Do Zoomers Outperform Roomers in EFL Writing Peer-Review Tasks?

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Welcome

Some think synchronous online teaching, originally a stopgap, may potentially replace offline classes, so comparative research is needed. This study investigates the interaction patterns, feedback targets, and student preferences in synchronous online (Zoom) or offline (F2F) peer review sessions. Two South Korean university EFL writing classes had three essay assignments, each with a real-time peer review session. The first (training) and third peer review sessions were conducted completely online using Zoom and the university's LMS. The second was conducted face-to-face in a classroom. The tasks were identical in procedure, but not essay topic. The study found: (a) differences in interaction patterns between Zoom and the classroom; (b) little difference in feedback target (surface features, discourse, content, planning, or affect); and (c) cases in which students who preferred online peer review performed better offline. It also found that teacher feedback was more relevant to more students in the F2F situation.

Organization

- Peer review rationale
  - Benefits (for whom)
- Peer review approaches
  - Asynchronous /Synchronous
  - Unguided / Guided
- The Peer Review Circle
  - Talking with vs talking about then with
- Online synchronous peer review
  - Why Zoom?

- Study rationale
- Study methods
- Study findings
- Implications for teachers on/offline

What is peer review?

- In EFL writing, peer review means having another learner or learners read a student's writing and comment on it with the aim of improving the work

- Guided (list of questions/ targets)
    - Extensive: long list of items, asking for ratings and explanations
    - Simple: two or three Likert-type ratings

- Unguided (reviewer is free to comment about anything)

A potential 'vicious cycle' of peer review in EFL writing

- Part of the process approach to writing is 'getting feedback'
- (but) Feedback from peers is often viewed as 'less expert'
- Strong preference for teacher feedback (Manning, 2018)
    - To the point of ignoring peer feedback totally
- Proficiency level is a major concern (both reviewer and reviewee)
- Vicious cycle:
    - Feel PR is waste of time, do not engage sincerely, wastes time …

Approaches to PR

Asynchronous – OUT **of class**

- Shared docs with comments

- Audio-recorded comments

- Screen-sharing comments (video)

Synchronous – IN **Class**

- Speak to the person directly

- Speak to another person while the writer 'overhears' (PRC)

- Reading / preparing could be done in advance…

Who benefits from peer review (PR)

- The intention of peer review is that the peer identifies issues with the writing and helps the writer improve the work

- The evidence of this is mixed

- Sometimes PR is done more 'to make students read more' rather than to train them to read critically / evaluatively

- Peer review helps the <u>reviewer</u> (Lundstrum and Baker, 2009; Rouhia & Azizianb, 2013)

- Collaboration in general is helpful for writing (Shehadeh, 2011)

- Training Ss to do PR

- What 'guidance' to give (i.e., how detailed a set of questions)

- Requirement for 'suggestions to improve'

- What language to use (EFL sit'n with shared L1)

- Grading the PR ('what gets rewarded gets done')

- Proficiency, perceived proficiency, and relative proficiency

- Teacher role in peer review

Some of the other issues in PR

Peer Review Circles:
Peer review circles (PRCs), (Manning and Jobbitt, 2019)

Guided peer review

Triads – everyone reads two others' work

Do one paper at a time

Writer (A), Reviewer 1(B), Reviewer 2 (C)

Writer listens while reviewer 1 gives a timed monolog outlining their thoughts and continues to listen as both reviewers discuss their paper

Only AFTER listening for a pre-designated amount of time (5-10min) can the writer join in the discussion of their own work

Peer Review Sheet

Read your partners' papers. As you read, think about these questions. You will have to give a 2-minute speech to the writer about what you think, so read carefully.

Content
1. Was the essay **enjoyable**, **informative**, or both?
2. Were there any parts that you did not understand? Where? Ask the writer what she/he means.
3. Are there any points that need better evidence or clearer explanations?
4. Is the content new to you as a reader, or did you know much of it?

