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Negotiations and Criticisms in L2 Peer Review Sessions[*]

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to describe the types of negotiations and the use of criticizing strategies manifested during peer review interactions. Four low-level learners and four native speakers (NSs) of English participated in peer review sessions. The L2 learners, novice peer reviewers, were compared to the NSs who were familiar with peer review tasks from their English writing classes from high school through college. Data were collected through interactive peer review activities. The participants were asked to exchange the first draft of their essays and give suggestions following peer review guidelines. The peer review interactions were audiotaped and analyzed for types of negotiations and criticizing strategies. Discourse analysis revealed that whereas the NSs employed negotiation types to discuss opinions and provide constructive suggestions, the L2 learners mainly discussed the procedures of the peer review task and showed difficulties in comprehending the essay drafts. In realizing criticisms, compared to the NSs, the L2 learners used a relatively narrow range of criticism strategies and mitigating devices. The study analyzes the learner behavior and suggests pedagogical implications for enhancing L2 peer reviews.

I. INTRODUCTION

During peer review interactions, students read drafts of their classmates' essays in order to suggest different perspectives and provide valuable feedback on the strength and the weakness of their drafts. Peer reviews are one of the peer interactions which "enable students to conceptualize their ideas in light of their peers' reactions and to establish a didactic relationship with their audience by giving and receiving feedback" (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994, p. 746). A great deal of research has focused the beneficial effects of peer reviews on students' writing revisions and L2 development (Chang 2012; Cotterall & Cohen, 2003; Ferris, 2014; King, 1990; Kroll, 1991; Liu & Sadler, 2003). Relatively a small number of studies have paid attention to the actual L2 peer review interactions. It is important to observe what exactly L2 learners do during the peer review sessions because observing the interactions is the first step to check whether the peer review session is properly proceeded as guided by instruc-

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tors and to investigate whether it can give a positive effect on their revision. By adopting a Vygotskian sociocultural framework, L2 writing researchers argued that during peer review negotiations, L2 learners have cognitive benefits through their "exploratory talk" (Barnes, 1976, p. 200) and active participation (Lim & Jacobs, 2001; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Ohta, 1995). This strand of research found different types of negotiations which may support L2 learners' revision activities. This included seeking and providing information, explanation, grammar correction, elaboration, restatement, and suggestions/advice, and using interaction strategies such as comprehension checks, clarification, paraphrasing, repetition, repairs and so on (DiCamila & Anton, 1997; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Zhu, 2001).

Linked to L2 peer review interaction research, other studies focused on pragmatic competence in delivering criticism and suggestions (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Nelson & Carson, 1998, 2006; Nguyen, 2005, 2008). These studies reported that L2 learners tended to used offensive indirect criticism strategies. The studies argue that L2 learners' lack of pragmatic competence can result in the unsuccessful peer review interactions because the participants may not maintain the positive relational goal due to the offensive criticism. Both studies of negotiation and of criticism during L2 peer review interactions are sparse, especially those that focus on low-level learners of English. Aforementioned studies have uncovered how L2 advanced learners negotiate and use criticism strategies during their peer review interactions, and whether they employ the received peer feedback for their L2 writing revisions. However, we do not know much about what exactly low-level learners of English do during their peer review interactions.

The current study describes a discourse that occurs during peer review sessions by low intermediate learners of English. As a baseline data, NS peer review sessions will be compared to the learner data. As discussed in Kasper and Schmidt (1996), we cannot not argue that NS norms are a target for NNSs to follow because the deviation from the NSs would be considered as a deficit. However, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) argue that "optimal convergence [to NSs] rather than total convergence is a more realistic and desirable goal" (p.156). By observing the NS behaviors in peer review discourse, we can at least understand the nature of peer review negotiations and criticism strategies performed by NSs. Based on that, we can assess the production of linguistic action of the L2 learners and analyze the reasons why they act differently from the NSs. Under the framework of discourse analysis and speech act theory, the study focuses on types of negotiations and criticism strategies. The study concludes with a discussion of suggested pedagogical implications for enhancing L2 peer reviews.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Peer Review Negotiations

Peer reviews are learner oriented and process oriented social and cognitive activity (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). According to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, language use is closely related to social interaction, and through that social interaction, L2 learners develop their cognitive skills including a language ability (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Peer feedback in L2 writing can be viewed as peer scaffolding through which L2 learners reconceptualize the understanding of their own writing and develop their L2 writing skills (Lin & Samuel, 2013; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; S. Yun, 2012).

Previous studies investigated peer review interactions in which students accomplish their goals through meaningful negotiations. The studies reported different types of behaviors, negotiation strategies and the functions of negotiation or scaffolding during peer review sessions (DiCamila & Anton, 1997; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Zhu, 2001). DiPardo and Freedman (1988) found varied types of behaviors including task related talk, discussion of content, and talk about negative evaluation during peer review interactions of NSs of English. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) investigated the peer review interactions of advanced L2 learners at the graduate level. A variety of types of negotiation strategies were identified. The types included question (request for explanation and comprehension check), explanation (unclear point, opinion, and content), restatement of the prior utterances, suggestions, and grammar correction. The study found that among the type of negotiations, restatement (repeating the previous utterances) was used most frequently, followed by opinions and requests for explanation. Other types of negotiations were also used by the learners (e.g., explanation of unclear point, and suggestion). The retrospective interview data showed that the learners selectively chose the feedback comments that they had received from their peers, and used them for their revision activities.

