

**An Exploration of ESL Learners' Emergent Beliefs about Academic Group  
Work and Peer Review at a New Zealand University**

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored ESL learners' emergent beliefs about academic group work and peer review at a New Zealand university. The thesis focuses on learners' beliefs about the factors that are necessary for successful group work, the benefits and drawbacks of group work and peer review, and the role of the student and teacher during group work and peer review. The research contributes to original knowledge by filling a gap in the research on ESL learners' beliefs about cooperative group work and peer review at the university level in New Zealand. The study took place within an Action Research framework (look, think, act, plan, implement, evaluate) and employed learner diaries as the primary data collection instrument. A contextual approach was used which regards beliefs as socially constructed, dynamic, and emerging.

The study was conducted in two cycles with two groups of participants who were enrolled, in two different semesters, in the same first-year English for Academic Purposes course at the University of Otago. Cycle I explored the beliefs of learners about group work and peer review when they had not received any targeted training. In addition to the learner diary entries of participants enrolled in the course, Cycle I also included a case study of four students who had volunteered to be interviewed. A period of reflection followed this first cycle during which time the course was revised and training guidelines were formulated. Using a grounded approach to the analysis of the data, the results of the first cycle's diary entries and case studies were taken into consideration when making improvements to the course and, based on the analysis of these findings, students in Cycle II received some training in group work and peer review. Cycle II focused on the beliefs of learners in the researcher's tutorial group. In addition to the learner diary entries, a group evaluation exercise was completed by this smaller group of participants, which added further insights into the beliefs of these learners.

The findings appear to indicate that training students to participate in group work and peer review could lead to a richer learning experience for students and, possibly, more positive beliefs. The findings also show the value of using learner diaries to explore learners' beliefs and how these beliefs influence their behaviour in group work and peer review. They show the importance of exploring the beliefs of language learners which, following data analysis and identifying themes, could then be taken into consideration by the teacher when implementing future group work or peer review. The thesis concludes with pedagogical implications and recommendations for training EAP students in effective academic group work and peer review.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FFPS	Foreign Fee-Paying Students
GW	Group Work
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MESDC	Main English-Speaking Destination Countries
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
PR	Peer Review
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

# CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Overview

This thesis examines Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) learners' emerging beliefs about group activities in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at a New Zealand university. The study was conducted within an Action Research (AR) framework in two research cycles. Cycle I explores the beliefs of language learners who did not receive any training in Group Work (GW) and Peer Review (PR) and these beliefs were then taken into consideration by the researcher when revising the course in Cycle II. Cycle II explores the beliefs of learners who did receive some training in GW and PR and compares these with the beliefs of learners in Cycle I. This chapter provides the context for the current study and begins with this introduction highlighting the importance of language learners' beliefs and the growing popularity of GW/PR in the university classroom. The need for the study is provided first (Section 1.1). The focus of this section is to briefly review the relevant literature, establish the gap in the current knowledge and show how the current study has filled this gap. This is followed by an overview of the research (Section 1.2). This section begins with the scope of the study and then provides general background information regarding NESB learners studying in New Zealand and, in particular, at the University of Otago (Dunedin), the research site of the study. This discussion then leads into an explanation of the context of the research, which includes the motivation for the study and the place of GW/PR in the course. The research questions are presented next, including an explanation of how they are related to the context of the study (Section 1.3). The following section gives a detailed definition of the key terms used in the study (Section 1.4). This chapter concludes with a summary and an overview of the organisation of this thesis (Section 1.5).

There seems to be little doubt that learners bring with them to the second and foreign language classroom a complex set of assumptions, experiences, expectations, attitudes, perceptions and beliefs (Bernat, 2004; Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1987; Kalaja, 2003; Sakui & Gaies, 2003; Wenden, 1986, 1987). These individual histories become more apparent and provide challenges for these learners when studying in a formal institution in an English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Students learning a second or foreign language can hold various preconceived notions, ideas and beliefs as to how a language should be learned and what is involved in learning another language. These beliefs about language learning can be related to beliefs about the goals or objectives of a language course, beliefs about teaching methods and approaches, beliefs about

the role of the teacher and student, as well as beliefs about the type of classroom activities and tasks that students participate in.

The beliefs that learners have regarding the learning process can sometimes be attributed to differences in cultural backgrounds, both between the learner and the teacher as well as between the learners themselves. These cultural differences, for example, different perceptions of what should take place in the ESL classroom, may lead to tensions and misunderstandings between students or between the student and teacher since these language learners have had various prior school and learning experiences (Kramsch, 1985). Such mismatches between teacher and student expectations are likely to occur, particularly today with a greater emphasis on GW/PR in language classrooms. Today, many universities offer EAP courses with the emphasis on developing problem-solving and team building/small-group skills needed for students' undergraduate lives and post-university careers. Many of these EAP courses also incorporate PR into the writing component of their syllabus to develop students' writing skills and to develop collaborative skills amongst students. Knowledge of learners' belief systems is, therefore, of particular importance in attempts to understand language learning in institutional settings where English is taught as a second language. In this language learning context, students are often from a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and usually do not come from the same cultural background as their teacher.

Considering the different cultural backgrounds and past language learning experiences of students in second language (L2) classrooms, it is likely that students and teachers will have different beliefs about the teaching methodology and the types of activities and assessments implemented in the course. Group work and pair work continue to be popular trends in second language pedagogy (Fushino, 2010), and bring with them their own set of challenges for the language learner. Group discussions, group investigation, group presentations, group projects, pair work and PR have become a fundamental part of second language classrooms in many countries where English is taught as a second language. This shift in emphasis from individual, competitive learning to students learning together in small groups with their classmates often requires adjustments on the part of the second language learner to adapt to this new learning environment. However, as Johnson and Johnson (1990) point out, "simply placing students in groups and telling them to work together does not, in and of itself, produce cooperation" (p.29). It is crucial, therefore, that students understand the purpose and value of GW/PR in their course/s and are taught how to be effective group members and peer reviewers.

## **1.1 The need for the study**

Learners' beliefs can have a substantial impact on the language learning processes of students. An understanding of learners' beliefs and how they perceive certain tasks is, therefore, essential to effective learning. In the last three decades, a number of significant studies have investigated the beliefs of language learners in the field of applied linguistics (Bernat, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009; Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1987; Sakui & Gaies, 2003; Wenden, 1986, 1987, 1991). These studies have highlighted the importance of understanding beliefs since they are likely to influence the learning process. Earlier studies on the beliefs of ESL/EFL learners tended to investigate general beliefs about language learning (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Mori, 1999; Wenden, 1986). Some of this early research also focused on students' use of language learning strategies (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1986; Yang, 1999) and autonomous learning (Cotterall, 1995). More recent studies have examined learners' beliefs in relation to specific factors such as personality (Bernat, 2009; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). In the past decade, researchers have started to examine learners' beliefs in a specific context (Alanen, 2003; Barcelos, 2003; Hosenfeld, 2003; Kalaja, 2003; Sakui & Gaies, 2003; Stracke, 2004, 2007; White, 1999). These studies support the argument that learners' beliefs about language learning are context specific.

The first-year undergraduate NESB learners enrolled in Cycle I of the EAP course in this study had little prior experience or training in GW/PR and yet they held strong beliefs about the factors that are needed for GW/PR to be successful, which resulted in significant improvements to the course in Cycle II. The beliefs that these learners brought with them to the language classroom shared many of the characteristics of the main principles of cooperative learning (Section 2.1.2) and it is this insightfulness, which is often not expected of first-year NESB students, which is this study's major contribution to existing knowledge. An in-depth exploration of learners' beliefs about cooperative learning at the tertiary level in New Zealand is also a significant contribution to knowledge since this is an area that has received relatively little attention (Baker & Clark, 2011). Insights into learners' beliefs about participation in GW both inside and outside the language classroom is another main contribution to knowledge. The study also provides a detailed insight into PR from the perspective of both the student as the writer and the student as the reviewer. Finally, the suggestions and recommendations for training students in GW/PR are also an important contribution to language teaching pedagogy.

## **1.2 Overview of the research**

This research explores ESL learners' emergent beliefs about academic GW/PR at a university in New Zealand. The qualitative study uses learners' diary entries as a reflective learning tool for the student, teacher and researcher. Although the diary entries yielded rich data about learners' beliefs about language learning in general, this thesis focuses on learners' beliefs about GW/PR. The study is set in an AR framework and this was chosen by the researcher because of the highly reflective nature of the research. AR was also considered the most appropriate framework since the research questions focus on finding solutions to classroom pedagogical challenges.

The study was conducted over two Cycles in an EAP course in different semesters. Cycle I included the majority of students enrolled in the course whilst Cycle II was limited to students enrolled in the researcher's tutorial group. In Cycle I, students did not receive any specific training in GW/PR although they did participate in GW/PR activities/assessments throughout the course. Students in Cycle II received some training in GW/PR (for example, discussions centred on the benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR and strategies to improve their GW/PR experience), participated in a wider range of cooperative activities and participated in cooperative learning groups throughout the course (Section 4.4). The aim of the research was to compare the findings from the two Cycles and explore the extent to which students who had received some training had benefitted. Surprisingly, although students in Cycle II held more positive beliefs regarding their cooperative GW/PR experience, the students in Cycle I had been particularly insightful in terms of how GW/PR should be implemented and had also developed their own strategies to improve their GW/PR experience. The study emphasises the importance for ESL/EFL/EAP teachers to have an understanding of the beliefs of their learners since these beliefs influence students' behaviour in the classroom and also shows the value of utilising this knowledge to improve classroom practices. With the growing number of international students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutes, it is important that teachers understand these beliefs and have an awareness of how these students perceive their post-secondary academic learning experiences.

