



9TH INTERNATIONAL
ELT RESEARCH CONFERENCE

"INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES: BEYOND THE BORDERS OF ELT METHODOLOGY"

Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University
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Anonymous digital peer feedback
in beginner EFL
undergraduate writing

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OUTLINE

- * Peer-feedback
- * Pros and cons of peer-feedback
- * Overcoming the problems in peer-feedback
 - * Peer-feedback on a digital environment
 - * Anonymity in peer-feedback
- * Aim of the study
 - * Methodology
 - * Findings and discussion
 - * Conclusion and implications



Feedback

- “Input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision” (Keh, 1990, p. 294).
- May serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed but also to increase motivation and build a supportive class climate (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).
- A crucial factor of motivation and encouragement in learning process (Çınar, 2014).



Peer feedback

- * Feedback plays a central role in learning (Black & William, 1998).
- * Indicating problematic aspects in a written assignment that had been overlooked by a peer (Ruecker, 2010).
- * Beneficial both for authors and reviewers (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013)
 - * More beneficial for the reviewer than the author (Lu & Law, 2012).
- * Difficult to measure its impact (Kleijn, Mainhard, Meijer, Brekelmans & Pilot, 2013).
- * Usually beneficial (e.g., Hu, 2005; Hu & Lam, 2010; Zhao, 2014).
 - * Enable learners to become more autonomous (Villamil & Guerrero, 1996).



Peer feedback: Theoretical background

- * **Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**
 - * Peer interaction:
 - * A powerful way of developing skills by **scaffolding** (Weissberg, 2006).



Potential problems

- May not be reliable (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013).
- Two main problems related to students with limited abilities:
 - **Problem 1:**
 - **Misleading** each other due to their own deficiencies and **lack of trust** in peers' feedback (Paulus, 1999; Rinehart & Chen, 2012; Rollinson, 2005; Ruecker, 2010; Saito & Fujita, 2004).
 - **Problem 2:**
 - Reluctance to criticize friends (Liou & Peng, 2009).



Anonymously multi-mediated writing model (Razi, 2015)

- * Provides solutions to the problems.
- * Writing process in the model:
 - * First draft
 - * Peer review by 3 anonymous reviewers
 - * Revising and resubmitting



Solution to Problem 1: Assigning multiple reviewers

- * Categorize students in three groups: 'good', 'moderate', and 'weak'.
- * Each student:
 - * Receives feedback (directive/corrective) from a good, moderate and weak peer.
 - * Provides feedback to a good, moderate and weak peer.
- * Asymmetrical vs. symmetrical feedback (Hanjani & Li, 2014)
 - Subsequent applications of ZPD enable both asymmetrical and symmetrical considerations.
 - *Asymmetrical*: feedback from an expert to a novice learner.
 - *Symmetrical*: feedback between learners of equal ability.



Solution to Problem 2: Anonymity in peer feedback

- * Anonymous peer review provides awareness of academic writing (Robinson, 2002).
- * Better writing performance and more critical feedback in anonymity (Lu & Bol, 2007).
- * Survey: preference of anonymity among university students (Hosack, 2003).
- * Superiority of anonymous peer reviewers over open ones (Razi, 2015).



Metacognitive skills

- * Three essential cognitive processes in writing (Ong, 2014):
 - * Planning, transcribing, and reviewing.
- * Metacognitive knowledge of tasks operates when the nature of a task forces learners to think about how they will manage.
 - * For difficult tasks, learners allocate more time, or prepare an outline (Flavell, 1985).
- * Metacognitive experiences occur when careful, conscious monitoring of one's cognitive efforts is required (Abbott, 2006).



Why digital environment?

- * No consensus on the superiority of online feedback over traditional modes (Elwood & Bode, 2014).
- * Enables timely and more effective feedback.
- * Not confined to physical and time constraints.
- * Accelerates peer review process.
- * Anonymity may not be possible without digital technology.
- * Eliminates social constraint of face-to-face feedback (Ho & Savignon, 2007).
- * Gives the possibility to seek teacher's advice and peer's guidance online simultaneously (DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001).



