



Peer Response for EAP Writing Revision Based on Online Shared Platform

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Abstract. Many online tools and platforms have been used in EAP writing classes for several years, especially in the feedback process. Studies have been conducted in this field and the results have provided solid evidence for teaching designs. This paper introduces the practice of using Tencent shared document in feedback process, aiming to investigate students' attitude towards it and evaluate its efficiency. Qualitative research method was mainly used based on 89 writing drafts, classroom observations and questionnaire results, mathematics software Matlab was applied to analyse the data and evaluate specific efficiency in different areas. The findings illustrate that compared with traditional face-to-face peer review, students are more inclined to use Tencent shared document. They also show better learner engagement and fully affirm the high efficiency of this tool, especially in grammar and vocabulary level. This study brings illumination for teachers who considering whether to apply online shared documents to their writing classes.

Keywords: EAP · Writing feedback · Computer-mediated peer review · Matlab · Class practice

1 Introduction

A variety of online tools have been integrated into English for academic purpose (EAP) writing classes due to the inevitable development of information technology and the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic. Online study and communication platforms, such as Moodle, MOOC and Zoom are widely applied for online classes, while social media and some software, for example blogs and Kahoot are used along with traditional teaching activities.

In EAP writing class, giving feedback is undoubtedly one of the most important activities. Through revision and comments, learners could learn from self and peer evaluation and take suggestions for the better capability for effective self-expression. It is also a good opportunity for teachers to scaffold learners to build confidence in target language writing [2]. To improve the efficiency of this important process, teachers gradually integrate some online tools and provide computer-mediated feedback to or among learners. Tencent shared document is one of the widely applied tools in Chinese college's EAP writing classes. It is an online shared document that can be edited by many people at the same time and supports many types of online files. Users can view

and modify documents anytime and anywhere using laptop, smart phones and other types of digital devices. This paper aims to investigate the efficiency of using Tencent shared document in feedback process of college EAP writing classes. Findings illustrate that compared with traditional ways of giving feedback, using Tencent shared document shows better learner engagement and higher review efficiency based on Matlab analysis of data. Students also feel it is easier to learn from others in this way and enjoy the live online peer review process.

2 Literature Review

Teacher review, machine review, student's self-review and peer review are the four common methods of giving feedback in writing. Research and practical teaching experiences show that teacher review works best, because students place a higher value on teacher's professional and accurate review. However, teachers need to spend considerable time and energy evaluating and commenting on every student's work, so it may not always be practical. In terms of machine review, learners think that it could help them improve their general writing skills, but the comments are usually not personalized enough. Some learners show distrust in their self-review and peer review as they believe that without the help of teachers, self or peer review could only cover simple grammatical errors with relatively low efficiency [7].

Although it may not be fully trusted, peer review has been widely used in EAP writing classes for a variety of reasons. First, peer review facilitates the drafting and rewriting of writing tasks by allowing learners to obtain several pieces of input from their peers [5]. It also helps the reader and writer to consolidate and restructure their English knowledge and make it explicit for the benefit of each other. Moreover, peer review aids learners in developing audience awareness as they revise their work in front of others [4].

A number of studies comparing face-to-face versus computer-mediated peer review (CMPR) have been conducted for several years. Researchers have found that due to the unwillingness to criticize peer as a consequence of cooperation-oriented cultural background, some students may find CMPR to be more comfortable than face-to-face peer review. It allows students to write and express themselves in a relaxed environment, so they could work independently and create the comments and reflections at their own pace [4; 1]. The efficiency of CMPR is another focus for researchers and language teachers. According to previous research, compared with traditional face-to-face peer feedback, more revision-oriented comments were given in the technology-enhanced group [6]. However, different forms or tools of CMPR may have an impact on the efficiency and outcome of feedback process. A research focused on the comparison between face-to-face peer review and email peer review revealed that due to the lack of spoken contact and the long email exchanging time, the effectiveness of peer review is readily diminished [3]. However, another research using blogs as the mediator of CMPR illustrated that blogs might be an effective strategy for creating a supportive communication and reflection environment among students which allows students to provide instant comments and modifications [4]. Therefore, although some researchers hold a positive attitude towards the use of CMPR, the impact of different online tools on the effectiveness of feedback outcome remains to be studied.

