other's papers. After this summary, I share some strategies other researchers have used to mitigate the negative effects of peer editing while maximizing its benefits. Finally, I explain the unique focus of this study within the literature.

Comparing Sources of Feedback

As summarized above, the characteristics of feedback that are most helpful to students include the feedback's appropriateness, explanations, positivity, creditability, and accuracy (Gielen et al., 2010; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Dawson et al., 2019; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). Within the classroom, writing students have a limited number of sources of feedback—the teacher, each other, and technology—that each offer unique aspects of feedback quality.

First, while technology can be accurate, timely, and appropriate, human-provided feedback is more effective at providing explanations (Contento, 2016). Technological resources (such as proofreading software) quickly find function and usage errors in student writing, but cannot provide much information on *why* something is wrong. Humans have the intelligence to supply further information and suggested approaches (Contento, 2016).

For the greatest accuracy, teacher feedback is the best option: Neither technology nor students can provide feedback as accurately as the teacher can (Gielen et al., 2010; Hughes, 2001; Hovardas et al., 2014). The teacher is considered a domain expert in writing ability, and as such, the teacher has more knowledge about what constitutes correct writing, and more perspective to know why certain skills are important (Gielen et al., 2010). The teacher also has more of an understanding of the assignment, having assigned the writing task, and is

therefore more aware of the expectations and what modifications are necessary to reach that standard (Hovardas et al., 2014). By the same token, students, when they provide feedback to each other, have less knowledge and understanding, and therefore provide less-detailed and less-informed feedback (Hughes, 2001; Gielen et al., 2010; Hovardas et al., 2014). Thus, teacher feedback is most appropriate to the writing situation, and most creditable (Gielen et al., 2010; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017).

Student and technological feedback both have an advantage in their timeliness, which is an important aspect in making feedback usable (Yang, 2010; Gielen et al., 2010; Hughes, 2001). Students can apply technological feedback in real-time as they type their papers (Contento, 2016; Bernstein et al., 2015). Word processing programs immediately underline mistakes, but even student feedback can be much timelier than teacher feedback (Gielen et al., 2010; Dawson et al., 2019; Ebadi & Rahimi, 2017; Hovardas et al., 2014; Karegianes et al., 1980; Nelson & Schun, 2009; Panadero et al., 2013). A simple mathematical exercise shows that student feedback is exponentially faster than teacher feedback. In the time a teacher can edit one paper, each student's paper can be peer-edited. In a classroom of 25 students, peer editing is 25 times faster than teacher editing. Two teacher edits take approximately the same amount of time as 50 peer edits, etc., so a writer can receive significantly more feedback through the process of

peer editing (Dawson et al., 2019). The increased efficiency of peer editing must be weighed against the decreased accuracy when compared to teacher feedback (Hovardas et al., 2014; Gielen et al., 2010; Hughes, 2001). Peer editing offers other benefits, though, in addition to increased efficiency.

Benefits of Peer Editing

In addition to the increased amount of feedback, numerous studies have examined the practice of peer editing, yielding results showing that it provides several benefits to the students involved (Hovardas et al., 2014; Gielen et al., 2010; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Yang, 2010; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Karegianes et al., 1980; Graner, 1987; Topping et al., 2000; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Dawson et al., 2019).

A common topic in these studies is the tone of students' comments to each other (Hovardas et al., 2014; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Topping et al., 2000). Students are more likely to provide editing suggestions that are positive or encouraging (Hovardas et al., 2014; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Topping et al., 2000). Hovardas et al.'s (2014) mixed-methods study showed that positive feedback was very common in seventh-grade students' peer editing, and benefited students' writing scores.

Vanderhoven et al. (2012) performed a quasi-experimental study comparing anonymous peer editing with providing scores in front of everyone. Students

were much more comfortable and positive in the peer editing group, which improved the feedback itself and responses to the feedback. Nelson and Schunn's (2009) correlational study demonstrated the relationships between various types of feedback and other factors that impact whether the feedback will be accepted. Positive comments had one of the strongest correlations to task success. These studies together demonstrate that positive comments are beneficial in peer editing because they are more likely to be accepted, implemented, and appreciated (Hovardas et al., 2014; Gielen, 2010; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Fong et al., 2018).

Researchers have also found that the act of peer editing benefits the person performing the editing as well as the one receiving the feedback (Carless & Boud, 2018; Hovardas et al., 2014; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Hovardas et al. (2014) found that students made similar changes in their own work to those they had previously suggested to their classmates when they performed peer editing. Lundstrom and Baker (2009), in a quasi-experimental study, found that student peer editors were able to transfer writing skills to improve their own writing by providing peer editing suggestions on their classmates' essays. This outcome aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD. Students comment on issues that are within their ZPD (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), which improves their own self-evaluation skills (Carless & Boud, 2018), and as a result, they see how to make

those improvements in their own writing (Carless & Boud, 2018; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

Several researchers also found that peer editing is beneficial even though (and perhaps *because*) it is not as accurate as teacher feedback (Gielen et al., 2010; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Dawson et al., 2019; Yang, 2010; Graner, 1987; Karegianes et al., 1980). In fact, Dawson et al.'s (2019) qualitative investigation found that a student's relative novice ability is a benefit to other students in the editing process because their comments are closer to the receiver's level, and thus, more understandable. Another factor in this dynamic is that students tend to want documentation when a peer suggests a change, so the receiver is more likely to look for confirmation by consulting with a reliable source or the teacher. The same student receiving a comment from a teacher is more likely to treat it as fact and therefore is unlikely to look up related information from sources, according to Gielen et al.'s (2010) quasi-experimental study and Yang's (2010) analysis of students' reflective journal entries about the editing process. Peer editing also increases student time on task, since both editing and revising are active learning techniques (Yang, 2010; Graner, 1987; Karegianes et al., 1980).

Benefits for Low-level Writers

Several studies found that peer editing provided benefits specifically for lower-performing writers (Karegianes et al., 1980; Gielen et al., 2010). In a study

of inner-city high school students who read on average three grade levels below average, students who had their essays peer edited received significantly higher essay scores than those who received teacher feedback (Karegianes et al., 1980). Gielen et al. (2010) had a similar finding, demonstrating that the greatest gains from the peer editing process came from students whose initial drafts were rated lowest. These studies indicate that peer editing is particularly beneficial for students who are below grade level because it increases the amount of time students spend focused on the editing process, and because peer editors' comments are typically closer to the level of the writers' understanding (Karegianes et al., 1980; Gielen et al., 2010). These findings demonstrate the potential for peer editing to be a useful strategy for a number of situations in which students may be behind grade level, such as students with learning disabilities or information processing differences and students who are in the process of learning a new language.

Potential and Perceived Negatives of Peer Editing

An overview of literature about peer editing would not be complete without including a look at the potential or perceived negatives of the practice. The perceived and actual negative results of peer editing include concerns about the quality of feedback (Hovardas et al., 2014; Hughes, 2001; Nelson & Schunn, 2009); students' perception that the feedback is lower-quality (Forsythe &

Johnson, 2017; Strijbos et al., 2010); and social factors, such as peer pressure (Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Fong et al., 2018; Topping et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2019), perceived fairness or unfairness (Topping et al., 2000; Panadero et al., 2013), and the challenge of meeting the needs of a classroom full of writers at different ability levels (Gielen et al., 2010).

The quality of feedback is a significant concern when comparing peer editing to teacher editing (Hovardas et al., 2014; Topping et al., 2000; Nelson & Schunn, 2009). Illustrating this dynamic, Nelson and Schunn's (2009) qualitative study of peer editing showed that student writers were more likely to make a change to their writing when a specific instance of a writing issue was pointed out to them, which is more likely to happen with a teacher's editing than with peer editing. This finding also appears in Hughes' (2001) experimental study, which has the provocative title, "But isn't this what you're paid for?" As the title indicates, the student participants believed peer editing was not a viable use of class time when the teacher provides better feedback than peers can manage. Hovardas et al. (2014) specifically compared peer editing feedback with expert feedback, and while peer editing did get students to make changes to their writing, the receivers rated peer feedback as being of lower quality than teacher feedback.

Perhaps as large of a problem as low-quality feedback is the students' perception that peer editing feedback will be of lower quality than teacher editing feedback (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Strijbos et al., 2010). If students come into the peer editing situation with a belief that it will be of lower quality, that will affect their willingness to accept suggestions or even take the exercise seriously (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Strijbos et al., 2010). Forsythe and Johnson's (2017) qualitative study of mindset in university students showed that their attitude toward the quality of feedback, especially how it fit their perceptions of themselves, significantly impacted their willingness or unwillingness to accept suggestions. Strijbos et al.'s (2010) experimental survey further demonstrated that the students' perceptions of who was giving the feedback strongly impacted their attitude toward suggestions. Suggestions from peers perceived as having low competence were not taken seriously.

Social dynamics can also problematize peer editing (Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Topping et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2019; Panadero et al., 2013). Topping et al.'s (2000) participants were college students, and they reported a high level of social discomfort when peer editing. Peer editing is an emotionally uncomfortable act because students are not often in a situation where they have to rate and critique each other (Topping et al., 2000). In secondary schools, this social discomfort coincides with issues involving peer pressure (Vanderhoven et

al., 2012). Peer editors in Vanderhoven et al.'s study stated that the feedback they gave to classmates was affected by the presence of other students in the room and their desire to avoid failing in front of classmates. Students can also be emotionally affected by the tone of feedback. Dawson et al.'s (2019) mostly quantitative survey found that, while students did not necessarily expect peer editing to be encouraging, they could easily be hurt by negative comments from peers. Another impact of social dynamics is in already-existing relationships among students. Panadero et al. (2013) found that friendship between students negatively influenced fairness in peer editing because friends were more likely to over-score their friends' work.

Student Writing Ability Level

One final challenge involved with peer editing is the fact of varying ability levels (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Strijbos et al., 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Karegianes et al., 1980; Fong et al., 2018). Students are aware of which classmates have a high or a low ability level and are more likely to accept feedback from those peers whom they perceive as being highly skilled (Strijbos et al., 2010), whose comments are within their ZPD (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Conversely, students at the top of the class are unlikely to find peer editing useful because only a few classmates can provide suggestions that extend their ZPD. Hence, the lowest-level students got the most out of peer editing in

Karegianes et al.'s (1980) study—they had more ground to make up, and could get beneficial suggestions from more classmates.

Students at different levels do not just have different abilities to provide feedback, but they also need different types of feedback (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Hovardas et al., 2014). Finkelstein and Fishbach (2012) performed five separate studies to determine if a difference existed in the feedback desired by experts and novices at particular tasks. In all five cases, they found that experts were more likely to want corrective (negative) feedback and beginners were more likely to want affirming (positive) feedback (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). In high school classrooms, students generally are not novices at writing, but they are also not experts (Hovardas et al., 2014), which suggests that all high school students could use some affirming/positive feedback and some constructive/negative feedback (Finkelstein & Fischbach, 2012). The implications of these studies are significant: Within a heterogenous classroom, each student may need and desire a different package of feedback to help them improve, some mostly positive, some mostly constructive/negative, and some in between (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012).

Improving Peer Editing

Several studies have sought to reduce the negatives of peer editing while maximizing its benefits (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Panadero et

al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010). To make peer editing more accurate, Panadero et al. (2013) and Gielen et al. (2010) both recommend using rubrics or comment guides for students to follow as they peer edit. In both studies, following a format for peer editing kept students focused on the types of feedback that would be most helpful for their classmates to receive and use (Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010). The characteristic of usability also factored highly in Dawson et al.'s (2019) study, which recommended focusing on usable comments, rather than stressing high-quality peer editing. Focusing on usability alleviated students' concerns about comment quality. Usability increased when feedback clearly connected to specific knowledge, skills, or learning strategy. These characteristics can mitigate students' concerns about their perceptions of peer editing quality (Dawson et al., 2019; Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010).

Dawson et al. (2019) indicated that high usability in peer editing also reducew students' concerns about emotional discomfort. Strengthening this premise, Carless and Boud's (2018) study on feedback literacy found that social interaction is particularly useful in reducing the emotional challenges of peer editing, because students can have conversations about potential changes and follow up on unclear recommendations, explaining the meaning of their suggestions. Significantly, Boud was one of Dawson's collaborators.

