

An Analysis of Dyadic Interactional Patterns in Peer Reviewing Tasks in an ESL Language Classroom at a Malaysian Higher Educational Institute

Paramasivam Muthusamy¹, Atieh Farashaiyan², Rabindra Dev Prasad³,
Peyman Jahanbin⁴, Ananthi Pattanimuthu⁵, Hamsavathi A/P Ramalingam⁶,
Fan Qihang⁷, Wang Jing⁸, Zhang Xiaoling⁹

¹ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

² Faculty of Humanities and Literature, Zand Institute of Higher Education, Shiraz, Iran

³ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

⁴ Faculty of Letters & Human Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

⁵ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

⁶ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

⁷ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

⁸ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

⁹ Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Atieh Farashaiyan(atieh.farashaiyan9@gmail.com)

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ABSTRACT:

Flipped learning has emerged as an innovative educational approach that is increasingly prominent in higher education. This study investigated the patterns of dyadic interaction between peer reviewers in an ESL classroom and examined students' perceptions of the flipped language classroom. Ten Malaysian female ESL students participated in the study. TOEFL scores, instructional videos, audio recordings, and writing tasks were used as data collection instruments. The recorded peer-review dialogues were transcribed using the transcription system developed by Storch (2002). Among the identified patterns of interaction, the collaborative pattern was the most frequent. Four of the five pairs predominantly displayed a collaborative pattern, while the expert/novice pattern was the least frequent across all pairs. The findings indicate that students tended to focus primarily on surface-level errors during peer feedback, and their revision activities showed relatively limited engagement with macro-level aspects of writing. Likewise, it was reported that students tend to concentrate on surface-level textual features in assessing the writing and consequently, overlook global errors like content and organization. The findings of the present study can have some implications for both teachers and students..

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1. Introduction

Digital technologies have developed rapidly in recent years and have had a strong impact on educational practice. In second language teaching and learning, the use of technology is now considered essential rather than optional (Barjestesh et al., 2025; Connor & Asenavage, 2021; Günüş, 2017). When technology is integrated into English language instruction, it can support learners' development in all four skills. For example, studies on computer-assisted language learning report gains in both reading comprehension and listening performance (Ghalami Nobar & Ahangari, 2012; Esmaeilifard & Nabifar, 2011; Lam, 2020; Yang, 2017). Other research has turned to writing and has shown that digital tools can facilitate writing instruction and practice. Van Praag and Sanchez (2015), for instance, found that mobile devices can play a supportive role in writing assignments for both teachers and students.

As technology use has become more widespread, learners have started to approach language learning with different expectations and habits (Farashaiyan et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2020). Conventional teacher-fronted lessons are increasingly perceived as insufficient to meet these expectations (Aminath et al., 2024). In response, scholars have explored alternative designs that might enhance learning opportunities (Lee, 2019; Yan & Yu, 2016). Blended learning (BL) has been one influential development. It combines online and face-to-face components and has been described as having the potential to reshape higher education by enriching traditional classroom instruction and

supporting learning processes (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 35). Empirical work suggests that BL can offer students a wider range of learning experiences and can foster engagement because it makes use of diverse teaching strategies (Luan et al., 2024; Muthusamy & Farashaiyan, 2016).

A specific form of BL that has gained increasing attention is the flipped classroom (FC). In a flipped design, key instructional input is moved outside the lesson, typically in the form of online videos or other web-based resources, while class time is reserved for more interactive tasks. In this model, students are expected to study the core material before coming to class. Numerous studies have argued that this approach can enhance achievement compared with traditional lecture-based instruction (Hwang et al., 2018; Tan & Farashaiyan, 2016). When students arrive with prior exposure to the content, they are better prepared to participate in complex, face-to-face activities such as problem-solving, discussion, and debate (Min, 2021; Nyamupanemunda & Deshinta, 2022).

Work in this area also indicates that the flipped design can help students make more efficient use of limited class time. Because they encounter explanations in advance, they may be able to follow in-class clarification more easily and engage in deeper learning during lessons (Kumar & Vairavan, 2024; Roberson, 2014). These observations align with a social interactionist view of learning, which treats learning as a socially situated process. From this perspective, language classrooms are social spaces in which learners participate in a variety of pair and group activities. Teachers are expected to organize

conditions that allow learners to interact in meaningful and authentic ways.