Title
5. Did the title get your attention? Why or why not? If not, (or if there is no title) suggest one.

Introductory paragraph
6. Does the first sentence (the 'hook') get your attention and make you want to read more? Explain why / why not?
7. Does the thesis statement have the topic, a claim/ opinion, and a writing plan? If not, suggest an improvement.

The body
8. Does the first body paragraph begin with a strong topic sentence? If not – suggest improvements.
9. Are the major points logically relevant to the topic sentence? If not, suggest changes.
10. How does the writer prove their ideas? Do they use examples, details, quotations, and explanations effectively in the paragraph? Suggest improvements – such as the type of information that is needed.
11. Is there any repetitive or off-topic information? (NOTE: something can be both true and off-topic!) If so, suggest what needs removing or changing.
12. Answer these questions for the other body paragraphs.

Conclusion
13. Does the conclusion either summarize the main points or restate the thesis statement? If not, suggest changes.
14. Is the final sentence memorable? Does it predict, suggest, call to action or quote? If not, suggest a new ending.
15. Is there any new information in the conclusion that should be in the body? If so, suggest where to move it or if the writer should delete it.

Language
16. Is there a wide range of vocabulary and grammar?
17. Did you notice any big mistakes of grammar, vocabulary, or style?

Citations and reference list
18. Are there any parts that need a citation?
19. Are the citations and reference list in APA format?
20. Are the references **reliable** sources?

Mechanics and Format
21. Is the essay in the correct font, double spaced, neat, free of spelling and capitalization mistakes?
22. Is the essay free of contractions (e.g. don't, can't), emoticons (e.g. ^^ ;;;;), ALL CAPS, and underlining?

The triad spends the entire time talking about one person's writing.

When time finishes, switch roles.

The triad then reviews another person's paper.
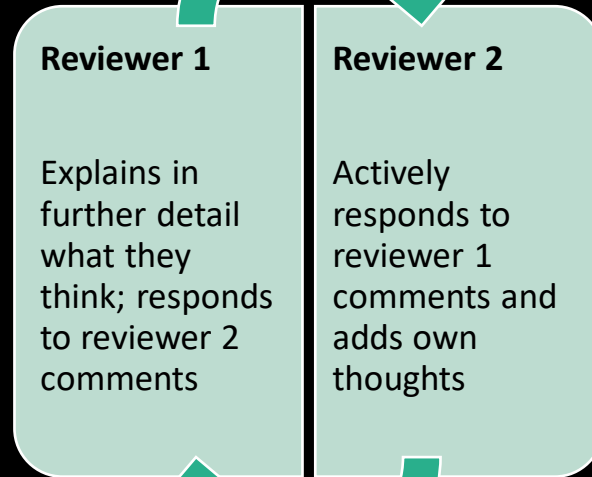
A (reader)

C (writer)