Topping et al. (2000) add another strategy for reducing emotional discomfort: Having students provide peer editing feedback repeatedly to each other lessens the emotional uneasiness. Each time students peer edit, they become more comfortable with the process, and more able to provide useful help to each other.

Positive and Negative Feedback

The previous sections have examined the practice of peer editing for its benefits and negatives and introduced several strategies for reducing the negative factors. The concept of positive and negative feedback has been a part of this discussion already but bears repeating, given that tone feedback is particularly significant to students (Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Hovardas et al., 2014). Dawson et al. (2019) found that students were much more likely than teachers to state that an important characteristic of feedback is that it be nice/supportive/positive. Hovardas et al. (2014) found that student-provided feedback was more positive than teacher feedback. Putting those two findings together indicates that students would actually prefer to get feedback from peer editing rather than from teacher editing, based on its positive tone. However, that conclusion is misleading.

As Finkelstein and Fishbach (2012) discuss, everyone does not have the same preferences in feedback tone. People who are novices at a particular skill

tend to prefer feedback that is positive/encouraging/affirming, while people who are experts tend to prefer feedback that is negative/corrective (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). High school students are in between novice and expert at writing, and as such, benefit from some positive and some negative feedback on their writing. Compared to teachers, though, high school students are all closer to the beginner level of writing than to expert, which explains their strong preference for positive feedback (Dawson et al., 2019; Hovardas et al., 2014).

Adding an element to this discussion is Fong et al.'s (2018) qualitative study, which asked students to imagine receiving either positive or negative feedback on their writing, and then to picture a situation in which they could find either type of feedback encouraging or discouraging. Expected results of this study included that students were much more likely to be able to imagine feeling enjoyment and pride from positive feedback. Some unexpected or incongruous results existed, though: More than half of the students reported that they could picture feeling encouraged by negative feedback, often because they could see themselves improving from it, and 20% of the students could even imagine being angry or frustrated with positive feedback because it was not helpful or factual (Fong et al., 2018). This study's findings demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the emotional tone of feedback. The researchers did not adjust for the participants' writing ability, but they did demonstrate that students have

a complex understanding of feedback's usefulness. If students can imagine being frustrated by positive feedback, and appreciative for negative feedback, they certainly understand which type of feedback is most helpful for them individually.

Combining these findings with Finkelstein and Fishbach's (2012) study prompts a leveled approach to peer editing in the classroom. High-level writers, while likely to prefer negative/corrective feedback, will also likely appreciate some positive feedback. Lower-level writers, who need and desire positive/encouraging feedback, will still benefit from corrective suggestions (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Fong et al., 2018). This action research study sets out to use peer editing in a way that has not been researched before: Having students provide both positive and negative feedback to each other in ratios that are most beneficial to them, respective to their individual writing ability levels. This study is similar to previous research that operationalizes suggestions for making peer editing less more helpful, such as providing a structured platform for peer editing (Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010), including social interaction (Carless & Boud, 2018; Dawson et al., 2019), and repeating the process several times in the school year (Topping, 2000). No study, though, has specifically examined the provision of positive/negative balanced peer editing feedback to determine the benefit for students at different writing ability levels.

Summary

This literature review presents a variety of information about the important topic of feedback in writing education. It begins by explaining the purpose and goal of a literature review in an action research study. Next, it explains the background for my problem of practice in my classroom, and relates the research question that guides my study. It then examines the theoretical perspectives that relate to the use of the social strategy of peer editing within the classroom (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986).

After exploring the historical origins of peer editing (Moffett, 1968; Elbow, 1973; Macrorie, 1976), and the changing focus from teacher-provided to student-provided feedback (Nelson & Schunn, 2007; Topping et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2019), the review discussed the topic of feedback effectiveness in depth (Hattie, 2009; Stone & Heen, 2015; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Gielen et al., 2010; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). This included a comparison between feedback from teachers and feedback from peers (Gielen et al., 2010; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Dawson et al., 2019; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012).

The remainder of the literature review changes focus to characteristics specific to peer editing feedback. First, the benefits of peer feedback were listed (Hovardas et al., 2014; Gielen et al., 2010; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Yang, 2010; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Karegianes et al., 1980; Graner,

1987; Topping et al., 2000; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Dawson et al., 2019), especially the benefits for students at lower writing ability levels (Karegianes et al., 1980; Gielen et al., 2010). Next, some of the significant downsides of peer editing were discussed, both actual and perceived (Hovardas et al., 2014; Hughes, 2001; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Strijbos et al., 2010; Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Fong, 2018; Topping et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2019; Panadero et al., 2013). After covering positives and negatives, a section about the attempts to improve peer editing followed (Dawson et al., 2019; Carless & Boud, 2018; Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010). Finally, the literature review ends with a glimpse at the complete picture of emotional tone in feedback (Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012; Hovardas et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2013; Gielen et al., 2010; Carless & Boud, 2018), leading to an explanation of the unique focus of this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The purpose of this action research study was to implement a structure for providing feedback in a high school English classroom to make the best use of peer editing of student writing, while mitigating the negative effects commonly associated with peer editing. This feedback structure uses the writing/editing/revising process as a method to instruct students in 21st-century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, information literacy, and technology literacy.

This study was designed to help my students understand how to provide more effective and helpful peer feedback. I have taught high school writers for over 15 years, and have consistently struggled to find a peer feedback method that is beneficial for all students. Because of the number of students in a classroom and the total number of classes I teach, I struggle to provide sufficient feedback and suggestions to all students. As a result, nobody gets abundant feedback: The feedback I can provide is often either too little to address all the students' needs, or too late to be helpful.

Two specific methods of getting more feedback on papers are having students peer edit each other's papers, and using technology to assess and

provide feedback on students' writing. Students, whose level of understanding is significantly less than the teacher's, may not see peer editing as helpful.

Technological methods of assessing writing may also be problematic to students, using algorithms rather than a human reading the essay.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What impact will peer editing feedback on student essays have on the revision process of high school upperclassmen in an English 4 class?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do high school upperclassmen have of the peer editing process in an English 4 class?

Study Context

This study was completed in a high school English Language Arts classroom at a small Christian school in Oregon. The study was designed as qualitative action research, in which I, as the teacher-researcher, intervened to improve my students' writing and feedback skills. The study took place over the course of one academic quarter. Students in English 4 at my school wrote essays at different times throughout the year, starting with conceptually simpler essays and working up to more complicated formats that pushed students to think more critically. Early essays provided opportunities for me to gauge student abilities at

writing and providing feedback, and that information helped me determine how to apply student feedback on later essays.

The participants were all students in a single English 4 class, the only section of this class offered at my small Christian school in a medium-sized city in Oregon. The class consists of 18 11th- and 12th-grade students who represent a wide diversity of academic proficiency.

The sample for this study is a convenience sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), since these are the students available to study. I selected high school upperclassmen because essay writing is a major focus of the English 4 curriculum at my school. The majority of the students in this class would be placed in standard or Advanced Placement English Language Arts classes if they were attending a public school. A small number of students have received individual tutoring in reading from a Title I educator who provides services at the school. This wide range of ability levels within the classroom presents a challenge but also an opportunity to study a broad picture of student perspectives and understanding. Students with different writing ability levels have different needs, and this reality adds depth to the study as I analyze the variety of student understanding and individual paths to improvement.

I initially assessed the writing ability and feedback-providing skills and styles of all the students in the class, gleaning data to determine which students

were likely to be able to provide useful feedback to specific classmates. As the study progressed, a smaller number of students in the class became the focus of specific analysis and interviews to provide substantive qualitative data on the efficacy of the intervention. For these later stages, I used maximum variation sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), studying students at diverse ability levels, to analyze how effectively they were able to provide feedback to each other and use the feedback given to them. This process captured the results of my intervention for students of differing ability levels, thus addressing my research questions, explaining how engagement in both providing and receiving positive and negative feedback on written work impacts the development of my students' writing, communication, and literacy skills.

Action Research Design

Action research is a form of research in which a teacher can investigate experiences in the classroom to determine the effects of an intervention (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Action research is possible in this case because of my position. I teach the English 4 class, as well as additional classes in English and other subject areas. I am positioned as an insider to the research setting (Efron & Ravid, 2013), which allows me to enact the intervention in my own classroom while I study the effects of the intervention as it progresses over the course of the year. I present information to my class, and then directly apply findings as the study progresses.

I can also study myself as I look at the effectiveness of my intervention in improving my problem of practice.

Another goal that is frequently part of an action research study is a focus on social justice (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Efron & Ravid, 2013), given the intention of an action research intervention—improving the situation in a classroom. In my study, as my students became more adept at giving and using feedback, I introduced more socially-charged essay topics that apply to real-life situations. Students wrote on topics that challenged them to reflect on interpersonal inequalities, and the formats of the essays tasked them with their own improvement goal.

The format for the third essay in the study was a satirical problem solution essay. In this essay, I gave students the task of talking about a social problem that affects them and/or people their age. The students were then supposed to use the tools of satire to discuss the problem and propose a solution. In their essays, students had the chance to work on using their writing as a tool to argue for societal change. Student topics on the satirical problem solution essay included “Why NOT to protest,” “Encouraging stereotyping,” and “Using extreme compliance to avoid police brutality.” Students who wrote on these topics used the power of their individual voices to argue against inequalities they saw in the United States by satirizing common responses to controversial issues.

These students got experiencing activating their voice in support of people who are on the lower side of a power imbalance

In action research, the researcher collaborates with the participants to produce a positive change in the researcher's own setting (Herr & Anderson, 2015). An action research study begins with an analysis of a compelling problem that presents itself in the researcher's area of practice (Dana, 2013). Significant elements of action research include its unique context inside an individual setting, practical focus on improving the problem area, and cyclical nature of research (Efron & Ravid, 2013). My research questions demonstrate each of these significant characteristics. The setting of my study is in my classroom. The focus is on improving student writing and literacy skills, and understanding how students perceive this process. The extended focus of essay writing, editing, and revising over the course of several essays gives students time to reflect and implement strategies learned in previous class periods.

In this study, social interactions between students, and technological methods, increased the amount of feedback students received on their writing. The social interactions, as discussed in the theories of Vygotsky and Bandura, provide the students and teacher with a setting for increasing the writing ability of all students. According to Vygotsky (1978, 1981), social interactions are a necessary component of education that precedes student learning. Bandura

(1986) also stressed the importance of social interactions for building students' self-efficacy, thereby increasing their likelihood of success. These theoretical underpinnings compel a process by which students come to understand how to provide effective feedback to each other. The method in this case is to focus students on providing both positive and negative feedback to each other, which will greatly increase the amount and variety of feedback they receive.

Student Participants

My English 4 class includes 18 students: 11 12th graders and 7 11th graders. The class consists of 12 male students and six female students. The racial/ethnic composition of the class includes seven White students, seven Hispanic students, and two Asian students. Two students have mixed-race backgrounds. I sent the parent consent letter (Appendix A) home to the parents of all the students to inform families and get permission to include minors in my study.

I rated the students on their ability to give positive and negative feedback and compared the ratings with the students' scores on the standardized NWEA MAP test (MAP Growth, 2020). I looked at scores on a test of language usage, in three specific areas: The students' ability to revise texts, edit grammar and usage, and edit mechanics. Comparing these two numbers allowed me to see which students were likely to need either positive or negative feedback because of their

writing ability and which students were good at giving positive or negative feedback.

I chose the study participants through a process of maximum variation sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), selecting students who were very different from one another on the axis. I also considered their answers on the first peer editing response sheet, noting students who had interesting responses to select among students at each ability level. For example, when one student mentioned wanting more “brutality” in editing, I marked that down as an interesting response that warranted further study. Another student, who I rated highly as a writer, mentioned feeling unsure of herself, which alerted me to a possible complex perspective on writing and editing. Although I rated students by their writing and feedback ability, they were not aware of my categorization. I wanted to avoid the social stigma of a student being termed a low-ability writer or feedback provider, so I did not tell them why they were selected.

The student participants include two female and four male students, representing the same ratio of the entire class. Three of the students are White (two male students and one female student), two are Hispanic (one male student and one female student), and one (male student) has a mixed-race background. The names below are pseudonyms.

Ana is a female 12th-grade student with a Hispanic background. She is a motivated student who accelerated earlier in her educational career, and as a result, is the age of most 11th graders. She is one of the top writers in the class, and is also excellent at providing critical feedback.