Research on interaction has long pointed to the benefits of pair work and peer feedback for second language development (Alharbi, 2020; Farashaiyan et al., 2018; Kim, 2019; Storch, 2005, 2007; Vijayaratnam et al., 2025). However, many studies have focused on outcomes rather than on the details of how learners work together while negotiating language and meaning. There is still a need for closer examination of the interactional processes that occur when learners engage in peer review activities, particularly in new instructional settings such as flipped classrooms. The present study addresses this need by examining dyadic interaction patterns among Malaysian ESL students during peer reviewing tasks in a flipped writing course, and by exploring how these students perceive the flipped classroom environment.

Literature Review

2.1. Studies on the flipped classroom approach

The flipped classroom has generally been interpreted within a blended, constructivist view of learning. Strayer (2012) characterizes it as a student-centered instructional model in which learners are expected to build their own understanding rather than simply receive information. Constructivist theorists argue that learners construct knowledge through their engagement with tasks and materials, and that learning is an active process rather than something that is transmitted from teacher to student (Sjøberg, 2007).

In a typical flipped classroom, students first encounter the target content through technology-mediated resources outside the classroom. They may, for example, watch online videos at home, take notes, and generate questions about the material (Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Roach, 2014). These questions can be shared electronically with the teacher, who can respond before or during class and use them to plan instruction (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Fulton, 2012). Class time is then devoted to active learning tasks that build on this

preparation, such as collaborative problem-solving or application activities.

Empirical studies across disciplines have reported promising results for the flipped approach. Tally (2013) introduced the FC model in an undergraduate psychology course and found that students' final grades improved, which suggests a positive influence on academic performance. In a physics course, Şengel (2016) examined the use of the flipped method in a cooperative learning context and investigated students' views on the use of instructional videos. The study indicated that both homework performance and the extent to which students watched the videos were linked to success in the flipped classroom. It also suggested that when students see themselves as responsible for their own learning, they are better able to adapt to the new format and achieve higher grades.

Thai, De Wever, and Valcke (2017) compared several learning environments in a unit on invertebrates: a flipped classroom, a blended learning condition, a traditional learning condition, and an e-learning condition. They looked at learning performance, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and perceived flexibility. Their results showed that students in the flipped classroom outperformed those in the other conditions and that the FC had positive effects on self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, although it did not increase perceived flexibility.

Despite the growing interest in the flipped model, relatively few studies have examined its use in language education. Hao (2016) surveyed 387 middle school students to investigate their readiness for flipped learning and to see how personal characteristics influenced their readiness levels. The findings showed that individual characteristics and contextual conditions play an important role in determining how prepared learners feel for this type of instruction. Soliman (2018) explored the effectiveness of the flipped classroom in an English for Academic Purposes course. The study reported several advantages, such as the possibility of checking whether students were engaging with the material and the opportunity for learners to develop additional

skills through online components. The flipped format also allowed the teacher to adopt a more active role in class by employing a range of teaching strategies.

Lee (2020) compared a communicative English course delivered in a traditional format with a flipped version of a university course across two semesters. Data for the study included students' task completion, responses to surveys, and the instructor's notes on classroom engagement. The results indicated that students in the flipped course not only achieved better outcomes but also expressed greater satisfaction with learning in that environment.

2.2. *Students' collaboration*

Swain (2000) introduced the notion of collaborative dialogue to describe talk in which learners work together to resolve language-related problems and, in doing so, construct linguistic knowledge. Subsequent research has emphasized that peer collaboration allows learners to move between expert and novice roles, depending on the particular strengths and weaknesses they bring to the interaction (Storch, 2005; Storch & Aldosari, 2013). Even when learners are placed in the same proficiency group, their profiles are rarely identical, so they may contribute in different ways to joint problem solving.

To capture these dynamics, Storch (2002) proposed a framework of "patterns of interaction." She argued that analytic approaches focusing only on linguistic features of talk overlook the interpersonal dimension of peer work, where learners negotiate both the task and their relationship with one another. In her framework, two dimensions are central: equality, which reflects how far learners share control of the task, and mutuality, which reflects the degree of engagement with each other's contributions. When these two dimensions intersect, they yield four patterns of interaction: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice.

In a classroom study with ten pairs of adult ESL learners, Storch (2002) analyzed pair talk during

three writing tasks. She found that the collaborative pattern was the most frequent. A post-test of individual writing performance showed more evidence of learning in pairs that had displayed collaborative or expert/novice patterns than in those characterized as dominant/passive or dominant/dominant.