The following section provides a brief history of international students in New Zealand, in addition to information regarding the number of international students at the University of Otago and an overview of the entrance examination requirements needed by these students.

## **International students in New Zealand and at the University of Otago**

This section first offers an overview of the international tertiary student market, and then provides a brief history of international students in New Zealand and an overview of the number of international students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutions and specifically at the University of Otago. The figures here focus mainly on the time when the data were collected. This section concludes with a brief outlook at what has happened since 2007. Following this, the entry levels required to enroll at the University of Otago are explained. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the research context. Studies on the experiences of international students studying at Western universities, including New Zealand, are reviewed in the Literature Review (Section 2.2).

In 2012, the following five countries attracted almost 50% of the international tertiary student market despite a fall in enrollments since 2000: the United States (18%), the United Kingdom (11%), France (7%), Australia (6%), and Germany (5%). According to the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO, 2013), these traditional markets have faced competition from the following emerging markets which make up 6% of the international tertiary student sector: China, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and New Zealand. International tertiary students studying overseas totaled 4.5 million in 2013, which was twice the number of students than in 2000, and this is predicted to increase to 5 million in 2015.

New Zealand first began to encourage international students to study there during the 1950s under the Commonwealth Colombo Plan (Smith & Rae, 2006). In 1990, New Zealand Education International, Ltd (NZEIL) was created from an alliance between the New Zealand government's Trade Development Board and the higher education sector with the aim of promoting New Zealand education overseas (Mazzarol & Hosie, 1996). New Zealand became one of the first Western countries to allow Chinese nationals open access to student visas and was soon followed by Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America, now known collectively as the "main English-speaking destination countries" (MESDCs) for international fee-paying students (Ministry of Education, 2013). To meet the academic demands of the growing numbers of international students, New Zealand universities all offer a range of EAP courses. Depending on the university, these courses are usually offered through an academic department at the university, in most cases either the English or Linguistics department. EAP courses are also available through private, independent language schools or language centres affiliated with the university.

The number of international students<sup>1</sup> studying at New Zealand universities increased significantly in the late 1980s from 2,638 in 1986 to 9,820 in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2005). The number of foreign fee-paying students (FFPS), particularly from Asian countries, studying at public tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics/institutes of technology, colleges of education, and wananga<sup>2</sup>) in New Zealand continued to increase in the 2000s. Based on statistics from the Ministry of Education (2005), the number of FFPS attending New Zealand public tertiary institutions continued to rise in 2004, with an 11.5% increase from 2003. In 2004, 88% of FFPS enrolled in public tertiary institutions in New Zealand came from the Asia region. In 1999, the number of FFPS from Asia was 4,966 and this increased more than four-fold to 25,603 in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2005). In 2005, the number of FFPS at public tertiary institutions had risen to 40,706 compared with only 13,326 in 2000. This number dropped to 36,474 in 2006. The number of FFPS from Asia studying at New Zealand public tertiary institutions was 26,214 in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2007). In 2007, FFPS from Asia studying at New Zealand public tertiary institutions were 17,962. For universities this was down 18% on the previous year, but represented a 189% increase in students from Asia in the period 2000-2007 (Ministry of Education, 2008). The number of FFPS at public tertiary institutions from 2007-2012 were 32,373, 30,010, 30,335, 30,959, 30,511, and 30,555 respectively. In 2012, the number of FFPS from North Asia studying at public tertiary institutions was 10,501 (China, including Hong Kong), 1,659 (Japan), 1,470 (Republic of Korea), and 315 (Taiwan). For South East Asia the numbers were 336 (Thailand), 1,590 (Malaysia), 963 (Vietnam), and 633 (Philippines). For South Asia, the numbers were 4003 (India), 60 (Pakistan), 48 (Bangladesh), 261 (Sri Lanka) (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Ho, Li, Cooper, and Holmes' (2007) report for Education New Zealand, which focused on the experiences of Chinese students in New Zealand, found that at the time of their study 71.6% of the Chinese students interviewed planned to find employment in New Zealand upon completion of their studies while 67.5% planned on applying for permanent residency. It is also worth noting that the major ethnic groups in New Zealand in 2013 were: European (74%), Māori (15%), Asian (12%),

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<sup>1</sup> This includes students from English speaking countries.

<sup>2</sup> A type of tertiary institute in New Zealand offering education in a Maori cultural context.

Pacific peoples (7%), and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) (1%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).

At the University of Otago, the number of international undergraduate students increased from 1,220 in 2002 to 2,660 in 2006, decreasing slightly in 2007 to 2,019. Following national trends, the majority of international NESB students came from Asia (in descending order for the year 2007, China, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, India, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam). Student numbers from this region grew from 812 in 2003 to 1,200 in 2007. During the period 2002-2005 the greatest increase in total international student numbers came from China, which rose from 171 in 2002 to 700 in 2005, with a decrease to 625 in 2006 and another decrease in 2007 to 436 students. At the time when this study was conducted, the University of Otago was quite different from other New Zealand universities in terms of the international student population. Only 25% of the total number of international students at the University of Otago were Chinese, compared with approximately 50% at other New Zealand universities (“Student Facts and Figures”, n.d.).

In 2008, the number of international FFPS enrolled at the University of Otago was 1,889. In 2009, this dropped to 1,426, and in 2010, the number rose slightly to 1,531. The number of these students coming from Asia was 1,067, 1,093, and 1,147 respectively (“Student Facts and Figures”, n.d.).

NESB students wishing to gain entry to the University of Otago are required to provide evidence of a satisfactory level of English proficiency. Students are required to have sat, within the previous two years, one of the major internationally recognised English language tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Cambridge Certificate Advanced English (CAE), Cambridge Certificate in Proficiency in English (CPE), or Advanced Placement International English Language Examination (APIEL). Students are expected to have attained a minimum standard on these tests: A score of 550 (out of a total score of 677) on the TOEFL, a score of 6.0 (on a Band Scale from 1 to 9 in which 1 = Non User and 9 = Expert User) in the academic module (no individual band below 6.0) of the IELTS, a grade B for the CAE (out of three pass grades: A, B, and C), a grade C for the CPE (out of three pass grades: A, B, and C), and a grade 3 in the APIEL (on a five points scale of 1-5 with grades of 3 or higher considered “qualifying”).

For NESB students who have studied at a secondary school in the United Kingdom, they are required to have gained a C grade or higher in either the General Certificate of Education (GCE), ‘O’ level

English or the GCE 'A' level General paper (English). From 2005, NESB<sup>3</sup> students who wish to enroll at the University of Otago via the New Zealand School University Entrance Qualification, the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 3, are required to have first achieved 8 credits at Level 2 or higher in English (4 credits in Reading and 4 credits in Writing).

Although these NESB students have reached a certain level of English proficiency, many students experience difficulties when using English in an academic environment, particularly at the tertiary level. The English language tests do not require students to write extended academic essays, nor are students tested on their ability to understand academic lectures nor to participate in typical academic speaking situations such as participating in tutorial groups. At the time that this research was conducted, the Linguistics Programme at the University of Otago offered an EAP paper<sup>4</sup> to support NESB students who were studying at the university. This EAP course and the motivation for this study are now described in the following section.

### **The English for Academic Purposes course in the current study**

The University of Otago first offered a first-year credit bearing EAP paper in 1997 and it was taught through the English Department until 2003 when the Linguistics Programme took over the teaching of this paper (Appendix A: Course outline). In February 2004, the researcher became the new coordinator for the paper which was a one-semester course and was available in the first semester of each academic year. Students were required to attend a one-hour lecture twice a week and one two-hour weekly tutorial. Lectures ran for 13 weeks and tutorials for 10 weeks. This paper aimed at assisting NESB students to develop their competence in using English in an academic environment. Students developed their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills as well as strategies necessary for tertiary study. There was also an emphasis on developing students' awareness of how they could become independent language learners and how they could use these skills in future language learning. Many papers at the University of Otago have a strong emphasis on GW and the tutorial activities and assignments students were required to complete in this course reflected this. In addition to group activities and assignments, students were also required to keep a weekly language learner diary in

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<sup>3</sup> This new requirement applies to all students including those whose first language is English.

<sup>4</sup> Courses are usually referred to as "papers" at New Zealand universities.

which they could reflect on their language learning experiences. In this first year of teaching and coordinating the paper the researcher decided against setting specific prompts or questions for each of the diary entries. Instead, students were able to write about anything that affected their learning of English. Unexpectedly, the issue of GW became a common and dominant theme in many of the diary entries with students expressing strong opinions either in favour of or opposing the use of GW in tutorials and as a part of the course assessment. Likewise, students expressed strong beliefs about PR after participating in this in-class exercise. Although these diary entries were insightful, students often did not give reasons or further details explaining why GW/PR was rewarding or unsuccessful. Furthermore, students often had conflicting beliefs about GW/PR. The beliefs that this group of students held about GW/PR also raised other issues - some of which were also alluded to in their diary entries albeit somewhat briefly. These issues included the role of the learner versus the role of the teacher and the extent to which students could learn from each other during GW/PR. These issues motivated the present study and led to the four main research questions for Cycle I which would start the beginning of the following year. The sub-research questions were developed more specifically during the course of the research. The identification of these issues was a significant step in the research procedure and later became the first step in the AR framework to be discussed in detail in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.2.3).