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Can beginner EFL learners
help their peers
detect and correct
the overlooked problems
in their writing?



Main aim of the study

Investigating the impact of
anonymous multiple digital peer review
on the quality of students' revised texts.



Research Questions

1. Can beginner level EFL learners provide effective peer feedback?
2. Does receiving anonymous digital feedback contribute to the development of better writing skills?
3. What are the perceptions of students towards the use of peer feedback in writing?



The Study: Setting and participants

- * Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University:
 - * A state university in Turkey
 - * School of Foreign Languages
 - * Biga Preparatory class students
- * 2015-2016 academic year
 - * Fall term
- * Participants
 - * $N = 13$ (8 Female, 5 Male)
 - * Mortality of participants!
 - * $n = 7$



Instruments

- Turnitin as a digital environment
- Semi-structured interview sessions
- Writing assessment rubric by Çınar (2014)



Procedure

- * Pilot assignment:
 - * To categorize students.
 - * 'good', 'moderate', and 'weak'.
 - * To familiarize students with digital peer review process.
- * Received feedback from three peers.
- * Provided feedback to three peers.
- * Students were aware of this categorization:
 - * Did not know into which category they were placed.
- * Rationale: Teachers should consider different student groups carefully and give precise instructions about the peer review task (Rollinson, 2005).



Findings



Findings:

R1: Can beginner level EFL learners provide effective peer feedback?

- ◆ A few students found the practice difficult and time consuming.
 - ◆ Felt frustrated .
 - ◆ Model how to use the rubric with real samples.
- ◆ They demanded more training opportunities.
- ◆ Consider their weakness in the target language.



R2: Does receiving anonymous digital feedback contribute to the development of better writing skills?

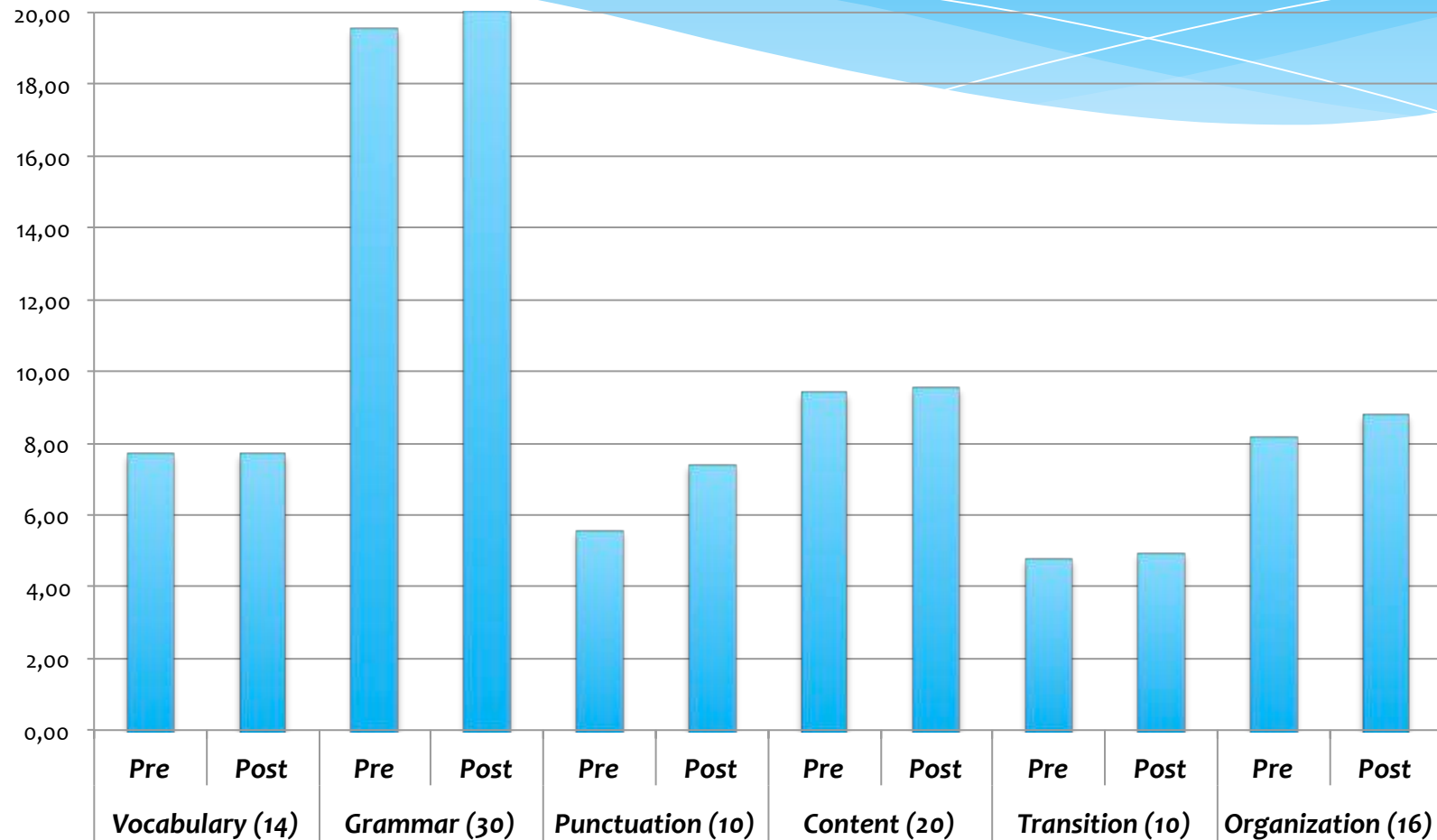
* **Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test:**

