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Preparing pupils for peer or group response

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Abstract

Teaching writing is a complex skill, and one that needs attention if student writing scores across New Zealand are to improve. The teaching of writing has changed over the years from a traditional product approach, where students wrote for the teacher, to a more collaborative approach where students work together as part of a writing community.

Peer or group response is one approach that teachers can use when building a writing community as part of their writing programme. This typically involves groups of students sharing and responding to writing, usually during the *revision* stage of the writing process. Students use the responses they receive from peers to revise their message, which in turn impacts on the quality of writing produced.

Preparing students for effective peer or group response is a sophisticated process that requires careful planning and preparation. This research used qualitative observations and interviews to investigate some of the ways that four teachers prepared their students for peer or group response in writing. The results of this study suggest that there are a number of ways to prepare students for response in writing and that teachers will coach students how to respond to their own and others' writing differently, depending on the discourse/s of writing and teaching writing that they consciously or unconsciously subscribe to. This research also shows that response activities motivate students, and suggests the benefits of adopting a school-wide approach and involving teachers in professional development to help develop their identity as a writer.

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Chapter One: Why peer or group response?

The understanding, in which writing is seen as a specific communicative interaction with others, for a specific purpose, at a specific moment in time, highlights the need to examine the context of peer response group work, along with its material consequences, or, put another way, to make explicit the highly developed and complex – though sometimes unconscious – understandings of peer response groups, to make theory conscious so that we may avoid turning this cornerstone of writing pedagogy into a mechanical routine. (M. Hall, 2009, p. 1)

Introduction: The journey

This thesis was prompted by my experience in teaching writing to primary students for the last 13 years. During that time I experimented with a range of strategies, which aimed to improve the quality of students' writing. However, despite trying my best to improve the classroom-writing programme, I began to feel more and more disheartened when my writing data did not show accelerated progress. Often frustrated by changes in policy, whole-school professional development and testing procedures, I began to update my knowledge by furthering my study of literacy approaches at university. It was then that I discovered the importance of teacher knowledge and its impact on student achievement. This fairly simple notion led me to explore research-based approaches that have been successful in improving students' writing. Peer or group response seemed a practical, motivating approach that could be implemented easily into classroom practice.

I began to reflect on my experiences of peer/group response that I had used in my previous classrooms. Buddy conferencing had been part of my classroom programme for years. However, I really hadn't thought about the purpose or the potential advantages of using this approach with my students, nor did I prepare my students for this process. I automatically assumed they could do it because they had been at school for three years! Buddy conferencing in my classrooms typically involved students that had finished their draft writing finding another peer who had also finished their

writing and taking turns to read their writing to each other. By reading their writing out loud I assumed the reader (also the writer in this case) would locate and reflect on their own mistakes (or possibly hear them). To some extent this was true and I noticed that students made changes to their writing, sometimes while reading it to their peer. At other times, the listener would respond to their partner by pointing out surface errors – mostly spelling and punctuation. I noted that peers rarely commented on the actual message. Another observation I made was that many students were ‘off task’ while working with their buddy.

Looking back, buddy conferencing was more of a ‘time filler’ than an actual process in my classroom. It was a time for students to keep busy while I carried on conferencing with individuals who had finished and edited their writing. The buddy system that I had implemented in my classroom was not productive or purposeful. Students were merely going through the motions, *fixing up* their mistakes for me, as I was their audience. At the end of the day, I would be the one that would look at their writing and give them feedback and feed-forward, not their buddy.

It wasn’t until I began reading the literature on peer and group response that I started to ask myself the following questions: Who were my students really writing for and how could I prepare them so that they could provide quality feedback and feed forward for each other?

Significance of this study

Hillocks (1986) noted that writing practice in isolation does not improve writing, but having writing responded to does. There is significant evidence suggesting that students can benefit from sharing and responding to writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Bobbitt-Nolen, 2007; Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2008; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006; Hidi & Boscolo, 2007; Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013; Locke & Kato, 2012; Magnifico, 2010; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007; Simmons, 2003). Peer or group response typically allows students to share and respond to draft texts as part of the revision process during writing (Hansen & Liu,

2005). This approach normally involves small groups or peers of students responding to writing and then revising their drafts based on the responses they receive (Berne, 2004; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007).

With growing concerns regarding New Zealand students' under achievement in writing Dix and Cawkwell (2011) it is perhaps timely for researchers, teacher educations and teachers to investigate ways of improving writing quality. National Standards data in 2012 indicated that just 68% of students were achieving 'at' or 'above' the National Standard in writing (Thrupp, 2013). The introduction of National Standards in 2010 has increased the pressure on teachers to make judgements about student achievement in writing (Thrupp, 2013). Unfortunately, this has meant that some students are being exposed to standardised tests such as asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning), which may not necessarily motivate or help them understand what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their writing. There is a danger that these tests can drive our teaching in the wrong direction, thus becoming 'product' based and related to flawed understandings around audience, purpose and genre. Peer or group response challenges the use of one-off formal tests on allocated topics by allowing students to work through the entire writing process rather than squeezing it all into a one-hour test (Smith & Elley, 1997).

Class ratios of 1 teacher to 29 students in Years 4 – 8 (recommended by the Ministry of Education, 2011) call for teachers to find manageable ways to organise their writing programme so that all students can achieve successfully. Teachers will find it challenging to respond to 29 pieces of writing in a single lesson. According to some researchers, peer or group response can help address this problem, as well as offering other advantages, some of which include; increased motivation to write, a non-threatening audience, improved writing quality, development of teamwork and social skills, opportunities to engage in critical thinking skills, and strengthened self efficacy (Beach, Campano, Edmiston, & Borgmann, 2010; Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena, & Smeets,

2010; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). (See Chapter Two for more details on these advantages.)

See Chapter Two for more details on these advantages.

Of course, as teachers we cannot assume that students will naturally be able to respond to writing. Putting peer or group response into practice requires careful thought, planning, and scaffolding so that students can learn to respond and comment appropriately and purposefully. As a result of careful scaffolding students can learn about writing through the social 'dialogues' they engage in with their group or peer (Englert et al., 2008; M. Hall, 2009; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007).

Recent research on peer response is sparse (M. Hall, 2009). Therefore, exploring this approach and the range of techniques that teachers adopt when preparing pupils for peer or group response is an important process in helping other teaching professionals successfully adopt this approach as part of a quality writing programme.

Research questions

This thesis will address the following questions:

1. How do a small sample of primary teachers prepare students for peer or group response?
2. How do these teachers prepare their students for providing useful responses to others' writing?
3. How often do students engage in collaborative peer or group response when undertaking a writing assignment?
4. How does engagement in peer or group response appear to decrease/increase student motivation in respect of writing?
5. What kinds of changes do students make to their writing in response to peer/group responses?

The questions above have been formed to assist in finding out how four teachers prepare and develop a collaborative environment where peer and group response is a valued part of a *process approach* to writing.

Outline of this thesis

The following chapter provides a review of the literature on peer and group response and how it can benefit students and teachers. Strategies on how to prepare students for effective peer or group response are outlined along with the importance of scaffolding instruction during this process.

Chapter Three explains and justifies the research design, including the data collection methods and analysis. The findings from this research are presented in Chapter Four. This will report on how teachers organised peer or group response opportunities in their classrooms and the ways in which they prepared their pupils for this process. Chapter Five discusses the implications of the research and suggests avenues for future investigation.

Chapter Two: Review of relevant literature

Introduction

This chapter provides an account of a selection of literature that relates to peer/group response as a collaborative writing approach. Research in this field is limited, especially studies involving primary-aged students. Similarly, studies on practical aspects that involve preparing students for peer or group response is also scarce.

The review commences with a definition of peer/group response and discusses the purposes of using peer or group response as a writing approach. Following this, details regarding collaborative learning theory are discussed along with relevant writing pedagogy. In this chapter, literature on the advantages and limitations of using peer/group response are explored in some detail. The review concludes by summarising research regarding practical approaches that can be used to prepare students for focused peer or group response.

Peer/group response defined

Hoogeveen and van Gelderen (2013) define peer response as an 'umbrella term for many forms of collaboration between students' (p. 474). For the purpose of this research, peer response (sometimes referred to as 'peer review', 'peer conferencing' or 'peer editing') will be defined as:

The use of learners as sources of information and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing. (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 1)

The purpose of peer/group response

Peer or group response can be classed as a formative strategy because its focus is on assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning (Quinn, 2004). The main drive behind Assessment for Learning (AfL) is to help develop students, who 'judge performance relative to goals, generate

internal feedback about amounts and rates of progress towards goals, and adjust further action based on that feedback' (Butler & Winne, 1995, p. 258). When students are given the power to provide responses to others' writing including feedback (positives about writing) and feed-forward (areas to improve) they become independent learners who take responsibility and ownership for their learning (Calfee & Miller, 2007; Hawe & Dixon, 2014). In addition, if students lack knowledge in a certain area 'feedback can help students add information, thereby elaborating and enriching prior knowledge' (Butler & Winne, 1995, p. 265).

The primary purpose of responding to students' writing is to help them improve the quality of their writing (Burke, 2010). Response groups are designed to engage students by having them respond to their peers' writing whilst internalising the responses they themselves receive to assist them in improving their own writing performance (Beach & Friedrich, 2008, p. 222). For quality peer or group response to occur, students need to know how to access, understand and act on the responses they are given (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007; Smith & Elley, 1997). Through careful deliberate structure, guidance and modelling, teachers can assist students in providing valuable responses, which in turn help students reflect on their own progress as writers (Sadler, 1998).

Writing as a social practice

When we picture a traditional classroom we envisage students sitting in neat rows facing their teacher who instructs them to independently write on a given topic. Once the students finish their writing they present it to the teacher who then marks/grades it (*assessment of learning*). This traditional approach, where teachers had power over students, placed an emphasis on product, was un-motivating for students and resulted in students having little influence on decisions related to their learning (Locke, 2015; Nelson, 2007).

Writing is far from the traditional solitary skill described above; it is an 'act of social communication' (Bobbitt-Nolen, 2007, p. 241). In contrast to the

product approach, the *process* approach recognises that writing is a social activity and is best learned in a community of practice (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007, p. 34). Sociocultural approaches to writing focus on creating opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Gillespie, Olinghouse, & Graham, 2013; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Hillocks, 1986; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007; Smith & Elley, 1997).

Peer or group response is based on collaborative and sociocultural learning theory where students learn as part of a 'writing community' where they draw on each others' knowledge, skills and resources (Bruffee, 1984; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). In a meta-analysis of qualitative writing research Graham and Perin (2007) found ten common themes relating to effective writing instruction. One of these themes acknowledged that effective teachers treated writing 'as a process, where students plan, draft, revise, edit, and share their work' (p.325).

The collaborative nature of peer or group response makes the writing process authentic for students, bringing with it a sense of purpose and motivation because students write for an actual audience – their peers (Alber-Morgan, Hessler, & Konrad, 2007; Elbow, 2000; Latham, 2002; Magnifico, 2010; Nystrand, 1997b; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007; Smith & Elley, 1997; Walshe, 1981).

Elbow (2000) describes four kinds of audience that we potentially write for: audience with authority such as teachers; audience of peers; audience of allies such as family and friends; and ourselves. In addition, Elbow discusses variables that can affect our experience of writing and presents the following questions:

- Are we writing to readers we know or to readers we don't know?
- Are we writing to a large group, a small group or just one reader?

- Are we writing to absent readers or to readers who are present with us as we write? (p. 29)

Elbow believes that we have rich writing experiences when different audiences respond to our writing. However, as mentioned earlier, most of us have only experienced writing for a teacher.

The sociocultural view of writing 'impacts on the way writing teachers need to think about texts, author and audience' (Locke, 2015, p. 137). Interestingly, Linden and Whimbey (1990) suggest that the process approach does not motivate students to write, yet they neglect to discuss the importance of audience. Audience is addressed in the *prewriting* stage where students make decisions about their topic and audience (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). Attending to audience during the composition of texts ensures that students clarify purpose, style and when to use particular language features. Audience is a key factor in the peer/response process and much research suggests that this can influence student motivation (Boscolo & Gelati, 2007; Cutler & Graham, 2008; Gambrell, Hughes, Calvert, Malloy, & Igo, 2011; Magnifico, 2010).

Obviously, there are many factors that teachers need to consider when planning and teaching writing. However, this literature review focuses on theory and practice relating to peer or group response of which audience and purpose are strong elements.

Learning theory

Vygotskian theories also support the need for writing to be interactive and social (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Smith & Elley, 1997). The difference between what a child can do alone and what they can do with support is called the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1986). van der Veer (2007) explains that the ZPD 'refers to functions that have not yet matured, but are in the process of maturing' (p.81). Teachers should ideally present children with problems that they cannot yet fully solve by themselves but are capable of solving with help,

such problems will be new and stimulating for the child (van der Veer, 2007, p. 82). Therefore, teachers need to find out what students already know about writing and responding to writing, then mediate a path working within the student's ZPD to develop new knowledge (Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 520).

One way to achieve this is by creating a dialogic stance. According to Nystrand (1997a) dialogic instruction allows students to contribute their ideas in a conversational manner. This is in contrast to recitation (where the teacher asks the questions and students make the responses), which can be less interactive due to its procedural nature (p. 17). By taking a step back and allowing students to talk about writing and listening to their responses, the teacher can gain a greater awareness of his or her students everyday knowledge and understanding of language. Following this the teacher can build on and consolidate students' knowledge through deliberate acts of teaching while introducing the more mechanical features of language (Ching, 2007; Keen, 1997). This shared language can be used when students respond to others' writing and is called *metalinguage*. (This is discussed in more detail further on in the chapter.)

Bakhtin, Holquist, and Emerson (1986) explain that students' utterances (their turn in a conversation) are determined by what they are talking about (discourse) and whom they are speaking to (p. xviii). These discussions shape the understanding and thinking of each student and how they will respond to future discussions (Nystrand, 1997a, p. 7). Consequently, what students' experience in a response conference will determine how they act and respond in subsequent conferences. Responses that students give each other are influenced by the social organisation and the individual roles of those involved. Therefore, learning to respond to others' writing is influenced by the learner's interactions, including the responses they anticipate from other peers in their group (Haworth, 1999; Nystrand, 1997a). It is up to the teacher to inculcate students through explicit modelling of appropriate behaviours and contributions, so students can

master the discourse strategies entailed in peer response (Zhu, 1995). Practical ways of achieving this are described later in this chapter.

An overview of writing pedagogy

Locke (2015) clearly explains that, 'there is no *one* way of thinking about writing and writing pedagogy' (p. 117). In other words, there is more than one story (discourse) to be told about what writing *is* and how it is best taught. It is useful to think of peer response as a kind of 'discourse' where students are taught to use certain patterns of language and follow rules for taking turns or opening and closing conversation (Paltridge, 2000, p. 7). In contrast to this 'lower case' use of the word, Gee (1992) used the term 'Discourse' to describe 'a socioculturally distinctive and integrative way of thinking, acting, interacting, talking, and valuing connected with a particular social identity or role' (p. 33). Authors such as Ivanič (2004) and Locke (2015) have set out to categorise discourses in regard to writing and the teaching of writing.

Locke (2015) uses four discourses and indicates the beliefs that teachers operating out of these discourses may hold (see Table 1). The discourses that teachers subscribe to when teaching peer/group response will influence how they coach students to respond to their own and others' writing (see Table 2).

