Peer response in second language writing classrooms.

Perhaps nowhere before has there been such a focused, comprehensive discussion of L2 peer response as that provided by Jun Liu and Jette G. Hansen in Peer Response in Second Language Writing Classrooms, an efficiently written jewel of the new Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers.

The most important test that a teacher’s resource book must pass is that it is indeed useful, flying colors. Not only do the authors offer tips based on research and their own experience within the chapters, but they have also included a list of “Suggestions for Teachers” at the end of each chapter. These lists are packed with innovative approaches and solutions to peer response issues. The chapters themselves are clearly organized by use of explicitly labeled headings and subheadings.

Michigan series on teaching multilingual writers (Series editors Diane Belcher and Jun Liu and Jette G. Hansen (2002)
Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press
Pp. viii + 182
$16.00
Chapter 1 starts by addressing some of the most pertinent questions to any teacher using peer response, such as whether students can detect problems in their peers’ texts and whether students adopt more feedback from peers or teachers.

In the second chapter, the authors present clear distinctions between different types of learners and learning contexts, as differences between adults and children and ESL and EFL learners have garnered ever more acute attention over the past several years. The tone of this chapter is more forward-looking than retrospective, which imbues the text with a sense of usefulness and practicality: readers will not feel as if they are recounting the history of the field so much as constructing its future.

The full third chapter is devoted to a discussion of considerations to take into account when grouping students into peer response groups. Though the authors do not prescribe a strict formula for establishing groups, they do offer specific advice for teachers in order to make peer response as effective and harmonious as possible.

Chapter 4 explains different modes of response, including particular attention paid to computer-mediated modes. The authors have expertly balanced their discussion of curricular concerns with student concerns throughout this volume, and that is perhaps most evident in this chapter.

Chapter 5 offers insight about what peer response should focus on. The title of the chapter, “Foci of Peer Response,” hints that the authors will not endorse a simplistic model of response. In fact, if anything, the authors might be said to challenge seemingly linear approaches to peer response (focus on content in the first draft, focus on mechanics in the second draft).

It is in Chapter 6 that teachers will find a wealth of resources in the form of examples of peer response sheets and some very helpful tables. Table 14 (pp. 141-142), “Useful Sentences for Peer Response Activities,” may be especially appreciated for its immediate potential as a time-saver to the teacher who would try to compile such a list for use in class. Although the authors may have reservations about teaching formulaic language (see p. 140), the reality is that such a list is extremely valuable as a starting point or guide for non-native speaking students. Additionally, pages 126-128 present teachers with an extremely welcomed list of points to cover when preparing students to respond to peers’ papers. The sixteen-item list is synthesized from previously published, complementary sets of suggestions.

A brief discussion of specific problems and solutions in implementing peer response appears with a “Final Checklist for Peer Response” (164-167), which offers teachers an ordered checklist of preparations to make and procedures to follow in implementing peer response. Included in this volume are both a Subject Index and Author Index, which can come in handy when searching for mention of a particular study.

One complaint about *Peer Response* is that the authors occasionally made unfounded statements which they expect the reader to accept. One such example is when a single piece of correspondence is used as the basis of the claim that Asian students “consider group cohesion more important than personal opinions when there is a conflict.” (pp. 95-96) Whether it seems like common sense or not, a blanket statement such as this demands more support.
Peer response is an exciting, still-unfolding area of L2 writing and curriculum design, and an indispensable guide to the major issues and considerations. More than that, though, Peer Response educates teachers about research in peer response and providing teachers with practical

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Peer response in second language writing classrooms, however, experts note that the wave of dissonant farce, such a research approach to the problems of artistic typology can be found in K.


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A metaperspective for counseling practice: A response to the challenge of contextualism, ka