The first, main component of the study was conducted between March and June 2005 and the second component of the study was conducted between February and June 2007 with different participants enrolled in the same first-year EAP paper. The researcher decided to use the same course outline and to include similar course assessments for both 2005 and 2007 since it was the implementation of the assignments that were developed and improved rather than the actual assignments.

The paper was 100% internally assessed and was based on individual and group assessments. Individual assignments constituted 60% of the course assessment: an essay (30%), a summary (20%), and a learner diary (10%). The remaining 40% was based on the GW aspect of the course: group oral presentation (20%) and tutorial participation (20%). The PR counted for 5% of the tutorial participation grade. Most of the tutorials involved students in small group/pair work based around activities relevant to that week's module or to an assignment that students were currently working on.

In terms of the assessment of the learner diary, students were graded according to the following criteria: all five points in the prompt covered (50 marks), coherence (30 marks), word length - a

minimum of 400 words and a maximum of 500 words (10 marks) and format (10 marks). Students were given a set of guidelines outlining the requirements of the learner diary at the beginning of the semester (Appendix B: Learner diary guidelines) and they were given the diary prompts each week by the lecturer (Appendix C: Learner diary prompts). Each diary entry was written by students in their own time. The first diary entry was designed to provide additional data to support the background questionnaire and is therefore discussed in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.2.5). The second diary entry required students to reflect on the PR activity that had been conducted during one of the tutorials. The third and fourth diary entries focused on the assessed group oral presentation: the third diary entry had students reflecting on the process of working together in groups while they were working together on the group presentation and the fourth diary entry was written after the group presentations had been completed. The fifth diary entry gave students the opportunity to make suggestions regarding the improvement of tutorials and tutorial activities and the sixth diary entry aimed at exploring the beliefs of learners about the group tasks carried out in tutorials and the role of tutor and learner was the focus of the seventh journal. In Cycle I, an eighth diary entry had also been included in the course. This prompt was a very general topic regarding learners' experiences of language learning in New Zealand. Although this diary entry yielded rich data, it was decided not to include these findings in the final study since there was little content related to GW.

Students in Cycle I were required to submit a minimum of five diary entries in addition to the first and second diary entry. For Cycle II, students were required to submit a minimum of three diary entries, in addition to the first and second diary entry. The researcher was aware that including the learner diary entries as part of the course assessment may influence what students wrote in their entries and this is discussed in the Conclusion chapter (Section 7.4).

The following section presents the main research questions and the sub-research questions which this study aimed to explore.

### **1.3 Research questions**

In this AR study, the researcher explored the beliefs of EAP students about GW/PR in two separate Cycles (42 participants in Cycle I and 14 participants in Cycle II). To provide answers to the research questions, data were collected in Cycle I through a learner diary (202 diary entries) and interviews (4), and in Cycle II data were collected through a learner diary (40 diary entries) and a group evaluation exercise (14 group evaluation papers). This section presents the main research questions and their

relevant sub-research questions for Cycle I. A brief explanation follows each main research question and subsequent sub-research questions indicating how the sub-questions relate to the main questions and why the researcher decided to focus on these particular questions. Secondly, the research questions for Cycle II are presented. The researcher was primarily interested in the beliefs of the learners and so the research questions are addressed from the perspective of the learner.

## *Cycle I*

### **Main Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training?

### **Main Research Question 2 (RQ2)**

What are learners' beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of **group work** and **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training?

**Sub-Research Question 1(SRQ1):** What are learners' beliefs about participation during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 2 (SRQ2):** What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 3(SRQ3):** What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **group work** and **peer review**?

### **Main Research Question 3 (RQ3)**

What are learners' beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **group work** and **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training?

**Sub-Research Question 1(SRQ1):** What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 2(SRQ2):** What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **group work** and **peer review**?

#### **Main Research Question 4 (RQ4)**

Do learners' beliefs about **group work** and **peer review** change during a one-semester course when they **have not** received targeted training?

The main purpose of this AR study was to gain a deeper understanding of learners' beliefs about GW/PR and to discover the differences between the beliefs of students who had received no training in GW/PR and those who had received some training. The first main research question was added following the analysis of the data gathered in Cycle I when it became evident that the findings could be taken into consideration when revising the course. Learners' beliefs about effective ways to implement GW therefore became an invaluable part of the study as well as providing an in-depth understanding of the learners' beliefs regarding the factors that contribute to effective GW.

The second main research question was chosen since much of the literature has considered the benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR and the researcher believed it to be important to be able to draw comparisons between the literature and the results of this research. In addition to exploring the benefits and disadvantages of GW/PR in general, the study also focuses on discovering learners' beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of specific aspects of GW/PR. The first sub-research question was chosen due to the obvious relationship between learners' beliefs about GW/PR and their level of participation during GW/PR activities. If students were willing to cooperate then it could be assumed that they would participate to a higher degree than if they were not willing to work together. Consequently, even if students did work willingly together they may still prefer to carry out some tasks individually.

The second and third sub-research questions are concerned with the beliefs that students held in terms of the contribution their peers made to students' own learning and their own contribution to the learning of others during GW/PR. These questions need to be explored in-depth because if students had the belief that they were learning from their group mates, their beliefs about GW would be more favourable than if they held the belief that their group mates had not contributed to their learning. It was also important for learners to consider their own contribution to others' learning and to explore whether they held the belief that they had contributed to GW/PR and whether they considered this to be important.

The third main research question was chosen because the teacher and student assume different roles during cooperative GW/PR. The role of the learner is particularly significant when examining learners' beliefs about GW/PR since it encourages students to become more actively involved in their own learning and they also tend to learn from their group members. Students are also required to take more responsibility for their own learning and to become more accountable. This is even more apparent when applying a cooperative approach to GW in which the role of the teacher becomes one of facilitator rather than that of instructor. This change of roles in which learners become more autonomous can frequently cause challenges for the second language learner. These issues led the researcher to consider learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher. Did students expect the teacher to play a greater role during group activities? Did students prefer to be corrected by the teacher or did they also value the feedback from their fellow classmates? This research question is of particular importance in exploring the beliefs of learners regarding PR because many of the learners' beliefs centred on students giving feedback to their peers and receiving feedback from their peers.

The fourth and final main research question is important since its aim is to explore whether students experienced any changes in their beliefs during the course even though they were not receiving any training in GW/PR.

The main research questions and sub-research questions for Cycle II are the same as those for Cycle I, except they reflect the training that students had experienced in GW/PR:

## *Cycle II*

### **Main Research Question 1 (RQ1)**

What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have** received some targeted training?

### **Main Research Question 2 (RQ2)**

What are learners' beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of **group work** and **peer review** when they **have** received some targeted training?

**Sub-Research Question 1(SRQ1):** What are learners' beliefs about participation during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 2(SRQ2):** What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 3(SRQ3):** What are learners’ beliefs about their own contribution to their peers’ learning during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Main Research Question 3 (RQ3)**

What are learners’ beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **group work** and **peer review** when they **have** received some targeted training?

**Sub-Research Question 1(SRQ1):** What are learners’ beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Sub-Research Question 2(SRQ2):** What are learners’ beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **group work** and **peer review**?

**Main Research Question 4 (RQ4)**

Do learners’ beliefs about **group work** and **peer review** change during a one-semester course when they **have** received some targeted training?

The following section provides definitions of the key terms used in this thesis.

**1.4 Definition of key terms**

This section provides definitions of some of the key terms used in this study. In some cases these terms may have more than one meaning. For the purpose of this study, however, they are only defined in terms of how they are used in this thesis.

**Beliefs (Section 2.3)**

Beliefs are defined in this study as “opinions and ideas that learners (and teachers) have about the task of learning a second/foreign language” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003, p. 1). They are “general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning and about the nature of language learning and teaching” (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, p. 224). As such, they are subjective, but held to be true by the learners themselves. In this study, beliefs are defined according to the contextual approach, that is, they are socially constructed; they are social in nature and thus they emerge from interaction with others. Because of the social nature of beliefs, they are subject to change. While some beliefs may remain static, others are dynamic and emerging. Although beliefs are social, they do become part of a learner’s knowledge system.

### **Collaborative learning** (Section 2.1.1)

According to Smith and MacGregor (1992), “collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together” (p.1). Collaborative learning typically involves students working together in groups to achieve a common goal (Dooly, 2008). Collaborative learning takes place “when students and faculty work together to create knowledge ... It is a pedagogy that has at its center the assumptions that people make meaning together and that the process enriches and enlarges them” (Matthews, 1996, p. 101).

### **Cooperative learning** (Section 2.1.2)

Cooperative learning in this study is defined as an approach to learning rather than a concrete system of learning and teaching in which students work together in small groups to maximise their own and their group members’ learning. This study follows Johnson and Johnson’s five principles of cooperative learning: 1) positive interdependence, 2) face-to-face promotive interaction, 3) individual accountability, 4) interpersonal and small-group skills, and 5) group processing (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988).

### **Cooperative and collaborative approaches to learning**

Cooperative and collaborative learning are two approaches to GW that have become increasingly popular in the university classroom in the past few decades. The terms “cooperative” and “collaborative” are frequently used interchangeably which can lead to confusion between these two different types of GW, especially since some practitioners see little or no difference between these two strategies (Panitz, 1996). Both approaches use small groups in which each member is required to be an active participant who works with his/her group members to complete a specific task but, as Oxford (1997) points out, they have “developed special connotations and classroom applications in recent years” (p. 443). The distinction will be further clarified in Chapter Two (Section 2.1).