Similarly, Lin and Samuel (2013) examined the types of negotiation or scaffolds and their functions in L2 learning. Error correction was the most frequently used peer scaffold, and the second was the use of questions, followed by repetition, suggestions, explanation, confirmation check and identification of errors. The researchers reported that the most effective type of negotiation for the L2 learners' revisions was to provide correction of errors. The L2 learners positively received the feedback on correction and applied the newly learned grammatical rules to their subsequent writing drafts. Asking questions was used in order to encourage the peers to rethink about their errors. Identifying the lack of content was served as an alert and allowed for the writer to add supporting ideas for their thesis or arguments. Bejarano, Levine, Olshtain & Steiner (1997) focused on effective interaction strategies and identified 'modified interaction strategies' and 'social

interaction strategies' that allow L2 learners to achieve successful peer review negotiations. The modified interaction strategies included checking for comprehension and clarification, giving assistance and repairing. The social interaction strategies were elaborating, facilitating, responding and paraphrasing.

Observations emerged from previous studies show that during peer review sessions, through negotiations, L2 learners provide and received different types of peer feedback and selectively applied them for their revisions. Also, peer review interactions allowed students to use a wide range of types of negotiation strategies, to express their ideas and to rethink or rectify their errors, which lead to the better understanding of their own writing.

Despite the potential benefits of peer review interactions in L2 writing, empirical studies have shown incongruent conclusion on the effect of peer review. Mendonca and Johnson (1994) found that the L2 learners were selective in incorporating the peer's comments on their revision. Other studies also reported that students considered their peer feedback to be incorrect or hard to understand (Yoshida, 2008). Thus, L2 learners tended to prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Paulus, 1999). Also, peer review negotiations can be unsuccessful because students are reluctant to give critical comments to the writer, which will be discussed in the next section (Nelson & Murphy, 1993).

2. Criticism Strategies During Peer Review

Peer review requires L2 learners to have L2 linguistic resources as well as critical thinking skills for delivering negative evaluation. When peer reviewers identify problems in writing, they need to express criticisms. Based on Searle's (1969) typology of speech acts, criticizing can be categorized as expressives, defined as a "psychological attitude or state in the speaker such as joy, sorrow, and likes/dislikes" (Huang, 2007, p. 107). According to Nguyen (2008), criticizing is defined as follows:

> an illocutionary act whose illocutionary point is to give negative evaluation of the hearer's (H) actions, choice, words, and projects for which he or she may be held responsible. This act is performed in the hope of influencing H's future actions for H's betterment as viewed by the speaker (S) or to communicate S's dissatisfaction with or dislike regarding what H has done, but without the implicature that what H has done brings undesirable consequences to S. (p. 45)

Criticism can be interpreted as 'good' or 'bad' depending on the perception by the hearer (Tracy, Van Dusen, & Robinson, 1987). Good criticism entails positive language and attitude and includes detailed suggestions for possible changes (Tracy et al., 1987). In this sense, criticism in peer review sessions can be viewed as a 'good' criticism. However, since criticism still expresses noncompliance toward the interlocutor, it is a face-threatening act (Brown

& Levinson, 1987). Thus, during peer review sessions, multiple face-threatening strategies are used to mitigate the force of criticism. There is direct criticism and indirect criticism. Direct criticism includes negative evaluation, disapproval, expression of disagreement, statement of the problem, statement of difficulty, and warning about consequences (Nguyen, 2008). Indirect criticism is realized through correction, indicating standards, demand for change, request for change, advice about change, suggestion for change, expression of uncertainty, asking/presupposing, and other hints (Nguyen, 2008). External mitigating devices for criticism include steers, sweetners, disarmers, and grounders. Internal mitigating devices are past tense, interrogative, modal, hedges, understate, downtoners, subjectivisers, consultative, cajolers, and appealers (Nguyen, 2008). The examples of the criticism strategies are in the method section.

Nguyen (2008) examined how Vietnamese adult learners of Australian English at three proficiency levels and NSs of English modify their criticism during their peer review sessions. The results showed that regardless of the proficiency levels, learners underused the internal modifiers (e.g., modals, lexical and phrasal hedges, downtoners, and appealers). With the same data but with different focal analysis, Nguyen (2008) examined the criticism strategies including direct criticism and indirect criticism. Interestingly, the learners used less direct criticism than the Australian NSs. The NSs often produced direct criticisms such as statements of problem (stating errors or problems found with writer' choice, "You had a few spelling mistakes"). Although L2 learners used less direct strategies, they employed offensive indirect criticisms such as a demand for change (e.g., "You must pay attention to grammar"). The demand strategy was avoided by all the NSs.

Previous studies also underlined cross-cultural issues during peer review activities. Since L2 learners from different L1s have their own cultural expectations and pragmatic knowledge, they can have conflicts while giving peer feedback (Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Nelson & Carson, 2006). Their different politeness strategies might threaten the hearer's face or the learners are reluctant to express criticisms. For example, Chinese and Japanese students who come from collectivist culture may avoid indirect criticism such as demand for change, suggestion for change or advice about change (Nelson & Murphy, 1993).

