THE ROLE OF STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS PEER REVIEW IN ANONYMOUS ELECTRONIC PEER REVIEW IN AN EFL WRITING CLASSROOM

by

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DEDICATION

For my beautiful wife Ingrid, who has stood by me since day one in this process.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... 13

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................... 14

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... 15

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 19

1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 19

1.2 Statement of the Issue ............................................................................................... 20

1.3 Overview of the Study ............................................................................................... 22

1.4 Research Questions .................................................................................................... 23

1.5 Definition of Terms .................................................................................................... 24

1.5.1 ESL and EFL .......................................................................................................... 24

1.5.2 L1 and L2 ................................................................................................................ 25

1.5.3 Peer Review ............................................................................................................ 25

1.5.4 Ethnographic Research .......................................................................................... 26

1.5.5 Action Research ..................................................................................................... 26

1.5.6 Participant Observation ......................................................................................... 27

1.6 Significance of the Study ........................................................................................... 29

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................. 31

2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 31

2.2 Peer Review in the ESL/EFL Classroom .................................................................... 32

2.3 Pitfalls of Peer Review ............................................................................................. 33

2.4 Social Issues in the Second Language Writing Classroom .......................................... 38

2.4.1 The Role of Ethnicity ............................................................................................ 39

2.4.2 The Role of Gender ............................................................................................... 42
TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

2.4.3 The Role of Face ........................................................................................................43
2.5 Racism in Spain...............................................................................................................45
  2.5.1 Frente Nacional .......................................................................................................48
2.6 Standardized English Language Proficiency Exams......................................................52
2.7 Target Language Competence.......................................................................................55
2.8 The Need for Peer Review Training .............................................................................58
  2.8.1 Empirical Research on Successfully Trained Peer Reviewers.................................63
2.9 CALL in Peer Review....................................................................................................65
2.10 Anonymous (Blind) Peer Review ................................................................................66
2.11 Ethnographic Research ...............................................................................................68
2.12 Action Research ..........................................................................................................69
  2.12.1 Participant Observation .........................................................................................70
2.13 Conclusion....................................................................................................................72

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY .........................................................................................74
3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................74
3.2 Setting ............................................................................................................................75
3.3 Selection of Participants ...............................................................................................76
  3.3.1 Criteria for Participating .........................................................................................78
  3.3.2 Recruiting Procedures ............................................................................................78
3.4 Course Content .............................................................................................................79
3.5 Initial Data Collection Procedures and Clarifications ....................................................80
3.6 Data Collection Instruments ........................................................................................81
  3.6.1 Biographical Questionnaire ....................................................................................81
  3.6.2 Pre-Activity Questionnaire .....................................................................................82
TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

3.6.3 Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet ............................................................... 82
3.6.4 Peer Feedback Clarification Form ............................................................................ 82
3.6.5 Ignored Changes Form .......................................................................................... 83
3.6.6 Post Activity Questionnaire .................................................................................... 83
3.7 Peer Review Training Procedures .............................................................................. 84
  3.7.1 Past Peer Review Experiences .............................................................................. 85
  3.7.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Training ..................................... 88
3.8 Peer Review Practice Activity ..................................................................................... 93
3.9 Peer Review Writing Task Procedures ....................................................................... 94
3.10 Qualitative Data and Analysis ............................................................................... 97
3.11 Quantitative Data and Analysis ............................................................................... 98
3.12 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 98

CHAPTER 4 - QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA ......................................... 100
  4.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 100
  4.2 Description of Participants ...................................................................................... 101
  4.3 Female Participants .................................................................................................. 105
    4.3.1 Participant 1 ......................................................................................................... 105
    4.3.2 Participant 2 ......................................................................................................... 106
    4.3.3 Participant 3 ......................................................................................................... 107
    4.3.4 Participant 4 ......................................................................................................... 107
    4.3.5 Participant 5 ......................................................................................................... 108
    4.3.6 Participant 6 ......................................................................................................... 108
    4.3.7 Participant 7 ......................................................................................................... 109
    4.3.8 Participant 8 ......................................................................................................... 109
TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

4.4 Male Participants........................................................................................................ 110

4.4.1 Participant 9.............................................................................................................. 110
4.4.2 Participant 10.............................................................................................................. 112
4.4.3 Participant 11.............................................................................................................. 113
4.4.4 Participant 12.............................................................................................................. 113
4.4.5 Participant 13.............................................................................................................. 113
4.4.6 Participant 14.............................................................................................................. 114
4.4.7 Participant 15.............................................................................................................. 114
4.4.8 Participant 16.............................................................................................................. 115
4.4.9 Participant 17.............................................................................................................. 115
4.4.10 Participant 18............................................................................................................. 115
4.4.11 Participant 19............................................................................................................. 116
4.4.12 Participant 20............................................................................................................. 116
4.4.13 Participant 21............................................................................................................. 116
4.4.14 Participant 22............................................................................................................. 117
4.4.15 Participant 23............................................................................................................. 117
4.4.16 Participant 24............................................................................................................. 117
4.4.17 Participant 25............................................................................................................. 118

4.5 General Student Attitudes on Peer Review.................................................................. 118

4.5.1 Participant Attitude Profiles ....................................................................................... 119

4.6 Quantitative Data ....................................................................................................... 121

4.6.1 Type and Number of Questions and Comments Offered to Peers ......................... 122
4.6.2 Type and Number of Changes Suggested to Peer ..................................................... 133
4.6.3 Changes Accepted from Peer .................................................................................. 141
# TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

4.7 Pre and Post TWE Scores ........................................................................................................ 146

4.8 Case Studies .......................................................................................................................... 149
   4.8.1 Positive Attitude Participants ......................................................................................... 149
   4.8.2 Neutral Attitude Participants ......................................................................................... 158
   4.8.3 Negative Attitude Participants ....................................................................................... 169

4.9 Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 175

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ...................................................................... 180

5.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 180

5.2 Review of the Study .............................................................................................................. 181

5.3 Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................. 182

5.4 Summary and Analysis of Major Findings .......................................................................... 182
   5.4.1 Correlation between student attitude and quality of peer review ................................. 183
   5.4.2 Correlation between student attitude and changes incorporated into essay ............. 185
   5.4.3 Changes in Attitude towards Peer Review ..................................................................... 187

5.5 Student Comments on the Peer Review Experience ............................................................. 189
   5.5.1 Positive Comments ........................................................................................................ 189
   5.5.2 Negative Comments ...................................................................................................... 190

5.6 Pedagogical Implications ..................................................................................................... 192
   5.6.1 Students Need Explicit Peer Review Training ................................................................. 193
   5.6.2 Students Need Time ........................................................................................................ 196
   5.6.3 Standardization .............................................................................................................. 198

5.7 Limitations ............................................................................................................................ 199
   5.7.1 Participant Skepticism .................................................................................................. 200
   5.7.2 Low Quality Feedback ................................................................................................ 200
### TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.7.3 Maintaining Anonymity</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7.4 Time Constraints</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A – BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B – PRE ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C – POST ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D – PEER FEEDBACK CLARIFICATION FORM</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E – ELECTRONIC PEER REVIEW FEEDBACK SHEET</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX F – IGNORED CHANGES FORM</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX G – SITE AUTHORIZATION LETTER</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX H – INFORMED CONSENT FORM</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I – WRITING TASK ASSIGNMENT</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX J – PARTICIPANTS’ PRE AND POST TEST SCORES</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1: Frente Nacional Poster. .................................................................................................................. 50
Fig. 2.2: English Translation.......................................................................................................................... 50
Fig. 2.3: TWE (Test of Written English) scores ............................................................................................ 54
Fig. 2.4: Paper-based TOEFL scores ............................................................................................................ 54
Fig. 4.1: Female Participants’ Nationalities ................................................................................................... 104
Fig. 4.2: Male Participants’ Nationalities ....................................................................................................... 104
Fig. 4.3: Female L1 ....................................................................................................................................... 104
Fig. 4.4: Male L1 ......................................................................................................................................... 104
Fig. 4.5: Participants’ age distribution versus years of studying English ...................................................... 105
Fig. 4.6: Participants’ pre-activity Likert scores ............................................................................................ 121
Fig. 4.7: Comment and question types offered to peers. .............................................................................. 123
Fig. 4.8: Percentages of comment and question types in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) across two studies (Cote current study vs. Liu & Sadler 2003). ......................................................... 124
Fig. 4.9: Comparison of percentages of comment and question types in Cote’s (current study) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) study vs. Liu & Sadler’s (2003) traditional [paper-based] study. .......................................................................................................................... 125
Fig. 4.10: Scale size of questions and comments offered to peers ............................................................... 127
Fig. 4.11: Percentages of global and local sized comments and questions in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) Cote (current study) vs. Liu & Sadler (2003, p. 204) ................................................................. 127
Fig. 4.12: Number of revision vs. non-revision questions and comments offered to peers .................. 128
Fig. 4.13: Percentages of revision and non-revision comments and questions in Cote (current study) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) study vs. Liu & Sadler (2003) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and traditional studies .......................................................................................................................... 129
Fig. 4.14: Ratio of question and comment types (per 50 words) offered to peers ...................................... 130
Fig. 4.15: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by type ........................................... 134
Fig. 4.16: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by size .................................. 136
Fig. 4.17: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by function .......................... 138
Fig. 4.18: Percentage of suggested changes accepted and rejected by essay authors .............................. 144
Fig. 4.19: Changes accepted by essay authors per 50 words (Average 2.28) ................................................ 145
Fig. 4.20: Participants’ pre and post course Test of Written English (TWE) scores .................................. 147
LIST OF TABLES
Table 2.1: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam content .................................. 53
Table 3.1: English as a Second Language (ESL) program exemption scores .......................... 76
Table 3.2: Participant assumptions and definitions of peer review before the activity commenced ........................................................................................................... 86
Table 3.3: Example question and comment types in peer response ........................................... 90
Table 4.1: Participants’ biographical descriptions ........................................................................... 103
Table 4.2: Sample question and comment types in peer response .............................................. 122
Table 4.3: Alteration comments offered by participants (Cote current study) ......................... 124
Table 4.4: Participants with the highest, middle and lowest pre-task attitude scores............... 131
Table 4.5: Participant attitude, TOEFL, & TWE to QCO Pearson Correlation Coefficients ....... 132
Table 4.6: Revisions offered by highest, middle and lowest pre-task attitude scorers ............ 140
Table 4.7: Pre-attitude and revisions suggested per 50 words Pearson Correlation Coefficient 141
Table 4.8: Pre-Attitude and changes accepted per 50 words Pearson Correlation Coefficient .. 146
Table 4.9: Paired samples statistics ............................................................................................ 147
Table 4.10: Paired samples test .................................................................................................. 148
Table 4.11: The most positive participants’ quantitative data ..................................................... 149
Table 4.12: Comments offered by Participant 4 ......................................................................... 152
Table 4.13: Revisions offered by Participant 25 to Participant 12 .............................................. 156
Table 4.14: Participant 25 text changes ....................................................................................... 157
Table 4.15: The neutral participants’ quantitative data ............................................................... 158
Table 4.16: Participant 23’s quantitative scores ......................................................................... 164
Table 4.17: Participant 23’s post peer review activity questionnaire statements ................. 166
Table 4.18: Participant 18’s text revision .................................................................................... 172
Table 4.19: Participant 11’s quantitative scores ........................................................................... 174
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the widely-used English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classroom practice of peer review, which has continued to expand as the numbers of English language learners in today’s composition classrooms increases, often challenging instructors to maintain their role as primary communicator via one-on-one interaction. In many cases, the traditional responsibilities of the instructor, such as correcting essays and providing the necessary feedback required for writing a second draft, are being conducted by students who assist their peers in acquiring the skills needed for competent writing in English by utilizing both native and target languages, frequently in face-to-face interactions but less commonly via computer mediated communication (CMC).

One of the primary issues with peer review is the unavoidable possibility that factors other than the target language competence of the participants, including but not limited to attitude, race, native language, gender, and/or nationality to name a few, may negatively impact the participants’ willingness to engage in the peer review process as well as cause peer reviewers to form unfounded ideas about the quality of the feedback they receive based on the personal characteristics of a partner. For this reason, I chose to incorporate anonymous, or blind, peer review in hopes of avoiding bias, both negative and positive, based on any of the aforementioned factors.

This dissertation consists of three content chapters, which explore the components and impacts of a two-week peer review writing experience by 25 non-native speakers of English in an Intensive English Program (IEP) at an American university in Madrid, Spain. Prior to this study, there has been little consensus on the benefits of peer review with respect to the teaching of expository writing in English to non-native speakers. While Lu & Bol (2007) reported on
several English as a Second Language (ESL) writing instruction studies (Chaudron, 1983; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Paulus, 1999) that suggested peer feedback was as good as, and in some cases, better than teacher feedback in helping revise and improve students’ papers (p. 101), Brammer & Rees (2007) reported, “Yet we frequently hear students complain bitterly that peer review is a waste of time or blame their peers for ‘not catching all the mistakes’ …and that students do not stay on task during the peer review process” (p. 71). Additional studies (Asraf, 1999; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Murau, 1993) examined student attitudes and found that both L1 and L2 students have mixed feelings about peer review, and up to 20% surveyed would not participate in peer review if it were not required (Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 73).

Being an expository writing teacher, I have often wondered about the purposefulness and effectiveness of using peer review in my writing classes. One of my goals in this study was to determine whether or not a participant’s attitude towards the peer review process plays some role that affects both their willingness to participate in and effectiveness in offering a useful peer review to a partner. If a relationship was found between a positive attitude and a successful peer review, defined as offering more suggestions and corrections to a peer than a neutral or negative participant, or similarly, if it was discovered that there is a relationship between negative attitude and failure to participate in the peer review task successfully, then perhaps classroom writing instructors should not mandate peer review to everyone, but instead make it a voluntary activity to be done outside of the regular, scheduled classroom time only for those students who are interested in the peer writing process, allowing them to participate at their own discretion.

I firmly believe that being the classroom instructor as well as the researcher was advantageous, for it allowed me to play the role of participant observer in an authentic action research setting. As the instructor, I had both the time and opportunity to conduct proper peer
review training with my students which allowed me to clarify any questions or concerns related to the process directly with the participating students as opposed to having to rely on a third party to carry out these crucial components of the study. Because I was also their classroom teacher, I was able to observe the student participants put into practice what they were taught, basically how to conduct an anonymous peer review, during a scheduled closed language lab setting. In other words, I observed the entire peer review process firsthand, as opposed to reading about it from another person. As a result, I was able to utilize the in-class activities employed in the present study to examine two aspects of the relationship between EFL student attitude towards peer review and performance of the task of conducting a peer review by asking the following:

1. Do students with a positive attitude toward peer review offer more questions, comments\(^1\) and corrections\(^2\) to a classmate’s essay during anonymous electronic-peer review than students who display a negative attitude?

2. Do students with a positive attitude toward peer review accept and incorporate more questions, comments\(^3\) and corrections\(^4\) into their original essay after receiving feedback from an unknown classmate in anonymous electronic-peer review than students who display a negative attitude?

\(^{1}\) Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)  
\(^{2}\) Based on Min (2006)  
\(^{3}\) Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)  
\(^{4}\) Based on Min (2006)
In order to identify if any type of relationship indeed existed between attitude and participation in peer review, a Likert questionnaire was administered before and after the writing task to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any correlation between a student’s attitude towards peer review and the quality of a review s/he provided to a classmate based on the number and type of changes they suggest to a peer?

2. Is there any correlation between a student’s attitude towards peer review and the number and type of changes s/he incorporates into his/her original essay?

3. Is there any change in attitude towards peer review after peer review training and the subsequent in-class writing activity?

This study provides insight into whether or not a student’s attitude plays any role in the quality of peer feedback provided to others as well as one’s willingness to take advice from other students in the context of the EFL writing classroom. It also offers extensive data on the number and types of questions, comments and correction types a student makes to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review. Most importantly, the research provides valuable information on what the 25 students who participated in the study thought and felt about peer review as they revealed their personal feelings on the experience before, during and after the writing task on several topics including the value of the experience, effects on their writing, insecurities about their English writing skills, the confidence they have in their peers based on perceived target language competence and how this manifests itself in the ability to provide helpful feedback and the willingness of the students to participate in peer review again in the future.
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

With the increasing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) found in today’s classrooms around the world, it is becoming increasingly difficult for teachers to maintain their role as the primary communicator with their students via one-on-one interactions. In many cases, the traditional role of the teacher is being replaced by the students themselves, who, through both native and target languages, are assisting their peers in language acquisition via peer interaction.

Brammer & Rees (2007) reported, “The process of having students critique each other’s papers has become commonplace in the composition classroom and in English composition textbooks, and according to one survey (Belcher, 2000, p. 109), experienced instructors believe that all new teachers of composition should use peer review to at least some extent” (p. 71). The positive aspects of peer collaboration in the writing classroom have been spotlighted by a plethora of empirical studies which identified numerous benefits, including clarifying ideas and improving rhetorical organization (Berg, 1999); providing opportunities to give and receive advice, ask and answer questions, and play the roles of novice and expert (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994); making both surface and meaning-level changes to writing samples (Paulus, 1999); improving grammar and augmenting vocabulary (Storch, 2005); and establishing and maintaining inter-subjectivity between reader and writer (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000). Lu & Bol (2007) reported on several studies on English as a Second Language (ESL) writing instruction (Chaudron, 1983; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Paulus, 1999) that suggested peer feedback was as good as or better than teacher feedback in helping revise and improve students’ papers (p. 101).
1.2 Statement of the Issue

The prevalence of English as the lingua franca of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has driven the necessity to learn English on a global scale. This has created classroom situations around the world in which teachers are playing less and less of a role interacting with their students. Instead, they are often required to relegate some of their duties to the students in the classroom. This change of power may be difficult for both teachers and students who prefer to play traditional roles, but the new classroom dynamics is proving to be very beneficial for the students. Rollinson (2005) wrote, “…in recent years, the use of peer feedback in ESL writing classrooms has been generally supported in the literature as a potentially valuable aid for its social, cognitive, affective, and methodological benefits…” (p. 23).

In addition, peer feedback tends to be a different kind from that of the teacher in that it may be more constructive and come across to the students as less critical. It seems that since the students are only concentrating on one essay as opposed to an entire class or in some cases classes’ worth, depending on an instructor’s teaching load, the students may be exerting more effort into essay correction, resulting more detailed feedback. This was supported by an early study by Caulk (1994), who “found that teacher feedback was rather general, whereas student responses were more specific” (as cited in Rollinson, 2005, p. 24).

Incorporating the practice of peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom is not a novel concept, and it has continued to expand as the numbers of English language learners in today’s composition classrooms increases and instructors are more frequently challenged to maintain their role as primary feedback provider via one-on-one interactions. More and more frequently, the traditional responsibility of the instructor providing all of the feedback or corrections on a piece of writing are being carried out by students who assist their peers in acquiring the skills of
English language writing by utilizing both native and target languages, frequently in face-to-face interactions.

One of the primary issues with peer review is the reality that factors other than target language competence, including but certainly not limited to race, native language, gender, nationality, age, and target language competence, real or perceived, may have an impact the participants’ willingness to engage in the peer review process as well as cause peer reviewers to form unfounded ideas about the quality of the feedback they receive based on the personal characteristics of a partner. For this reason, I chose to incorporate anonymous, or blind, peer review in hopes of avoiding bias based on any of the aforementioned factors. It is hoped that removing the identity of a peer reviewer will produce feedback that is based solely on the text itself and not the person who authored it.

There is no general consensus regarding how much peer coaching and feedback can affect the language learning process with respect to target language writing. This current project aims to focus directly on a writing task and the impact anonymous peer review has on the development of expository writing skills by the authors as they take into account the feedback they receive from a classmate. In this dissertation, the role of attitude toward peer review as well as the written feedback provided for an essay will be examined to determine whether they play a part in the improvement of the writing task at hand, and if so, to what extent? It is hoped that empirically proven positive effects will add to the literature that supports using peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom.
1.3 Overview of the Study

Intermediate to advanced English as a Foreign Language writing students who were enrolled in an expository writing class at an American university in Madrid, Spain were trained extensively on the procedures necessary to conduct a peer review on a multi-paragraph cause and effect essay. Unlike most empirical studies on peer review in the writing classroom, this study offered anonymous peer review as an alternative to face-to-face peer review, so students who do not enjoy or benefit from face-to-face interaction, for whatever reasons, would still be able to participate in peer review, but through a different approach. This is in no way implying that face-to-face peer review should be replaced with anonymous peer review, only complimented by it when the proper setting, available technology and sufficient time are available.

Students who were willing to participate in the study were required to submit their most recent TWE and TOEFL scores so that each participant could be matched with a partner of similar writing ability. Participants completed a biographical questionnaire at the start of the study.

All participants were instructed to write a multi-paragraph essay on either the Causes of Happiness or the Effects of Immigration on Spain during one class period lasting 75 minutes in a closed computer lab using MSWord 2004. Draft one was emailed to the instructor/researcher, who forwarded it, along with the Peer Review Worksheet (see Appendix E) to the anonymous partner for review during the next class. At the same time, the partner’s essay was forwarded for review. After electronically reviewing the essays using MSWord “track changes” and inserting comments during another 75-minute lab period, the corrected versions of the essays were emailed back to the instructor/researcher, who forwarded them back to the original author. Copies of both the first and second drafts were kept by the instructor/researcher. Lastly, all
participants completed a post-questionnaire survey (see Appendix C) evaluating the peer review experience and stating their perceptions of the activity.

1.4 Research Questions

The present study aims to explore the relationship between student attitudes towards peer review and one) the amount and type of corrections a student makes to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review in a writing course, and two) the amount and type of corrections a student incorporates into his/her original essay after receiving feedback from a peer. Two hypotheses will be examined. Hypothesis 1 proposes that a student who exhibits a positive attitude towards peer review, as indicated by a Likert questionnaire, will offer more comments and revision suggestions when correcting a peer’s essay than a student who exhibits a negative attitude. Hypothesis 2 proposes that a student who exhibits a positive attitude towards peer review, as indicated by the same Likert questionnaire, will incorporate more peer-suggested corrections into his/her original essay after receiving feedback from a peer than a student who exhibits a negative attitude.

This study hopes to determine whether or not a student’s attitude towards peer review in the EFL writing classroom plays any role in the quality of feedback provided to others as well as a student’s willingness to take advice from other students and incorporate suggested changes to an original text, in this case, a piece of expository writing. In order to identify if any type of relationship indeed exists between attitude and participation in peer review, a Likert questionnaire was administered before and after the writing task to answer the following questions:
1. Is there any correlation between a student’s attitude towards peer review and the quality of a review they provided to a classmate based on the number and type of changes they suggest to a peer?

2. Is there any correlation between a student’s attitude towards peer review and the number and type of changes s/he incorporates into his/her original essay?

3. Is there any change in attitude towards peer review after peer review training and the subsequent in-class writing activity?

1.5 Definition of Terms

Although most terms in this dissertation are self-explanatory, it is prudent to define some in greater detail, including ESL, EFL, peer review, ethnographic research, action research and participant observation.

1.5.1 ESL and EFL

English as a Second Language (ESL) is the term used to describe any English language learning situation in which the primary language of communication used by the majority of the local population in the environment outside of the classroom is also English. Examples of this include the USA, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and most of Canada.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL), on the other hand, is the term used to describe any English language learning situation in which the primary language of communication used by the majority of the local population in the environment outside of the classroom is a language other than English. Because the dominant language outside of the classroom in this study was Castillian Spanish, this dissertation was conducted in an EFL environment.

It is worth noting that throughout this paper, I often use the acronyms ESL/EFL simultaneously. This is the case because the various subject matter: peer review, peer review
training, expository writing, etc. are not affected by the language(s) used outside of the classroom. In other words, the in-class procedures, activities and findings would be similar regardless of being conducted in an ESL or EFL setting. However, when I refer to any situations that are exclusive to the Madrid group because it was in fact in an EFL environment, I will only use the acronym EFL.

1.5.2 L1 and L2
L1 is the abbreviation used to describe a person’s first language or mother tongue, defined as the language or languages acquired from birth by caregivers in a natural setting that requires no formal education to speak or understand. On the other hand, L2 represents someone’s second or multiple languages that are typically learned after the L1 and most often in an educational setting. It is possible for someone to have two or more L1’s as in the case of a child being raised in bilingual or multilingual environments. Several L2’s are also common though the level of fluency is rarely as advanced as the L1.

1.5.3 Peer Review
In the simplest terms, peer review can be defined as “the process of having students critique each other’s papers…” (Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 71). The term is also synonymous with the phrase peer feedback. In this study, which took place in an EFL writing classroom, each student independently and individually created a piece of expository writing on a certain topic in a monitored lab setting and submitted it electronically to me. In the next lab, I sent each essay to one of the author’s classmates, and the pairs of students followed a pre-determined rubric to offer corrections, comments and general suggestions to the essay s/he had been assigned. Upon receiving their essay that had been marked/corrected by their classmate, each student was expected to edit and re-write his or her original essay, carefully examining and incorporating
their peer’s input as warranted. The ultimate goals of this activity were to write with a sense of audience in mind and to improve the second draft.

1.5.4 Ethnographic Research

According to Genzuk (2003), ethnographic research “relies heavily on up-close, personal experience and possible participation, not just observation” (p. 1). I met these criteria on several fronts. First, I served as the academic advisor for all of the participants, so I had numerous interactions with them outside of the classroom setting. Second, I had taught some of them in previous ESL classes, so I was well aware of their English abilities before the start of the study. Third, I was also the grammar instructor three additional hours per week for several of the participants. All of this made me well aware of their academic abilities before the study began. Most importantly, I was the instructor for the expository writing class in which the study took place, which enabled me the first-hand opportunity and adequate time to explain to the students the purposes of peer review and demonstrate to them how to conduct a peer review properly as part of the in-class training. This would also meet the participation criteria mentioned above.

Genzuk (2003) wrote that “Typical ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents” (p. 1). The current study utilized all three of these components, with documents consisting of the majority. These documents included pre and post activity questionnaires, first and second drafts of the essays, and the essays marked with feedback. The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from all of the measurement instruments will be presented and addressed in the data analysis section of this dissertation (see Chapter 4).

1.5.5 Action Research

Craig (2009) defined action research as “a common methodology employed for improving conditions and practice in classrooms as well as other practitioner-based environments…” (p. 3).
My goal was to determine, with empirical evidence, whether or not it is sensible to continue the widespread practice of mandating peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom if the negative attitude of some participants prevents them from conducting an effective peer review.

I was also interested in determining if a participant’s negative attitude towards peer review influenced the number of corrections such a student would accept from a peer and ultimately incorporate into his or her own paper. It does not seem good pedagogy to force a student or students to do something that one) they do not see merit in and two) that will negatively impact other students. My personal interest was to determine if perhaps I, as classroom writing teachers, should offer my students the option of participating in peer review at their own discretion as opposed to mandating it. This is not something discussed in the literature. Every study I have encountered described the peer review process as a requirement for all students, not a voluntary activity for those who desired to engage in it.

Action research has a second characteristic according to Craig (2009), and that is it is “typically conducted by teachers for teachers” (p. 4). This is clearly the case in this dissertation. At the time of the research, I had been a classroom English as a Second Language instructor for 15 years, and I had been teaching expository writing in Intensive English Program (IEP) settings for 12 years. I sincerely hoped that something would be learned that was worth sharing with other classroom ESL/EFL writing instructors to make for a better teaching experience and also a better learning experience for composition students.

1.5.6 Participant Observation

Participant observation is defined as a process that requires “a researcher to become actively involved in the study of the environment and the parties who interact naturally with each other and with the environment” (Craig, 2009, p. 5). Historically, this definition has been applied most
frequently to the fields of anthropology and sociology, where researchers immerse themselves in the lives and cultures of the people being studied. However, I believe that the current study afforded me similar opportunities. I spent nine hours per day on the miniscule campus, which allowed me to both observe and interact with the participants in many non-academic situations five days per week. Most of the participants also lived in the same neighborhood as me, within a mile or so of campus, so I also interacted with them during the evenings and occasionally on weekends in non-academic settings. As a result, although the micro-environment may have only been a 3-hour per week EFL writing classroom, the macro-environments of a small college campus and a Madrid neighborhood also played important roles in my opinion.

A person who experiences this up close and personal style of research is known as a participant observer. In this study, I played the role of sole participant observer. Although most of the data was collected during the two-week period in which the peer review training, essay writing, essay correction and re-writing occurred, I was the students’ instructor for the courses in which the data was collected for a period of four months. In addition, I had also taught some of the students the previous semester, and because I was each of the participants’ academic advisor, I had also met each one of them several times previously during the year for academic counseling and course scheduling. As a result, I knew many of the students for the entire school year, which provided me the advantage of knowing them outside of only the peer review process.

Because I knew all of the participants so well, and by this, I mean their pre and post-test TOEFL and TWE scores, their grade point averages, performance in all of their classes as well as their general behavior outside of the classroom, I had to be very careful to avoid the halo effect, defined by Tomal (2010) as a “tendency to always view subjects positively or negatively” (p. 39), based on their performance in other courses and who they were as individuals outside of my
study. This would have impacted my ability to conduct the research in a neutral, unbiased and objective manner. But as Genzuk (20003) wrote, knowing as much as possible about your participants is inevitable and for good reason:

Experiencing an environment as an insider is what necessitates the participant part of participant observation. At the same time, however, there is clearly an observer side to this process. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders. (p. 2)

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study aims to shed light on the impacts that both attitude and anonymous peer review have on the critiques offered to another student’s paper as well as the changes incorporated into a student’s own paper based on peer input. The working assumption for this study is that students who display a negative attitude towards peer review will both offer less and incorporate less feedback than students who have a positive attitude towards the process. In addition, I am also pursuing the assumption that anonymous or blind peer review frees the participants of many of the negative aspects of the collaborative writing process. In particular, I believe that based on many of the social, cultural and academic factors previously mentioned, anonymous reviewers will be more comfortable conducting a thorough peer review, will offer more and better constructive criticism and will be more honest in their critique, regardless of attitude towards the experience. Similarly, with respect to incorporating changes into their own paper, students who do not know their reviewer’s identity should be more open to incorporating suggested changes, as there is no particular reader/audience with a name, face and personality associated with the comments. These indicators may alert future instructors who use peer review
to possible tendencies based on personality and attitude that may promote or prevent successful peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom.
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As English has become more widespread as an international language, the number of persons learning and using it in the classroom as a second or third language has exceeded the number of native speakers. This has created a variety of scenarios in which non-native speakers (NNS) are working together to develop target language skills. This scenario can undoubtedly raise numerous challenges. The literature supports an awareness of various issues, yet does not often provide remedies. Levine et al. (2002) were concerned with cultural differences between the participants, stating “students may use culturally diverse rules for how much and what kind of criticism should be expressed” (p. 1). This was exacerbated by the fact that

L1 students share similar communication styles and sociolinguistic rules of speaking, whereas L2 students do not. They come from different cultural backgrounds with different expectations about writing. These differences may lead to discomfort in multicultural peer response groups. (Levine et al., 2002, p.3)

In any peer interaction, there is always the issue of power structure, which can be dependent on L1, target language competence, gender, age, or any number of other social and linguistic factors. Trimbur, an advocate of process writing, stated “we cannot eliminate power structures from writing groups, and therefore, theories of collaboration must grapple with the fact that writing groups have the potential to reinforce conformity rather than negotiate new meaning” (as cited in Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 72). Nelson & Carson (1998) wrote, “socio-linguistic differences in expectations concerning amount of
talk, the role of the speaker and listener, and politeness strategies contribute to high levels of discomfort in multicultural [and multilingual] peer response groups (p. 129). It is hoped that by utilizing an anonymous approach to peer review, such cultural conflicts will be minimized.