Watanabe and Swain (2012) examined patterns of interaction and their relationship to language development among 12 Japanese ESL learners. Their results again highlighted the advantages of the collaborative pattern relative to the other three patterns. Zheng (2016) extended this line of work to a group of 28 Chinese university students learning English. The students, working in groups of four, completed a narrative writing task. Using Storch's framework, Zheng identified a fifth pattern, which she labelled passive/passive. Her analysis indicated that the collaborative and expert/novice patterns offered more opportunities for learning than the other patterns.

Roberson (2018) investigated how interaction patterns related to revision outcomes in a writing course for non-native speakers of English. Five pairs of students were recorded while discussing their drafts. The analysis showed that texts revised in the context of expert/novice or collaborative interactions tended to show stronger improvements. In follow-up interviews, learners themselves attributed their better performance to taking part in these two types of interaction.

More recently, Jang and Cheung (2020) studied dyadic interaction in an ESL course for young pre-elementary learners. Eighteen students were paired into nine dyads and taught 24 target vocabulary items over six sessions. In each session, they completed recognition and production tasks. Their conversations were recorded, transcribed, and coded according to Storch's (2002) categories of expert/novice, collaborative, dominant/dominant, and dominant/passive. When these interaction patterns were compared with vocabulary test scores, the collaborative and expert/novice

patterns were again associated with better learning outcomes.

2. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This study adopted a case study design and used convenience sampling, a common approach that allows researchers to work with an intact class (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2003). The participants were ten female Malaysian ESL students enrolled in an English literature course at a state university in Malaysia. They were between 20 and 22 years old and were all native speakers of Malay.

The ten students were placed into five pairs, with pairing based on similar proficiency levels. During the first meeting, the researchers explained the goals, stages, and procedures of the study. All participants indicated that they understood the procedures and agreed to take part.

3.2. Instruments

Four instruments were used for data collection.

3.2.1. TOEFL

A sample of an abridged TOEFL test was administered to assess students' proficiency levels. The test included three sections: Listening Comprehension, Language Structure, and Reading Comprehension. Each section consisted of 35 four-option multiple-choice items, and the total testing time was 2 hours. Reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an index of .93, indicating high internal consistency.

3.2.2. Videos

Because the course adopted a flipped design, instruction on how to write an argumentative essay was delivered through a series of videos. These videos outlined the stages of argumentative writing and were made available to students in a class Dropbox folder.

3.2.3. Data recording

Peer review activities were carried out in pairs. Students discussed the drafts that they had produced in response to the flipped instruction.

Their peer review dialogues were audio recorded so that the interaction patterns could be analyzed.

3.2.4. Writing tasks

As previous work has noted, written texts can offer valuable insights into writers' goals, processes, and ideas (Punch, 2009; Wolff, 2004). In this study, each participant completed three cycles of argumentative writing. For each cycle, one argumentative topic was selected, and students produced a draft that later served as the basis for peer review.

3.3. Data collection procedure

3.3.1. First session

In the first session, the researchers introduced the study and explained the overall procedure to the students. The abridged TOEFL test described above was then administered in order to obtain a measure of proficiency and to assist with the formation of pairs. Initially, 22 students took the test. Based on their scores, 10 students were selected as the focal participants and 12 were excluded from further analysis. The selected students were briefed again about the research procedures. Instruction then proceeded in two phases: pre-class activities and in-class activities.

3.3.2. Pre-class activities

During the pre-class phase, students were asked to watch the argumentative-writing videos that the instructor uploaded to the Dropbox folder. The videos were intended to prepare them to write an essay on the assigned topic at home. Students were encouraged to take notes while watching and to record any questions they wished to raise in class. They were informed that they would have time to bring these questions to the group.

3.3.3. In-class activities

Classroom time focused on addressing students' questions and carrying out peer review. At the start of each lesson, students discussed their questions with one another, with the instructor stepping in as a facilitator to provide additional explanations where needed. This phase prepared

students for the peer-review stage. In the second part of the lesson, pairs exchanged drafts and discussed possible revisions. Their peer-review conversations were audio-recorded.

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. Transcription and coding system

All recordings were transcribed using the transcription conventions described by Storch (2002), which are summarized in Table 1. Following earlier studies in this area (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Storch, 2007; Zheng, 2012; Roberson, 2014), the transcripts were divided into episodes. For this study, an episode was defined as a stretch of talk in which the pair

focused on language-related issues, content-related issues, or both.

