Chapter 15
Student Peer Feedback in a Translation Task:
Experiences With Questionnaires and Focus Group Interviews

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ABSTRACT

Social science research methods can help shed light on students' peer feedback performance. They can also help enlighten researchers on students' reception and repercussion to feedback tasks. The operationalizability of these methods for future peer activities in Translation Didactics is examined in this chapter. Multiple peer feedback data from undergraduate Business Communication students is compared with questionnaire and interview data. The data derives from peer feedback loops and provides insights into the students' perception of working with peer feedback on a web-text localization and translation commentary task performed to mirror professional practice. The analysis of the wording of student feedback, of the revisions suggested and the analysis of whether or not—and how—students implement their peer's suggestions, allows qualitative evaluation and interpretation. The methods applied are compared and their feasibility for further research into peer feedback in Translation Studies is explored.

INTRODUCTION

Peer feedback is an emerging area in Translation Didactics. It mirrors the reality of the translation profession, where qualitative measures in the form of other-revision play a crucial role. Most of the research work on peer feedback has so far been done in other research areas, such as Educational Psychology, Writing Research and Second Language Acquisition. The theoretical base of this study stems from these fields. The theoretical discussion focuses on participants' roles in peer feedback studies, scaffolding (instruction and teacher guidance (instruction used to move students progressively forward to independence in the learning process), feedback comments, student perceptions of peer feedback tasks and the process loop of feedback (a system where student comments to their peers form an action and reaction circuit;

the reaction being implementation or non-implementation of the feedback provided). The threefold aim is to shed light on the scaffolded feedback loop approach taken during teaching, on the feasibility and operationalizability of the research methods applied and on student perception and repercussion of the feedback task. The research questions of the study are: how do the students perform in a scaffolded peer feedback localization and academic commentary task, when they are given the possibility to implement multiple sets of feedback, and how do they perceive the task, the process, their roles as feedback providers and receivers and learning outcomes? Insight from this project may enlighten Translation Studies didactics to enhance students' learning experiences with peer feedback to prepare them for the requirements of the translation industry.

The research methods applied in this study are textual analysis of student peer feedback comments based on a coding scheme, peer feedback questionnaires and focus group interviews. The study with 19 undergraduate students in an L2 web-based communication course focuses on a peer reviewed web-text localization task from L1 into L2 and a translation commentary in L2, while the course also included other corrective written and oral peer and teacher feedback on web-copy writing and website analysis tasks[1]. The peer feedback task comprised a multiple feedback loop with additional teacher feedback and was carefully scaffolded by the teachers. The scaffolding included graduated guided assistance and task instructions. Participants provided and received multiple feedback for two tasks and implemented feedback. Upon task completion, two types of recall assignments were performed. One group completed a questionnaire and received written teacher feedback. The other group participated in focus group interviews and received oral teacher feedback. Examples of feedback types provided by peers, which unfold in the form of feedback comments, e.g. suggestions, questions, or praise, form part of the data of this study. This data is examined to illustrate whether or not peer comments are implemented by the feedback recipient in his/her final translation and translation comment. The changes made are classified into revision types. An overview of this data supports the comparison to be drawn between questionnaire answers and focus group interview comments about the peer feedback task as a whole.

BACKGROUND

Editing, revision and post-editing are part and parcel of professional practices in the translation industry and quality assessment has become an established element of translator training. Industry revision practices are mirrored in the translation classroom to prepare students for their future professions and to teach them quality criteria to exert quality control and assessment practices, such as self-assessment against criteria of collaborative practices. Peer feedback as a didactic practice reflects – at least to a certain extent – expert translators' professional assessment practice. Student peer feedback is usually regarded as a productive platform for the development of evaluative skills and for learner self- regulation. Yet, reports about experiences with peer feedback in translation, analysis of how students execute peer suggestions in their texts (implementation performance), the impact peer feedback has on translation competence and reflection about these are scarce in the Translation Studies literature. Studies by Lindgren, Sullivan, Deutschmann, and Steinvall (2009), Wang and Han (2013) and Flanagan and Heine (2015), Lisaitė et al. (2016) and Vandepitte (2016) are exceptions to the rule.

Advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback in general, scaffolded and non-scaffolded approaches to feedback, group composition, feedback roles, the role of L2 and the importance of the feedback loop are areas of research interest for further scrutiny. Peer feedback as evaluative judgement (Boud, 2007)

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