2.2 Peer Review in the ESL/EFL Classroom

Brammer & Rees (2007) reported, “The process of having students critique each other’s papers has become commonplace in the composition classroom and in English composition textbooks, and according to one survey (Belcher 109), experienced instructors believe that all new teachers of composition should use peer review to at least some extent” (p. 71). The positive aspects of peer collaboration in the writing classroom have been spotlighted by a plethora of empirical studies which identified numerous benefits, including clarifying ideas and improving rhetorical organization (Berg, 1999); providing opportunities to give and receive advice, ask and answer questions, and play the roles of novice and expert (Mendonça & Johnson, 1994); making both surface and meaning-level changes to writing samples (Paulus, 1999); improving grammar and augmenting vocabulary (Storch, 2005); and establishing and maintaining intersubjectivity between reader and writer (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000). Lu & Bol (2007) reported on several studies on English as a Second Language (ESL) writing instruction (Chaudron, 1983; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Paulus, 1999) that suggested peer feedback was as good as or better than teacher feedback in helping revise and improve students’ papers (p. 101).
2.3 Pitfalls of Peer Review

The literature also reveals a number of shortcomings of peer collaboration. Armstrong & Paulson (2008) described peer review as “…one of the most diffuse, inconsistent, and ambiguous practices associated with writing instruction” (p. 398) and added, “because proofreading is not a primary goal of peer review, classroom paper-swapping interactions where students “correct” each other’s papers would seem to limit the effectiveness of the activity’s underlying purposes and goals” (p. 401). Hyland & Hyland (2006) believed feedback sometimes denies a student’s own voice or causes them to create texts “that address the expectations needed to succeed in a particular discourse community” (p. 2). This is not likely to have happened in my research because during the extensive peer review training exercises before the task, the students were given very specific instructions and examples of how to write useful and constructive feedback based on Liu & Sadler’s (2000) descriptions of question and comment types in peer response. As a result, they were well aware of the specific style of writing I was expecting them to produce on their classmate’s essays when making corrections, offering suggestions, and asking for clarifications.

One of the most demanding aspects of peer collaboration is addressing students’ different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Foster, 1998; Hewings & Coffin, 2006; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Zhu, 2001), not to mention age, race, gender and even religion, factors often deeply ingrained in the minds of students. In this study, participants came from seven different countries, spoke seven different first languages, and practiced four different religions. Moreover, several of the participants were multicultural and
multilingual, further complicating matters. For these reasons, I decided that using anonymous or blind peer review would be most beneficial in order to remove any possible biases and allow the students to focus solely on the text they would be correcting as opposed to the personal characteristics and appearance of the author.

Brammer & Rees (2007) questioned both the value and validity of peer review based on students’ negative perceptions of the activity, stating, “We frequently hear students complain bitterly that peer review is a waste of time or blame their peers for ‘not catching all the mistakes’ …and that students do not stay on task during the peer review process” (p. 71) Several studies have examined student attitudes (Asraf, 1999; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997) to explore their effects on the success of peer review, and Murau (1993) found that both L1 and L2 students had mixed feelings about peer review and up to 20% of those surveyed would not participate in peer review if it were not required…” (as cited in Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 73). De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) also supported the notion that personality plays an important role, stating “…certain students’ attitudes and behaviors are more facilitative than others in providing support during the peer revision process…collaborative or cooperative stances are more productive than authoritative or prescriptive attitudes” (p.55).

Zheng (2012), who conducted a face-to-face peer review activity in an EFL writing class in China with a similar ratio of males to females and of same age group as my group in Madrid, found five areas of general concern among her participants:

1. Not all errors or inappropriate expressions can be identified or corrected.

2. Students sometimes do not trust peers’ corrections.
3. Disputes are annoying and sometimes meaningless.

4. It’s time consuming, so students just hurry up the activity.

5. The revision suggestion from the peers may not be appropriate. (p. 121)

These would be issues that I would be looking for on the students post activity questionnaire (Appendix C) that they completed at the end of the peer review activity to see if there were any similarities between Zheng’s (2012) students and mine.

One highly disconcerting study by Mukundan & Nimehchisalem (2011) found that peer review played no significant role on the learners’ overall effectiveness scores, content scores, language scores, vocabulary scores or on the learners’ total writing performance scores (p. 34). This seems hard to believe, and the authors themselves were perplexed at the outcomes. They attributed the homogeneity of the participants as one possible cause of the apparent insignificance of peer review in their study, stating the following:

Therefore, it can be implied that learners from homogeneous cultural backgrounds tend to avoid criticizing peers and to be in agreement by establishing a harmony with them. The insignificant effect of peer review in this research could be due to such cultural differences between the participants who were to a large extent from the Malay ethnic group and those of other research who come from a vast variety of cultural backgrounds. (Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2011, p. 34)

I believe that the failure of the researchers to find any significant effect of peer review on the participants’ essays in the above study had little to do with the participants’ ethnicity. More likely, it was the result of a combination of insufficient training, unconventional
peer correction and the fact that the partners were allowed to work with their friends. Mukundan & Nimechisalem (2011) reported:

Before they started peer response activity, students were taught to give their peers observational rather than evaluative feedback. That is, instead of direct criticism and evaluation of their friends’ stories, they would describe how certain events in the story made them feel or think. (p. 29)

The researchers failed to describe in detail what and how the participants were taught. Furthermore, observational feedback is more concerned with audience reaction and response to a piece of writing, not what the reader sees as incorrect or needing revision, which is the true purpose of peer review. Clearly, much of the success of peer work depends on the individuals involved as well as the type and amount of proper training they receive.

Another area of concern is the quality of peer feedback. Numerous studies (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Ghorpade & Lackritz, 2001; MacLeod, 1999; Nilson, 2003; Zhao, 1998) suggest that “the biggest problem with peer review is that students are easily biased or not honest in giving feedback because of friendship, gender, race, interpersonal relationships, or personal preferences” while others (MacLeod, 1999; Schaffer, 1996; Topping, 1998) believe that “students find it extremely difficult to give negative feedback to classmates, especially friends because they hate to hurt others’ feelings or damage personal relationships” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 101). If the author of a text is unknown to a reviewer, there should be no issues regarding bias or hurt feelings, which should result in a more thorough review and better constructive feedback. Students often
do not realize that they should be focusing their efforts on the text, not the author. Therefore, utilizing anonymous review focuses the attention away from the individual and concentrates it on the text.

Lu & Bol (2007) identified an additional problem: the uneven quality of feedback. Kerr et al. (1995) and Robinson (1999) determined that students with better writing ability were, not surprisingly, better at evaluating peers’ writings. As a result, “students often hesitated to take peers’ feedback seriously when they know their peers are less capable writers than themselves, even if the comments are correct (Quible, 1997, as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 101). Additionally, Brammer & Rees (2007) reported that “…many students indicated that they did not trust their peers to review their papers…” (p. 80).

Surely, such apprehension on the part of the student cannot have a positive effect on the peer review process. Nelson & Carson (1998) stated that many students in their study believed that the comments provided by their peer collaborator were simply ineffective. They reported that students felt “that the feedback was not always at a level that was helpful. At times, both the Chinese and Spanish speakers felt that too much time was spent talking about unimportant issues” (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 125). Examples of this included grammar issues, sentence-level problems and small details such as word choice. It appears that concentrating on minor surface issues is not what the student writers wanted peer work to address. They were more concerned with major errors in structure and reader comprehension.

A final issue is the difficulties that arise in pair or group work when certain students are irresponsible or procrastinate (see Dyrud, 2001), or in other cases when
“students are more interested in maintaining positive group relations than in helping one another with writing during group interactions” (Carson & Nelson, as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 101). The later will be avoided in anonymous peer review.

2.4 Social Issues in the Second Language Writing Classroom

The literature also identifies social issues that can negatively affect the outcome of peer review, such as students being easily biased or not honest when providing feedback due to friendship, gender, race, interpersonal relationships, or personal preferences (see Carson & Nelson, 1996; Ghorpade & Lackritz, 2001; MacLeod, 1999; Nilson, 2003; Zhao, 1998). Lu & Bol (2007) cited several studies (MacLeod; Schaffer, 1996; Topping, 1998) in which students “found it extremely difficult to give negative feedback to classmates, especially friends because they hate to hurt others’ feelings or damage personal relationships” (p. 101).

In order to maximize the benefits of peer review in the writing classroom, as well as reduce social interferences, this study incorporated anonymous electronic-peer review. Armstrong & Paulson (2008) believed “electronic activities might encourage more holistic (and more thoughtful) feedback” (p. 401). More importantly, numerous researchers (Bornstein, 1993; Bostock, 2000; Liu et al., 2001; Valacich, Dennis, & Nunamaker, 1992; Zhao, 1998) have suggested that anonymity “provokes more critical feedback because reviewers are relieved from the social pressure and enabled to express themselves freely without considering interpersonal factors” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). Furthermore, various studies (Hartman et al., 1991; Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1986; Kelm, 1996; Mabrito, 1991; Siegel et al., 1986) revealed that “electronic
communication expands the boundaries of classrooms, enables students to communicate anywhere at any time, and discourages the emergence of dominant participants typical in face-to-face communications, and thus promotes more and equal participation among group members” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 103).

2.4.1 The Role of Ethnicity

The literature reveals that peer interaction is greatly affected by the L1 linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the participants. In this study, although the majority of participants were Spaniards from Madrid, there were also Spaniards from Catalunya and the Basque country, three Arab students, two East Asians (Chinese), one Central American, one South American and one student of mixed race (European and sub-Saharan African) who was also bilingual (not including English) and another student who’s first language background. Thus, it is prudent to examine previous studies whose participants were of similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Nelson & Carson (1998) matched native Spanish speakers with native Chinese speakers and found that, in general, the students felt the primary purpose of peer response was to find mistakes with each other’s essays, and they believed that a paper’s good points did not need to be mentioned at all. Thus, “negative comments came to be the focus of peer group interaction and the measure of group effectiveness, since the writers perceived this behavior as leading to improved drafts” (p. 124). Furthermore, the students felt that feedback was not always beneficial, and sometimes, “too much time was spent talking about unimportant issues” (p. 125). The researchers also reported that differences
based on the participants’ native culture affected how they viewed the goals of peer collaboration. Nelson & Carson (1998) wrote:

[The] Chinese expressed a specific mechanism for peer response group interaction that would result in change: consensus. In other words, the Chinese speakers depended more than the Spanish speakers on group consensus to guide decisions about making changes and assumed that this criterion motivated others in their peer groups. (p. 126)

The Spanish-speaking students, on the other hand, viewed the interaction as task-oriented, focusing on discussing group member’s essay and viewing the social dimension of the group as secondary to the task dimension.

Even more troublesome was the amount of time the Spanish speakers dominated the conversations compared to the Chinese speakers, which is an effect of the differences in politeness strategies across cultures. Many times this dominance by the Spanish speakers was due to feelings of discomfort expressed by the Chinese speakers, for they did not want to offend their partners. Nelson & Carson (1998) added, “Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the Chinese speakers’ interactions was their reluctance to speak. At times, Lin chose not to talk because of not wanting to embarrass the writer” (p. 126). Also, “The Chinese speakers frequently refrained from speaking because of their reluctance to criticize their peers, disagree with their peers, and claim authority as readers” (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 127). Apparently, the Chinese students felt they were not in a position to constructively criticize their peers’ writing.
Clearly, when one participant, either because of language, culture or both, dominates the peer interaction to the point that other rarely speaks, the benefits of peer collaboration will be negligible. Such situations can create a dilemma for the instructor. If the students feel more comfortable staying in groups of the same linguistic or cultural background, how will they learn to positively interact with others of different backgrounds? Furthermore, linguistically homogenous groups tend to speak their L1 more than heterogeneous groups, tending to make similar errors due to L1 transfer and interference, which further impedes target language acquisition.

The only study I found relating to native Arabic speakers involved in pair work in the EFL classroom was by Storch & Aldosari (2010), who “investigated the effect of learner proficiency pairing and task type on the amount of L1 used by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in pair work and the functions that the L1 served” (p. 355). Although not directly related to my study because it focused on the use of both spoken Arabic and spoken English as opposed to written English in my study, it does bring to light some characteristics of male Arabic speakers involved in peer work.

The researchers observed 36 Saudi males who were attending the second semester of their first year in an Intensive English Program in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They reported that when the students worked in pairs, they used their L1 for important cognitive, social, and pedagogical functions but only to a limited extent, far less than the researchers expected. Storch & Aldosari (2010) summarized their most important findings as follows:

A closer examination of the use of L1, particularly in serving a task management
function, suggested that the L1 was also used as a social tool that reflected and maintained the relationship formed by the pairs, whether collaborative or dominant/passive. In collaborative pairs, found mainly in the equal proficiency pairs (H-H and L-L), the L1 was used to offer to share the role of the scribe and to invite suggestions. In dominant/passive pairs, found only in unequal proficiency pairs (H-L), the L1 was used to issue orders and direct the writing activity. (p. 372).

Such a dearth of articles on Arabic speaker interactions in the classroom reveals a significant and important gap in the literature. Considering the fact that this study was based on only male participants, there is also a need to include female Arabic speakers in future studies based in the Arabic speaking world. With respect to my study, the students were only allowed to offer feedback in English. I understood the value of feedback in L1; however, this would have forced me to match up all the speakers of the same L1 as review partners, greatly increasing the chances that they would be able to figure out the identity of the person who reviewed their essay.

2.4.2 The Role of Gender

In the present study, there were twice as many male participants (17) as female (8), but the total numbers were too small to determine what roles, if any, gender played in their feedback. There have only been a few studies on the role of gender in peer review (Ashton-Jones, 1995; Roskelley, 2003) resulting in little consensus. While Liu & Hansen (2005) believed, “Gender does not play a substantial role in differentiating a good peer response interaction from a not so good one” (pp. 63-64), Tomlinson (2009) supported...
the opposite, stating that a “group’s gender make-up often does influence written feedback provided by group members during peer response sessions” (p. 139).

In this study, because the peer reviews were done anonymously, the participants did not know the sex of their partners. Therefore, the gender roles that have been reported in other studies based on all male, all female or mixed-sex groups that may influence group dynamics when dealing with face-to-face interactions are not an issue in this dissertation. I have included this section, however, because I believe, like Tomlinson (2009) above, that gender is an important factor in face-to-face studies, which constitute the great majority of peer review research. I want my audience to realize that I am aware of the possible impacts of gender, and I am not ignoring them. They simply do not play a role in this study because of the anonymity and the very small sample size.

2.4.3 The Role of Face
Finally, one area that is little explored but worth mentioning is the importance of maintaining face in peer response groups. “Goffman claimed that participants in immediate social interaction shared an interest in protecting one another’s ‘face’ during the course of an encounter” (as cited in Erickson, 2004, p. 143). I was primarily concerned that using face-to-face peer review could prevent the participants from giving honest reviews, for they might feel constrained.

Even more important, there was the possibility that students who were matched with other students from the same cultural and linguistic background would be in a better situation since they had similar understanding with regard to face, putting them at an advantage from the start. Nelson & Carson (2006) also believed this to be a realistic
possibility when they wrote, “Because such ‘face work’ may lead to indirect responses … speakers of the same language and cultural backgrounds will better understand the nuances and subtleties or each other’s messages, allowing for both group harmony and improved writing” (p. 48). Clearly, grouping together students from the same culture should avoid problems associated with face; however, this is not always possible. In a multicultural setting, making all students aware of the rules of saving and losing face across cultures would present a serious challenge, one that interferes with the peer review process and is only avoidable in an ethnically and linguistically homogenous group.

Since the participants in my study were diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, L1 and religion, it made sense to avoid face-to-face peer review, for I did not want to advantage any of the participants based on the possibility that their partner would be of the same linguistic, cultural and/or racial background. Despite the fact that a pair of students may hail from the same country, first language, race and even religion, it would be presumptuous to assume that the duo would interact with one another identically. Hyland & Hyland (2006) believed that “students have individual identities beyond the language and culture they were born into and may resist or ignore cultural patterns” (p. 11). In other words, individuality plays a crucial role.

Storch (2005), in a study on pair writing involving 23 college level ESL students of various East Asian backgrounds in Australia, reported that the only students who did not view peer writing positively were the two females from Japan, who “both felt working in pairs made it harder for them to concentrate” (p. 167) primarily because they were working with another native speaker. In addition, “both students felt embarrassed by
their perceived poor English skills, suggesting quite strongly the fear of losing face” (p. 168). In this particular case, gender may have also played a role. Situations such as this led Hafernik (1983) to state “…peer editing is a technique that many researchers believe should be avoided with non-native writers when the focus is on the form of language…” (as cited in Huang, 2004, p. 115). Such a belief, whether based on student or instructor opinion, would seriously limit the opportunities that many second language learners have to experience peer collaboration, especially in EFL classes. For these reasons, I felt it was necessary to incorporate an anonymous component to the study in the form of blind electronic review in order to avoid the challenges of face-to-face interaction. This enabled the participants to focus their efforts on the text and not the spoken language deficiencies, real or perceived of the reviewer or the author.

2.5 Racism in Spain

In this study, because I was dealing with students of several races, nationalities, native languages and religious backgrounds, I hoped that anonymous peer review would be able to minimize the effects of bias related to these differences while simultaneously promoting critical feedback and improving writing skills. In particular, I was concerned with a far more troublesome factor that could have negatively affected my study had I chosen to incorporate face-to-face peer review, and that was racism.

Although varying degrees of racism can be found inside any classroom or more likely the environment outside of the classroom, the particular macro environment in Spain at that time increased the possibility that racism could have had an influence on
how some of the participants approached the marking and correction of their partner’s essay in the peer review activities solely based on their classmate’s ethnic background.

Van Dijk\(^5\) (2004) addressed the reality of racism in the context of Spain only four years prior to my study at the annual conference of Associació de Professors d'Anglès de Catalunya (APAC). He stated:

Racism is a social system of domination, in which white Europeans abuse their power in relation to the non-European peoples in or from the South and the East. Its main dimensions are those of social practices [discrimination] and social cognition [prejudices, racial ideologies]. Not only economically and culturally, but also ideologically, Spain is increasingly being integrated with the rest of Western Europe. This is unfortunately also true for its racism against Latin Americans, Africans and Asians. (pp. 22, 24, 25)

It was crucial for me to be aware of this national sentiment considering the fact that eight out of 25, or 32\%, of the participants in my study would be categorized as non-white, non-Europeans, and they would be interacting directly with the 17 other white, European participants. Clearly, the blight of racism, whether covert or overt, could present itself as an intrusive factor.

\(^5\) Teun Adrianus van Dijk is a scholar in the fields of text linguistics, discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Since the 1980s, his work in CDA focused especially on the study of the discursive reproduction of racism by what he calls the ‘symbolic elites’ (politicians, journalists, scholars, writers), the study of news in the press, and on the theories of ideology and context, particularly in Spain and Latin America. Since 1999, he has served as a professor of discourse studies at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain.
To make the situation even more delicate, during the 2008 – 2009 academic school year, Spain, along with most of Europe, was experiencing its worst economic crisis in recent history. By the time of the study in the spring of 2009, unemployment had reached 15% in the general population, but was a much higher 28% among the immigrant population. As a direct result, government sponsored advertisements were erected in the metro stations and on billboards all over the major cities, including Madrid, offering financial incentives and no criminal charges against immigrants, legal or illegal, from Central and South America, Africa and Eastern Europe if they agreed to be repatriated to their homelands and not allowed re-entry into Spain for a minimum of five years.

To some, this repatriation program may have made Spain appear to be a nation trying to help its unemployed “guest” workers, whose joblessness was simply an unfortunate effect of a souring economy. On the contrary, the reality of this repatriation program may have had its foundations in Spain’s long history of discrimination against immigrants, particularly those not considered to be white and European. Van Dijk (2004) reported the following:

Although most immigration to Spain is of recent origin, racism in Spain is hardly new and goes back to the religious and political persecution of Jews, the reconquista against the Arabs or 'Moors' and the colonization of the Americas as from the end of the 15th century. Throughout the ages, similarly, 'Gitanos' and 'Gitanas' [gypsies] in Spain suffered from discrimination, exclusion and criminalization, as did 'gypsies' in other parts of Europe. [Today] in Greece, Italy,
Portugal and Spain, we find prejudices and discrimination against Africans, Asians and Latin Americans. (pp. 21-22)

Although this is a delicate subject and one that, at first glance, may appear to be outside the realm of this dissertation, I feel it must be introduced for two reasons. One, several of the participants came from North Africa, the Middle East, East Asia or Latin America and two, two of the participants told me in person that they had felt discriminated against by some of their Spanish peers at the university, though not necessarily from our class, at some point prior to the course. The latter issue will be addressed later in this dissertation in Section 4.3, Participant Biographies.

2.5.1 Frente Nacional

At the time of his conference lecture, Van Dijk (2004) stated “Spanish racism is less radical and less widespread than elsewhere in Europe… because there is no political party or newspaper that explicitly promotes racism” (p. 22). He explained that while discrimination was present, it was usually practiced rather covertly, presenting itself “…in housing, employment, services and other forms of interaction” (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 22). However, less than two years after his lecture, the Frente Nacional, a far-right wing, nationalistic and publicly anti-immigrant political group was formed, and by the time of study was executed in 2009, the above mentioned covert discrimination practices were being openly advertised but in a way that portrayed the Spaniards as the victims.

As the economic situation continued to worsen, the Frente Nacional became more and more vocal in its promotion of its “Spaniards First” ideology, which promoted the

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rights and access to social services of white, Spanish-born citizens before anyone else. The ‘anyone else’ in this context, referred to non-white, non-European immigrants, and no distinction was made between newly arrived immigrants or those born in Spain as second or third generation Spaniards.

During the middle of a frigid night in February of 2009, four weeks after the writing course in which the study was conducted had begun and just a week before the peer review component of the study was about to commence, members of Frente Nacional covered dozens of store front windows, banks and government offices around much of Madrid, including the university neighborhood, with large, three-foot by two-foot colorful and professionally designed but blatantly racist posters presented below (Fig 2.1).
The poster shows four immigrants - one Asian man, one gypsy or Romany woman, one African man and one Muslim man all waiting in line at a non-descript door, most likely a government run social services building. The Asian man, most likely Chinese, at the front of the line is laughing, obviously mocking the disabled, white, elderly Spaniard who is at the end of the line behind held back, or possibly pushed back, by a heavily bearded, dark-skinned Muslim man who is sneering menacingly at the Spaniard.

The illustration, however, is not the only disturbing aspect of the poster. The poster’s title “Quien es el ultimo?” has significance in itself. It is intentionally based on the very typical Spanish practice of announcing oneself upon arriving in a market where there is no number dispenser to keep track of who will be served next by the shopkeeper. The last person (A) to enter the store loudly asks the other patrons “Quien es el ultimo?”
[Who is last?] to which the most recent previous arrival to the shop (B) responds, “Soy Yo” [I am]. The interrogator (A) then knows s/he will be served by the shopkeeper immediately following the responder (B). In the meantime, if another person (C) arrives in the store, s/he will repeat “Quien es el ultimo?”, and it is the responsibility of (A) to reply “Soy Yo” to him/her (C) to continue the cycle. This is the Spanish method of keeping order. It was no coincidence then that the creators of the poster chose to borrow this phrase. The only difference is that in the minds of Frente Nacional members and supporters, Spaniards should be served or taken care of in all matters in life – housing, employment, education and health – before anyone else, in this case Asians, gypsies, Africans and Muslims. In other words, a Spaniard’s needs always take priority.

The first student to arrive in class the next morning was Participant 9, who was born in Spain but whose parents were East Asian. The first thing out of his mouth was “Robert, did you see the Frente Nacional poster?” Sadly, there were so many of them hanging everywhere around the city that it would have been impossible for me not to see at least one during my walk to campus. In reality, I had seen dozens and even taken a photo of one. I answered “Yes”, but before we could pursue our conversation, more students began arriving, chatting excitedly in Spanish, all discussing the controversial poster.

I tried to steer the students’ conversation away from the poster and its disturbing content towards the poster’s creators, Frente Nacional. Obviously, I did not want anyone to openly admit that they supported the group, nor did I feel the need to subject the students to any type of questionnaire asking them to self-report if either they had racist
tendencies or felt they had recently been a victim of racism. But I would have been naïve to ignore the possibility that some of my participants could have very well been either perpetrators or victims of racism. As a result, I avoided racism as a subject for any of our future essays. Despite the fact that I had originally considered using some face-to-face peer review in this study during the early planning stages, the economic, social and political climate at that time convinced me that I had made the correct decision to solely use anonymous or blind peer review.

2.6 Standardized English Language Proficiency Exams

A significant issue I have always had as a classroom instructor of English language learners regarding the students’ language proficiency is that the results of standardized test scores do not always represent actual student abilities. Therefore, it is prudent to explain more about the ESL placement of the students in my dissertation based on the entrance exams below.

The university where this study transpired accepted student test scores from the following three globally recognized English language proficiency exams: TWE, TOEFL and IELTS. The TWE stands for the Test of Written English, and the TOEFL is the acronym for the Test of English as a Foreign Language. Both exams are produced by Educational Testing Services in Princeton, New Jersey, USA. The IELTS, or International English Language Testing System, is administered by the British Council based in the United Kingdom.

The TWE requires a student to write one multi paragraph essay, which may be in the style of opinion, compare/contrast or argumentative, in 30 minutes. The essay is
marked on organization, development and language usage by a minimum of two but often three blind reviewers, usually English composition teachers. Scores range from 1 to 6, with the minimum score required on the TWE to bypass all ESL/EFL writing classes being 4. This allows a student entry into English medium content courses at the university.

The TOEFL paper-based exam (as opposed to the computer and internet based ones) contains 140 questions in three sections: listening, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension, and it lasts approximately two hours. Specific details are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Time Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30-40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure and Written Expression (Grammar)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The minimum required score on the TOEFL to bypass all ESL/EFL classes in the university where the study took place was 530.

The third exam was the IELTS. This exam contains four modules: listening, academic reading, academic writing and speaking. Each module is further divided into subsections. The exam lasts nearly three hours. Specific details are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Number of Sections</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Time Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The minimum required score on the IELTS to bypass all ESL/EFL classes in the university where the study took place was 6. No one took the IELTS prior to the study; however, some of the participants used it to exit the ESL/EFL program at the end of the semester in which the data was collected.

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 indicate the Test of Written English (TWE) and paper-based TOEFL scores respectively of all participants at the start of the study as determined by exams administered by the university’s ESL/EFL department the week before class began. The average TWE score was 3.3, while the average TOEFL score was 505. (For a list of all scores, please refer to Appendix J). As written previously, the minimum scores to be exempted from the ESL/EFL program were TWE 4 and TOEFL 530, and these had to be acquired on both exams. If a student failed just one of the assessments, they were still required to attend ESL classes in that area. In other words, only failing the TWE resulted in only having to attend ESL 112, the expository writing class.

Fig 2.3: TWE (Test of Written English) scores.  
Fig 2.4: Paper-based TOEFL scores.
2.7 Target Language Competence

One major shortcoming with respect to peer review is the target language competence, real or imagined, of the reviewers. This can manifest itself in various ways. While some students accurately recognize their limitations in the target language, many second language students erroneously over-estimate, or in this study under-estimated, their language proficiency. Those who over-estimate tend to disregard their classmate’s input, while those who under-estimate may be hesitant to offer as much feedback as they are actually capable of.

Similar to findings by Storch (2005), student participants in this dissertation had reservations about collaborative writing based on several factors: lack of confidence in their own language skills, concerns about criticizing others and viewing writing as an individual activity. Many of the participants in this study openly expressed feelings of inferiority with respect to their English language abilities. Participant 5 (TWE=3.0, TOEFL=473) responded that she was not confident in her ability to provide feedback to a peer “because sometimes I don’t know if it’s wrong or not.” Participant 3 (3.0, 497) wrote, “I think the teacher can provides much more feedback than I.” When Participant 1 (3.5, 567), who was a highly competent user of English in all skills based on her previous standardized test scores, in-class performance and overall GPA, was asked if she would participate in the activity again, she surprisingly wrote,

Not really. I think it is too hard to correct someone else’s paper since the author’s way of writing can be incorrect for me, and it is not. I mean, the author and I have different ways of writing. I might correct parts of the essay that are OK already.
Participant 9 (3.5, 500) described a lack of confidence in his abilities when he wrote, “I am not very good correcting due to my knowledge, which is not enough,” and he labeled his peers similarly. Participant 20 (4.0, 480) questioned his ability to provide feedback to others when he wrote, “I usually have the same mistakes.” Participant 21 (3.0, 543), who was a very competent writer of English based on in-class writing assessments, explained “I prefer to don’t correct any paper because I’m not good enough in English to do it…I’m not that good in English to go out and correct anonymous papers.” The initial comments made by these five students alerted me to the fact that they may not be giving themselves as much credit as they deserve in terms of target language abilities, and this could affect how they correct another student’s essay.

Second language students sometimes extend these perceptions of target language abilities to their peers as well. In Asraf’s (1999) study of L2 first-year writers, he found “that students see the value of peer review, but often give poor advice to their peers; thus, [he] concludes that peer review may be most useful to writers who are proficient in the language, unless less proficient writers are given constant teacher oversight” (as cited in Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 73).

