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EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of peer review in upper secondary schools in Sweden

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine how three teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Swedish upper secondary education use peer review, and to investigate the perceptions of these teachers and three EFL students regarding peer review. Interviews were used for data collection and content-analysis of the interviews was conducted. The results showed that many types of peer reviews are used in the teachers' classrooms, both oral and written peer reviews on both oral and written assignments. The results also showed that all six participants regarded peer review positively. The teachers cited discussions, seeing another person's perspective and becoming self-aware as positive outcomes of peer review while listing insecurity and preconceived notions about others' ability to express themselves in English as difficulties that can be encountered while engaging in peer reviews. The students reported collaboration, receiving concrete comments from peers as well as seeing other's perspectives as positive outcomes of peer review. Their main difficulty regarding peer review was that some peers were not receptive of peer feedback. As such, the participants' overall perceptions of peer review are positive and shows that it can be useful to implement peer review in classrooms.

Keywords: EFL, teacher perception, peer review, peer feedback, student perception, upper secondary education, writing, anxiety

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1. Introduction

During my years of studying to become a teacher in upper secondary school, I have observed different ways of encouraging and helping students further their abilities in various areas. Although most of this knowledge comes from books and different theories, it has not only been through these sources, but also from being an actual student receiving constructive criticism from educators and peers that I have acquired knowledge. The various assignments I have worked on (written assignments in particular) have required me to invest numerous hours, do endless revisions and plenty of planning. Likewise, it takes a lot of time and planning for educators to give feedback to students and consequently, they might not get enough feedback. The ideal work environment in an upper secondary classroom during written assignments, for instance, would be for the teacher to have enough time to give proper written responses and a chance for the students to write drafts and thereafter revise their work. However, as this is not always the case, peer review (peer feedback, peer response, peer assessment) where students give feedback to one another, is often viewed as a helpful tool instead. According to Cho and Macarthur (2011) however, it is not regarded as a proper pedagogical method by either teachers or students but seen more as a “compromise for practical purposes” (p. 73).

In the Swedish curriculum for English upper secondary school (Lgy11 Skolverket 2011), there are numerous criteria regarding language skills that the students must develop. In the curriculum, it is stated that “students should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and text as well as produce oral and written works, individually and with the help of others, using the support of different tools and medias” (p. 53). Having this in mind, students are expected to produce different types of work individually as well as in cooperation with other students. Additionally, they are expected to use different tools, which do not necessarily need to be traditional tools like books and the internet, but can be other things such as peer review. Peer review, however, goes beyond being just a tool for learning but also becomes a means of cooperation between students once utilized.

Although peer review has been extensively researched (e.g. Dijks, Brummer & Kostons 2018, Mulliner & Tucker 2017) much of the earlier research has mainly focused on teachers or students at university level (e.g. Huisman, Saab, van Driel, van Den Broek 2018) so in order to understand more about the perception both EFL teachers and students in Swedish upper

secondary schools have regarding peer review and how teachers implement it in their classrooms, these topics are the focus of this essay. Although peer review is often regarded as a useful tool, there is still room for more research concerning peer review in upper secondary schools as most research about this subject has been conducted at college-level, as previously stated, or has not included students' perceptions at all. Mulder, Pearce and Baik (2014) write that more research into students' perception of peer review can help create strategies to engage students and lead to peer reviews being conducted in better ways. Still, little research has been carried out into students' perceptions of peer review (p. 159). Furthermore, in order to gain a better understanding of each teacher's experience, how they use peer review in their classrooms is of interest as well. As such, the research questions in this paper are the following:

- How do three English as a foreign language teachers in Swedish upper secondary education use peer review in their classrooms?
- What are these teachers' perceptions of peer review?
- What are the perceptions of three EFL learners at the Swedish upper secondary school level?

2. Background and review of literature

2.1 Peer review

Peer review, or peer assessment, has been defined as “an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value, or quality of a product or performance of other equal-status learners” (Topping 2009 p 20). Essentially, peer review constitutes students helping to correct and give feedback to their peers so that the students' working process, overall quality of their final product as well as the students' own abilities are improved.

2.2 Difficulties and advantages of peer review

There are many difficulties and advantages in using peer review. Not so surprisingly, students might have preconceived notions that only better writers or native speakers of English are capable of commenting on their written work. They can feel that students that are at a lower level of proficiency or even the same level as themselves are not suited to comment on their work as the students might compare their peer's feedback to the teacher's feedback. This can lead to teachers feeling deterred from engaging their students in this type of work (Rollinson 2005, p. 23). Similarly, Tsui and Ng (2000) write that “students have more confidence in

teacher comments because the teacher is considered more experienced and more authoritative” (p. 166) and continues to explain how students perceive teachers’ comments as more concrete than their peers’ comments (2000, p. 166). Cartney (2010) writes about a group of university students who were asked about their perceptions and experiences with peer feedback. Some of the answers indicated that students did not deem themselves worthy feedback givers. Moreover, the students did not want to be too critical of their peers’ work in order to avoid upsetting them (2010, p. 555). Additionally, Leki (1999) writes that EFL students can have mixed perceptions of peer feedback, one of which is that peers’ comments are often too vague, another that students might be reluctant to point out mistakes in their peer’s text as they do not wish to criticize each other (1999, p.6ff). Furthermore, Liu & Carless (2006) argue that students can be vulnerable when exposing their work to other peers and that it is therefore important to create “a collaborative learning environment” (2006, p. 288).