Table 1. Discourses of writing and learning to write¹

Possible Teacher Beliefs	
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literacy texts are more important than non-literacy texts ▪ It is more important to read literacy texts than to compose them ▪ The meaning of a text is in the text ▪ It is individuals who produce texts ▪ Genius has a bigger role than craft in the production of texts, but craft is still very important ▪ Literature has an important role to play in the way a culture expresses itself and is passed on ▪ Technology is just a tool for doing things and not especially relevant
Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creativity is an individual human capacity and everyone can write/compose texts requiring creative shaping (such as literacy texts) ▪ Texts for modelling and exploration need to connect with the 'world of the student' ▪ The meaning of a text is in the text ▪ It is individuals who produce texts ▪ Craft is important, but so are such things as exploration, experimentation and process; process is more important than product. ▪ Writing has a key role to play in a person's individual growth: writing is a way of making sense of the world. ▪ Literacy texts, even when these are popular literature, have a bigger role to play in individual growth (self-realisation) than non-literacy texts. ▪ Technology can be a way of connecting with the world of the student. ▪ Teaching grammar formally is a waste of time.
Rhetorical or textual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literacy is a social practice as well as an individual one ▪ The writer/composer is inevitably socially situated, with a need to be rhetorically oriented that is to have a keen awareness of audience and purpose ▪ Students need to master a range of text-types or genres in order to be successful in the world; product is as important as process ▪ Teacher modelling is vital in helping students negotiate mastery of new genres ▪ Students need to be exposed to good examples of particular genres which can be used for study (breaking the generic code) and imitation ▪ Individuals produce textual meaning, but in social contexts ▪ There is a place for grammar in the classroom ▪ It is important that students understand how language functions – at word, sentence and whole-text levels – and have a metalanguage to express that understanding.
Critical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reality (for readers and writers) is socially constructed by human sign systems ▪ As readers and writers we are very much social products (individual genius doesn't have much place here) ▪ A text does not have a single meaning. Different readers read texts differently and texts mean things only in relationship to other texts ▪ Texts reflect one or more discourses and are inherently ideological ▪ Texts have powerful roles in representing the world in particular ways to advantage some groups and disadvantage others ▪ Technological mediation impacts on the meaning of a text ▪ Literacy is multiple (multiliteracies) ▪ There are ethical implications for the way we read the word/world as writers/composers of texts ▪ Metalinguistic understanding is vital to our understanding of the textual work we do as writers

¹ Table used with permission from author (Locke, 2015, pp. 119-126).

Table 2. Discourse orientations and practices that may be evident during peer/group response (as related to Locke's (2015) categories)

Cultural	Personal growth	Rhetorical or textual competence	Critical practice
Students may lack motivation because writing is prescriptive and product based.	Students are 'authors' who feel empowered to create texts for others to read.	Students are aware of who their audience is and the purpose for writing.	Students know that texts are socially constructed and are not neutral (Sandretto & Klenner, 2011).
Students may feel their writing is not valued because it does not follow rules or linguistic patterns.	The teacher uses socially relevant texts as models, which may increase learners' motivation and interest.	The teacher exposes students to various models ensuring that students master a variety of genres and the metalanguage connected with these.	Students are encouraged to analyse others' writing and suggest how it could influence their beliefs and actions.
Peer/group response has little significance as writing is independent and would be assessed on accuracy not content.	Students work through the entire writing process, which includes peer/group conferencing. Grammar is not explicitly taught or mentioned in a random fashion. Peer/groups are more likely to respond to content.	Students use metalanguage to discuss their writing and give appropriate responses on characteristics associated with a particular genre and its intended audience.	Students engage with texts differently depending on their knowledge and experiences.

A teacher's ability to teach the discourse practices entailed in peer/group response can be hindered by his or her own knowledge and experiences, and will inevitably be influenced by discourses of writing and teaching writing that they consciously or unconsciously subscribe to. Most teachers will draw on two or more discourses when teaching a lesson or series of lessons (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227).

A recent study of 20 primary teachers' discourses in writing and writing instruction discovered that teachers were negotiating between multiple discourses including professional development discourses, those from the curriculum, and their own personal experiences (McCarthy, Woodard, & Kang, 2014). The results of the study found that curricular influence was dominant and the authors' recommended that teachers find ways to offer students more diverse writing instruction (McCarthy et al., 2014, p. 87).

In this case knowing a range of discourses provides teachers with more options for preparing students for responding to one another's writing.

The National Writing Project (NWP) is a successful teaching network in the United States, which for almost three decades has been developing research-based professional learning for teachers in writing. The pedagogical strategies promoted by the NWP are to:

- Encourage learners to think of themselves as authors.
- Invite them to take ownership for the direction and processes of learning.
- Require them to risk making their voices public.
- Ask them to serve as critical and supportive audiences for fellow authors
- Ground them in the reiterative processes of writing including generating topics, drafting, engaging feedback, assessing, revising, and publishing. (Wood & Lieberman, 2000, p. 260)

The main objective of the NWP is to raise student achievement in writing by improving writing instruction (Gallagher et al., 2009). In a study of New Zealand teachers' responses to a NWP experience Locke, Whitehead, Dix, and Cawkwell (2011) found that teachers valued: sharing their writing in small groups due to the safe environment; firm guidelines around giving feedback; and the facilitative nature of the feedback on their learning (p. 286). When teachers of writing participate in writing tasks themselves through professional learning or otherwise, they take on an additional identity which changes their attitude towards writing, how they think and how they teach writing. Consequently, the teacher becomes a learner alongside the student resulting in improved relationships that are non-hierarchical.

Advantages and limitations of peer response

Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007) discuss the benefits of peer group response, placing a large emphasis on social aspects, which are fostered in a writing community and have outcomes that extend beyond writing products. They list the advantages as:

A nonthreatening audience, immediate feedback, experience of a wide range of writing abilities, reduced writing apprehension, development of positive attitudes about writing, increased motivation to revise, increased quality of writing, more teacher time for individual attention, and development of cooperation and interpersonal skills. (p. 35)

These advantages and others are discussed in the paragraphs below, along with some possible implications of using peer or group response as a strategy.

Language development and writing quality

Research on the long-term effects of peer response is sparse. However, some research suggests that peer response can assist with language development for students who have English as an additional language (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Paulus, 1999). One study by Prater and Bermudez (1993) investigated the use of heterogeneous peer response groups with students who had limited English. They found that the students' language fluency increased but their overall writing quality did not.

In a review which set out to discover what instructional practices improve the quality of students' writing, Graham and Perin (2007) discovered that, 'collaborative arrangements where students help each other with one or more aspects of their writing had a strong and positive impact on writing quality' (p. 463). In addition, they recommended that teachers develop instructional strategies where students work together through the writing process (planning, drafting, revising and editing) as these experiences are likely to have a strong influence on the quality of students' writing.

Yarrow and Topping (2001) evaluated the use of peer-assisted learning in writing over a six-week period. The pairs in this study were matched by gender and writing ability (a more able student with a less able student). They found that students who worked interactively with a peer produced significantly better pieces of writing than those who wrote independently with no peer influence. The implications of grouping more able and less able students will be discussed later in this chapter.

Olson (1990) studied the influence of peer response on the quality of students' writing. Her study involved several groups including:

1. Students who received revision instruction and worked with a peer to revise drafts;
2. Students who received no revision instruction and worked with a peer to revise drafts;
3. Students who received revision instruction and revised their drafts alone;
4. Students who received no revision instruction and revised their drafts alone.

The study indicated that, 'peer feedback seemed to help students write initially superior rough drafts but was not consistently linked to improvement of content between rough and final drafts' (p. 22).

Interestingly, this study also showed no difference between the various groups and their ability to edit for surface features.

Teacher versus peer feedback and feed-forward

When it comes to teaching writing, responding to and commenting on writing can be challenging and demanding on teacher time (Calfee & Miller, 2007; Sommers, 1982). In a recent international survey on teaching and learning, investigators found that the average teacher spent nearly 5 hours a week out of the classroom marking and correcting students' work (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). In addition, Linden and Whimbey (1990) claim that,

'students barely look at written feedback and feed-forward unless the teacher takes time to explain it in a one-to-one conference' which is not always practical due to limited time (p. 33).

Adopting peer or group response is an approach that can help to reduce the amount of time it takes for a teacher to respond to a class of students' writing as well as allowing him/her to spend more time guiding and facilitating small groups of students (Beach et al., 2010; Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Gielen et al., 2010; Liu & Hansen, 2002). When operating effectively, peer or group responses are more frequent and individualised than teacher responses (Gielen et al., 2010). As teacher feedback and feed-forward is often constrained by time, the responses teachers give can sometimes be generalised and therefore difficult for students to interpret because they are associated with a discourse they cannot access owing to inexperience (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006).

Some writing practices assume that writing will improve once the teacher corrects errors a student makes on their draft writing. However, correcting errors on students' draft writing may encourage students to believe that their first draft is their finished draft, thus overlooking writing as a process (Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Walshe, 1981). This has the potential to confuse students and shift their focus from writing their own paper to writing the paper they think the teacher wants, 'thereby relinquishing responsibility for the text to the teacher' (Giberson, 2002, p. 412). When students have their writing corrected by the teacher (before they have the chance to revise themselves), they are encouraged to view 'their writing as a series of parts - words, sentences, paragraphs and not as a whole discourse' (Sommers, 1982, p. 151).

One implication of peer or group response is the view that less able writers will not be able to give appropriate responses because they lack knowledge of what makes a 'good' piece of writing. Linden and Whimbey (1990) comment that many teachers find peer or group response 'exemplifies the phrase; blind leading the blind' (p. 33). However, Calfee

and Miller (2007) propose that although 'teaching students to become independent and responsible learners is difficult, addressing this challenge is critical for reform of schooling' (p.284).

A study comparing peer and teacher feedback and feed-forward discovered that students supplied with an a priori question and reply form made more progress than students receiving impromptu teacher or peer responses (Gielen et al., 2010). The a priori forms used in the study helped to ensure that feedback was appropriate to the author's needs and encouraged the author to make use of the feedback he/she received. The form contained the following prompts:

- By receiving/giving feedback I learned...
- I revised my work on the following criteria...
- My best piece is...
- I paid special attention to... (p. 152).

Another study involving a meta-analysis of writing instruction found that when students used specific criteria to evaluate others' writing, the quality of writing improved (Hillocks, 1986). This suggests that peer response groups can provide helpful feedback and feed-forward *if* students are equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills.

Student motivation

Peer/response can help to increase student motivation, as writers are required to write for an audience – 'to move their audience' (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 325). Some research suggests that students who are aware of their audience produce better quality texts than those who are not prompted to focus on an audience (Rafoth, 1989; Roen & Willey, 1988). Establishing audiences for students helps them truly experience writing as a communicative process (MacArthur, 2013; Magnifico, 2010; Nystrand, 1997b). When writers have a sense of audience they are able

to develop a 'deeper sense of the rhetorical nature of language and use written language effectively' (Wyngaard & Gehrke, 1996, p. 67). Online writing communities, where students can write and seek responses from various audiences are becoming increasingly popular. 'Young people who read and write blogs, participate in fan-fiction communities, contribute to message boards, and post on each others' social networking pages' are likely to be doing so because they want to engage in meaningful communication (Magnifico, 2010, p. 181). Additionally, Internet-based writing practices can help students to understand the social implications of their writing and how it affects various communities (Karchmer-Klein, 2007). Further research on using Internet technologies to connect classroom learning and real world writing is needed especially if authentic audiences do serve as a motivational factor for students learning to write (Magnifico, 2010).

Critical thinking

Fisher, Frey, and ElWardi (2005) noted that peer response groups could contribute to critical thinking and revision skills as well as increased confidence (p.99). Discussion about writing, where thinking is expressed to a peer or group, naturally allows students to develop higher-level thinking (Nystrand, 1997b). The critical reading that students engage in as editors of their peers' writing can help develop evaluation skills, providing that it is integrated with explicit teacher instruction (MacArthur, 2007).

Critical thinking can also be encouraged by 'asking writers to reflect on what they've learned from their peer responses' (M. Hall, 2009, p. 5). This also allows the teacher to establish what the students know and where to take them next (see earlier paragraph on learning theory).

Gambrell et al. (2011) performed an exploratory study in which students learnt various ways of responding critically to texts they had read during reading instruction. This structure was then used to support them when responding to their own and others' written texts. The findings of their study showed that critical thinking and revision skills improved when

writing and reading instruction were integrated. They noted that 'discussion makes thinking public as ideas are expressed, therefore enabling higher-level thinking and critical analysis' (p. 251).

Social dynamics

According to Bruffee (1984) peer and group work improves student outcomes as groups are able to combine their ideas, as opposed to an individual whom may not have all the knowledge or resources required for a task. In addition, MacLusky and Cox (2011) advise that peer and group work that encourages students to share personal writing can help to create bonds across diverse groups and assist with empathy development (p. 23). Furthermore, peer response may offer a comfortable and secure learning environment for students who otherwise feel isolated and misunderstood (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 9).

However, Christian (2000) warns that not all students will feel comfortable with peer or group response for reasons such as 'shyness, fear, embarrassment' and issues surrounding social power (p. 308). Beach and Friedrich (2008) advise that students may give inappropriate responses because they are worried about 'jeopardising' their social relationships (p. 229). This can lead to over generous compliments because students do not want to 'hurt each others' feelings with criticism' (Linden & Whimbey, 1990, p. 34). In contrast, responses that are too judgemental or negative will also have an impact on students' ability to revise their writing. It is important that teachers understand these implications and know their students well before preparing them for peer or group response.

Simmons (2003) warns us that 'academically talented students' may not 'necessarily make the best' responses to their peers' writing because they lack skills unique to peer or group response (p. 684). Often peers are 'reluctant to criticise each other or unable to provide significant help because their own evaluation and revision skills are limited' (MacArthur, 2013, p. 219). Zhu (1995) recognises that students require a repertoire of knowledge and skills some of which include: knowledge of written

discourse; knowledge of the task and its goals; knowledge of their role in the task; and skills to initiate response and negotiate (p. 517).

Lipstein and Renninger (2007) interviewed 178 students to find out their perceptions of writing and discovered that many students disliked peer conferences because the students they were grouped with had diverse interest levels and therefore viewed writing differently. However, Franklin (2010) recommends that students need to share their writing with new audiences and well as old to create a 'balance of comfort and risk' (p. 83). Techniques for grouping students are discussed later in this chapter.

Preparing students for peer/group response

There are many approaches writing teachers may use when setting up response groups as part of their classroom programme. Each approach will influence how students interact and the kinds of responses they will offer (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, p. 137).

To start with, teachers may want to ask themselves (and their students) the following questions when setting up or reviewing their peer response system:

- Should a reflection section be built into each peer response activity to allow group members to share their experiences and make suggestions for improvement?
- What major areas (e.g., content, organisation, grammar, mechanics) should the comments focus on?
- Should drafts revised as the result of peer response be circulated among group members?
- How long should the peer response activity last?
- What is the order of commenting and turn taking?
- Who should communicate with a person who is absent? (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 70)

Metalanguage

'When we encounter the metalanguage of a new discipline we may find it difficult to understand and therefore feel excluded from that discipline because we are not familiar with its terminology' (Sandretto & Klenner, 2011, p. 15). Building metalanguage with students where teachers teach knowledge about language through explicit dialogue is important in helping ensure that individuals feel comfortable and included in the peer/group response process. Consequently, when teachers support students' verbal interactions and focus on the content of students' writing, a metalanguage develops which is meaningful to students (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013, p. 498). Yet Ruttle (2004) warns that we as teachers must be wary of assuming that our students ascribe the same meaning to their metacognitive metalanguage as we do (p. 71). For example, a teacher may instruct his or her students to *add detail to their writing*, but unless the student knows and understands what *adding detail* means and looks like then they could misinterpret this instruction.

