

A Case Study of Web-based Peer Review for College English Writing

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As writing is increasingly recognized by more scholars as a social activity, peer review as a classroom activity has yielded a great amount of research findings. Recently, peer review has been reinvigorated with the enhancement of electronic communication. However, limited studies have been conducted concerning the impact of computer-mediated peer review on the nature of negotiation in the process, students' attitudes, and textual revision. This case study documents the review process of a group of college English learners who used a web-based review platform on three writing tasks. Besides the functions of document management and synchronous chat, the website integrates a Chinese-English concordancer and a collocation program for diction help. The learners went through three cycles of drafting, peer review and revising in pair-work. Evaluation of the group performance included (1) a vocabulary test and a writing task before and after the three cycles of peer reviews, (2) an evaluation questionnaire given after the reviews, and (3) the students' learning process data during the reviews. Results indicate better performance after three rounds of peer reviews. It seems that the experiences of obtaining feedback via online talk, additional knowledge from the two referencing tools for diction, and revision with reflection of the students' own writing through others' eyes may be facilitative for more accurate word use in collocations and connectors, and better writing quality. During the peer review process, some learners would customize the technology to meet their different demands of obtaining needed feedback and revising texts accordingly with content- or form-related concerns. Last, the learners expressed moderate satisfaction with the web-based platform for peer review, but rated the referencing tools more highly than other online functions. The study makes contribution to our better understanding of student-writers, text, and the process in computer-mediated environments.

Keywords: peer review, concordancer, collocation, connectors, web-based learning environment

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