In Mendonça & Johnson’s (1994) study, one Japanese participant, Yoko, realized her own errors as her partner read her paper aloud even though the partner made no mention of the obvious errors in English prose: “I realized that the paragraphs were not in order, the ideas weren’t connected, and there weren’t transitional phrases. And he didn’t notice any of that” (p. 764). Without the partner, it is possible that Yoko would have never realized her errors; however, it is clear that she expected more corrective feedback
from her partner, which is one of the primary objectives of peer collaboration. In this study, Participant 4 (3.5, 480) expressed similar concerns. She wrote, “Usually they don’t find all the mistakes,” and she also stated that she would participate in peer review again “If all the students are honest.”

Contrary to the lack of confidence expressed above, a few participants in the present research expressed confidence in their own correction abilities. Participant 4 (3.5, 480) stated, “I usually recognize the mistakes,” and Participant 6 (3.5, 513) wrote, “My English is good enough.” Participant 23 (3.5, 530) expressed strong self-confidence, stating, “I feel I can do it and help my peers” while Participant 24 (3.5, 523) was a bit more hesitant, writing “I don’t know if I can do it, but I want to do it because I think for me [it] is interesting.” In the post activity questionnaire, he wrote, “I did the best I could.”

I was also aware of the possibility that some of the students may not respond to the feedback they received from their peers at all. In a study by Hewings & Coffin (2006), which examined the responses to peer feedback in a graduate program, it was observed that many of the comments, suggestions and challenges made by classmates to a peer’s text were rarely responded to by the original author. The researchers suggested this could have been caused by students feeling they were not obliged to respond, or more importantly, because “the volume and length of messages generated may have meant that students were too overwhelmed just reading and responding to really engage in an ongoing dialogue about a particular point” (pp. 236-237). In this particular case, I believe that because the participants were graduate students dealing with lengthy, complex papers, the workload may have been overwhelming and too time consuming,
overshadowing the benefits that spending more time and energy on peer feedback would have afforded.

There is also the distinct possibility that the participants in the Hewings & Coffin (2006) study simply may not have had enough faith in their peers’ correcting abilities. This did not seem to be the case in my study. Fortunately, at least some of the participants in my study explicitly expressed confidence in their peer’s English language abilities and truly valued the feedback they received. Participant 1 (3.5, 567) wrote, “I really like the way that person corrected me. I think he/she corrected exactly what was wrong and also gave me his/her point of view in a very articulate [way].” Participant 2 (3.5, 510) agreed, writing “I think she/he made a very good correction of my essay. The person who corrected it found very good mistakes.” Participant 3 (3.0, 497), who downplayed her own correction abilities, wrote of her future partner, “Maybe they can do it better than me or they like to make corrections,” and after the exercise, stated she would repeat the activity “because I think that he or she gave good reasons of his or her corrections on my essays.” Participant 8 (3.5, 517) wrote, “I like to have another point of view apart from the teacher’s, and in most of the cases, their feedback was the same as the teachers.”

2.8 The Need for Peer Review Training

Covill (2010) wrote, “Many composition experts argue that students must be trained how to respond effectively to each other’s writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2006), or at least be given guidelines by the teacher (Hillocks, 1986)” (p. 205). In order to accomplish this
crucial component of my research, I spent hours planning and executing a weeklong pre-activity training exercise to meet these needs.

It is realistic, however, to caution that any instructor preparing a group of students for peer review must accept the possibility that no amount of planning peer activities or modeling them for the students can prepare the teacher for the multitude of problems that may arise during peer correction. Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) discussed various aspects of individual “social behavior that indicated how peers handled their mutual interaction regarding the text” (1996, p. 56). Difficulties often appear in the following areas: management of authorial control including relinquishing, appropriating, respect for authorship, struggle for authorial control, maintaining authorial control, collaboration, affectivity, and adopting reader/writer roles (Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996, p. 64).

Before peer editing can be profitable, students must become aware of how to conduct it properly. Like any other classroom task, there are foundations that must be laid before progress can be made. Rollinson (2005) concurred when he wrote, “…training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing quality” (p. 24). Before the an instructor attempts to use peer collaboration, it is crucial to explicitly teach and model to the students what peer correcting entails. Rollinson (2005) suggested the following:

Even before the response process begins, some form of pre-training is crucial if the activity is to be truly profitable…. students have to learn a variety of basic procedures, as well as a series of social and interactional skills such as arriving at a consensus, debating, questioning, asserting, defending, evaluating the logic and
coherence of ideas, and expressing criticisms and suggestions in a clear, comprehensible, yet tactful way. (p. 26)

Though each of these aspects can be explained in the classroom in mini-lessons, the notion of being tactful is highly challenging to teach, especially since the concept is so culturally and individually rooted. As Nelson & Carter (1998) found in their study, the silence that some of their Asian students considered tactful may have been perceived by some of the Hispanic students as a lack of willingness to cooperate, while in contrast, the outspokenness of some of the Hispanic students may have come across as too forward, unintentionally offending their Asian peers. Of course, this was all due to the face-to-face nature of their study. With anonymous peer review, such perceptions of peer interactions are not an issue.

Rollinson (2005) offered some advice to avoid perceiving peer input negatively. Two of the more beneficial suggestions were conducting “class discussions of the purpose of peer response and the role of the responder” as well as having “non-threatening practice activities during which there is class modeling and discussion of adequate and inadequate commenting” (pp. 27-28). As both the researcher and instructor, I accomplished this by discussing with the class how to politely conduct peer correction so as not to offend, insult or embarrass the writer. This, of course, will be based on the standards of what is appropriate in the English-speaking American classroom, a task which may not be easily accomplished considering the multicultural, multilingual and mixed gender of the class.
Since the class was comprised of intermediate to advanced EFL students, I assumed that all of the students had had at least some experience with peer correction, either in schools attended in their homelands or in previous ESL/EFL classes. However, since the class also contained new students to the university EFL program, in particular those coming from educational systems where peer review is unknown, I included some general questions about the participants’ knowledge of and past experience with peer review on the pre-activity questionnaire (see Appendix B). Their responses revealed that some of the students had little or no experience with formal peer interaction in the classroom. Thus, it was necessary for me to both train and provide every student with an opportunity to practice executing an electronic-peer review.

The best method for training participants on peer review is modeling, which I conducted during several class periods. Hansen and Liu (2005) suggested several ways to do this: “Teachers can show students their own work and how peer commentary has helped them make revisions…with the guidance of the teacher, students can work together to revise a paper…students can work together in groups to make revisions on a paper…” (p. 32). I chose using two anonymous essays from previous students and correcting one together as a class and the other for homework electronically. MacLeod (1999) stressed the importance of teaching the students how to use the computer applications they would need to conduct the electronic peer review “to avoid having the applications hinder rather than enhance communication, provide instruction on using the software” (p. 89). She also encouraged tasking the students with “a few practice activities and give the students time to become familiar with the instructions and comfortable with
the software” which “results in fewer computer questions and problems during the peer review” (MacLeod, 1999, pp. 89-90). I accomplished this by demonstrating to the class how to make “track changes” and “insert comments” via MSWord into an anonymous multi-paragraph student-produced essay that was displayed to the entire class simultaneously using a laptop and overhead projector.

Lastly, it is crucial for an instructor to create a sense of affective stability in the classroom. Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) described affectivity in the realm of peer interaction as follows:

It encompassed camaraderie, empathy, and concern for not hurting the others’ feelings. Oftentimes, readers and writers congratulated each other on a job well done. Comments that could be interpreted as a pat on the shoulder were enough stimulus to open up the social relationship and make both participants less apprehensive and willing to collaborate. (p. 65)

Finally, Rollinson (2005) mentioned some affective advantages of peer response over teacher response, including the perceptions that the peers are less threatening, less authoritarian, friendlier and more supportive than the instructor (p. 24). Villamil & De Guerrero (1996) also believed the observed peer activities constituted the social basis for the development of cognitive processes that are essential for revision (p. 67) and that “It is the exchange of ideas during interaction, where both peers extend and receive help, that they are able to advance their knowledge” (p. 70).

Fortunately, there are various approaches that can be taught to the students to overcome the above mentioned challenges. These include “making effective use of
discourse strategies such as advising, eliciting, and requesting clarification and using the L1 on a contingent basis to maintain control of the task are other behaviors that have been identified as facilitative in providing peer support during revision” (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 55). Considering much of the literature I have read on peer review as well as my own practices prior to conducting this study, I believe instructors often neglect to provide sufficient time and training. Therefore, explicit in-class peer review training procedures should be conducted before students can be expected to participate successfully in peer error correction. An excellent guide for proper training can be found in Liu & Hansen (2005) who dedicated an entire chapter to instructing students in peer response. Raimes, as early as 1983, explained the rationale for extensive pre-activity scaffolding:

If students are alerted to what to look for and how to look for it, they can be very helpful to each other. It is not productive just to expect students to exchange and actually mark each other’s papers.... With guidance, with clear, specific instructions on what to look for and what to do, they can be useful readers of drafts. (as cited in Jacobs et al., 1998, p. 310)

The research clearly indicates that the social, cultural, and linguistic interferences encountered in peer interaction as well as sufficient lack of training can limit the benefits of peer review.

2.8.1 Empirical Research on Successfully Trained Peer Reviewers

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings of peer review, the process does offer numerous benefits if the participants are carefully trained and guided throughout the peer
editing process. Armstrong & Paulson (2008) believed that explaining to the students a clear purpose for the peer review from the start was essential, writing, “When instructors ask students to perform peer review, they must consider exactly what they are asking students to do in order to develop a peer-review activity that fits instructors’ specific goals for students” (p. 400). In this study, the activity was focusing on editing surface-level issues as well as evaluating holistic ones such as organization and content.

One area that shows significant promise is the number of changes implemented to text based on peer suggestions. “In a study of graduate students working in pairs, Mendonça & Johnson (1994) found that 50% implemented their partner’s suggestions …and 40% made changes, but these changes were not directly mentioned by their partners” (as cited in Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 114). Perhaps these 40% were the result of indirect influence by the partner as the writer was forced to re-examine what they had written. It is difficult to force a student to implement suggestions made by their peers in pair editing, but if all but 10 percent of the students are making some sort of modification to their papers after peer collaboration, that should be considered a significant accomplishment of peer editing.

Paulus (1999) analyzed revisions made by students of different L1’s in a pre-university writing class and determined that “32% of the changes made to the second draft of the essay, written immediately after receiving only peer feedback, were a result of peer feedback [and] a majority (63%) of these second draft peer-influenced revisions were meaning changes, showing that not only do student’s take their classmates’ advice seriously, but they also use it to make meaning-level changes to their writing” (p. 281).
The above-mentioned cases of student interaction indicate that there are no typical results; the success or failure of peer interaction depends on many variables, including L1 language and culture, gender, target language competence, and individual personality to make any concrete generalizations. For these reasons, classroom instructors must become fully aware of the individual attitudes and preferences of their students before attempting peer collaboration.

2.9 CALL in Peer Review

Most of the current literature on peer review in the writing classroom previously mentioned in this dissertation utilized traditional paper exchange. This study, on the contrary, incorporated a technology component by directing the participants to use “track changes” and insert comments via MSWord in their peer reviews. More than a decade ago, Strever & Newman (1997) stated “the importance of using technology in writing instruction has been recognized by researchers and educators so that e-peer review—peer review via electronic communication—has become more prevalent in writing courses” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 103).

Several earlier studies (Hartman et al., 1991; Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1986; Kelm, 1996; Mabrito, 1991; Siegel et al., 1986) reported, “Electronic communication presents several advantages over traditional face-to-face communication. It expands the boundaries of class-rooms, and enables students to communicate anywhere, anytime. Electronic communication also discourages the emergence of dominant participants typical in face-to-face communications, and thus promotes more and equal participation among group members” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 103). Other researchers (Hiltz &
Turoff, 1978; Lin et al., 1999; Lin, Liu, & Yuan, 2001) contended that “electronic communication helps students retain more information and results in better student learning” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 103). Tuzi (2004) wrote that writing students “made more revisions in response to electronic feedback than to either oral feedback or feedback provided at the writing center” (as cited in Ware & Warschauer, 2006, p. 112). Hewett (2000) commented specifically on “a qualitative difference in the kind of feedback students offer depending on whether their feedback was verbal or computer-mediated…verbal feedback tends to be more global, whereas computer-mediated feedback tends to be more concrete” (as cited in Armstrong & Paulson, 2008, p. 402). Clearly, the benefits of electronic peer review in the writing classroom are worth the effort of implementing its use.

2.10 Anonymous (Blind) Peer Review

Given the prevalence of peer review in second language composition classrooms, it is prudent to involve students in the activity in a manner that reduces as many negative aspects as possible while simultaneously enhancing the positive ones. For this reason, this study integrated an anonymity component, an aspect of peer review that aside from sporadic studies in various fields conducted over the past twenty years (see Haaga, 1993; Lu & Bol, 2007; Pelaez, 2002; Valacich et al., 1992; Zhao, 1998) is seldom explored. I view this as unfortunate with regard to classroom language teaching considering the possible positive impacts that not knowing one’s reviewer can have on the peer review process, or on the contrary, the possible negative impacts of knowing one’s partner due to various causes, many which will be explored below.
A number of empirical studies that explored writing in various non-EFL/ESL situations found that anonymous peer review also resulted in improved writing skills. Pelaez (2002) who “compared the effects of two instructional approaches—problem-based writing with anonymous peer review versus traditional didactic lectures followed by group work—on student performance on physiology exams found that students learned better with anonymous peer review for problem-based writing” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). “Similarly, Guilford’s (2001) students commented that their course grades and the quality of their papers improved as a result of using anonymous peer review during the process of writing a term paper.”

In a pilot study by Tuautmann et al. (2003) involving double-blind online peer review, students reported that “the peer review process gave them insight into their own work and thus helped improve their writing skills” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). “Haaga (1993) used anonymous peer review in his graduate courses, and his experiences suggested that anonymous peer review was an effective strategy in producing improved student papers” (Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). Lastly, Lu & Bol (2007) found that “students participating in anonymous e-peer review performed better on the writing performance task and provided more critical feedback to their peers than did students participating in the identifiable e-peer review” (p. 100).

Johnson (2001) believed that anonymity can avoid unnecessary biases, and he advised students to submit papers without any names on them because “if peer evaluators can see the names of the writers, there is a chance their evaluation will be affected by such things as knowing what score the writer received last time, or knowing the writer’s
gender, or knowing English is not the writer’s native tongue…” (p. 10). Furthermore, there is the belief that not having to talk to someone allows a person to be more honest, for s/he is not concerned with saving or losing face. Erickson (2004) wrote, “…usually people can be more face-threatening in written dialogue than they are when they confront another person in a situation of co-presence., where they can monitor one another’s reactions visually as well as auditorily” (p. 143). All of this supports the notion that anonymous peer review in the writing class not only avoids many of the disadvantages common in face-to-face peer review, but also offer numerous benefits. For these reasons, I chose to forego face-to-face peer review and only use anonymous peer review utilizing computer mediated communication (CMC).

2.11 Ethnographic Research

Much ethnographic research has been traditionally associated with the social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology, but its significance in the field of education also has great value. Duranti (1997) broadened the factors that can be used to determine who may be labeled as members of a community worthy of ethnographic research when he stated the following:

A criteria for identifying a community as suitable for an ethnography can be quite varied, including political, geographical, racial, theoretical, and methodological considerations. The complex of features required for thinking about a number of individuals as forming a ‘community’ also vary, ethnographies of those who spend a certain period of time together, such as the participants in a class. (p. 87-88)
Fetterman (1998) also believed that the classroom was a valid setting, describing ethnography as “the art and science of describing a group or culture… [ranging from] a small tribal group in an exotic land or a classroom in middle-class suburbia” (as cited in Genzuk, 2003, p. 1). Based on these definitions, I would accurately describe my community, as micro as it may seem, as the 25 non-native English speaking students who attended my 3-hour per week ESL-112 expository writing classroom at a small American university campus located in a residential neighborhood in Madrid, Spain, in the spring of 2009. Most importantly, they all shared the common goal of trying to passing the Test of Written English (TWE) that would be administered to them on April 16, 2009, so that they could enroll full-time as undergraduates in their chosen fields of study.

2.12 Action Research

Action research, also known as practitioner or school-based research since it is often teacher initiated (Tomal, 2010, p. 15) was the only logical choice for me, for not only have I been working actively in second language classrooms since 1995, but I would continue to do so for this research and beyond. In addition, I have found that applying theory to real-life situations myself and experiencing the successes and failures first-hand has much more of an impact on me and my current and future students than observing another instructor executing the tasks.

When I first began this dissertation, I knew that one of my goals was to learn something that would ultimately lead to improvements in the peer review experience in the writing classroom for both instructors and students. As a result, I based much of my research approach and subsequent activities on the framework of Daniel R. Tomal
(2010), a professor of educational leadership at Concordia University in Chicago, who wrote the following:

In action research, the researcher is concerned with using a systematic process in solving educational problems and making improvements. The researcher utilizes appropriate interventions to collect and analyze data and then to implement actions to address educational issues. Action research does not entail creating a null hypothesis but rather focuses on defining a problem, collecting data, and taking action to solve a problem. (p. 14)

I also realized before beginning this project that I would be directly involved in the data collection from start to finish, and I looked forward to the collaborative aspects of action research. According to Tomal (2010) generally speaking, “action research is conducted by a change agent (i.e., consultant, researcher, educator, or administrator) who works with identified subjects within the context of a group (classroom, school, or organization) in conducting the study” (p. 15). In this case, I found myself in the role of the change agent on three levels: researcher as the author of this dissertation, educator as the classroom writing teacher and administrator, for I was also the director of the school’s ESL/EFL program.

2.12.1 Participant Observation

Duranti (1997) described participant observation as the “…complete participation in which researchers intensively interact with other participants and might even get to participate in and perform the very act they are studying” (p. 99). In this study, I was the course instructor, so I met the criteria of intense interaction, even if it was only for three
hours per week. Furthermore, I believe that the peer review training I offered my students, in particular my modeling of how to correctly offer feedback using questions and comments in addition to suggesting changes clearly meets the notion of participating in and performing the act being studied.

At first, I was hesitant to serve as both the classroom instructor and the researcher, especially since I had frequent contact with all of the participants in their daily lives outside of my classroom. I feared this might somehow jeopardize or invalidate my objectivity. However, as Malinowski (1935) explained so long ago, sometimes direct interaction with participants, even outside of the specific behavior being studied, is a necessity. He wrote:

The observation of a particular community is not attained from a distant and safe point but by being in the middle of things, that is, by participating in as many social events as possible. It is this often difficult but necessary combination of modalities of being with others and observing them that is referred to as participant-observation...” (as cited in Duranti, 1997, p. 89).

More recently, Genzuk (2003) eloquently described the importance of a researcher being able to balance both roles, participant and observer, simultaneously, when he wrote:

Experiencing an environment as an insider is what necessitates the participant part of participant observation. At the same time, however, there is clearly an observer side to this process. The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders. (p. 2)
I closely followed this advice throughout the research in order to learn as much as I could about what my students were involved in first-hand as peer reviewers without losing sight of the fact that one of my primary objectives was to report objectively on their experience from both an instructor’s and researcher’s point of view.

2.13 Conclusion

All of the problems associated with face-to-face peer review previously listed convinced me without reservations to utilize anonymous peer review in the present study. Numerous studies (Bornstein, 1993; Bostock, 2000; Liu et al., 2001; Valacich, Dennis, & Nunamaker, 1992; Zhao, 1998) suggest “the major advantage of anonymous peer review is that it provokes more critical feedback because reviewers are relieved from the social pressure and enabled to express themselves freely without considering interpersonal factors” (Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). Falchikov (1996) argued that “constructively critical feedback is more useful in helping students improve their work”, while Zhu (1995) wrote, “if students do not approach their peers’ writing critically, they will fail to provide meaningful and useful feedback” (as cited in Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102).

Kerr et al. (1995) observed students who took a critical approach when reading and scoring peers’ work and found that students “were likely to be more critical of their own work, and thus create improved products” (Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). Finally, several studies (MacLeod, 1999; Robinson, 1999; Stone, Spool, & Rabinowitz, 1977; Zhao, 1998) “support the contention that in anonymous situations, people are more honest and less anxious in expressing their opinions and that anonymity seems to encourage more critical feedback” (Lu & Bol, 2007, p. 102). As I wrote before, I was most interested in
how the participants interacted with the text they were assigned to correct, not any influences that an author’s appearance, personality or language competence may have had on the assigned peer correction task.

Despite the extensive literature on the many challenges an instructor may face when conducting peer review in the foreign language classroom as well as the possible drawbacks I could encounter as a researcher playing the role of a participant observer, I strongly believed that guiding the students in my expository writing course through a thorough peer review and all of its related activities was a unique opportunity that was simply too good for me to pass up. I wanted to test the findings of previous researchers on my own, and my ESL 112 class was the perfect setting in which to accomplish this task.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

“The process of having students critique each other’s papers has become commonplace in the composition classroom and in English composition textbooks, and according to one survey (Belcher 109), experienced instructors believe that all new teachers of composition should use peer review to at least some extent” (Brammer & Rees, 2007, p. 71). Based on the assumption that all expository writing students should experience peer review, I recruited twenty-five intermediate to advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing students who were enrolled in an expository writing class at an American university in Madrid, Spain, to participate in my research. They were trained extensively on the procedures necessary to successfully conduct a peer review on a multi-paragraph cause and effect essay. I then utilized the in-class essays that the participants wrote to examine two aspects of the relationship between EFL student attitude towards peer review and performance of the following tasks:

1. The number and types of questions/comments and corrections a student makes to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review.

2. The number and types of revisions a student incorporates into his/her original essay after receiving feedback from an unknown peer.

Unlike most empirical studies on peer review in the writing classroom, this study offered anonymous peer review as an alternative to face-to-face peer review, so students who do not enjoy or benefit from face-to-face interaction, for whatever reasons, would

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9 Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)
10 Based on Min (2006)
still be able to participate in peer review, but through a different approach. It is in no way implying that face-to-face peer review should be replaced with anonymous peer review, only complimented by it whenever possible. I hoped to identify some relationship between student attitudes towards peer review and their willingness to offer suggestions to others papers as well as incorporate suggested changes to their own original essays.

3.2 Setting

The research was conducted on the campus of a small, private, American university in Madrid, Spain. The campus, located in a primarily residential section of the city, had been in existence for more than 40 years. The school, with about 600 full-time students, uses English for the majority of its content classes.

There were three main classroom buildings, two of which were situated around a small courtyard that also contained the library and cafeteria. All of the peer review training took place in one of the courtyard buildings. The actual writing of the essays, completion of the peer review feedback sheet and re-writing occurred in a third classroom, a computer lab, located one block away from the regular classroom but still on the campus. This lab played several important roles in guaranteeing anonymity. First, it was the only lab that had dividers separating each computer desk, which prevented the participants from seeing one another or communicating during the writing and correcting of the essays. More importantly, the computers in that room allowed me, instead of the students, to log on to all the desktops using my username and password, so that none of the students’ initials would be attached to the comments and track changes.
3.3 Selection of Participants

The students who qualified for the study were narrowed down from a much larger pool of non-native English speakers enrolled in the university. Before a non-native English speaking student was allowed to enroll in any of the university’s degree-granting programs, s/he was required to show proof of English fluency by taking an internationally recognized English language exam, such as the US-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Second Language) or the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), which is jointly owned by British Council, IDP Education, IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment. Table 3.1 shows the minimum scores required in order to be exempted from EFL classes.

Table 3.1: English as a Second Language (ESL) program exemption scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL TWE</td>
<td>530 4.0</td>
<td>TOEFL cBT</td>
<td>197 71</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL iBT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a student failed to meet these requirements, s/he had to attend non-credit EFL classes, of which there were four levels: Beginning, Low, Intermediate, and Advanced. Beginning EFL students were required to attend between 20 and 25 contact hours of English per week, focusing on developing all skills. Students in these classes were usually below a 400 on the TOEFL paper-based exam. Low-level students were also required to attend between 20 and 25 contact hours of English per week, focusing on developing all skills. Students in these classes generally had scores between 400 and 440 on the TOEFL paper-based exam. Intermediate students were required to attend between 9 and 15 contact hours per week, focusing on three areas: paragraph writing, general
grammar and test-taking skills. Students in these classes had scores between 440 and 480 on the TOEFL paper-based exam. Finally, there were the advanced students, the population that participated in this study. Generally, they only attended English classes for between 3 and 9 contact hours per week and focused on essay writing, general grammar and test-taking skills, concentrating on the skill in which they were weakest. Students in these classes scored between 480 and 520 on the TOEFL paper-based exam. There were a few students in the highest level who had TOEFL scores above 520, but they were still required to take ESL 112 because of TWE scores below 4.0

It is interesting to note that despite having TOEFL scores as low as 460, some students in their freshman year were allowed to take general education courses, such as mathematics, science and introduction to computers, in Spanish. This created a dilemma for any EFL students who were not fluent in Spanish by forcing them to take more English classes than the Spanish speaking EFL students, thus delaying their participation in content courses, which were only offered in English or Spanish. This resulted in some students viewing their EFL classes in a negative manner, especially at the advanced levels of English, for these students felt they were ready to attend content classes taught in English on a full-time basis. They viewed EFL as a waste of time, and their attendance suffered because of this. I was very concerned with the possibility that lack of attendance during the two week peer review training and writing task activities would have disastrous results. Fortunately, because the participants knew how crucial perfect attendance was to the peer review process, everyone was present. I did offer a make-up

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11 By sophomore year, all classes, aside from Spanish language and culture, are taught in English.
lab day in case of emergencies or illnesses, but I only needed it for some of the students to complete their Post Activity Questionnaire (see Appendix C).

3.3.1 Criteria for Participating
The students who participated in this dissertation study did not pass either the Test of Written English (TWE), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or a combination of the three. Participants for the study had to be pre-freshmen undergraduate students enrolled in an intensive one-credit English as a Foreign Language advanced writing class [ESL 112] that had three classroom contact hours per week at an American English-medium university in a European capital where Spanish is the primary language of the external community, but English was the primary language of the academic community. Students also obviously had to be non-native speakers of English. Their most recent Test of Written English (TWE) scores ranged from 3.0 to 4.0. Their most recent paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores ranged from 443 to 593, with a class average of 513. No one had taken the IELTS at the start of the study though several did by the end.

3.3.2 Recruiting Procedures
All students enrolled in ESL 112 Advanced Writing were invited to participate. Students were given and explained an Informed Consent form (see Appendix H). They were allowed to withdraw from the research study at any time. They were also informed that their final course grade of Pass or No Pass would be determined by an end of the
semester college-wide TWE exam corrected blindly by a panel of university English teachers including but not limited to their instructor, who was also the researcher.

Each student filled out a biographical questionnaire (see Appendix A) the first week of class, so I, as their instructor, could learn more about my second language learners as individuals. All students were extensively trained (See Sections 3.7 and 3.8) on electronic peer review as part of the regularly scheduled syllabus about one month into the course. All students wrote and corrected their essays and did the peer review, including filling out the peer review forms, all of which were part of the regular class activities stated on the course syllabus. However, students did not have to submit their essays to be analyzed by me as part of my research objectives.

3.4 Course Content

During the first few weeks of the semester, students were given various essay assignments based on the classroom text *Effective Academic Writing 3* by Jason Davis and Rhonda Liss (2006). The focus of the class was to develop expository writing skills over a period of approximately four months. Three to five paragraph expository essays were taught using the afore-mentioned textbook. Styles included description, process and cause and effect. Students wrote one to two essays per week, all of which were corrected by me until the peer review activities began in mid-semester. Therefore, all of the feedback received prior to the peer review was teacher generated. There was no mention of peer review before training began half way through the course.
3.5 Initial Data Collection Procedures and Clarifications

The instructional part of the class began January 20, 2009 and ended April 16, 2009 with the administration of the TWE exam. Students who were willing to participate in the study were required to submit their most recent TWE and TOEFL scores so that each participant could be matched with a partner of similar writing ability. Participants completed a general biographical questionnaire (see Appendix A) at the start of the study and before any training or participation in peer review commenced. The purpose of this was for me to know who my students were as individuals and what they perceived to be their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the English language.

At the start of the course, the students were told about the research I would be conducting about half way through the semester when they would be writing one of their scheduled essays based on the course syllabus. Everyone would be submitting one essay for peer review, correcting an anonymous partner’s essay, and rewriting their original draft incorporating peer input. This second draft would then be submitted to me for a grade. As all of these activities were part of the regularly scheduled classwork, everyone had to participate. However, they did not have to agree to have any of their essays coded by me to tabulate question and comment types or revision size, type, or function as required for my study. This was all made clear to them again later in the course using the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix H).

More importantly, to avoid conflict of interest between the students and me, who served the dual roles of classroom instructor and researcher, the course was deemed Pass/No Pass. This would be based solely on the students’ score on the Test of Written
English (TWE) exam that took place on Thursday, April 16, 2009. I was only one of four graders: therefore, I was not solely responsible for issuing the final grade, which was an average of the four scores. If a student scored an average of 4.0 or higher on the TWE as determined by the average score of the four raters unknown to the student, then the student received a P grade. If a student’s average score was less than 4.0, s/he received a score of NP and would have to enroll in ESL 112 once again in the fall of 2009. This policy was clearly explained to the students beforehand.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This study used numerous questionnaires at all stages of the research. There were general information questionnaires, Likert-based attitude questionnaires before and after the peer review training and writing tasks, and several forms used during the actual peer review. Each of these will be described briefly below.

3.6.1 Biographical Questionnaire

Each student was asked to complete a one page biographical survey (see Appendix A) based on Levine et al. (2002) in order for me to know who there were as persons as well language learners based on questions about length and location of English study. More importantly, there were several self-assessment prompts that asked the students to rate themselves on their English competence and on their perceived writing skills in English and their native language. Finally, I asked if they liked to read, write and speak English. This was intended to give me an idea about an individual’s general attitude towards academic skills in the target language.
3.6.2 Pre-Activity Questionnaire

This Likert scale questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered prior to the start of the study. It began by asking if, when and where the student had ever completed a peer review. Following this general request, participants had to respond to 13 statements related to their opinions on various aspects of the peer review process.