Caitlin is a female 11th-grade student with a White background. She is a dedicated 4.0 student who attempts to complete every assignment exactly as requested, but appears to struggle somewhat with confidence as a writer.

Zack is a male 12th-grade student with a White background and grade-typical ability in writing. He is an insightful and thoughtful thinker, but does not appear to have a strong desire to produce professional writing.

Ruben is a male 11th-grade student with a Hispanic background. He has grade-typical ability in writing. He likes to complete assignment as requested.

Anthony is a male 12th-grade student with a Caucasian background. His writing ability is below grade level. He is conscientious about completing assignments, but struggles to expand on ideas in his essays.

Cooper is a male 12th-grade student with a mixed-race background. His writing ability is far below grade level. He is a conscientious student, but struggles to write in a formal fashion, especially in supporting his ideas with material from sources.

Data Collection Measures, Instruments and Tools

The research questions for this study guided me to collect data on student classwork as they provided and received feedback and produced rough drafts and final versions of their essays. To examine the full scope of the intervention, I collected a variety of types of data. I gauged writing ability level for each student by using NWEA MAP assessment scores and student writing samples. I then collected qualitative data through student surveys, student self-rating assessments, observations, and interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, the history of changes on the students' essays provided trace data showing the concrete results of the editing process (Cesare et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Combined, the data sources portrayed the full extent of this intervention, and how it played out in my classroom.

Measures of Writing Ability

I measured students' writing ability in two ways: through standardized test scores and through writing samples. The students have taken the NWEA MAP assessment, a national standardized test (MAP Growth, 2020), at several points in recent school years, and I used their Language Arts scores to get a basic evaluation of their writing ability. To confirm the MAP scores, I also collected student writing samples, which provided me with actual student artifacts to use as a gauge of writing ability. These writing samples were part of normal

classroom instruction and paired with the students' MAP scores to provide a fuller picture of each student's writing level.

Measures of Feedback Ability

Students demonstrated their ability to provide affirming and critical feedback through exercises in class designed to assess their feedback, first on sample essays, and on classmates' writing in later class periods. Through this formal peer editing process, students reviewed classmates' writing and interacted socially to discuss suggestions. After each peer-editing session, I collected student self-assessment data on surveys asking them to rate and describe the feedback they provided and received.

Interviews

I chose six participants for this study because they represent different ability levels, which gave me a fuller picture of how the intervention impacts a variety of students with different strengths. I interviewed the participants to better understand their perspectives and perceptions of the editing process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews included questions related to the students' experiences and perceptions as both a giver and receiver of feedback, with a goal of understanding the direct impact of the intervention on students. I chose to use a semi-structured interview format, using a sequence of open-ended questions, but allowing for the participants' answers to determine follow-up questions

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Some questions also included prompts requesting specific information in case the students had a hard time answering the initial question

Essays and Trace Data

Another source of data, the one that allowed me to include revisions in the study, was the students' essays themselves. The essays were the goal of the process: All the other elements of the study, including class interactions and social experiences, contributed to this product.

Essays were assigned, written, and revised three times for this study. These essays demonstrate both students' initial ability, shown in writing drafts, and their growth over time, when comparing drafts to final versions, and also comparing early essays to later essays. These essays, completed on a word processing platform, also contain trace data (Cesare et al., 2018), the record of changes as students adapted their essays due to feedback.

Observational Field Notes

I wrote field notes during and after the class periods in which the activities of this study took place (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These notes are my observations of how peer editing transpired and students' reactions and interactions. These notes helped me to connect students' in-class actions and attitudes with their self-reported perceptions of the process. The field

notes also include some comments students made during class that the other data gathering methods did not capture.

Each of the data collection methods and tools mentioned above is discussed in greater depth in the next section. Following that is a section on how each type of data was treated, processed, and analyzed.

Research Procedure

This action research study focused on instructing students in methods of providing effective feedback to each other on their writing and collected data in selected class periods over an 8-week period. The students wrote three essays during the quarter, one per month. The first step in the research procedure was to determine students' strengths in both their writing ability and in their ability to provide feedback.

Student Writing Ability

Writing ability is often a vague descriptor, but to match writers with editors, I needed a basic measure, which I determined through two methods: standardized test scores and writing samples. The standardized test scores came from the NWEA MAP assessment, a national standardized test that includes a section on writing ability (MAP Growth, 2020). This method was effective at giving a basic picture of each student's ability. The MAP system produces a variety of reports, one of which provides an overview of the change in each

student's scores (growth) over time. By looking at the students' scores on previous MAP assessments, I gained a picture of each student's performance and growth, which implied their ability. This data suggested which students in the class might seek, and benefit most from, more affirming feedback or more critical feedback. According to Finkelstein and Fishbach (2012), more proficient writers (those who score above grade level) will likely prefer more critical feedback, while less proficient writers (those who score below grade level) will likely prefer more affirming feedback.

MAP scores provide a basic understanding of students' understanding of writing ability but do not include the students' actual writing. Therefore, I obtained student writing samples to gain a more direct perception of their writing ability. Every 2 weeks on average, students wrote answers to specific questions to analyze literature in depth. These assignments are an element of class instruction, and they yielded samples of student writing that gave me an understanding of student strengths and weaknesses related to writing ability.

Student Feedback Ability

To gauge students' ability at providing feedback, I asked them to provide feedback on sample student writing. Before students wrote their first essays, I gave them sample essays representing a range of typical writing ability. I asked the students to provide feedback as if they were giving feedback to a classmate. I

started by giving them a sample that represented lower-level writing ability and asked them to provide positive (affirming) feedback. Next, I gave them a sample that represented higher-level writing ability and asked them to provide negative (critical) feedback. The student work on this task began to show which students are skilled at giving positive feedback and which are skilled at giving negative feedback. Some students were very good at providing positive feedback, and not very good at negative feedback. Some were good at both types.

I determined which students to pair for peer editing by combining their writing ability and feedback ability measures. I created a chart and plotted the students on a graph to determine which type of feedback students were likely to need for their writing, and which they were likely to be good at providing.

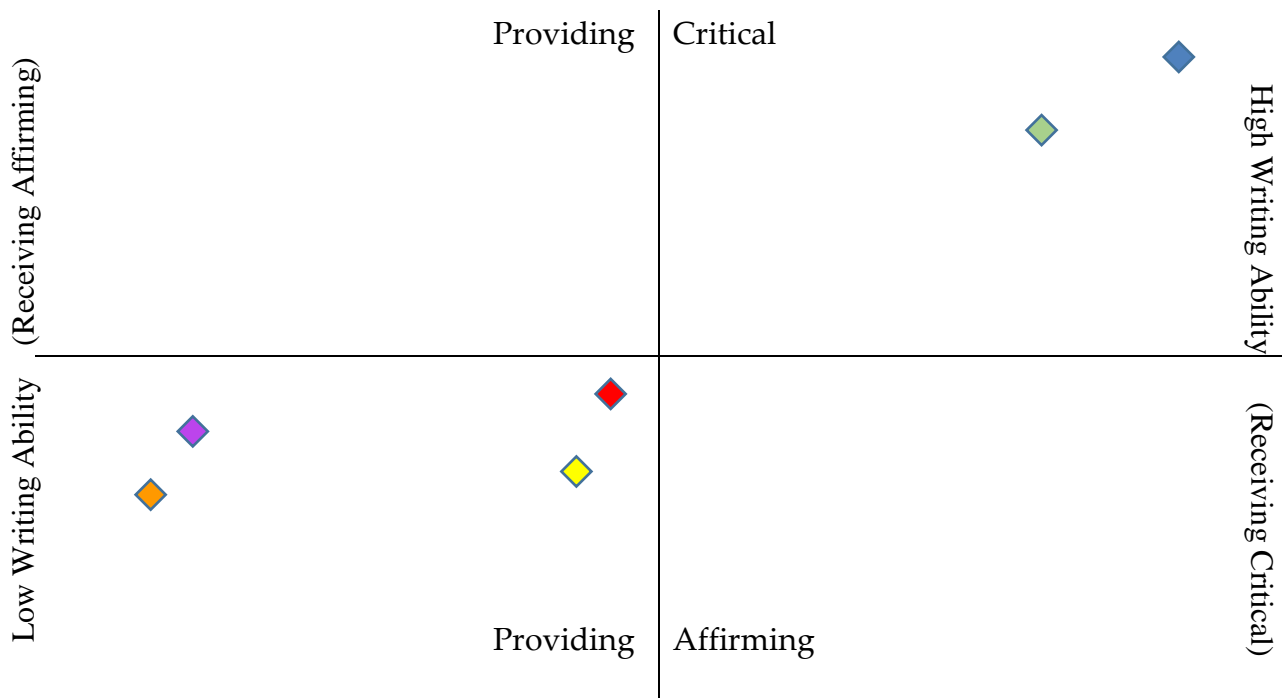


Figure 3.1: Graph of student writing ability compared with feedback ability

Figure 3.1 depicts the six study participants in their ability to provide effective feedback and their feedback needs. The dots on the top right represent Ana and Caitlin, students who have a high writing ability and are good at providing critical feedback. The dots on the bottom left represent Cooper and Anthony, who had a lower writing ability and were better at providing affirming feedback. The dots near the middle represent Zack and Ruben, who are close to average in their writing skills and generally better at providing affirming feedback. Although the students who were good at providing critical feedback were also good at providing affirming feedback, the figure's limited vertical scale only emphasizes their critical feedback ability.

Student Essays: Writing, Editing, Responding

During the study, students produced three essays using Google Docs, an online word processing platform. Each essay cycle was the same: Students first submitted a draft of the essay, which classmates then peer-edited. Students then revised their essays based on classmate suggestions and submitted a new copy as a final draft.

The students peer-edited each other's essay drafts in different ways. On the first essay, I assigned students three classmate papers to peer edit on their own in succession. On the second essay, I paired students to read their papers

together and provide suggestions face-to-face. I chose peer editors by matching up student writing ability with feedback ability. Students who needed or desired more critical feedback got it from classmates who are skilled at providing critical feedback, and students who needed or desired more affirming feedback got it from classmates who are skilled at that type of feedback. On the third essay, I gave students the choice of doing their peer editing face-to-face or by themselves one paper at a time. All the students chose face-to-face peer editing, except for one who edited several papers in a row by himself. In each case, I kept track of which students edited which papers. I computer scanned the papers with editing marks on them to preserve them as artifacts for future analysis. The cyclical structure of the quarter lent itself well to action research. Student feedback and performance influenced the methods of instruction and feedback for future essays.

The first essay was a literary analysis essay based on the plot of the *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories written by English author Geoffrey Chaucer in the late 1300's. Students read these stories in September 2021 and wrote their essay drafts during the first week of October. Essays were due through Google Classroom on Thursday, Oct. 7, and I printed them off for peer editing, which took place during that day's class. I instructed them to focus on the writer's ideas and organization of material and to provide both affirming and

constructive feedback. I distributed each student's essay to a series of three different peer editors based on their feedback ability. After each essay was edited three times, I gave them back to the student writers and instructed them to revise their essays and submit a final version by Monday, October 11. I selected my six participants after the first cycle of peer editing ended. After that point, I focused all data collection on my six participants.

The second essay was a literary analysis of a character in the William Shakespeare play *Twelfth Night*, written in the early 1600s. The class read this play in class in early November 2021. Essay drafts were due on Tuesday, November 23 for peer editing. For this session, I paired each student with one other student who was likely to provide the type of feedback the student needed. The six student participants were paired according to the arrangement in Figure 3.1. After receiving peer editing, the students then revised their essays and turned in final drafts on Tuesday, November 30.

The third essay was a satirical problem-solution essay, modeled after the satirical essay *A Modest Proposal*, written by Irish writer Jonathan Swift in 1729. This essay draft was due on Wednesday, December 8 for peer editing. For this essay, I gave students the choice whether to edit with a partner or on their own. After the peer editing session, I asked students to revise their essays and submit a final draft on Monday, December 13.

After peer editing on the assigned essay, the students ended each editing class period by completing surveys that asked questions about their experiences with peer-editing (Appendix B). These surveys included a Likert-style question and two open-ended response items asking how effectively they thought their peer editors did at providing help, and what feedback they would like to see in future peer editing (Efron & Ravid, 2013). These surveys were in the form of exit tickets, which are informal assessments distributed to students toward the end of class to quickly gather information on all students' experiences.