Quinn (2004) highlights the importance of teachers assisting students through the use of a metalanguage, where teaching writing becomes more than providing models of writing but also being able to talk about the linguistic features of writing explicitly with students. Students can benefit from consistent exposure to this kind of talk about language so they can transfer this knowledge and understanding when responding to others' writing. Evidence from a study by Corden (2007) suggested that when teachers explicitly examined mentor texts by demonstrating and drawing attention to language features, students became more reflective writers who were able to use specific literacy terms to help clarify their thoughts and identify issues when engaging in discussions about writing.

Structure and ground rules

Establishing expectations are fundamental when preparing students for response groups. Students should agree upon the rules and procedures so that peer or group response times are productive and successful. Below are suggestions drawing on Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007) and

Berne (2004) regarding how a response group might operate within a classroom:

1. Students sit so that they are looking at each other with a copy of the first student's draft writing in front of them.
2. The first student reads their writing without any other interaction or explanation.
3. Group members think about the writing and what responses, questions or suggestions they might make. Responses begin starting from the student to the right of the student who has read their writing.
4. Questions may be asked. Initial responses should be positive followed by suggestions for revisions.
5. While peers give their responses the writer does not make any comments or noises to avoid influencing the response in any way.
6. The writer makes notes and confirms any responses to help them revise their writing later.

In addition, Bremer and Smith as cited in Franklin (2010) provide a list of rules that assist students in developing social skills that 'can easily be embedded in the process of learning how to share and talk about writing' (p. 80). These include:

- Using appropriate loudness and tone of voice;
- Encouraging everyone to participate;
- Learning and use people's names;
- Looking at the person who is speaking;
- Making eye contact with others when speaking;
- Checking one's own understanding and ask questions;
- Describing one's own feelings when appropriate;
- Building on others' comments and ideas;
- Supporting others, both verbally and nonverbally;
- Keeping remarks to an appropriate length;

- Asking for direction or assistance from the teacher (if required).

The difference between the two lists above is that the first one concentrates on the response process, while the second is a checklist of social behaviours that are required when working with a group. Both lists are useful as they outline the skills needing to be taught in order for peer or group response to be successfully implemented into the classroom writing programme.

Types of grouping

There are two types of groups referred to in the literature: those that function well where trust, respect and understanding are fostered; and those where members don't get along and feel uncomfortable working together (Liu & Hansen, 2002). One of the key issues teachers face when organising response groups is how to organise students that will work together effectively and purposefully. In addition, they need to consider size, gender, age, and social and cultural factors when forming groups for response purposes. It is important to note here that teaching group work skills should not be confused with teaching students to respond to writing (Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Simmons, 2003). However, some researchers suggest that developing students' social skills can easily be embedded in the peer or group response process (Berne, 2004; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Simmons, 2003).

'Teachers may use homogeneous or heterogeneous criteria to group children' (Kutnick, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002, p. 192). Unfortunately, there is little research on heterogeneous versus homogeneous grouping for peer response (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013). Heterogeneous grouping where the teacher forms mixed ability groups is common and can benefit less able learners. However, higher ability students may struggle to get the most out of this type of grouping (Liu & Hansen, 2002). In contrast homogeneous groups where students choose who they work with can exclude students who are shy, new to the class or have English as an additional language. Furthermore, some teachers have suggested that

friendship grouping may result in more 'off task' behaviour (Zajac & Hartup, 1997).

In an examination of thirteen studies Zajac and Hartup (1997) discovered that 'collaboration between friends supports cognitive performance' (p. 3). They suggest four reasons why friends work better together than non-friends:

1. Friends know one another better so their feedback and feed-forward are more likely to be appropriate;
2. Friends are committed to each other and because of this reciprocal relationship each feels valued;
3. Friends feel more secure when they work together, are more likely to be motivated and take risks;
4. Friends are likely to resolve conflicts, as they want their relationships to last.

Although friendship groupings may be appropriate for writing response, 'teachers need a certain sensitivity in deciding when friends may not be the most appropriate collaborators or when friendship exclusiveness threatens classroom cohesiveness' (Zajac & Hartup, 1997, p. 12).

Another aspect to take into consideration when grouping students is the size of the group. 'Research findings on the effects of size on the efficacy of group work are inconclusive' (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 62). However, larger groups can sometimes cause shy or less confident students to become withdrawn (Barron, 1991; Kutnick et al., 2002; Zhu, 1995). Therefore, group size should depend on the type of task and the time allocated to complete it. Cullingford (1988) suggests that, 'group size is defined not so much in terms of numbers as in terms of the style of working, of helping each other even in pairs' (p. 32). The following table shows the relationship of group size and working interactions.

Table 3. Relationship of group size and working interactions²

Group size	Social Relationship	Working interactions
Individual	Hierarchical	Individualised
Dyad	Mutual	Collaborative work Brainstorming Joint problem solving Peer tutoring
Triad	Mutual	Collaborative work Brainstorming Joint problem-solving
Large Group	Hierarchical	Lecturing, teacher-led discussion
Whole class	Hierarchical	Interactive lecturing

Liu and Hansen (2002) suggest small groups of three or four are sufficient for writing response as students can go through each others' papers more thoroughly. Barron (1991) recommends four students per group because, if the group is too small, then 'students do not get sufficiently diversified responses to their papers, thus limiting the value of peer response' (p. 26).

Types of response

Hansen and Liu (2005) suggest four modes of peer response which include:

- *Oral response*: The writer reads their work aloud and peers give their responses.
- *Written response*: The peer reads the writer's work and writes the comments down for the writer to read.
- *Written and oral response*: The peer writes comments and also discusses his/her comments with the writer.
- *Computer-mediated*: Peers read writing on-line and respond in 'real time' or within a set time frame.

Holt (1992) highlights the success of using written and oral responses in unison as each have their advantages and disadvantages. Written responses can be difficult to read due to poor handwriting. However, oral

²Table adapted with permission from John Wiley and Sons © 2002 British Educational Research Association. Kutnick (1994) as cited in Kutnick et al. (2002, p. 191).

responses can be highly dependent on individuals' communication skills (Liu & Hansen, 2002). In addition, M. Hall (2009) points out that both written feedback and feed-forward are beneficial, because students don't have to 'rely on their memories as they revise' (p. 5). Teachers need to decide what mode of response/s will best suit the needs of their students and then model what this will look like in practice.

Techniques for teaching peer response

Simmons (2003) provides a useful table (see below) with techniques to help teach peer or group response, but warns that, this kind of approach cannot be implemented in a single year. Instead, effective peer/group response should be part of a whole-school or community approach especially if it is to have an impact on the quality of students' writing (Corden, 2007).

Table 4. Techniques to teach peer response³

Technique	What the teacher does	What the students do
Sharing your writing	Shares a piece of writing and asks for response. Shares rewrites tied to class response.	Offer comments on the teacher's writing.
Clarifying evaluation versus response	Shows evaluation is of product. Response is to the writer.	Understand that response is personable and helpful.
Modelling specific praise	Shows how to tell what you like as a reader.	Understand that cheerleading is too general to be helpful.
Modelling understanding	Shows how to tell what you understood the piece to be about.	Understand that reflecting back the piece to the writer is helpful.
Modelling questions	Shows how to ask questions about what you didn't understand.	Understand that questions related to the writer's purpose are helpful.
Modelling suggestions	Shows how to suggest writing techniques.	Understand that a responder leaves the writer knowing what to do next.
Whole-class response	Moderates response by class to one classmate's piece.	Offer response Hear the response of others. Hear what the writer finds helpful.
Partner response	Pairs up students in class to respond to pieces.	Practice response learned in whole-class session.
Comment review	Reads the comments of peers to writers. Suggest better techniques. Devises mini-lessons.	Get teacher feedback on comments.
Response conference	Speaks individually with students responding inappropriately.	Have techniques reinforced.

³ Table used with permission from author (Simmons, 2003, p. 690).

The techniques suggested by Simmons (2003) clearly demonstrate that explicit modelling is required in order for students to understand the peer/response process. The following paragraphs describe some practical ways of supporting students through the peer response process.

Hsu (2009) used a one-week implementation plan when organising writing partners. Her ideas are practical and suited for primary-aged students. The table below illustrates the step-by-step process that Hsu used in her classroom when setting up writing partnerships.

Table 5. One-week implementation plan for partner response⁴

Day	Question	Purpose	Description
1	How can a writing partner make you a better writer?	Establish that writing partners are a powerful, long-term resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-play or show video of a writing partnership in action. • Allow students to describe what they notice and list reasons for partnerships.
2	What are the dos and don'ts of writing partnerships?	Involve students in articulating norms and agreements for partnership work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a T-chart with 'do' on one side and 'don't' on the other. • Students write positive and negative behaviours on sticky notes, and sort them into the 'do' or 'don't' columns. • Help the class organise, evaluate and discuss their ideas. • Write agreed-upon norms in marker.
3	How do we 'touch base' with our partners?	Train students to be accountable to partners by checking in at the start and end of independent writing time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrate analogy of baseball players toughing base and continuing on toward goal. • Introduce students to their writing partners. • Start by having partners touch base to share their goals for the independent writing time. • Close by having partners touch base about what they accomplished.
4	When should we confer with our partners?	Promote student-initiated partner conferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one student's writing to highlight when partners should confer during independent writing time, not just touch base. • Ask students to brainstorm situations needing a partnership conference: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Wanting feedback on a draft b. Encountering difficulty when revising c. Needing help with editing
5	How can we give good feedback?	Teach effective response skills using an age-appropriate strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a sandwich and introduce the term 'compliment sandwich'. • Demonstrate giving a suggestion directly versus couching it between two compliments. • Invite partners to practice exchanging compliment sandwiches.

⁴ Table used with permission from John Wiley and Sons © 2009 International Reading Association (Hsu, 2009, p. 154).

It is clear that the practical ideas suggested by Hsu can easily be implemented by primary school teachers wishing to adopt partner response as part of their writing programme.

Criteria or rubrics to support peer or group response

When preparing students for peer response, MacArthur (2013) recommends the use of evaluation questions which can contain criteria that relate to a specific text structure. It is important that these criteria are specific, as this is easier for students to understand. For example, when responding to a narrative text, students might ask themselves: 'Are the characters clearly described?' Other questions might be more general, such as, 'Is there anything difficult to understand?' (p. 223). These types of questions can help students engage in appropriate dialogue when responding to others' writing and this in turn can be useful in generating quality revisions.

Wyngaard and Gehrke (1996) used rubrics to teach peer response groups the importance of audience. They found that the rubrics helped generate class discussion and develop students' critical responses to texts. Ward-Martin (2004) emphasises the importance of involving students collaboratively in creating rubrics that address the processes writers undertake, as opposed to the end product which, as discussed earlier in the chapter, is often graded or levelled by teachers. If students realise that their teachers value the process of writing and develop rubrics that reflect this, then they are likely to take peer response and revision more seriously (Urbanski, 2006).

Role-playing

One suggestion by Alvermann (2002) is to use role-playing to show students how to deal with various situations and personalities that are unique to group work. Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007) recommend using former students to role-play appropriate responses while the class watch

and take notes about what they observe. The notes the students make are used later in a follow-up discussion.

Franklin (2010) used role-playing to demonstrate to her pupils what an ineffective conference might look like. This included using unhelpful responses such as 'good job'. Using this approach can be 'more beneficial than discussing effective writing conferences, because improving on a bad example is an easier goal than trying to meet the expectations of a perfect example' (Franklin, 2010, p. 81).

Smagorinsky (1991) adopted a different role-playing technique that involved students pretending to be part of a 'mock admissions committee', which made decisions about whether their anonymous peers' writing was admitted or rejected. In this approach, students had to justify their decisions and offer suggestions on how to change the writing. Using this approach was found to be helpful in teaching students evaluative skills and helping them prepare writing for a specific mock audience.

'Fishbowl' technique

Berne (2004) recommends a strategy called the 'fishbowl' technique where a small group partake in a group response session, while the remainder of the class listen. Once the group have finished responding to all the members of the small writing group, the remainder of the class and the teacher are free to comment on how the group functioned and how the comments given would help the writer to revise his/her draft. Berne (2004) recommends this approach when first teaching group response and for 'tune up' sessions throughout the year (p. 44). Beach and Friedrich (2008) also recommend frequent modelling and scaffolding of appropriate responses throughout the school year to maintain effective response groups.

Using media

Some research suggests that showing video clips of students engaged in group or partner response is helpful before starting response activities (Hsu, 2009; Mawlawi Diab, 2010; Nystrand, 1984; Yang et al., 2006).

After each section of video footage, Nystrand (1984) recommends asking the students how useful the discussion was to the author and what comments or questions were useful or unhelpful.

Author's Chair

Teachers can use 'Author's Chair' to help students observe tacit knowledge such as the 'discourse, thoughts, actions, decisions, struggles, and deliberations that are part of the writing process' (Englert et al., 2008, p. 209). 'Author's Chair' can involve an author (pupil) sitting in a chair in front of the class and reading their writing. The Author can then facilitate responses, questions and comments from the class about his/her writing (A. Hall, 2014). The teachers' role can vary: they can control the way the response is provided; or 'channel dialog without taking control from the Author' (McCallister, 2008, p. 462). This activity helps increase students' confidence and their ability to take risks when sharing writing with their peers. In addition, the Author can use the responses they receive to improve their writing (McCallister, 2008). 'Author's Chair' promotes the kind of behaviours necessary for smaller group response and gives the teacher an insight as to what support students might need in the future.

Written prompts

Some research suggests using prompt or 'help cards' to support students in providing helpful responses (Franklin, 2010; Gielen et al., 2010; Latham, 2002). Latham (2002) provides an example of a 'writing partner help card' in which students:

- Share their favourite part of the writing;
- Discuss whether the writing makes sense;
- Question if words are over-used;
- Suggest improvements with better words or phrases;
- Suggest if the beginning or ending could be improved (p.176).

By using these kinds of prompts, teachers can help prevent their students from falling into the trap of making responses that focus solely on editing (Latham, 2002). It is important for students to give feedback and feed-forward on the deeper meaning as opposed to the surface features of writing, as this is more useful in making quality revisions. Furthermore, the use of purposeful peer response sheets with criteria or a grading rubric can be beneficial in supporting students to respond appropriately on deeper content, especially when commenting on specific genres (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

Training small groups

One way to prepare students for peer or group response is to train them in small groups with the teacher guiding the process as needed. Zhu (1995) studied the effects of small-group conferencing with the teacher acting as a facilitator who encouraged and probed students through deliberate questioning about the writer's message as opposed to their spelling and grammar. The study revealed that training students using small-group conferences with the teacher had a 'significant impact on both the quantity and quality of feedback students provided on peer writing' (Zhu, 1995, p. 516).

Other approaches

Franklin (2010) recommends using participatory approaches that promote peer interaction in a scaffolded environment. This typically involves the teacher explicitly demonstrating a strategy (for example, how to respond appropriately to a piece of writing) and then gradually withdrawing their support when 'students show they are capable of assuming more responsibility for their own learning' (Alvermann, 2002, p. 202).