### **Diary studies**

A diary study constitutes a first-person account of learning experiences recorded over a period of time. It is introspective and describes affective factors that are usually not visible to the external observer (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983).

## **EAP learners**

In this study, EAP learners are representative of those students whose first language (L1) is not English and who either wish and/or need to improve their academic English skills to a standard that is necessary for success at the tertiary level by enrolling in a recognised course. When describing this study, such students are referred to as NESB students or simply learners, students, or participants and these terms refer to those students enrolled in the EAP paper at the University of Otago. In this study the majority of EAP learners were from Asia.

### **Group work (GW) (Section 2.1)**

In this thesis, group work or GW is used to refer to any activity in which two or more students are simply working together in loosely structured groups. If the study is referring to GW that involves students interacting with each other to achieve a common goal, but is not based specifically on cooperative learning principles, it is referred to as collaborative learning or collaborative GW and if it is specifically referring to GW that follows cooperative learning principles then it is referred to as cooperative learning. Since it was not the purpose of this research to explore learners' beliefs about the various approaches to GW or the different types of activities that students participated in during Cycle II, the teacher/researcher did not think it necessary to point out to students the methods or activities that used collaborative learning approaches or those that followed the specific principles of cooperative learning (Section 2.1.1 and Section 2.1.2).

### **Peer review (PR) (Section 2.1.3)**

Peer review, or PR, involves collaborative learning in which students read, evaluate, and provide feedback on each other's writing.

## **1.5 Summary and organisation of the thesis**

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter One has provided the background and the context of the study, explained the existing gap in the literature and presented the research questions that frame the study. Chapter Two, the Literature Review, begins with a review of the research related to GW in general before moving on to collaborative learning, cooperative learning and PR. A review of the literature on international students studying at Western universities is also presented before reviewing the research on learner beliefs. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the AR framework that

guided this study. Chapter Three, Methodology, begins with the methodological approach of the study which is followed by the research design and the implementation of the research. Chapter Four and Chapter Five present the results of the analysis of the data from Cycle I and Cycle II respectively. Chapter Four presents the findings of the learner diary entries and the case studies: diary entries and interview and concludes with a reflection which explains the changes that were made to the course following Cycle I. Chapter Five presents the findings of the learner diary entries and group evaluation exercise. Chapter Six, Discussion, presents the main discussion of the research findings in light of the research reviewed in Chapter Two. The findings from the present research are linked directly to the research questions provided in this chapter. Finally, in Chapter Seven, Conclusion, the key findings are presented and this is followed by the original contribution to knowledge and the major contribution of this study which are the pedagogical implications. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research follow and the chapter concludes with a final reflection.

## **CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter reviews the theory and previously published studies in the following three main areas: GW, international students at Western universities, and language learners' beliefs. The first part of this chapter begins with an overview of GW (Section 2.1), and then focuses on the background and the theory that underpins collaborative learning (Section 2.1.1) and cooperative learning (Section 2.1.2). The following section focuses on the history and theory of PR (Section 2.1.3). These sections also present the benefits and drawbacks of the respective methods and reviews approaches to training. The second part of the chapter reviews the literature on international students studying at Western universities (Section 2.2). The focus of this section is on the academic and learning experiences of NESB students enrolled in undergraduate courses or university preparation programs at English-medium universities. This section begins with a review of studies on NESB students at Western universities and this is then followed by a review of the research in the New Zealand context. The third part of the chapter focuses on learners' beliefs (Section 2.3). This section begins by exploring the complex nature of beliefs (Section 2.3.1). This is then followed by a review of the developments in research on learners' beliefs over the past few decades (Section 2.3.2). This section includes a discussion of the main approaches researchers have used to study learners' beliefs and a review of significant studies within these approaches. The concept of emergent beliefs is also introduced. The following section (Section 2.3.3) reviews the studies on learners' beliefs about GW in ESL/EFL/EAP/writing courses, which is followed by a review of the literature on learners' beliefs about PR in these contexts (Section 2.3.4). An overview of AR follows (Section 2.4) and the chapter concludes with a summary (Section 2.5).

### **2.1 Group work**

GW has its origins in the field of education where groups are used to create more interactive, learner-oriented classes in which students are more involved in their own learning (Reynolds, 2013). For the past few decades the use of GW in ESL/EFL contexts has been seen as both valuable in maximising student learning and essential in developing the communicative competence of ESL/EFL students (Long & Porter, 1985). In tertiary classrooms, the use of GW is no longer restricted to oral communication classes, but is now used in classes aimed at teaching the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing and is also used extensively in EAP classes. In addition to participation

in GW activities, university students are increasingly required to work with their peers to complete group assignments since such activities offer opportunities for students to practice and develop team work skills, skills which they are expected to have fully acquired upon graduation (Volet & Mansfield, 2006).

In this study GW is used as “a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language” (Brown, 1994, p. 173). This concept of group dynamics, however, is often missing when GW is implemented in the language classroom and it is therefore often seen as ineffective by language teachers and frequently leads to inefficient use of teacher and student time.

### **2.1.1 Collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term encompassing a broad range of theories and approaches involving the combined contributions of students (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Cooperative learning is considered a subset of collaborative learning (Nakata, 2006), despite the terms being frequently used as synonyms (Panitz, 1996). Collaborative learning is connected to the social constructivist view that knowledge is a social construct, reflecting the ideas of Vygotsky and Dewey (Oxford, 1997). Social constructivists emphasise social interactions as the prerequisite to cognitive development and regard learning as a social activity. Collaboration is strongly linked to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and to scaffolding.

According to Vygotsky (1978, p. 86), there are two language development levels that learners will experience. The “actual developmental level” refers to what the language learners are already able to do and the “potential developmental level” refers to what language learners are capable of reaching in the future. Vygotsky refers to a point somewhere between these two levels as the ZPD. In order for students to reach the potential developmental level they need to interact and collaborate with fellow students, preferably those that are more capable than they are. By collaborating with each other to complete their learning task, their cognitive abilities will be extended (Nastasi & Clements, 1991). Nastasi and Clements assert that in L2 classrooms the teacher’s role is that of expert or director to assist their students to move from their actual developmental level through their ZPD to achieve their potential developmental level. This teacher-student interaction is known as “scaffolding”. In scaffolding, teachers motivate students by simplifying tasks to reduce learners’ stress and anxiety,

especially for those students whose language ability is limited. Kenneth Bruffee was also influenced by the work of Vygotsky whose theories form the basis of Bruffee's collaborative learning model.

Bruffee's (1984) essay traces the history and development of collaborative learning in both the British and the American contexts. According to Bruffee, the term collaborative learning was first coined in Britain and began to develop there during the 1950s and 1960s by a group of secondary school teachers and a biologist who was studying British postgraduate medical education. Research had already been conducted into the use of collaborative learning amongst medical students at the University of London by Abercrombie (1964, as cited in Bruffee, 1984) whose ten year research started when she noticed that medical students "acquired good medical judgment" faster when they worked collaboratively in groups than when they learned alone (Bruffee, 1984, p.637). In the United States, however, collaborative learning grew out of a need to improve college students' academic performance during the 1980s. It appeared that students were not adjusting to their new learning environment and were reluctant to attend tutoring programmes provided by the university since students perceived these to be "merely an extension of the work, the expectations, and above all the social structure of traditional classroom learning" (Bruffee, 1984, p.638).

In the field of leadership education, much has been written about the importance of developing GW skills in the university classroom and the transferability of these skills to the workplace. Hassanien (2007) found that students perceived GW as an essential component of their university studies "because teamwork skills represent currently essential employability requirements" (p.145). Collaboration has become an important aspect of today's workplace and it is, therefore, crucial that university students acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience that will enable them to successfully work with others outside the classroom. Ricketts, Bruce, and Ewing (2008), argue that team building skills are a significant benefit of GW, however, their study found that students often did not realise that the team building skills they learned in the classroom could be transferred to the workplace in their future lives. Furthermore, there is often an assumption amongst teachers that students will develop group skills merely by being part of a group and, consequently, they do not receive any formal or informal instruction related to group behavior or group dynamics (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).

### **2.1.2 Cooperative learning**

This section begins by presenting the theory that underpins cooperative learning: Social interdependence theory.

### *Social interdependence theory*

The basic theory of social interdependence was formulated in the 1940s by Morton Deutsch, who had built on the work of Kurt Koffka and Kurt Lewin. Koffka was one of the founders of the Gestalt School of Psychology and he had contended that “groups were dynamic wholes in which interdependence among members could vary” (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007, p. 16). Later, Lewin further developed the concept, explaining that:

- a) the essence of a group is the interdependence among members (created by common goals) that results in the group being a “dynamic whole” so that a change in the state of any member or subgroup changes the state of all other members or subgroups and
- b) an intrinsic state of tension in group members motivates movement toward the accomplishment of the desired common goals (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007, p. 16).