A different line of research investigated the teachers' use of positive and negative comments toward their students. Although these studies focus on teachers' criticism, they are still relevant to the current study because the studies show the perception of L2 learners on positive and negative criticisms. The learner perception on different types of criticisms can also be applied during peer review interactions. Studies showed incongruent conclusions about the effect of positive or negative feedback on the quality of writing. Some studies reported that no differences were found in the quality of writing depending on the positive or negative feedback by teachers (Gee, 1972; Taylor & Hoedt, 1966). In contrast, Cardelle and Corno

(1981) argued that positive comments or praise may confuse L2 writers and result in poor revisions because the teacher's praise demotivates the students. In fact, Ferris (1995) revealed that L2 learners preferred constructive criticism rather than insincere praise. Hyland and Hyland (2001) examined the functions of praise, criticism, and suggestions employed in written feedback by ESL teachers. The teachers' feedback acts were comprised of 44% of praise, 31% of criticism, and 25% of suggestions. The teachers employed many mitigating devices to soften their criticisms including praise, hedges, interrogatives, and personal opinions. Although the criticism strategies maintained the social relationship between the teacher and students by saving the students' face, the indirect criticism made students misunderstand the teachers' feedback.

Peer review negotiations and criticism strategies are particularly relevant to the current study. All the previous studies reported peer review sessions by high-intermediate or advanced L2 learners. A close analysis of peer review interactions by low-level learners of English will provide us a better understanding of what exactly goes on during their negotiation and possibly allow us to identify different behaviors of low-level learners. The low-level learners' peer review interactions will be compared to the baseline data collected from the NSs. The present study focuses on the types of behavior and negotiation, and criticism strategies. The following research questions are addressed:

1) What types of negotiations are used by the L2 learners and the NSs of English during peer review interactions?
2) What criticism strategies did the L2 learners and the NSs of English perform?

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Four L2 learners and four native speakers of English participated in the current study. At the time of this study, low intermediate learners, Ting (Taiwanese), and Chanho (Korean) had spent two months of their life in the U.S., but Aziz and Ibrahim (Saudi Arabians) had been in America for almost one year (see Table 1). Ting and Chanho came to the U.S. for their language improvement. Aziz planned to apply for an MA program. Ibrahim had already been accepted by an American college, and would start his study the following academic year. All four male learners were placed in level 5 (low intermediate) out of 7 levels in an Intensive English Program (IEP) at an American university. Teachers in the IEP program do not regularly do peer review sessions due to learners' low language proficiency and their frequent absences. There was only one teacher (Tina) who planned a peer review session, and her four students aforementioned agreed to participate in this study. All male learner participants had known each other

for 3 weeks as classmates, and they only met in class. Aziz and Ting experienced three times of peer reviews, but Ibrahim and Chanho were unfamiliar with the task. For the baseline data, the researcher recruited four male NSs of English, undergraduates at the same university. All the NSs have done peer reviews through their academic English writing classes during their high school and college years. All the participants were aged from 20 to 23. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to all participants.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of L2 Learners and NSs of English

| Participants | Age | Gender | | L1 | Length of residence in the US |
		M (*n*)	F (*n*)		
Ting	21	1	0	Mandarin	2 months
Aziz	21	1	0	Arabic	10 months
Ibrahim	23	1	0	Arabic	12 months
Chanho	22	1	0	Korean	2 months
David	22	1	0	English	22 years
Lyan	22	1	0	English	22 years
Avi	21	1	0	English	21 years
Alex	21	1	0	English	21 years
Total		8	0		

2. Data Collection and Procedure

The data consist of four peer review sessions. Two pairs of the learner participants did a peer review based on their first draft, which was assigned as homework for their writing class. They were asked to write a letter to the editor of the Indiana Daily Student (IDS) or other newspaper responding to any recent article that had been published. Their teacher provided guidelines to follow for their writing because it was their first time writing a letter to an editor (see Appendix 1). The next day, the students had a peer review session in classroom following a peer review activity worksheet (see Appendix 2) provided by their teacher. All the participants wrote their paper, exchanged, and gave feedback to their partner. First, the learners read their partner's paper and answered the questions from the peer review worksheet. After that, they were asked to give oral feedback on each other's essays. Before they come to class, the participants were asked to read the partner's original article. So, they were supposed to know about the topic of the article before they read the partner's first draft.

Aziz and Ting were paired with each other, and Ibrahim and Chanho worked together for their peer reviews. The teacher organized the pairs considering the learners' first language to prevent them from using their native language. The learners spent approximately 20 minutes on their peer reviews. The researcher audio-recorded the peer reviews during regular class time. The NS participants did the same task in the researcher's office following the same guidelines. When collecting data from the NS participants, the researcher played the same role as the IEP teacher by giving peer review guidelines to the NSs. The NSs' peer review session lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The

IEP teacher prepared three main guided questions that students had to focus on. The specific questions related to the following main guided question are shown in Appendix 2.

1) Is the wording and the summary easy to understand?
2) How would you argue against the writer's support?
3) What suggestions could you give to your partner?

3. Analysis

All the interactions were transcribed by the researcher. Discourse analysis was used to examine the peer review negotiations. The current study also takes pragmatic perspective to explain how the speaker produces their criticisms when identifying problems from the writer's paper and when giving advice. In conducting a qualitative analysis of the types of negotiations and the strategies of criticisms, the researcher used the taxonomy of negotiations and criticism strategies based on the previous studies by Mendonca and Johnson (1994) and Nguyen (2008), respectively. Table 2 shows the examples of types of negotiations (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994).