When students submitted their final papers, I also assessed them technologically by submitting the essays to an online paper checker called PlagiarismCheck, which is a service that finds similarities with material online to determine whether students copied text. PlagiarismCheck also provided basic editing of student work. Such computerized editing platforms are designed to catch plagiarism and grammatical and usage errors but may not be attuned to the overall scope of student writing (Contento, 2019). They may provide a benefit, though, by finding common writing errors that student peer editors do not catch. I paired reports from the online paper rater with data from peer editing to get a fuller picture of the revisions recommended to each student.

Trace Data: Essay Revisions

Examining submitted essays for revisions surfaced trace data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), changes in an environment caused by people's actions that can be collected and analyzed unobtrusively after an event occurs. More specifically, I used students' document history in Google Docs as digital trace data (Cesare et al., 2018), demonstrating the changes they made to their essays after receiving feedback from classmates. Google Docs tracks every change in a document by the date and time it occurs. By cross referencing the comments students provided in peer editing with specific document changes, I was able to see what revisions writers made as a result of peer editing suggestions. This method illustrated and illuminated the effects of the peer editing process in students' actual writing, which connected the data to my second research question, in which I sought to examine the impact of the peer editing process on the revisions my students made.

Interviews

Interviews with the six study participants took place on December 13 and 14, 2021 (Appendix C). They focused on the students' experience as both a feedback provider and receiver. I asked students open-ended questions to describe and evaluate the feedback they gave and received, and the impact on their writing, communication, and literacy skills. These interviews sought to

ascertain how each student responded to the peer editing process. Questions dealt with various aspects of the intervention, including how the students felt the peer editing process worked for them, both as giver and receiver, and how they perceived their writing ability to have changed over the course of the semester.

Treatment, Processing, and Analysis of Data

The goal of this research was to improve the classroom process of peer editing. Each element of the study focused on those ends. Action research increases in quality when the results inform practice to advance student understanding (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Throughout the research process, all the assignments, peer editing experiences, surveys, and interviews were embedded in my instruction for the course. I thus met the educational goals of the course while engaging the class in the study. I removed or modified identifying details, such as names, descriptors, and other characteristics, to ensure anonymity. All physical student artifacts, such as papers, surveys, and exit tickets, were stored in a locked office to ensure the protection of student information and records.

In qualitative research, the researcher performs analysis through a process of coding and categorizing to make sense of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). From the first collection of data in this study, I began this process. I analyzed data collected in various forms: student assignments, surveys, interviews, and the document history. While reading through this data, I noted terms descriptive

of the content therein. The initial coding is called open coding, a type of analysis in which the researcher writes down anything that might be useful (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I then combined these initial codes into broader categories, which I later categorized into emergent themes. For example, early in the study, I asked my students during class about their perspectives on positive peer editing. I wrote down student responses to these questions. Two of the answers to this question were: "I'm not going to sugar-coat it." and "Just complimenting isn't helping them better their writing." I coded these as "sugar-coating" for the first answer and "helping to improve" for the second answer. These two codes gradually became part of my eventual themes as I collected more data.

Data analysis in action research studies is unique in several ways: First, the goal of action research is classroom improvement, so analysis must incorporate and reflect that ameliorative focus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Second, qualitative action research takes place over time, and analysis must explore the process by which the study develops (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This second point is significant because students' perspectives and understanding may change over time, as they gain experience with feedback and editing. I had to analyze at each point so that I could compare students' initial perspectives with their end perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, student responses after each essay or feedback event may have impacted the way future learning

activities took shape during the study. The goal and time scope of my study fit well with action research data analysis. My research questions sought a way to increase feedback, improve student feedback, and benefit student skills and understanding over the course of several student essays, which were assigned at different times during the semester.

Additional elements of action research that must be included in data analysis are data quality and accuracy, addressed by considering and disclosing any bias that may affect a researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Herr & Anderson, 2015). As the teacher in the classroom being studied, I had preconceived notions about my students, which have affected my data analysis and coding. I endeavored to be as open and candid as possible with my opinions and assumptions about the students and the process. In doing so, I was better able to analyze the data and provide high quality, accurate observations on the students' products and experiences.

Student Writing Ability

I assessed writing ability using two methods: NWEA MAP scores and student writing samples. MAP scores consist of a numerical score with a range from about 140 to 300. This score is based on a national norm, which compares to the average score of students around the United States taking the test within the same time window (MAP Growth, 2020). I analyzed student writing samples

based on the goals of the assignment. Combining these two data points, I ranked students on a scale from lower to higher writing ability.

Student Feedback Ability

I assessed student feedback ability by analyzing student responses to feedback tasks, both on sample student writing and on actual student essays. As students provided feedback to each other, both affirming and constructive, I assessed the quality of their positive and negative feedback suggestions based on how effectively they followed instructions on the task. This method revealed which students were good at providing affirming feedback, and which were good at providing constructive feedback. Students could also let me know which type(s) they believe they feel comfortable giving. This enabled me to rank students on their feedback ability, and then, comparing this with data on student writing ability, I was able to plot students on the axis in Figure 3.1.

Student Essays: Writing, Editing, Responding

As students submitted essays, I graded them using teacher-produced rubrics designed to assess different aspects of essay construction, such as the essay's ideas, organization, and clarity (Appendix D). I also noted students' peer editing comments at this stage. Students completed peer editing using pens on paper, enabling me to see the suggestions students provided to each other. I computer scanned the edited essays and saved them in PDF files for future

analysis. I also included students' responses on exit tickets after editing sessions in this analysis. I recorded these editing suggestions and student responses on exit ticket surveys using open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I wrote down concepts that resulted from student editing and the surveys and compiled them into categories to observe themes that emerged from the process.

Trace Data: Essay Revisions

The trace data in essays include the history of changes made on the essay and earlier versions of essays. These historical data are saved automatically in Google Docs' version history. Through comparing the Google Docs version history with peers' and the computer's editing suggestions, I gained a solid picture of which suggestions informed the final version of an essay, which documented the effectiveness of the editing process from beginning to end.

Interviews

I interviewed the six student participants after the conclusion of the third essay, asking questions about the students' perspectives on the editing process, both in giving and receiving feedback (Appendix C). Specific questions asked how effectively the students felt they were able to provide the requested feedback, how effective other students' feedback was for them, how much they felt they benefited from editing suggestions, what aspects of the process were helpful (or detrimental), and how their perceptions changed over the course of

the semester. I compared the comments axially (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), with a goal of linking comments to emergent themes in the data. The interviews provided the widest view of the data sources, going into greater depth with a small number of students representing a range of ability levels to gain as great a perspective as possible. For example, when one student used the phrase “straight to the point,” I combined this thought with one from another student who used the phrase “don’t sugar-coat it” as similar concepts regarding tone of feedback.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design and methods I used to collect and analyze data in my study. Based on my problem of practice, this study aimed to improve the peer editing process by drawing on the social theories of Vygotsky and Bandura. Collecting a variety of data—standardized test scores, writing samples, feedback, essays, surveys, digital trace data, and interviews—provided a full picture of the peer editing intervention’s impact.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

To resolve my problem of practice—the limitations of peer editing as a classroom strategy to provide significant usable feedback on student writing, this study examined the effects of peer editing on my high school students' essay revisions and perceptions of the editing process. The aim of this process was to answer my two research questions.

Research Question 1: What impact will peer editing feedback on student essays have on the revision process of high school upperclassmen in an English 4 class?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do high school upperclassmen have of the peer editing process in an English 4 class?

A group of six junior and senior students participated over the course of 8 weeks, during which all students wrote, edited, and revised three essays. Each essay received teacher-arranged peer editing from one or more classmates. I, as the teacher-researcher, determined what type(s) of feedback would benefit each student, and engineered the process to help students to receive their preferred type of feedback from each other. Between October 13 and December 8, 2021, student-participants provided data in several ways. Before writing and

responding to essays, students provided feedback on sample writing passages. They also evaluated each session of peer editing, and the six participants had interviews at the end of the study, looking over the entire process. Coding the data revealed three themes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to examine the impact of peer editing feedback on student essays in a high school English 4 class, noting the effects of positive feedback and constructive feedback on students' revisions and perceptions.

Findings of the Study

Over the course of the eight weeks of the study, I collected data in a variety of ways, including measures of student writing and feedback ability, interviews, student essays, trace data of revisions on essays, and researcher field notes.

I began analyzing the data from the first days of the study, looking at physical artifacts the students produced in class, and writing down concepts that the students mentioned. Often, multiple students would bring up the same ideas in their comments on the process, and I began to conceptually group the data under broad headings. As the study progressed, I kept adding new data into the broad headings, and eventually began to connect ideas under a smaller number

of concepts. The interviews provided a great deal of new data at the end of the study, and as I looked over the transcripts of the interviews, I incorporated many student comments into the headings I had previously established. As a result of this analysis of the data set, three dominant themes arose from the data:

- 1) The role of confidence in writing and editing.
- 2) The benefits and challenges of social dynamics in peer editing.
- 3) The significance of positivity in tone.

Theme 1: The Role of Confidence in Writing and Editing

Writing can feel risky. A student may feel exposed or attacked in the process of peer editing. Echoing Vanderhoven et al. (2012), participants talked about not being excited about peer editing, even if they believed that they would benefit from the process. Writers, especially student writers, see their work as a part of themselves, and showing that to others can feel like an invasion of privacy (Topping et al., 2000).

In this study, all six participants expressed concerns about having other students read their writing. Even if they knew that the feedback would be beneficial, they were still uncomfortable with the process. For example, Caitlin, a junior, who has not done peer editing in English classes before, commented in her interview, "I was very nervous to write the essay and then have people look at it." Ana, a senior who is more used to peer editing, expressed similar ideas,

stating that she feels confident when writing, but less confident when her writing is being edited: “I like to think [my ability is] pretty high, like when I’m writing, I’m like, ‘Oh, this is so good,’ and then when I get the feedback, I’m like, ‘Maybe it wasn’t so good.’” Every time Ana had someone read her paper, she felt discomfort.

Confidence was a factor that helped participants overcome this discomfort. The more confidence the participants had in their ability, the more self-assured they felt, both in giving and receiving feedback. All six students believed they could complete writing classwork as assigned, but they differed in their perceptions of their initial ability. Caitlin and Ana, the two high-level writers, both said they felt confident that they could produce quality work on the first try, and they were used to not getting a lot of suggestions on their work. Zack and Ruben, the middle-level writers, both felt confident in their abilities but also saw their limitations. For example, Zack was confident in his ability to put his ideas into words, but also aware that all peer editors tend to point out the same problems in his writing (“Punctuation”). Ruben, while he felt confident that he could complete writing assignments, said in his interview, “I just feel like I take longer sometimes. I like to take my time in writing. I sometimes find myself enjoying it. Just finding the words can be interesting.”

The two lower-level writers in this study, Anthony and Cooper, both said they felt they could eventually complete assignments as requested, but both of them demonstrated a lack of confidence in their ability to write well. Anthony stated about the third essay, “That one essay [satire], I couldn’t get my brain wrapped around it. But I feel like I do [OK usually].” Lack of confidence translated into a greater likelihood that a student would accept a suggestion from a classmate. For example, Cooper stated in his interview, “[My confidence level is] not really too high.” As a result, when a classmate gives him a suggestion, he is very likely to incorporate it into his essay: “Practically, I will do it every time.” Cooper’s lack of confidence in his own writing ability therefore made him more willing to accept suggestions from any source.

At the other end of the ability level spectrum, a greater confidence in writing ability made a student more likely to expect an explanation for an editing suggestion. Both high-level participants, Ana and Caitlin, stated in interviews that they appreciated one-on-one interactions about feedback because of the chance to talk through the suggestion. Caitlin said she appreciated discussing feedback: “If I talk to [my peer editor] about it and understand where they’re coming from. [That helps] if it doesn’t make sense when they say it or when they explain it back to me.” This is significantly different from Cooper, who said he would try to incorporate any suggestion given to him. More confident writers

expected justification for suggested changes, corroborating Gielen et al.'s (2010) findings.