Yet, there are several benefits that can come from working with peer review. For instance, if done properly, students can learn how to be critical thinkers and therefore better writers as they become more capable of revising their work independently. They can also learn how to be receptive of feedback as well as how to provide feedback to others (Rollinson 2005, Liu & Carless 2006). Similarly, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) write that by participating in peer review “students may develop the ability to critically examine even their own writing, which offers them self-feedback and greatly improves their writing skills” (2009, p. 39). These findings are in line with Todd and Hudson’s (2007) conclusions where they state that students themselves seem to agree that peer review develops their critical thinking skills (2007, p. 43). Ferris (as cited in Farrah 2012) writes that participating in peer review does not only develop students’ critical thinking skills, but it can also “build a sense of classroom community”. Furthermore, peer review offers students “opportunities to share ideas and give constructive comments” (2012, p. 183). Likewise, according to a study conducted by Sims (1989), students can borrow ideas from each other by engaging in peer review. Some examples of aspects that the students might borrow from each other are “concepts, organizational strategies, and presentation styles”. According to the instructors and students that participated in the study, as well as the author, this leads to students organizing their texts in a better way (1989, p. 107).

2.3 The Swedish curriculum

As previously mentioned, the Swedish curriculum has many learning objectives that are associated with the English language as a subject. One that can be closely related to peer

review, is the interaction criteria. This goal is mentioned throughout the two mandatory (and one voluntary) English courses that Swedish EFL student have during their three years of upper secondary school. In the curriculum (LGY11), it is stated that “students should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and text” (p. 53) which means that teachers need to find appropriate ways to include student interactions in their lesson plans, as such, peer review can be viewed favourably when it comes to this criterion.

2.4 Foreign language anxiety

As this current study deals with peer review in the context of English as a foreign language, it can be worth noting foreign language anxiety. Schwartz (as cited in Hashemi 2011) writes that language anxiety is a concept that stems from psychology. The cause of language anxiety can either be an intrinsic motivator which is related to one’s self-perception and how someone perceives others such as teachers and students, or extrinsic motivators such as “social and cultural environments” (2011, p. 1812). Horwitz (as cited in Hashemi 2011) claims that experiencing language anxiety can also be the result of not having enough control of the language. (2011, p. 1813). One way to decrease foreign language anxiety can be through peer review. In a study regarding writing anxiety among EFL students, it was noted that some students believed peer review could help decrease their writing anxiety. The students’ beliefs were based on the collaborative learning that takes place in peer review and how students can see and learn from each other’s mistakes. The same study confirmed the students’ beliefs that working with peer review can lead to a decrease in EFL students’ writing anxiety as peer review creates a less stressful learning environment for the students and thus increases their confidence (Yastibas and Yastibas 2015, p.535f).

2.5 Two stars and a wish

With some guidance, students can learn to identify the stronger as well as the weaker points of a peer’s text. By using a simple method to guide the students, it enables the students to understand the assignment criteria better. Consequently, this leads to students being able to improve their own work as they become aware of how small changes can improve the overall quality of their work. One such method is “two stars and a wish” where the stars represent the strong points of a text and the wish something in the text that can be improved (Black & Jones 2006, p. 8).

2.6 Written and oral feedback

When giving peer review, it can be done either verbally or in writing. Rollinson (2005) states that there are many advantages that comes with giving written feedback. For one, the students must be more detailed and explicit in their comments. When giving oral feedback, it is easy to be brief and the students can be more susceptible to negative interactions. Another advantage with written feedback is that both the student and teacher can look back and see the comments and compare them to the revision (2005, p. 27). Clarke (as cited in Pirhonen, 2016) states that oral feedback has its advantages as well as it can be given often and directly. This enables students to know what to improve immediately rather than extending the period between feedback and progress. Oral feedback also provides opportunities for discussions and clarifications between the giver of feedback and the receiver (2016, p. 12).