3 Research Design

This research was conducted in a university in China. The participants were all engineering students in their second year of college and had finished 3 courses in EAP. They already learnt some basic skills of academic writing and were able to finish the draft of literature review.

3.1 Research Objectives

- What's students' attitude towards the use of Tencent shared document in the feedback process of EAP writing class?
- How effective students find using Tencent shared document in the feedback process?

3.2 Methodology

The research lasted for a whole semester (4 months) using classroom observation, student drafts collection and in-depth questionnaire survey as the methods of data collection. The participants were 53 students in 3 different class groups taught by the same teacher, they were required to finish two writing and feedback tasks aimed to practice two main paragraphs (300–350 words) of literature review writing and complete a questionnaire after the second task.

The two tasks followed the same steps. Before the lesson, the teacher created a Tencent shared document link for each class group and all the following writing and feedback process were completed in this link. After the teacher shared the link, students had to complete their literature review writing and post them in the shared document. During the class session, the teacher led students to revise and comment on at least 2 other students' writing using shared editing function of Tencent shared document based on teacher's demonstration and the checklist (see Fig. 1).

After the peer review process, students started to revise their writing based on others feedback, they could also write down the confusions or questions of any comments. Since

Feedback Checklist	
✓	<i>Is the structure of this LR logical?</i>
✓	<i>Is the topic sentence clear enough?</i>
✓	<i>How's the paragraph development?</i>
✓	<i>Is the language academic?</i>
✓	<i>Is the tense correct?</i>
✓	<i>Is the passive voice used appropriately?</i>
✓	<i>Are there any grammatical errors?</i>
✓	<i>Are there any spelling errors/ typos?</i>
✓	<i>Are the citations correct?</i>
✓	<i>Does the reference list follow IEEE referencing system?</i>
✓	<i>Can you find any personal opinions?</i>

Fig. 1. Checklist of literature review writing feedback

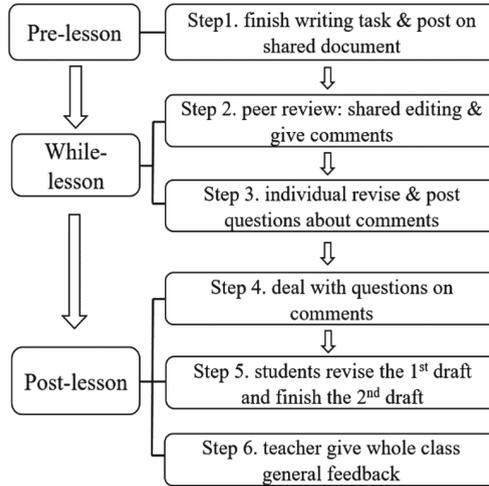


Fig. 2. Teaching process using Tencent shared document

students were editing at the same time in the same document, the questions they raised could be seen by the student modifier and the teacher, so more specific responses could be given later. After the class, students had to finish the second draft of these 2 paragraphs based on previous tasks and the teacher would read through all the writing and provide general whole class feedback in the shared document (see Fig. 2). After finishing the second writing and feedback task, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire covers 10 questions in total, including 6 multiple choices and 4 open questions, aiming to investigate students' attitudes and feelings towards the use of Tencent shared document as an online tool in their writing feedback practice. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire results, students were allowed to use Chinese to write responses to the 4 open questions.

Qualitative method was mainly used in this research. Data was collected from students' drafts (89 drafts from 53 students based on two literature review paragraph writing tasks) and questionnaire results. Mathematics software Matlab was used to analyse the data of students' revision based on peer review.

4 Findings

It can be seen from the classroom observation and questionnaire results that the vast majority of students completed the feedback tasks on time (see Table 1) and the average engagement rate was 83.98% (89 submitted drafts in total).