B (listener)
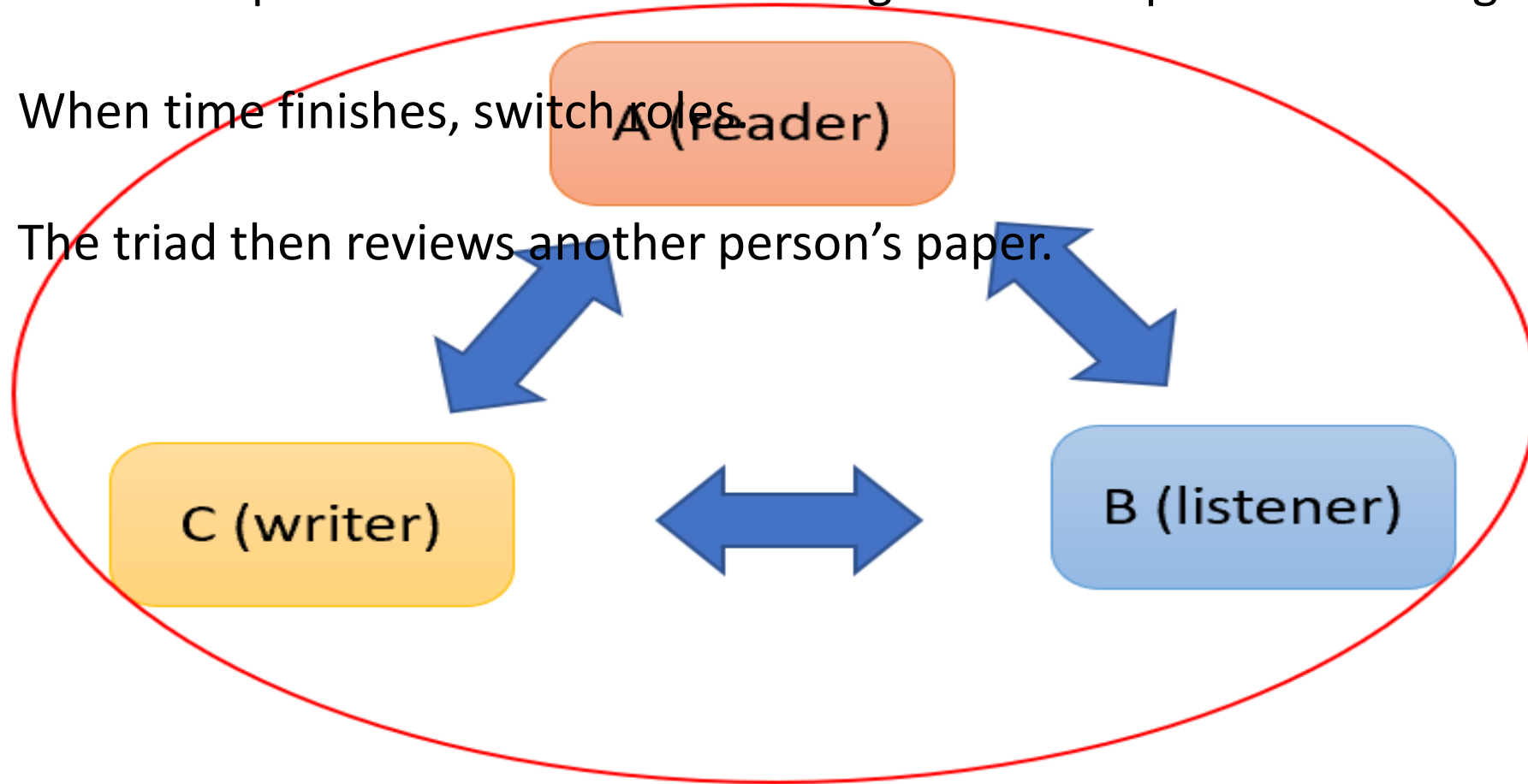
Three people discuss C's writing.
1. C responds to what A and B said.
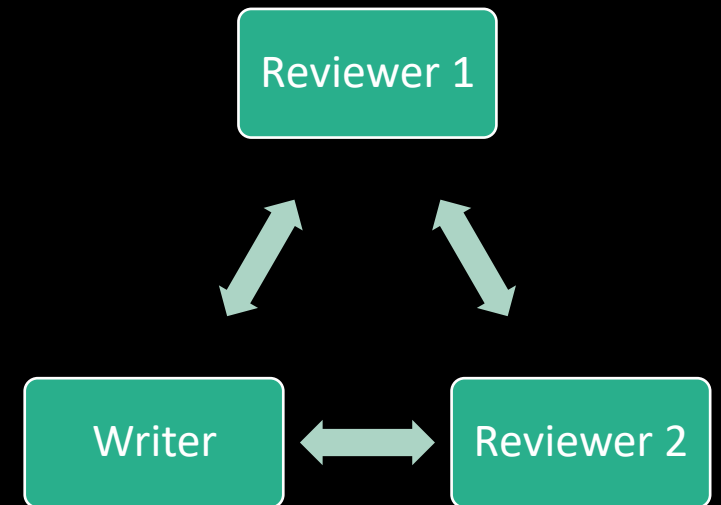2. C can ask for more specific ideas or comment

Peer review circle: [PRC]

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Reviewer 1	Review-er 2 & Writer
Gives a monolog	Listening only

Discussion

Writer is silent!