2.7 Preparing for peer review

In order to properly use peer review so that its effects are maximized, there are certain things teachers can do before they start the task with their students. Rollinson (2005) describes how different “pre-training” activities can help in the process of peer reviewing and proceeds to list five activities: group work, class discussions, “the propaganda phase”, practice work and a final discussion on how to revise in the most efficient way. The activities are mainly discussions but they have important differences in the topics that are discussed and timing of when something needs to be discussed (e.g. benefits of peer review that needs to be discussed beforehand vs how to revise which can be discussed when the students can see their peers’ comments). During the “propaganda phase”, the class discusses any concerns they have regarding receiving feedback from peers, the teacher also explains, among other things, why peer review is beneficial and how it compares to teacher feedback. Then, the students can practice giving feedback to their peers. Thereafter the students work in groups where they write texts and give feedback to another groups’ work. Finally, the students revise their work; however, students do not always have a clear view of how to revise their work after completing the peer review, so it is important that it is discussed in class. The discussion, according to Rollinson, should also cover the topic of the writer’s choice to reject any peer comments but also their responsibility to alter their work following the peer review (2005, p. 27f). Phillipakos (2017) agrees that practice before feedback can help the students understand the criteria for their assignment and improve the comments they give to their peers (2017, p. 15). These are not the only positive outcomes of peer review preparation, Berg (1999) writes that when students are properly trained before doing peer reviews in written assignments, they

improve their drafts significantly more than students that have not had previous training in peer review irrespective of their level of writing proficiency (1999, p. 230).

2.8 Results from previous research

Research regarding peer review has shown that there are several different types of peer reviews, with different methods and different results. There have been studies regarding peer feedback on, for instance, oral assignments (Eksi & Yesilcinar 2016), written assignments (Zhang & McEneaney 2019), corrective feedback (Ferris, Liu, Sinha & Senna 2013), electronic/online peer feedback (Guardado & Shi 2007, Lu & Law 2012) among many other. Below, studies concerning peer review as well as students' perception of peer review are presented to reveal some results of previous studies.

In a study focusing on improving students' oral skills with the use of peer review, Yépez-Jouvin (2019) implemented peer review with videos made by seven students ranging from ages 17-37 years old in an English school in Guayaquil. The study was conducted during a five-week period and the aim of the study was to see how well the students improved their oral skills after they had received feedback from their peers. The data collection was done by each student recording two videos and uploading them to a website and thereafter receiving preliminary feedback and then proper feedback, all according to a rubric provided by Yépez-Jouvin. To begin with, the students created their first video (labelled pre-test) a week after the start of the assignment and the presentation of the rubric. After working with the rubric in-depth and discussing different ways to give good quality peer feedback, the students' second videos (labelled post-test) were uploaded and they were subsequently given peer feedback. The results showed that the students' scores went from 2,9 points out of 5 (pre-test) to 4,4 points out of 5 (post-test) showing an 53 % increase in student scores after receiving feedback from their peers (2019, p. 10fff).

Harutyunyan and Poveda (2018) conducted a study in a university in Ecuador, where 34 EFL students (and 10 university personnel) were asked about their perceptions of peer review after having participated in peer review sessions. The results showed that 80% of students appreciated the peer review process and liked working in groups. As peer review supports collaborative learning, the study also showed that less than 20% of the participants thought that collaborative learning was meaningless, i.e. collaborative learning was positively regarded. In general, the students thought that working together leads to improved results and more than 70% of the participants stated that peer review helped improve several aspects of their writing, e.g. "grammar and structure, content, compositional organization and format

[...]” (2018, p. 147). In another study conducted by Mulder et al. (2014), Australian university students were asked to complete a questionnaire about their expectations of peer review and then another questionnaire after they had participated in peer review to see if there were any differences in their perceptions before and after completing the activity. Results showed that the percentage of students that had rated the experience as ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’ dropped from 89% to 77% after partaking in peer review. Although most students seemed to acknowledge the process of peer review as helpful, some comments made in the post-peer review questionnaire suggested that it could also be problematic. One student wrote that they gave a lot of feedback to their peer but only received short comments consisting of one line. Another student said that the peer review was helpful, but that it was confusing when one student gave good comments regarding a specific thing while another said it needed a lot of work (2014, p. 162f).

3. Method

In order to see how some teachers and students in Sweden perceive peer review, I chose to interview three teachers from different Swedish upper secondary schools and three students from the same school as one of the teachers. The teachers were interviewed separately while the students were interviewed together.

3.1 Data collection and participants

The participants consisted of three teachers and three students from three different upper secondary schools in Sweden. The selection process was based on finding out, through emails, the teachers who had previous experience with peer review. The students were chosen through the “snowball effect” which is described by Tivenius (2015) as a method for finding participants by asking the participants you already have, if they know other people that may be of interest for the study. This way, you will have a network that will help you and give you a shortcut in finding more participants (2015, p. 68). Upon request, one of the teachers suggested some of her own students that were willing to participate and had previous experience with peer review as well.

The interviews were held in each participant’s school to provide them with a comfortable and familiar environment. The participants were given the option of executing the interview in either Swedish or in English. The option to conduct the interview in either language was given so that each participant could choose the language they are most comfortable in expressing themselves in to minimize any misunderstandings and worries that they might

have during the process. All participants chose to answer in English. The interviews were audio-recorded with permission from all the participants.