3.6.3 Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet

This 26 question document (see Appendix E) was completed by all participants during or immediately following the peer review they conducted on a classmate’s essay. Questions covered the quality of the introduction, body and conclusion, the interest level, adherence to essay formatting and competence of numerous grammatical points. Lastly, the paper asked the reviewers to report their honesty of their review based on anonymity in addition to how they viewed the experience of peer review up to this stage of the activity.

3.6.4 Peer Feedback Clarification Form

The purpose of this form (see Appendix D) was for the original author of an essay to get clarification from his or her reviewer anonymously after receiving the Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet (see Appendix E) from their anonymous reviewer. The original author was asked to read the comments made in the margins on Essay 1 Draft 1, and if there were any comments that s/he did not understand, s/he was to first indicate the number of the comment in the left hand column in the table. Then, in the right hand column, s/he was instructed to ask the reviewer for clarification. However, not one of the participants bothered to complete this form. I believe that this could be the case for two reasons. One, the peer review task, which included both corrections and completing the
Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet (Appendix E), was very demanding on a cognitive level, and two, the participants may have felt too pressed for time during the re-write to bother with yet another form. Although the form’s intention was good, the execution did not take place.

3.6.5 Ignored Changes Form

This form (see Appendix F) was expected to be completed by the author of Essay1 Draft 2 after incorporating the feedback received from their anonymous reviewer. The author was asked to explain why s/he chose to disregard some of the reviewer’s input. Participants were reminded that only the instructor would see the responses, so they should be as honest and explicit as possible. Unfortunately, like the Peer Feedback Clarification Form described above, not one student used this form. I failed to ask why, but can only assume it was due to time constraints.

3.6.6 Post Activity Questionnaire

This 18 question Likert scale questionnaire (see Appendix C) was administered at the end of the study and inquired about the participants’ opinion on different topics such as usefulness of feedback, honesty, how enjoyable the activity was, the overall value of the peer review process and if the student would participate in peer review again the future. The questionnaire, which was a modified version of Appendix B, the pre-activity questionnaire, helped to establish the students’ new attitude towards the anonymous electronic-peer review experience to see if there was any correlation between student attitude and 1) the amount and type of modifications suggested to a paper
reviewer] and 2) the amount and type of modifications incorporated into a student’s original paper after receiving peer feedback [role as author].

There are several reasons such a similar questionnaire was administered after the e-peer review exercise. The first is that the post-questionnaire (see Appendix C) was necessary in order to be compared to the pre-activity questionnaire (see Appendix B) to see if the training and subsequent peer review changed their opinion towards peer review. Another was that since six of the participants had never done a peer review before, it is possible that they could not have had a valid opinion about peer review when they completed their pre-activity questionnaire (see Appendix B) at the start of the study, thus rendering some of their responses invalid. Finally, the students needed to experience the activity in a real setting in order to formulate an honest opinion about it.

3.7 Peer Review Training Procedures
Beginning in Week 3, because peer review was part of the regular course curriculum, all students enrolled in ESL112 had to be trained in electronic peer review by using “track changes” and “inserting comments” via MSWord into an anonymous essay. Before the training, students completed a questionnaire to determine their previous experiences with peer review (see Appendix B).12 I was interested in determining both how much experience the participants had with peer review as well as how they felt about it. I also wanted to identify any particularly strong positive or negative pre-activity attitudes towards peer review based on a Likert scale.

12 They completed a very similar questionnaire (Appendix C) at the end of the study.
Prior to allowing the students to peer review a classmate’s essay, I had to take sufficient time to cover one of the most important aspects of this research: the training that all participants were required to complete over a period of several classes. This was also a crucial step for me as an action researcher. According to Tomal (2010), one “distinguishing feature of action research is the researcher’s use of various interventions (i.e., set of structured activities), which provide the mechanism for the action research” (p. 15). It was my responsibility to get the participating students acquainted with the peer review process as my first challenge, and it may very well have also been the biggest one. According to Jacobs et al (1998) reported:

For peer feedback to play its proper role in writing instruction, a well-planned implementation process is needed. For instance, to build positive attitudes toward peer review, teachers can share their own writing experiences with students, emphasizing where they have given or received feedback from peers. With that introduction, teachers can provide sample peer review forms for each assignment, model constructive comments in the feedback, which they give on student writing, highlight the need for a balance between praise and criticism, critique student feedback, and share examples of useful peer reviews with the entire class.

(p. 314)

3.7.1 Past Peer Review Experiences

Keeping these thoughts in mind and based on a recommendation cited in Hansen & Liu (2005), I provided participants with a questionnaire (see Appendix B) to open a dialogue with the students to determine their previous experiences, both positive and negative,
concerning peer work. Hansen & Liu (2005) suggested discussing “students’ prior experiences with peer response and group work” (p. 32) which would serve several purposes. First, hearing what the students had to say about peer work informed me about their attitudes, which may have helped their upcoming peer interaction. Second, it indicated to me how these students viewed the concept of peer review even if they had never done it before. Third and most importantly, it proved to the students that they had some voice in what would transpire in the class. I believe that encouraging the students to dialogue with one another about past successes and failures in peer collaboration also created a feeling of trust and camaraderie. The students had to put at ease before any learning could commence. Hansen & Liu (2005) placed this responsibility on the instructor when they suggested that the teacher must “create a comfortable environment for students to establish peer trust” (p. 32).

Of the 25 participants, six had never done a peer review before, and when asked to define it, it was evident that some of the participants had no idea what the purposes of peer review are or what it involves, as Table 3.2 reveals.

Table 3.2: Participant assumptions and definitions of peer review before the activity commenced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect Assumptions and Definitions</th>
<th>Correct Assumptions and Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think to study again something that we had studied before.” (P5)</td>
<td>“First, Robert will collect the papers. After collecting, he give us the paper of another person to correct.” (P6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It means to correct something.” (P20)</td>
<td>“The student in the same class, they trying to help each other and correct each other.” (P18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To correct the essay perfectly by a computer program.” (P22)</td>
<td>“Possible it could be a correction by our peers of our essays, works or whatever.” (P23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those who had done prior peer review activities gave much better explanations when asked the same question, including the following: “To review, correct someone else essay, work.” (P2); “I think is that our colleges [colleagues] will correct our cheat [sheet] or essay or whatever exercise we are doing.” (P3); “For me, peer review means when you’re in class and it’s a kind of exercise you do with another student, both are the peer and at the end of the exercise, the students have to switch with their partners.” (P4); “It is like that my essay is corrected by someone in the class and I will correct other’s essay.” (P10); “I think that peer review means that your own classmates are going to correct your essay, and you are going to correct someone’s essay.” (P14); “It’s a review that is done by all the partners of the class, reviewing the essays of other partner.” (P15); “Peer review is a kind of correction that consists on correcting exercises exchanging them with other students.” (P24)

Before conducting the peer review training, it was essential for me to mention my own peer collaborative experiences, both negative and positive. In many cultures, students do not feel it is appropriate to speak negatively of classroom activities that were assigned by a professor. If the instructor demonstrates that s/he has also had some unsuccessful peer interaction activities, it will create a more open and honest classroom atmosphere. I explained that I had both good and bad peer reviewers in high school and graduate school and explained to the students the behaviors and characteristics that supported my opinions of these reviewers. I also encouraged the students to tell the class and me about their experiences with peer work, for I needed to know what went wrong
for them in the past and what did or not work to avoid classroom disasters during our peer review activities.

Zhang (1995) reported that participants often experienced “a lack of trusting the accuracy, sincerity, and specificity of the comments of their peers” (as cited in Rollinson, 2005, p. 24). For these reasons, a questionnaire about previous peer review experiences and resultant perceptions of the activity was completed by the participants individually (Appendix B), then discussed openly with the class, and finally, collected.

During the practice activity, I explained to the students that if they received any comments or suggestions from their reviewer that they did not understand, they would be allowed to ask for clarification by filling out Appendix D, Peer Feedback Clarification Form. Furthermore, the students were told that they were not required to make all the suggested changes, a suggestion made by Liu & Hansen (2005) who wrote, “It is also important to emphasize to students that as writers, they are ultimately the final decision makers regarding what should and what should not be revised” (p. 30). Subsequently, a form was provided to document such cases (Appendix F).

3.7.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Training
As previously mentioned, this project integrated technology into the peer review activity using electronic formatting via Microsoft Word, which is becoming increasingly widespread. Liu & Sadler (2003) reported, “Given the rapid increase in computerized classrooms across the nation and the increasing number of courses that rely on distance learning, the use of CMC [Computer Mediated Communication] is becoming a crucial tool for the teaching of ESL writing” (p. 196). They added that even more importantly,
“CMC is a rapidly growing tool for peer review in L2 writing” (Liu & Sadler, 2003, p. 196).

One minor challenge of training the students on the use of computers in peer collaboration is that it required more time for training than face-to-face paper-based peer review. However, I was confident that thoroughly preparing the students was the only way to guarantee a successful peer review experience for them, and I dismissed the notion that “elaborate and extensive training may score high in effectiveness but low in practicality” (Hu & Lam, 2010, p. 376.)

Another issue in peer review is whether or not students can avoid perceiving peer input negatively and subsequently implement their peers’ suggestions. Rollinson (2005) offered some beneficial suggestions to overcome this dilemma: conduct “class discussions of the purpose of peer response and the role of the responder” as well as have “non-threatening practice activities during which there is class modeling and discussion of adequate and inadequate commenting” (pp. 27-28).

In order to address the possible challenges described above, I first provided the participants with a hard copy of Table 3.3 below, taken from Liu & Sadler (2000), which are examples of the types questions and comments that can be offered to a peer during review in order to clearly “explain the different types of comments/questions and how they affect the peer response process” (Liu & Hansen, 2005, p. 138). I went through each cell of the table explaining how to write a comment or question and how the more explicit a comment or suggestion was the more likely it would a) be understood by the author and b) help the author write a better second draft. The table also assisted me in
providing clear examples from the sample essay that the class would be viewing on the movie screen and that every one of the participants would be receiving an electronic copy of for homework later in the class.

Table 3.3: Example question and comment types in peer response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revision oriented</td>
<td>Non-revision oriented</td>
<td>Revision oriented</td>
<td>Non-revision oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>This is not a clear thesis statement.</td>
<td>This is a great thesis statement.</td>
<td>This word does not make sense.</td>
<td>I like this sentence a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>Could you explain your thesis statement in more detail?</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>What do you mean by this?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>Your thesis should be explained more clearly.</td>
<td>Your thesis should stay as it is.</td>
<td>You should rephrase this sentence.</td>
<td>You should keep this word here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteration</td>
<td>Change your thesis into X.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Change “tail” to “tale”.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once I explained the contents of the table, for which I also provided more examples for the students and allowed the stronger bilingual students to explain points in their native languages to one another, I began an extensive in-class demonstration on peer review training using a laptop and projector. I showed the class a previous student’s essay entitled “The Causes and Effects of Poverty”, which was chosen because cause and effect essays were the instructional focus at the time. Focusing on the first half of the essay, which included the introduction and the paragraphs containing the causes, I demonstrated

to the class as a whole how to conduct a peer review using Microsoft Word “track changes” and “inserting comments”. As I worked through the essay with the students, I encouraged them to make suggestions and ask questions about the text as if they would be sent to the author, which I typed directly into the essay. It is interesting to note that not one student had ever seen these features of Microsoft Word.

As I inserted the various comments that the students offered, I paid careful attention to modeling to the students how to comment appropriately based on advice given by MacLeod (1999) who advised “preparing students to make effective and diplomatic comments on their peers' writing [for] computer-generated messages tend to be honest and direct because information is not relayed face to face” (p. 90). She offered several other tactful approaches, which were explained to the students in the present study to aid them in “providing constructive comments and encourage open, honest communication” (p. 90), including many of the following:

Starting on a positive note; picking a criterion that the writer effectively achieved to begin your original posting; when addressing an area that needs improving, use wording that is tactful and respectful; giving examples to clarify a point; maintaining a positive tone even when stating something that needs to be improved; avoiding words with negative connotations such as error, failed, and mistake; wording your suggestions so that you don't come off as a know-it-all; preparing writers to avoid taking comments personally and to encourage the reviewers to provide honest opinions. (p. 91)
The students appeared enthusiastic to try this new, electronic approach to peer review, so for homework, I emailed them the same essay on the Causes and Effects of Poverty with the comments, questions and track changes that we had added in class. I then asked them to continue making corrections and adding comments to the remainder of the essay, which included the effect paragraphs and the conclusion. This task, which Liu & Hansen (2005) labeled a practice draft - the same essay for all participants to use to practice executing an anonymous electronic-peer review - was a crucial step in the training process. The purpose of this was to “engage the whole class in a peer response activity and practice asking clarification questions” (Liu & Hansen, 2005, p. 138).

In addition, students used the electronic peer review feedback sheet (see Appendix E) which focused their attention on evaluating various aspects of essay writing, including introduction, body, structure, content, reader interest, grammatical accuracy in numerous areas, unity, coherence and the conclusion as they completed the assignment at home. The participants were also given the following advice offered by Covill (2010):

…it is not the number or type of revisions made by a student, per se, that leads to good writing. The real issue is whether the revisions are strategic, that is, whether the revisions bring the text closer to the goals that the author has for his or her text. (p. 203)

I emphasized that the primary goals of the exercise were one, to become a proficient reviewer and two, to aid the author in creating a better final product. A better final draft was defined as one that contained fewer grammatical and organizational errors than the first draft and whose ideas were clear to the reader and well-supported by the author.
Students were also encouraged to make positive comments on the essays, indicating parts of the essay that were clear, well-written or interesting. Students needed to send me a soft copy of their reviews as well as print a copy and bring it to the next class.

Two days later, during the next class period, I discussed the homework activity with the students by projecting onto the screen some of the comments and suggestions they had made. It was made clear that the original author was not required to make all suggested changes. For any changes an author ignored during the actual peer review task, I asked them to make an entry on Appendix F, the ignored changes form. Unfortunately, none of the students completed the form even though some of them ignored suggested changes. I believe this was because they ran out of time in the lab.

One final but very important note is that I repeatedly informed the students that any critiques made to the essays were not a critique of the writer, but a critique of the essay. I wanted to make sure they understood that the focus of any peer review activity is on the written text, not the person who wrote it.

3.8 Peer Review Practice Activity

After clarifying any issues during the previous class, the students were ready to attempt an electronic-peer review on their own. Although the training was somewhat time-consuming, including two 75-minute class periods, as well as approximately one to two hours for homework, the students had to be made aware of how to conduct peer editing before it could be profitable. De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) observed, “In the brief pre-revising stage, we see the students’ efforts at appropriating the task; in other words, not until the task had become more meaningful for them and the roles and responsibilities
had been assigned could they proceed with their work” (p. 56). Like with any other task, there were fundamental peer review principles that had to be clarified and experienced first-hand by the participants before they would be competent enough to do a peer review on their own.

Rollinson (2005) also acknowledged the importance of training when he wrote, “…training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing quality” (p. 24). To further expose my participants to practice essays, I next sent everyone a soft copy of another previous student’s essay entitled The Causes and Effects of War. Each student was instructed to follow the same procedures of making corrections to the essay using track changes and inserting comments and questions just like I had demonstrated to them in class and they had practiced for homework. They were asked to email me a soft copy and print a hard copy of their electronic peer review and bring it to the next class so that I could see that they had done it successfully and we could iron out any problems before going to the computer lab for the assigned peer review task.

3.9 Peer Review Writing Task Procedures

After completing all of the electronic-peer review training, the participants were instructed to report to the language lab for the actual writing task. The lab was located in the basement of another building and met the requirements set forth by ETS for computer-based TOEFL testing. The room set up contained four rows of six computers each with wooden dividers between them that prevented the participants from seeing the persons sitting next to them.
Like all computers on the campus, a user id and password was needed to access the desktop. In order to maintain anonymity, I logged onto each desktop using a generic faculty username and password before the students arrived. This way, no names or initials would appear in the ‘track changes’ or comments.

Once all the students were seated, they were given a piece of paper containing the writing task assignment prompts (see Appendix I) and instructed to write a multi-paragraph essay either on the Causes of Happiness or the Effects of Immigration on Spain in Microsoft Word 2004. The students were offered a choice of writing either a cause or an effect essay for several reasons. One, they had previously practiced writing and correcting both types of essays, and two, the two sample peer review essays that they had practiced doing peer reviews on contained both cause and effect paragraphs. More importantly, when I asked the class beforehand if they preferred to write a cause or effect essay for a grade, they could not come to a consensus. Some stated they found cause essays easier to write, while others preferred to write effect essays. In order to avoid any positive or negative bias by forcing one type of essay on the class, I simply decided to let each student choose the style s/he preferred.

Participants were given one class period that lasted 75 minutes in a closed computer lab under my supervision and exam conditions. There were not allowed to talk, leave the room, use any dictionaries or online devices, or ask me any questions about essay formatting, content, grammar or punctuation. Upon completing their essays, they emailed draft one to me, which I would later label Essay 1/Draft 1.
During the next lab class held two days later in the same computer room, I logged on to all the desktops once again using the generic faculty username and password and forwarded the original essays, along with the yet-to-be completed Electronic Peer Review worksheet (Appendix E) to the university email account of the partner for review. Upon receiving their partner’s essay, each student reviewed their partner’s essay, suggesting changes by inserting comments and using “track changes” via Microsoft Word 2004. The peer reviewer also filled out the Electronic Peer Review worksheet (Appendix E) as s/he corrected the paper. While questions, comments and revisions were meant to identify specific areas that needed correcting, Appendix E required the participants to examine their partner’s essay on a more holistic level, including general comments about the introduction, body, conclusion, interest level and various grammatical aspects such as fragments, run-ons, comma splices, subject-verb agreement, capitalization and punctuation, all components of the grammar class they were taking concurrently.

Once again, the participants were given one class period that lasted 75 minutes in a closed computer lab under my supervision and exam conditions. There were not allowed to talk, leave the room, use any dictionaries or online devices, or ask me any questions about essay formatting, content, grammar or punctuation. After electronically reviewing and editing the essays, the corrected versions of the essays were emailed back to me, and I also collected the hard copies of the Electronic Peer Review worksheet (Appendix E).

Finally, during the third supervised closed lab class, I forwarded the essays with the peer’s comments, suggestions and changes back to the original author who then
utilized the final 75-minute lab period to review the suggestions and incorporate them into the final draft, which became Essay1/Draft 2, before submitting it to me electronically for the final grade. I did not print the essays until after all the students had left the lab. None of the participants had access to the essays outside of the three 75-minute lab periods. Copies of both the first and second drafts were kept in my sole possession. Lastly, all participants completed the post-questionnaire survey (Appendix C) evaluating the peer review experience and stating their perceptions of the activity.

3.10 Qualitative Data and Analysis

Craig (2009) describes a qualitative study as one that involves a small group of subjects and “attempts to provide insight into behaviors that occur among a specific number of subjects at one given time in one very specific setting” (p. 8). The best method of gaining knowledge in these areas is by collecting, analyzing and reporting on qualitative data, which includes “a great deal of pure description of the program and/or the experiences of people in the research environment” (Genzuk, 2003, p. 9.) According to Genzuk (2003), having a wealth of qualitative data serves many purposes, including informing the reader about “what happened in the environment under observation, what it was like from the participants' point of view to be in the setting, and what particular events or activities in the setting were like” (2003, p. 9). Lastly, according to Tomal (2010), qualitative researchers tend to be personally involved with who (participants) and what (subject matter) they are studying (p. 3). My study meets all the criteria mentioned above. It involved only 25 participants all enrolled in the same expository writing class for one
semester, completed several of the same questionnaires, and were under my supervision as both the classroom instructor and researcher.

3.11 Quantitative Data and Analysis

According to Craig (2009), “Quantitative studies usually involve a large number of subjects as the researcher attempts to quantify attitudes or behaviors in order to correlate or compare” (p. 8). Although my study only involved 25 participants, they offered a large number of feedback items, collectively providing 124 different comment and question types (see 4.5.1) in addition to 490 various types of corrections to their peers’ essays (see 4.5.2). Using Likert-scale questionnaires, I attempted to identify any correlation between a participant’s attitude regarding peer review and the number and type of corrections they a) offered a peer and b) incorporated into their own essay during the re-writing stage. Because of this, I believe this study satisfied at least one major aspect of quantitative research, and that is “it typically consists of a systematic examination of specific factors and includes numerical information as data” (Craig, 2009, p. 8).

3.12 Conclusion

My study could be described as a hybrid one, for it combined aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research. I state this based on the fact that the pre and post questionnaires, peer review feedback sheets and the 72 essays (24 originals labeled Essay 1/Draft 1, 24 marked with peer comments and 24 final drafts labeled Essay 1/Draft 2) resulted in a substantial amount of numerical data (see 4.6 Quantitative Data) based on the number and types of comments, questions and corrections offered to and incorporated into students’ essays as well as extensive descriptive data, including six case studies (see 4.8
Case Studies) as well as in-depth descriptions of the participants and their behavior, all of which will be presented in detail, analyzed and interpreted in Participant Descriptions (see 4.2 Description of Participants) and Participant Biographies in Chapter 4 below.
CHAPTER 4 - QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the data generated by the study and is divided into several sections, beginning with the qualitative data, which begins with general biographical descriptions of the participants including nationality, age, gender, first language(s), major, and years of English study. The next section provides the reader with more in-depth descriptions of each of the participants, starting with the females, and includes pre-activity TWE and TOEFL scores, academic performance, personality traits exhibited during the study and comments made to me, which I feel affected their willingness to participate and overall experience in my writing course and its peer review component. Following this, there is a section on student attitudes towards peer review. All of this qualitative data hailed from several sources: the biographical questionnaire administered at the start of the writing course, the very similar pre and post activity Likert-based attitude questionnaires, and the standardized ETS exam scores.

The middle of the chapter presents the quantitative data, which includes several subsections: the type and number of questions and comments offered to a peer, the type and number of changes suggested to a peer, and the type and number of changes accepted from a peer. This data also hailed from the peer review feedback sheets, Essay One/Draft One essays marked with the peer reviewer’s comments, questions and suggested revisions, which included 490 different changes, categorized by type, size and function that were suggested to the essays collectively. Additional quantitative data resulted from the coding by me of the two essays written by each participant [the original one marked
by a peer containing suggested revisions and the final version submitted for a grade, and the pre and post activity TWE scores, which were based on the standardized ETS exams that were administered before and after the writing course.

The final section of the chapter presents six case studies based on some of the participants whom I felt were worth examining further based on their pre-activity attitudes: two who displayed a highly positive attitude towards peer review, two who were neutral and two who showed a negative attitude towards peer review based on their pre-activity Likert-based questionnaire responses. These case studies also incorporate more details regarding the partners of these six participants as the feedback they offered was either incorporated or ignored based on the attitude of the six case study students. All of the data produced by the study will be presented, analyzed and interpreted in the sections that follow.

4.2 Description of Participants

As a longtime classroom teacher, I have always been very interested in who my students are as human beings in terms of their personalities. I also desire to know as much as possible about what they are experiencing as target language learners as students in my various courses. Therefore, I value their evaluations and opinions concerning the learning activities we engage in and the assignments I task them with. Even more importantly, I am curious to know how they feel about the methods I use in the classes that I teach them and how these may be affecting their learning by enhancing or impeding it. Often my perceptions of the how and why behind what we do every day in class are very different from the students’. Because I was very interested in knowing as much as possible about
who my participants were as members both inside and outside of our ESL 112 micro-community as well as if they shared similar traits, I collected as many details as I could from them from the questionnaires they completed and by observing their behavior during the study. This was an attempt to satisfy the advice offered by Duranti (1997) when playing the role of an ethnographer:

> The initial assumption that the people studied formed a ‘community’ must be sustained by systematic observations. This means that the ethnographers expect to find certain commonalities among the members of the group, certain shared or mutually intelligible habits, social activities, ways of interacting and interpreting social acts. (p. 88)

In order to collect demographic information, all students enrolled in ESL 112 were given a biographical questionnaire (see Appendix A) to complete during their first meeting with me.

The Biographical Questionnaire (Appendix A) provided basic details about each of the participants. However, subsequent interviews with each of the participants throughout the semester provided me more in-depth knowledge about who my students were as individuals outside of the writing classroom. This, in some cases, is crucial to understanding the participants as more than just writing students and what they were experiencing in their daily lives that may have affected their performance in the study, not only as English language learners, but as new college students as well. Table 4.1 shows general biographical characteristics of the participants.
Table 4.1: Participants’ biographical descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Years English</th>
<th>Future Major</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Years English</th>
<th>Future Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Interior Design</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>FR &amp; Arabic</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP &amp; Basque</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sp &amp; Catalan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>FR, SP &amp; Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>SP</td>
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<td>Int’l Business</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Int’l Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>SP</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Although the majority of the participants were from Spain (18), the class was by no means homogenous linguistically or culturally. Of the Spaniards, two were from the Basque country and one was from Catalunya. Several of the female participants were multilingual (not including English) and multicultural as well. Although I am a native speaker of English born in the US, I do consider myself to be multilingual and multicultural, which may have played some role in the class’s dynamics and the rapport I developed with most of the student participants.
Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the participant nationalities by gender, while Figs. 4.3 and 4.4 indicate the participant’s native languages, also categorized by gender.

Figure 4.5 below reveals the ages of the participants as well as the years each participant spent studying English before the study began. The group of participants was young, averaging 19.4 years of age, with a rather small spread of only seven years. However, their number of years studying English was quite varied, ranging from less than one to more than 17, averaging 8.9 years.
4.3 Female Participants

In general, the female participants displayed mature, studious behavior based on the facts that they almost always attended class, paid attention during lectures and completed homework assignments in a timely manner. They were interested in my peer review study and asked more questions than the males about procedures during the peer review training activities. Aside from one student, they all made the transition from high school to university smoothly. They had the need and desire to improve their English, and they were very open to constructive criticism from me. Because I also served as their academic advisor, we had significant contact outside of the writing classroom, which may have helped them to feel more at ease in their interactions with me. Please note that the participants’ individual TWE and TOEFL scores at the beginning of the study are written in parentheses in the descriptions below.\(^\text{14}\)

4.3.1 Participant 1

Academically speaking, Participant 1 (3.5, 567) was the strongest female and second strongest student overall. She was a recent immigrant from South America, who was a

\(^{14}\) Please refer to Appendix J for a list of all participants’ pre and post study TWE and TOEFL exam scores.
quiet and responsible student. She always sat in the front row, asked questions, enthusiastically participated in class activities and was rarely absent. She was one of the few students who always completed assignments on time, and she usually wrote more than was required and definitely more than the other students.

Though a native speaker of Spanish, she was not a native speaker of Castillian, and as a result, she stated she found it difficult to connect with the Spaniards at first. She also told me privately that some of the Spanish students were not very friendly to her. This may have also been due to the anti-immigrant sentiments that were prevalent in Spanish society towards darker-skinned immigrants to the European continent at that time as previously introduced in the section on racism in Spain (see 2.5 Racism in Spain).

However, by the time of the peer review, all of her fellow classmates treated her with respect and valued her input based on the fact that I had distributed and reviewed with the class several of her outstanding essays as examples of proficient English writing. She had a talent for descriptive story-telling, and her assignments prior to the essay written for this study were superior to the other essays in terms of content, length, cohesion and grammatical accuracy. She finished the course with an A average, passed her TWE and was promoted out of the EFL program.

4.3.2 Participant 2

Participant 2 (3.5, 510) was a friendly and sociable Spaniard who had attended international schools in North America. She was outgoing, talkative and very popular among all the students and did her assignments well. She wrote thoughtful, interesting essays but had some issues using advanced English grammar properly. Overall, she was a
good writer and maintained an A average throughout the semester. She passed her TWE, and as a result, was promoted out of the EFL program.

4.3.3 Participant 3

Participant 3 (3.0, 497) was the oldest female participant in the study, and she was fluent in both Castillian and Portuguese. She was a good student, always present, eager to learn and talkative. She was a very aural/oral learner. She sometimes turned her assignments in late and finished the semester with a high B average. She finished the course with a B average and was passed out of EFL based on a passing IELTS exam score.

4.3.4 Participant 4

Participant 4 (3.5, 480), who will be examined more closely later as one of the positive case studies, was one of two Arabic speaking females. She had only studied English for six months before enrolling in the study. Despite that fact, she was a good writer in terms of content and organization, but had problems using French cognates and literal translations. Sadly, she also faced tremendous personal problems during the semester, including anxiety attacks, homesickness and a death in her immediate family.

Though she rarely completed assignments, she seemed to enjoy the peer review process and participated wholeheartedly. When I asked her about her change in attitude during the weeks of the peer activity, she replied, “It’s fun, challenging, and keeps my mind off my problems.”

Unfortunately, her attendance waned towards the end of class, and her final grade was less than 70%. I believe that her shyness to speak in the classroom could have been caused by her limited experience with English. She simply lacked the necessary time
exposure to the target language in order to be confident enough to speak it. On a positive note, her post course TOEFL and TWE scores were high enough to pass out of the EFL program.

4.3.5 Participant 5

Participant 5 (3.0, 473) was a quiet Spaniard from the distant Madrid suburb. Based on her initial test scores and in-class performance, she was the weakest female student overall in terms of English fluency, especially with respect to speaking the language. She was also one of the least proficient writers in the class, often using Spanish cognates, incorrect verb tenses, and Spanish word order. Though she always did her assignments, they often required three or four rewrites, which she did willingly. Despite her efforts, she made little progress in the class, finishing the course with a high C average. However, she did not pass the TWE and was forced to repeat ESL 112 once again.

4.3.6 Participant 6

Participant 6 (3.5, 513) was one of several students from the Basque country. She was a good student who always completed her assignments though she often only wrote the minimum required for a task. She did not seem to enjoy the writing process. She once told me in Spanish that writing an essay was a necessary evil that had to be done not so much to improve her skills, but because I required it. Even her responses to my three questions about liking and using English were succinct: Yes, Yes, and Depends with who. She finished the course with a high B average and was passed out of the EFL program upon passing both the TWE and TOEFL.
4.3.7 Participant 7

Although Participant 7 (3.0, 480) was another very weak student in terms of overall English skills at the start of the course, she showed the most improvement in her writing among the female students. Aside from being the youngest participant, she was also the most accurate in her description of her English language abilities, labeling herself as “pretty bad.” She always completed assignments on time, often sought additional help from the instructor, and was attentive and enthusiastic in the classroom. She finished the course with a B average and was passed out of the EFL program based on her TWE and TOEFL scores.