When students work together on tasks, some groups will cooperate more successfully than other groups and interactions between students in the groups will also vary depending on factors such as motivation, personality, and relationships between the individual group members. Nevertheless, each group, as a dynamic whole produces results. When groups work interdependently towards a common goal then their motivation to achieve results will naturally increase (Dörnyei, 1997; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). Social interdependence theory was further developed by David Johnson, a former graduate student of Deutsch’s, who applied the theory to an educational context and established methods and strategies for teachers to implement. Social interdependence theory, when applied to cooperative learning, attempts to explain how group members interact with each other to achieve a common goal and how this interaction influences the group’s achievements (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). According to the theory, there are two types of social interdependence: positive interdependence (cooperation) and negative interdependence (competition). Positive interdependence refers to situations in which group members work cooperatively and respect and support each other’s contributions toward achieving the shared goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Negative interdependence occurs when the group becomes competitive rather than cooperative with students discouraging each other rather than supporting each other (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that positive social interdependence or cooperation will promote learning among students and therefore will increase the achievement levels of students.

Social interdependence theory provides the foundation on which cooperative learning is built (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). According to D. W. Johnson (1970) and Johnson and Johnson (1974), cooperative learning originated in the United States and can be traced back to 1966 when teachers were first trained in the effective use of small group work at the University of Minnesota (as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Despite the earlier formulation of social interdependence theory and the training carried out at the University of Minnesota, cooperative learning did not start to become popular until the 1980s (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In these early days of cooperative learning, much of the research was conducted by researchers in the United States and focused on group learning in mainstream classrooms, typically at the primary and secondary school level. However, as Johnson and Johnson point out, a considerable amount of literature has since been published on cooperative learning from around the world and cooperative learning is now used in all subjects and in adult classes, including at the tertiary level.

The cooperative learning approach is an instructional process in which students work together to achieve common goals or academic tasks (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). Olsen and Kagan (1992) define cooperative learning as being:

group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. (p.8)

Cooperative learning can, therefore, be seen as a structured approach with specific, systematic principles and practices (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988, 1993). This systematic set of principles and practices include positive interdependence, specific role assignments in a group, and goal-related accountability of individuals and of the group (Oxford, 1997). Cooperative learning, therefore, refers to students working together to maximise the learning of all members of the group and ensuring that students benefit from the work of every group member. To achieve this, goals of the task are clearly specified and individual as well as group grades are assigned.

Many educationists (Johnson & Johnson, 1990, 1999b, 2002a; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988; Kagan, 1992, 1995, 1996; Slavin, 1995) have studied cooperative learning in the mainstream school classroom, especially in social studies, science, and mathematics classes and a significant amount of this research has studied the benefits of cooperative learning. The results of these studies have found that the cooperative learning approach enables students to learn more and is appropriate for all content

areas and grade levels in schools. Although there have been an increasing number of studies conducted on cooperative learning at the tertiary level since the 1990's, much of the literature on cooperative learning has continued to focus on research into cooperative learning in primary and secondary classrooms. Some researchers, however, have recognised the value of cooperative learning for university students in terms of academic achievement and the opportunities to develop team skills and social skills needed in their future careers (Jones & Jones, 2008). However, there is some debate regarding the use of cooperative learning at the tertiary level because it is regarded as being highly structured, rigorously prescriptive and more directive about how to work together, which some researchers argue may impede students' development in higher-order thinking skills, initiative and autonomy in learning (Bruffee, 1995; Matthews, Cooper, Davidson, & Hawkes, 1995; Oxford, 1997). Collaborative learning, which is less structured and allows for greater power and freedom over the learning process and assessment, is often considered more suitable to postsecondary or tertiary levels. On the other hand, as Panitz (1996) points out, some researchers do not make a clear distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning because of the considerable overlap focusing on positive peer-to-peer interaction and fulfilment of mutual goals.

### **The five principles of cooperative learning**

Johnson and Johnson (2002a, 2002b), who are considered the pioneers of cooperative learning in mainstream classrooms, identified the five following basic principles of cooperative learning: 1) positive interdependence, 2) individual accountability, 3) mutual interaction, 4) social skills, and 5) group processing. They argue that all five of these principles are necessary for successful cooperative situations, including peer tutoring.

#### ***Positive interdependence***

Johnson and Johnson (2002a) describe positive interdependence as being “the heart of cooperative learning” (p. 96). According to Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984), positive interdependence occurs when each group member understands clearly that they each have dual responsibilities: 1) the responsibility to understand what the assigned tasks are and 2) the responsibility to ensure that all group members understand the group task as well. This dual responsibility is referred to in the literature as positive interdependence. Positive interdependence is an important belief that students (and teachers) hold about the classroom environment (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007). Students who have a strong sense of positive interdependence hold the belief that there is value in learning from

the ideas and contributions of their fellow students. They realise that each group member is dependent on every student in the group and that for the group to be successful, each member needs to be successful (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Positive interdependence exists when group members promote each other's achievements and believe that their goal can be best achieved through mutual cooperation, effort and support. Dörnyei (1997) points out that positive interdependence provides contact and interaction amongst group members which promotes cohesiveness within the group. Once students realise that "we sink or swim together" they understand the importance for each group member to contribute to the learning of others in the group (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998; Jolliffe, 2007). Groups which have a strong sense of positive interdependence are made up of members who work together towards a common goal and care about each other's learning. This is achieved in successful groups because positive interdependence establishes that: 1) each group member's efforts are required and essential for the success of the group (no "free-riders") and 2) each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of either the resources, role and/or task that each member is responsible for. Positive interdependence is central to cooperative learning and is vital to the success of the group (Slavin, 1995). Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998) point out that positive interdependence may be structured by the teacher in various ways, including, but not limited to the following: established mutual goals (own and each other's productivity are maximised), shared resources (members have different expertise), and assigned roles (for example, summariser, encourager of participation, elaborator).

### ***Individual accountability***

Individual accountability refers to the concept that each group member is held accountable for investigating and learning their assigned task and any assigned materials. This element of cooperative learning emphasises the point that each group member is individually evaluated as well as the group as a whole therefore ensuring the effort of each group member (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). If students are not individually accountable then there is a risk that "social loafing" may occur.

### ***Mutual interaction***

Mutual interaction, or face-to-face interaction, refers to the help and support given and received by members of the group. This positive face-to-face interaction should result in students feeling more comfortable and secure when working together in a group. As well as lowering students' anxiety, by sharing and challenging each other's ideas, students' critical thinking skills should also improve

(Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). When mutual interaction does not take place, students are likely to employ a “divide and conquer” attitude whereby the task is divided amongst the group members and each group member completes their part of the task individually and the end product becomes a series of individually completed assignments (Jones & Jones, 2008). This is more likely to occur when GW has not been carefully structured. For cooperative learning to be successful, students must have numerous opportunities where they can sit together and discuss the material, activity, or assignment. The quality of student interaction is an important aspect of cooperative learning. However, the researcher believes that mutual interaction does not necessarily have to be limited to face-to-face interaction, but that it can also include direct interaction between group members such as communication through e-mail, talking on the phone, and texting each other. Although such interactions do not take place “in person”, students are nevertheless cooperating with each other through this type of interaction.

### ***Social skills***

The cooperative approach does not expect students to bring with them to the classroom the necessary skills to interact successfully within a group. If students lack these social skills then it is essential that they are taught these skills by the teacher so that they know how to cooperate with others, for example, how to accept the opinions of fellow group members and how to support their group members. As Johnson and Johnson (1990) argue, placing students in groups and telling them to cooperate does not ensure that groups will cooperate. In addition to teaching social skills, teachers may also need to teach the skills necessary for resolving conflicts, leadership skills, and developing communication strategies and building trust (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993).

### ***Group processing***

Group processing, also referred to as debriefing, refers to group self-evaluation in which students reflect on their GW experience and identify the aspects that the group did well as well as those that the group did not do well. By having students reflect on the group task and their performance in completing the task, the GW process becomes even more effective as students are able to find ways to improve performance for their next task (Johnson et al., 1993). Time spent on group processing can range from five minutes to the whole class period and can be conducted immediately following the GW activity or sometime after. Group processing can be formal or informal: a formal group processing session could involve the teacher giving a questionnaire or checklist to the students and an informal

group processing session could be carried out by students through a discussion of the activity. In the present study, students in Cycle II were involved in group processing through their completion of the group evaluation exercise (Section 3.2.7).

For Johnson and Johnson (2009), these five pillars of cooperative learning are crucial in ensuring that cooperation amongst group members is successful. In this study, the training in cooperative GW that learners in Cycle II received incorporated some of the elements of these five principles and these are presented in the Reflection (Section 4.4).

This section has reviewed the five elements of cooperative developed by Johnson and Johnson (1999b). However, Kagan (1992) and Slavin (1995), also leading researchers of cooperative learning, have developed different approaches to cooperative learning. Kagan (1989) advocates an approach based on a variety of structures which emphasise team building and group skills. According to Kagan (1992), the essential elements of cooperative learning are: “Positive Interdependence”, “Individual Accountability”, “Equal Participation”, and “Simultaneous Interaction”, known collectively as PIES. Slavin’s (1995) approach is based on methods adapted from the work of Johnson and Johnson (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988) and Kagan (1994) and has resulted in the development of specific learning structures. The researcher decided to follow Johnson and Johnson’s approach to cooperative learning in this study because the students were required to cooperate outside the classroom and Kagan’s structures are designed to be implemented in the classroom.

### **Cooperative learning methods**

Cooperative learning is a generic term that is used to describe numerous methods of organising groups. These pedagogical practices can range from loosely structured activities to very highly structured activities. Likewise, groups can also vary from informal groups that work together once to complete a task to formal and more structured groups that can work together in the same groups throughout the semester. Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000) selected ten commonly used methods of cooperative learning, shown in Table 1, in their meta-analysis of 164 studies on cooperative learning. They concluded that the literature found strong evidence that cooperative learning methods are likely to produce positive achievement results. The researcher added “Think-Pair-Share” to the table since this is a commonly used cooperative method and was included as part of learners’ training in Cycle II of this study. As can be seen from Table 1, a number of researchers have developed various strategies

and approaches to cooperative learning over a period of twenty-five years from the mid 1960's to the end of the 1980's.