TABLE 2
Type of Negotiations

Type of negotiation	Examples
1. Question	
-Request for explanation	I don't understand pesticides
-Comprehension check	Oh you don't know what is a pesticide?
2. Explanation	
-Unclear point	I'm talking about parents that have their first language is other than English.
-Opinion	Yeah, because your section is very short.
-Content	It's something that farmers use to put in the crop to kill…
3. Restatement	A: you can just use the transitions for B: On the transition
4. Suggestion	Maybe… actually put some more words to make clear what procedure…
5. Grammar correction	Oh. The tense of the verb. Advances.

(Mendonca & Johnson, 1994, pp. 752-756)

Criticism strategies are divided into direct and indirect criticisms (Nguyen, 2008). Direct criticism strategies include negative evaluation, disapproval, expression of disagreement, statement of problem, statement of difficulty, and consequence of an action. Indirect criticism strategies are correction, indication of standard, demand for change, request for change, advice about change, suggestion for change, expression of uncertainty, asking and presupposing, and other hints. The mitigating devices included external (e.g., sweeteners) and internal (e.g., past tense, modal, hedges) devices. The examples of criticism strategies and mitigation devices (Nguyen, 2008) are shown in Appendices 3 and 4. The current study employed the aforementioned taxonomy of negotiation types and criticism strategies without modification. However, not all types of negotiations and criticism strategies were observed in the current data. The result section will report observed types of criticism and mitigating devices.

IV. RESULTS

Overall differences were observed in peer review interactions between the low-level learners and between the NSs of English. The L2 learners frequently used different types of request for explanation and the corresponding explanations. In contrast, the NSs focused on sharing opinions and providing suggestions. The following sections discuss 1) types of negotiation and 2) the use of criticism strategies and mitigating devices.

1. Types of Negotiation

The observed negotiation types from the current data included question (requests for explanation, comprehension check); explanation of content, unclear points and opinion; restatement; suggestion, and grammar correction.

The L2 learners frequently requested for information or explanation and occasionally used comprehension check. The current study identified that the L2 learners ask questions for different purposes: request for explanation about peer review task, unknown vocabulary, content, opinion, and selection of topics. The L2 learners also asked questions simply to identify or locate the parts of summary and supporting ideas to fill in their worksheet. In responding to those questions, the learners produced corresponding explanations. The following excepts show the learner participants' use of negotiation strategies.

Although the ESL teacher gave instructions, since the L2 learners were confused with the peer review task, they frequently asked questions to their partners about the task including the procedures of the task, what to criticize, and the grading issue of the worksheet (Excerpt 1):

Excerpt (1)
Request for information/explanation about the peer review task by learners ((looking at the peer review worksheet))
16. Aziz: So::: What is this? Five fifteen.
         [*Request for explanation*]
17. Ibrahim: This- uh:: The teacher will grade the article as a point.
         [*Explanation*]

Due to lack of explanation about vocabulary in the worksheet by the teacher, the L2 learners had difficulty understanding some unknown words in the worksheet. The excerpt (2) shows that Ibrahim and Chanho try to figure out the meaning of the unknown vocabulary word, 'accurate'.

Excerpt (2)
Request for information/explanation about unknown words by learners
97. Ibrahim: Do you know what- accurate- does means?
         [*Request for information*]
98. Chanho: … uh: so:: maybe it's the- uh:: exactly. Maybe.
         [*Explanation*]

After reading their partner's paper, the learners had a 'parenthetical talk' about the sources of the original article and the time duration to complete their draft. Excerpt (3) presents the learners' parenthetical talk about their drafts.

Excerpt (3)
Request for information about the selection of articles by learners
71. Ibrahim: Where you got it? [*Request for info*]
72. Chanho: Uh:: this is article is the- uh:: is this the original [article
73. Ibrahim: [Probably Internet?=
74. Chanho: =yeah yeah. XX is the Freepit.com

The L2 learners often had trouble comprehending the contents of the partner's essays. As a result, they took a great amount of time for reading. Furthermore, they frequently requested explanation for content. In Excerpt (4), Aziz asks for explanation of the main idea of Ting's paper. Ting produces a repair initiator, 'huh?'. In responding to Ting, Aziz replays his previous utterance by rephrasing the sentence. In Ting's explanations of the content of his essay, Ting attempts to enable Aziz, the reader, to understand more clearly what his main idea is.

Excerpt (4)
Request for explanation about main ideas by learners
66. Aziz: What's the main-
        [what's the main idea of? [*Request for explanation*]
67. Ting: [huh? [*Clarification check*]
68. Aziz: …. I know what talk about but- [*Request for explanation*]
69. Ting: … Ah:: main idea is . ah::…. ah: recently there are some:: some ideas that from the::
        vegetarian. they:: they are not and- and idea to:: do not eat meat [*Explanation of content*]

The L2 learners also used a request for information to identify or locate specific contents (Excerpt 5). This indicates that the reviewer may have not understood the contents of the paper due to their language proficiency, or the writer's summary or opinions was not clear enough to be identified by the reviewer. In addition, the 20-minute peer review session could be too short for the learners to read and criticize the essay. This type of negotiation occurred also because the learners were asked to fill out the peer review worksheet that were graded. They had to underline or circle the part where the writer's summary, opinion, and supporting sentences are.