4.3.8 Participant 8

Participant 8 (3.5, 517) was the most diverse student in the study in terms of ethnic and linguistic background. Born in Spain to North African immigrant parents, she was a fluent speaker of Moroccan Arabic, continental French, and Castilian Spanish. She was also one of the stronger students in terms of English, and her only issues were attendance and completing assignments.

Because of her advanced language abilities in both Spanish and English, she was able to take most of her other classes in content areas, so she spent little time on her writing class assignments. She also told me that she was only a few questions short of passing the TOEFL, so she did not feel she needed to spend as much time as the other students on her English. Unfortunately, her classroom performance resulted in a 60% average, which is a failing grade. However, as she predicted, her post course TOEFL was
a 550 and her post course TWE was a 4.5. Based on the passing criteria of the course, she received a final grade of Pass.

4.4 Male Participants

The male participants, who were double the number of the females, were a diverse and at times, a challenging group, both inside and outside of the classroom. Despite being better in English than the female participants based on the previous semester’s standardized test scores, there were numerous issues including those rooted in racial, cultural and religious identity as well as problems with physical disabilities, emotional and psychological problems, that though beyond the scope of a dissertation such as this, obviously played an important role in their success and/or failure as course participants and must be mentioned.

As I wrote earlier, not only did I serve as their course instructor and academic advisor, but for many of these young men, I also played the role of confident, older brother or parent. In a small school, where the majority of students were either from abroad or are attending college as freshmen and living away from home for the first time, and with only two professional counselors who were American women, many of the male students felt they had no one else to turn to for guidance and advice. As a result, I learned more about their personal lives than I perhaps would have had I only been their classroom instructor.

4.4.1 Participant 9

Participant 9 (3.5, 510) was a well-read engineering major who enjoyed discussing various topics in English with me before class. He was very dedicated to his studies and
usually arrived to class 20 minutes early to ask me for feedback on either his writing assignments or his use of English on assignments in his content courses. He always sat in the same seat in the front row and arranged his book, notebook, dictionary and pencils methodically. He did have one bad habit, and that was a tendency to disagree with any of the suggestions that anyone, including me, would make to his essays, so it was not at all surprising to me that he rejected 93% of his peer reviewer’s suggested corrections. Furthermore, he came across as defensive and unyielding at times in face-to-face interactions.

Born in Spain to Chinese immigrant parents, he was far more Spanish than Chinese in terms of language, culture and identity. When I once asked him about China, he stated, “I went there once when I was five, and I hated it. I couldn’t speak it [Chinese], and everyone laughed at me. I’m a Spaniard.” Between 2000 and 2008, there had been a major influx of Chinese immigrants to Madrid. Many of them owned Chinese restaurants or operated low-priced Euro stores, similar to dollar stores in America. Unlike Spanish-owned stores, these Euro stores are open long hours every day including Sundays. As a result, they are viewed as both a threat to and necessity of modern Spanish life, and unfortunately, the Chinese immigrant owners themselves, referred to as Los Chinos, are viewed similarly (see Section 2.5 Racism in Spain). To fight this negative stereotype, Participant 9 distanced himself from the other Chinese students, only socializing with Spaniards.

From a teacher’s perspective, he was the ideal student: always present, always on time with assignments, and he always wrote more than the minimum required. He viewed
learning English very positively, often telling me that it was the most important language in the world. He needed it to succeed in his major, which also offered him the future opportunity to complete his degree in at the university’s American campus. He finished the course with an A average. He also passed out of EFL after receiving high scores on both the TWE and TOEFL.

4.4.2 Participant 10

Participant 10 (3.5,473) was another East Asian student, born in China and forced to move to Madrid in 2006 at the age of 18 to join his parents who had immigrated without him 10 years earlier, a fact which embittered him. He identified solely a Chinese immigrant, and he had no desire to remain in Spain. Though he had learned to communicate in Spanish on a basic level, he preferred English and viewed learning it as the best way to get out of Spain and move to the USA to finish his degree. His ultimate goal was to marry his Chinese girlfriend and return to China to start an import/export business.

He was one of the weakest male students, ranking 14 out of 17 on his TOEFL and was repeating ESL 112 for the second time. He communicated well in English, but had problems with reading and writing. He often stated that coming to Spain and trying to learn Spanish as a teenager “messed up” his English learning. Unfortunately, though he was a good student who attended classes, completed assignments, rewrote his essays many times, and had a B- average at the end of the course, he neither passed the TWE nor TOEFL and was forced to repeat ESL 112 for a third time in the Fall of 2009.
4.4.3 Participant 11

Participant 11 (3.0, 487) was a shy, quiet, reserved, and very respectful young man from Madrid. He never missed a class, always wrote interesting, well-organized and competent essays, and by the end of the course, had greatly improved in all aspects of English. He ended the course with an A- average, and he passed out of EFL based on his post course TWE and TOEFL scores.

4.4.4 Participant 12

Participant 12 (3.5, 517) was a highly introverted student who suffered from a disfiguring congenital birth defect that affected both his speaking and writing abilities. He was not interested in receiving special needs accommodations, and he seemed to get somewhat offended whenever I suggested it. I only wanted to make sure that he had enough time to write his TWE essays. He began the class very reserved and hesitant to participate, but over time, he became more and more actively involved in the learning process. He worked hard to improve his English, but about two-thirds of the way through the semester, he began to dedicate more and more of his time to his content courses. As a result, he did not pass the TWE or ESL 112.

4.4.5 Participant 13

Participant 13 (3.0, 597) was the youngest male in the study, and he also had the best English abilities based on his TOEFL score that was almost 600. He was a serious student with very good grades who did not like to read or write in any language, not surprising for an engineering major. He finished the class with an A average and passed the TWE effortlessly.
4.4.6 Participant 14

Participant 14 (3.0, 503) was a lifelong learner of English who had reached a plateau at an upper-intermediate in terms of listening and speaking, but a lower-intermediate level of reading and writing. He had issues with completing his assignments and was often absent from class for weeks at a time. He failed both the TWE and the TOEFL and was required forced to repeat the class.

4.4.7 Participant 15

Participant 15 (3.0, 533) was fluent in both Basque and Castilian Spanish. Having spent the previous summer in an English speaking country, he was able to express himself clearly, but he lacked Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (see seminal work by Cummins, 1979). The first time I met him at the new student barbeque, before I knew he would eventually become a student in my expository writing course, he matter-of-factly stated, “I only came here [American university] because I am a bad student and I need discipline. I cannot get that at Spanish universities.”

Over the semester, as his attendance decreased and his academic performance deteriorated, I became very concerned about him, and as any good teacher should do, confronted him about his erratic behavior. He claimed he was having trouble sleeping at night and waking up in the morning due to problems both in and out of school. He became more and more withdrawn. After a three-week absence, he returned to class with prematurely graying hair. Obviously, writing essays was the least of his concerns. He was always very quiet, and I had the impression that the student only participated in the study
to appease me. Interestingly, he passed both the TOEFL and TWE but was expelled from
the university due to failing all of his content classes.

4.4.8 Participant 16

Participant 16 (3.0, 443) was one of the few native Arabic speakers in the study, and he
was also the weakest carried the lowest test scores on both the TWE and TOEFL of
anyone in the study, male or female. He always attended classes and did his homework,
but he failed to make much progress. He did not pass the TOEFL or TWE, but he did
pass the IELTS, allowing him to exit the ESL program.

4.4.9 Participant 17

Participant 17 (4.0, 500) was an average student who usually handed his assignments in
late. In theory, he did not have to take ESL 112, for he achieved a passing score on the
TWE. However, he needed to improve his overall English and did not want his writing
abilities to decrease before enrolling in English 150 [freshman composition] the next
semester, so he opted to take my writing course. He expressed interest in my study and
seemed to enjoy the peer correction activities, for as he stated, “It is something new and
different for me.” He finished the class with a B average and passed both the TWE and
TOEFL exams.

4.4.10 Participant 18

Participant 18 (3.0, 453) was another Arabic speaker with low English abilities overall,
ranking second out of the 25 participants in terms of his combined TWE and TOEFL
scores. He completed all assignments with minimal effort and as quickly as possible. He
ended the class with a B- average, and he passed the TWE. However, he did not pass the
TOEFL nor the IELTS because of his writing, and as a result, he was expelled from the university.

4.4.11 Participant 19

Participant 19 (3.0, 517) was always early to class, participated in the lessons, completed his homework well and on time and showed general enthusiasm about learning all aspects of English. He did, however, lack confidence in his English language abilities, particularly with regard to speaking, which continued even after he passed both the TOEFL and TWE. He finished the class with an A average.

4.4.12 Participant 20

Participant 20 (4.0, 480) was a bilingual Catalan-Castilian speaker with better writing skills than any other aspect of English based on his pre-course TWE score and the expository writing assignments that he did in my class. Like Participant 17, he also passed the TWE exam before enrolling in the course and took my class to maintain his writing abilities. He was a good student overall who became somewhat lazy towards the end of the semester. He finished the class with a B- average, but because he failed to pass both the TWE and the TOEFL, he was required to repeat ESL 112.

4.4.13 Participant 21

Participant 21 (3.0, 543) was an excellent writer who should never have been placed in ESL 112 in the first place. The timed essays that he wrote in my class which were TWE-based and marked as such consistently received scores of 4.5 and 5.0. He was well-read in Spanish literature and despite being far ahead of his classmates in terms of his English abilities, he always attended classes, completed his assignments, and participated whole-
heartedly in the study. He completed the course with an A average and passed his TWE effortlessly.

4.4.14 Participant 22

Participant 22 (3.5, 487) was from Spain. He was a dedicated, hard-working student who struggled with both grammar and speaking. He passed both the TWE and TOEFL and ended ESL 112 with a B+ average.

4.4.15 Participant 23

Participant 23 (3.5, 530) was an excellent student in terms of effort, participation and general desire to improve all aspects of his English abilities. He passed both the TWE and TOEFL and finished the writing class with a B+ average.

4.4.16 Participant 24

Participant 24 (3.5, 523) was the oldest student in the class, and he was a fair writer based on his assignments. What caught my attention from the start was that his essays were very dark and often expressed feelings of insecurity, depression and anxiety. After a long absence in which no one at the university had seen or heard from him for several weeks, I decided to visit the student’s apartment located only a few blocks from the campus to check on him.

At the front door of his posh residence, I was greeted by the maid, who explained to me that the student had been very sick for about one month. I was not convinced, so I asked her to please bring him to the door so I could speak to him myself. When the student came to the door a few minutes later, I was taken aback by his physical appearance. He was very thin and pale-faced with dark circles under his eyes. I asked him
what was wrong, and he told me. Realizing that he was indeed very ill, I apologized sincerely for having bothered him, expressed my deep concern for this health, and informed him that I was immediately withdrawing him from the study. To my complete surprise, the student stated, “Robert, because you cared enough to come to see if I was ok, I want to do the study.”

Upon his return to college one week later, we worked together one-on-one several days per week for the remainder of the semester to make up missed lessons and assignments. Through his efforts, determination and dedication to his studies, not only was he able to fully participate in the study, but he passed both the TOEFL and TWE, resulting in a passing grade for my writing class.

4.4.17 Participant 25

Participant 25 (4.0, 487) was a native Arabic speaker who had attended English medium schools since birth and also did not belong in ESL 112. He attended classes infrequently but always managed to submit all of his assignments. He ended the class with a B average and passed both the TWE and TOEFL.

4.5 General Student Attitudes on Peer Review

One interesting aspect of peer collaboration is addressing the students’ different attitudes towards peer review. De Guerrero & Villamil (2000) explained this dilemma clearly when they reported the following:

   Certain students’ attitudes and behaviors are more facilitative than others in providing support during the peer revision process…collaborative or cooperative stances are more productive than authoritative or prescriptive attitudes.
Collaborative stances seem to be characterized by an emphasis on negotiating ideas and making meaning throughout the interactions, by peers trying to see the text through the writer’s eyes, and by an atmosphere of mutual respect in which feedback is allowed to flow freely from writer to reader & vice versa. (p. 55)

Such a description could lead one to believe that perhaps not all students should be involved in peer correcting. In fact, Murau (1993) found that both L1 and L2 students had mixed feelings about peer review, and a full 20% surveyed would not participate in peer review if it were not required. For these reasons, I devised and distributed a Likert questionnaire (see Appendix B) that he administered to all participants before the peer reviews commenced in the hopes of possibly identifying an individual’s predisposition towards the peer review process. Results are presented in the next section.

4.5.1 Participant Attitude Profiles

I was interested in the participants’ attitudes on two fronts. One was how they perceived the use of English for basic academic and social purposes. In order to gauge this, The Biographical Questionnaire (Appendix A) contained the following three questions:

1. Do you like reading English? Why or why not?
2. Do you like writing English? Why or why not?
3. Do you like speaking English? Why or why not?

I sought to obtain a preliminary profile of how each participant viewed reading, writing and speaking English in general, which could possibly indicate the type of student behavior to be expected during the semester. In other words, if the individual viewed using English in a positive manner, it would be assumed that s/he would be more inclined
to attend the writing class, participate in class activities, do their homework and improve their expository skills during the semester. I was also looking for target language insecurities.

The second and more important area I needed to assess in terms of attitude was related to their position on peer review. In order to determine if the participants in my study echoed the findings in the literature and/or had any predisposition to peer review, I requested each of the 25 students to complete the Likert Pre-Activity Questionnaire (see Appendix B) which contained 13 general statements that required the participant to rate on a five choice scale assigned values from one to five: Strongly Disagree (SD=1), Disagree (D=2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (N=3), Agree (A=4), or Strongly Agree (SA=5). Statements 1 through 8, 10 and 12 correspond positively to anonymous peer review such that the higher the number, the more likely the participant views peer review in a positive way. Conversely, the lower the number, the more negative their view toward peer review will be. In contrast, Statements 9, 11 and 13 correspond negatively to anonymous peer review - the higher the number, the more likely the participant views peer review in a positive way, and the lower the number, the more negative the view towards peer review. Figure 4.6 shows the averages per participant to determine the participants with the most positive, neutral and the least positive attitudes at the beginning of the study. These values were also utilized to select the participants for the case studies presented and examined later on in this chapter.
Before the study took place, participants generally viewed the peer process somewhat positively with an average score of 3.4. Those with the most positive views were participants 4, 7, 10, 19 and 25, all with an average score of 3.85. The most neutral participants were numbers 23 (3.4), 17 (3.38) and 21 (3.46). Those with the most negative views towards peer review were participants 15 (2.62), 18 (2.9), 22 (3.08), 11 and 20 (3.15).15

4.6 Quantitative Data

Both drafts one and two of the essays were analyzed and meticulously coded. I examined each Essay One/Draft One once to count the number and types of questions and comments16 suggested by its reviewer, which resulted in a total of 124 for all essays combined. Then, I examined each Essay One/Draft One a second time to tally the number and types of corrections17 categorized by type, size and function, suggested by the reviewers, which numbered 490 in total for all of the essays. Finally, each of the

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15 Data unavailable for participants 1 and 8
16 Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)
17 Based on Min (2006)
participants’ Essay One/Draft Two was inspected to calculate the number of revisions made by a peer that were incorporated into the final draft per 50 words. All of these will be explained in greater detail in the sections that follow.

4.6.1 Type and Number of Questions and Comments Offered to Peers

I commenced the data analysis by coding each reviewer’s comments, questions and suggestions made to his or her partner’s essay based on Liu & Sadler’s (2000) question and comment types in peer response as shown in Table 4.2 in order to determine if the feedback type was an evaluation, clarification, suggestion or alteration.

Table 4.2: Sample question and comment types in peer response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revision oriented</td>
<td>This is not a clear thesis statement.</td>
<td>This is a great thesis statement.</td>
<td>This word does not make sense.</td>
<td>I like this sentence a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>Could you explain your thesis statement in more detail?</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>What do you mean by this?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>Your thesis should be explained more clearly.</td>
<td>Your thesis should stay as it is.</td>
<td>You should rephrase this sentence.</td>
<td>You should keep this word here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteration</td>
<td>Change your thesis into X.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Change “tail” to “tale”.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The goal of this was to classify each and every one of the reviewers’ comments into one of the four categories in order to compare the findings of this study with those of Liu &

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Sadler a decade earlier. The distribution of the raw numbers for the current study are shown in Figure 4.7.

![Bar chart showing comment and question types offered to peers.]

Fig. 4.7: Comment and question types offered to peers.

The numbers clearly show that students were twice as likely to offer their peer an evaluation or suggestion as opposed to asking for more information (clarification) or suggesting that a specific change be made to the essay (alteration). If we compare these as percentages to Liu & Sadler’s similar study (2003, p. 205) which also used “track changes” and inserting comments for students via computer mediated communication (CMC) peer review (Fig. 4.8) and upon which the current student was modeled, we see that the trends are similar except for alteration, which is highly divergent.
Fig. 4.8: Percentages of comment and question types in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) across two studies (Cote current study vs. Liu & Sadler 2003).

A possible explanation for the major difference between the two studies with respect to alteration comments is that in the current study, participants simply made the change themselves instead of explicitly commenting to a peer to ‘change x to y’, the specific phrase identified by Liu & Sadler (2000) as an alteration comment. Examples of these can be seen in Table 4, which shows replacements that are clearly alterations but do not contain the specific wording ‘change x to y’.

Table 4.3: Alteration comments offered by participants (Cote current study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This</td>
<td>These</td>
<td>Also</td>
<td>However</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>love and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the three</td>
<td>Also</td>
<td>Moreover</td>
<td>accept the</td>
<td>except for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>go through</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>more and more</td>
<td>Faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be with</td>
<td>support</td>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>Talked</td>
<td>this people</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Trip</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Let you down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Had the participants used the phrase ‘change x to y’ verbatim, the alteration percentage would have been closer to 35%, still not as high as Liu & Sadler’s (2003) approximately 47%, but at least trending in the same direction. I did not include these obvious alteration suggestions that are listed above in Table 4.3 in the category because there were many cases of participants in my study who actually wrote ‘change x to y’ directly paralleling the phrasing in Liu & Sadler’s (2000) study. Because I could not find reference to situations in which their students offered alteration changes without explicitly writing ‘change x to y’, I did not learn how these situations were coded and did not want to calculate my numbers differently from the original study.

If we compare the percentages from this study to those of Liu & Sadler (2003, p. 205) whose students engaged in traditional face-to-face peer review (Fig. 4.9), we find that the percentages follow a more similar pattern to one another, except for evaluation, which was significantly higher for Liu & Sadler.

![Fig. 4.9: Comparison of percentages of comment and question types in Cote’s (current study) Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) study vs. Liu & Sadler’s (2003) traditional [paper-based] study.](image-url)
I attribute this difference with respect to the number of evaluations on the higher level of English of the participants in the Liu & Sadler (2003) study. Those students were “taking second semester freshman composition at a large southwestern university in the United States” (p. 197) meaning they had already passed the TWE and TOEFL, had already completed one semester of freshman composition, and they had been living in a fully English-dominant community for at least six months prior to the study. Because evaluative comments require a higher level of fluency, it is only logical to assume that students with an additional semester of English study, in particular composition, would be able to make more and better evaluative comments. In addition, seven of the twenty-four participants, roughly 29%, in the Liu & Sadler (2003) study were native English speakers as opposed to the Madrid group, which had none.

Once all of the questions and comments were classified into one of four categories above, it was necessary to re-group them to determine if the questions and comments made could be classified as global ones, affecting larger portions of the text or local ones, affecting only a word, clause or phrase. The data in Fig. 4.10 below reveals that local comments outnumbered global ones by a margin of three to one, which is very beneficial to the authors as local suggestions, because they address specific words, phrases or sentences, are clearer to understand and easier to incorporate into the final draft. In other words, they are not open-ended questions or vague comments and do not require any guessing on the part of the author.
Fig. 4.10: Scale size of questions and comments offered to peers.

If we compare the percentages of the global and local revisions between the two studies, the percentages for the computer-mediated groups are identical: 28% for global changes and 72% for local ones as indicated below in Fig. 4.11.

Fig. 4.11: Percentages of global and local sized comments and questions in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) Cote (current study) vs. Liu & Sadler (2003, p. 204)
I had hoped that there would be similar percentages in the two studies but certainly did not expect them to be identical. Finally, the essays were re-analyzed and coded for a third time based on whether or not the author was expected to make some type of revision. There were 100 revision-oriented questions and comments versus less than twenty non-revision ones resulting in a five-to-one ratio.

![Bar chart](image)

**Fig. 4.12**: Number of revision vs. non-revision questions and comments offered to peers

This much higher number of revision-oriented questions and comments is important because it indicates that the reviewers made a strong effort to provide feedback, even if it was negative, that was intended to encourage the author to make specific changes. On the other hand, the non-revision comments were all positive in nature, either commending the author in some way or simply suggesting that the text was acceptable in its original form and should not be altered.

In terms of the revision versus non-revision types of comments and questions, percentage values in the current study fell somewhere between Liu & Sadler’s computer-based and paper-based groups (Fig. 4.13).
The revision/non-revision percentages in this computer-based study were 83% and 17% respectively, compared to Liu & Sadler’s computer-based percentages of 92% and 18% and traditional paper-based percentages of 75.6% and 24.4% (2003, p. 207). I strongly believe this is due to the fact that although the Madrid group was weaker than the US group with respect to English language skills, the use of the computers combined with the anonymity factor allowed them to make more revision suggestions than Liu & Sadler’s (2003) traditional face-to-face participants but not as many as their CMC group, the latter which likely benefitted from both using computers and having more advanced target language skills.
I was also very aware of the varying lengths of the essays, whose total word count ranged from 209 to 476. Therefore, it was necessary to standardize the corrections by calculating the number of comments and questions for every 50 words of text. The purpose of this was to determine if a participant offered more or less comments and question types relative to the other participants. In other words, the number of comments was normalized per 50 words to control for differences that could be attributed to variation in essay length. I chose 50 words as a guideline because while reading the essays, I determined that generally speaking, around 50 words were the number of words required for students to fully explain one thought. Simply stated, shorter texts did not usually contain complete ideas, while longer ones tended to cover more than one concept. Figure 4.14 shows the number and types of questions and comments for each participant, revealing who offered the most and least for every 50 words of text that they corrected.

![Figure 4.14: Ratio of question and comment types (per 50 words) offered to peers](image)

The average number of all types of questions and comments offered to a peer was .81 per 50 words. In other words, it took more than 50 words of text before a peer asked a
question or offered a comment of some sort. Values ranged from a low of zero per 50 words for participants 19 and 25, which was unexpected as they were among the five participants who had the highest pre-activity Likert attitude scores (3.85) to a high of 2.41 for participant 9, whose pre-activity Likert attitude score of 3.54 was only slightly higher than the average score of 3.4. The participants with the highest, lowest and average pre-activity attitude scores and subsequent rate of questions and comments offered to peer are indicated in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Participants with the highest, middle and lowest pre-task attitude scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Highest pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Middle pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Lowest pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an examination of the data in Table 4.4, there appears to be no relationship between a person’s attitude towards peer review and the number and type of questions and comments offered (QCO) to a peer. To determine if this were indeed the case, and also to see what, if any, relationship existed between attitude and QCO, I conducted a Pearson Correlation for all participants which also included other possibly important independent variables such as pre-activity TOEFL and TWE scores to determine if they had any effect on the QCO rate (Table 4.5).
Table 4.5: Participant attitude, TOEFL, & TWE to QCO Pearson Correlation Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre_Attitude</th>
<th>QCSug_per50</th>
<th>TOEFL</th>
<th>TWE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Attitude</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCSug_per50</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.566</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWE</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To my surprise, there was no statistically significant correlation between any of the variables though the results are still interesting. The pre-attitude to QCO correlation coefficient of -.133 possibly indicates a very weak negative linear relationship such that as the participant’s attitude towards peer review became more positive, the number of questions and comments decreased, which does not make much sense to me as the opposite should be true. More likely, this value of -.133 is simply a random result since there is no significance, in which case there is no connection between one’s attitude and an increase or decrease in the number of questions and comments offered. Furthermore, because the p values (significance, in this table) are not below 0.05, the statistical decision should be to fail to reject the null hypothesis that no relationship exists. It was
determined that sufficient data do not exist to conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between the two variables. This is the opposite of what I expected.

Unexpectedly, the opposite was true when examining the pre-activity TOEFL score to the QCO correlation co-efficient, a value of +.140. This could indicate a very weak positive linear relationship such that as the participants’ paper-based TOEFL scores increased, the number of questions and comments s/he offered also increased. I attribute this to the fact that participants with higher levels of English had the target language abilities that enabled them to write more feedback. Like the pre-attitude to QCO correlation coefficient discussed above, this value of +.140 could simply be a random result since there is no significance, in which case there is no connection between the pre-activity TOEFL score to the QCO correlation co-efficient.

An analysis of the pre-activity TWE score to the QCO correlation co-efficient resulted in a value of +.027, which is so close to zero that no linear relationship can be determined. One likely cause for this is that the TWE scores only came in a very narrow range: 3, 3.5 and 4. The spread, like the sample size, was just too small to offer any reliable data. As none of the Sig (2-tailed) values are even close to .05, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant correlation between attitude, TOEFL or TWE score and the QCO.

4.6.2 Type and Number of Changes Suggested to Peer

I also coded the various corrections offered by the anonymous partners to the students’ original essays using Min’s (2006) method for categorizing essay revision suggestions based on Sengupta’s (1998) earlier “framework for analyzing types, sizes, and functions
of revisions” (p. 126). More specifically, revision types included addition, deletion, substitution, permutation (or rephrasing), distribution (re-writing information in larger chunks), consolidation or re-ordering (moving) text (Min, 2006, p. 139). Figure 4.15 shows the overall tally of revision types as well as the revision types as a percentage.

![Percentage and Number of Revisions by Type](image)

Fig. 4.15: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by type.
The current study found that substitutions (35%) were the most common type of revision, which is corroborated by previous studies (Min, 2006; Sengupta, 1998; Sato, 1991). However, Min’s (2006) second and third rankings went to permutations (19%) and re-orderings (18%), unlike the current study where deletions (25%) and additions (24%) held the second and third places. Permutation (7%) and re-ordering (7%) were ranked much lower and only accounted for less than 15% of the total, unlike the 37% reported by Min. I attribute these differences to the fact that Min’s participants had much higher TOEFL scores, ranging from 523 to 550 (2006, p. 122) compared to the Madrid group in which only nine of the 25 participants had scores at or above 523. Again, the overall English language abilities of Min’s participants allowed them to make more complex suggestions and revisions to their peers’ papers. In addition, the top three ranks in Min’s (2006) study accounted for only 57% of the total revision types (p. 130), significantly lower than the nearly 85% of all revisions which made up the top three revision types in the Madrid study. Again, higher target language competence would likely result in more of a distribution among the various revision types as opposed to a clustering among the easier three types of addition, deletion and substitution found in the Madrid group.
Revision size was the next type of coding executed. Size refers to symbol, word, phrase, clause, sentence or paragraph. Figure 4.16 shows the revision distributions by size.

Fig. 4.16: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by size.

In the current study, the three most common revisions with respect to size were word (47%), symbol (25%) and phrase (14%), which when combined, represent 86% of all size-based revisions. This is quite different than what Min (2006) reported:

With regard to size of revisions, the most frequent revision occurred at the level of sentence (32%), closely followed by paragraph (20%) and word (20%). The
least revised part in terms of size of revisions was at the level of symbol. Only seven instances were recorded. Sengupta (1998) also found the sentence to be the unit that received most revisions in her study. (p. 131)

In this study, sentences (7%) and paragraphs (2.5%) were the least common, again likely due to the English abilities of the Madrid-based participants, most of whose TOEFL scores were below 520 placing them lower than Min’s students. In my opinion, the high number of symbol-size revisions in this study, which includes small scale items such as spelling, punctuation and inflectional morphemes, can be attributed to the frequent correction of punctuation in the students’ essays as well as the fact that I counted all inflectional morpheme changes, such as plural ‘-s’ and past tense ‘-ed’ as symbol revisions, for they only modified a verb’s tense or a noun’s number without affecting the word’s meaning or class.

Revision functions could be classified as grammatical, cosmetic, texture, which makes the text more cohesive and coherent” (Min, 2006, p. 141), un-necessary expression or explicature. Figure 4.17 displays the number and percentage of function-based revisions.
Fig. 4.17: Percentage and number of revisions offered to peers categorized by function.

The current findings in terms of revision function were very different from those found by Min (2006), who determined that the most common functions of revision were texture (39%), explicature (29%) and cosmetic (21%) which the current researcher calculated as 14% for texture, 5% for explicature and 13% for cosmetic. At first, it may seem that the current study contained some error in the coding. However, Min (2006) may have inadvertently biased her students; she wrote, “It is likely that texture (concerning coherence) and explicature (concerning explanation) were the most commonly perceived functions of revision because two of the principal foci of the guidance sheet used in peer review training were format and content” (p. 131). This was
not the case in the Madrid study, where there was no particular focus in either the pre-
activity training or on the electronic peer review feedback sheet (Appendix E) that was 
completed during the live peer review in the computer lab.

Even more divergent from Min’s (2006) study was the percentage of grammar-
based revisions in my current study, which made up the majority and accounted for an 
impressive 61% of all function-based revisions versus only 4% in Min’s study. My 
percentage is more than 15 times that found by Min, who was surprised at the very low 
number in that study. Min wrote

Interestingly, grammatical change (4%) was less common among writers in this 
study. A closer look at their first drafts revealed a lot of grammatical mistakes.

Yet, their reviewers appeared to ignore those errors as long as they did not 
obscure the intended meaning. Such a keen attitude toward understanding the 
content is probably an effect of the training. (2006, p. 131)

As the class’s instructor, I made it quite clear to all of the participants on many occasions 
both before and during the peer writing task that the primary purpose of the peer review 
activity was to provide comprehensive and extensive feedback so that the partner could 
improve his or her chances of writing a better second draft. All participants were strongly 
encouraged to mark any and all irregularities in the essays they reviewed. This included 
items that they did not understand, obvious grammatical and/or structural errors and 
anything that deviated from the expository writing style that had been taught in the 
classroom.
The pressing question, of course, is ‘Was there any relationship between pre-activity attitude towards peer review and the number and type of revisions offered?’ The average number of revisions offered by the participants was 3.07 per 50 words. Working on the same assumption as before, students with the highest pre-activity attitude scores should offer more revisions, whereas those with the lowest pre-activity attitude scores should offer fewer revisions. As Table 4.6 below shows, like the questions and comments offered, this was not the case for revisions either.