**TABLE 1: MODERN METHODS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

<b>Researcher-Developer</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Method</b>
Johnson & Johnson	Mid 1960s	Learning Together & Alone
DeVries & Edwards	Early 1970s	Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT)
Sharan & Sharan	Mid 1970s	Group Investigation
Johnson & Johnson	Mid 1970s	Constructive Controversy
Aronson & Associates	Late 1970s	Jigsaw Procedure
Slavin & Associates	Late 1970s	Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD)
Cohen	Early 1980s	Complex Instruction
Lyman	Early 1980s	Think-Pair-Share
Slavin & Associates	Early 1980s	Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI)
Kagan	Mid 1980s	Cooperative Learning Structures
Stevens, Slavin, & Associates	Late 1980s	Cooperative Integrated Reading & Composition (CIRC)

The following section discusses the main features of implementing cooperative learning in the classroom.

### **Implementing cooperative learning in the classroom**

Cooperative learning groups are successful only when every member has learnt the material or has understood the assignment. It is also important to emphasise individual learning, so group members can help each other. When teachers apply cooperative learning in their classrooms, there are several issues that need to be considered. The following factors are not exclusive to cooperative learning and should be taken into consideration when introducing any type of GW into the classroom.

#### ***Group size***

When implementing cooperative methods in the L2 classroom, it is important to take into consideration the size of the group. The size of the group is an important consideration in GW because this affects the dynamics of the group (Burke, 2011). There is some disagreement in the literature regarding the most appropriate size of a group. Although it is often suggested that a small group

consists of three or more members, some researchers argue that groups of two, or dyads, are also considered to be groups (Jacobs, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1999b; Kagan & Kagan, 1994). Johnson and Johnson (1999b) maintain that for meaningful face-to-face interaction to take place, groups should be limited to four members while Oxford (1997) advocates that groups should have fewer than seven members. Kagan and Kagan (1994) argue that dyads provide greater opportunities for student participation. It has also been noted that the amount of time available for the task needs to be considered: the less time available, the smaller the groups should be (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). Jacobs (2006) acknowledges that there are advantages, too, with groups of four which he believes are also the most common. He argues that four is an optimum number because they can be divided into two pairs and then reunite as a group of four. Arumugam and Abdullah (2011) investigated tertiary ESL writing students' perceptions of cooperative learning and found that 90% of students thought that the maximum size of a group should be four members. Group size also needs to be considered for logistical reasons if students are participating in GW outside the classroom. Fiechtner and Davis (1992) found that a large group could be problematic for students causing difficulties for arranging times to meet outside the university classroom.

### ***Group formation***

Proponents of cooperative learning suggest that in mixed level groups consisting of low-ability, medium-ability and high-achieving students, all members are able to benefit academically (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Outside the field of cooperative learning, it has also been suggested that groups be comprised of members of different levels since this will require a greater need for negotiation (Varonis & Gass, 1985). Students who are more knowledgeable can scaffold their weaker peers to a point just beyond their current capability (Donato, 2004; Storch, 2002). Porter (1986), argued that in pair work consisting of a higher-level and a lower-level student, both students will benefit: the student who is more proficient is able to practice producing comprehensible output and the less proficient student gains experience in negotiating meaning. From the learners' point of view, they may have their own beliefs about who they wish to work with in a group.

### ***Teachers' roles***

Teachers play an important role in helping groups function successfully. In a cooperative learning classroom, teachers should assume the role of facilitator, preparing students for the tasks they will carry out and assisting students with the learning task (Zhang, 2010).

### *Students' roles*

Learners are active participators and autonomous learners in cooperative learning (Zhang, 2010). It is recommended that each group member be assigned a specific and distinct role to play in helping the group to achieve its goals. Johnson and Johnson (2009) recommend the following roles be assigned to group members: reader, recorder, summariser, and encourager of participation.

### *Group grades*

Although there tends to be a general consensus amongst proponents of cooperative learning regarding the principles of cooperative GW, the inclusion of group grades in cooperative courses remains a contentious issue. Slavin (1995) believes that group grades have a positive effect on student motivation, but he maintains that for cooperative learning to be successful, there needs to be individual accountability and that the grade each student receives must be based on the ability and effort of each individual student. Some researchers and educators argue that group grades are unfair especially for groups that include a social loafer who is not participating fully within the group (Kagan, 1995). Kagan strongly criticises group grades, claiming that there is never any justification for the inclusion of group grades in a course and he believes that group grades have a negative impact on students' motivation since students have less control over the grade they will receive (Kagan, 1996).

However, some researchers believe that there is a place for group grades in a cooperative course and that they are very important because they reinforce the notion that students "sink or swim together" thus fostering positive interdependence within the group (Johnson & Johnson, 2002b; Joliffe, 2007). Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) explain that this type of grading can be used to promote positive reward interdependence: the group is rewarded according to their efforts and when groups are successful the quality of cooperation in their group improves. Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984) do not recommend, however, that every grade in the course should be a group grade, but rather that the final course grade should consist of grades resulting from collaborative, individualistic, and competitive assessments. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith suggest various ways of assigning group grades to cooperative assignments including, but not limited to, averaging of group members' individual marks (each group member receives an individual mark and all members' marks are then divided by the number of group members), randomly grading one member's paper (each group member completes the exercise individually, group members check that all papers in the group are correct, the teacher then selects one of the papers and all group members receive that mark), and

receiving a group grade on a single assignment (group members work together to complete the assignment, the teacher grades the final product and all members of that group receive the awarded grade). These methods also ensure that individual accountability has been structured into the group grade.

Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984), argue that although there is a belief amongst educators and students who have not experienced cooperative learning that group grades are unfair, research on the views of students regarding group grades has found that after students have experienced cooperative learning and received a single group grade for an assessment, students have more positive perceptions of group grades. They argue that for GW to be successful, it is essential that students view the grading system used in their courses as being fair. In contrast, Barfield's (2003) study of 230 university students enrolled in management courses found that students with less experience with group grades were more in favour of every group member receiving the same grade and as students became more experienced with group grades there was a tendency for them to believe they should receive a higher grade than their group members. Barfield suggests that these findings could be due to students' lack of understanding of the complexity of group dynamics. Students in his study were not involved in courses following cooperative learning principles. Hoffman and Rogelberg's (2001) study involved 360 undergraduate students evaluating 1 of 12 randomly assigned hypothetical versions of a syllabus based on group projects. Findings from their study showed that students had a stronger preference for group projects in which students were evaluated on both their individual and group performance and that lower level students held more favourable views towards courses in which GW accounted for half of the final course grade and when students were evaluated as a group compared with higher level students. Unexpectedly, students were not in favour of a group grade which also included students' evaluation of their peers. However, Kouros and Abrami's (2006) study of high school and junior college biology students found that only one third of the students believed that a group grade was fair and approximately half of the students had the view that group members would still receive a good grade even if they had not contributed as much to the group as their group members had.

### ***Training in cooperative learning***

Baker and Clark (2011) developed a training programme for Ako Aotearoa (National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) aimed at teaching lecturers about the principles of cooperative learning

and approaches to implementing cooperative learning in tertiary classes in New Zealand. It is intended that the programme will enhance the experience of first-year domestic and international tertiary students working together in these culturally, socially, and educationally mixed groups. Clark and Baker (2009) argue that it is of particular importance to have a programme that has been specifically designed for post-secondary teachers in New Zealand, due to the diverse population of tertiary classrooms and the lack of lecturers trained in cooperative learning in New Zealand. Following two pilot studies, their revised training programme includes the following: pre-reading articles related to concepts and approaches of cooperative learning and teacher participation in various cooperative activities. In addition to traditional cooperative activities the training also includes activities from outside the realm of cooperative learning.

It was mentioned earlier in this literature review that there has been a vast amount of research conducted on cooperative learning outside New Zealand and the findings of this research have provided substantial evidence of its benefits to students. The following section presents an overview of the benefits of cooperative learning in mainstream classrooms and then discusses the benefits of GW in language classrooms.

### **Benefits of group work**

Much of the research on cooperative learning has focused on the benefits of this learning approach. Johnson and Johnson (2002a) reviewed 60 years of research on cooperative learning and found that students generally benefitted from cooperative learning when they worked together to achieve a common goal by achieving higher levels of achievement and being more productive than when they worked individually. Studies have found that students working in groups are more likely to gain a deeper understanding of the material presented by the teacher compared with students who are working individually (Cohen, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin, 1995). Research has also found that cooperative learning has social and affective benefits such as fostering intergroup relations, the ability to work collaboratively with peers, and the development of self-esteem (Cohen, 1994; Dörnyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Slavin, 1995). In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the benefits of GW from the perspective of university students in various disciplines. Burdett's (2003) study of final year business students at an Australian university found those students who responded positively to GW were also more likely to perceive that the workload was fairly shared, that they could not have achieved better outcomes had they been working individually, and that the marks they were awarded were also generally fair. Their GW experience

also gave them the opportunity to generate ideas and share their views, meet people and build friendships, and improve the learning processes. Interestingly, these students were less likely to perceive themselves as holding a leadership role within the group or having done more work than their group members.