Despite higher-level writers' expectation for explanations, all six participants said they were willing, and likely, to accept suggestions from classmates. Four of the participants said they would take the classmate's ability into account when deciding whether to listen to suggestions, echoing Boudrias et al. (2014). Participants' confidence in the rightness of a suggestion thus depended somewhat on comparing themselves to their editor. For example, in his interview, Zack named several classmates from whom he would or would not accept suggestions. "If they have like a way lower grade than me, or they're not [says some specific names], someone who doesn't complete their work or doesn't do their work, I am less likely to take their suggestions." Zack had confidence up to a certain point: Suggestions from classmates he sees as better writers were more likely to cause him to doubt his initial work. Ana agreed with this point as well in comments from her interview: "I hate to say it," she said, "but it depends on the person."

The student participants' confidence impacted their perceptions of their editing as well as their writing. The six participants were generally confident in their ability to fulfill assignment requirements with their writing, but most of them expressed less confidence in their editing ability. An example of lower

editing confidence is that some students needed to be reassured that their suggestions were worthwhile. My field notes during the first peer editing session, which took place on October 7, included this observation: “Some students asked me or each other for confirmation on a particular point (including Cooper and several classmates).” The students who felt the need to verify a suggestion before writing it down showed they were not confident enough to assert the suggestion without verification.

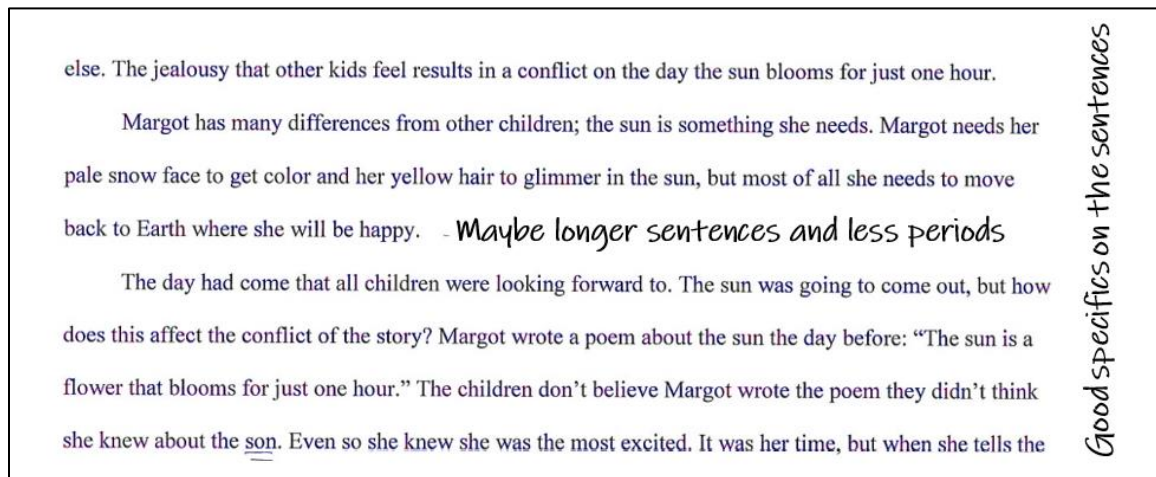


Figure 4.1: *Editing Sample 1*

Figure 4.1 exemplifies Anthony’s unease about criticizing an essay, as seen in the comments and marks. I replaced Anthony’s hand-written comments with darker computerized letters. This example was from a practice editing session. During that class period, which was early in the study, I gave students two sample essays and asked them to give feedback as if they were written by classmates. One of the samples was a lower-quality essay on which I asked the

students to give only positive, affirming feedback. The other sample, from which Figure 4.1 was taken, was a higher-quality essay on which I asked students to give only negative feedback. Anthony showed his lack of confidence in giving negative feedback in multiple ways: First, his use of “maybe” implies hesitation. Second, even though I asked students to *only* give negative feedback, he supplied a positive comment in the right margin (“Good specifics on the sentences”). These two types of responses were typical of students who had lower writing ability. They felt they had to hedge when giving critique, and they felt compelled to compliment even when it was not requested.

Students showed a lack of editing confidence in several ways. First, some students wanted to avoid imposing their style and writing tendencies on each other. For example, Ana stated in her interview that she struggled to know which suggestions to make to classmates: “I don’t quite know, like, we all have different writing styles. This isn’t my writing style, but I don’t know how to word that... Maybe it isn’t my writing style, and I just didn’t comprehend it.” Ana’s lack of confidence in her editing ability made her hesitant to impose her style and preferred wording on a classmate. She doubted that she knew enough to really critique a classmate.

Additionally, some participants were anxious about how their editing played a part in their classmates’ grades. Cooper expressed in his interview this

insightful observation regarding the role of editing in the writing process: “[It’s tough] giving out advice, ‘cause you could have doubts that, like, you were wrong or right to say that. And if the other person gets a bad grade, you might be like, ‘Oh, it was my fault.’” Cooper’s comment expresses an idea common in earlier conceptions, that the product of writing is more important than the process, which I discuss in Chapter 2 (Murray, 1972; Rohman, 1965). Thinking about the outcome of the editing process gave Cooper a bit of apprehension about making the right suggestions. Feeling less confident about his abilities, he feared missing chances to help his classmates succeed, or even worse, lowering their grades.

In summary, students’ relative confidence about their writing ability correlated with a greater or lesser comfort level with accepting changes from classmates, and suggesting changes to classmates. This relationship was somewhat due to comparing their confidence in their own ability with their perceptions of their classmates’ ability.

Theme 2: The Benefits and Challenges of Social Dynamics in Peer Editing

This study’s framework connected the strategy of peer editing to the social learning theories of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and Bandura (1986, 1997), who both considered social interactions a necessary element in growth and development. Peer editing is certainly a social activity. Whether students are interacting one-

on-one or in a group, or editing a paper on their own, the exchange of factual and emotional information from student to student is social interaction.

When the class peer edited the third essay on December 8, I gave them the option to edit with partners, or on their own with just a paper in front of them. I noted in my field notes that all but one student in the class chose partners with whom to edit. I observed that this session was louder and more interactive than the previous two, so afterward I asked the class how they decided whom to pick as a peer editing partner. Responses included choosing based on past experience with classmates who provided useful information and selecting someone whom they knew well. Some chose based on proximity—they turned toward a nearby student and partnered by convenience. They may have been sitting near classmates with whom they were comfortable: The class does not have assigned seating.

Participants in the study had a lot to say about the social interactions involved in their peer editing. A common response was that peer editing is challenging socially, but worth the challenge to improve writing and eventual grades. Ana expressed this well in her interview, stating, “I don’t like other people reading my writing because sometimes, as I said, I don’t think it’s very good.” Despite that, Ana reported coming around to enjoying peer editing in the end because of the chance to see other students’ perspectives.

The benefit of gaining a different perspective from classmates was a common comment from participants, confirming Macrorie's (1976) basic argument peer editing. All six of my participants expressed the idea that they gained greater understanding from the social nature of peer editing. Ana, Caitlin, and Anthony especially appreciated the gained perspective of having someone read their papers. Cooper took this a step further, explaining that the perspective he gained also occurred when he was the one editing: "When I see other people's work, and then I read my own, I see what flaws I've had, and what flaws they've had, and I learn from their papers what I can do on mine better." As Carless & Boud (2018) found, peer editing can help students see how to make similar changes in their own writing, which might not happen without the social interaction and modeling inherent in peer editing.

Some students preferred the interactivity of one-on-one editing, while some would rather have less direct interactions by trading papers and peer editing on their own without real-time interactions. In my field notes, I recorded an observation during the peer editing session on the second essay, which took place on November 23: "Zack and Ruben were very positive about each other's suggestions and worked especially well together. Ruben specifically said it was very helpful... [Also], Anthony was complimentary of Cooper's editing."

In some cases, interacting one-on-one increased the likelihood that a suggestion would be accepted, as students got the chance to talk it out and come to a resolution. Caitlin and Ana both commented that they appreciated the chance to discuss suggestions with the students who make them. Caitlin, in her interview, stated, “Especially if I talk to them about it and understand where they’re coming from, like one-on-one. [That helps] if it doesn’t make sense when they say it or when they explain it back to me.” Just getting a mark on paper would make her less likely to make a change, unless she could ask the peer editor for clarification on their intent. Ana also expressed the same idea, saying she appreciates interacting: “We can brainstorm together and elevate the piece.”

Some students preferred having peer editing be more impersonal, however. Sitting across from someone affected some students’ comfort level with criticism, both when giving and receiving feedback. When students felt less confident, they were less interested in “being there” when the editing takes place. Zack stated in his interview that he would prefer to have his classmates write down their suggestions rather than tell them to him: “If they write it down, or write it on the paper, I’m 100% going to change it, but if they just tell me something, I’m more likely to forget.” Zack’s work illustrates his perception. Figure 4.2 is an image from Zack’s third essay, which was peer edited by multiple classmates. Figure 4.3 is an image from his final essay, showing that he

incorporated the suggested changes into the final paper. By comparing these two figures, I can see that Zack made nearly all the changes that peers suggested, no matter how small they seemed.

say oh I'm offended or wow that's very offensive and this works for everyone. you see
it's not sexist or racist, honestly it's probably one of the easiest and best words to use in
any of those ^{places} ~~oppositions~~ for example, if someone says something sexist along the lines
of oh you probably can't lift that because you're a girl, you know what you can say to
them, you can say "I am offended" and that's the easiest way to get the point across to
them that you do not want to hear what they have to say and you do not like how they
are talking to you, and since you can convey the emotion so easily, they will see it

Figure 4.2: *Writing Sample 2 with Editing*

You see, it's not sexist or racist, honestly it's probably one of the easiest and best words
to use in any of those places. For example, if someone says something sexist along the lines of,
oh you probably can't lift that because you're a girl, you know what you can say to them. You
can say, "I am offended", and that's the easiest way to get the point across to them that you do
not want to hear what they have to say and you do not like how they are talking to you. Since
you can convey the emotion so easily, they will see it themselves and they can see how rude and

Figure 4.3: *Revised Writing Sample*

Ruben also preferred not doing peer editing one-on-one due to the social dynamic affecting the process: "I kind of liked just sitting down with the paper. I feel like having someone in front of you can sometimes affect how you edit them, like if you know them." Many of the studies reviewed address this social concern, notably Topping et al. (2000) and Vanderhoven et al. (2012).

Interestingly, of my participants, the higher-level and lower-level writers

appreciated one-on-one editing, while the medium-ability writers preferred sitting down with a paper.

Challenges from the Social Dynamics of Peer Editing

A major social concern from peer editing is that students want their classmates to understand that their suggestions come from a desire to help, not hurt. Anthony expressed this effectively in his interview, stating, “I think they can see that I’m not trying to be that bad guy, like everything needs to be perfect. I’m just trying to give you small suggestions that will help you.” Caitlin also discussed the emotional difficulty of social peer editing, saying, “You don’t want to hurt their feelings. And sometimes it’s hard to describe what is wrong other than just saying ‘you need to rewrite this.’” This desire to be seen as a helper can cause students to avoid making too negative of a suggestion. Cooper stated, “We’re trying to find the flaws. And if you’re nice, you know, you try to hold back on your critique.” Cooper perceived that wanting to be seen as being helpful could ironically make him less helpful as he tried to balance the social risk of fully critiquing a classmate.

Growth in Social Comfort Over Time

A particularly interesting outcome of peer editing was that students appreciated editing with the same classmates on successive essays. Several participants commented that repeated one-on-one interactions increased their

comfort and made them more helpful to one another. Ruben mentioned this in his interview when asked if the identity of the peer editor matters to him: “I think it also depends on who it is. I sometimes feel like if I don’t have the right person, I don’t feel comfortable in peer editing.” When he had a peer editor who had given him feedback before, he felt better about the suggestions because he understood them better.

Cooper and Anthony also commented that they appreciated these repeated interactions. Cooper stated the benefit from the perspective of the editor after noticing a situation where a classmate learned something from his previous suggestions: “The second time I peer edited [a specific student’s paper], it wasn’t there as much. So they took my comments seriously, and paid a little more attention to it.” Anthony said that past experience with an editor affects how likely he is to make a change: “If I’ve had them edit my paper before, I would just take it. But if it’s someone I haven’t really edited with, then I would probably ask for a second perspective.” In these comments, Cooper and Anthony are talking about each other as writer and editor. The two were assigned to each other for one-on-one peer editing on the second essay in the study, and they chose to work together again as peer editors on the third essay.