Dialog

Reviewer 1	**Reviewer 2**
Explains in further detail what they think; responds to reviewer 2 comments	Actively responds to reviewer 1 comments and adds own thoughts

Reviewer 1

Writer — Reviewer 2

All three members discuss the writing. The writer can ask, explain, or listen at this point

The Peer Review Circle (why)

- Manning (2021); Manning & Jobbitt (2019) found more feedback
- Manning (2021) found more that double the number of feedback moves in the PRC compared to peers in pairs
- Manning (2021) also found nearly 40 % of feedback in pairs was affective (cf. cheerleading), while only 13% of feedback was affective in PRC (and 87% focused on structure, discourse, or planning (strategic) issues with the source).

Average number of feedback moves per minute (Manning, 2021) – comparing pairs with PRC

FB type	Pairs	PRC
Surface	0.8	3.0
Discourse	1.05	2.35
Planning	0	0.5
Affective	1.25	0.9
Total	3.1	6.75

A brief note about Zoom (vs. other apps)

- At the time of this study:

1. Zoom had breakout rooms (BOR) which other apps either did not (yet) have

2. Zoom allows the host to give permission to students to record their BOR

3. Zoom allows screen sharing and text chat between members (I disabled S – S direct chat, but whole class / whole BOR chat was possible) – Chat can be saved

4. The teacher can drop in on any session and the students can 'call host' (i.e., the teacher) for help at any time.

The Study

How do PRCs done on Zoom stack up when compared to those done F2F?

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Research question (and angles thereof)

1. In what ways did online and offline peer review circles differ?

- In amount of feedback
- In focus/target of feedback – structure, discourse (content), planning (strategic), or affect (praise / admonition / expression of alignment)
- In type of feedback – direct or indirect
- In function of feedback – analytical, evaluative, explanatory, revision
- In overall participation (turns; 'empty air')
- In 'confusion' (i.e., time spent organizing themselves)
- In 'use of the teacher'

Context and participants

- University in Seoul that specializes in language teaching

- Two classes of first year English majors taking a mandatory writing class

- The classes are the higher level of a 2-level system for first-year writing
  - Ss could all write a relatively well-structured, 300-word essay in 60 min; and were the top 40 students on this test of an incoming freshman class of 100 students

- Students were in their second semester, and were familiar with essay writing and peer review (in some form) from the previous semester (survey)

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The semester and how the study came about