Research has also been conducted on the benefits of GW in language classes. In their seminal paper, Long and Porter (1985) identified five pedagogical arguments for using GW in second language classrooms. They argued that effective GW can lead to increased language practice opportunities, improvements in the quality of student talk, individualised instruction, the creation of a positive affective climate, and increased motivation among learners. Pica and Doughty (1985) also compared teacher-led discussions with small group discussions and found that there were greater opportunities for students to interact with each other as well as more opportunities to practice using English during GW. In addition to improving the communicative competence of ESL/EFL learners, developing team building skills is also regarded as a key benefit of GW.

### **Drawbacks of group work**

Not surprisingly, one of the most frequently cited drawbacks of GW is the contribution of each group member to the group activity or assignment and the possibility of a group member or members not contributing to the group effort which is referred to as freeloading, social loafing or hitch-hiking in the literature and according to Clark and Baker (2011) was first researched in the workplace. A further disadvantage of this lack of contribution is the benefit that the freeloading student receives from the contributions of their group members. Social loafing has been identified in some research as being a significant factor affecting students' attitude toward GW, especially at the undergraduate level (Buckenmyer, 2000). According to Chapman and Arenson (1993), social loafing can be avoided if it is made clear to students before the implementation of GW what is expected of each individual within the group as well as the expected individual contributions to the group. Additional variables that can lessen or eliminate the effects of social loafing include high personal involvement, task complexity, accountability for the group product, clarity of the group goals, collective efficacy, cohesiveness of the group, and potential for evaluation (Chapman & Arenson, 1993). Significantly, these variables share similar features with the five principles of cooperative learning and Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) argue that if social loafing does occur, then it is because the GW activity has been ill-defined and poorly structured.

In Burdett's (2003) study discussed above, although fewer students responded negatively to the GW, those that did were also concerned with the distribution of work within the group. Students who did respond negatively, were also more likely to share the view that they would have been more successful had they completed the task individually, perceive that they had completed most of the work and feel that the marks they were awarded were not fair. Students also experienced difficulties attempting to accommodate different work schedules for meeting times. The issue of students not contributing equally to the group activity or assignment is a frequently cited drawback of GW.

The following section reviews the literature regarding PR, a collaborative activity that has become increasingly popular in EAP and writing courses in the last two decades.

### **2.1.3 Peer review**

PR has become a common activity in ESL/EFL writing classrooms and is a standard component of the writing process approach. Early practitioners and researchers of the writing process strongly advocated the use of collaborative techniques in composition and writing classes (Bruffee, 1984; Elbow, 1972). The writing component of the EAP course in the present study followed a process in which students followed a series of steps before submitting their final draft of their essay (brainstorming, writing an outline, writing a first draft, peer reviewing the first draft, self-reviewing their second draft, and revising, proofreading, and editing their final draft). In the writing process approach, the journey towards the final draft is regarded as more important than the actual final product. In the reviewing of their first draft in this course, each student's essay was reviewed by a peer, in addition to the student and the student's tutor.

Although PR can include students giving each other feedback on oral assignments such as presentations, in the present study PR is defined as an in-class activity in which students, working in pairs or small groups, provide feedback on their peers' writing. In this study, students exchanged the first draft of their academic argument essay and gave written feedback (Cycle I) and written and verbal feedback (Cycle II) on their peers' draft based on a set of guidelines. The aim of this student-centred exercise was to help students improve their writing by receiving feedback from their peers. In this study the term PR, referring to peer review is used, however, the literature also shows a number of additional terms used including peer editing, peer evaluation, and peer response (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In contrast, the term peer assessment is more commonly and accurately used to refer to students giving grades or marks to their peers' work. This could be in the form of students assessing other

students' work: either the finished product or a work in progress or where students assess the performance or contribution of other group members (Falchikov, 1995). Gere (1987), in her influential book *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications*, also refers to the myriad of names that have been used to describe the concept of groups of three to more than forty peers giving feedback on each other's written work:

Writing groups, the partner method, helping circles, collaborative writing, response groups, team writing, writing laboratories, teacherless writing classes, group inquiry technique, the round table, class criticism, editing sessions, writing teams, workshops, peer tutoring, the socialized method, mutual improvement sessions, intensive peer review. (Gere, 1987, p.1)

Although PR has been popular in university writing classes for the past few decades, it is not a recent concept, as is often believed by writing teachers. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, George Jardine, a professor of logic and philosophy at the University of Glasgow, designed a peer review strategy for writing assignments aimed at students who were lacking the necessary written skills to succeed at a traditional university (Gaillet, 1994). As Gaillet points out, Jardine used a form of peer review (though he did not use this terminology) in response to increased class sizes and an increase in the number of nontraditional learners who had not attended private schools. Studies in English language and composition continued to gain in popularity with these students throughout the Scottish universities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. University professors, at that time in Scotland, received an income based on students' fees rather than a fixed salary and consequently it was necessary to deliver lectures in subjects the students were interested in and wanted to learn more about. The nontraditional students wanted lectures on the English language and composition as a means of improving their own proficiency in the language, which would help increase their status in life (Gaillet, 1994). Gere (1987) gives an extensive account of the history of writing groups and literary societies both in academic contexts and outside the university classroom in the United States from the latter part of the nineteenth century to more recent times.

### **Benefits of peer review**

PR, as part of the process approach to teaching writing, has gained increasing attention over the past few decades and there is now a large volume of studies in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature which have focused on the use of peer feedback in the L2 classroom. Much of the literature

has focused on the benefits of PR in language classrooms (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) and many studies have found that PR is an effective activity which has many benefits for the ESL/EFL writing student (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Rollinson, 2005). However, studies which have examined learners' beliefs and perceptions about PR have produced mixed results and these are reviewed later in this chapter following a discussion of learners' beliefs (Section 2.3.4).

A considerable amount of research has focused on the type of feedback students receive in PR. Some of these studies have focused on the positive effect of PR on the revisions made in subsequent drafts of students' work (Berg, 1999a; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Rollinson, 2005). Interestingly, Nelson and Murphy's study also found that cooperation was an important factor in the success of PR. When students worked together cooperatively, there was a greater likelihood that they would incorporate the suggestions made by their peer into their revised draft. In addition to the research conducted on PR and revisions, a number of studies have found that PR develops learners' critical-thinking skills and the analytical skills needed to develop learners' writing (Chaudron, 1984; Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006). Some studies have also found that PR helps learners become more self-aware as they become more aware of the gap between how they and other students view their writing (Saito & Fujita, 2004). This sense of co-ownership encourages students to contribute to decision-making in the classroom. Research has also shown that PR helps students develop a greater awareness of audience since students perceive their peers to be a more realistic audience than their teacher (Chaudron, 1984; Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Zhu, 2001). Lundstrom and Baker (2009) argued that PR can be as beneficial, if not more beneficial, to the reviewer, that is the student who provides the feedback, as it is to the student who receives the feedback. In terms of the social constructivist view discussed earlier (Section 2.1.1), the reviewer's writing may develop more than the writer's since it is the reviewer who will be making the decision about which aspects of writing they will be targeting and the suggestions and advice they consequently give is likely to be within the reviewer's ZPD. If the writer's ZPD is at a different level to that of the reviewer, then the feedback they receive may not scaffold learning (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Lundstrom and Baker also point out that there is a need for more research to be conducted on the benefits of PR for the reviewer in the field of L2 writing.

The social benefits of PR have also been studied by researchers focusing on negotiation and interaction between students during PR (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Such studies have highlighted the positive effect on students' communication and collaboration skills (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Hyland

(2000) suggests that PR encourages greater student participation in the classroom and argues that it should lead to greater student autonomy by encouraging students to be less dependent on the teacher. It has also been argued that PR can create a more comfortable environment for students since they are receiving feedback from a supportive peer rather than their teacher.

Research has also shown that PR has linguistic benefits for learners since PR encourages students to focus on their intended meaning in their own writing as well as discuss feedback with their peers resulting in students acquiring more new ideas and being exposed to different points of view which can also lead to the development of their ideas (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). PR also gives students the opportunity to practice and develop language skills. Nelson and Murphy (1993) studied the content of students' talk during PR and found that when students worked together in a cooperative manner and talked about each other's writing, they were more likely to incorporate the feedback from their peer into their revised draft. Similarly, Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) found that students generally focused on the task of talking about their peer's draft during pair interactions and often worked in a collaborative manner. Nelson and Murphy (1993) highlighted the importance of teachers explaining to students the value of conversation and the negotiation of meaning during PR. PR also provides practical benefits to both the teacher and students. PR can be efficient in terms of time since it allows students to receive immediate feedback on their draft (Rollinson, 2005). Students bring their draft to class and by the end of the class they have received their feedback, in contrast to the usual one-two week turnaround time needed by teachers. Another practical benefit for students is that PR reinforces the writing process and can be used throughout the various stages of the writing process (Liu & Hansen, 2002).

Some studies have focused on comparing peer feedback with teacher feedback (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006). In Yang et al.'s study of Chinese EFL tertiary students, it was found that students successfully incorporated most of the suggestions from their teacher's feedback and more than half of those from their peers, and this resulted in improved final versions of their draft based on the two types of feedback. Interestingly, the revisions that students incorporated that were based on the feedback from their peers were more successful than the revisions that were based on teacher feedback. According to the researchers of the study this was likely due to the interaction between peers which provided them with the opportunity for negotiation of meaning and understanding which lessened the likelihood of misinterpreting their peer's feedback. Caulk (1994) also found that peer feedback complements

teacher feedback because students tend to regard the written draft as a work in progress compared with teachers who tend to regard the draft as a finished product.