Liu and Hansen (2002) recommend that students use a journal, where they keep a log of the errors they have made and how their peers have suggested they correct them. This could be helpful for the teacher to see what kinds of errors are being picked up as part of the peer response process, and also help with future goal setting.

Another activity that can be useful in preparing students for peer or group response involves inviting students to 'share their past experiences of giving and receiving responses to writing, both inside and outside the classroom, in order to distinguish useful feedback from unproductive' (M. Hall, 2009, p. 11). This can create a useful starting point for the teacher in finding out what the students already know about peer or group response, an important process in planning for future learning.

Summary

Research indicates that peer or group response (when implemented correctly) has many advantages including increased motivation, providing an authentic audience for students and improving writing quality. For this to happen students must be supported in understanding how response groups function and their purpose. When students are well prepared for peer or group response, they are able to provide substantial feedback and feed-forward for their peers, which in turn helps them revise and therefore improve their draft writing. Teachers need to teach students to make responses that are nonjudgmental, detailed and content-related. This can be done using a range of approaches including, small group training, role-playing, providing written guidelines, designing rubrics, using prompt cards, and creating a metalanguage. The effectiveness of peer response groups as a cornerstone in writing pedagogy lies in the teaching – we can't just assume our students 'know it' already.

Chapter Three: Research design

Overview

The aim of this study was to find out how four teachers were preparing their students for peer or group response in writing. This was carried out as four case studies using qualitative observations and interviews. These methods allowed the researcher to ascertain what teachers did to prepare their students for peer/group response and analyse the types of discourse involved. Following ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato, the observations and interviews were completed in 2014 during the second term of the primary school year. This chapter gives an outline of the research design, the participants, the observation and interview structure, and ethical considerations. A detailed account of how the data were analysed is also presented.

Characteristics of case studies in educational research

According to Denscombe (2010), 'Case studies focus on one (or just a few) instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance' (p. 52). The case study approach suited this research because the focus was on social interactions and procedures within four classroom settings. Case studies were used as an illustration to show how peer response as a collaborative approach was being applied in a real-life setting (Denscombe, 2010; Gillham, 2000).

Case studies help researchers to focus on social situations using multiple methods (usually qualitative), which 'facilitates the validation of data through triangulation' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 62). At times case studies can be critiqued, because generalisations stemming from the research may be less impartial than other types of methodology. Yin (2003) notes that case studies 'provide little basis for scientific generalisation' (p. 10). However, this research focused on more than one case, so that a range of examples of practice could be analysed and interpretations made, as it is difficult to generalise from just one case (Wisker, 2001). Even so, it is

conceded that four classrooms are a small sample, and results are a best indicative of possible trends.

Participants

Four teachers from Waikato schools were selected for this study. The teachers were all using peer or group response as part of their writing programme and had more than five years teaching experience. The students in the teacher participants' classrooms were also given the opportunity to partake in the study. A brief description of teacher participants' class and school is listed below. Please note that teacher's names are pseudonyms.

Participant 1:

Fiona was a teacher of a Year 6 class in a large contributing decile 3 school. She had just recently completed a Master of Education, with a focus on literacy. Peer response was part of her classroom programme along with a newly established on-line response programme with another school. Peer/group response was not a school-wide practice.

Participant 2:

Monica was a teacher of a Year 7/8 class in a rural decile 5 school. She was involved in a whole-school professional development programme with literacy consultant Gaye Byers. Monica's school followed a set programme for teaching writing each week, which included 'writing trios' where groups of three students responded to each other's writing. In addition, this class also participated in whole-class response.

Participant 3:

Erin was teaching a Year 6/7/8 class in a rural decile 2 school. She was involved in whole-school professional development with Louise Dempsey, co-author of *The Writing Book*. Partner response was part of the professional development and Erin's writing programme. Group and class response were also part of Erin's programme.

Participant 4:

Lara was teaching a Y5/6 class in a large contributing decile 10 school. She had previous professional development in writing but the whole-school focus this year was in another curriculum area. Peer/group response was not a school-wide requirement. However, Lara was using group, peer and whole-class response as part of her writing programme.

Observations

In educational research it is common to use observations because of their flexible nature, which allows for 'detailed information to be gathered in a natural context in order to gain a deeper understanding of issues, practices, problems and people' (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011, p. 169).

The observations for this research took place in four classrooms, each located in separate school settings. The students in these classes were between 9 and 13 years of age. Students at this age have more experience in writing and are developmentally able to articulate their experiences more capably than those just starting primary school (H. Cameron, 2005).

Observations focused on groups of students engaged in peer or group response. Each observation took place for the duration of the peer or group response session, which in most cases was about 10-15 minutes. All observations were completed inside the classroom setting.

A total of two groups from each class were video recorded to ensure data accuracy. Only groups for which consent had been obtained from both the student and their parent were video recorded. Observations of the students engaged in peer or group response were deemed useful in providing information to help explore and understand why students behaved the way they did and what values they held (Menter et al., 2011).

A small number of additional field notes were also made during whole-class instruction, as these were non-intrusive and ensured that students without consent were not subjected to video footage. These notes included details on how teachers were preparing and involving their students in peer or group response opportunities. Teacher participants wore a digital audio device to record their instructions and questioning that related to peer or group response. These recordings were used later to assist with ensuring my field notes had accurately recorded the teachers' instructions and/or questioning. Some digital photographs of classroom wall displays were also taken, but only in cases where the display showed references to peer or group response work. In some classrooms, student work samples were photocopied; this was considered necessary in situations where students had written their responses down.

Semi-structured interviews

As noted in Menter et al. (2011), observations offer only 'partial insights on research foci' (p. 63). To assist in achieving valuable and reliable data, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students were also used to 'triangulate' and strengthen emerging findings in each case study (Polkinghorne, 2005; K. Punch, 2005; Shultze & Avital, 2011).

Interviewing is one of the most widely used tools in qualitative research (Menter et al., 2011). Polkinghorne (2005) state that, 'the purpose of the interview is to gain a full and detailed account from an informant of the experience under study' (p. 142). Interviews help the researcher to gather more accurate information as they are able to ask the interviewee for clarification if necessary (Menter et al., 2011).

A total of four teachers and eight students were asked a series of questions (refer to Appendices A and B) during individual semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with the teacher participants and a randomised sample of two students from their classroom, i.e. the first male and female from their attendance register. Semi-structured interviewing allowed the researcher to clarify and ask probing questions in

order to gather more accurate information on the research topic. In most cases additional questions were asked when interviewees shared information that needed further explanation.

For interviewed children, social interactions can be vulnerable, especially if a rapport has not been established prior to the interview (Christensen, 2004; S. Punch, 2002). Zwiers and Morrissette (1999) note that 'some children will respond in ways that they think will please adults' (p. 33). Care was taken to meet the students and develop a rapport prior to both interviewing them and recording the peer response groups. Students were assured that their video recordings would not be viewed by anyone other than myself. The recording device was small and discreet so that students were not distracted or left feeling uncomfortable.

Interviews were video recorded and later transcribed to allow interviewees to validate the interview content. Video recording interviews allowed for transcription of both verbal and non-verbal cues. Completed transcripts were e-mailed to teacher participants and the information from these transcripts was analysed once participants had confirmed their transcripts as an accurate account.

Ethics

According to Mutch (2005), consent letters or forms should include statements outlining participants' rights to 'voluntary participation', withdrawal, 'anonymity and confidentiality' (pp. 81-82). The consent letters for this study included all of these elements. The letters and consent forms were clear with minimal technical language so that participants understood what was involved (University of Waikato, 2014).

All participants were given appropriate information about the study before being asked for their consent. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw their consent at any time and that their data could also be withdrawn up until the commencement of the data analysis process. They were also informed that participation was voluntary.

The principal of each school was informed of the research project and his/her approval was obtained for the research to proceed (refer to Appendix C). Once the principal had given consent, the participating teachers, their students, and the parents of each student were given appropriate information and consent forms (refer to Appendices D and E).

All participants willing to be part of the research were asked to provide written consent. In addition to the parent consent form, another consent form was provided in 'simple language terms' for students to sign (refer to Appendix F). Student participants were part of the study if:

- a. Their parent had consented by filling out the consent form correctly;
- b. The student themselves had consented and signed the student consent form.

Mutch (2005) warns that: 'research should ensure that individuals, groups and sites cannot be identified' (p. 79). Participating schools, teachers and students are not named and were not publicly identified (University of Waikato, 2014). Pseudonyms were used to ensure that the identity of all participants remained anonymous.

Data analysis

'The analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies' (Yin, 2003, p. 109). The qualitative methods usually associated with case studies often generate large amounts of data which can overwhelm both novice and experienced researchers (Rabiee, 2004; Yates, 2004). Interviewing alone takes time to prepare, conduct and analyse. Just transcribing an interview can take up to 6 times the amount of time it takes to conduct the original interview (Gillham, 2000; Menter et al., 2011; Richards, 2009). Qualitative data such as words and sentences from an interview have significant differences from quantitative data involving numbers and therefore require a different process of analysis (Polkinghorne, 2005). The key in sorting

and analysing qualitative data is to ensure that the original 'voice' of the participants is not lost and that the researcher adopts a neutral perspective (Gillham, 2005; Menter et al., 2011; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Yin (2003) notes that when multiple case studies are used 'analysis is likely to be easier and the findings likely to be more robust than having only a single case' (p. 133). This research used both thematic coding and discourse analysis to manage the data that was gathered from observations and interviews.

Thematic Coding

Coding simply means looking for patterns and themes (Mutch, 2005). The main purpose of qualitative coding is to compare experiences, sort data into categories (themes) and sub-categories, find patterns, construct theories and ask further questions. There are various sorts of coding in qualitative research each serving a different purpose. Richards (2009) describes three types of coding including 'descriptive, topic and analytical' (p. 96). Menter et al. (2011) suggest writing lists of key categories and themes as a starting point when first analysing data. This type of strategy is also known as thematic analysis and is commonly used when initially sorting qualitative data such as the interview transcripts and observations which were used in this research. Coding is a dynamic and recursive process and sometimes coding categories are modified and refined as each case is brought into the overall picture. The type of coding structure used in the first case needs to be continued for subsequent cases and then refined as necessary (Flick, 2011).

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is the 'close study of language and language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life' (Taylor, 2013, p. 7). Some areas of discourse analysis as identified by Paltridge (2000) include:

Paragraph structure, organisation of whole texts, rules for opening and closing conversations, rules for taking turns in a conversation,

patterns of vocabulary, linking words, pronouns for backward or forward reference, the way language reflects different views of the world and different understandings. (p. 7)

In this study discourse analysis was used to understand the 'talk' used by teachers and students when engaging in various discourses of writing, and how this reflected their understanding of the writing process. All peer/group response video recordings and interviews were transcribed to allow for discourse analysis. Transcription provided an opportunity to review the 'live' interactions after they had taken place and allowed me to analyse:

- The style of interaction;
- The results of the interaction;
- The relationship of the interactants;
- The purpose of the interaction and whether it was achieved;
- The development of the interaction;
- The strategies adopted by the interactants;
- The turn-taking and turn type patterns;
- The sociocultural values which informed the interaction. (Burns, Joyce, & Gollin, 1996, p. 63)

Taylor (2013) notes that analysing discourse data is 'exploratory and iterative' and involves 'reading and re-reading an entire data set, comparing, noticing and marking points of possible interest and returning to them later' (p. 69). This type of analysis was used to see what types of interactions were taking place in each classroom and what impact the interactions had on the types of responses students gave to each other. The following paragraphs describe the procedures that were used when analysing the observation and interview data.

Procedures used to analyse data

Interview transcriptions were manually analysed using the following procedure as recommended by Rabiee (2004, p. 7):

1. Transcripts were printed onto various coloured paper stock, each colour representing the four participants and their students.
2. Coloured highlighters were used to identify key text and quotes with each colour of pen indicating a thematic area.
3. Text associated with the main analytical themes was cut out and arranged under existing and/or developing main thematic areas.

Analysis of the transcriptions helped to ask questions such as, 'What patterns and themes are emerging?' and 'What do I think this means?' (Mutch, 2005, p. 155).

Video recordings of response groups were also transcribed and printed out. The student responses were highlighted and coded using the following system:

- Feedback (positive) responses were highlighted in green.
- Feed-forward (areas for improvement) responses were highlighted in pink.
- The letter 'S' was used to identify responses that focused on surface features such as spelling and punctuation.
- The letter 'D' was used to identify responses that focused on deeper features such as clarity of message, language features and structure.

The highlighter system was also used to identify key themes from the observational field notes. These notes were cross-checked with the interview transcriptions to triangulate emergent findings. This use of multiple data-sets was aimed at enhancing the validity of this research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Finally, relevant student work samples were cross-checked to ensure that written responses matched the oral responses on the video recordings.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter reports on an analysis of data from the observations and interviews that took place in four different primary school classrooms. The results will be presented in three sections: the first will be an overview of how each teacher organised peer or group response within the classroom setting; the second will present how each of the four teacher participants were preparing their students for peer or group response as well as teacher and student views on response activities and motivation; the last will contain an analysis of language used by both teacher and student participants.

The observations and interviews for this research took place in 2014 during the second term of the school year. Therefore, the foundations in preparing students for peer or group response had already been set. However, it was evident from the observations and interviews that preparing students for peer or group response was an on-going process that would continue throughout the year.

Section One: How teachers structured response activities

The subsections that follow explain how each teacher structured peer, group or class response within their writing programme. This includes: what they called peer or group response; how peer or group response was organised; and the time and frequency of peer or group response occurrence. Two of the four schools were using peer and group response as part of whole-school professional development in writing, where each classroom was expected to use a similar peer or group response format. The remaining two classrooms involved individual teachers adopting peer or group response as part of their own writing programme. In these classrooms some students were experiencing peer or group response for the first time.

Fiona's classroom:

Fiona used a combination of whole-class (sharing circle), buddy conferencing and on-line conferencing with her students. The whole-class response was completed initially when setting up buddy conferencing to model appropriate responses. For buddy conferencing, Fiona used homogeneous ability grouping, which changed every 3 - 4 weeks depending on the students' writing assessment data. Students engaged in buddy conferencing for every writing project/topic.

This meant that buddy conferencing usually occurred once or twice a week. Students carried out buddy conferencing only during the revision stage of the writing process. The buddy conferencing lasted about 10-15 minutes and followed the routine below:

1. Two students sat next to each other and exchanged their draft writing books.
2. Each student read their partner's writing silently or out loud to themselves.
3. Each student responded orally to the writing as they read. They asked for clarification or offered suggestions as needed.
4. The students exchanged books again and made revisions on their own draft writing. The revisions were made using green pen.

Online conferencing followed a different routine where each student was assigned an 'on-line' buddy from Ocean school (pseudonym used). Fiona and the teacher from Ocean school had worked together to group students with similar interests and needs. One week Fiona's class responded to the writing of their assigned partner at Ocean school and the following week Erin's students had their writing responded to by the same partner. The process followed the steps below:

1. A representative from the class scanned all the students' writing onto the computer.
2. The writing was sent through 'Google Documents' to Ocean school.

3. The partner at Ocean school wrote a response on the scanned document and sent it back within the week.
4. The author read the response from their partner and made changes to their writing as they wished.