This comfort level increase over time is an interesting finding that I did not anticipate. The interview comments are substantiated by the exit tickets

(Appendix B) that the entire class filled out at the end of each peer editing session. I assigned a number value to the responses of the entire class on their exit tickets, with “Very useful” as a 3, “Useful” as a 2, and “Not useful” as a 1. Averaging the students’ ratings shows that their appreciation of their classmates’ peer editing went up over time, as they got more comfortable with each other (see Figure 4.4). The average rating from peer editing on the first essay was 2.49, whereas the second essay’s rating was 2.86 and the third essay had a 2.87 average. This increase suggests that having consistent partners for peer editing can alleviate some of the social apprehension inherent in the process.

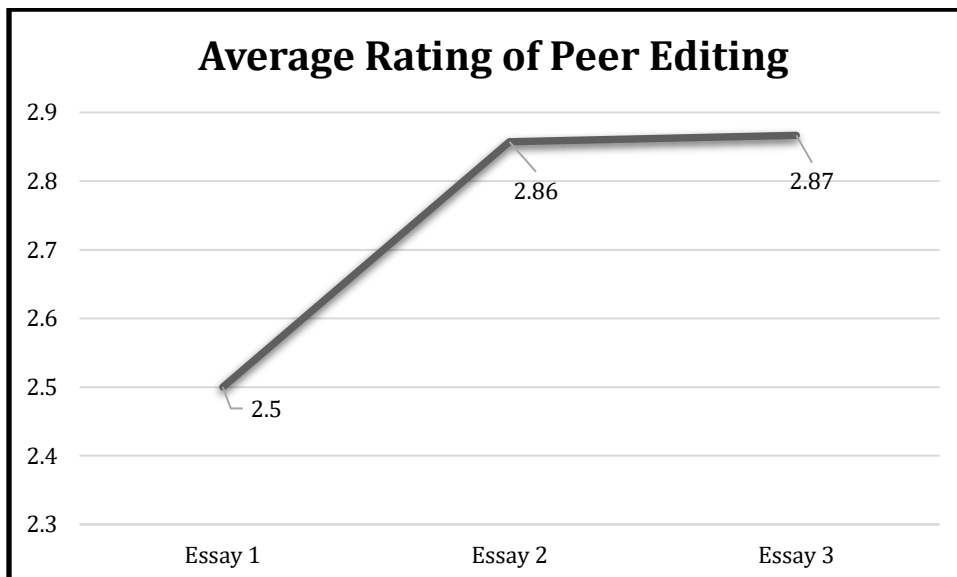


Figure 4.4: *Graph of Peer Editing Ratings by Essay*

Theme 3: The Significance of Positivity in Tone

One of the basic premises that I held at the outset of this study was that students would differ in how much positivity and affirmation they desired from

peer editors. I expected that lower-level writers would want their peer editors to be positive, whereas higher-level writers would not want or need positivity in tone. In the study, though, the six participants seemed to agree that positivity was not a necessary element in useful editing feedback. At the same time, even though they did not see positivity as essential to the message, they generally appreciated affirmation on the part of their editors, and all of them wanted to be positive toward the students whose work they were editing.

Positivity's importance in peer editing is evident in numerous studies (Gielen et al., 2010; Strijbos et al., 2010; Boudrias et al., 2014; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Dawson et al., 2019). Dawson et al. (2019) found that many students cited as the *only* imperative characteristic in peer editing, such that tone is unimportant. Echoing Dawson et al., my student participants expressed the strong belief that positivity is not the purpose of editing. The goal is improvement, and they did not think simply complimenting their classmates was extremely beneficial, because it would not help them improve. If the goal was improvement, then students believed the very purpose of giving feedback was to focus on mistakes.

Participants were very clear with their opinions on positive comments. Caitlin, a high-level writer, stated several times in her interview that she does not want "sugar coating" feedback with hedging or affirmation. On her exit ticket

after the peer editing for essay 3, Caitlin wrote, “Being straightforward about how to improve is very good.” Zack also preferred direct feedback to suggestions tempered by the desire to appear polite, writing on the first essay’s exit ticket that he wanted “more critiques.” He followed this up in his interview, saying, “I like critiques a lot better than them saying ‘this is good.’ I need them to tell me that I’m doing something wrong so I can fix it. And give me exact places.” Ruben also did not mind critiques as long as the peer editor kept comments focused on the paper: “As long as they’re not hitting anything personal. I think it should be fine.”

The desire for constructive or “negative” feedback increased in tandem with students’ writing ability. Ana, who is one of the best writers in the class, consistently asked for “more brutal” feedback throughout the course of the study, a phrase that shows up in both her exit tickets and my field notes about her request. On each exit ticket after peer editing, she answered the prompt, “Next time, I hope my peer editor(s) will do this differently:” with a similar appeal, stating, “I wish they would be a little more critical & brutal” on the first essay exit ticket, and simply “Brutality!” on the second exit ticket. In her interview, Ana commented on this desire for unembellished feedback, saying,

Honestly, I think the more brutal the better, even though it kind of hurts my feelings... I feel like if everyone says ‘Oh, you did good,’ like, ‘You

don't need to change anything.' I'm like, I didn't gain anything from this.

I'd rather have something more to add, even if it hurts my feelings.

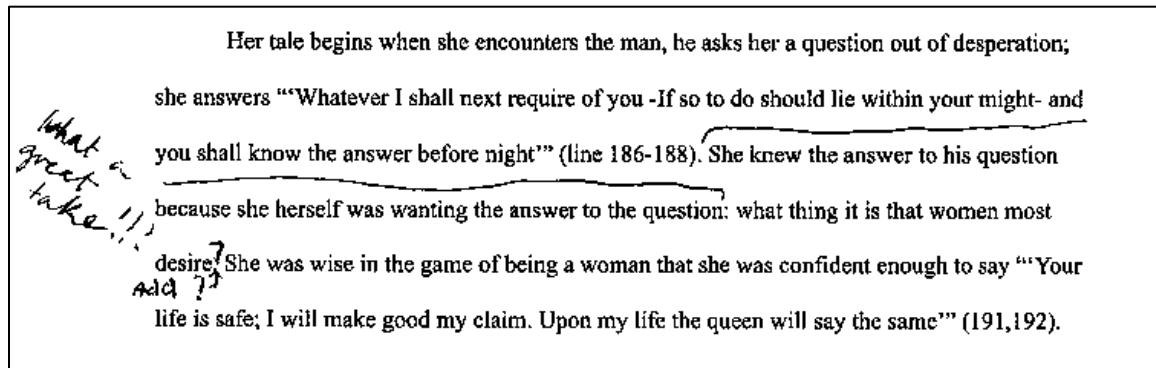


Figure 4.5: Writing Sample 3 with Editing

Ana's comments uncover a problematic circumstance related to peer editing for high-level writers: Their classmates struggle to critique them and help them improve. Figure 4.5 shows a typical peer editing comment written by a classmate on Ana's first essay. The peer editor affirms Ana's insightfulness with an appreciative comment ("What a great take!!!") that Ana found useless. In truth, it *was* a great take. Ana made an insightful point, which her classmate recognized, but Ana did not desire such affirmation. Ana kept asking for more critique and directness, even if it hurt her feelings. For her, being hurt was an essential part of the process. It helped her to get past the first draft and reaffirmed her desire to produce the best possible final product. When her classmates were unable to give her enough blunt feedback, she did not receive the support she needed, which diminished the effectiveness of peer editing for her.

The Importance of Positivity for Lower-Level Writers

As I expected, the lower-level writers in this study did desire positive messages from their peer editors. Cooper and Anthony both said that they would be less likely to make changes if their peer editors were too focused on mistakes and did not give any affirmation. Cooper, commenting in his interview on the likelihood of accepting a suggestion, said, “If it was a big and long critique, I probably wouldn’t do it. If it was good and encouraging, I might put it in.” This statement closely follows Hovardas et al.’s (2014) finding that a positive comment in peer editing is more likely to be accepted.

Anthony went a step further, saying that the tone of feedback should be kind, not just polite:

Yeah, I feel like they should [be kind], because if you’re just going to downgrade it, it’s not going to make it helpful to edit it... [If] they’re just ticky-tacky about every little thing, it doesn’t make you want to actually improve your writing, just makes you feel like, I’ll just leave it as is, if that’s going to be the way it is.

These comments from Cooper and Anthony resemble results in studies that found peer editing has specific benefits for lower-level writers (Karegianes et al., 1980; Gielen et al., 2010). Perhaps the greatest benefit lower-level writers can receive is a positive affirmation that gives them the courage to persist.

Anthony's comment shows that receiving a teacher-edited paper with a lot of markings would cause these students to feel disheartened and tempted to give up. On the other hand, encouraging feedback from a classmate would be likely to reassure them and keep them focused on improvement.

Giving Positivity

Despite not generally expecting or desiring positivity from their peer editors, participants hoped that their feedback to their classmates was helpful and encouraging. Anthony and Cooper both felt this way, commenting that giving a whole list of negatives would make them feel like the writer might be distressed and stop trying.

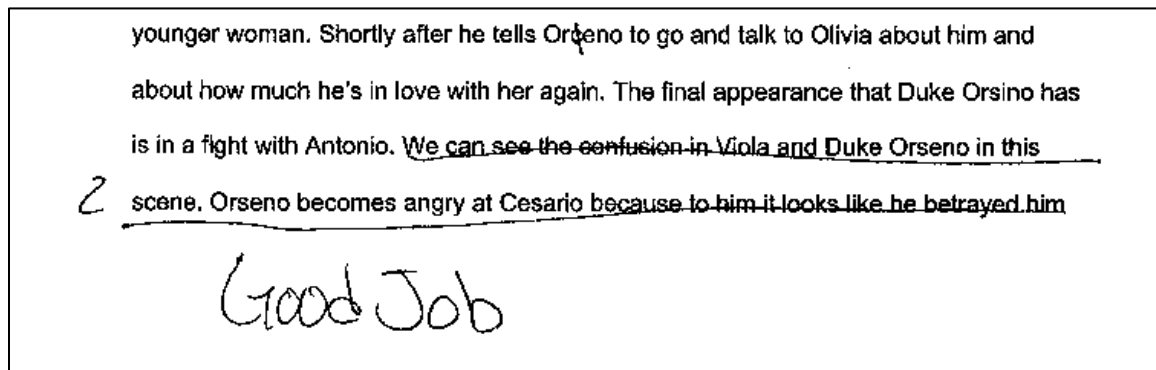


Figure 4.6: *Writing Sample 4 with Editing*

Students who wanted harsh feedback still wanted to give encouragement. Figure 4.6 is a portion of an essay that Zack peer edited. The underlined portion is a support for the essay's thesis, and Zack was careful to write a large encouragement at the bottom of the page to affirm the writer's work. Zack, who clearly stated he did not want or demand positivity from classmates, saw one of

his goals as an editor as helping people feel encouraged to keep going: “I don’t tell them they need to fix anything. But I can acknowledge when a part of it is good, or the whole thing is good. So they’re going to get compliments.” My field notes corroborated this statement, with the observation that Zack was complimentary “both verbally and in writing” on the first essay’s peer editing. These comments illustrate how a person may simply be better at, and more comfortable, giving affirming feedback, despite wanting critique.

Conclusion

The practice of peer editing has been studied in numerous school settings and from a variety of perspectives (Dawson et al., 2019; Hamilton, 2018; Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Schunn et al., 2016; Boudrias et al., 2014; Hovardas et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2013; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Kaufman & Schunn, 2011; Gielen et al., 2010; Strijbos et al., 2010). Peer editing as a classroom strategy has proven effective for providing more feedback on writing, despite some drawbacks. Positive and negative feedback have also been studied in the past (Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). This study sought to examine the outcomes of peer editing if students are instructed with the intention of providing more encouraging feedback for lower-level writers and more critical feedback for higher-level writers. While the sample size of this study (six students) was small, it represented a spectrum of ability levels and

ethnicities, illustrating the variety of experiences and perspectives present in any writing classroom.

The purpose of this study was to note the various impacts of positive and negative peer editing feedback in an upperclassman high school English class. The results of the study suggest several conclusions related to the research questions. First, students appreciated feedback from their peers. Second, with some variation, students prioritized direct and thorough feedback over positivity. These results show that the tone of feedback impacts students differently depending on their writing ability: As expected, higher-level writers did prefer more critical feedback, and lower-level writers did want more affirmation, connecting closely with previous research (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012).