Excerpt (5)
Request for information to identify/locate specific parts by L2 learners
1. Aziz: Is this your- opinion (.) or summarize? [*Request for info*]
        ((Pointing the parts of B's writing with a finger))
2. Ting: Oh is this [this is] summarize (.) is this [this is] opinion= [*Providing info*]
3. Aziz: =Just this is opinion. [*Restatement*]

Remarkable differences were found in the use of questions between the L2 learners and the NSs. Although the L2 learners used both question-form and declarative sentences to request for explanation, they more frequent-

ly employed question-form negotiation (e.g., What's the main idea?). The NS data showed only two occurrences of question-form negotiation type. Rather, the NSs used a declarative form to request for explanation (e.g., The only thing I was little confused about is the whole butt-shake).

As seen in the excepts above, the majority of the L2 learners' peer review discussion included different kinds of requests for explanation of task/worksheet, vocabulary, and identification of summary or supporting ideas from the essay and the corresponding explanations. In contrast, the NSs focused on discussing ideas expressed in their papers, identifying problem, and providing explanations of unclear points and opinions, suggestion, and grammar correction. Excerpt (6) exhibits how the NSs provide opinions and an explanation of unclear points through multiple turns of negotiation.

Excerpt (6)
Request/Explanation of unclear points by NSs
1. David: Major public decisions also cost a lot of money and cause a lot of pain [*Providing opinion*]
2. Lyan: Right [*Acknowledgment*]
3. David: but uhm.. I thought that- I guess that's a sort of- I also thought that they were- like two like- different things. That was more like a criticism of them…. as a group- their decision-making abilities versus like the actual like …. the new health care bill now,
        [right? [*Request for explanation*]
4. Lyan: [yeah right
5. David: Yeah
6. Lyan: uh huh. I guess- I wasn't really considering like- any of like the validity of a health care bill [*Explaining unclear point*]
7. David: uh huh [*Acknowledgment*]
8. Lyan: Just like the fact that you can't criticize democrats for being hypocritical about a health care bill I'm not- I mean in terms of the overspending. [*Explaining unclear point*]

In his writing, Lyan (writer) argues against the original article, which criticizes the Democrats' hypocrisy over the health care bill because a healthcare bill does not require certain elected officials to subscribe to the new bill. Lyan argues that conservatives cannot accuse liberals of hypocrisy considering the Republicans' overspending on the wars. David (reviewer) asks Lyan whether he is comparing two fundamentally different issues 'the decision-making abilities of the Republicans and the Democrats' and 'the validity of the actual new health care bill'. Lyan explains the unclear point and says that he focused only on the conservatives criticizing Democrats for being hypocritical, rather than the validity of the new healthcare bill.

In Excerpt (7), David gives grammar correction and suggestions for Lyan's second draft. David says in line 44, "the high school English made me all the 'I's out, indicating that Lyan should use other grammatical structure without using the first-person pronoun. In addition, David suggests Lyan adding more evidence about the Republican's spending on the war to support his main point.

Excerpt (7)
Grammar correction and suggestions by NSs
44. David: For the second draft uhm..uhm.. let's see. I guess uhm.…

just like like the high school English made me take all
the 'I's out. [*Grammar correction*]

45. Lyan: Right [*Acknowledgment*]

46. David: Other than that- That was one thing.
Grammar thing better…. yeah.. I think.. that.….maybe
even give more evidence to like the magnitude of how
the war spending was like and how big it was compared
to- even what the- what the healthcare bill will be.
[*Suggestion*]

In summary, compared to the NSs, the low level L2 learners were not familiar with the peer review task and spent most of their time figuring out the task, understanding the main ideas of the partner's essay and completing the peer review worksheet; thus, they frequently showed negotiations for requesting for the relevant explanation. In contrast, the NSs mainly used explanation of opinions, unclear points, and suggestions. Now, we move onto criticism strategies manifested in peer review interactions by the L2 learners and the NSs.

2. Criticism Strategies

The results showed the major differences between the L2 learner and the NS groups in the use of direct strategies, indirect strategies, and mitigating devices. The most frequently used direct criticism strategies by the L2 learner group was 'statement of difficulty' (e.g., I can't understand). It was mainly because most of the learners had difficulty understanding their partner's essay. For this reason, the L2 learners hardly provided constructive comments or suggestions to their partners. This resulted in a few occurrences of indirect criticism strategies such as demand, request, advice, or suggestion for change.

Excerpt (8) includes Chanho's direct criticism strategies, statement of difficulty. The learner uses an external mitigating device, steers that lead to the major criticism, 'I read the- several times this article, in line 41. In the next turn, Chanho directly expresses his direct criticism without internal mitigating devices, 'but I don't understand'. In addition, he complains to the writer about the selection of the difficult article, 'but why- why- why did you choose this article? in line 45. Chanho's loud utterance in the word 'WHY' seemed to represent how much he was frustrated by reading Ibrahim's paper. Since Chanho had trouble comprehending Ibrahim's paper, he rarely gave comments or suggestions.