Erin's classroom:

Erin's students engaged in whole-class response sessions every day. This involved the whole class sitting in a circle and the teacher choosing: one child to read their writing; one child to give feedback; and another child to give feed-forward while the remainder of the class listened. In addition, Erin placed students in groups of three called 'writing trios'. The groupings changed twice a term and were heterogeneous. Writing trios met twice a week for around 10-15 minutes during the 'revision' stage of the writing process. The response groups followed the routine below:

1. The previous day students had produced a draft piece of writing in their books and handed it into Erin.
2. Erin responded to a third of the classes draft writing books using written feedback and feed-forward.
3. Students were organised into groups of three ensuring that one person in the group had their writing responded to by Erin.
4. The student who had their writing responded to by Erin read their writing out to the rest of the group while they listened.
5. The group read Erin's feed-forward and assisted the author by suggesting changes in order to action the feed-forward.
6. The author made the revisions in his/her writing book after listening to the groups' suggestions.

Erin described in her interview that the sharing circle worked better than the writing trio.

The sharing circle works a lot better than the writing trio does because they have got the teacher listening in, and if their response is not...very full, I can...probe them for a little bit more information

or ask them what the language feature might be called or why that language feature works.

Monica's classroom:

Monica used homogeneous groupings for partner response. Her groups changed regularly depending on what stage the students were up to with their writing. The students in Monica's classroom engaged in partner conferencing once a week for 10-15 minutes during the 'revision' stage of the writing process.

So they do the individual peer conference once although if they had it their way they would be...doing it everyday, because they love...getting that feedback, and then we do whole-class peer response...every writing lesson.

Monica's whole-class response involved two activities. First, a reflection question was given to the class. For example: Do your ideas help your reader visualise the topic? Which idea does this best? Why? The class then worked with a partner, each reading a paragraph of their writing to one another. Following this, each student gave feedback or feed-forward based on the reflection question. During this time Monica roamed the class supporting the students with questions such as 'What's he used to do that?'

The second activity involved a student offering to place their writing under a visualiser, which projected it onto the whiteboard for the class to view. The student then read out their writing goals and their writing. Following this, the teacher called on students to give the author relevant feedback or feed-forward related to the author's goal/s.

During partner response, Monica's students used a laminated 'Partner Response' card and went through the following process:

1. The author read their goals and their draft writing out aloud while their partner listened.

2. The partner orally shared relevant feedback.
3. The partner orally suggested relevant feed-forward.
4. The partner wrote the feedback and feed-forward onto a response card and signed it.
5. The students swapped roles and repeated steps 1-4.
6. The students went back to their desks and glued the response cards into their draft writing books.
7. The students actioned the feed forward by making changes to their draft writing but only if they felt it was necessary.

Lara's classroom:

Lara's students engaged in buddy, group and whole-class conferencing. Buddy conferencing was done at anytime during the writing process.

So my students know that...buddy conferencing can be done at anytime in the writing process, it actually can even be done right at the beginning before they start their writing.

When students wanted to buddy conference they placed their name on a 'writers wall' to let other students know they were ready for a conference. This situation meant that students chose whom they worked with for buddy conferencing as long as their name was on the wall as well. When Lara wanted the students to focus on something more specific or to provide a 'critical eye', she used heterogeneous groups of three or four students. Group conferencing followed the sequence listed below:

1. The first author read their writing out to the rest of the group who listened.
2. The group took turns to offer feedback to the author (each student gave the feedback orally and also wrote it down in the margin of the author's book).
3. The group took turns to offer feed-forward to the author (each student gave the feed forward orally and also wrote it down in the margin of the author's book).
4. Steps 1-3 were repeated until all members of the group had shared.

Group conferencing happened less frequently than buddy conferencing and was usually done during the revision stage of the writing process. In addition, Lara's class also engaged in whole-class response, which involved students going to sit in a circle once they had completed their draft writing. When they were in the circle, students took turns at offering to read their writing and then gathered collective feedback and feed-forward from the other students in the circle. The circle got progressively bigger until all the class were part of the circle.

Section Two: How teachers prepared students for response activities

This section describes strategies that each teacher used to prepare the students in their class for peer or group response. In addition, teachers' and students' thoughts are presented about whether peer/group response increased or decreased student motivation.

Setting up and sharing the purpose with students

Lara talked about the purpose of conferencing with her students at the beginning of the year. She also demonstrated what would happen within a group conference so her students knew what the expectations were. Lara did this by explicitly teaching her students specific behaviours like how to sit in a conference, and how to position their book. She helped students understand how to give appropriate feed-forward by asking them to relate their comments back to the success criteria or the writer's goal.

A lot of students say 'I like your writing', or 'I think your writing is good'. What the purpose of that feedback...and...feed-forward is how we can give that feed-forward because some students might find that feed-forward is perhaps a criticism about their writing so they realise that it's done in a supportive way. That feed-forward is a suggestion, it's not a 'you must do!'

After group conferencing, Lara allowed time for her and the students to discuss the conferencing process and invited her students to suggest 'opportunities for change' when reflecting on their group conferences.

Lara and the students had experimented with different group sizes and the students had given her feedback and feed-forward on this. During the reflection, Lara asked the students questions such as:

- How did our conference go?
- What worked, what didn't?
- How can we improve this process?
- How useful is that written feedback?
- Do you need more time?

The first time I visited Lara's classroom the students were working in groups of 4. The following time I visited the students were arranged in groups of 3. This was due to the students' reflection at the end of a conferencing session where they explained to Lara that they did not have enough time to get through all four students' writing and provide written feedback and feed-forward in the time that was allocated.

Monica spent the first term modelling each step on the 'Partner Conference Card' from *The Writing Book* by S. Cameron and Dempsey (2013). She did this using a role-play approach with some of her students in front of the whole class. After each step she would tell her students to go and copy the step with a partner, and then she would model the next step, and so on.

Fiona began the year with 'writing circles' where students would be arranged into small groups and she would be act as a facilitator by asking questions using students as role models, so everybody could see what the process looked like.

First of all they need to know what the criteria is that they are looking for and then we have deliberate acts that they need to go through which is... things that they need to say and that's a starting point, but then they develop their own.

Students' thoughts on how they were prepared for response activities

Students were asked to comment on ways that their teacher supported them with peer or group response. Fiona's students talked about how she helped them come up with personalised comments. 'It's like something that's personal just between you and your buddy.' The same student also described how she helped her buddy to edit their writing: 'I'm looking for capitals in the right place, words spelt correctly, full stops in the right place...speech marks if someone is talking.' Another student made the comment: 'I normally just blurt stuff out like, 'Oh your writings really good.'"

Students in Erin's classroom talked about how she helped them come up with better words for things and how to notice language features in others' writing:

She teaches us things to learn so we can notice it in other peoples' writing like how to look for hooks and how to look for like staccato sentences and look for good, good sentences to praise people about.

One student described how he looked at the comments that Erin had written and used these to help him support his buddy.

She marks one person's work out of three and then the other two people help that person with editing it and marking, and improving it and analysing what Mrs ___ put in.

The students in Monica's room talked about how Monica helped them through whole-class response, where she put up writing on the interactive board via a visualiser. One student talked about using her partner's goal to help her respond to writing.

They got their goal thing and you just look at what they have and if they needed to work on it, they tell them to work on it. If it's like descriptive you say it is, and if they need more information you say, 'Add some more', so the readers can understand it'.

Lara's students said she helped them by reminding them what to do during buddy conferencing.

We just listen and then we're thinking...what could they improve on and...what's...good about it, and then we tell them what it is and

then if it's good they'll...just go away and do something else or...they'd carry on if they have feed-forward.

The students in Lara's class talked about using success criteria to help them come up with comments when responding to writing. They also mentioned the importance of using language features such as a *hook* to draw the reader in and descriptive language when introducing a character.

Feedback and feed-forward

Feedback and feed-forward were generic terms used in all four classes. Feedback typically involved a positive response about a piece of writing and feed-forward referred to an area to improve on or change. The students interviewed in Lara and Erin's classes were asked to describe the difference between feedback and feed-forward.

Feedback is when you say something positive and something that you like about the writing. Feed-forward is...something that...you give them to work on or some advice that you give them. (Lara's student)

Feed-forward is the bad things, like the not so good things that they could make better and then the feedback is some things that are really good. (Erin's student)

Erin used her own written feedback and feed-forward as a model for the students in her class so they could understand what quality feedback and feed-forward looked like.

Setting an example, so making sure that I'm marking their work and giving them really good feedback and feed-forward and identifying their next steps.

She used the following colour coding when marking her students' writing and was encouraging the students to use the same system to self-evaluate their own and others' work:

- **Yellow** (gold) for glory – the 'good' bits;
- **Pink** for things to think about or improve;
- **Blue** for spelling mistakes and punctuation.

As the year progressed Erin could see the students taking more of a role in using the highlighter system to help them provide feedback and feed-forward for those in their 'writing trio'.

In all classes both oral and written feedback/feed-forward were encouraged. Each class had some form of highlighting or coloured pen coding that was used in the students' draft writing books:

- Fiona's students used green pen to make changes to their draft writing during the peer conference.
- Monica's students used green highlighters for areas to work on. Yellow highlighters were used to identify things they had done well, as a self-assessment task before engaging in partner response. During partner response, Monica's students wrote their responses on a response card.
- Lara's students wrote their responses in the margin of the author's draft writing book using various coloured pens. Lara wrote her feed-forward in the margin too but this was highlighted in yellow.
- Erin used the three different coloured highlighters as mentioned above.

Students actioned their feed-forward in various ways. Lara and Monica made it clear to their students that actioning feed-forward was an option.

I always say to my students that any feed-forward given to you...is up to you to action, if you choose not to action it, that is entirely your choice because it is your writing. (Lara)

I don't make them put in what their peer says, they have a choice whether they want to use it or not. (Monica)

In all four classrooms students were given time to action their feed-forward immediately after the peer or group response session. In some cases students took their writing back to the student who gave the initial feed-forward to show them how they had revised their writing based on the

response they had been given. Other students handed their revised compositions into the teacher.

Resources used to support peer/group response

As mentioned earlier, Monica's students used a laminated 'Partner-Check' card to support them through the peer response process. The cards included five steps:

Partner-check card


- 1. The author introduces their writing and tells the partner what they were trying to achieve.**
The title of my writing is ...
I was aiming to include ... in my writing
- 2. The author reads their writing to their partner.**
- 3. The partner identifies two 'medals' (successes) – remember to refer to criteria/checklist for the lesson**
I like the way you ... because ...
You have used ... It is effective because ...
You have remembered to ...
The way you said ... was effective because ...
- 4. Together record the 'medals' on the feedback form.**
- 5. Identify a 'mission' (something to work on).** 
I'm not sure I understand ...
because ...
I'd like to know more about ...
I think your writing would be stronger if you added ...

Figure 1: Partner-check card ⁵

⁵ Used with permission from author (S. Cameron & Dempsey, 2013, p. 242).

Each student had his or her own copy of the prompt card to refer to. The peer groups in this class used the prompt cards to help guide them as they progressed through the conference. Feedback (the medal) and feed-forward (the mission) were written onto small green cards, which included images of medals and a backpack (see Figure 2). These cards were pasted into the students' writing books for them to refer back to and action if they wished. The cards had a space for the writer and editor to sign.

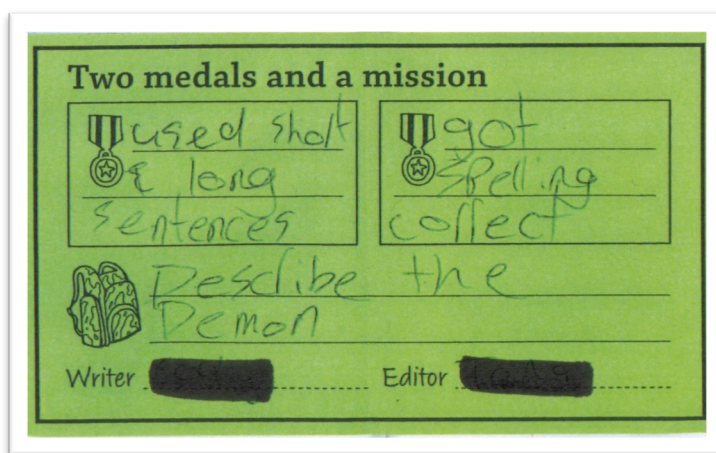


Figure 2: Example of a completed response card⁶

A similar prompt sheet was used in Fiona's classroom, only this sheet was pinned to the wall for students to refer to as needed. This sheet contained six points:

1. Read your buddy's writing.
2. The part of your writing I like is...
3. Does it make sense?
4. Make some suggestions to help them improve their writing.

Examples: *'It doesn't quite make sense here...'*

'Perhaps you could add some more detail about...'

'What is going to happen next?'

5. Has your buddy achieved their personal learning intention?
6. Has your buddy achieved the class learning intention?

⁶ Used with permission from author (S. Cameron & Dempsey, 2013, p. 244).

Erin and Lara's class did not use visual prompts.

Classroom environments

Fiona and Erin's classrooms had displays with lists of names showing whom each child was working with for peer or group response.

Lara's classroom had a wall display describing the stages of the writing process, which were presented in a 'writer's wheel'. The stages were:

1. Topic, purpose, audience – identify the purpose of your writing
2. Plan
3. Draft
4. Evaluate - check W.A.L.T
5. Edit - proofread
6. Partner conference
7. Finish
8. Teacher
9. Publish

Lara advised her students that buddy conferencing could be done at any stage of the writing process. Fiona, Erin and Monica's pupils engaged in peer/group response during the revision stage of the writing process.

Motivation: Teachers' reflections

Each teacher felt that peer or group response motivated his or her learners in some way.

I've see a lot of reluctant writers and unfortunately as students go through the system, they become more reluctant to write because they, see barriers and they think that there's a right and wrong. As soon as they know that the whole conferencing process is not a judgement call, it's an opportunity to seek guidance, ask for affirmation. It creates self-direction in the learners, they become more engaged because they are excited about the writing. (Lara)

Fiona mentioned that the peer response in her classroom was not as motivating as the 'on-line' conferencing that she had recently set up:

Now, the motivation for this is a lot different. It's much higher. The kids...are excited about writing to their buddy. They...want to do two or three pieces a week for their buddy but it's just harder to manage because you have to scan them, they have to have time to respond, then they have to have time to send back so we do one

about every two weeks. So it's...quite cool to write to somebody that's older. They don't know the person either except for what they've read about them and so it's more like they want to impress and...are interested, where as these kids they know, because I even thought about doing it classroom to classroom but they still know these kids because they might have been in a class with them last year, and I mean the kids have even said to me in here, 'Can we meet them at the end of the year?' That's how interested they are in the kids.

Fiona also explained that her students were more likely to fix up their mistakes since she had introduced peer response: 'They actually want to fix up their mistakes, where as before they just wanted to be the first one finished.'

Monica talked about how her class were more motivated because they were writing for a 'real' audience:

I think it increases motivation, my class like to see themselves as authors now, and you...notice that they put more effort into their writing because they know someone else is gonna be reading it, and they...want that feedback from them.

Erin discussed how her students responded to the feedback she gave them and how this acted as a reward for her students:

I had a really tough group of year 7 and 8s two years ago and you'd hand out their books to them and they would instantly be looking for their gold for glories and what they had done really well...it's sort of a reward for all the hard work that they had put in.

Motivation: Students' reflections

Students' all commented that they found response activities useful as it gave them an opportunity to share their writing and to make their writing better. The following is a typical response: 'Yes it is a good idea because it gives them new ideas and ways to improve their writing and it also encourages them.' (Monica's student). In addition, many said they felt proud of their writing.

