The role of peer editing in first and second language writing

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In the past few decades, peer editing has established its place in teaching languages and writing. Peer editing is based on a view on learning where knowledge is actively and jointly constructed, shared and discussed. Giving and receiving feedback on their own writing strengthens students’ analytic approaches to language and writing by enhancing their metacognitive and self-regulation skills (Ormond et al. 2013, Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick 2006), thus increasing their motivation to write. Peer editing is part of a social culture of learning and assessment where students’ agency plays a central role (Sadler 2010, Virtanen et al. 2015).

In this presentation, we explore students’ peer editing experiences in writing and language courses at the university level. Our results are based on a student questionnaire (N=149) focusing on peer editing as a process. The students are from various levels of language learning, from A1-level students of French to B2- and C1-level students of English to students writing in their mother tongue, Finnish. The presentation focuses on what the students perceive as the benefits from the peer editing process, what kind of difficulties they find with the approach and what their views are on the relation between peer and teacher feedback.

The results show that most students have a positive view on peer editing. Our results also indicate that peer editing is a successful approach even at beginner-level language courses, but what the students gain from peer editing at that level is different from what more advanced learners find useful. Moreover, there are individual differences in what is considered difficult in the process. Some respondents wanted to emphasize the fact that although they appreciate peer feedback, they find it necessary to get feedback from the language teacher as well. More details and pedagogical implications are discussed in the presentation.

Keywords: agency, peer editing, student experience.