According to Alvehus (2013), there are three types of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (2013, p. 83). I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with all participants in order to open up discussions regarding the topic using open-ended questions. The teachers were interviewed separately while the students were interviewed together for multiple reasons. Firstly, the timing made it convenient to interview all students at the same time. Secondly, group interviews often lead to discussions and enables the participants to remember more of their experience. To provide context about the participants, some background information on each participant is presented below:

Teacher 1 is 46 years old, has been teaching for 21 years and has worked with peer review for approximately five years.

Teacher 2 is 40 years old, has been teaching for 14 years and has worked with peer review since the beginning of her career.

Teacher 3 is 41 years old, has been teaching for 14 years and has worked with peer review for approximately 10 years.

The students are all currently attending their first year in upper secondary school and come from the same class. They will henceforth be addressed as student 1, student 2 and student 3.

3.2 Data analysis

Bauer (2000) writes that with the help of content analysis, larger texts can become much less complex. By systematically classifying texts, larger texts can also be shortened to show some of their distinctive features (2000, p. 4). This method was used in the analysis of the data that emerged from this study. The interviews were transcribed and read through, first without any notes and then with annotation and note-taking. This led to similarities and differences emerging from the questions that were discussed during the interviews which in turn lead to the identification of themes such as “insecurity” and “preconceived notions”. The themes were decided upon as they emphasize the most central aspects that came up during the interviews and it also provides the study with straightforward results. Furthermore, it highlights the contrasts and similarities between the participants’ work process and perceptions. The themes were not identified by the use of specific terms which means that, for

instance, the theme regarding “convenience” did not require the participant to explicitly use that word in their interview but rather speak about it in a general sense.

3.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in line with Vetenskapsrådet and published in *God forskningssed* (2017) were taken into account during the entire study. The participants were informed before the interviews that their participation was voluntary, they could at any given time stop the interview without reason and without any repercussions and that their name and place of work/study would remain confidential throughout the entire study (to the extent that it is possible). Permission to record the interviews was given by each participant.

3.4 Limitations

This study was based on interviews made with six participants but as this is not a large number, it would be of interest to interview more participants to create a more substantial study. Additionally, the student participants were all attending their first year in upper secondary school when the study was conducted which meant they had limited experience with peer review. Although the students had firm beliefs about peer reviews, to further improve the study, students with more experience would be preferable participants. Furthermore, interviews in combination with classroom observations would be ideal to compare “perceptions and beliefs” with “what actually is happening” (see, for instance, Li and Walsh 2011 for such line of research), as this can provide further insights into the phenomena under investigation.

4. Results

The results of the study regarding how English teachers in Swedish upper secondary schools use peer review and their perceptions as well as students’ perceptions of peer review are presented below.

4.1 Working with peer review

The teachers were all asked how they work with peer review, how they prepare for it and in relation to this, they were also asked about the pairing of students.

Table 1 Themes regarding how the teachers prepare for and work with peer review

Question	Theme
How do you work with peer review?	1. Written peer feedback
	2. Oral peer feedback
How do you prepare the students?	3. Oral discussion

How do you pair up the students?	4. Written instructions
	5. Convenience
	6. Comfort

As evident in table 1, there were two themes that emerged from the first interview question, written peer feedback (see table 1, theme 1) and oral peer feedback (see table 1, theme 2).

The results showed that all three teachers use written feedback (theme 1), but to different extents and with different approaches. Teacher 1 explained that before starting an assignment, the class discusses the criteria and then proceeds to use the “two stars and a wish” method where the students comment on each other’s texts in writing. Similarly, teacher 2’s students look at a list of questions (regarding topic, structure, conclusion etc.) and write down short comments for their peers. Teacher 3 explained that she tries to incorporate two written peer reviews during the year she has each class and she includes the interaction criteria from the curriculum into her lesson plan when working with peer review. When her students start to work with peer review, teacher 3 instructs the students not to make too explicit comments when they are marking their peer’s text in order to support their critical thinking skills.

They’re supposed to give their friends some ideas on how they can move forward with the text and also what they liked about the text [...] when they underline a word or a sentence or part of a sentence [...] I tell them not to tell the other student what fault it is so they have to find out by themselves. (Teacher 3)

In regard to the second theme that emerged from the question regarding oral vs written peer feedback (see table 1, theme 2) the results show that oral peer feedback is used less than written peer feedback. Two of the teachers mentioned oral feedback and of these two, teacher 2 mentioned the “two stars and a wish” method. She explained that “when they’re listening to each other when they have presentations, we use two stars and a wish which I think a lot of people do”, acknowledging the widely used peer review method. Teacher 3 on the other hand, explained that she tries to incorporate oral peer feedback but mentioned that it is not always possible.