Of all the students who were interviewed one commented that she preferred to share her writing with classmates rather than with the teacher.

I think, classmates because the reason I pick classmates is because...it feels better when it...comes from a kid...your age because they have more things to say cause they have ideas that I could also put into my writing. (Fiona's student)

Section Three: Analysis of language used by teachers and students

This section reports an analysis of language used by the students when engaging in peer or group response. It describes the types of responses students gave each other and the changes that teachers noticed students making after they had engaged in peer or group response. The last part of the section describes the discourse/s that each teacher appeared to subscribe to when preparing their students for response activities.

Types of responses

The following table shows the types of responses that each group of students gave while engaged in peer or group conferences.

Table 6. Overview of Responses

<i>Class and Group</i>	<i>Number of feedback responses</i>	<i>Number of feed-forward responses</i>	<i>Responses on surface features</i>	<i>Responses on deeper features</i>	<i>'Good work' responses</i>
Fiona group (a)	2	6	1	7	0
Fiona group (b)	0	4	2	2	0
Fiona's Total	2	10	3	9	0
Erin group (a)	2	1	2	1	0
Erin group (b)	2	4	0	5	1
Erin's Total	4	5	2	6	1
Monica group (a)	7	2	1	7	1
Monica group (b)	3	2	0	4	1
Monica's total	10	4	1	10	2
Lara group (a)	3	8	7	4	0
Lara group (b)	7	0	2	2	3
Lara's total	10	8	9	6	3
TOTAL	26	27	15	32	6

The next two tables illustrate the types of feedback and feed-forward that students gave each other during their peer or group response sessions.

Table 7. Types of feedback responses

<i>Surface Features</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Punctuation	1
Handwriting	1
Editing	1
Spelling	2
<i>Deeper Features</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Use of short and long sentences	2
Using a good 'hook'	1
Organisation of ideas	1
Use of descriptive words and/or sound effects	11

Table 8. Types of feed-forward responses

<i>Surface Features</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Punctuation	5
Spelling	5
<i>Deeper Features</i>	<i>Number of Responses</i>
Making message shorter or clearer	5
Developing a better 'hook'	1
Adding more dialogue	1
Changing metaphors or similes	1
Adding more detail through descriptive language or finding an alternate word	8
Tense	1

These results show that students responded to the use of (or lack of) descriptive words and/or language more than anything else. Also worth noting is the number of surface feature comments compared with deeper feature comments. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Changes students made to their draft writing

During the interviews each teacher was asked what changes they observed their students making to draft writing after engaging in the response process. All four teachers commented that students made changes to their writing based on deeper features including: tense, improving their message, choosing appropriate language features and/or sentence structures, and improving the choice of language. Fiona and Erin commented that students attended to both surface (specifically

spelling) and deeper features when making changes in response to their peers' comments.

Fiona explained that her students fixed up spelling mistakes and changed some of the wording in their writing: 'What we call higher level words, you know if they've used a word *make* they'll go and find the word *create*.'

Erin referred to her students making changes to their spelling and tense but said they found it harder to re-craft their message:

The're definitely fixing up their spelling...their tense. They have a little bit more trouble...changing something so it's a better language feature, but they are getting a lot better at doing that...a lot of the time the similes they are using are inappropriate and their peers are helping them change it so it's an appropriate similie, so it fits with the context of the story.

Monica felt that her students' sentence structures were improving as a result of partner response:

A lot of the sentence structures are improving so...someone might give them feed-forward...'This would sound really good if you put that in there.' So they'll go...away and put that in.

Lara encouraged her students to comment on the message before attending to surface features:

There's no point...attending to surface features until the message is clear, it's met the success criteria, and it reads well and at that point then the students will...suggest...looking at surface features.

The teachers' comments reflect findings showing the frequency of deeper feature responses compared with surface feature responses (see table 6), where the total number of feedback and feed-forward responses that relate to deeper features is more than double. However, in Lara's class, there is a variation where students commented more on surface features than deeper features.

Types of responses that students received

When students were asked what others commented on when responding to their writing they gave a range of replies including:

- Attending to apostrophes;
- Attending to punctuation and/or spelling;
- Deleting overused words;
- Re-wording a sentence that did not make sense;
- Changing sentences so they contain a variety of beginnings;
- Organising ideas;
- Using powerful verbs;
- Using *hook in* sentences.

Three out of the eight students who were interviewed shared positive comments that they had received from their peers. These included:

- ‘They say that I have a good imagination.’ (Fiona’s student)
- ‘Oh it’s really good.’ (Erin’s student)
- ‘Most of the time they say that...I have good descriptive words.’ (Lara’s student)

Only one student out of eight made the comment: ‘They don’t really say anything.’

Types of discourse teachers subscribed to

Locke’s (2015) framework was used to understand the discourses of writing and teaching writing. Table 9 (below) suggests the discourse/s that each teacher participant consciously or unconsciously subscribed to when preparing their students for peer/group response. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Table 9. Discourse analysis of teacher participants

Teacher	Discourse orientation	Practices	Composing vocabulary (metalinguage)
Fiona	Rhetorical or textual competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An emphasis was placed on audience and purpose when writing tasks were introduced. For example: Students were instructed to write instructions on 'How to make a poi' for a younger sibling or friend. Fiona modelled how to write a set of instructions making sure the students started each step with a 'bossy' verb. Fiona exposed the students to various examples/types of instructions. Fiona was explicitly teaching students how to use a plan to write. Students responded to each other's writing during the 'revision' stage of the writing process. Students had personal goals and class goals. Responses contained a balance of surface and deeper features. 'On-line' response was set up to connect the student to a wider writing community. 	sentence structure feedback feed-forward planning genre personal learning intention/goal spelling grammar punctuation higher level words imagination detail verbs personal response
Erin	Rhetorical or textual competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher exposed the students to various models and genre types. The students did 'cameo' writing every week. A cameo is an extract of text that uses descriptive language. It clearly defines an image or a moment in time. Erin taught the students about language features every Monday. Students used metalinguage such as 'staccato sentences' and 'metaphor' when responding to Erin's feed-forward in their 'writing trios'. Erin modelled appropriate feedback and feed-forward for her students on a daily basis and encouraged students to act on the feed-forward using their 'writing trio' for support. 	metaphor feedback feed-forward next steps spelling language features punctuation staccato sentences similes tense better word for...

Table 9 continued...

Teacher	Discourse orientation	Practices	Composing vocabulary (metalinguage)
Monica	Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were called 'authors'. • The teacher chose socially relevant contexts for writing. For example; the new movie 'Frozen'. • Students' worked through the writing process and engaged in peer response during the 'revision' stage of the writing process. • Students had personal goals that they were working towards and peers were encouraged to make responses based on these goals. • Students did not have to revise their writing based on feed-forward they received in the partner conference. 	spelling sentence structures writing flows sentence types goals organise ideas powerful verbs descriptive words hook in dialogue entertained problem authors audience feedback feed-forward sound effects
Lara	Personal growth Rhetorical or textual competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students used success criteria to support them in shaping their own texts. • Students composed a range of genres with the teacher setting criteria for these. • Students were encouraged to use buddy conferencing at any stage in the writing process. • Students were encouraged to select what they wanted advice on during the buddy/group conference. • Lara placed a big emphasis on 'process' as was evident through her wall display and class organisation. • Lara explained that feedback and feed-forward was not only part of writing but other curriculum areas as well. • Lara explained that writing was a 'personal thing'. • Lara made time for students to reflect on the buddy and group conferencing process. • Students did not have to revise their writing based on feed-forward they received in the group or buddy conference. 	message writing process punctuation 'hook in' sentences descriptive words humour proof-read/Edit setting length handwriting feedback feed-forward

Findings summary

The data from observations and interviews showed that teacher participants organised their response activities differently. Consequently, the way teachers prepared their students also varied, particularly in respect of: teaching strategies; frequency of response activities; and approaches to grouping.

Analysis of responses that students gave while engaged with a peer or group showed that students were twice as likely to give feedback and feed-forward on deeper features of writing as opposed to surface features.

The findings in this chapter will be discussed in Chapter 5 and will include; connections between findings and the literature, research implications, and comments on how these findings may impact on future research and practice.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The use of peer groups to respond to student papers is a long-established practice in the composition classroom, so well entrenched, that we may sometimes employ peer response without thoroughly evaluating underlying assumptions and beliefs about how such groups operate. (M. Hall, 2009, p. 1)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter starting with the discourse analysis of teacher instruction. Following this, findings in relation to each of the research questions will be discussed with links made to some relevant literature. The chapter concludes with some implications of this research and recommendations for future research of this type.

Discourse analysis and response activities

The previous chapter showed the different discourse/s that each teacher subscribed to when preparing for and implementing peer response as part of their writing programme. It is important to note that the discourse analysis was based on the interview and observation data only, and is therefore indicative of possible trends. In addition, teachers may operate out of multiple discourses as they negotiate their way through their past and present professional development experiences; beliefs about writing; personal histories; and experiences of learning to write (Borko, 2004; McCarthey et al., 2014; Robbins, 1992).

The discourse analysis in this research showed that teachers were operating out of either the rhetorical or textual competence discourse, the personal growth discourse, or a combination of the two. The two discourses mentioned above have different principles regarding writing as a social process. The first – rhetorical or textual competence – suggests that process and product are equally important and also places an emphasis on skills. The second – personal growth – places a higher

emphasis on process, the development of writer identity, and the development of writing as a social practice.

Lara talked about the writing process with her students and also had a large wall display of this in her classroom. She was the only teacher who encouraged students to buddy conference and/or make revisions at anytime during the writing process. In addition, Lara described herself as 'a coach on the side...a facilitator'. This demonstrated that she valued the process approach and her students' ideas and ability to work through the process, a belief that teachers tend to hold when operating out of the personal growth discourse.

Lara, Erin and Fiona placed an emphasis on their students learning various genres; 'different forms texts take with variations in social purpose' Cope and Kalantzis (1993, p. 7) and composed learning intentions and criteria for these. For example, Fiona's class were writing a set of instructions, Erin's class were writing poetry and recounts and Lara's class a narrative. Although students were being exposed to various genres in these classrooms, there was only one occasion (during the observations) when the 'social purpose' (audience) was mentioned. This occurred when Fiona explained to her students that they were writing instructions for making a poi, so that their buddy or sibling could understand.

Fiona and Erin exposed their students to various models to help them learn about how language was organised and the grammatical structures required for a particular genre. For example, Fiona showed her students a set of instructions on *How to take care of a rabbit*, and talked about the importance of using a verb to begin each point. This type of instruction is representative of the rhetorical or textual competence discourse which places an emphasis on students being exposed to teacher modelling and good examples of a genre (Locke, 2015). The students in these classrooms referred to the class criteria (specific to the type of genre) to support them in responding to others' writing.

In contrast, Monica exposed her students to socially relevant texts that she knew would motivate her students. On the occasion that I visited her class, she was using the latest animation movie *Frozen* to engage her students. Each student in Monica's class had personal goal/s that they were working towards, which they shared with their partner at the beginning of the peer conference. The partner then based their response on the goal. Erin described her students as 'authors' and encouraged them to become independent by providing scaffolds and instilling trust in their ability to support one another with their writing. This type of instruction focuses mostly on personal growth, where writing is creative and linked to the world of the student; hence the student uses writing as a way to make sense of his/her world.

Monica and Erin were participants in school-wide professional development programmes, which meant that they may have had little opportunity to individualise their instruction. The discourse/s they subscribed to could have easily been influenced by both past and present professional development or even the literacy consultants they were working with (McCarthy et al., 2014). As discussed in the literature review, such factors, as well as teachers' personal experiences of learning to write will influence instruction. This could also explain why Lara operated out of two different discourses.

The findings suggest that Erin and Monica (both involved in whole-school development in writing) were each operating out of different discourses. This indicates that no one discourse of what writing is and how it is best taught will necessarily take precedence in an actual classroom or school situation (Locke, 2015).

Relationship of findings to intital question

This thesis aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do a small sample of primary teachers prepare students for peer or group response?

2. How do these teachers prepare their students for providing useful responses to others' writing?
3. How often do students engage in collaborative peer or group response when undertaking a writing assignment?
4. How does engagement in peer or group response appear to decrease/increase student motivation in respect of writing?
5. What kinds of changes do students make to their writing in response to peer/group responses?

Questions one and two: Preparing students for response

The first two questions promoted an investigation into ways in which teachers prepared their students for the response process, including setting them up so that they provided quality responses for their peers. 'Merely putting students in small groups and telling them to 'talk about writing' will not work when it comes to effective peer response' (Nystrand, 1984, p. 11). The findings of this research indicate that all teachers used some form of modelling (demonstrating or showing) and/or scaffolding (providing support or a framework) when setting up response activities in their classrooms. However, there was variability amongst the four classes in the amount of training given to prepare students for peer or group response activities and also the frequency in which students participated in such activities.

Modelling

Modelling is a fairly broad term used to describe a number of different teaching approaches. When modelling peer/group response, it is necessary to model: types of feedback and feed-forward; language or vocabulary unique to response and writing; and appropriate questioning.

All teachers included 'whole-class' or 'sharing circle' response activities in their classroom programme as a form of modelling appropriate types of responses. This typically involved the teacher inviting a student to come and read their writing to the whole class and then choosing students to give feedback and feed-forward (similar to the 'Author's Chair' activity

described in Chapter Two). This activity gave the teachers an opportunity to observe the types of responses their students were giving but also let them act as a facilitator if necessary. Modelling also allows the teacher to expose students to metalanguage that learners need when responding to others' writing. Erin discussed how she used whole-class response to develop vocabulary with her students and would probe them for more information by asking what language feature an author used, and why it worked. The metalanguage that Erin established during whole-class instruction was transferred into dialogue that students used when working in their 'writing trios'.

The Ministry of Education (2010) recognises modelling as an essential tool where teachers can make their thinking visible through the use of 'think alouds' which articulate how they arrived at a solution and model how a good writer works. Locke (2015) suggests that 'teachers and sometimes peers model various aspects of the writing process' and may use a 'think aloud' approach when doing this (p. 133). In addition, when students have problems with an aspect of writing or response, teachers can model how to solve it using a 'think aloud' approach. The use of 'think alouds' as an approach was not observed during this research but could certainly be a useful strategy in preparing students for response in writing and also in helping students revise their writing.

Fiona discussed how she used a group of role models to show her class what an effective partner response session looked like. Fiona, Monica, and Lara talked about using a step-by-step approach at the beginning of the year to model explicit behaviours such as how students had to sit, how their book should be positioned and what would happen during a buddy conference. Erin explained how she set an example for her students by modelling what effective feedback and feed-forward looked like and wrote this down in her students' draft writing books. Erin talked about providing fewer written responses for her students as the year progressed. Her vision was that the students in her class would take on the 'teacher role'

by providing feedback and feed-forward for their peers, using the same model that Erin had developed from the beginning of the year.

S. Cameron and Dempsey (2013) recommend that good modelling starts with good preparation and will be most effective if teachers know what they will write and/or say. In addition, they suggest teachers, 'consider how much modelling is needed to prepare students' (p. 20). Fiona and Lara explained that they modelled for students how they might go about achieving a set of success criteria. For example, during whole-class instruction Fiona used a model text for students so they could see what a piece of instructional writing looked like. She developed a shared language with the students when explaining that each step had to start with a 'bossy verb'. This language was then used during the peer conferences, where students responded to their partner's writing with comments such as: 'Most of your sentences do have, um verbs at the start.' A similar situation was observed in Lara's class where she talked about the success criteria and structure of a narrative piece of writing. This criteria were then discussed in the group conference, where students engaged in dialogue regarding description and setting.