During the class session, students showed a strong sense of participation in online editing and actively shared their opinions towards specific feedback with classmates and the teacher. This positive learner engagement was also shown in the shared document, it can be seen that around 30% of students commented on more than 2 peer's writing task. Most of the participants showed high expectation of peer's feedback, as many as

Table 1. Learner engagement rate

TASKS	GROUP	TOTAL	NUMBER OF	FEEDBACK
		NUMBER OF STUDENTS	FEEDBACK SUBMISSION	SUBMISSION RATE (%)
1 ST TASK	G1	18	15	83.3%
	G2	17	13	76.5%
	G3	18	16	88.9%
2 ND TASK	G1	18	13	72.2%
	G2	17	16	94.1%
	G3	18	16	88.9%

*Authentic data from 53 participants of this research

Sample Student Comments	
Student A	Comment: Your writing is very academic and the logic is easy to follow. However, there are some editing and spelling errors. <i>You can proofread with your friends to help each other find out the mistakes.</i>
Student B	Comment: Useful information and good structure, but you made so many grammatical mistakes, such as subject-verb agreement and wrong verb forms. You can <i>buy a grammar book and work on some specific grammar points and do more exercises.</i> Also, <i>using the website Grammarly can help you with your accuracy.</i>
Student C	Comment: So many casual expression in this literature review and the writing style is not very academic. <i>You could read more literature reviews from published papers to help you improve your language quality.</i>

Fig. 3. Sample student comments

87% of them accessed the shared document again immediately after the first round of peer review to check peer’s comments and respond to questions.

The quality of the peer feedback seemed relatively high based on questionnaire results. 94.3% of participants stated that they worked on peer feedback thoroughly and provided constructive feedback on others writing. Some students gave very detailed feedback, apart from revise the language and logic problems based on the checklist, they also provided some additional practical writing tips to others (see Fig. 3).

Questionnaire results also illustrated that compared with traditional face-to-face peer feedback, up to 94.3% of the participants showed their preference in using Tencent shared document for peer review. Some participants mentioned the sense of accomplishment

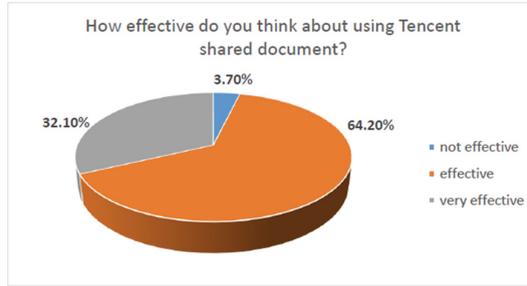


Fig. 4. Questionnaire results: the effectiveness of using Tencent shared document

when their comments were shown to the whole class and they enjoyed playing the role of teacher during the feedback process. However, 9.4% of the participants also stated that they would hesitate to post their writing and feedback to the shared document if the whole process was not anonymous. Sample questionnaire responses mentioned about anonymous submission are listed here:

- *It will be very embarrassed if other classmates know that's my writing, so I really think keep our writing anonymous is a good idea.*
- *I feel much more comfortable when the teacher said we don't need to post our names on the shared document.*

Some participants also mentioned that they were more cautious in giving comments and tended to trust peer's suggestions as they knew that the teacher would supervise and participate in the second round of the feedback process by providing timely correction and whole class feedback. Many students also mentioned that by using Tencent shared document, they could not only receive feedback and revision suggestions of their own writing, but also gain the opportunity to read through other students' writing. While learning from each other, their anxiety in literature review writing was also greatly reduced. Here are some participants' questionnaire responses regarding their feelings after the feedback process:

- *I read through all the other students' writing and the comments they received, that's really impressive! Some students are really good at academic writing, I feel that I need to do more practice to catch up with them.*
- *I always thought my academic writing is not good enough, but I feel less anxious after I read some other students' writing, it seems that I'm not that bad.*

Almost all the participants agreed that by using Tencent shared document, their effectiveness in giving peer feedback was greatly improved (see Fig. 4) and compared with traditional face-to-face peer review, they tended to read peer comments more carefully and make immediate revision in shared document.