Related to these results, I identified three themes from student participants' responses: student confidence, social dynamics, and tone positivity. When participants reflected on the peer editing process, they showed a great deal of understanding and insight on the three themes. The students and I all gained a greater understanding of how peer editing helps writers, both through receiving and giving feedback to their classmates. The study also yielded unexpected insights, including student perceptions of the potential benefit of partnering with the same peer editor over time, how students' confidence can affect their writing

and editing, and students' preferences for one-on-one editing partnerships or a more impersonal form of peer editing on one's own. These results may be opportunities for further research on the topic of peer editing.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The in-class strategy of peer editing has been beneficial for student writers, despite some negative effects (Wu & Schunn, 2020; Dawson et al., 2019; Schunn et al., 2016; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Gielen et al., 2010). This strategy is widely seen as providing much more feedback on student work than the teacher could provide by him/herself. Students in my English 4 classroom write several essays over the course of a semester, and it is generally not feasible for me to provide timely feedback to the extent that would be most beneficial. In response to this problem of practice, this study was designed to provide students with a structure for giving useful feedback to each other that capitalizes on the positives of peer editing while reducing the negatives. Through an action research model, I utilized a peer editing intervention in student writing in my English 4 class at a small private Christian school in a medium-sized city in Oregon during 2 months of the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year.

I collected mostly qualitative data from a variety of sources to address the two research questions:

Research Question 1: What impact will peer editing feedback on student essays have on the revision process of high school upperclassmen in an English 4 class?

Research Question 2: What perceptions do high school upperclassmen have of the peer editing process in an English 4 class?

Analysis revealed three major themes: The role of confidence in writing and editing; the benefits and challenges of social dynamics in peer editing; and the significance of positivity in tone. The data show student participants' understanding of the peer editing task, as well as demonstrating certain characteristics of feedback, class time, and classmates that would make students more or less likely to accept peers' suggestions.

Overview/Summary of the Study

This study, involving six student participants at a wide variety of ability levels, examined the effects that peer editing had on students' revisions on their essay drafts in an English 4 classroom. It also examined student perceptions on the peer editing process as a whole. As a high school English teacher, I have watched numerous peer-editing sessions that were not particularly useful for students, and I wanted to see if I could help make these sessions more useful for a greater number of students. Because of that, I designed this study to provide

the students with the type of feedback I believed would be most useful to them in their essay revisions.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Parents of each of the students signed a permission slip (Appendix A) giving me their authorization to use data from their class experiences. I selected six students for this study based on standardized test scores, early class assignments, and in-class interactions. I selected students with a variety of writing ability levels: Two of the students are ahead of grade level in writing ability, two have grade-typical ability, and two are behind grade level. Of these six students, two are in the 11th grade and four are in the 12th grade. The participants' racial/ethnic background includes three White students, two Hispanic students, and one with a mixed-race background. These demographics are typical for a class at my school.

The data in this study are mostly qualitative in nature, with a small amount of quantitative data. Student exit ticket responses to each editing session included a Likert-type scale indicating how they felt about the class session. Additionally, numerical values from a standardized test provided a measure of student writing ability. The rest of the data, including class assignments, student essays and revisions, researcher field notes, and post-treatment interviews, were qualitative in nature. All of the collected data were used to show students'

perceptions of the peer editing process and the effects of peer editing on their essay revisions.

During the study, students wrote three essays. The students first wrote essay drafts, which they peer edited in class. Then students revised their essays based on feedback from their classmates. Comparing the final versions of the essays to the drafts revealed which suggestions informed the final essays.

Summary of Major Points

Point 1: The Role of Confidence in Writing and Editing

Even though their ability levels differ, the student participants in this study are all dedicated students. All six students reported feeling fairly confident that they could figure out how to write an essay as assigned by a teacher. This confidence went a long way in giving them the self-efficacy to believe they were capable of the task. Despite this confidence in writing, they all felt uncomfortable having classmates look at their work. In essence, their confidence evaporated when they had to share their writing with peers, partly because they felt their writing was like a part of them, and having it inspected felt like an invasion of privacy. Students' confidence also related to their perceptions of their classmates' knowledge. When getting suggestions from classmates they perceived to be knowledgeable, students had more confidence in those suggestions.

This confidence in their classmates' ability compared to their confidence in their own ability impacted students' willingness to accept a peer editing suggestion. Suggestions were more likely to be accepted when received from classmates they saw as having more ability. The fact that they compared themselves to their classmates was fairly consistent among the participants. The outcome of that comparison is that lower-level writers had a lot more classmates from whom they would accept a suggestion.

Students' confidence also impacted their experience as editors. Where they might have felt fairly confident as writers, all six felt uncomfortable serving as editors for each other. This lack of confidence manifested in several ways: Some softened their feedback, using terms such as "maybe" when making a suggestion. Some lessened their feedback in an attempt to avoid imposing their own style and wording on a classmate. Some were nervous to give any feedback at all, knowing that the final essay affected classmates' grades and not wanting to make a suggestion that would contribute to their classmate being hurt in the final grade.

The best plan I could target for boosting student confidence was pairing them with classmates in whom they had confidence. Most students were generally encouraging to each other, which helped lower-level writers' confidence, and did not hinder the confidence of higher-level writers.

Point 2: The Benefits and Challenges of Social Dynamics in Peer Editing

Social interactions are unavoidable when peer editing. In this study, students peer edited in two different ways, with different levels of social interaction. On the first essay, students sat down with a classmate's paper and wrote suggestions. On the second essay, students paired with classmates and read each other's essays out loud, one at a time, while they edited. For the third essay, I gave students the choice which of those two formats they would prefer. All but one student in the classroom chose the interactive format from the second essay.

As with Point 1, students did not like the idea of having classmates read their essays, but when it actually happened in class, participants reported appreciating the social interactions they got from classmates. All of the participants stated that they appreciated the suggestions their classmates gave. They appreciated the different perspective they gained from classmates, and they appreciated seeing their classmates' perspectives when editing each other's work.

Student participants differed somewhat on their preferred style of editing. The high-level and low-level writers all preferred partner editing where they interacted with other students. High-level writers reported appreciating the chance to "talk through" suggestions with a classmate, presumably to verify that

the classmate actually makes a valid point. The low-level writers appreciated the chance to “be there” when the editing took place, presumably so they could better understand the suggestions being made. The two student participants who were grade-level writers both preferred sitting with a paper but no partner, editing only on paper.

One of the notable findings was that several participants appreciated having the same peer editor over multiple essays, which suggests how to extend this research in another direction. Relating to the confidence discussed in Point 1, peer editing with the same partners over time can give students more confidence in their editors’ feedback, and in their own feedback. Bandura (1997, 2001) would call this confidence “self-efficacy,” an essential component of success in social cognitive theory.

Point 3: The Significance of Positivity in Tone.

Based on the research of Finkelstein Fishbach (2012), I expected that lower-level writers would want more positive affirmation and higher-level writers would want more negative criticism. This proved true, to a certain extent. Lower-level writers did express appreciation for positive comments, and distaste for a lot of suggestions without encouragement. Grade-level and higher-level writers repeatedly said they needed more “brutality,” but participants generally

agreed that positivity was not the purpose of feedback. As a result, they generally said that positivity was not absolutely essential to the message. However, participants still appreciated positivity, especially lower-level writers. The two lower-level writers implied that they would not accept suggestions if they were just a list of changes to make. Such feedback would make them more likely to give up. This affirms earlier research about the tone of feedback. Moreover, even though grade-level and higher-level writers said they did not expect or demand positive feedback, they still commented that they appreciated receiving it.

A major takeaway from this study is confirmation of Karegianes et al.'s (1980) study on lower-level writers, showing that people with lower writing ability have the highest appreciation for peer editing. This demonstrates that peer editing is an effective strategy for helping students who may be behind grade level in writing in a variety of situations, such as students who have developmental delays, students who have learning disabilities, and students who are English language learners. In all of these situations, peer editing can be an effective strategy to support classroom equity. Where a teacher's feedback could be seen as intimidating, making the student more likely to quit trying, a classmate's positive feedback is likely to be encouraging and help a student stick with the effort to improve.

Finally, all participants were more likely to give positive feedback than to expect it from their peers. They all felt they should give encouragement even if they said they did not want it from classmates. This inconsistency is an interesting finding that warrants more in-depth study.

Implications of the Findings of the Study

I began this study with the goal of helping to improve student feedback on essays. From the results, I offer implications for using peer editing more effectively in the future, a discussion of the limitations of the study, and an action plan for implementing peer editing more successfully in a classroom.

One important note is that a teacher must be comfortable with the writing and editing process in the classroom in order to lead students through effective peer editing. Attempting to institute peer editing through a positive/negative framework requires teaching lessons on feedback literacy, both in giving and receiving suggestions.

The findings of this study suggest several considerations for teachers who wish to use peer editing as a strategy. First, students in my classroom tended to appreciate having the same peer editors on sequential essays, which gave them more confidence in the suggestions they received. Second, student participants expressed an inconsistency between their desire to receive positive feedback and their willingness to give positive feedback: They were all generally more likely to

give than to receive, which makes me think that they would all still appreciate receiving positive feedback, even if they say it is not absolutely necessary. Third, one of the biggest challenges presented by peer editing is the fact that high level writers cannot get enough suggestions from their peers to help them improve. When a student's writing ability is comparatively high in a classroom, most peers will struggle to critique anything in that person's essay.

Limitations of the Study

This action research study of peer editing in an English 4 class was completed in a single classroom, and only six of those students were participants in the study. As is the case with action research, this limits generalizing the results of the study over larger populations of students, and over students at other schools with different class compositions. Action research is designed to be transferable rather than generalizable (Efron & Ravid, 2013), so the format of my study informs the reader that the small scope should not be considered a limitation. However, a larger-scale study of the topic, and a larger sample, could yield more generalizable results.

In addition to the small number of participants, the participants all shared one specific characteristic: They were all students who typically turn in assignments. I did not intentionally seek out students of a particular motivation/dedication level. But upon reflection, I see that I selected students

who are highly dedicated to completing work, even the students who write at a lower level than their English grade would indicate. This characteristic may affect the data I gathered from the students, especially the students' perspectives on their confidence as writers and editors. A less dedicated or motivated student might feel less confidence in writing, which would change their thoughts on the writing and editing process.

My positionality as the teacher of this class may also have affected my observations and understanding of student actions and attitudes. My beliefs about specific students' ability could have affected my in-class field note observations as I may have assumed the reasons for certain actions and comments. My own bias may also have affected my choices of student participants for this study. As stated above, I selected students who typically turn in all their assignments, which ensured that I would have usable data on all essays, but may have limited me from getting a full understanding of students who might perceive the process differently as a result of lower motivation. At the same time, my positionality should be seen as an asset for garnering honest answers on surveys and in interviews. Students may not have felt comfortable being as forthcoming in an interview conducted by an outsider.

The data collection for this study took place over 2 months, during approximately 12 class periods. This narrow scope of time may have had an

impact on data collection. Students will grow over the course of the year, and this study, which took place during the second quarter of the school year, did not capture the full extent of their writing growth over the course of the school year. Extending the time frame of a study could show more clear differences between students' writing level at the beginning and end of a school year.

One additional possible limitation of this study is that two of the three essays were the same type. The first two were literary analysis essays, and the third was a satirical problem-solution essay. Some students said they found one type easier to write than the other, so considering whether the format choice affected students' perceptions of the writing and editing process would have been useful. Studying a greater variety of formats to see how students responded may have been more effective, or making all three essays the same format might have yielded more consistent observations over the course of the study.

Action Plan

As a result of my findings, and considering the possible limitations, I developed an action plan to impact my future teaching and the practice of other English teachers. I plan to continue to use peer editing as a strategy for improving student writing, and I will change my practice to reflect findings from the study.

First, I will make sure that I encourage students to add positive comments in all peer editing sessions (Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). Participants generally stated they appreciated positive affirmation, even if they did not expect or demand it, and they were all more likely to give positive affirmation than to expect it for themselves. Therefore, positives are worth the time and effort. Being told you did a good job is encouraging, even if you say you just want brutal, non-sugar-coated feedback.