Two themes emerged from the question regarding the preparations made before starting with peer review, oral discussion (see table 1, theme 3) and written instructions (see table 1, theme 4). The results show that the teachers mainly discuss different aspects of peer review with their students, i.e. oral discussions. However, teacher 1 has a mix of both strategies as she

discusses with her class while simultaneously creating written instructions together. She explained that she discusses the specific criteria with her students and then they arrange it into a feedback form.

So, what we do is that we usually before they, if they're to write a text or do some other assignment [...], we talk about and discuss okay so what is important for the quality of this thing that you're going to produce. And we try to formulate some criteria which will be a feedback form. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 further explained that the form that she has created with her class becomes the basis of what the students look for in their peers' texts. The students can also look at the form to understand what criteria the particular assignment covers. Similarly, teacher 2 mainly uses written instructions, however, she also discusses questions with her class before starting with peer review.

Already on the lesson plan, 'this particular area we're going to do peer reviewing as well' so they know and sometimes it's like 'ok, this date you need to be done, you need to have a draft, so you've got something to show' so I try to prepare them in that way and mostly I do like the questions that they're going to look for in the text, I usually do on that lesson so they know it then. (Teacher 2)

Thus, the results indicate that teacher 1 and 2 use a mix of oral discussions and written instructions (see table 1, theme 3 & 4). Contrary to the other teachers' mixed use of methods, teacher 3 uses oral discussions (see table 1, theme 3). She clarified that during their first peer review for each English course, she explains how to give feedback; "I tell them that they have to be like constructive and diplomatic and try not to use strong words and try to help their friends because that's what they would like for themselves I gather". Thereafter the teacher continues with "some short instructions on how to do it and what I would like for them to do" and does not talk about how to give feedback moving forward as she thinks the students have a general understanding of how to act towards one another and has never encountered a student being mean when giving feedback.

Regarding how the teachers pair their students up for peer review, there were two themes that emerged, convenience and comfort (see table 1, theme 5 & theme 6). The results show that all three teachers let the students, to some extent, choose their own partners for peer reviews. Two of the teachers have classroom seating which influences the way they pair up their students as the students usually work with whoever is sitting next to them. However, there are

exceptions to this as teacher 2 explains “I’ve got someone who’s like she doesn’t say anything, ever and she’s like ‘I’ve got one person I could sit beside and work with’ and there are others that are no problem at all, they just work with anyone” indicating that the pairing is not only convenience based but also made out of consideration for her students’ comfort. Likewise, for teacher 3, the pair up of partners is mainly done with her students’ comfort in view (see table 1, theme 6) as she explained that her students can discuss with each other more freely when choosing their own peers. She stated that “they work in pairs or in threes depending on and they choose their friends most of them because they feel more comfortable discussing faults and such with each other” showing that teacher 3, like teacher 2, has her students’ comfort in mind when pairing the students.

4.2 Teachers’ beliefs about peer review

The teachers were also asked about their perceived benefits and difficulties with peer review and lastly, they gave some additional comments about their overall perceptions of peer review.

Table 1.2 Themes regarding teachers’ perceptions of benefits and difficulties of peer review

Question	Theme
What are some benefits of peer review?	1. Different perspectives
	2. Enables discussions
What are some difficulties of peer review?	3. Preconceived notions
	4. Insecurity

Concerning the benefits of peer review, one theme that came up was different perspectives (see table 1.2, theme 1). All three teachers explained how peer review leads to students seeing from others’ perspectives and how they are able to draw inspiration from their peers’ work. Teacher 1 mentioned students seeing other students’ work and how it can be beneficial.

I think the benefits that I see, [...] is for each student to get a chance to be more aware. It’s easier to look at someone else’s work and notice things than to look at your own work cause it’s hard to observe or see. (Teacher 1)

Similarly, teacher 3 said “I think it’s good for the students to see other student’s work [...]and also practice to see faults that’s not your own is good I think, it’s easier to pick someone else’s faults than your own”.

Finally, teacher 2 explained how students can think differently and draw inspiration from each other after partaking in peer review.

They get ideas afterwards it's like ‘that one is so much better than mine’ but it's not good or bad it's more like did you get any ideas from it, could you steal something, you know steal with pride. Pick something that you thought was good and make it into your own. (Teacher 2)

These results indicate that the teachers are aware of the improvement students can make after engaging in peer review.

The second theme related to peer review that came up during the interviews was creating opportunities for discussions (see table 1.2, theme 2). Two teachers stated that peer review engages students in meaningful discussions while one mentioned an overall ‘meta-discussion’ about their work in general.