The class was scheduled to be online-only, but during the semester, the university migrated to face-to-face classes, and then back to online only
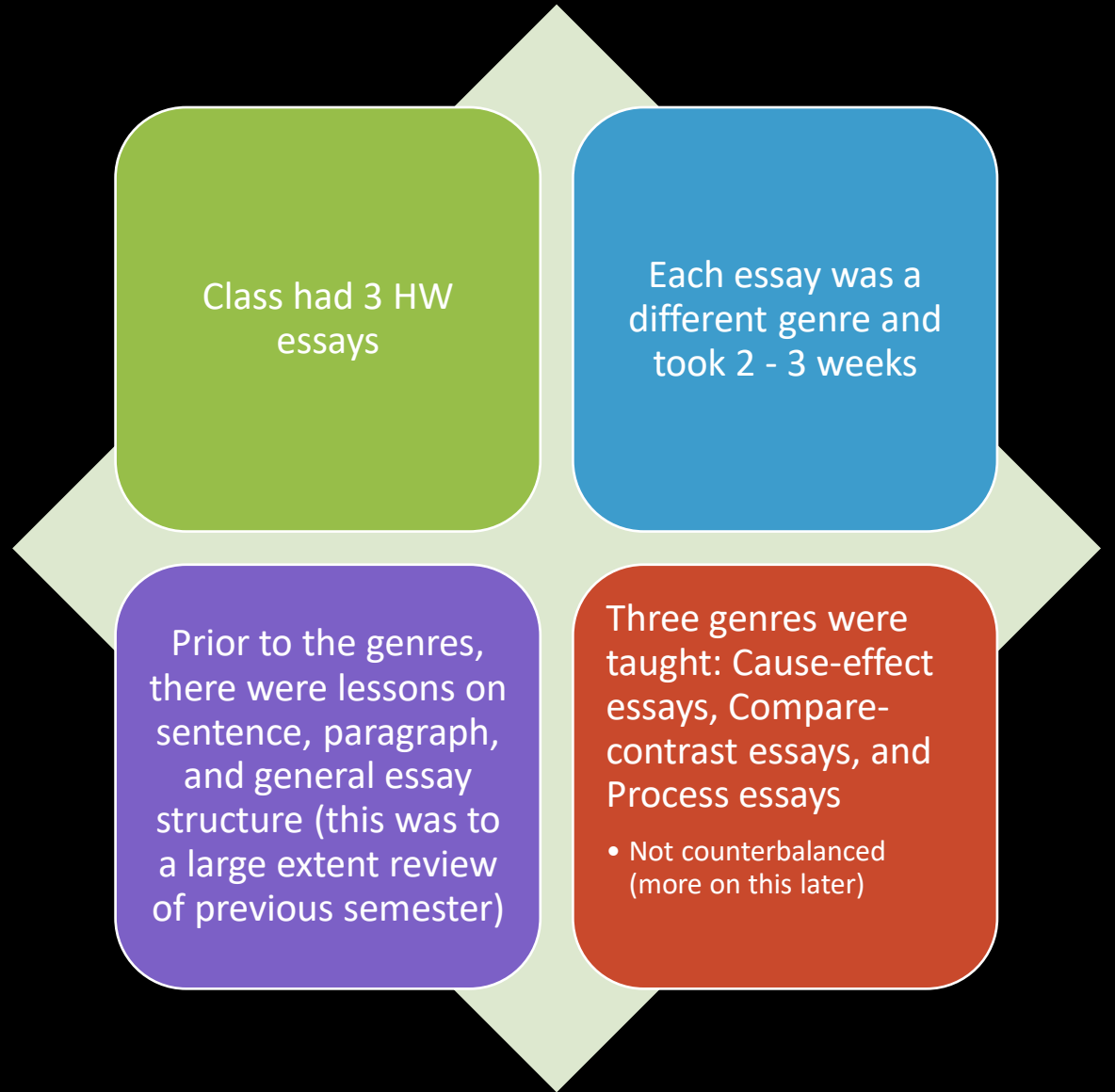
The 'jumping' online and F2F and back to online happened at points in the semester which coincided with new genres / assignments in the writing class

This meant that a sequence of online class → F2F class → online class naturally emerged in such a way that there was also online peer review → offline peer review → online peer review.

Class structure, data collection, and data analysis

Class had 3 HW essays

Each essay was a different genre and took 2 - 3 weeks

Prior to the genres, there were lessons on sentence, paragraph, and general essay structure (this was to a large extent review of previous semester)

Three genres were taught: Cause-effect essays, Compare-contrast essays, and Process essays

- Not counterbalanced (more on this later)

Schedule

Week	Genre	Lesson focus
6	Cause-effect	Peer review training with sample paper and PRC questions
7	Cause-effect	Peer review training with sample paper and PRC questions
8	Cause-effect	Peer review session
10	Compare-contrast	Peer review training with sample paper and PRC questions
11	Compare-contrast	Peer review session
13	Process	Peer review training with sample paper and PRC questions
14	Process	Peer review session
16	ALL	Final exam (timed writing)

Data

- All PRC were recorded
  - Zoom recordings were sent to me via Google Docs after class by group captain after class
  - In F2F classes, I used DVRs on each group's desk.
- All PRC recordings were analyzed, segmented, and coded using ELAN version 6.3 (note it would be easy to use NVIVO for this, too).

