

Issues in TESL

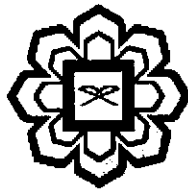
Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

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Ratnawati Mohd Asraf



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RESPONDING TO STUDENT'S WRITING: A CRITIQUE OF PEER REVIEW

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

In the last few decades, discussions on the teaching of writing have been dominated by the process approach, which involves helping students through the different stages of writing such as prewriting, writing, and revision by stressing on strategies that are felt to be conducive to better final texts (Flower, 1985; Zamel, 1987). Of these different stages of writing, the one that has been identified as a crucial factor in achieving quality of the final product is revision, whereby attempts are made at continually improving the text through various drafts (Elbow, 1981; Sommers, 1980; and Lame!, 1983).

Many techniques have been suggested to help in revising the written text; and one such technique is peer revision, where the students' peers participate as audience and collaborate towards the final product. In recent years, peer revision has been widely adopted by composition teachers not only in first language classrooms (Elbow, 1981; Brufee, 1984) but in second language classrooms (Bell, 1991; Kroll, 1991; Newkirk, 1984) as well. Numerous arguments have been put forth in support of this technique. Barnes (1976), Brief (1984), and Mittan (1989), for example, argue that peer interactions that occur during peer reviews have cognitive benefits because they provide students with opportunities to assume a more active role in their own learning. Barnes (1976) supports peer review because it allows students to engage in "exploratory talk" (p. 200) as they work through their ideas, which, he argues, would then lead to better writing. Brief (1984) concurs, and argues that writing, like thought, is related to conversation because "the way they [the students] talk with each other determines the way they will think and the way they will write" (p. 642). Researchers who