Teacher 2 talked about discussions in relation to oral feedback, and explained, “I think it’s easier when they talk to each other and say ‘ok, oh that’s what you meant’ and then they have a discussion about it”. Likewise, teacher 3 said that when marking another student’s work, they write in the margin what type of mistake it is and added;

and then they can look at it and then obviously if they feel like... they get stuck they can always talk to their peer; ‘I don't understand this, I can't really understand what you mean’ and then they can explain. (Teacher 3)

These results show that some of the teachers not only see discussions as a benefit of peer review, but they also regard oral feedback favourably.

Rather than creating discussions among students, teacher 1 emphasised that working with peer review lets you work in-depth with different tasks and have ‘meta-discussions’, as she clarified;

I think in general we would benefit a lot from working more with ... like having this meta-discussion about what is learning and what are we doing here cause then that would make learning much more efficient. (Teacher 1)

When it comes to the difficulties of peer review (see table 1.2, theme 3 and 4), preconceived notions about other students' English proficiency levels is closely related to insecurity among the students according to the teachers. Teacher 2 explained;

what I feel is difficult with peer reviewing is that they are on different levels and they don't want to show themselves to someone who is so much better [...] I got one student who's really good orally but the written part he really needs to work with, it's not that it's bad but it's very confusing and not structured and I think everyone thinks that he's great and probably don't want to work with him. (Teacher 1)

Similarly, teacher 3 said that students are "insecure in their English and if they perhaps have a friend that's, in their eyes better, then they tend not to write as much because they can't see the faults" showing that students have apprehensions regarding their ability to express themselves in English.

Lastly, the teachers gave some general comments about peer review which indicates that the teachers view peer review positively. Teacher 1 and 2 expressed wishes to use and focus more on peer review while teacher 3 maintained that none of her students have deemed peer review as an impractical method to use in the classroom.

4.3 Students' beliefs about peer review

Firstly, the students were asked about how they have worked with peer review in upper secondary school so it could be made clear how much experience they actually had. Student 1 and 2 said that the students had recorded cooking videos which they then showed to a classmate to receive feedback from using the "two stars and a wish" method. Student 3 added that they had done an exercise where they wrote debate articles and then showed their work to students sitting next to them so they could receive comments on how they could improve their texts.

Table 2 The main themes that came up during the students' interview

Question	Theme
What are some benefits of peer review?	1. Collaboration
	2. Concrete comments
	3. Different point of view

What are some difficulties of peer review?	4. Non-receptive peers
How does it feel to receive feedback from a peer rather than a teacher?	5. Knowledge level

In regard to the benefits of peer review (see table 2, theme 1), the students identified collaboration (and closely related receptiveness of criticism to this theme) as a major positive outcome of peer review and linked it to both school work and their lives beyond school.

Student 1 claimed that “I think it's a major part of school, to work with people not just like sit with a paper and do your own work. It's very important to work with people”. The student also talked about the benefits of collaborating with different people after they have finished their education.

It's like the real life outside of school when you grow up, when you get a job, you can't be like ‘no I don't want to talk to anybody, I don't wanna take critics’ because if you have that mindset all the time in whatever you do, you're not gonna move forward, you're gonna be like on the same spot even move backwards so in school it's very important to like focus on the whole picture of how life is going to be. (Student 1)

When the students were talking about the “two stars and a wish” peer review that they had done, the students thought that it went well because of the collaboration and ‘connection’ that was established between the students.

It's good because we were supposed to find like the partner that we'd like to work with and I think it was very good for the whole class to connect with each other and find a partner and...yeah work together. (Student 1)

All the students were in agreement that peer reviews help the students become more social and receptive of different situations, i.e. being able to collaborate with different people regardless of differing opinions.

The second major part of peer review according to the students, is concrete commentary (see table 2, theme 2). Student 2 mentioned that the peer review method they worked with enabled students to receive concrete comments.

You got some concrete like examples of how you could improve the video, when a teacher gives you feedback it's like mostly abstract like in general because they then see the whole process like from three years but we give like for five minutes, this is what they can improve right now. (Student 2)

At a later stage, student 2 again emphasised that “the teacher gives like mostly abstract long-term things that you can improve but we tend to give like ‘you can do this to improve that’” and the other two students agreed with this statement.

Another benefit according to the students, is that peer review enables the students to see other perspectives on their work from people of different backgrounds (see table 2, theme 3).

I can say that it's a great way to get your friend...the people on the same level as you, or if you can say that, their point of view because everyone here comes from different backgrounds and different schools so everyone has got different teachers and learn different things so I believe that's a great thing about giving peer review. (Student 2)

The other students agreed and student 1 added that “you can get like a lot of information and you get very inspired when you work with other people from other schools and other backgrounds as (student 2) said”.