General observations

1. Background noise was a factor in both F2F classes and online, but the online BGN is more prominent and more distracting to the students.

2. F2F students would show their device screen or printout to partners to refer to where they were talking about; although Zoom allows screen sharing, this was rarely used.

3. There were a lot of hitches with technology and the accompanying talk thereof

4. Online Ss were still studying in 'groups' (café, dorm, etc.)
   1. A few cases of roommates in the same dorm room being in different online PRCs
   2. Another case when 6 classmates went to the same café to have the online class and were sitting at one long table… so they had both online noise and similar noise to working in a loud classroom

Findings re: PRCs done F2F

1. Many moves to align with the content the writer wrote (e.g., when comparing two products, the reviewer would comment on their need to buy a computer / dye their hair, etc.) ~ not found in the online data

2. Predominance of TOPIC and REFERENCING feedback

3. Feedback on organization centered on the thesis statement, topic sentences, and the relation of the evidence (content) to them

4. Disagreement between the reviewers was observed many times
   1. Groups often asked the professor if they didn't know something (raise hand)

5. Many 'mitigating moves' (e.g., "It's just my opinion")

Findings re: PRCs done on ZOOM

1. Feedback is predominantly on formatting (esp. APA), with some on the content

2. Less overall feedback, and there were many long silences of over a minute

3. Focus of feedback on the structure & organization (things taught in class, like the hook, topic sentence placement, etc.) and less on the ideas within the essay

4. Reviewers frequently ignored what the other reviewer said and just made their own comments

5. Related to 4, there was no observed reviewer-reviewer disagreement

An observation (not really part of the original RQ, but of interest to teachers)

- **Teacher's role and presence is very different F2F vs on Zoom**
  - Zoom:
    - Has to be called or drop in – cannot observe from central position & overhear
    - Cannot observe INCORRECT feedback being given and change it on the spot
    - Is asked fewer questions during feedback (i.e., not used as a resource despite the 'call host' option on Zoom)
    - Students spent quite a bit of time discussing things like 'italics' for Korean terms (e.g., *bibimbap* or *hanbok*) which were readily solved in F2F situation
  - F2F:
    - Teacher observes common errors/issues and presents at end of the class about them (e.g., Italics use, capitalization, etc.)

Some things to consider about this study

- There will be a topic / genre difference with any kind of writing and therefore any peer review study should account for it (counterbalanced designs)

- This study was more exploratory and emergent than preplanned

- These students were somewhat high-level and homogeneous; yours may well differ

- Your students may need to use L1 for much of their feedback

- The observations here point to some interesting issues for using Zoom in general
  - How is the T seen and used by students?
  - How can the T 'stand and observe' in the BOR context
    - Currently this is not possible with existing technology; although Zoom now [since the study ended] is allowing 'hosts' to monitor chat, screen share, etc. in the BOR ~ but there is no method of monitoring voices in real time]

Implications and further expansion...

- Tech is with us, but it's not at our level (or our needed level) yet.

- If possible, avoid tech with no BOR function and that with no ability to record what happens in a BOR

- We may need some more immediate way to determine what is going on in a BOR, particularly when 'incorrect' students are leading the others astray

- Re this study: PRCs could be done on Zoom, but as I've noted elsewhere re other tasks, performance on Zoom lacks full learning potential, especially immediate addressing of incorrect feedback by the instructor