Scaffolding

Visual prompt cards and checklists were used as a scaffold for students in two of the four classrooms. Monica provided her students with a visual 'Partner Check-card' as described in the previous chapter. This proved useful in helping students direct their responses to the deeper features of text and proving a balance of feedback and feed-forward. The students each had their own copy of this card and used it in combination with a matrix containing individual goals. In addition, the students were required to fill out a feedback/feed-forward card for their partner. The transcript from the peer response groups in Monica's class indicated that her students gave more feedback than any other class (refer to table 6). In addition, all pupils that engaged in peer response received feed-forward that related to a 'deeper feature' of their writing. In most cases the

feedback and feed-forward linked to the student's goal, which was identified before the student read out their writing.

Interestingly, Monica's students gave no feed-forward responses on surface features. Liu and Hansen (2002) advise that focus on deeper features of text is more helpful when making revisions to draft writing. One possible reason why every student in Monica's class received feedback and feed-forward was due to the response card template which acted as a support for the students who were required to fill out two 'medal' responses (feedback) and one 'mission' response (feed-forward).

Two medals and a mission

Two medal icons, each with a blank space for a response.

Backpack icon with a blank space for a response.

Writer Editor

Figure 3. Partner response card⁷

The use of this scaffold and the analysis of dialogue used in Monica's response groups provide us with some useful insights as to how these types of resources can support students in providing purposeful responses. In addition, there is a body of research that supports the use of visual prompts in supporting effective student responses, for example, Eli and Topping (1999); Gielen et al. (2010); M. Hall (2009) and Liu and Hansen (2002).

Fiona's class used a prompt sheet that was displayed on the wall for her students to refer to. The students in Fiona's class had the highest number

⁷ Used with permission from author (S. Cameron & Dempsey, 2013, p. 244).

of feed-forward responses with nine out of twelve relating to 'deeper features'. However, Fiona's class only had two feedback responses, meaning that some students received no positive feedback about their writing during the response session. It is widely recognised that feedback is equally as important as feed-forward especially in maintaining student motivation and participation in response activities (Freedman, 1992; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Lynch & Polich, 2009).

While scaffolds such as the ones used in Fiona and Monica's classrooms are useful in preparing students for the tasks involved in learning to respond, at the same time teachers must be careful that response activities remain 'flexible and open to revision' so that they don't become another 'black-boxed routine' (M. Hall, 2009, p. 11).

Grouping for response activities

When preparing groups for response activities, teachers used a combination grouping strategies. As outlined in Chapter 4, Fiona and Monica both used peer response; Lara used a mixture of peer and group response depending on the purpose and Erin used groups of three called 'writing trios'. When grouping for response activities there is no 'magic number for a group' (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p. 77). However, Vygotsky's theories emphasise that learning is a result of social interaction and his theories were developed through studies of dyadic interaction (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988). Hsu (2009) discovered that writing partnerships worked better than groups of three or more because 'there is less to negotiate when only two students are involved' (p. 155). In Hsu's classroom, she grouped students into pairs who worked together for an entire year. If there were problems with the partnership then she coached them or addressed the issue in a class mini-lesson.

The group compositions in this research varied with some groupings being heterogeneous (Erin's) and others homogeneous (Fiona's and Monica's). Lara used a mixture of both. As discussed in Chapter Two, heterogeneous grouping can benefit weaker students but at the same time

more able students may struggle to benefit from this type of grouping. This was evident in Erin's class, where one gifted and talented student dominated the group with his suggestions and during whole-class response received no feed-forward from his peers. Erin was aware of this on-going matter and decided to set the student up with an on-line response partner of similar ability from another school.

Findings from Kutnick et al. (2002) suggested that teachers did not always think strategically about group size and composition in relation to the task. However, Lara had experimented with various group-sizes for peer response activities and engaged her students in reflection about the size of the group and the task. She then changed the group-size in response to the students' feedback and feed-forward. As mentioned in Chapter Two, 'teaching group work skills should not be confused with teaching students to respond to writing' (Beach & Friedrich, 2008; Simmons, 2003). It is hard to tell from this research how much emphasis and preparation had been put into 'group work' skills prior to the observations and none of the teacher participants mentioned this in their interview. However, all groups observed functioned well in terms of individual members participating in 'on-task' discussion. It is also possible that these groups behaved appropriately because they were being filmed.

Lara's 'writing trios' of mixed ability worked together as they helped support one of the writers in actioning Erin's written feed-forward. This became a problem-solving process as the students brainstormed ways to action the teacher's feed-forward regarding the use of tense. Eventually the students came up with a collaborative awareness of what 'tense' meant and were able to help the author in making appropriate revisions. A similar situation occurred in Lara's classroom, where a group of three students were deciding if it was important to describe the setting in the first paragraph of a narrative. In the end, all students agreed that it was important and wrote the comment on the author's draft writing for him to action after the conference. These particular conversations followed a pattern of communication where the group discovered a problem with the

text and worked together to achieve an outcome. Nystrand (1984) explains that effective groups engage in 'extensive collaborative problem solving' (p. 9). As discussed previously in Chapter Two, discussion about writing, where thinking is expressed orally to a group, naturally allows students to develop higher-level thinking skills (Nystrand, 1997b). In addition, the students in these groups learnt something they could apply when writing future compositions.

The conversation patterns that emerged from the students engaged in peer response followed a slightly different pattern. When students were confronted with a problem during the conference, they tended to 'agree' with their partner's suggestion rather than reason with them or ask for further clarification. For example, one student responded to his peer's writing with the comment, 'I think you need to work on your hook, like cause you didn't have much about your problem,' and the author simply replied, 'okay'. In another instance, a student responded to a piece of instructional writing her partner had written saying, 'I don't understand that bit 'Plait the nice wool with three of each three different colours...'. The reply from the author was, 'Okay, I'll just cross that out.'

One could argue that the conversations between peers did not promote as much critical thinking as the conversations described between groups of 3 or 4. Nystrand (1984) noted in his research that 'groups differ significantly in how they deal with writing problems', some groups identify a problem and then consider their task completed, whereas other groups identify a problem and also work through the revisions in detail (p. 9).

Question three: Frequency and timing of response activities

Question three asked how often students engaged in collaborative response activities when undertaking a writing assignment. All classes used peer or group response during the revision stage of the writing process. This meant that students were engaging in peer or group response at least once or twice a week. Lara's class was the only one that encouraged peer or group response during other stages of the writing

process, which meant that her class engaged in response activities more frequently. All classes engaged in some form of writing response (either whole-class, on-line, group or both) every writing session. Answers on frequency of engagement in response activities varied between student and teacher participants. Therefore, it is difficult to say exactly how much time students were spending on response activities. However, in all of the classes, whole-class response was mostly a daily occurrence and was used to prepare students for small-group response.

The literature suggests that peer response activities should take place during the revision stage of the writing process as the main purpose is for students to support each other with responses that will assist their peers in making quality revisions to their writing. However, Hsu (2009) suggests that there is no reason why students cannot work together to support each other with editing as well as revision, including making changes to their draft writing after a conference.

In a study of two classroom teachers' approach to peer response, Freedman (1992) discovered that in a ten-week term, one class spent over 50% of their time responding to writing while the other spent just 25%. Although both classes spent a similar amount of time engaged in peer or group response, the first class also engaged in whole-class response as well. Unfortunately the results of this study did not shed any light on what organisation or frequency works best for response activities, although we do know that response activities need to occur regularly. Nystrand (1984) recommends that students meet three times a week so they can increase their ability to respond appropriately and purposefully. In addition, Franklin (2010) advises that teachers should encourage the sharing of and responding to writing on a daily basis. Hansen and Liu (2005) also agree that:

While peer response activities are typically introduced in the revision stages, when students have already produced a written text, they can be utilized effectively across all stages of the writing process. For example, a typical beginning to a writing assignment is a brainstorming activity to help students generate possible topics.

After this activity, the teacher can encourage students to make a list of all the topics they have generated, and then guide them to discuss these topics with their peers in light of their relevance, importance, and difficulty level, as well as availability of resources. This may help students decide which topic is more appropriate, and also generate more information. If outlining is a stage in the process, peers can also read and respond to the outlines. Students then have the opportunity to work with their peers through the entire writing process, which may enable them to be better responders on a written draft, as they have more knowledge of the content of their peers' writing, and may result in increased negotiation of meaning and scaffolding. (p. 32)

Question four: Peer/group response and motivation

The fourth question asked whether student motivation increased or decreased when students engaged in peer or group response activities. Findings indicated that students thought it was a good idea to engage in response activities as it motivated them to improve their writing:

I do think it's a good idea because we are able to make our writing better by the feed forward that they give us and we're able to feel proud of our writing by the feedback that they give us. (Lara's student)

The four teachers also felt that peer or group response activities motivated their students.

On-line response and motivation

Of particular interest is Fiona's comment in the previous chapter about on-line response being more motivating than class response activities. There are many advantages in using computer-mediated modes of response, including the fact that it provides an authentic audience (Magnifico, 2010). However, there are also many questions. One mentioned by Fiona herself was the 'time' issue. In addition, access to computers is a problem in some classrooms where up to 30 students share just one or two computers/tablets, as was the case in three of the classrooms involved in this research. Cutler and Graham (2008) noted in their study (a survey about primary teachers' instructional practises in writing) that computers were not used enough in writing programmes owing to the limited number available.

Research on the use of computers and its effects on writing quality are limited. However, 'computers are powerful, flexible tools for writing and writing instruction, but their effects depend on the design of the software and ways that instruction takes advantage of computer capabilities' (MacArthur, 2006, p. 260). Regardless of whether peer or group response is computer-mediated or face-to-face, explicit instruction needs to be at the forefront.

Braine (1997) compared a networked computer class to a more traditional lecture-style class and found that the networked setting promoted better writing and more peer and teacher feedback (p. 45). In addition, computer-mediated modes of response can provide a supportive, anxiety-free environment which may boost student confidence and motivation especially for ESL (English as a Second Language) learners (Kern, 1995).

McPherson (2006) explored the use of wikis, which provide students with an authentic audience. He advocates that when students know that a real audience will be reading and responding to their writing, it acts as a stimulus to motivate them, more so than if they are composing a text solely for the teacher. 'As technological communication continues to grow, we must begin to better understand this alignment of writing, audience, and motivation by examining key features of successful writing communities' (Magnifico, 2010, p. 181).

Fiona believed that her students were more likely to take risks with their writing during on-line conferencing because they didn't know their buddy but wanted to impress them because they were older. Fiona also reported that her students were more motivated to fix up their mistakes after engaging in peer response. This suggests that response activities encourage students to make improvements to their writing, a positive feature in using peer/group response as an approach.

Self-efficacy and peer/group response

Lara talked about her students being reluctant to share their writing at the beginning of the school year for fear of it being 'wrong'. Lara worked in a school where peer or group response was not a 'whole-school' approach. The language she used with her students helped to break down this barrier. She described writing as 'crafting something special' and encouraged her students to take ownership and know that everyone in the class was going through the same writing process. By the end of the first term, Lara's students all wanted to share their writing. Consequently, sharing became a celebration rather than a chore. Lara also talked about the collegiality between her students and explained how they guided each other with her being more like 'the coach on the side'. What Lara described is a collaborative classroom where the teacher and students have respective roles as members of a writing community where power is productively shared.

A classroom that could more properly be called a resource room, its teacher more properly a knowledgeable coach, its students more properly one another's colleagues. Learning in such an environment becomes less a matter of following teachers' directives and more a matter of teachers and students mutually engaged in talking and reading and writing, in giving and receiving feedback across varied audiences and at varied points in the writing process. (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, p. 144)

Lara was the only teacher that allowed her students the freedom to choose when they wanted or needed to buddy conference.

Question five: Changes made to writing as a result of peer/group response activities

The last question prompted an exploration of the changes students made to their draft writing after engaging in peer or group response activities. From my response group observations, the highest number of feed-forward comments related to adding more detail through descriptive language or finding an alternate word. These types of responses are what we would expect from students whose teachers work out of a

rhetorical or textual competence discourse. As mentioned earlier, this type of discourse places an emphasis on developing 'metalinguage' so that students can explain how language works. Comments such as: 'some of this doesn't make sense'; 'what's a better word for *feel*'; 'you have to change that because you can't have two similes in a row'; and 'describe more about how she killed them', demonstrate that students were able to express their understanding of how language works and its purpose.

Erin and Fiona both mentioned that surface features such as spelling were improved after students had engaged in response activities. Erin said she noticed that students had more trouble making changes to improve their message such as changing an inappropriate simile to fit with the context of the story.

Lara commented that the message was the main priority for her students:

The students at this end of the school...start off with deeper features. Any changes that need to be made to...the message itself...once they've got the message then they look at surface features. There's no point attending to surface features until the message is clear, it's met the success criteria, and it reads well.

However, students in Lara's class gave a mixture of surface and deeper feature responses, with one group giving a higher number of surface feature responses than the other. Of particular interest to me was a group of four girls who gave each other feedback such as: 'I reckon it was a pretty good piece of writing'; 'I don't think you need any work on it'; 'it's quite descriptive'; 'your handwriting is good'; and, 'you have edited things and it's quite funny'. Although the girls in this group gave feedback they did not offer any feed-forward responses, which meant that no changes were made to their draft writing. The group of girls were friends and this raises a question about whether friendship groups are reluctant to give constructive feed-forward for fear of jeopardising their relationships. In contrast, another group from the same class, which included a mixture of genders, gave the following feed-forward responses: 'add a few more

commas because their weren't any breaks'; 'describe the setting in your introduction'; 'that part is quite long'; and 'you might wanna put an explanation mark after the word *wham*'. These students were able to leave the group with suggestions on how they could improve their writing.

Implications and recommendations

Teachers in primary schools face the comprehensive challenge of providing learning activities that help improve students' writing, a complex cognitive activity Graham and Perin (2007). Peer or group response is just *one* of the many writing approaches that teachers may consider as part of their writing programme. However, 'although enthusiastically advocated by practitioners and supported by current theories of the teaching and learning of writing, response groups are difficult to organize effectively' (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, p. 119). This research showed that indeed, response groups require thought, planning and preparation to be successful. Simmons (2003) deftly explains that 'responders are taught, not born' (p. 84). Responders need to be explicitly taught how to act and respond appropriately to their peers, which of course provides implications for the classroom teacher in terms of knowledge, organisation and preparation.

As with learning to write, learning to respond follows a unique process (M. Hall, 2009). There is much theorising about writing and research that recommends peer/group conferencing as a collaborative approach that, as mentioned earlier, needs to be explicitly taught in order for it to impact on the quality of students' writing (M. Hall, 2009; Simmons, 2003; Zhu, 1995). This study has provided one glimpse of how a small number of teachers were preparing their students for peer/group response in writing. It is limited to students between 9 and 13 years of age. In addition, this research solely examined the students' oral and written responses but not the writing compositions. The data in this research were gathered over a short period of time and, in most cases, only two or three visits were made to each classroom. This meant only a very constrained picture of pedagogical practices taking place in each setting was obtained.

Furthermore, my presence as the researcher and the novelty of recording equipment may have influenced some of the results in this research. However, this is likely to be offset by the fact that peer or group response was already part of the writing programme in each of the four classrooms, so was already part of 'natural' everyday practice.