When discussing the difficulties that could occur during peer review, the students singled out one problem, non-receptive peers (see table 2, theme 4). Student 3 stated that “maybe like persons that can't really take feedback and get it wrong like something is bad with the text, it can be bad”. Student 1 then added;

if you work with someone who's hard to work [...] like if you have different opinions or ideas or something and the one part trying to like make it work and make it work for both but then the other part is like ‘nah this is my way I'm going to do it this way’, and it can get quite hard to work with the person but if you learn to do that I think it's gonna be very easy. (Student 1)

The comments made by the students indicate that even though non-receptive peers can be a problem, they can overcome the problem by learning to collaborate.

Moreover, the students were asked about their thoughts regarding receiving feedback from peers rather than their teacher (see table 2, theme 5). The students' perceptions were that the teacher and students have different knowledge levels, which leads to the students not listening to their peers' comments as much as they would to their teacher's. They also mentioned that peers and teachers look at different things when giving feedback. Student 2 said “to be honest I think that you don't listen as much as you do to the teacher... make sense because the

teacher knows what they're talking about in a different way if you compare to the student". The other two students agreed and student 3 then added that "the teacher and the student are looking at different things in the text".

Lastly, the students were asked whether or not they think peer review is useful and if they had any additional comments to which the students responded that it pushes individuals of the same level to cooperate and understand their peers rather than envy them and shy away from sharing ideas. Student 2 explained that;

because you get to learn to take critics and like feedback from people but it doesn't have to be like more or better than you like from a teacher to a student it's like OK you have to like take in the feedback and do whatever they say but from a student to student it's like from a person to person on the same level. (student 2)

The other students agreed and student 3 added "I think it's good because you get like feedback and it's always good, it's up to you if you want to use it or not so like it's always good to hear then it's your opinion on what you wanna do with it" indicating an awareness of creative freedom while acknowledging the usefulness of peers' comments.

5. Discussion

As earlier studies have shown, proper preparation before starting with feedback is beneficial and research has also shown that working with and discussing for instance expectations and criteria lead to greater opportunities to maximize the effect of peer review. It has been suggested that educators can, among other things, practice peer reviews with their students before starting with the actual peer review, show sample texts, discuss criteria and discuss how the students should revise their work after peer review (Black & Jones, Phillipakos 2017, Rollinson 2005, Yopez-Jouvin 2019). The informants of this study mainly use one of the aforementioned preparations, discussions. One particular discussion is the one regarding criteria. While all the teachers naturally talk about the assignment or show the students the criteria, teacher 1 explicitly stated that she discusses it with her class and that they create a feedback form together. For this form, they use the criteria for that specific assignment meaning that they discuss the criteria together. Teacher 3 talked about the usage of the interaction criteria which leads to the natural conclusion that they discuss this in the classroom. Discussing the criteria during peer review is a good way to help the students understand their assignment criteria better (Black & Jones 2006) which will ultimately lead to the production of more qualitative projects. Teacher 3 also mentioned that they discuss appropriate peer review behaviour. Teacher 2 on the other hand, talks about peer review

overall and shows the questions that are going to help the students in their peer feedback. Although Rollinson (2005) suggests detailed discussion topics, it is not implausible to assume that discussing the peer review questions is also a good way to prepare the students for peer review as they know what to expect and what to look for instead of starting the assignment before prior knowledge of these aspects. Interestingly, the three teachers all have a specific focus when preparing the students; criteria, acceptable peer review behaviour and discussion about what peer review entails. If these aspects were to be combined, they would make for an even better peer review preparation. However, it is worth mentioning that the teachers know their classes and their needs which leads to them preparing their students accordingly and that time constraint might lead to focus being put to other parts of the peer review process.

As for different ways of incorporating peer review in their classrooms, the results vary between oral and written feedback on both oral and written presentations. The commonly used “two stars and a wish” method was shown to be used frequently among the teachers of this study as well. As Black and Jones (2006) describe it, it is an easy method to show students what they can improve and how. When students clearly mark, or comment, their peers can see not only the parts that need improvement, but the aspects that are especially good as well. The teachers’ answers regarding this method, indicates that it is an efficient way of using peer review in both written and oral assignments. The results of this study also show that both oral and written feedback is used in the classrooms of the three EFL teachers that were interviewed. There are many benefits with either type and the teacher informants of this study emphasize the usage of oral feedback in their work with peer review. Giving oral feedback enables a discussion in which students can directly ask about aspects they find hard to understand and receive a response straight away (Clarke 2003 as cited in Pirhonen, 2016). These findings are similar to what the teachers have found beneficial when working with peer review, namely the discussions that take place during oral feedback sessions.

The teachers’ perceptions regarding the difficulties of peer reviewing were mainly that the students could feel self-conscious about their ability to express themselves in English which could lead to students feeling less motivated to participate in peer review. This can possibly be the result of language anxiety (Schwartz as cited in Hashemi 2011) where students are affected by their self-perception (intrinsic motivator). However, previous research has shown that EFL students’ anxiety can decrease with the help of peer review (Yastibas & Yastibas 2015), as such, participating in peer review can lead to more confident EFL students overall. As the teachers have identified intrinsic motivators as the reason for the students’ language

anxiety, they have taken measures in the form of letting the students pair up with whomever they feel comfortable with so that the anxious students are still encouraged to participate.