To ensure reliability in identifying episodes, a second rater with a PhD in TESL and extensive qualitative coding experience independently segmented the transcripts into episodes. Her coding was then compared with that of the researchers.

Next, each episode was assigned to one of Zheng's interaction patterns: collaborative, dominant/passive, expert/novice, dominant/dominant, or passive/passive. The second rater also coded the episodes for interaction patterns so that agreement could be checked.

Table 1. Transcription symbols (adapted from Storch, 2002)

Symbol	Meaning
()	Nonverbal sounds, e.g., (laugh)
Bold	Word(s) pronounced with emphasis
...	Short pause (between 0.5 and 3 seconds)
[5]	Longer pause; the number in square brackets indicates the length of the pause in seconds
[	Beginning of simultaneous/overlapping talk (end of overlap indicated by])
!	Sharp rise in pitch at the end of a word or phrase
?	Rising intonation at the end of a word or phrase
(())	Comments made by the researcher to describe other phenomena, e.g., ((writing))

3.4.2. Comment analysis

The comments made by peers and by the teacher were coded, quantified, and compared. Following

Min (2005, p. 298), all comments were coded as either global, referring to idea development and overall organization, or local, referring to word choice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Table 2. Local/global comment categories

Type	Definition
Global	Includes idea development and organization
Local	Includes word usage, grammar, spelling, and punctuation

3. Results

The first aim of this research was to examine the interactional patterns of reviewers during reviewing process. Moreover, the effect of

flipped approach on comment provision of comments students engaged in reviewing process were examined. Now firstly, results of the interaction analysis are reported and then the findings of comment analysis are presented.

4.1. Interactional pattern

Showing the interactional patterns in the interchanges between two ESL students during the reviewing is one of the purposes of this research. Thus, to illustrate the interactional patterns for each pair, one interactional pattern was chosen for each peer reviewing transcript. Based on their frequency, diverse interactional patterns are shown.

The collaborative pattern was the most frequently identified patterns. Four out of five pairs of students illustrated the collaborative pattern. The following excerpt demonstrates two students who employed interactional pattern to write comments:

Excerpt 1. collaborative pattern

Aisha: This sentence working becomes their priority is Malay. She should say work is their priority

Sofia: ...Yes. Besides, the previous sentence is a bit odd in my opinion: They may deal with adults who aren't in their age. I can't understand it! What can we say instead of this?

Aisha: [5] The second part can be changed into who are not as old as them. She also said they may misbehave them. Here, she should mention the names instead of pronouns to make it clear.

Sofia: ...Yes, exactly. "They" refer to adults and "them" is written instead of children.

In this pattern, the participants collaborated with each other for completing the task and constructing the target sentence. Their speech is highly contingent and coherent since they repeat each other's utterances. In fact, they confirm each other's response. Here, Sofia confirms Aisha's utterance by saying "yes". In such patterns, the participants could reach a joint comment.

The dominant/passive pattern was the second most frequently interactional pattern. The subsequent text illustrates a sample of this type.

Excerpt 2. dominant/passive pattern

Melur: Yeah exactly. In the second sentence he wrote rely in instead of rely on.

Jana: Yes. The preposition is on.

Melur: In the second paragraph the main problem that I observed was the excessive use of his or her that could be replaced by one.

Jana: [6] Yes

In this pattern, the dominant member is involved more in doing the task, while the passive person plays a less vital role. Here the dominant does not invite the other participants to share the responsibility of task completion. Accordingly, the degree of equality and mutuality is low in this kind of interaction. In this example, Melur took a dominant role and so she had a long monologue. She made no attempts to invite Jana for giving suggestions. As the consequence of authoritative stance taken by the dominant participant, the other participant accepts a passive role.

The third common pattern of interaction was dominant/dominant. The succeeding extract shows two members using such interactional pattern to review the article:

Excerpt 3. dominant/dominant pattern

Amina: In my viewpoint the conclusion is too short.

Farah: ... but it is complete!

Amina: [5] Yeah, but don't you think it was too short for this essay? I think this wasn't enough.

Farah: ... But I do not have the same idea! In my viewpoint, it was brief and direct.

Amina: Alright. What is your opinion about this essay generally?

Farah: It was literary stunning. But she had some major grammatical mistakes.

Amina: No, I think she had just a few minor mistakes!