Excerpt (8)
Direct criticism strategy, statement of difficulty, by L2 learners
41. Chanho: I read the- several times this article [*Steers*]

42. Ibrahim: yeah [*Acknowledgement*]
43. Chanho: but I don't understand [*Statement of difficulty*]
44. Ibrahim: me too. but I try too
[((laughter)) [*Agreement*]
45. Chanho: [but WHY-why- why- did you choose this article?
[*Presupposing*]
46. Ibrahim: because- I don't have enough time. [*Response*]

Although the L2 learners infrequently used other indirect criticism strategies, they often used an indirect criticism strategy, 'asking and presupposing'. It is "a rhetorical question to raise H(hearer)'s awareness of H's choice" (Nguyen, 2008, p. 48). In Excerpt (9), the reviewer produces the rhetorical question to indicate the error and in the next turn, the reviewer directly states the problem of no inclusion of summary. But the writer refutes by indicating that the first sentence of his essay is the summary of the original article.

Excerpt (9)
Request for information to identify/locate specific parts by L2 learners
133. B: Where is summarize? [*Asking/presupposing*]
No summarize. [*Statement of problem*]
134. A: Just the first sentence. All the houses in Indiana … this May [*Providing info*]

As seen in aforementioned excerpts, in the L2 learner data, they rarely used mitigating devices to soften their direct or indirect criticism strategies. In contrast, the NS group employed a wide range of internal and external modifiers along with criticism strategies. Now we move onto the NS data.

In the sequential organization of turn-taking in criticism interactions, the remarkable differences were found between the L2 learner and the NS groups. In general, when the NS provides negative evaluation or suggestions, the NS reviewers used positive comments (external mitigating devices) first and identified a problem in later turns. That is, the NS mitigated their criticism comments by delaying them throughout turns.

Excerpt (10) exhibits the interactions between NSs, Alex (writer) and Avi (reviewer). Alex wrote about an Indiana basketball recruit, who came on campus but unfortunately the basketball player decided to commit to another university. Alex supports his idea by discussing Tijan Jobe's official visit on campus and a successful recruit.

Excerpt (10)
Postponing negative comments in turns by NSs
14. Avi: Okay I thought.. yeah.
It's pretty well written for the:: [*Positive comments*]
You know how short the article was uhm::
There was one part kind of [*External mitigator, Steers*]
15. Alex: Yeah I just saw it. [*Agreement*]
16. Avi: It's just- Tijan Jobe part of the-
I have seen recruits to Tijan Jobe [*Identifying problem*]
17. Alex: Yeah [*Agreement*]
18. Avi: It's just one.. and kind of confusing you should say like.
I have seen a recruit for instance Tijan Jobe you can
[you can resolve it something like that [*Giving suggestion*]
19. Alex: [uh huh [*Acknowledgment*]

Avi points out a part of Alex's paper, which was grammatically incorrect. Avi gives Alex a positive comment first in line 14 (e.g., It's pretty well written) and uses external mitigating device, steers, in order to lead the hearer onto the issue the reviewer was going to raise (e.g., There was one part kind of). In later turns, the NS reviewer

identifies the problem, the plural of recruits when introducing only one person (e.g., I have seen recruits to Tijan Jobe) and provides an advice for change in line 18 (e.g., You should say like…). That is, the NS reviewer delayed his negative comments throughout turns to mitigate his criticism. Also, it was common for the NSs to use external moves such as sweeteners by providing positive remarks (I think that was a really good point) before his suggestion to compensate for any possible offensive act. This tendency was often observed in the NS interactions but not in the L2 learner interactions.

In Excerpt (11), the NS reviewer toned down his criticism by using an indirect strategy, 'indicating standard' (e.g., The high school English made me take all the 'I's). He avoids using a demand for change, a request for change with an animate agent "you should change" or a suggestion for change "It could have been better to take all 'I's out". Rather, he indicated a standard by stating a collective obligation rather than an obligation for the hearer personally (Nguyen, 2008).

Excerpt (11)
Indirect criticism strategy, indicating standard, by NSs
44. David: For the second draft uhm..uhm.. Let's see.
          I guess uhm.…just like like the high school English
          made me take all the 'I's. [*Indicating standard*]
45. Lyan: Right. [*Acknowledgement*]

As for the use of internal mitigating devices, different from the L2 learners, the NSs employed multiple lexical and phrasal mitigators including subjectivisers (I guess, I think), understaters (just, one thing), and a downtoner (maybe). The use of a past tense, a syntactic modifier, was also common among the NSs (e.g., The only part that I would change for the second draft would be maybe like-breaking it down to two paragraphs).

V. DISCUSSION

The current study addressed two research questions: 1) What types of negotiations are used by the L2 learners and the NSs of English during peer review interactions? and 2) what criticism strategies did the L2 learners and the NSs of English perform? In answering to the first question, the L2 learners and the NSs differed in the way of shaping their negotiations. The learners did not construct ideas through negotiations and rarely provided feedback to the interlocutors. The most frequently used negotiation types were request for information/explanation and explanation of content. In contrast, the frequently used negotiation types by the NSs were explanation of opinion, unclear point, and suggestion.