Regarding perceptions of peer review benefits, all the teachers mentioned students seeing other texts and thereby developing their work as well as getting inspiration from each other. These benefits are also mentioned about peer review in earlier research (Ferris cited in Farrah 2012, Lundstrom & Baker 2009, Rollinson 2005, Sims 1989) where students become critical readers by seeing other perspectives and consequently develop abilities such as problem-solving and being more self-aware and critical of their own work. This study suggests that the participating teachers are well-aware of these benefits, however, the same cannot be said for the students. In contrast to earlier findings (Todd & Hudson 2007), none of the three students mentioned anything that could immediately be related to critical thinking skills. Rather, they saw collaboration as a major part of peer review. They also mentioned peer review helping the students to connect with one and other and learning to work with people of differing opinions which is supported by earlier research (Rollinson 2005, Liu & Carless 2006).

Furthermore, this study shows that the students believe that peers give more concrete comments in comparison to their teachers. This perception is the opposite of some earlier examples of EFL students' perceptions indicating that students often give vague comments (Leki 1999). The students felt like they knew what to do after receiving peer comments as opposed to teachers' comments and they attributed this to the teacher looking at their long-term development rather than short-term like their peers. However, it is worth mentioning that the meaning of concrete commentary can be different for students and educators. The students define concreteness as a peer showing the exact aspect that is wrong but did not indicate that their peers knew how to explain them well.

The students in this study, although not very experienced, had generally positive beliefs about peer review, just like the informants in the study by Harutyunyan & Poveda (2018). As previously mentioned, the students identified collaboration, concrete commentary and seeing texts from different perspectives as positive outcomes of peer review. The students also mentioned how they felt that the class 'connected' with each other during the peer review sessions which is similar to some previous research where Ferris (cited in Farrah 2012) mentions how working with peer review can help build the classroom community and give students a chance to share ideas. As for the students' perceptions regarding difficulties that might occur during peer review, they said that non-receptive peers are a big factor as it can be hard to work with someone who does not cooperate and respond in an appropriate manner.

This can be linked to a lack of preparation before starting with peer reviews. As mentioned earlier, it is advised that teachers prepare their students through discussions and exercises. Rollinson (2005) mentions the “propaganda phase” where the beneficial aspects of peer review are discussed and then practice before engaging peer review where students can give feedback in a non-threatening way. If these steps are implemented correctly, the risk of non-collaborating peers can decrease making it easier for students to work with each other. This can also help the students collaborate with peers that they would usually not work with.

Finally, when asked if they listened to their peers’ comments like they would to their teacher’s, the students said that because of different knowledge levels, they tended to listen more to the teacher. This claim is supported by previous research (Rollinson 2005, Tsui & Ng 2000) and shows that even though the students appreciate concrete comments, they also know that their teacher has more knowledge and is therefore more reliable.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that three EFL teachers in Swedish upper secondary education work with peer review in two different approaches: written and oral peer feedback. They have shown that peer review can be successfully implemented in both oral and written tasks as well as be given in writing or verbally. Although some forms of preparations are done by each teacher, with more preparation before starting with peer review, the process and outcome can be more beneficial. If, for instance, discussions regarding expectations and the responsibilities of reviewers and reviewees are implemented, students might be more receptive of collaborating with others and fully understand the benefits of peer review. This study has also shown that all three of the teachers think that peer reviews are useful and that it helps students to be critical readers and identify mistakes. They mention that peer reviews are difficult overall and that it is challenging when you have students that are unsure of their language abilities, but by letting students find their own peer, they can ensure that everyone feels comfortable enough to participate. Similarly, three EFL students in Swedish upper secondary education regard peer review favourably and cite collaboration and concrete comments as the biggest outcome of peer reviewing. They have also shown to rely more on teacher’s comments as opposed to peer comments, much like results from previous studies (Tsui & Ng 2000) but nevertheless, they still view peer review as beneficial for both school work and for future endeavours.

Suggestions for future use of peer review include preparing the students with discussions on how to do peer review and how to receive it, as well as showing sample texts and having

discussions regarding the advantages of using peer review. Peer review is also a good way to incorporate the *interaction* criteria from the curriculum and encourage the students to participate in collaborative learning. Although dividing the students according to their seating chart is possible, exploring new options regarding cooperation between other students can also be achieved in order to further improve students' collaboration skills as well as their critical reading skills. When it comes to the means of feedback giving, a combination of written comments along with oral discussions is recommended so that the students can remember the feedback as well as discuss and sort out any misunderstandings directly. As this study has shown, teachers and students alike view peer review positively and this suggests that peer review can and should be used as a tool in EFL classrooms in Sweden and beyond.

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