In a dominant/dominant pattern, the discourse is defined with arguments among the members, occurring when each one upholds her own viewpoint. Here, Amina believes that the writing written by the writer of their group is short. But Farah strongly rejected this comment. The disagreements of this kind of interaction are

explicitly indicated by repetition of the word “no”. These disagreements were also present about other parts of the writing as well. Therefore, these two participants were unable to reach a joint comment through negotiation.

Among the interaction patterns, the expert/novice occurred less in the participants’ dialogues. The subsequent passage illustrates this pattern:

Excerpt 4. expert/novice pattern

Kasih: The tense of “I naturally don’t have” should be past.

Puteri: Yeah, didn’t is right.

Kasih: ... Here by the word “by” he meant “my”. Didn’t he?

Puteri: Yes, exactly

Kasih: “waste of my time” should become wasting my time.

Puteri: Yes and “commas” should be deleted.

Kasih: The next paragraph. “of” should be deleted.

Puteri: [4] Yeah.

The expert/novice interactional pattern is characterized by excessive mutuality and low parity. Therefore, one of the participants adopted the role of a director of the task, while the other participant adopted a more peripheral role and so the degree of equality was low. In this excerpt, Kasih was the dominant participant and took the

authoritative stance. She initiates almost all the questions and gave the main comments while Puteri, who was less active, just repeated the expert’s question. In all cases of such pattern, the expert waits for the novice’s contributions and he/she doesn’t jump into the next comment. Moreover, the experts try to provide scaffolding by mediating novice’s comment provision.

4.2. Comment types

The second objective of this research was an examination of the connection between diverse interactional patterns and the reviewers’ concentration on comments, using the most frequently occurring pattern in each pair as the general one. Consequently, the overall pattern of all interactions was collaborative, except pair 3 which was dominant/dominant. Moreover, the comments of reviewers in each pair were investigated in terms of being local or global. On one hand, local comments address issues of word choice, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, whereas global comments concentrate on idea expansion and organization. As indicated in figure one, pair 1 had the least local comments (42%) while pair 2 had the most local comments though both of them had collaborative patterns (97%). Pair 4 and pair 5 produced high and nearly the same percentage of local comments which are 90 % and 89%, respectively. Finally, 81% of pair three’s comments were local. The following figure shows the local comments produced by different pairs.

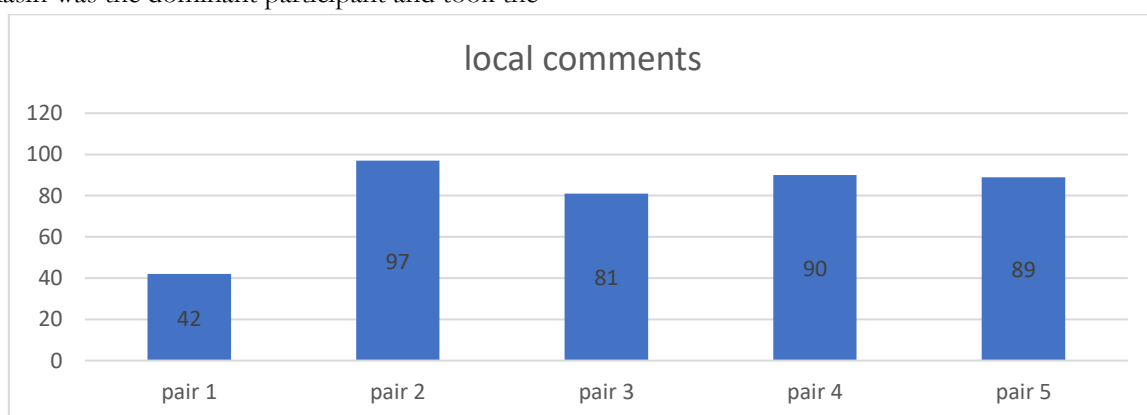


Figure 1: Local comments produced by five pairs

With respect to global comments, pair 1 (collaborative pattern) produced them more than

other pairs. They produced about 58% of the global comments. In return, this category

constituted just 3% of pair two's comments (collaborative pattern) which is the least global comments among all five pairs. Pairs 3, 5, and 4

produced 90%, 89%, and 81% global feedback respectively.