Second, I will make sure that students have the opportunity to partner with their preferred peer editors over time in order to develop relationships where they feel confident in giving and receiving feedback (Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Carless & Boud, 2018; Topping, 2000). The student participants were very aware of their own comfort level with other students reading their work. They were more comfortable with classmates whom they saw as looking out for their best interest and/or someone they believed could give them good suggestions. They did not want feedback from someone who was trying to be hurtful or someone they did not really know well. If they have the chance to develop peer editing partnerships over time, they will feel more comfortable both editing and receiving feedback, and will gain the benefit of greater confidence in suggestions, learning more over time.

Finally, I plan to share this research with other English teachers, both at my school and other schools. I brought up this study at a professional learning community meeting I attended during the first semester of the present school year and sharing my research with other teachers impacted the way I presented information in class. I will make my findings available to other English teachers, with the background of how I used peer editing in my classroom, and what I learned. Most secondary English teachers will already know the positives and negatives of peer editing, having used it before in their classrooms. My research will likely help them use it more effectively, and they may be interested in pursuing further research in their own classrooms.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was limited by its narrow time frame, small number of participants, and a narrow focus. Further research should fully explore the benefits of positive and negative feedback in peer editing. Below I offer five suggestions for further research that could extend and amplify my findings.

Research Suggestion 1: Larger Sample

I included only six students as participants in the study, and all of them are 11th- and 12th-grade students at the same school. While these students did represent a wide range of ability levels, the overall findings apply to a narrow

demographic. Further research should use a larger cross section of students, including different schools, as participants.

Research Suggestion 2: Increased Focus on Confidence

One of the themes in the findings of this study was that students' confidence in writing and editing impacted how they perceived the process and related to their classmates. Their confidence seemed to play a part in whether they were willing to accept a suggestion from a peer. Perhaps confidence has a greater part to play in whether students want positive affirming feedback or negative constructive feedback. A future study should attempt to isolate the characteristic of student confidence from writing ability level. By doing so, a researcher could determine whether a confident lower-level writer would respond to feedback differently than a less-confident higher-level writer.

Another aspect of confidence to consider is the dynamic of gender in peer editing. While I did not focus on gender in this study, it is possible that gender differences played a role in the participants' approach to editing. The two high-level writers in this study were both female students, while the grade-level and lower-level writers were all male students. This is a factor that may have contributed to their confidence in writing, as adolescent and young adults who are female generally report lower self-esteem than those who are male (Bleidorn et al., 2016). Further study into the role gender plays in writing confidence could

yield valuable insight into how female students and male students differently understand and approach writing and the social process of peer editing.

Research Suggestion 3: Extended Study Time Frame

This study took place over only 2 months, and fewer than 15 class days during that period included any activities from this study. Thus, findings are based on a small number of interactions. A longer time frame, such as editing essays over a full school year, could yield further confirmation for the findings, or modify the overall findings. Future researchers should consider extending the time frame of a similar study, both to see students' understanding develop more fully over time, and amplify the effects of students becoming more comfortable editing with each other over time. A side note to this suggestion relates to the students who appreciated editing with the same classmates multiple times. Future research should study the comfort level increase over time with peer editors who have repeated editing partnerships.

Research Suggestion 4: How to Help Higher-level Writers

One important finding from this study was that higher-level writers struggle to get enough help from their peers. Because their ability level is comparatively higher, few students have the knowledge or experience to give them the brutal suggestions they crave. Further research should consider approaches to peer editing that give higher-level writers optimal feedback. I

suggest using a checklist for peer editors to follow in order to get comments on a specific list of aspects of the essay, including critical comments, and asking the peer editors to converse with the writers and ask as many questions as possible, pressing the writers to explain their reasoning.

Research Suggestion 5: Impersonal vs. Interactive Peer Editing

Some of my participants preferred editing on their own without directly conversing to the writer of the paper. Some, though, preferred to edit in a partnership with another student, where they could immediately discuss suggestions. The students who preferred on-their-own editing were the two participants who were grade-level writers, while the higher- and lower-level writers preferred one-on-one editing partnerships. This breakdown may be a result of the small sample size. Further research should study this phenomenon to determine what factors affect a student's preference for on-your-own or one-on-one editing. Such a study should also examine how the feedback changes depending on whether the author of the essay is present during the editing.

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of a novel strategy for peer editing on the revisions and perceptions of students in an English 4 classroom. The participants consisted of six students, four seniors and two juniors, representing a wide range of writing proficiency. During the study, students wrote three essays, and

revised them based on the suggestions of their classmates. These revisions were tracked, as were the perceptions of the students during and after the study.

Results of the study included three main themes: The role of confidence in writing and editing, the benefits and challenges of social dynamics in peer editing, and the significance of positivity in tone. These themes arose from the study of all data, including student interviews, field notes, exit tickets, standardized test scores, and the essays and revisions themselves.

This study was framed by the social theories of Vygotsky (sociocultural theory) and Bandura (social cognitive theory). Peer editing is an exemplary classroom strategy to show the usefulness of both theories in classroom activities. The social interactions that take place in peer editing build students' understanding (Vygotsky, 1986, 1978) and improve their motivation (Bandura, 2001, 1997, 1986). This study confirms previous research that peer editing is a useful strategy in providing a lot of feedback for writing students (Wu & Schunn, 2020; Dawson et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2018; Hamilton, 2018; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Yang, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Moffet & Wagner, 1991; Karegianes et al., 1980). Previous research has demonstrated that peer editing also carries challenges, largely due to the social interactions inherent in the practice (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017; Johnson et al., 2017; Hovardas et al., 2014; Panadero et al., 2013;

Vanderhoven et al., 2012; Deni & Zainal, 2011; Kaufman & Schunn, 2011; Strijbos et al., 2010; Nelson & Schunn, 2009; Nilson, 2003; Hughes, 2001).

This study demonstrates the benefit of focusing on the tone of feedback in peer editing. Low-level writers benefited the most from positive messages, and all students, regardless of writing ability, appreciated affirmation, even if they said it was not necessary. High-level writers were likely to be affirming with their feedback, even if they did not claim to need affirmation themselves.

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APPENDIX A: PARENT CONSENT LETTER

August 31, 2021

Dear families,

Over the past two school years, I have been a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of South Carolina. As part of my degree, I am conducting an action research study in my English classroom. Your child is in the class in which I will be performing my study this fall.

In this research study, I am investigating the impact of peer editing on essays written for English class. My goal is to attempt to help students understand how they may provide feedback to one another that is helpful in revising and improving essays. The planned dates for this study are October 5 – December 1, 2021. Over that time, students will be writing three Literary Analysis essays for English class and providing feedback to one another.

This study will be part of the normal classroom activities for English class. I already use peer editing as a strategy for students to get more feedback on their essays. The only additional element of the study that is not part of usual classroom interaction is a brief interview. As the study progresses, I will select four (4) to six (6) students to take part in an interview, asking these students about their experiences writing essays, providing and receiving feedback, and revising their essays. Students are not required to answer any interview questions they do not feel comfortable answering, and there will be no grade penalty for not answering a question.

There are no harmful physical risks to your child as a result of this study.

The students' answers to interview questions will only be reviewed by me as their teacher, and will be returned to students or destroyed upon completion of the study. All identifying information will remain strictly confidential. No personally identifying information will be included in the dissertation paper submitted for my program. Students will be given pseudonyms, and their true names will not appear on any documents. Identifying details may also be modified if necessary.

The study may be discontinued at any time if I judge it is in the students' best educational interest. If your child is one of the participants chosen to be interviewed in the study, he/she may stop participating at any time without losing any benefits. Participation is completely voluntary. A decision not to participate in the study will not harm the student's relationship with me, the teacher, in any way.

Your consent is being sought so that I may use your child's work samples and have your child complete the surveys and interviews. This is completely voluntary. If you are willing to have your child to participate in the study, please complete the back of this form, and return the letter to me by Friday, September 17, 2021.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. James Kirylo at _____.

Sincerely,
Lorin Koch,
Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at the University of South Carolina
Teacher, _____ Academy
Email: _____
Mobile: _____

By signing below, I give my permission for my child to participate in this research study. I understand that this is a completely voluntary project, and my child can withdraw if needed without any penalty or conflict.

Child's name: _____

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Parent/Guardian's signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: PEER EDITING EXIT TICKET

My name:
The suggestions I received were: <input type="radio"/> Very useful <input type="radio"/> Useful <input type="radio"/> Not useful
Thinking about the suggestions I received, here is something that was particularly useful:
Next time, I hope my peer editor(s) will do this differently:

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your grade level?
2. Describe your confidence level as a writer.
(i.e. When your teacher assigns you an essay to write, how confident do you feel that you can meet the expectations for the assignment?)
3. Talk about your experience when a teacher, classmate, or any other person has edited your work.

On your assigned essays this quarter, you have been peer editing your classmates' writing. The following questions apply to receiving peer editing.

4. When a classmate gives you a recommendation for something to change or add to your essay, how likely are you to accept their suggestion and incorporate it into your paper?
5. What would make it more (or less) likely that you would accept a recommendation?
(i.e. Does the identity of the student matter? And if so, who would you be more likely to accept it from? What types of recommendations are you likely to accept? Reject?)
6. If your classmate and your teacher recommend different changes, whose suggestion are you more likely to accept? Why?
7. Do you think that your peer editor should be "nice" or "encouraging" even when making suggestions?

The following questions apply to giving peer editing.

8. What did you personally gain or learn by giving peer editing to your classmates?
9. What did your classmates gain or learn by receiving your peer editing suggestions?
10. Is it difficult or challenging to be a peer editor? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D: LITERARY ANALYSIS RUBRIC

CATEGORY	Exemplary	Above Average	Average	Approaching
Topic Introduction	Introduction grabs attention and provides meaningful context to a persuasive argument	Introduction sparks some interest and effectively introduces reasonable argument	Introduction provides context for the argument but is obvious and/or basic	Introduction or conclusion does not flow with the argument of the paper
Thesis	Argument is clearly articulated and persuasive, contains an original opinion	Thesis presents a reasonable opinion, argument is clear and focused	Thesis is a plausible argument; contains a legitimate opinion, but somewhat broad and basic	Thesis demonstrates misunderstanding of the prompt or text
Topic Sentences	Topic sentences contribute to the highly persuasive nature of the argument	Topic sentences articulate precise argument; logically linked to thesis	Topic sentences are present and make an argument connected to the thesis; however, ideas are obvious and basic	Topic sentences are not linked to the thesis; Topic sentences show misunderstanding or prompt or text
Support	Writer uses appropriate quotes or research information to support ALL pertinent paragraphs AND ALL parenthetical citations are correctly written and placed.	Writer uses appropriate quotes or research information to support most pertinent paragraphs AND most parenthetical citations are correctly written and placed.	Writer uses appropriate quotes or research information to support some pertinent paragraphs AND some parenthetical citations are correctly written and placed.	Writer uses unsatisfactory amount of supporting quotes or research information in pertinent paragraphs AND most parenthetical citations are incorrectly written or placed.
Commentary	Creative/original ideas and insights; extensive commentary, refreshing; goes beyond obvious and basic commentary	Analysis is believable and convincing, a few assertions may lack specific examples, but assertions are still clearly connected to the argument	Analysis supports your argument, but ideas are obvious and basic	Ideas lack development; misunderstanding of prompt or text; illogical argument

Organization	Paper exhibits paragraph organization that link and develop ALL ideas in entire paper. Reader can easily see a logical organization among paragraphs that enhances the research topic.	Paper exhibits paragraph organization that link and develop most ideas in paper. Reader can see a logical organization among paragraphs that somewhat enhances the research topic.	Paper exhibits paragraph organization that link and develop some ideas in paper. Reader can somewhat see a logical organization among paragraphs that enhances the research topic a little.	Paper exhibits paragraph organization that link and develop few ideas in paper. Reader has difficulty seeing a logical organization among paragraphs, which hurts the development of the topic.
Length and Format	Paper meets the length requirement without compromising content quality AND follows MLA all formatting.	Paper meets length requirement, but some content quality is compromised AND follows all MLA formatting.	Paper meets length requirement, but much content quality is compromised AND/OR follows most MLA formatting.	Paper does not meet length requirement (either it is too short or too long) AND content quality is compromised. Most MLA formatting is not present.