Table 4.6: Revisions offered by highest, middle and lowest pre-task attitude scorers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Highest pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Middle pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Lowest pre-task attitude score</th>
<th>Rate per 50 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the most positive students, only Participant 25 offered more revisions than the group average. Although three of the most negative students did offer fewer revisions than average as I expected, one of them, Participant 18, offered an impressive 5.6 revisions per 50 words, one of the highest ratios in the study. Even more surprising to me were the ratios for two of the middle students, Participants 21 and 23, whose ratios were 3.53 and 3.63 respectively. I would have anticipated them to be much closer to the average of 3.07.

In order to determine if there was any relationship between attitude and number of revisions offered to a peer, it was necessary to run a Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. The results were not encouraging. Table 4.7 reveals a correlation coefficient value of
only +.061, which is not significant. This number could possibly indicate an extremely weak positive linear relationship, meaning that as participant attitude becomes more positive, the number of revision suggestions also increases. However, like the data presented earlier, since there is no significance, this could simply be a random result, meaning there is no relationship between a student’s attitude and the number of revisions they offer to a peer when conducting a review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom.

Table 4.7: Pre-attitude and revisions suggested per 50 words Pearson Correlation Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre Attitude</th>
<th>SugRev_per50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Attitude</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SugRev_per50</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the Sig (2-tailed) value of .793 is far above the required .05, again there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude towards peer review and the number of revisions suggested to a peer.

4.6.3 Changes Accepted from Peer

One area of the peer review process that is often overlooked despite its importance is the amount of feedback that a student writer actually incorporates into his or her original essay after receiving a classmate’s suggestions, comments and corrections. Min (2006)
acknowledged this issue when she wrote, “In contrast to the large number of studies centering on the cognitive, affective, social, and linguistic benefits of peer response/review groups, few studies have examined the extent to which peer feedback is incorporated into students’ subsequent revisions (Chou, 1999; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Tsui & Ng, 2000). Results from these studies reveal a low ratio: ranging from 5% (Connor & Asenavage, 1994), 22% (Chou, 1999), less than 50% (Paulus, 1999; Tsui & Ng, 2000), to a little above 50% (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Tang & Tithecott, 1999)” (p. 119). This is an aspect of the current study that I felt would be worth exploring because I wondered how beneficial peer review would be if the recipients did not incorporate their peer’s suggestions. Some of these studies mentioned above require a more in-depth examination before discussing the present study’s findings.

“In a study of graduate students working in pairs, Mendonça & Johnson (1994) examined the influence of peer feedback on students’ revisions. They found that 50% implemented their partner’s suggestions, 10% did not make the suggested changes, and 40% made changes, but these changes were not directly mentioned by their partners” (as cited in Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 114). Perhaps these 40% were the result of indirect influence by the partner as the writer was forced to re-examine what they had written. Similar results were found in another study by Nelson & Murphy (1993). Nelson & Carson (1998) reported, “In a study in groups as opposed to pairs, Nelson & Murphy (1993) also investigated whether ESL students altered their drafts according to the suggestions made by their peers…in half the cases, students made significant changes
based on their peers’ suggestions” (p. 114-115). There is no way to control or enforce a student to implement the suggestions made by their peers in pair editing, but if all but 10 percent of the students are making some sort of modification to their papers after peer collaboration, I would consider this a significant accomplishment of peer editing.

Based on the positive effects of anonymity found in previous studies (Johnson, 2001; Lu & Bol, 2007; Zhao, 1998) I expected that the anonymous peer review activity would encourage students to incorporate as much feedback as possible into their final draft, resulting in a better final product. Johnson (2001) in particular believed that anonymity in peer review writing could avoid unnecessary biases, and he encouraged his students to submit papers without any names on them to avoid being influenced by factors such as knowing an author’s past grades, gender, or target language proficiency (p. 10).

To determine the amount of feedback that the participants’ incorporated into their final essays after receiving comments and suggestions from their anonymous partner, I analyzed the second/final draft [Essay 1/Draft 2] based on the following: percentage of changes accepted and rejected per total number of changes received (Fig. 4.18) and the number of changes accepted per 50 words (Fig. 4.19) to see if there was any correlation between their attitude towards peer review as indicated by the pre-activity Likert questionnaire and the number of suggested changes they incorporated into their original essay.
Fig. 4.18: Percentage of suggested changes accepted and rejected\textsuperscript{19} by essay authors.

Quite unexpectedly, participants accepted on average an impressive 70\% of the revision feedback as a group, a rate unprecedented in any of the previous studies. I believe this to be the case based on several factors. One is that in this study, the participants were rewriting Essay 1/Draft 1 and submitting it to me as Essay 1/Draft 2 for a grade, and this final draft was the only one I was correcting. Another is the fact that they were given 75-minutes of regularly scheduled class period in the language lab to rewrite their original essay incorporating their peer’s input; as a result, there was no imposition on their personal time. A third possible cause, and one that can only be surmised, is that the students were all aware that I was going to be analyzing the essays for my dissertation research, and considering the extremely high faculty evaluations I received from the group, it is entirely possible they made an extra effort simply to please me.

\textsuperscript{19} Values of zero percent indicate missing data
Analyzing the changes accepted per 50 words (Fig. 4.19), participants 10 and 22 clearly stand out as the two participants who incorporated the most peer-offered changes. While this is to be expected from participant 10, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.85 was tied for the highest, it is very surprising for Participant 22, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.08 was second to the lowest. Other unexpected outcomes were participants 7 and 25, both among the most positive at the start, yet with very low acceptance rates.

Fig. 4.19: Changes accepted by essay authors per 50 words (Average 2.28)\(^{20}\).

To examine the overall trends, another Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was done, this time comparing a participant’s pre-activity attitude score to the number of changes they accepted per 50 words (Table 4.8). Once again, the coefficient of +.034 indicates a too weak of a relationship between the two variables, and the Sig (2-tailed) value of .892 further supports the conclusion that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and changes incorporated.

\(^{20}\) Values of zero percent indicate missing data
Table 4.8: Pre-Attitude and changes accepted per 50 words Pearson Correlation Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre_Attitude</th>
<th>ChgAcp_per50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChgAcp_per50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 Pre and Post TWE Scores

One anticipated effect of both the peer review training exercise and the re-writing of the essays was an overall improvement in the quality of expository essay writing. While many past studies compared the same essay before and after peer review to determine if writing skills had improved, this study was more concerned with the participants’ final TWE exam score, which took place at the end of the semester. The reason for this is that this exam alone would determine progression out of ESL classes and into university content courses. A plot of the pre and post-course TWE scores (Fig. 22) show that the posttest TWE scores were indeed higher than the pretest scores, with the final TWE averaging 3.85 compared to 3.36 at the start of the study.
The pressing question, of course, is whether or not the increase was significant.

Conducting a paired samples t-test for pre and post TWE scores, we see that there was a strongly significant difference ($p < 0.001$) between pre and post TWE scores, as predicted (Tables 4.9 and 4.10).

Table 4.9: Paired samples statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>postTWE</td>
<td>3.8455</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.31279</td>
<td>.06669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preTWE</td>
<td>3.3636</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.35125</td>
<td>.07489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10: Paired samples test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>postTWE – preTWE</td>
<td>.48182</td>
<td>.45632</td>
<td>.09729</td>
<td>.27950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>4.953</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We need to be cautious with this result that even though the half-band level increase in post test scores was significant, this cannot be contributed solely to the peer review training, time spent analyzing another student’s essay or the time spent reading a peer’s suggested revisions and subsequently rewriting the original essay. Other possible factors for the increase could be the three extra months spent in ESL classes or spending many hours each school day on a predominantly English-speaking college campus. These are changes that occur naturally over time regardless of the treatment and present a very real threat to internal validity. Unfortunately, they are effects that cannot be isolated or evaluated in the current study, and future research is needed to determine what effects these external variables may have had on the students’ general English abilities, which could have easily transferred to their writing abilities and thus, an increase in post TWE scores.
4.8 Case Studies

Dealing with more than two dozen participants who completed numerous questionnaires, which also contained self-reported reasons for their decisions, it is not unexpected to have rich qualitative data to explore. Narrowing this down to a few case studies that represent the most interesting findings was not an easy challenge. I chose to identify the most positive, neutral and most negative participants, and then chose two from each category to analyze in-depth.

4.8.1 Positive Attitude Participants

Two of the female participants (4 and 7), and three of the male participants (10, 19 and 25), all scored 3.85 on the pre-activity Likert-based questionnaire, indicating that they began the study with the most highly positive attitudes towards peer review. Therefore, I expected them to offer the highest number of comments and questions as well as corrections to their peer review partner as well as incorporate a higher percentage of revisions received from their partners. As Table 4.11 below indicates, this was not the case, for none were above the average for all four categories.

Table 4.11: The most positive participants’ quantitative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average of all Participants</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P10</th>
<th>P19</th>
<th>P25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Questions &amp; Comment types suggested to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Revisions offered to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes accepted from Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of feedback revisions incorporated into final essay</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 4 scored above the average in three out of four, while Participant 25 was below the average for three out of four. These two participants, who represent the outliers in their group, will be examined in greater detail below.

Participant 4, with a pre-activity attitude score towards peer review of 3.85, was one of two Moroccan females. She was fluent in Moroccan-Arabic and French but had only studied English for six months before enrolling in the study. Despite that fact, she was a good writer in terms of content and organization, but had problems using French cognates and literal translations. Sadly, she also faced tremendous personal problems during the semester, including anxiety attacks, homesickness, depression, substance abuse and a death in her immediate family. Though she rarely completed her regular assignments, she seemed to enjoy the peer review process and participated wholeheartedly. When asked about her change in attitude during the weeks of the peer review assignments, she replied, “It’s fun, challenging, and keeps my mind off my problems.” When asked if she liked reading, writing and speaking English, her responses to the questions were:

1. Yes, I like it, because I like reading in general. And it helps me to improve my knowledge.

2. Yes, I like it for the same reasons.

3. I like it because I feel myself more knowledge, but I’m too shy.

I contributed her shyness to the fact that she had very limited experience using spoken English prior to the study. As a result, she lacked the necessary time exposure to the language in order to be confident enough to speak it in front of others. For her, it can be
assumed that doing computer mediated peer review as opposed to face-to-face would be beneficial for she would not have to speak publicly.

The fact that most of her responses to the Pre-Activity Questionnaire (Appendix B) were positive is not as impressive as her reasons for her choices. When prompted with the statement ‘I like correcting someone else’s essay’ to which she marked Strongly Agree, she also wrote, “I could probably do the same mistakes and it helps me to not make them again.” She also agreed strongly with the statement The time it takes to do peer-review justifies the benefits of the activity adding, “cause you keep everything in your mind after that.” She believed she would be more critical if she did not know the author and therefore would make more corrections and suggest more changes, for “sometimes, you don’t want to hurt anyone.” Based on this statement alone, it can be assumed that being tasked with a traditional face-to-face peer review would have reduced the number and types of feedback she would be willing to offer for fear of offending her partner.

In the Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet (Appendix E), which she completed during the peer correction exercise, she responded to an inquiry about preferring anonymous peer review as follows:

It doesn’t affect me to know or not the author of the essay. I like honesty for everything. I’ll give the same honest feedback in both cases, because I’m here to correct an essay and not think about the author.

At first, this may seem to contradict her previous statement about not wanting to hurt anyone’s feelings. However, I truly believe she expressed these later sentiments because
she was in fact conducting anonymous review and knew she would never have to work
with her partner face-to-face in a writing setting.

During her review, she offered her partner nearly twice as many questions and
comments than the group average (1.45 vs .81), and all but one would be labeled as
polite, constructive criticism or positive and encouraging (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: Comments offered by Participant 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polite, Constructive Criticism</th>
<th>Positive and Encouraging</th>
<th>Strong and/or Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple title</td>
<td>Nice introduction</td>
<td>NO contractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The persons there are not things</td>
<td>Is better to put my family because like this we can see that you really miss they.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is not necessary</td>
<td>Ooh! Beautiful sentence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could put in the beginning of the sentence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She did, however, offer slightly fewer revisions based on type, size and function than the
average participant (2.34 vs. 3.07). This was likely due to her TOEFL score of 480, quite
low for such the demanding task of extensive grammatical and structural essay revising.

The most significant results with respect to Participant 4 are in regard to her
rewrite. Not only did she accept 100% of her partner’s suggestions, resulting in a higher
than average rate per 50 words (2.86 vs. 2.28), but she also lengthened her final draft
from 297 words to 419, an increase of 41%, the most of anyone in the study. This is not
to say that more words make a better essay, but in her case, because her original essay
was vague and poorly written in several places, her partner’s accurate and correctly
placed feedback encouraged her to address his questions and concerns to create a more
detailed and obviously improved final product. A few of these changes are worth exploring further.

Participant 4’s Essay Improvements

In her original Causes of Happiness essay, the first body paragraph began and ended with the following two sentences:

One cause of happiness is related to conditions of life. Comparing to a rich man, a poor man will hope to switch their lifes just to not have to think about all the current problems that he meets all the time because of money.

Her reviewer, Participant 20, inserted this revision-oriented, local evaluation: “You do not say why the condition of life is a cause of happiness. You only mention some condition of life.” In her re-write, Participant 4 added the following sentences after the word money:

Money makes people ask themselves many questions: am I going to have money to pay for rent? Where am I going to live? Am I going to have lunch tomorrow? All these questions have several impact mentally and conduce to different kind of depression and stress.

Though not the most accurate clarification, it was a good attempt at further explaining what she meant. As the essay continued, the quality of her re-writes improved. She originally ended the second body paragraph as follows: “As much as we want, as much as we need, people around us make everything easier and better.” Her reviewer asked, “What can they help you with?” another revision-oriented local clarification. Her
response to this was an extensive addition that not only clarified her point but dramatically improved the paragraph:

A relative or a friend would never leave you alone in a difficult situation: feeling homesick, loosing someone, or being really sick. Also they would support your ideas and would help you to make them better by giving you the right advice.

The final and most noticeable change was to her conclusion. In the original text, there was no separate concluding paragraph. In the last body paragraph, she had written the short sentence, “This is the happiness!” Her peer’s response was “Is this the conclusion? First of all, it has to be in another paragraph, and secondly, it has to be longer.” This revision-oriented global evaluation, though somewhat abrupt, was well-deserved, and Participant 4 addressed his concerns, creating an entirely new paragraph that elaborated her thoughts:

Conditions of life, friends and relatives, and hobbies are influential on happiness. It creates pleasant and agreeable way of thinking that it’s essential in your life. All these positive attitudes are considered the causes of happiness. So don’t worry, be happy!

Despite the clichéd ending, it seems that she believed her partner had valid concerns about her conclusion, and she took his input seriously.

Her positive attitude towards peer review was also evident in her Post Activity Likert Questionnaire (Appendix C). She viewed peer review as a valuable part of the writing process, stating “it makes us think about mistakes, so we don’t do them again” and “I hope that I learnt from my peer’s mistakes and also my mistakes.” She also felt
confident in her ability to provide feedback to a peer, writing “I think that I am really doing it seriously.” When asked if she would participate in peer review again and if she had any other comments about her experience doing electronic peer review, her responses speak for themselves: “It’s a good way to improve my writing. I think in [of] all the peer activities, the electronic peer review in ESL 112 was the most interesting activity.”

Unfortunately, her attendance waned towards the end of class, and her final grade was less than 70%. On a positive note, however, her post course TOEFL and TWE scores were high enough to pass out of the EFL program, and she entered into the mainstream undergraduate program in International Business the following semester.

Participant 25 was a native Arabic speaker born in Egypt but who attended English medium schools since birth in Saudi Arabia. In my opinion, he did not belong in ESL 112 and should have been allowed to take English 150, the university’s freshman composition course. In fact, he scored 4 on the initial TWE placement exam, but because of his low TOEFL score (487), which he attributed to “not taking the test very seriously because I didn’t know it counted that much”, he was forced to enroll in ESL classes. He attended classes infrequently but managed to submit all of his assignments. When asked if he liked reading, writing and speaking English, his responses to the questions were:

1. Yes, because it’s easy for me to understand.
2. Yes, I express my thoughts in English.
3. Yes, because it’s easy for me to communicate.

Although he was quite fluent in English and his pre-activity attitude score was 3.85, he asked no questions and made no comments to his partner’s essay. However, he
offered many revisions, 4.75 per 50 words, well above the average of 3.07. Not only was the number of his suggested changes impressive, but their quality exceeded that of many of the other students in the group. Some examples are shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Revisions offered by Participant 25 to Participant 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Text by Participant 12</th>
<th>Revision Offered by Participant 25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This essay will explain which are the main effects.</td>
<td>This essay will present the three effects mentioned above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for sending some of the earned money to their families and need more money in order to fulfil their hopes.</td>
<td>to earn money, so they can send a part of their payment to their families The families are in need of the money in order to fulfil their hopes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example many women come to Spain for working as domestic household chores and also as waiters or secretary's office</td>
<td>For example, many work as domestic household chores and also as waiters or secretaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chance of a lifetime of many people who wants to survive.</td>
<td>opportunities for many people who are in need to find a change to a better life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One interesting aspect regarding Participant 25 was how he dealt with his partner’s suggested corrections; he ignored 11 out of 16, or approximately 69%, incorporating only .92 suggested revisions per 50 words, well below the group average of 2.28. This is not something that I expected, for I was under the logical assumption that a more positive attitude towards peer view would result in more acceptance of feedback. What I failed to take into account was the reality that some peer feedback will inevitably be bad. In this case, five of the eleven suggestions made by his peer were indeed incorrect, and by ignoring them, Participant 25 avoided changing text that did not need to be changed, thus maintaining the quality and accuracy of his original text. Additionally,
he further revised three of the suggestions (two incorrect, one correct) that resulted in a better final product (Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Participant 25 text changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P25 Original Text</th>
<th>P12 Suggested Changes</th>
<th>P25 Final Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When the immigration offers foreigners the Spanish residency</td>
<td>When immigration offers to foreigners the Spanish residency</td>
<td>When the immigration offers the Spanish residency to a foreigner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so it decreases job opportunities</td>
<td>so job opportunities decreases</td>
<td>which decreases job opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that are very time consuming</td>
<td>that requires many time</td>
<td>, which are very time consuming process to the applicant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that having his attention drawn to specific parts of his original text forced him re-analyze what he wrote. Covill (2010) reported this trend from numerous studies writing, “The experience of critiquing someone else’s writing makes students look at their own writing with a more critical eye (Herrington & Cadman, 1991; Nystrand, 1986; White & Kirby, 2005)” (p. 205). P25 validated this assumption by stating, “I would like to add the experience [doing an electronic peer review in ESL 112] helped me realize mistakes that I would not have noticed before.” He agreed that peer review was a valuable part of the writing process, adding “it helps me to improve my essay realizing mistakes that I won’t realize when I’m writing the first draft.” He also agreed that peer review improves student writing in general “because it is always possible to improve an essay by reviewing it.”

Finally, Participant 25 was the only student to mention audience. He stated he was confident in his ability to provide feedback to a peer “because I will provide feedback from an audience point of view.” Covill (2010) cited similar behavior from two peer
review studies, stating “Acting as a peer responder likely leads students to better appreciate the needs of the reader (Harris, 1992) and focuses students on the goals of the writing task and whether they themselves have met those goals (Rieber, 2006).” Participant 25 supported this assumption, adding “I made corrections, which I make in general, not focusing on who wrote it, but focusing on the audience.” Though I often reminded the students to always keep their audience in mind when writing, this was not mentioned on any of the peer review sheets. In the end, P25 finished the class with a B average, passed both his TWE and TOEFL and continued on to the International Business program.

4.8.2 Neutral Attitude Participants

Participants 17, 21 and 23 were the most neutral at the start of the study, with pre-activity attitude scores between -.02 and .06 from the group average of 3.4. Table 4.15 shows their other important scores, revealing that while P21 and P23 had displayed more positive behavior throughout the study, Participant 17 was negative in all areas.

Table 4.15: The neutral participants’ quantitative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average of all Participants</th>
<th>P17</th>
<th>P21</th>
<th>P23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Questions &amp; Comment types suggested to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Revisions offered to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes accepted from Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of feedback revisions incorporated into final essay</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Activity Attitude Score</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Activity Attitude Score</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 21 was a talented writer who should never have been placed in ESL 112 in the first place. His initial TWE score of 3 is suspect, especially considering his TOEFL at the time was 543. He was well-read in Spanish literature and despite being years ahead of his classmates intellectually, he never acted bored in class. He always attended lectures, completed his assignments and participated whole-heartedly in the study. When asked if he enjoyed reading, writing and speaking English, he responded:

1. I don’t read much in English because there are a lot of good Spanish writers.
2. I don’t mind writing in English.
3. I like it because it is a new language [to me] and I need it.

One bewildering trait that appeared numerous times in his questionnaires was his negative self-perception regarding his English abilities. With a paper-based TOEFL of 543, he was clearly in the top group of students based on language competence. Even towards the end of the course, when he knew he had an A average and would pass the TWE effortlessly (he scored a 4.5, highest in the class), he continued to express a lack of confidence with respect to providing peer feedback, stating “I don’t think I’m good enough in English yet.” Even more disconcerting was his response to the prompt *Do you prefer to know whose paper you are correcting, or would you rather correct an anonymous paper*” He replied in nearly flawless English:

I prefer to don’t correct any paper because I’m not good enough in English to do it. But if I have to, I would prefer to know the author because I can ask him why he wrote what he wrote. As I said, I am not that good in English to go out and correct anonymous papers.
Reading such statements would lead one to believe that Participant 21 would likely not feel confident or comfortable enough to offer much feedback. However, the opposite was true. In fact, he offered his peer 2.08 questions and comments per 50 words, greatly higher than the average of .81. He also offered more revisions per 50 words, 3.53, than the group average of 3.07.

A closer examination of his questions, comments and revisions prove that not only was Participant 21 capable of offering his partner, Participant 13, a good review, he actually excelled at it. Instead of simply adding or deleting words or phrases, he would state why he was making the changes and also suggested substitutions. To be quite honest, the quality of his corrections was as good as that of a teacher, and they are worth further analysis.

Participant 13 had the highest TOEFL score (597) of anyone in the study, and he was intentionally matched up with Participant 21, for I believed P13 was one of only two students in the entire study who would fully understand and be able to put to good use the feedback he was likely to receive from P21. The examples here prove that I made the correct decision. In his original essay, P13 wrote, “There are immigrants that are stolen by the local people,” and P21 commented, “It looks like you are saying that immigrants are kidnapped. But I think you want to say that their money is stolen.” He inserted the word ‘from’ after stolen. However, in the final draft, P13 rewrote the sentence as “There are immigrants whose money is stolen by the local people,” a very nice re-phrasing that not only clarified the sentence but made it grammatically correct.
In another example, P13 wrote, “It is true that immigrants are related to the crime.” His partner, P21, commented, “But not all of them, so we must not generalize” and offered the following new re-phrased sentence: “Even though it is true that immigrants are related to crime, we must not generalize because not all of them are.” P13 wisely accepted the suggested change in its entirety. One final example is P13’s original sentence, “In addition of doing these works, they do them for less money, so the prime matter is cheaper.” P21 offered the following corrections and comment: “In addition to doing these jobs.' I don't understand. What do you mean by prime matter?” The researcher, who also did not understand what was meant by prime matter, was very surprised when he read the corrected sentence in the final draft by P13, “In addition, they do these jobs for less money than a Spaniard, so the raw material is cheaper.” These are clear cases of successful peer input that led to improved writing. But we must keep in mind that these two students, based on their TOEFL scores, were competent enough in English to enroll in graduate level courses, so for them, the target language did not impede their progress at all. Their comments and revisions also support the higher number of evaluations and alterations shown in both Liu & Salder (2003) and Min (2006) whose participants were at similar advanced levels of English as Participants 21 and 13.

Because Participant 21 was so fluent, he was able to offer highly constructive feedback, and it is worthwhile to look at some of the general suggestions and evaluative comments he wrote on his peer’s essay. The reader will see that P21 wrote comments with a level of competence and maturity unexpected in an ESL class. Two of his local revision-oriented suggestions were, “The whole sentence needs a structural change,” and
“To make it more fluent, you should use a connector, like ‘also’, because you are writing about a different thing now.” One of his global revision-oriented suggestions was, “Maybe you should split the body part into three paragraphs with three effects.” Such explicit and useful input is far beyond what the average student will produce in a peer review activity. For someone who claimed not to be “good enough in English yet” to participate fully in peer review, even his global evaluative comments, more typical of teacher-feedback, were very impressive. He wrote, “Even the parts of this paper that are grammatically correct are hard to understand. Sentence structures are awkward and your choice of words is often unfortunate.”

In terms of P21’s incorporation of peer input, he scored very close to average, accepting 2.04 corrections per 50 words compared to 2.28 for the group. He did accept a higher percentage of feedback, 83%, compared to a group average of 70%, which is somewhat unexpected considering his obvious superiority with the English language. However, having a partner with a TOEFL close to 600 almost guaranteed high quality feedback, so P21 was wise to consider all recommended changes. When asked if he was confident in his peer’s ability to provide feedback, he neither agreed nor disagreed, but clarified that it “depends on who is correcting.” He agreed that peer review was a valuable part of the writing process, adding “sometimes peer review is very useful to point out mistakes.” He also commented that he would participate in anonymous electronic peer review again because “It’s useful when you can’t talk face-to-face with the author.” I feel Participant 21 would have benefited more from the peer review experience if he had been given the opportunity to engage in face-to-face review. At the
conclusion of the study, Participant 21’s attitude towards peer review remained unchanged, and his final comment was rather humorous, “I had fun doing my e-review, and I think it’s a good idea to save paper.”

Participant 23 was dead center in terms of pre-activity attitude towards peer review with a score of 3.4. He was an excellent student in terms of effort, participation and general desire to improve all aspects of his English abilities. He was also sociable, humorous and popular. His responses to liking English reading, writing and speaking were as follows:

1. Of course, I love it! It is an amazing way to enhance my level. I also like watching movies in it.
2. Not as much as reading because I am not bilingual yet so I cannot express my feelings writing in English. I would need to write in English to describe my feelings brilliantly.
3. Yes, I feel confident doing it.

Unlike P21, he did not express any sentiments of inferiority with respect to his English language abilities, writing, “I feel I can do it and help my peers.” I was surprised that P23 had never done a peer review before, and even more surprised at the enthusiasm with which he approached the activity. In his pre-activity questionnaire, he responded to the statement I like correcting someone else’s essay with “because it is a great way to improve my English.” He believed that peer review would improve student writing, stating “you are always improving checking mistakes.” On one hand, he supported the idea of anonymous review, writing “that would be cool because you can be absolutely
objective.” However, he then responded to the prompt *I prefer to know who is correcting my paper* with “Possible yes, so I can ask him what is wrong and how can I improve or correct them.” These seemingly conflicting opinions could be due to the fact that he had never done peer review before, so he was not exactly sure how he would view the experience anonymously versus face-to-face.

Participant 23 was close to the group average for all areas except questions and comment types offered, for his score of .39 was well below the average of .81, as indicated in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Participant 23’s quantitative scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>_aspect</th>
<th>Average of all Participants</th>
<th>Participant 23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Questions &amp; Comment types suggested to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Revisions offered to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes accepted from Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of feedback revisions incorporated into final essay</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Activity Attitude Score</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His QCO were very general and succinct: great essay, very well structured and just some grammar mistakes, while the revisions he offered to his peer were almost all grammatical (22 out of 26).

One very unique feature of P23’s rewrite is that he submitted two final drafts: one containing his personal commentary on his peer’s input, and the other a clean copy to be graded. It seems that although P23 accepted 83% of his peer’s corrections, he seemed somewhat offended by his peer’s criticism of his essay’s title, which he chose to be only
one word, Happiness. His partner, Participant 3, inserted the comment, “Very simple, what’s about? What causes happiness?” P23 responded, in 18-point font, the following:

I choose the title i want, I find it good, I don’t know why the corrector has to judge my title. At first, I assumed that the large font was a result of the title already being in 18-point. This error seemed supported by the fact that when his partner evaluated his introductory paragraph with the comment, “Is missing the thesis statement,” P23 inserted the comment, “I agree that the thesis statement is missing.” He then added the following entirely new 15-word sentence to the end of the introduction: “This essay will describe the principal causes of happiness according to my point of view” resulting in an excellent first paragraph in his final draft.

His response to the last question on the Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet (Appendix E), If you had to do this activity again, would you choose the same person to correct your essay? Why or why not? Please give specific examples raised a red flag. He wrote, “If he has been fair, of course I’d always choose him. If not, I would like to look for someone else.” He was clearly expressing a predisposed view that if a peer reviewer treats his paper unfairly in anyway, whether in reality or by perception, then he would want to change partners. One could argue, “Who wouldn’t want a different partner in this situation?”

At the end of the study, upon reading P23’s response to the last question on the Post Activity Likert Questionnaire (Appendix C) Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience doing an electronic peer review in ESL 112?, it was quite apparent that P23 was still feeling slighted by some of his reviewers comments and
suggested revisions. He wrote, “The teacher should correct and check the corrections of
the peer-review, before showing it to the student because sometimes, many peer-review
corrections are wrong and unfair.” This statement is somewhat perplexing, considering
the number of revisions he accepted, which were correct, and the large number of
positive comments (Table 4.17) that he made on the same questionnaire (Appendix C).

Table 4.17: Participant 23’s post peer review activity questionnaire statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Statement</th>
<th>Participant 23 Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correcting someone else’s essay was enjoyable for me.</td>
<td>Yes, was interesting, and a fantastic way to improve my English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked having my paper corrected anonymously.</td>
<td>I don’t care, I trust someone else’s judgement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My peer provided helpful feedback to me.</td>
<td>Yes, she has. All corrections are helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review was a valuable part of the writing process.</td>
<td>Definitely, it is a great way to learn and practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then something caught my attention: the words “Yes, she has.” In this study, there were
twice as many male as female participants, so the chances of getting a female partner was
only one in three. Further inspection of P23’s questionnaires showed that he always
referred to his unknown peer in neuter (them, the author, the student) or masculine form
(him, he). Since the main peer review activity of reading and marking of the anonymous
partner’s paper was done in a closed lab under the supervision of the researcher, P23
could not have known that his partner, P3, was in fact a female. However, at some point
in time between receiving his original essay back with his peer’s comments and rewriting
the final draft in the lab, and the next class when they completed the Post Activity Likert
Questionnaire (Appendix C), P21 discovered that his partner was P3.
To maintain the validity of the study, I had no choice but to meet with him and discuss the matter to determine if his negative comments toward his peer were gender based or the result of some other factors. The outcome of this meeting will be explored in greater detail in Section 5.7.3 Maintaining Anonymity. In the end, he passed both the TWE and TOEFL and his final average in ESL 112 was a B+.