With regards to levels of revision, after analysing through Matlab for the mean and standard deviation, the most frequent revision was the "grammar" level (27%), followed by "word" (25.1%), "phrase" (17.4%) and "sentence" (16%) levels. Changes in "citation"

Table 2. Frequency of levels of revision

	Mean	SD	Total	%
Word	5.2	1.135	463	25.1
Phrase	3.6	0.966	320	17.4
Sentence	3.3	1.252	294	16.0
Grammar	5.6	1.838	498	27.0
Spelling	1.4	1.174	125	6.8
Citation	1.6	1.075	142	7.7

**Authentic data based on submitted drafts*

Table 3. Ratios of levels of revision affected by peer comments

	Based on peers' comments		Non-comments		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Word	374	80.8	89	19.2	463
Phrase	249	77.8	71	22.2	320
Sentence	249	84.7	45	15.3	294
Grammar	400	80.3	98	19.7	498
Spelling	116	92.8	9	7.2	125
Citation	116	81.7	26	18.3	142

Note: Frequency

**Authentic data based on comparison of first and second drafts*

level were close to “spelling” level and the latter was the least frequent revision (see Table 2).

Through comparing the second drafts with the first drafts and peer comments, the findings indicate that the most frequent level of revision occurred at the level of “grammar”, 27% ($n = 498$), where 80.3% ($n = 400$) of the revision was made based on peer comments and 19.7% ($n = 98$) grammatical mistakes were revised due to the writer’s independent decision. Although students made only 6.8% ($n = 125$) of the revision in “spelling” level, most of them were made because of peer comments (92.8%, $n = 116$) while only 7.2% ($n = 9$) of spelling revision was based on writer’s independent decision (see Table 3).

5 Discussion

Consistent with the previous research results, the findings of this study show that compared with traditional face-to-face feedback, the shared document has a significantly

high learner engagement. It seemed that the participants enjoyed the feedback process been seen and recorded and were well adapted to their role as teacher or corrector. Researchers' positive results on anonymity in using online teaching tools have also been confirmed in this study. Some participants mentioned it clearly that it was because of the anonymous submission that they would actively participate and provide some critical comments. It can be seen that anonymous peer review using Tencent shared document could not only improve students' participation, but also enhance the criticism of peer feedback, in this way, participants would not concern too much about their personal relationship or any other factors, and truly focused on each other's writing, thus improve the quality of feedback.

It is also obvious from the classroom observation that during the in-class feedback process, students showed a positive attitude and discussed actively with each other. The openness of online timely peer review urged students to give constructive and detailed comments to a certain extent, students would also regard the feedback they received from peers as the result of thorough consideration, which greatly promoted the enthusiasm of discussion and improved the quality of feedback. The analysis result from students' drafts suggest that in the second drafts, although students could correct some mistakes based on their independent decision, most of the revisions were made according to peer comments, which indicate that the help from peers were effective in this practice. According to the questionnaire responses, it is interesting to find that the vast majority of students were also very curious about other students' writing and comments, some of them stated that they would read through other students' writing and estimate the average writing level of the whole class. In the process of reading and commenting on each other's work, students could further stimulate their own learning desire and reduce learning anxiety, which also cultivates their independent learning ability.

Although the present research was carefully designed, it is necessary to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, an in-depth focus group discussion could be applied, so participants could show more authentic opinions towards the use of Tencent shared documents with more detailed explanation. Secondly, the class teacher was the only observer of the classroom observation, as the teacher was dealing multiple tasks, some useful student actions might be missed. In this case, another observer could be invited and provide more thorough perspectives.

From the results of the study, it can be seen that online timely peer review tools, such as Tencent shared document, are more in line with the learning habits of Generation Z, who are well-skilled in using network and information tools and prefer to use them as learning tools. It seemed that students tend to show better engagement and become more concentrated when the online tools were involved. In the future course design, teachers may consider more about the advantage of using online tools in writing teaching process and create more effective activities to motivate students and get them involved.

6 Conclusions

As an online shared editing tool emerged during the epidemic period, Tencent shared document has been applied widely in online and offline classes. As can be seen from the findings, students hold an overall positive attitude toward the use of it in class and

generally approved its effectiveness. Compared with traditional face-to-face feedback, adapting Tencent shared documents in writing feedback process shows better learner engagement and allows students to share critical and constructive comments to each other with efficient timely communication. To ensure the effectiveness of the feedback process, it is also very important to keep the writing tasks anonymous as some students may hesitate to share their work in public.

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