The use of negotiation types suggests us how the L2 learners and the NSs differently structure their interactions and what they actually focus on. Based on the result of the current study, the researcher cannot argue whether the NSs' revision will be better than the L2 learners' or the benefit of peer reviews on the revision because the

current study did not examine the participants' following draft. However, it is clear that the low-level learners did not meet the goal of the peer review activity which was designed to exchange peers' feedback. Previous studies argue that the effective writing is based on the writer's revision, which is closely related to the quality of feedback that the writers receive (Nelson & Carson, 2006). Peer reviews force L2 learners to actively conceptualize their ideas and develop writing skills rather than merely reflecting teachers' feedback on their draft (Mittan, 1989; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). It is the writers' choice whether they use the partner's comments for their revision. But giving/receiving suggestions or sharing opinions and explaining unclear points through multiple turns of negotiations allow L2 learners to organize their thoughts and also see what parts are not clear enough to the audience (Zamel, 1983). The lack of such negotiations in peer review interactions and merely identifying or locating main ideas and supporting sentences from the partner's essay will bring little opportunity for L2 learners to be an active writer and a reviewer.

Multiple intertwining factors can explain relatively fewer negotiations on opinions and suggestions among the L2 learners. First, it could be their lack of familiarity with the peer review activity as some of the L2 learners did the peer review task for the first time. Second, it could be the limited language proficiency because the L2 learners had difficulty understanding the partner's essay and the teacher's instruction of the peer review task. In fact, the teacher's lack of explanation about new vocabulary may confuse the students (Excerpt 2). Third, the L2 learners might have needed more time to read and analyze the partner's essay. The 20-minute peer review session may not be enough for them to complete the task. Forth, the configuration of peer review activity by the ESL teacher would be a factor. In this study, the L2 learners had focused too much on their peer review worksheet because they were required to fill out the worksheet by identifying summary and supporting ideas from the partner's paper. Whereas the NSs completed the worksheet in a short time, the low-level learners spent a large amount of time finishing up their worksheet, which were graded by the teacher. Similar results were reported by Freedman (1987) in which strictly controlled peer reviews with edit sheets discouraged the interactions with peers.

In answering the second research question, both the L2 learners and the NSs employed direct and indirect criticism strategies. The NSs minimized their criticisms by delaying negative comments throughout turns. When using direct or indirect criticism strategies, they used multiple internal and external mitigating devices. This result is correspondent with the findings from the previous pragmatics studies in which the NSs tend to use lexical and syntactic modifiers and to delay face-threatening acts in sequential turns to avoid threatening the positive or negative face of the addressee (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004). The L2 learners' use of criticism strategies in the current study was rather

explicit and assertive due to the lack of modifiers (e.g., I don't understand; No summarize by L2 learners). Nguyen (2008) also reported that in realizing in criticisms, the L2 learners underused mitigating devices relying on lexical modifiers but rarely using syntactic modifiers. However, different from the findings of Nguyen (2008), the learners of the current study rarely used a demand for change (e.g., You must pay attention to grammar). Rather, the learners often used asking and presupposing strategies. The lack of comprehension of the partner's essay may prevent them to provide criticism strategies of demand, request or advice about change.

The differences in the use of criticism strategies between the L2 learners and the NSs can be explained by several reasons. First, the learners may have trouble in monitoring their language use because of overloaded communication pressure (Kasper, 1982). Second, the L2 learners' limited range of linguistic resources and the lack of the target pragmatic knowledge can result in the deviation from the NSs in the use of criticism strategies. The L2 learners could make an explicit and untactful pragmalinguistic choice in order to clearly deliver intended meaning and emphasize what they attempt to say rather than considering the "relational goals" with the addressee (Kasper, 1997, p. 350). The current study supports the claim made in previous interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research that even advanced learners show incomplete L2 pragmatic knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004).

In general, not total convergence to NS norms, but at least the appropriate use of pragmatic strategies in the target language would be ultimate goal to second language learners. However, previous studies argue that when it comes to a peer review activity, direct and explicit criticism strategy can be helpful for low-level learners of English. Hyland and Hyland (2001) reported that L2 learners had trouble understanding the teachers' indirect criticism or feedback. Because of the learners' lack of pragmatic knowledge, they could not interpret the implied meaning of the teacher's indirect criticisms. Similarly, in peer review interactions, L2 learners with low language proficiency may misunderstand the softened comments and fail to interpret indirect and mitigated feedback. Considering this aspect, it would be important for the teachers to carefully introduce appropriate criticism strategies depending on the learners' level of language proficiency.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study investigated negotiation types and criticism strategies manifested in the peer review interactions between low intermediate English learners and between NSs. The current study reports that the peer review sessions can be shaped differently in the negotiation types and the use of criticism strategies in relation to the degree of socialization toward the peer review activities and language proficiency.

The findings of the current study suggest pedagogical implications for peer review sessions. First, it was surprising that both L2 learners, who had no experience and who had experienced several peer reviews, spent most of their time on reading the partner's essay and had little opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions. This indicates that the L2 learners had trouble comprehending the partner's draft within the designated time period. To lessen the learners' burden, it would be beneficial for the L2 writers to introduce a summary of the essay or provide a vocabulary list for the peer reviewers so that the reviewers can expedite their reading processes. The peer review sessions can also be done through computer-mediated conversations so that learners can have technical support, for example, by looking up vocabulary words online. Second, too much control over the peer reviews can deprive L2 learners of the opportunity to interact and discuss ideas with peers. Since the peer review worksheet was graded, the L2 learners focused on finding summary and evidence from the partner's essay to fill out the worksheet instead of having peer review discussions for constructive feedback. Third, although the current study had a limited data of the L2 learners' use of criticism, the L2 learners' criticisms were rather assertive. The current study reported examples of NS peer review interactions that included a wide range of negotiation skills, pragmatically appropriate criticism strategies, and mitigation. Language teachers can model how to produce direct and indirect semantic formulas (contents) and speech forms (linguistic features) of criticism before conducting a peer review activity. However, since implied criticisms can confuse L2 learners as reported in Hyland & Hyland (2001), it is crucial for language teachers to evaluate the level of students' language proficiency and consider whether the use of mitigated criticism would benefit the L2 learners' peer review activity.

