

Using peer feedback in the ESL writing class

What are the pros and cons of peer feedback



Pros

- Students learn to be critical readers and revisers of their writing
- Students write for an authentic audience
- Students practice to engage in highly complex interactions
- Peers can provide more specific feedback
- Students can have a higher level of possession of their texts



Cons

- Students need time to learn how to give effective feedback
- Students may not view peer feedback as valuable
- It's challenging for teachers to monitor all student groups
- Teachers may find it difficult to let students take on this responsibility
- Students do not feel comfortable letting peers comment on their writing

How can teachers create a positive context for effective peer group response?

Setting up

- What is the size of groups?
- How many drafts to be written?
- Will the teacher evaluate and grade afterwards?
- Will the feedback be oral or written?
- How to organize the response sessions?

Pre-training

Objectives of pre-training include: the principles and goals of peer response; collaboration; basic procedures; effective commenting; effective revision; reader-writer dialogue. Some activities to use are:



Discussion of the purpose of peer feedback to emphasize readers are to collaborate, not to correct



Discussion of effective revision



Small group work on short, shared texts

Teacher's role

- Answer specific questions when they arise
- Teach techniques to make feedback effective
- Resolve uncertainties of the procedures
- Closely monitor each group
- Enact self-report heuristics (e.g., readers' feelings & reactions to the feedback, reasons for accepting/rejecting particular feedback)

Reference:

[Rollinson, P. \(2005\). Using peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *ELT Journal*, 59\(1\), 23-30.](#)