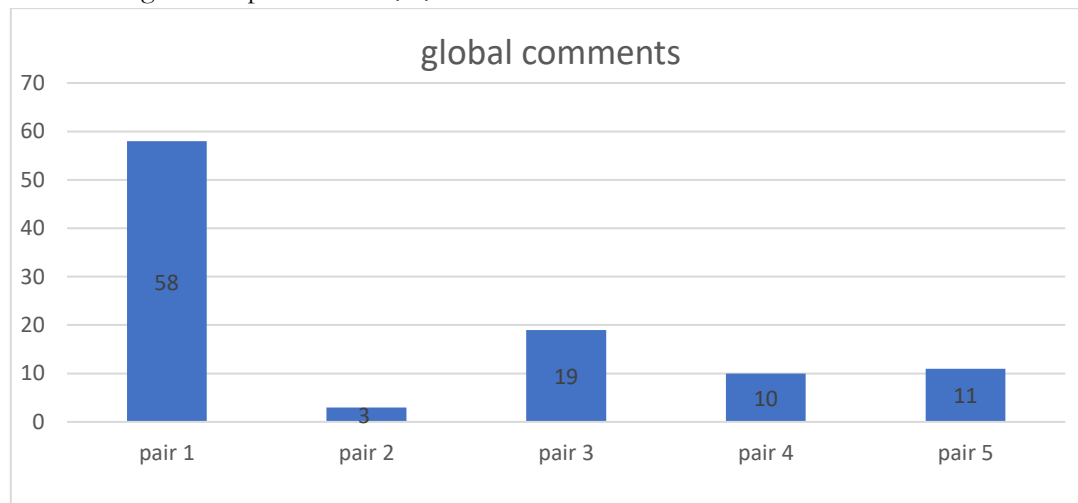


Figure 2: Global comments produced by five pairs

4. Discussion

The results of the first research objective indicated that the collaborative patterns were the most frequent interactional one. Likewise, previous research indicated that the collaborative pattern is the most common one in peer-based tasks (Kim, 2019; Muthusamy & Farashaiyan, 2016; Roberson, 2018; Storch, 2002; Watanabe & Swain 2007). In addition, the expert/novice pattern was found to be the least frequent one whereas Arak (2017) indicated that the least common interactional pattern was the dominant/passive one. Moreover, Farashaiyan et al. (2017) showed diverse findings as the dominant/passive and expert/novice patterns were found to be most frequent ones in face-to-face interactions.

With respect to the second research question, the findings suggest that students mainly concentrated on surface-level errors in peer feedback, failing to focus on macro-level writing. Likewise, it was reported that students tend to concentrate on surface-level textual features in assessing the writing and consequently, overlook global errors like content and organization (Nelson & Carson, 2019). Nevertheless, Connor and Asenavage (214) indicated that while learners utilized few peers' suggestions in their writings, most of them addressed macrostructural

mistakes. Similarly, Yang et al. (2016) showed that peer comments resulted in more meaning-level revisions than those found in the primary draft. Lastly, a study carried out by Kamimura (2017) indicated that peer comments mainly concentrated on macro-level levels of writing.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study can be useful for both teachers and students. Teachers can act the role of a mediator when they have pair work in their classes. Moreover, they have different varieties of mediation when dealing with different patterns of interaction. For instance, in the dominant/dominant interaction, the teacher has participants who insist on their perspectives and so they want to reject the ideas of the other student. Therefore, teachers can involve learners in reflective procedures, encouraging them to reconsider their assumptions and observe the values of their peers' impressions. These novel insights understandings may inspire learners to relinquish authoritarian stances and foster the tolerance. In collaborative interactional patterns, the teacher monitors the process and intervenes as a facilitator during the challenging situations. In the dominant/passive pattern, the teacher's role differs. the dominant learner needs guidance to develop open mindedness towards ideas of the

other friend. On the other hand, the teacher should encourage the passive learner to participate.

Providing such opportunities in classes can aid students to be in joint learning context. More specifically, collaborative pair work can be beneficial in ESL settings, in which learners rarely find opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom. Additionally, based on the finding of the second question, learners should be given hints and instruction to attend to macro-aspects of writing as well as micro-aspects. They should change their view that feedback and

correction just deal with grammatical and spelling errors. In fact, the organization and coherency of the written text are so important for academic and advanced levels of writing. Though the current study had some theoretical and practical values for both teachers and learners, it had some limitations. It just attended to writing and also academic level of students. Hence, future studies can concentrate on other dimensions of language such as speaking, listening or reading and also different levels of language proficiency. In addition, this study can be done in other settings or contexts.

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