Participant 17 was an average student who expressed interest in the study in the beginning and seemed to look forward to the peer correction activities, for he stated, “It is something new and different for me.” In response to liking reading, writing and speaking English, he wrote the following:

1. No, because I don’t usually read.

2. Yes, because it helps me to improve my writing skills.

3. Yes, because it helps me to improve my spoken English.

As time progressed, he developed an aloof attitude in class, often arriving late, and he usually handed in his assignments, which were never more than three short paragraphs, after the deadline. This was a direct result of the school making the decision that because he had already received a passing score of 4 on his TWE, he only needed to pass the TOEFL. He was enrolled in the intensive writing course to fulfill minimum semester credit requirements and to maintain his English writing abilities. He did not need to pass the TWE, but there was no choice but to keep him in the class.

Similar to several of his peers, because he had never done a peer review, he lacked confidence in his ability to provide feedback stating, “I also can make mistakes.” He believed that he would like correcting someone else’s essay “because it’s easier to
find other’s mistakes.” He also expressed confidence in his peer’s ability to provide feedback “because he can provide me his ideas and correct my mistakes.” He also expressed a preference for anonymous review, commenting “because it will be more objective.”

Participant 17 only offered brief comments to his partner, P8, who happened to write one of the best and the longest essay in the class (564 words), which P17 possibly viewed as more work that he did not need to do, considering he only wrote a 209-word essay, the shortest essay in the class and the absolute bare minimum to get his point across. His QCO rate was .54 per 50 words compared to the group average of .81, while his number of revisions offered was only 2.3 per 50 words compared to the group average of 3.07. He offered his partner little concrete advice, making vague statements like “I do not understand what you mean” two times, nor did he offer her one positive comment, something the group was explicitly instructed to do during peer review training. At times, because he never supported his comments or revision suggestions with reasons, he came across as curt, writing comments such as “You do not need that”, “Rewrite this sentence,” and “Run ons sentences, comma splices.”

When the time came to go to lab to receive the original essays marked with comments, suggestions and revisions and incorporate them,Participant 17 strolled into the room ten minutes late despite being forewarned that every minute would be needed to complete the rewrite in the allotted time. As the class had already begun, I held him at the door and quietly explained that P17 was not being fair to his partner, who had done a great review, offering more than 20 suggestions to his shorter-than-expected 209 word
essay, the shortest in the class and far below what he was both capable of writing and what was expected of him. It is very possible that my brief but strict reprimand affected both the rate of changes he accepted, .95 per 50 words, well below the average of 2.28 as well as the percentage, a meager 40% compared to the group average of 70% either because he was offended or insulted by our confrontation.

In the post questionnaire (Appendix C), Participant 17 agreed that correcting someone else’s essay was enjoyable “because I see how others write their essays.” He also, quite unexpectedly, agreed that peer review improves student writing in general “because people can tell you what you did wrong and you can tell them what you think about their essays.” On the other hand, he disagreed on the following three statements: I would participate in anonymous electronic peer review again, peer review was helpful in revising my essay, and my peer provided helpful feedback to me and added this comment after the last statement, “because I was not agree with every comment she made.” It was no surprise to me that P17’s post activity attitude score not only decreased by more than ten percent from 3.38 to 3.0 moving him from a neutral participant to the most negative one, but it was also significantly lower than the average score of 3.63. He finished the class with a B average and passed both the TWE and TOEFL exams.

4.8.3 Negative Attitude Participants

The four participants (15, 11, 20, and 18) who displayed the most negative attitudes towards peer review at the start were all males, which is hardly surprising considering they outnumbered the female participants by a ratio of two-to-one. Each of the negative participants will be explored in further detail below.
Participant 15, the most negative in the group, with a pre-activity attitude score of only 2.62, made some pessimistic comments at the start of the study. His response to the statement *I like correcting someone else’s essay* was “Is not fair because we’re not teachers who knows how to correct properly.” He also doubted his confidence in his ability to provide feedback to a peer, stating “I am not going to find all the mistakes of a peer.” He attended the class intermittently and failed to complete the study due to serious problems in his personal life. He was very apologetic, but it was obvious that he was not ready for the rigors of university life. A month after ESL 112 finished, he visited me, accompanied by his mother, seeking advice on what to do as they had been scheduled for a meeting with the Dean to discuss his expulsion from the university based on his attendance and GPA.

Participant 20 had never been involved in peer review before, and this affected his confidence level. He questioned the usefulness of serving as a peer reviewer “Because I usually have the same mistakes.” In fact, he ignored every one of his partner’s suggestions. When I asked him why, he replied, “I forgot to look at the comments.” I can only speculate that when he looked at the feedback, he realized incorporating the suggested changes into his final essay draft required a great deal of tedious work, so he may have decided to spend an hour and fifteen minutes of lab time doing nothing.

Participant 18 was an Arabic speaker with a very low TOEFL (453) but decent writing and rather good speaking abilities. He had the second most negative pre-activity attitude score of 2.9, and although he completed all assignments, he did so with minimal effort and as quickly as possible. He repeatedly told the researcher that he did not like
college and only came to school because his father, a university professor, made him. His father even requested a meeting with the researcher to discuss his son’s obvious lack of interest in higher education. Participant 18 confessed to spending all of his free time on the internet, chatting and playing interactive video games. His responses to the three questions regarding reading, writing and speaking English were as follows:

1. I don’t like to read because it is wasting time. There is internet which is easy to read fast.

2. Yes because it makes my English [under]standable.

3. Yes! Because I like it and I need to speak to American students.

Aside from his negative attitude, his Likert Pre-activity Questionnaire (Appendix B) contained several self-doubting comments. He disagreed to the statement I like correcting someone else’s essay, adding “Maybe I make a mistake or forget something.” Additionally, he expressed a lack of confidence in his ability to provide feedback to a peer stating, “I don’t think my English very high like an English person.” He expressed a strong desire to know his partner, writing “Just to make sure if he is easy or hard correction.” He also added the oddly placed comment, “I don’t mind to hear insults LOL.” Taking all of this into account, not much involvement was expected from P18.

To my surprise, Participant 18 offered his peer the second highest ratio of revisions in the group, 5.6 per 50 words of text, nearly twice the average. He also had a QCO of .8 (average was .81). The only area in which he under-performed was in his revision acceptance rate, a very low 33%, less than half the average of 70%. However, upon closer inspection of his essay drafts, it was determined that this was likely an effect
of the lack of helpful feedback he received from his partner, Participant 5. Aside from Participant 5 being one of the weakest students, she offered the fewest revisions by far of anyone in the study, only .63 per 50 words. For comparison, the next lowest number of revisions offered was 1.62 per 50 words, and that was from Participant 15, the most negative person in the group and the only one who dropped out of the study. With so few revisions or suggestions for change, it is no surprise that P18 only accepted 33% of them. The only valuable feedback he received which greatly affected his rewrite is shown below in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Participant 18’s text revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P18 Original Text</th>
<th>P5 Suggested Change</th>
<th>P18 Final Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She smiled at me and said “thank you my son and I wish you good life you and your friends and family”.</td>
<td>She smiled at me and said “thank you my son. I wish you have a good life, your friends and your family”.</td>
<td>She smiled and looked at me happily and said, thank you my son. I wish you, your friends and your family good life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the final version of his essay, Participant 18 made some changes on his own which he probably would not have done had his attention not been drawn to certain parts of the text by his partner. Also, he had 75 minutes in lab to rewrite and improve his essay. Because I was aware of P18’s internet addiction, I placed him in the front of the lab where his screen could be monitored. P18 was also warned in advance that no internet surfing was allowed during the rewrite activity.

Participant 18’s post questionnaire (Appendix C) showed an increase in his attitude from a score of 2.9 to 3.33, more highly positive than at the beginning of the study but still not as high as the group average of 3.63. He agreed that peer review was
valuable “to see their mistakes and try not to repeat them” and that the feedback he received was helpful “to see my mistakes in different ways.” However, his responses to other statements were quite negative. When asked if correcting someone else’s essay was enjoyable and if he would participate in anonymous electronic peer review again, he disagreed and wrote “Just boring. I don’t wanna see it again.” He also disagreed that his confidence had increased, stating “I’m not professional in this. Maybe sometimes I make mistakes.” He ended the class with a B- average, and he passed the TWE. Unfortunately, he did not pass the paper-based TOEFL nor the IELTS because of his writing. He was dismissed from the college and informed that he could return when he passed the TOEFL or IELTS.

Participant 11 was a shy, quiet, reserved and very respectful young man from an affluent Madrid family whose pre-activity score was 3.15. He never missed a class, always wrote interesting, well-organized and competent essays, and by the end of the course, had greatly improved in all aspects of English. He answered the three questions as follows:

1. Yes, it is interesting.
2. Sometimes.
3. Yes, I like English.

His scores were below the average when it came to offering feedback (Table 4.19), not unexpected considering his statement “I don’t like correcting” and his negative response to the prompt I would participate in anonymous electronic peer review again, “I don’t like it. I like to know who corrects it.” He once expressed the opinion that peer review
took too much time, and that the teacher should correct the essays, not the other students.

Table 4.19: Participant 11’s quantitative scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Attitude Likert Score</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Comments Offered</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisions Offered to Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisions Accepted from Peer per 50 words</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Changes Accepted</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Attitude Likert Score</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 11 only offered his partner one revision-oriented local evaluation, “This sentence does not make sense to me,” and two revision-oriented local suggestions, “It has to be: the second MOST COMMON effect of… and “Rewrite the sentence as I do on the previous paragraph.” He was also very brief in all of his questionnaire comments. He agreed that the peer review training helped him “to do better essays” and “It helps in improving the writing.” Such views would support his higher than average revision acceptance rate and percentage of changes accepted. Most of his partner’s revisions were grammatical on the word level, but there was one significant sentence revision. In the essay’s original introduction, Participant 11 wrote “This essay will describe the two effects that more benefits to Spain: multiculturalism and cheap labor. On the other hand, the one that more affects to Spain: crime.” His partner, Participant 7 offered the following: This essay will describe 3 effects of immigration in Spain.” P11 accepted it as is. Despite incorporating nearly all of his peer’s suggested revisions, he finished the study with the second most negative attitude of all the participants. I recall him stating that he felt the peer review was a lot of work and difficult, but he never expressed outright
dislike of the activity to me in class. He ended the course with an A- average, and he was passed out of the EFL program based on his post course TWE and TOEFL scores.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter examined various qualitative and quantitative data that hopefully made the different purposes of this study clear. The in-depth biographical descriptions of the participants as well as the case studies was intended to give the reader a clear picture of who the students were as individuals and what they were experiencing throughout the academically demanding and time consuming peer review process.

Due to the fact that all of the coding for the quantitative data in this study was based on coding that had been done in previous similar studies, it is important to re-iterate how the data here compared to the data produced in the seminal studies.

With respect to comment and question types (Liu & Sadler, 2003), upon which the current student was modeled, the percentages for evaluations, clarifications and suggestions between the two studies paralleled one another. In other words, evaluative and suggestive comments showed relative peaks in frequency, whereas clarification-based questions and comments displayed a valley, or lack of frequency. Alteration comments, on the other hand, were highly divergent. The greatest percentage (46.8%), or major peak, of comments and question types in Liu & Sadler’s (2003) study were related to alterations. In my study, however, alterations were the least frequent type of comment, accounting for only 10.5% of the total.

There are two possible explanations for this large difference in percentage with respect to alteration comments. One is that in this study, participants made the necessary
changes to their partner’s essays themselves as opposed to instructing their peer to make the change, which is how Liu & Sadler (2000) identified alteration comments. In my study, if the participants had used the phrase ‘change x to y’ word for word, then the alteration percentage would have been closer to 35%. Although still not as high as Liu & Sadler’s (2003) approximately 47%, the percentage would have been trending in the same direction if there had been a different approach to identifying the comment types. Furthermore, I believe that the unexpectedly significant difference in alteration percentages between the two studies could be an effect of the higher level of English of the participants in Liu & Sadler’s (2003) study. All of their participants were no longer enrolled in ESL courses, and in fact, were in their second semester of freshman composition. Since evaluation comments require a relative high level of fluency, it is rational to

Another aspect of quantitative data that showed importance was that the percentages of global and local changes in this study were identical to those found by Liu & Sadler (2003) even though the groups were somewhat dissimilar. Both studies revealed that the computer-mediated groups offered only 28% of their changes on a large, global scale, meaning larger portions of text such as the introduction, entire paragraphs in the body or the conclusion, but 72% on a small, local scale, affecting portions of the text such as sentences, phrases or words. This is really not so surprising, since it is easier for students to identify errors on a smaller scale, for example verb tenses, subject verb agreement and punctuation than it is to address larger ones, which are usually conceptual or content-based.
To determine if there was any relationship between a person’s attitude towards peer review and the number and type of questions and comments offered (QCO) to a peer, I conducted a Pearson Correlation for all participants. Quite unexpectedly, the analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant correlation between a participant’s attitude and the number or type of comments and questions they offer a peer.

The majority of the quantitative data had as its source my coding of the 490 total corrections collectively offered by the participants using Min’s (2006) and Sengupta’s (1998) method for categorizing essay revision suggestions into three major groups: type, size, and function. My study determined that substitutions were the most common type of revision, constituting 35% of the total, which is supported by previous studies (Min, 2006; Sengupta, 1998; Sato, 1991). Deletions (25%) and additions (24%) followed close behind, but this was not the case in Min’s (2006) study, which produced second and third rankings of permutations (19%) and re-orderings (18%). In my study, permutation (7%) and re-ordering (7%) were some of the least common revision types, only accounting for 14% of the total, unlike the 37% reported by Min. This could be due to the fact that Min’s participants had much higher TOEFL scores compared to the Madrid group, resulting in better overall English language abilities of her participants, which enabled them to make more complex suggestions and revisions to their peers’ papers.

With regard to function size, in my study, the three most common revisions were on the word (47%), symbol (25%) and phrase (14%) levels, with sentences (7%) and paragraphs (2.5%) least common. This is logical given the English abilities of the Madrid
group. They were most capable, and thus more comfortable, of correcting smaller chunks of information. Offering advice on sentences and paragraphs was likely too challenging for many of them participants due to their target language abilities. Min’s (2006) participants, who had higher English levels based on their TOEFL scores, were able to offer most of their changes at the sentence (32%), paragraph (20%) and word (20%) levels (p. 131). Comparing just suggested changes to sentences and paragraphs, the combined percentages for my study are a mere 9.5% versus 52% for Min. Clearly, the participants’ levels of English have a substantial impact on the size of the text they are able to evaluate.

Finally, analyzing the findings regarding revision functions between the current study and Min (2006), we see that the percentages are very different. Eighty-nine percent of the function revisions in Min (2006) fell into one of three categories: texture, explicature and cosmetic. However, in my study, the same three categories only accounted for 32% of the total, about one-third the number found by Min. Although her students were more advanced language learners, this was not the likely cause of the very different function percentages. Instead, in her pre-activity peer review training, texture and explicature were the two primary foci. As a result, her students were probably predisposed to concentrate their efforts on texture and explicature. This should caution future instructors about the direct effects of the focus of review activities resulting from the peer review training. Fortunately, a disproportionate percentage in my study did not likely occur because where there was no particular focus in either the pre-activity training
or on the electronic peer review feedback sheet (Appendix E) that would have drawn the students’ attention to a particular function.

The last area worth mentioning is the group’s impressive average of 70% acceptance rate of recommended changes, a number not seen in any of the previous studies. I believe this high rate is due to numerous reasons, including the ample in-class time allotted for all the peer review activities, the essay being graded, and the rapport that I had with the students.

Although many of the participants accepted all of the suggested changes, I needed to determine if an individual’s attitude towards peer review played any role in the acceptance rates. To do this, I conducted a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis comparing a participant’s pre-activity attitude score to the number of changes they accepted per 50 words of text. Surprisingly, both the correlation coefficient of +.034 and the Sig (2-tailed) value of .892 support the conclusion that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and changes incorporated.

In brief, twenty-four of the 25 participants who began the study finished it, resulting in a completion rate of 96%, which generated the extensive quantities of raw data presented above. Having so much raw data to analyze was the result of my decision to follow Genzuk’s (2003) approach to data collection, which he advised as initially collecting “in as raw a form, and on as wide a front, as feasible” (p. 4). It is wise to alert the reader that although there were many sources of data and many of them were being utilized simultaneously, it was not until long after all the data had been collected that its significance was truly realized.
CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The prevalence of English as the lingua franca of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries continues to drive the necessity for speakers of other languages to learn English. Incorporating the practice of peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom is not a novel concept, and it has continued to expand as the numbers of English language learners in today’s composition classrooms increases, often challenging instructors to maintain their role as primary feedback giver via one-on-one interactions. Furthermore, the push for collaborative and student-centered learning in modern classrooms is encouraging instructors to expand the skills that their students learn to include giving written feedback to peers in their classrooms. Although the teacher’s role continues to involve arranging activities and retaining the power of assigning a grade, there has been a definite shift in types of responsibility, and this may be difficult to accept for teachers who prefer to confine their work to traditional roles.

This new classroom dynamic, which relies heavily on co-constructed and collaborative learning, is proving to be very beneficial for the students. Rollinson (2005) wrote, “…in recent years, the use of peer feedback in ESL writing classrooms has been generally supported in the literature as a potentially valuable aid for its social, cognitive, affective, and methodological benefits…” (p. 23). In this study, where social benefits were negligible due to the anonymous component, it was expected that the peer review activities would serve the participants well cognitively, affectively, and methodologically. For example, the fact that the participants had to critique each other’s
essays using Liu & Sadler’s (2000) question and comment types in peer response as well as the Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet (Appendix E) forced them to meticulously analyze the text. They were accountable for making explicit comments and corrections which undoubtedly required them to use their minds and skills that were complementary to their own writing skills. In addition, it was anticipated that replacing face-to-face peer review with anonymous interaction would have released the students from the pressures of saving face, thus lowering affect. Finally, the hours of in-class peer review training and subsequent practice should have prepared students well, for they were taught both the how and why behind the peer review task.

This final chapter will offer a general review the study and discuss pedagogical implications, limitations and suggest recommendations for future research.

5.2 Review of the Study

In the spring of 2009, I taught a 14-week expository writing course at an American university in Spain, where I was able to train the participants on conducting a peer review of a multi-paragraph essay written by a classmate. Due to the racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious mix of the students, I chose anonymous peer review, so those who did not enjoy or benefit from face-to-face interaction, for whatever reasons, would still be able to participate in peer review activity.

After practicing peer reviewing together using a laptop and projector and correcting essays electronically for homework, all participants wrote an essay either on the Causes of Happiness or the Effects of Immigration on Spain during one class period lasting 75 minutes in a closed computer lab using MSWord 2004 to insert comments and
use the ‘track changes’ feature. Next, the participants were given another 75-minute lab period to review the comments and questions made to their essays, correct them and email them back to me, who forwarded them to their original author. Lastly, all participants completed a post-questionnaire survey to evaluate the peer review experience and state their perceptions of the activity.

Finally, I coded, categorized and tabulated the questions and comment types based on Liu & Sadler’s (2000) model as well as the essay revision suggestions according to revision type, size, and function based on Min’s (2006) and Sengupta’s (1998) previous studies.

5.3 Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study was to see what impacts, if any, both attitude towards peer review and anonymity in the peer review process have on the number and types of critiques offered to another student’s paper. Also, I wanted to determine how attitude and anonymity affected the number and type of changes that a student incorporates into his or her own paper after receiving feedback.

5.4 Summary and Analysis of Major Findings
I was able to utilize the in-class activities of completing questionnaires, peer review training, essay writing, peer correction and essay re-writing employed in this dissertation to examine five aspects of the relationship between EFL student attitude towards peer review and performance of the task of conducting a peer review. The results based on these will be examined below.
5.4.1 Correlation between student attitude and quality of peer review

The first question that I hoped to answer was “Do students with a positive attitude toward peer review offer more questions and comments\textsuperscript{21} to a classmate’s essay during anonymous electronic-peer review than students who display a negative attitude?” The five students with the most positive attitudes towards peer review at the start of the study based on their Likert-based questionnaire (Appendix B) were Participants 4, 7, 10, 19 and 25, all of whom had a pre-activity score of 3.85, above the 3.4 average for all the participants in the study. Therefore, I expected them to offer the most comments and questions. Surprisingly, that was not the case.

For the group, the average number of all types of questions and comments offered to a peer was .81 per 50 words. Going on my assumption that a positive attitude would result in more comments and questions, I expected Participants 4, 7, 10, 19 and 25 to have numbers well above .81. However, Participants 19 and 25 each offered zero questions or comments, while Participant 10 only had a score of .33, all well below the average. Participant 7 was .85, very close to the average. Only Participant 4, whose score was 1.45, was higher than the group average. In fact, the three students who offered the most comments and questions were Participants 8 and 9, whose pre-activity attitudes were middle-of-the-road, and Participant 20, who had the third lowest pre-activity attitude score of 3.15.

Based on these numbers, it appears that the number and types of questions and comments offered by the participants were random and unrelated to attitude. In fact, a

\textsuperscript{21} Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)
Pearson Correlation calculated for all participants resulted in a coefficient of -.133, proving that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and questions and comments offered. Based on my research and classroom experiences with peer review prior to this dissertation, I was surprised that there was no connection between a student’s attitude and an increase or decrease in the number of questions and comments offered, and this is actually the opposite of what I expected. However, there is the possibility that at least some of the participants approached the peer review process in my class with a *tabula rasa* or ‘clean slate’ approach. In other words, despite previous encounters with peer review, which could have been positive, negative or neutral experiences, they viewed the task in my class as an opportunity to start over without prejudices carried over from prior peer review tasks.

With regard to whether or not and students with a positive attitude toward peer review offer more corrections to a classmate’s essay during anonymous electronic-peer review than students who display a negative attitude, it was necessary to examine the number of corrections, from this point on referred to as revisions, that the participants offered. The average number of revisions offered by the participants was 3.07 per 50 words. Working on the same assumption as before, students with the highest pre-activity attitude scores would have been expected to have offered more revisions, whereas those with the lowest pre-activity attitude scores were expected to offer fewer revisions. Of the most positive students, only Participant 25 offered more revisions than the group average. Although three of the most negative students did offer fewer revisions than average as I

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22 Based on Min (2006)
expected, one of them, Participant 18, offered an impressive 5.6 revisions per 50 words, one of the highest ratios in the study. Even more surprising to me were the ratios for two of the middle students, Participants 21 and 23, whose ratios were 3.53 and 3.63 respectively. I would have anticipated them to be much closer to the average of 3.07.

In order to determine if there was any relationship between attitude and number of revisions offered to a peer, it was necessary to run a Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. The results: the correlation coefficient was +.061, which is not significant. Furthermore, the Sig (2-tailed) value of .793 is far above the required .05, solidifying the fact that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude towards peer review and the number of revisions suggested to a peer.

5.4.2 Correlation between student attitude and changes incorporated into essay

The next question I was interested in answering was “Do students with a positive attitude toward peer review accept and incorporate more questions, comments\textsuperscript{23} and corrections\textsuperscript{24} into their original essay after receiving feedback from an unknown classmate in anonymous electronic-peer review than students who display a negative attitude?” To determine the amount of feedback that the participants’ incorporated into their final essays after receiving comments and suggestions from their anonymous partner, I analyzed the second/final draft [Essay 1/Draft 2] based on the following: percentage of changes accepted and rejected per total number of changes received and the number of changes accepted per 50 words to determine if there was any correlation between attitude

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{23} Based on Liu & Sadler (2000)\\ 
\textsuperscript{24} Based on Min (2006)}
towards peer review and the number of suggested changes they incorporated into their own essay.

As a group, the participants accepted an average of 70% of the feedback they received from their partner, an acceptance rate far above the maximum of 50% reported by any other previous studies. There are several possible reasons for this high percentage. One is that I provided the participants plenty of in-class time to learn how to do a peer review, practice doing one, and in-class hours in the lab to write, correct a peer’s essay and re-write their original essay. As a result, very little of their personal time was sacrificed for the various activities.

To see if student attitude towards peer review played any role in the acceptance rates, I also conducted a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis comparing a participant’s pre-activity attitude score to the number of changes they accepted per 50 words of text. Unfortunately, the correlation coefficient of +.034 and the Sig (2-tailed) value of .892 supports the conclusion that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and changes incorporated.

Analyzing the changes accepted per 50 words, participants 10 and 22 clearly stand out as the two participants who incorporated the most peer-offered changes. While this is to be expected from participant 10, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.85 was tied for the highest, it is very surprising for Participant 22, whose pre-activity attitude score of 3.08 was second to the lowest. Other unexpected outcomes were participants 7 and 25, both among the most positive at the start, yet with very low acceptance rates.
To examine the overall trends, another Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was done, this time comparing a participant’s pre-activity attitude score to the number of changes they accepted per 50 words. The correlation coefficient of +.034 indicates a too weak of a relationship between the two variables, and the Sig (2-tailed) value of .892 further supports the conclusion that there was no statistically significant correlation between attitude and changes incorporated.

5.4.3 Changes in Attitude towards Peer Review

The final important question that I sought an answer to was the following: “Is there any change in attitude towards peer review after peer review training and the subsequent in-class writing activity?” Considering the amount of time it took to train the participants on peer review and the extensive work they did on writing, correcting and re-writing essays, I was not sure what the participants would write when it came time for them to evaluate the peer review experience in its entirety.

While research on peer review in the second language classroom shows little consensus, one recent study in a US content class indicated that students saw little value in peer review. Covill (2010), whose participants in a freshman level psychology class corrected a peer’s essay that was five pages in length, reported the following finding:

The majority of students who were required to follow a formal process for reviewing (whether that involved reviewing a peer’s or their own writing) did not believe that the process was particularly helpful for improving their written work for this class. These students also did not believe that the review processes improved their writing outside of the class. (p. 219)
Considering the fact that my group in Madrid was not fluent in English and that although the writing assignment and peer correction were both part of the course, the activities and associated questionnaires were demanding, it was possible that all of these factors might have negatively affected the participants’ feelings about the lengthy process. Participating in a study such as this required a great deal of dedication on the students’ part, and it was possible that the students in the current study would express similar sentiments as those in Covill’s (2010) study. To determine if this were the case, the final question on the Post Activity Likert Questionnaire (Appendix C) asked *Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience doing an electronic peer review in ESL 112?* Granted, this was not anonymous, but I promised the participants that I would not read Appendix C until after they had taken the TWE exam to avoid any possible bias from me towards their final graded essay exam.

Although not everyone commented as much as I would have hoped, the comments received were mostly positive and highly valuable. Participant 3 wrote, “I think is a good activity, an opportunity to learn and see how difficult is to correct an essay.” Participant 4, who had done peer review many times previously in her high school in many of her classes stated, “I think in all the peer activities, the electronic peer review in ESL 112 was the most interesting activity.” Participant 9 also offered compliments that were more general in nature and not specifically related to electronic peer review, stating “The class was very helpful for me because I learned many things about writing English and also many curiosities of the language – slang for example.” I was relieved to find that the Madrid group’s average post attitude score of 3.63 was
higher than the pre-attitude score of 3.4. In order to determine if this increase represented a significant difference in students’ pre- and post-instruction attitudes toward peer review, a repeated measures t-test was conducted. The test statistic was found to be $t(22) = 2.945, p = 0.007$ indicating that there was a significant gain in attitude scores between the pre-test and the post-test questionnaires. An analysis of the 95% confidence intervals corroborates this finding.

5.5 Student Comments on the Peer Review Experience

As indicated in the previous section, the participants’ attitudes towards peer review became more positive as a result of the activity. In my opinion, however, the comments they wrote about the experience are even more valuable than the statistical evidence. They indicate that the majority of the participants found the peer review experience to be helpful to them as writing students. This is something I had hoped would result, but it was not until I met with the students and read what they wrote on the post questionnaire that I realized how valuable the experience was for them.

5.5.1 Positive Comments

More than half of the participants offered comments praising the peer review activities. Participant 13, who was one of the strongest students based on test scores and in-class performance but had never done peer review before found the activity to be beneficial. He wrote, “The peer review is good. It helped me and it helped my mates. I would like to do more peer reviews in my English classes.” He told me that he would ask his next semester English instructor to include peer review in her course, since it was the most useful thing he had done all year.
Other positive comments made by the students included the following: “It helped me with my mistakes” (P2), “I hope that I learnt from my peer’s mistakes” (P4), “Because I learned new grammar skills, word choice, etc.” (P7), “Because reading essays could give me ideas to improve my writing and to avoid errors” (P9), “to do better essays” (P11), “new knowledge” (P12), “I am more critical now and I find the mistakes easier” (P13), “It’s not easy to make a good peer review that really helps to improve the essay,” (P21), “It helped me with my grammar, spelling, capitalizations” and “you are always improving checking mistakes.” (P23), and “I can see my common mistakes” (P25).

Finally, Participant 19 hinted at recognizing a sense of audience, writing, “is a good way to improve your skills in writing putting yourself on the teachers side.” One final comment by Participant 25 showed that the peer review process, for him, met one of my most important objectives. He stated, “I would like to add that the experience helped me realize mistakes that I would not have noticed before.” Clearly, they found many benefits beyond simply grammatical or surface corrections, which many of the opponents of peer review claim to be the only aspect of the process to which students pay any attention.

5.5.2 Negative Comments

I was rather surprised to receive so few negative comments regarding the peer review experience, especially considering what Zheng (2012) reported in her study so recently (see section 2.3 Pitfalls of Peer Review). In the Madrid group, no one mentioned not having all of their errors pointed out, nor did anyone display a sense of mistrusting his or
her partner. However, one interesting situation related to these first two concerns arose with Participant 25, who ignored many of the changes that his partner suggested because he realized that they were incorrect. Although he did not state that he did not trust his peer’s input, he was fluent enough in English to recognize incorrect feedback and disregard the recommended changes. As his case warrants further exploration, it will be addressed in more detail in the limitations section below. Also, because the Madrid group utilized anonymous computer mediated communication as opposed to face-to-face interaction, there were no explicit disputes like those mentioned by Zheng’s (2012).