Students who engaged in peer or group response as part of this research had varying amounts of preparation and this would have had an effect on the types of responses they provided. In addition, the way teachers set up their response groups will have influenced how the members of the group interacted and this could also have had an impact on the findings in this research (DiPardo & Freedman, 1988). This research discovered that the peer/group response process varied among the four classrooms, as did the types of teacher instruction. Freedman (1992) also discovered in her study that teacher interpretations of the term 'response groups' were completely different. One possible explanation for this is that each teacher subscribed to different discourse/s of writing and writing pedagogy depending on their experiences and professional knowledge (Locke, 2015; McCarthey et al., 2014).

The first implication to consider is the desirability of peer response as part of a whole-school approach, as was the case in Erin's and Monica's schools. Research suggests that, for response activities to have an impact on the quality of students' revisions, they really need to be part of a school-wide approach (Corden, 2007; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007; Simmons, 2003). VanDeWeghe (2004) points out that:

In addition to having many experiences with directly taught ways of responding, students need much more time than a mere three months, more even than a full year, if they are to develop the skills and dispositions to interact wisely with other writers. (p. 95)

Simmons suggests that the response process could start as early as kindergarten. One suggestion that Pritchard and Honeycutt (2007) make is to introduce children to sharing writing early on with a partner and then

expanding on this by building response groups before students reach middle school.

One teacher alone can create a community of responders, as I observed in Lara's and Fiona's classrooms. However, imagine the sophisticated responses that Lara and Fiona's students could have provided had they used peer/group response prior to their last year in primary school. This is not to say that Lara's and Fiona's students had no experience of peer or group response prior to entering their classrooms; it is the quality of their exposure to peer/group response activities that is likely to be significant. What quality peer/group response opportunities are students being exposed to in our New Zealand schools?

My own view is that approaches such as peer/group response be a school-wide practice. Unfortunately, much of the research into effective writing practice focuses on classroom practice, as was the case in this research. However, 'whole-school practices are likely to have a positive impact on the teaching of writing', especially if teachers are provided with ongoing professional learning (Locke, 2015). Professional learning might include situations where teachers experience what it is like to be part of a writing community, where they can respond to others' writing, and in turn have their own writing responded to. Such experiences help teachers to identify as a writer who can learn alongside their students.

Research by Dix and Cawkwell (2011) calls for more teachers to identify as writers in order to build confidence, which can help to transform their writing instruction. This proved to be the case when a group of 14 New Zealand teachers were involved in *writing workshop* activities based on the successful NWP (see Chapter Two for more details), a national professional development initiative designed for teachers in the United States. 'In the NWP, peer group response is an embedded practice' and this was used in the New Zealand workshops with encouraging results, some of which had an impact on the teachers' classroom writing practices (Dix & Cawkwell, 2011, p. 45).

Unfortunately, as mentioned by Locke et al. (2011), time and expense to implement an approach like the NWP in New Zealand schools is problematic, especially given that writing is just one aspect of a crowded curriculum. In addition, professional learning needs to be sustainable, which would mean that government funding would be essential.

Another avenue for future teacher professional development in writing would involve teachers learning about the discourses of writing and learning to write. Locke (2015) believes that teachers can be empowered if they have an understanding of writing discourses and pedagogy. Ivanič (2004) also recommends that writing teachers can benefit from knowing about the discourses of writing, learning to write and the pedagogical practices associated with these. McCarthy et al. (2014) suggest that this could be done by giving 'teachers opportunities to collaborate and delve deeply into discussions about a comprehensive writing pedagogy within their specific school communities, including understanding the discourses endorsed by the official curriculum' (p. 86). Making teachers aware of the discourses that they subscribe to would help with consolidating their practice, and improving writing activities they design for their students. This would include how they coach students to respond to their own and others' writing (Locke, 2015).

A second implication, is the constraints of assessment including standardised testing and the pressure on teachers to make judgements based on written 'product' rather than 'process'. Unfortunately, National Standards require teachers to level students' writing which, according to Ward-Martin (2004) places an emphasis on the final product:

As long as we must give grades in writing courses, we should put the evaluative emphasis not on the relative success or failure of students to improve their writing – their products – but on the discussion of the process writers undertake and the interactions that they experience as writers. (p. 131)

Our current writing assessment system in New Zealand does not take into account the process that students go through as they write. In fact, the e-

asTTle marking rubric has no grading for revisions made to draft writing (Ministry of Education). This is something that needs to be considered in the future, especially as students' writing achievement is of concern (Locke et al., 2011). In addition, students are often graded on their processing skills in other curriculum areas such as reading and mathematics, where students are given recognition for their working out or self-correcting. Finding ways to acknowledge and assess the development of writing, including the revisions that students make when they compose texts, is an important step in helping teachers value the writing process, not just the final product.

A third implication is how teachers organise their students for peer or group response activities. Freedman (1992) recognises 'how much we still have to learn if teachers are to provide classroom environments that are maximally supportive of peers talking and learning together' (p. 105). The frequency in which students engage in response activities will have a large bearing on the quality of responses they provide, but only if they have been given adequate coaching. The time it takes to prepare students for response activities is demanding and could initially take time from other curriculum areas. However, once established such activities have the potential to reduce teacher workload as suggested in Chapter Two.

Another component to consider is the size and composition of response groups. The research is inconclusive on what group size or type works best for response in writing. However, this research suggests that larger groups may be more useful in helping students develop problem-solving and metacognitive thinking skills. Barron's recommendation (see Chapter Two) of four students per group seems reasonable with older students. In contrast, having two students solely providing feedback and feed-forward for each other is not always purposeful, especially if one of the students does not have sufficient knowledge, skills or resources to provide a response which will lead to quality revision. Including more members in a group opens the door for diversified responses and helps students to

clarify questions and engage in problem-solving dialogue, as was observed with Erin's and Lara's response groups. It may be beneficial to try a range of grouping situations depending on the classroom dynamics and age of the students.

A fourth implication, also mentioned by Dix and Cawkwell (2011) is that students might not revise their writing after engaging in response activities, which in some respects can defeat the purpose of setting up response groups in the first place. Despite the social advantages, one of the main purposes for setting up response groups is to increase the quality of revisions and in turn improve students' writing. Though time consuming, it would be interesting to see how the language in response groups changed over the course of a year and the impact this had on the quality of writing. Conducting longitudinal research of students from the beginning to the end of primary school would also create further insights as to how response language and revisions change and improve over time.

All teachers in this research allowed time for their students to revise their draft writing on the same day they received responses, the rationale being that the feedback and feed-forward was fresh in the students' minds. However, two teachers indicated that it was not an expectation for students' to make changes to their writing after engaging in response activities. Research into how much students revise their drafts after engaging in effective group response is certainly an avenue for further investigation.

Final thoughts

This research set out to discover various ways in which a small group of primary teachers were preparing their students for peer/group response. The research and the literature indicate that preparing students for response activities is crucial and, without careful attention to planning and organisation, response groups will not be able to provide the sorts of responses that will help students revise their writing.

Some of the ways in which teachers were preparing their students for response activities included: modelling language unique to writing and response through the use of whole-class response sessions; providing scaffolds such as prompt cards to support students with the procedure and dialogue involved in peer/group response; modelling deliberate acts such as how to sit and act in a conference; role-playing each step of the response process; and asking students to reflect on the process to allow opportunities for change and improvement.

This research showed that the discourse/s teachers subscribed to (consciously or unconsciously) influenced the way they organised and coached their students for response activities. Being more aware of the discourses of writing and teaching writing could help teachers design improved programmes for their students. In particular, an emphasis needs to be put on programmes that involve students working in a collaborative environment where peer and group response is a valued part of the 'process approach' to writing.

The motivational appeal of peer/group response was evident in this research. Both teachers and students agreed that response activities: encouraged better writing quality; helped students self-monitor their learning; facilitated students in learning new ways of improving their writing; and made students feel proud of their work. There was also some indication that computer mediated response can increase motivation for students engaging in both face-to-face and online responses.

Finally, successful response groups involve teachers assisting students in developing skills they need to help one another improve their writing. In addition, teachers need to have confidence in their students' ability to learn from each other and for themselves. The literature suggests that students can learn from giving as well as receiving response, and it is anticipated that future research related to the topics investigated in this thesis will allow teachers to refine instruction in peer response in order to strengthen their writing programme.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Interview questions for teachers

- What active strategies do you use to prepare students for peer or group response?
- How often do you provide opportunities for your students to engage in collaborative peer or group response when undertaking a particular writing assignment?
- Do you think engagement in peer or group response decreases/increases motivation? Do you have any evidence to support your opinion here?
- What kind of changes do you observe students making to their draft writing after engaging in peer/group response?

APPENDIX B: Interview questions for students

- How do you know what to say when you look at another students' writing?
- What does your teacher do to help you talk about another students' writing?
- How often do you talk about writing with a peer, a group, or the whole class?
- What sorts of things do your classmates tell you about your writing?
- What do you do after a student has told you things about your writing?
- Do you think it is a good idea to share with some of your classmates what you think of their writing? Why? Why not?

APPENDIX C: Information/Consent form for principals

Dear _____

My name is Rebecca Foster and I am a Masters student at the University of Waikato. Currently I am working on a thesis which is looking at ways in which teachers use peer or group response in their writing programme.

Peer or group response is a social approach that teachers can use to engage their students in meaningful 'talk' about writing. When taught successfully, peer/group response is an approach that has been shown to improve students' writing quality.

Part of my thesis includes a research component where I would like to observe four teachers using peer/group response with their class. _____ is using peer/group response in his/her classroom and has expressed interest in participating in this research.

This would require my videoing some of _____'s writing sessions and taking notes on how he/she prepares his/her students for peer or group response. I would also like to interview _____ and two students from his/her class. It is also possible that students' writing samples will be part of the data collection.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that your school, _____ and the students in his/her class will not be named or revealed in any publication unless prior written consent is obtained. All teachers, students and their parents will be provided with consent forms and participation will be voluntary. Each participant will have the right to withdraw information at any time up until the research data is analysed.

If you agree to this research being carried out in your school then I will provide you with copies of consent forms which will need to be sent home to the parents/caregivers of the students in _____ classroom.

Finally, I would like to assure you that this research will benefit the participants involved, and hopefully open new avenues for future research in writing.

If you have any further questions or complaints regarding this research please contact myself or my supervisor Professor Locke, otherwise I look forward to working with _____ and the students in room _____.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Foster

Professor Locke (supervisor)
School of Education
University of Waikato
PB 3015
Hamilton
email:loketj@waikato.ac.nz
Ph: 07 8384466 ext 7780.

Rebecca Foster (Student)
Frankton Primary School
Massey Street
3204
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email:rfoster@franktonschool.ac.nz
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APPENDIX D: Information/Consent form for teachers

Dear _____,

My name is Rebecca Foster and I am a Masters student at the University of Waikato. Currently I am working on a thesis which is looking at ways teachers use peer or group response in their writing programme.

Peer or group response is a social approach that teachers can use to engage their students in meaningful 'talk' about writing. When taught successfully, peer/group response is an approach that has been shown to improve students' writing quality.

Part of my thesis includes a research component where I would like to observe you using peer or group response with your students. This would require my videoing some of your students during the writing sessions and taking notes on how you prepare the students in your class for peer or group response. I would also like to interview yourself, and two students from your class. In some cases writing samples may also be copied as part of the data collection.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that your school, yourself and the students will not be named or revealed in any publication unless prior written consent is obtained. All of the students in your class and their parents will be provided with consent forms and participation will be voluntary. Each participant will have the right to withdraw information at any time up until the research data is analysed.

If you agree to this research being carried out in your classroom then please sign the consent form below.

Finally, I would like to assure you that this research will benefit the teachers and students involved and hopefully open new avenues for future research in writing.

If you have any further questions or complaints regarding this research, please contact myself or my supervisor Professor Locke, otherwise I look forward to working with you and the students in your class.

Regards,

Rebecca Foster

Professor Locke (supervisor)
School of Education
University of Waikato
PB 3015
Hamilton
email:loketj@waikato.ac.nz
Ph: 07 8384466 ext 7780.

Rebecca Foster (Student)
Frankton Primary School
Massey Street
3204
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.....
I _____ (Please print full name)

consent / do not consent (please circle one option) to participate in the *peer/group response* study. I understand that this will involve data being collected in the form of video recordings, observations, semi-structured interviews and samples of work. I am aware that I will not be identified by name and can withdraw from the research study at any time, and their data up until the time of data analysis.

_____ (Please sign)

____/____/2014 (date)

APPENDIX E: Information/Consent form for parents

Dear _____,

My name is Rebecca Foster and I am a Masters student at the University of Waikato. Currently I am working on a thesis which is looking at ways teachers use peer or group response in their writing programme.

Peer or group response is a social approach that teachers can use to engage their students in meaningful 'talk' about writing. When taught successfully, peer/group response is an approach that has been shown to improve students' writing quality.

Part of my thesis includes a research component where I would like to observe your child's teacher _____ using peer or group response with the children in room _____. This would require my videoing some groups of students during the writing lessons and taking notes on how _____ prepares the students in room _____ for peer or group response. Peer/group response is already a part of _____ writing programme and therefore you can be assured that the observations will cause minimal disruption to your child's learning.

It is possible that your child may be one of a small number whose views will be sought via an informal conversation or interview. It is also possible that your child's written work will be part of the data collection. You can be assured that all conversations, interviews and work samples will be confidential.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that _____ (*principals name to be inserted*) has been consulted and given their consent for this study to take place. The school, teachers and students will not be named or revealed in any publication unless prior written consent is obtained.

Participation for this research is voluntary and each participant will have the right to withdraw information at any time up until the research data is analysed. If you agree to this research being carried out in your child's classroom then please sign the consent form below.

Finally, I would like to assure you that this research will benefit the students involved, and hopefully open new avenues for future research in writing.

If you have any further questions or complaints regarding this research please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor Professor Locke.

Regards,

Rebecca Foster

Professor Locke (supervisor)
School of Education
University of Waikato
PB 3015
Hamilton
email:loketj@waikato.ac.nz
Ph: 07 8384466 ext 7780.

Rebecca Foster (Student)
Frankton Primary School
Massey Street
3204
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email:rfoster@franktonschool.ac.nz
Phone: 07 8476726

.....
I/We _____ (*Please print full name/s*) consent / do not consent (*please circle one*

option) to _____ (*Please print child's full name*) participating in the *peer/group*

response study. I understand that this will involve data being collected in the form of video recordings, observations, semi-structured interviews and samples of work. I am aware that my child will not be identified by name and I can withdraw my child from the research study at any time, and their data up until the time of data analysis.

_____ (*Please sign*) _____/____/2014 (*date*)

APPENDIX F: Information/Consent form for students

Dear _____,

Your teacher _____ has been chosen to be part of a study about writing.

I would like to come and see _____ teach you writing and video some of his/her lessons.

I will come into your class and be taking some notes on how _____ helps you with your writing. Sometimes I might need to ask you questions about your writing and write some of your answers down on paper.

I might also make copies of your writing but I will ask you first. Any writing that I copy will not have your name on, so nobody will know that it is your writing.

When I write my study all the information will be looked after carefully and I will not use your real name.

If you would like to be part of this study about writing then please sign your name on the dotted line below. You can withdraw from the study at anytime or choose to have information that I have collected about you withdrawn before I write my study. You can ask me questions about the study when I visit your classroom. You can also talk about this study with your teacher or parents.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Foster

.....(Room ____)