The current study has limitations. It only included four pairs of L2 learners and NSs, and the configuration of peer review activity was specifically designed for the current study; thus, the findings may not be generalizable to other L2 learners. Another limitation is that the study investigated only one peer review session. Additional research is required to clarify whether the L2 learners show a change in their peer review sessions as they get familiar with the task and the writing topics. Finally, further analysis is needed to investigate whether the NS-NNS differences are attributed to other intervening factors such as L1 culture and individual discourse habits. Despite the limitations, this study has provided important information concerning the low-level learners' peer review processes. The researcher hopes that the description of the current study may encourage language teachers to examine the students' peer review interactions and provide them constructive guidelines.

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APPENDIX 1
Writing Guideline—Letter to the Editor

Description: You will write a letter to the Editor of the IDS (Indiana Daily Student) or another newspaper responding to any recent article that has been published.

Requirements:

1. Typed
2. Double-spaced
3. 300 words
4. Print 2 copies [One is for me and one will be reviewed by your partner at the meeting on Saturday]
5. Attach a copy of the article that you select to my copy.

Guidelines:
6. Clearly reference the article that you are responding to
7. Briefly summarize the opinion of the author of the article
8. Clearly state your own opinion
9. Support your own opinion using at least 2 of the following
a. Personal experience
b. Anecdotes
c. Research
d. Rhetorical questions
e. Words with strong connotations
f. Logic
g. Pointing out errors or excellent points in the article
h. Other

Note: The writing should be a **rough draft.**

APPENDIX 2
Peer Review Worksheet

Description:
1. Read the letter to the Editor one time without stopping.
2. Then follow the directions listed in the first column below
3. Answer the questions second column, giving reasons for your answer!
   Ex: No, the name of the author of the article is not given, so I don't know which article it is.
4. Fill out the box at the bottom of the sheet.

Directions	Comments
1. Underline the part of the letter that references the article that the writer is responding to.	Is the wording easy to understand? Is the reference accurate?
2. Draw a box around the part of the letter that summarizes the opinion of the article.	Is the summary short? Is the summary easy to understand?
3. Circle the part or parts of the letter where the writer states his or her opinion.	Is the wording easy to understand?
4. Draw a star (*) next to any parts of the letter that give evidence supporting the writer's opinion.	Did the writer use at least 2 types of support? Does the support match the writer's opinion? Is the support easy to understand? How would you argue against the support? (Can you find problems in the logic or accuracy of the support?)

In what other ways can this letter be improved for the 2nd draft? What could be added or taken away? What needs to be changed so that an American audience can understand it better?

APPENDIX 3

Taxonomy of Criticism Strategies

Type of strategies	Examples
1. Direct criticism a. Negative evaluation b. Disapproval c. Expression of disagreement d. Statement of problem e. Statement of difficulty f. Consequence	Umm that's <u>not really a good sentence </u>(NS). <u>I don't like</u> the way you write that (L). <u>I don't quite agree</u> with you with some points… (L). And <u>there are some incorrect words</u>… (L) <u>I can't understand </u>(L). Someone who doesn't agree with you would <u>straight away read</u> <u>that and turn off.</u>
2. Indirect criticism a. Correction b. Indicating standard c. Demand for change d. Request for change e. Advice about change f. Suggestion for change g. Expression of uncertainty h. Asking/presupposing i. Other hints	And you put "their" <u>I think t-h-e-r-e</u> (NS). <u>Theoretically, a conclusion needs to be</u> some sort of summary (L) <u>You must pay attention</u> to grammar (L). <u>I still want you to consider</u> some points (L). <u>You should change</u> it a little bit (NS). <u>It could have been better to put a comma</u> (NS). Are there several paragraphs <u>not sure</u> about the paragraphs (NS). <u>Did you read your writing again after you finish it?</u> (L) <u>I prefer a writing style which are not too personal </u>(L).

Note: L (L2 Learner), NS (Native speakers of English)   (Nguyen, 2008, pp. 47-48)

APPENDIX 4

Taxonomy of Mitigation Devices

Type	Examples
1. External a. Steers b. Sweeteners c. Disarmer d. Grounders	<u>I have some comments</u> about your writing (L). There are quite <u>good relevant ideas</u> that you presented but.. (NS). You had a few spelling mistakes but I think <u>that's because you're</u> <u>writing too quickly, nothing too major</u> (NS). I think 'is' is better than 'are' there because traffic ah single (NS).
2. Internal a. Syntactic -Past tense -Interrogative -Modal b. Lexical/phrasal -Hedges -Understaters -Downtoners -Subjectivisers -Consultative -Cajolers -Appealers	I <u>thought</u> you missed out something. <u>Should we</u> change a little for its clearness? May, could, would Sort of, kind of Quite, a (little) bit Maybe, possible, probably I think, I feel, in my opinion Do you think? Do you agree? I mean, you see, you know Okay? Right? Yeah?

(Nguyen, 2008, p. 50)