* post-test ranks were statistically significantly higher than pre-test ranks

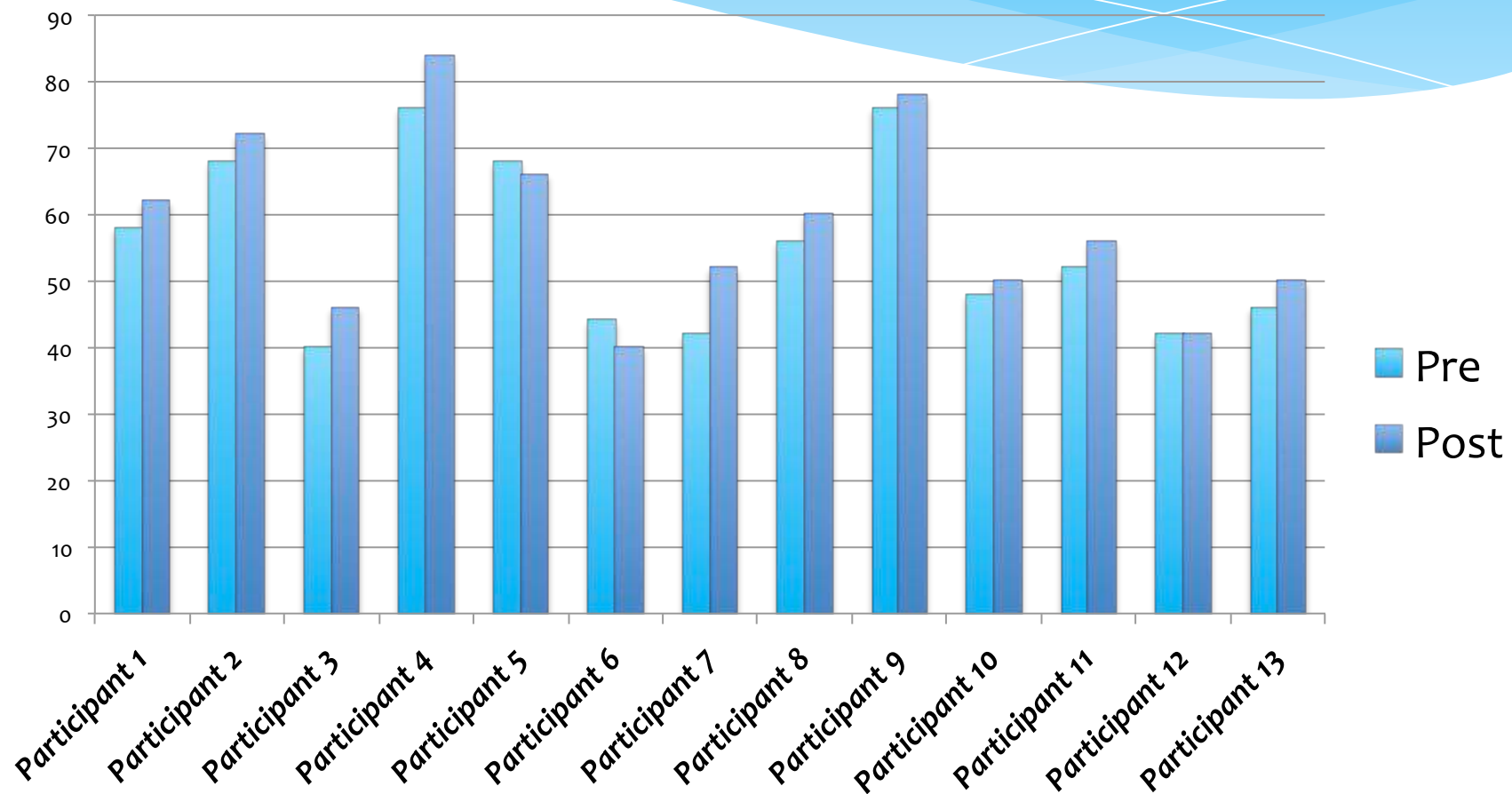
$Z = 2.43, p = .015.$



R2: Does receiving anonymous digital feedback contribute to the development of better writing skills?



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R2: Does receiving anonymous digital feedback contribute to the development of better writing skills?

- * Participants indicated that receiving peer feedback helped them realize their errors/mistakes.
- * Anonymity:
 - * When it comes to concerns about offending the writer, anonymity in peer feedback encourages them to criticize their friends' papers.



R3: What are the perceptions of students towards the use of peer feedback in writing?

- * Participants, in general, regarded online peer feedback **valuable**.
- * They were happy with the anonymity since this enabled to reveal their real opinions about their friends' papers.
 - * “It was nice to read my friends’ suggestions whenever I wanted.” [Participant 1]
 - * “Receiving peer feedback reduced my writing anxiety and made me more confident in the writing class.” [Participant 2]
 - * “The anonymity of reviewers made the process less anxious and stressful.” [Participant 3]



Discussion

- * Receiving feedback from several peers and revising accordingly requires deep analysis.
- * Development of **metacognitive skills**:
 - * **Autonomous learner**
- * Written corrective peer feedback contributes to the development of form-focused cognitive processing:
 - * Results in employment of **metacognitive revising strategies** (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).



Conclusion

- * **Receiving and providing anonymous peer feedback in beginner EFL writing is beneficial.**
- * Yet, this should be approached with caution!
- * The contribution with regards to the quality of the revised paper, is less in comparison to more proficient learners (e.g., Razi, 2015).
- * They can provide effective feedback related to mechanics of the paper.



Implications

- ✓ Group students carefully and give precise instructions about the peer review task (Rollinson, 2005).
- ✓ Familiarize with digital peer review.
- ✓ Model how to use the rubric.
- ✓ The review task should not be too demanding.
- * Consider participant mortality: Students who do not complete review task.
- * Language proficiency: Mistrusting peer feedback.
- * Extra work might be demotivating.



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