Some of the students mistrusted their own abilities, indicating they did not believe themselves to be fluent enough in English to offer a peer review as good as a teacher. For example, Participant 16, one of the weakest students based on test scores and in-class writing assignments, found the activity to have positive effects though he admitted that the teacher still plays an important role. He wrote, “The peer review helped a lot to improve my writing, not as much as the teacher review. But if you correct for somebody else, you will see you and his mistakes and actually that was helpful for me.”

One complaint that many of Zheng’s (2012) students made regarding peer review, that “It’s time consuming, so students just hurry up the activity” (p. 121), did not seem to be an issue in this study. I believe that this can be attributed to the fact that because I allowed the participants to use three, regularly scheduled, 75-minute classes in the computer lab to write their essays, conduct the peer review, and then rewrite their essay, the students took their time and did not rush the activity. In fact, the behavior of only one
male (Participant 17) indicated that he rushed both his original essay and the peer review (see 4.8.2 Neutral Attitude Participants).

Another student concern mentioned in Zheng’s (2012) study was that revision suggestions were inappropriate. I interpret inappropriate in this context to mean offensive, as opposed to incorrect, which will be addressed in more details below in section 5.7.2 Low Quality Feedback. Leki (1990) wrote that “Students may be hostile, sarcastic, overly critical, or unkind in their criticisms of their classmates’ writing” (as cited in Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 227). In order to try to prevent this type of behavior from happening, a good part of the peer review training included examples of both appropriate and inappropriate comments (See Sections 3.7.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning Training and 3.8 Peer Review Practice Activity). Using MacLeod’s (1999) advice to be diplomatic when offering feedback, all of the participants were told that comments should be constructive and honest but not hurtful, insulting or offensive. Participant 4 showed she was clearly aware of being sensitive to her peer’s feelings, for one of the comments she wrote regarding giving feedback was “sometimes, you don’t want to hurt anyone.”

5.6 Pedagogical Implications

One of the primary goals of this study was to determine whether or not a participant’s attitude towards the peer review process plays some role that affects both their willingness to participate in and effectiveness in offering a useful peer review to a partner. If the data had revealed a relationship between a positive attitude and a successful peer review, defined as offering more suggestions and corrections to a peer
than a neutral or negative participant, or that there is some relationship between negative attitude and failure to participate in the peer review task successfully, then perhaps classroom writing instructors should not mandate peer review to everyone. Instead, peer review should be a voluntary activity to be done outside of the regular, scheduled classroom time only for those students who are interested in the peer writing process, allowing them to participate at their own discretion.

However, this study did show that student attitude towards peer review became more positive over the course of the peer review process. This could have been a result of the training and related scaffolding or the in-class time spent on the activities or a combination. Furthermore, since this study failed to show any correlation between a student’s attitude towards peer review and the type and number of corrections suggested to or incorporated into a partner’s essay, then in my opinion, anonymous or blind peer review should be mandated for all students in the ESL/EFL writing class.

5.6.1 Students Need Explicit Peer Review Training

Covill (2010) wrote, “Many composition experts argue that students must be trained how to respond effectively to each other’s writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2006), or at least be given guidelines by the teacher (Hillocks, 1986)” (p. 205). To improve the quality of feedback, Rollinson (2005) suggested conducting “class discussions of the purpose of peer response and the role of the responder” as well as having “non-threatening practice activities during which there is class modeling and discussion of adequate and inadequate commenting” (Rollinson, 2005, pp. 27-28). In order to accomplish these crucial components in my study, I spent hours planning and then executing a weeklong pre-
activity training exercise to meet these needs (see Sections 3.7.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning Training and 3.8 Peer Review Practice Activity). The class spent two full periods (150 minutes total) on in-class training, plus they completed the practice peer review for homework, a task that likely took 30 minutes or more. I discussed with the participants how to politely conduct peer correction so as not to offend, insult or embarrass the writer. This, of course, was based on the standards of what is appropriate in my setting, an English-speaking American classroom, a task which may not be easily accomplished elsewhere considering the many different possible multicultural and multilingual settings in which a similar study could take place.

Like any other classroom task, there are foundations that must be laid regarding peer review to at least increase the chances of success. Rollinson (2005) wrote, “…training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing quality” (p. 24). Before I attempted to incorporate peer review, I was aware that I would have explicitly teach and model to the students what peer correcting entails. Rollinson (2005) suggested the following:

Even before the response process begins, some form of pre-training is crucial if the activity is to be truly profitable… students have to learn a variety of basic procedures, as well as a series of social and interactional skills such as arriving at a consensus, debating, questioning, asserting, defending, evaluating the logic and coherence of ideas, and expressing criticisms and suggestions in a clear, comprehensible, yet tactful way. (p. 26)
Though all of these can be explained via classroom in mini-lessons, the notion of being tactful is highly challenging to teach, especially since the concept is so culturally and individually rooted.

Following the advice of both Rollinson (2005) and Hansen and Liu (2005), I modeled a peer review over two 75-minute class periods to the students in order to provide them a firsthand experience in the task. I chose using two anonymous essays from previous students and correcting one together as a class and the other for homework electronically. MacLeod (1999) stressed the importance of teaching the students how to use the computer applications they would need to conduct the electronic peer review “to avoid having the applications hinder rather than enhance communication, provide instruction on using the software” (p. 89). She also encouraged tasking the students with “a few practice activities and give the students time to become familiar with the instructions and comfortable with the software” which “results in fewer computer questions and problems during the peer review” (MacLeod, 1999, pp. 89-90). I did this by demonstrating to the class how to make “track changes” and “insert comments” via MSWord into an anonymous multi-paragraph student-produced essay that was displayed to the entire class simultaneously using a laptop and overhead projector.

As the literature above draws so much attention to the importance of proper peer review training, I was curious to see how the participants would evaluate the training exercises that we participated in as a group. Macleod (1999) stressed the importance of proper, sufficient training, especially when using technology, when he wrote:

The key to success is training students to understand how to use the computer
application comfortably; instructing them in accepting and providing criticism;
allowing enough time for them to complete the rating form and post comments;
and providing structured questions for the postings. (p. 94)

Because I felt they had received adequate training, it was no surprise to me that nineteen of the participants agreed that the peer review training helped him/her, and two strongly agreed. No one wrote anything negative about the training, and it seems that it was worth the time and effort for all involved. Therefore, it is imperative that instructors who plan on implementing peer review in their courses see to it that their students are trained properly by not only demonstrating to them how to conduct a review but also providing them ample opportunities to practice peer reviewing on their own before in a no-stakes activity. Only after such training should an actual peer review task be assigned.

5.6.2 Students Need Time
I wanted to make sure that this peer review activity was not simply a quick paper-exchange that resulted in few, if any, concrete revision suggestions. In order to accomplish this, I took the time to demonstrate and train the participants on Liu & Sadler’s (2000) sample question and comment types in peer response, which I believe was the primary reason for the 124 comments and questions that were offered collectively by the participants. These comments and questions are valuable because they showed exactly what the students were thinking as they read and corrected each other’s essays. They also revealed several important things to me: text that the participants did not understand, text that they liked or approved, and text that they disliked and wanted changed, in some cases with reasoning to support their advice.
In my opinion, the explicit comments and questions that the participants directed at specific parts of the text indicated the ‘why’ behind the suggestions the students were offering to their peers. Had I not utilized Liu & Sadler’s (2000) model, I would have only received editing marks on the essays without any examples of how the students were interacting with the text. This information is valuable for me as a classroom writing instructor to share with other future students of mine who will be participating in peer review in the future because it shows the students that they and their classmates can and do make valid and useful suggestions to their peer’s essays.

I could find no references in the literature suggesting how much time should be spent on training students on peer review. The students in my study were given 150 minutes in-class training with me, plus at least an additional 30 minutes in homework related to the task, resulting in a total of 180 minutes or three hours of training time. Given their intermediate to advanced levels of English, I felt this was sufficient for most of them. However, it may not have been enough for the weakest students, in particular Participants 5 and 18. One dilemma, which will be addressed further in limitations below, is allotting sufficient time to the training without having the activity occupy too much of the overall class time. In this study, one full week out of a 14-week semester was set aside for peer review training. This is about 7% of the total semester, which I feel is appropriate. However, had the writing course only been eight weeks long, then a full week of training would have been too much.

The target language level of the students must also be taken into account. Perhaps a more advanced class would have only needed half the amount of time, whereas a lower
group would have needed an additional day or two. These are factors that anyone attempting to use peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom in the future has to take into account, and it all depends on the level of the students in the class.

One final aspect related to time that I believe encouraged participation by the students in my study was that aside from one practice homework assignment, which likely took the students no more than 30 minutes outside of class to complete, all of the training, essay correcting and the questionnaires were done during regularly scheduled class time. There was very little imposition on the students’ private time. It has been my experience that many students do not like to spend much time on homework, which is the primary reason that I integrated the majority of peer review activities into my regularly scheduled class time. I did not want to run the risk of having students either rush through the assigned tasks or not do them at all. In fact, the only student who disagreed with the statement ‘The time it takes to do peer review justifies the benefits of the activity’ was Participant 15. He was also the only student who did not complete the study.

5.6.3 Standardization

One limitation I discovered in the literature on peer review in both the ESL/EFL and English as a first or native language classroom was the lack of standardization with respect to both peer review training of the students and the subsequent coding of the essays by the researchers. Both aspects were quite variable among the studies reviewed. Not only was it difficult to find the methods that I found to be most accessible, logical and useful for training my participants and marking their essays, but it compounded the difficulty of the task to read comparisons of different studies examining similar pros and
cons of peer review when the training experiences and the essay coding were very different.

In a perfect world, it would be useful to have a set of standard procedures for conducting peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classroom with respect to the training of students. The computer-based peer review training procedures described in Section 3.7 of this dissertation could serve as a starting point for these procedures, at least for those classes utilizing computer-mediated communication. Obviously, another set of standards would be needed for paper-based peer reviewing. Similarly, it would be useful to have a basis for the coding of the essays in order to insure that future peer review writing studies end up with truly comparable results. I must caution the reader, however, that although the peer review training and coding that I used in my study worked very well for me, perhaps this would not be the case for other researchers.

These individual differences are probably the reason why there is no standard set of training and coding procedures. There are simply too many variables involved such that each study requires a customized training plan and coding rubric to best acquire the desired results from the students. In retrospect, it is probably not sensible or really that useful to have one, strictly adhered to set of training and coding rules for everyone to follow.

5.7 Limitations
There were, to reiterate, encouraging outcomes of the course that served as the context for this study: 1) the participants expressed a more positive attitude towards peer review at the end and 2) there was a half-band level increase in posttest TWE scores, which was
determined to be significant based on a paired samples t-test. Nevertheless, there are several components of the study that need to be discussed as limitations of the study. These include skepticism by the participants in the correction and feedback abilities of their partner, receiving low quality feedback, maintaining anonymity and the time required for the training and execution of the activity. All of these will be discussed individually below.

5.7.1 Participant Skepticism

Although most of the students seemed satisfied with their partner, Participant 10’s experience brought up a valid concern. Even though I had matched him with a partner of similar language abilities based on pre-course test scores, he did not perceive that to be the case. In fact, he did not believe that his English was as good as his partner’s, which caused him to struggle with the task. He wrote, “Maybe put the almost same level students together because the best student’s essay for the other students whose English is no so good in the class is really difficult.” In a case like this, where a student clearly states s/he feels there is a mismatch in abilities, then the student should be given the opportunity to exchange papers with a different partner. Although a good option in theory, this is not always possible.

5.7.2 Low Quality Feedback

Despite all the training, there is not much control an instructor has once the actual peer reviews begin regarding the prevention of students giving or receiving poor, incorrect or insufficient feedback. Two of the students in this study received a disproportionate
amount of bad feedback, but fortunately, they had the knowledge and self-confidence to ignore the suggested changes.

Participant 18 discounted 67% of the changes offered to him by his partner. A closer inspection of his essay drafts revealed that this low rate was likely the result of the poor and often incorrect feedback he had received from his partner, Participant 5. She was one of the weakest students in the study, and she offered the fewest revisions of anyone. With so few correct suggestions, it is no surprise that Participant 18 only accepted 33% of them.

Participant 25 disregarded the highest percentage of suggested revisions of anyone in the study, nearly 70%. He was both fluent and confident enough to recognize and reject incorrect feedback. In his case, five of the eleven suggestions that he ignored were faulty, so by rejecting them, he avoided changing text that was correct, which maintained the quality of his original essay.

The only assistance a teacher can provide to avoid the acceptance of low quality feedback is to encourage the students to believe in their target language abilities and reject corrections that they believe to be erroneous. Of course, this is more feasible with higher level students, as the more knowledge of the target language a student has, the better s/he will be able to judge what feedback is unacceptable and should not be incorporated.

5.7.3 Maintaining Anonymity

In order to guarantee anonymity in the peer review process, I utilized the only lab that had dividers separating each computer desk, which prevented the participants from seeing
one another or communicating during the writing and correcting of the essays. More importantly, the computers in that room allowed me, instead of the students, to log on to all the desktops using my username and password, so that none of the students’ initials would be attached to the comments and track changes.

Despite my proactive precautions, it became apparent to me during the review of the students second drafts and post activity questionnaires that one student, Participant 23, had figured out who his partner was. I invited him to my office, where I calmly explained to him that I believed he had figured out who his partner was. I also added that the two had been paired up solely based on the fact that their TOEFL scores were so close (TOEFL 530 for P23 and 510 for P3), and more importantly, their TWE scores were identical (3.5). In a concerned and non-judgmental tone, I asked the student if he had any issues with having a female reviewer as opposed to a male one. P23 responded, “Of course not. It don’t matter.” He then hinted that he had developed romantic feelings for P3 during the course, but unfortunately, these feelings were not reciprocated. Participant 23 admitted that he had complained to P3 outside of class that his reviewer had insulted his title. Once she realized it was her comment that had offended him, she admitted it and apologized. He accepted, and the two had then decided not to inform me of the situation as it was not until after their essays had been marked, re-written and resubmitted that they discovered they were partners. Thus, only the final Post Activity Likert Questionnaire (Appendix C) was compromised. Participant 23 admitted that he was actually happy with the peer review exercise in general; it was the romantic situation (or lack of) with his partner that caused him to write the negative comments on the final
questionnaire. This type of negative effect of working face-to-face is one of the primary reasons that I chose anonymous peer review.

The question, then, is what else can an instructor do to maintain anonymity aside from the precautions already mentioned in this dissertation? The best situation would be one that involves students from different classes or even better, different campuses. Unfortunately, this is not always an option.

5.7.4 Time Constraints
As mentioned previously, allotting sufficient time to training without having the activity occupy too much of the overall class time can be a challenge. In addition to the training, I also provided the students three additional 75-minute classes in the lab to write Draft 1, correct their partner’s paper, and write their revised Draft 2. As a result, in my study, students spent 2.5 weeks out of a 14-week semester, or 17.8% of the semester, on peer review activities. I do not consider this to be an imposition on their time as it afforded them the opportunity to work with a sample essay, a peer’s essay and their own essay twice. However, many ESL/EFL programs run on trimesters or quarters, limiting the instructor to student contact to ten or eight weeks respectively. In cases where the writing course is much shorter, a two and a half to three week peer review activity would have been a serious imposition.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Research
There are several aspects of this study that I would like to replicate or encourage others to explore. One of them is to repeat the study with a larger sample size, perhaps involving students of similar English proficiency levels to those in the current study but perhaps
from several different writing classes at different institutions to better insure anonymity. It might also be useful to the ESL/EFL writing community for others to use the same training and coding approaches with a similar group of students but also assign a second peer reviewed essay, this one face-to-face, which could further explore the validity of my belief in the necessity of anonymous review.

I am confident that the ESL/EFL writing communities would also benefit if other researchers replicated this study using the same or very similar training procedures and question and comment parameters set forth by Liu & Sadler (2000) as well as the same coding regarding revision type, size, and function used by Min (2006). I found her coding to be both accessible and useful for me as an instructor and researcher. The more data that can be collected using the same foundation can only further solidify the findings from this and other studies in the field of peer review in the ESL/EFL writing classrooms.

One aspect of the study that I did not have the time to explore were any possible effects that the peer review activity may have had on the quality of the essays that I analyzed for this study. If I had had the time and colleagues available, I would have subjected both Draft 1 and Draft 2 to blind TWE marking and then a paired samples t-test to see if the students’ essay scores improved, and if so, how significantly, as a result of the peer review process. Since I was more focused on their attitude towards peer review and how this manifests itself in the quality of the review they provided to a peer as well as their willingness to accept another student’s feedback, I did not analyze the essays for grade improvement. Perhaps this is something that I will do in the future, since I have the
first and second drafts of the students’ essays. Any positive findings here would certainly validate the amount of time spent on the entire peer review process.

5.9 Conclusion

This dissertation did not produce clear results that substantiated the expected outcomes, in particular that a student’s attitude towards peer review plays any significant role in the willingness to participate in peer review, the quality of peer feedback provided to others or their willingness to take advice from other students in the context of the EFL writing classroom. Importantly though, the outcomes of this study do provide extensive data on the number and types of questions, comments and correction types students make to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review. The study also shows the types of corrections students incorporated into their original essays based on the feedback they received from a peer.

Most importantly, this study provides valuable information on what the 25 students who participated in the study thought and felt about peer review as they revealed their personal feelings on the experience before, during and after the writing task on several topics including the value of the experience, effects on their writing, insecurities about their English writing skills, the confidence they have in their peers based on perceived target language competence and how this manifests itself in the ability to provide helpful feedback and the willingness of the students to participate in peer review again in the future. Of course, although it cannot be generalized that the feelings and opinions of the students in this study can be applied to all ESL/EFL students who participate in peer review in English writing classrooms, it does provide the global
ESL/EFL community valuable information on what other students in similar peer review situations may feel and experience when conducting a peer review. This information is important for both instructors and researchers.

In closing, I feel it is my duty to caution the reader to both address and attempt to lessen the misconception that most students have towards peer review in the writing classroom, namely that its purpose is “to be finding mistakes or problems in each other’s essays” (Nelson & Carson, 1998, p. 122). In addition, anonymous or blind peer review should be encouraged to free students from many of the negative aspects of the collaborative writing process. In fact, I believe that based on many of the social, cultural and academic factors mentioned in this dissertation, anonymous reviewers will be more comfortable conducting a thorough peer review, will offer more and better constructive criticism and will be more honest in their critique, regardless of attitude towards the experience, simply because of the fact that they do not know whose essay they are correcting. Classroom instructors must also keep in mind that peer review may not always provide the expected outcomes. Target language competence, culture and individual personalities must all be taken into account before assigning activities that require peer collaboration. These individual and context differences, along with proper training in peer feedback, must be fully addressed with all participants in order for the participants to get the most benefit from the peer review experience in the ESL or EFL writing classroom.
APPENDIX A – BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

Please answer the following an honestly and accurately as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (M or F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years studying English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where did you study English?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your general knowledge of English?</td>
<td>Fluent – Excellent - Very Good – Fair – Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your writing skills in English?</td>
<td>Fluent – Excellent - Very Good – Fair – Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your writing skills in your native language(s)?</td>
<td>Fluent – Excellent - Very Good – Fair – Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like reading English? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like writing English? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like speaking English? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX B – PRE ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE**

*The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom*

(To be used before the anonymous electronic peer feedback training.)

- Please define peer review. If you do not know what it is, write what you think it is.

- Have you ever done peer review before? Yes or No

- If no, would you like to learn more about peer review?
  - If yes,
    - a. Where? __________________________________________
    - b. When? __________________________________________
    - c. For what classes? _________________________________
      _________________________________
    - d. How many times?

Please state your opinion on the following statements. Please try to agree or disagree. Choose neither agree nor disagree only if you have absolutely no opinion in the matter.

1. I like correcting someone else’s essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

2. I am confident in my ability to provide feedback to a peer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
3. I am confident in my peer’s ability to provide feedback to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

4. Peer review improves student writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

5. Peer review has been helpful in revising my essays in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

6. The time it takes to do-peer review justifies the benefits of the activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

7. Peer review is a valuable part of the writing process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

8. I like to correct a paper without knowing the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
9. I prefer to know whose paper I am correcting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

10. I like to have my paper corrected anonymously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

11. I prefer to know who is correcting my paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

12. I will be more critical if I do not know the author; therefore, I will make more corrections and suggest more changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

13. I will be less critical if I do not know the author; therefore, I will make fewer corrections and suggest fewer changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
APPENDIX C – POST ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

(To be used after the anonymous electronic peer feedback)

1. Correcting someone else’s essay was enjoyable for me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

2. The essay I corrected was interesting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

3. I liked correcting an essay without knowing the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

4. I liked having my paper corrected anonymously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
5. I am confident in my ability to provide feedback to a peer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

6. I am confident in my peer’s ability to provide feedback to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

7. I provided helpful feedback to my peer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

8. My peer provided helpful feedback to me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

9. Peer review was a valuable part of the writing process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
10. Peer review improves student writing in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

11. Peer review was helpful in revising my essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

12. Peer reviewed improved my final essay draft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

13. I was more critical because I did not know the author; therefore, I made more corrections and suggested more changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

14. I was less critical because I did not know the author; therefore, I made fewer corrections and suggested more changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?
15. The time it takes to do e-peer review justifies the benefits of the activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

16. I would participate in anonymous electronic peer review again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

17. The peer review training helped me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

18. The next time I do a peer review, I will be more confident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Why?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience doing an electronic peer review in ESL 112?
APPENDIX D – PEER FEEDBACK CLARIFICATION FORM

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

(To be filled out by the author of Essay 1/Draft 1 after receiving the Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet – Appendix E from their anonymous reviewer.)

Dear Author,
Your essay was just reviewed anonymously by one of your peers. Please read the comments made in the margins on Essay 1/Draft 1. If there are any comments that you do not understand, please indicate the number of the comment in the left hand column in the table below. In the right hand column, please ask the reviewer for clarification. A sample has been done for you.

Be sure to skip one row of boxes to leave space for the reviewer to respond to your question!

Send this back to the instructor/researcher within 24 hours. He will forward it to your reviewer who will reply to each clarification request in the row below each of your questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Number</th>
<th>Request for Clarification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample comment #8 (The anonymous reviewer wrote So?)</td>
<td>Do you mean you do not understand what I wrote, or do you mean you do not understand why this is important to the paragraph?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
<td>Sample response: I mean why is this part of the paragraph? It doesn’t belong there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
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<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
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<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to clarification request:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E – ELECTRONIC PEER REVIEW FEEDBACK SHEET

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

(To be filled out during the anonymous electronic peer feedback.)

1. How interesting was the essay?
   Very interesting    Somewhat interesting    Not very interesting    Boring
   a. Why or why not?

2. How would you rate the introduction for content?
   Excellent    Very Good    Good    Fair    Poor

3. Was there a hook? YES or NO? If yes, was it interesting?
   Very interesting    Somewhat interesting    Not very interesting    Boring
   Why or why not?

4. Was there a thesis statement? Yes or No? If yes, was it clearly written?
   Why or why not?

5. How would you rate the body for content?
   Excellent    Very Good    Good    Fair    Poor

6. How would you rate the conclusion for content?
   Excellent    Very Good    Good    Fair    Poor

7. How would you rate the essay as a whole?
   Excellent    Very Good    Good    Fair    Poor
8. Please rate the author’s ability to control sentence fragments, defined as a clause that does not have a complete thought but is written as an independent sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. Please rate the author’s ability to control run-ons, defined as several independent clauses that should be separate sentences but contain no punctuation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Please rate the author’s ability to control comma splices, defined as several independent clauses that should be separate sentences but are separated by commas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Please rate the author’s ability to control verb tense conjugation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Please rate the author’s ability to control subject and verb agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Please rate the author’s ability to control punctuation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. Please rate the author’s ability to control word form, defined as errors such as using an adjective instead of an adverb, a gerund instead of an infinitive, or a noun instead of an adjective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Please rate the author’s ability to control capitalization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. Please rate the essay’s unity, defined as all the ideas in the essay supporting one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
17. Please rate the essay’s coherence, defined as all the ideas being connected or flowing logically from one paragraph to the next.

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

18. Please rate the overall grammar of the essay.

Excellent       Very Good       Good       Fair       Poor

19. Were there any parts of the essay that you did not understand? Where and why?

20. Because you did not know the author of the essay, how do you think this affected your review? Check one.

_____ I was more critical than because I did not know the author; therefore, I made more corrections.

_____ I corrected the essay the same as when I know the author; therefore, I believe the number of corrections I made would have been the same if I had known the author.

_____ I was less critical because I did not know the author; therefore, I made fewer corrections.

21. Do you prefer to correct an essay anonymously, or would you rather correct an essay of someone you know? Explain why?
22. In your experience, do you give more honest feedback when you do not know the author of the essay you are correcting, or do you give more honest feedback when you do know the author of an essay? Please give specific reasons for your answer.

23. Is this the first time you have done an anonymous electronic peer review? Yes or No

24. How would you rate the overall experience of anonymous electronic peer review?
   Excellent    Very Good    Good    Fair    Poor

25. Would you participate in this activity again? Why or why not?

26. If you had to do this activity again, would you choose the same person to correct your essay? Why or why not? Please give specific examples.
APPENDIX F – IGNORED CHANGES FORM

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

(To be filled out by the author of Essay 1/Draft 2 after incorporating the feedback received from their anonymous reviewer.)

Dear Author,
You have successfully submitted Essay 1/Draft 2. The following comments or changes that were suggested by your anonymous peer reviewer were ignored. Please indicate why you chose to disregard your reviewer’s input. Remember, only the instructor/researcher will see your answers, so please be as honest and explicit as possible. Some samples have been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Number or Suggested Change</th>
<th>Reason for rejecting the comment/suggestion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment #8</td>
<td>I did not delete the sentence because I think it supports my opinion on immigration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change verb tense</td>
<td>I think present perfect is correct.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
Site Authorization Letter

Date: October 2, 2008

Robert A. Coté, Principal Investigator
Calle de Aranjuez, 13
Madrid 28039 Spain

Dear Mr. Coté:

I have reviewed your request regarding your study and am pleased to support your research project entitled “Comparing the effects of peer feedback in blind versus face-to-face peer review in an EFL writing classroom”. Your request to use Saint Louis University in Madrid as a research site is granted.

The above mentioned research project will include recruiting students in ESL 112, training then on the aspects of peer review in the writing classroom, requiring them to submit two (2) essays for review, and completing a questionnaire describing their experiences and opinions regarding both blind and face-to-face peer review.

This authorization covers the time period of January to May, 2009. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Paul Vita, Ph.D.
Academic Dean
Saint Louis University in Madrid, Spain
APPENDIX H – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

Introduction
You are being invited to take part in a research study. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. Study personnel will be available to answer your questions and provide additional information. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. A copy of this form will be given to you.

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is twofold. One is to identify any relationship between an EFL student’s attitude towards peer review, based on a Likert questionnaire, and the number and types of corrections s/he makes to an essay in anonymous electronic-peer review as well as the number and types of changes s/he incorporates into his/her original essay after receiving feedback from an unknown peer.

The researcher is also interested in determining if anonymous peer review - not knowing the identity of the author of whose paper you are correcting and also not knowing who is correcting your essay - affects the outcome of peer review, as factors such as friendship, gender, race, interpersonal relationships, personal preferences, and target language abilities will not be apparent.

Why are you being asked to participate?
You are being invited to participate because you are a student enrolled in ESL 112, an advanced college prep writing course, which uses peer review as part of its scheduled curriculum.

How many people will be asked to participate in this study?
Approximately two (20) persons will be asked to participate in this study.

What will happen during this study?
As part of the regularly scheduled class activities, students will be asked to complete a Likert questionnaire addressing their pre-conceived ideas about peer review. Then, all students will be trained on how to conduct a peer review of an essay via a demonstration using a laptop and projector. The instructor/researcher will also explain how to use “Track Changes” and “Insert Comments” into an MSWord document. Students will also practice doing one anonymous electronic peer review on their own. All activities are part of the scheduled syllabus.

Participants will be asked to complete Essay 1/Draft 1 electronically and submit one copy to the instructor/researcher. Next, the instructor/researcher will send the essay
electronically to the anonymous partner. Each partner will anonymously review their partner’s paper, suggesting changes by inserting comments and using “track changes”. During the review, each participant will also complete an Electronic Peer Review Feedback Sheet. Once the peer review is complete, each student will send the essay back to the instructor/researcher electronically.

Essay 1/Draft 1 will then be forwarded to the author who will make corrections to his/her first draft. A form will be provided to the authors to clarify any of the comments received from the reviewer that they do not understand. In addition, a form will also be provided to each author to comment on any changes they chose to ignore. Then, the authors will submit the second draft electronically to the instructor/ researcher.

Finally, participants will complete a second Likert questionnaire about their experience doing the anonymous peer review.

How long will I be in this study?

Your participation will last for approximately two months. This involves several class periods of 75 minutes, plus the time it takes you to write, review, and rewrite an essay. You may withdraw from the study at any time by simply contacting the PI, Robert Cote (MS TESOL, Ph.D. Candidate) at 91-554-5858 extension 242, rcote@email.arizona.edu or rcote@slu.edu.
APPENDIX I – WRITING TASK ASSIGNMENT

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous
electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

Writing Task Assignment

Using Microsoft Word, please write a multi-paragraph essay (minimum of 3 paragraphs, but 5 preferred) on ONE of the following topics:

The Causes of Happiness

or

The Effects of Immigration on Spain

You will have the entire lab class period of 75 minutes.

Please adhere to the following rules:

1. Do not talk to anyone.
2. Do not use the Internet, dictionary or any other materials.
3. If you have a question or problem, please raise your hand.
4. I cannot answer any questions about formatting, essay content, grammar or punctuation.
APPENDIX J – PARTICIPANTS’ PRE AND POST TEST SCORES

The role of student attitude towards peer review in anonymous electronic-peer review in an EFL writing classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre TWE</th>
<th>Post TWE</th>
<th>Pre TOEFL</th>
<th>Post TOEFL</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre TWE</th>
<th>Post TWE</th>
<th>Pre TOEFL</th>
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</tr>
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</table>
REFERENCES


California. Los Angeles.


Hafernik, J. J. (1983). The how and why of peer editing in the ESL writing class. Paper presented at the State Meeting of the California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers or Other Languages, Los Angeles, CL. ERIC-No: ED253064.


issues. New York: Cambridge University Press.