### **Drawbacks of peer review**

Although the consensus amongst many researchers is that PR is a useful activity in the ESL/EFL classroom, some research has pointed out some of the disadvantages of PR. One of the main concerns is that PR was originally carried out in L1 writing classrooms and consequently research on PR focused on the L1 context (Bruffee, 1984; Elbow, 1972; Falchikov, 1995; Gere, 1987). Findings from such research showed that there were many benefits of PR and it was often assumed that there would be similar advantages when PR was applied to L2 classrooms. However, some researchers have argued that ESL/EFL classrooms are not the same environment as an L1 classroom and therefore findings from L1 research do not always apply to L2 classrooms and that PR poses different challenges to the ESL/EFL teacher (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Zhang, 1995).

PR is regarded as a social activity, however, some research has indicated that students, instead of interacting with their peer while providing feedback, are working on their own and focusing on the errors their peer has made (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). Villamil and De Guerrero found that whilst many students collaborated successfully in the PR, there were also incidents of uncooperative behaviour such as lack of involvement in the task and disagreements between peers. They argue that teachers need to understand that such behaviours can occur in any social activity in the classroom and that avoiding these behaviours could be a part of training students in PR.

Rollinson (2005) maintains that students may not understand the value of receiving feedback from a peer since they are also language learners of a similar level and they may regard the quality of peer feedback as inferior to that of the professional teacher. Rollinson also argues that students may not be aware of the affective benefits of PR and may not realise that it can be “less threatening, less authoritarian, friendlier, more supportive, and so on” (p. 24) than teacher feedback. Another disadvantage of PR is the quality of feedback given by the reader to the writer. Connor and Asenavage (1994) found that peer feedback had little effect on the revisions students made to their writing and that students incorporated more of the revisions suggested by their teacher. However, it should also be pointed out that the greatest number of revisions students made came from either self-revision or from another source. Tsui and Ng (2000), in their study of high school students in Hong Kong, also

discovered that students favoured the teacher's feedback over that of their peers. Interestingly, Tsui and Ng also discovered that students benefitted more from reading their peers' writing than they did from receiving the feedback from their peers. This is in line with the findings of Lundstrom and Baker (2009) who also found that it was the reviewer who received the most gains from PR.

The literature shows that the main factors needed for PR to be successful and effective is for students to be trained how to do PR and for students to be held accountable for the feedback they give to their peers. In addition, students need to have clear goals and guidelines before they do the PR and they need to understand that PR can be effective and that it can lead to improvements in their writing (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989). Rollinson (2005) also argues that students may be reluctant to participate in PR because they are unaware of its purpose and benefits. The following section reviews the literature on training students to do PR.

### **Training students to do PR**

Researchers have argued that for PR to be successful, it is necessary to train students how to participate in PR (Berg, 1999a, 1999b; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lam, 2010; Min, 2006; Rollinson, 2005). Berg's (1999b) PR training was developed over a period of several years, and in addition to being based on her own classroom experience of PR, it was informed by the recommendations of writing researchers and research into the problems encountered with PR. Berg's (1999a) study compared four classes of ESL writing students studying at a university in the United States: two groups received training in PR whilst two groups received no training. The findings showed that students who had received the PR training made more meaning type revisions and this appears to have led to better quality second drafts for that group compared with the students who had received no training. Similarly, Min (2006) discovered that peer feedback improved with a group of EFL students who had received training in PR and that students provided feedback which was more specific and relevant.

However, Rollinson (2005) also points out that students may still find the cooperative/collaborative nature of PR difficult to deal with despite having received some training, although he does argue that training in PR should lessen many of the problems associated with PR. Berg (1999a) also emphasises the importance of training students to do PR, stating that students need to be trained in three key areas of PR if the activity is to be successful and that teachers should not expect students to have already acquired the following skills: effectively read and respond to someone else's writing, constructively

react to a response to their own writing from a peer, and, based on the peer response activity, successfully revise their texts (Berg, 1999a, p. 216).

Before the training begins, Rollinson (2005) recommends that the teacher considers some practical issues in terms of how the PR should be implemented. He suggests that PR be conducted in small groups of three or four students and that students should review three drafts. Other researchers however have argued that student dyads are more appropriate (Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Paulus, 1999). Nelson and Murphy argue that students find PR less threatening and are more relaxed when working in pairs and Paulus pointed out that students have more opportunities to discuss their feedback in pairs. Another consideration for the teacher is whether to have students give feedback individually or whether they should collaborate in groups and reach an agreement on the feedback to be given. The teacher also needs to decide whether the feedback should be verbal or written or both verbal and written. Rollinson argues that whilst it is more usual for students to give verbal feedback in PR, there are the following advantages to having students give written feedback: students have more time to think about what they are going to write in their response; they are more focused on the important aspects of the writing; they are less likely to engage in negative reactions; and they have the opportunity to give clear, constructive feedback. Teachers are able to see the quality of the feedback given and to see whether the writer has taken the revisions into account in their following draft and students tend to have a preference for receiving and giving written feedback. In the present study, the researcher decided that students would provide both verbal and written feedback in Cycle II, following the focus on written feedback in Cycle I, so that participants were able to benefit from both modes of feedback. Hansen and Liu (2005) also recommend that prior planning is needed for PR to be successful and they also suggest that teachers need to make some decisions regarding its implementation such as the timing of student and teacher feedback. They recommend that the teacher does not give their feedback on the draft that has been peer reviewed since this could undermine the value of the peer feedback as well as raising questions about the teacher's trust in the quality of the peer feedback.

Following the previous considerations regarding the implementation of PR, it is necessary to provide students with some training in PR. According to Rollinson (2005) there are many reasons why students should be trained in PR and he recommends that the aims of training cover three main areas:

Awareness raising (the principles and objectives of peer response);  
productive group interaction (collaboration, supportiveness, tact, etiquette); and productive response and revision (basic procedures,

effective commenting, reader-writer dialogue, effective revision). (p. 27)

In terms of the first area of training, “awareness raising”, researchers have suggested discussing students’ prior experiences with PR (Hansen & Liu, 2005) and drawing students’ attention towards the benefits and drawbacks of PR (Hu, 2005). Berg (1999b) also argues that it is important that students are aware of the benefits of PR and its role in the writing process. Some researchers have found that this is particularly relevant for Asian students whose prior learning experiences and cultural backgrounds may cause them to have negative attitudes toward PR. Hu’s AR study found that PR was not successful when students had received inadequate training in PR. She revised her study to include a wider range of training activities aimed at awareness raising, demonstration, practice, reflection and instruction, and explanation of procedures and consequently the PR was more successful. For the second area of training, “group interaction”, researchers have recommended creating a comfortable environment so that trust can be developed amongst peers (Berg, 1999b; Hansen & Liu, 2005).

Finally, for the third area of training, “productive response and revision”, researchers have suggested peer feedback sheets which clearly show the purpose of the PR (Hansen & Liu, 2005), modeling the PR process (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Hu, 2005; Min, 2006), teaching students appropriate linguistic expressions (Hansen & Liu, 2005), and teaching students how to ask appropriate questions (Hansen & Liu, 2005).

The consensus amongst researchers who have examined the effects of trained PR on the quality of student feedback is that training students in PR is essential for PR to be successful (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Min, 2006). To further support this argument, some research has attributed unsuccessful PR to a lack of effective training (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Some research, however, has found that students do provide useful feedback to their peers without extensive training (Caulk, 1994). Furthermore, it is important to point out that studies on PR do not always examine the issue of training students in PR directly, but rather focus on the quality of peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Paulus, 1999). Consequently, although these studies indicate some training took place, it is not always clear how extensive this training was. Thus, although research indicates that students do benefit from extensive training in PR, it also appears that PR can achieve some positive results with students who have received some, but not extensive training.

This section has presented the historical and theoretical background to cooperative and collaborative GW and PR that provides the foundation to the studies on learners' beliefs about GW/PR reviewed in the third section of this chapter (Section 2.3.3 and Section 2.3.4). The following section discusses the research that has been conducted on international students in content courses at Western universities.

## **2.2 Studies on international students at Western universities**

The increased numbers of international students studying at Western universities has resulted in a large and growing body of literature that has investigated the experiences of these students. This increase in international student numbers has also led to greater linguistic and cultural diversity in the tertiary classroom that has also presented challenges for teachers as they strive to accommodate the needs of their international students and create a comfortable learning environment for all students. An understanding of international learners' beliefs, therefore, becomes increasingly important since the beliefs that these students bring with them to the classroom will influence the way in which they respond to domestic teaching preferences and approaches. This is of particular value for students who are from Confucian Heritage Cultures. Jin and Cortazzi (2011) point out the need for teachers and researchers to have some understanding of the beliefs that Chinese students bring with them to the classroom since it is likely that they will experience different styles of learning and their beliefs will affect how they respond to these approaches. Morita (2004), in her study of Japanese female students at a Canadian university, argues that "understanding how these students participate in their new academic communities...has become critical" (p. 573).

The largest survey instrument used to measure international tertiary students' satisfaction with their overseas education is the International Student Barometer (ISB), which is administered through the International Graduate Insight Group (i-graduate). The survey has gathered feedback from nearly two million students enrolled in over 800 universities and colleges across the globe. Recently, i-graduate published some of their results in the first of what will become a series of reports focusing on the experiences of a sample of these international students (Garrett, 2014a, 2014b). Their study surveyed over 60,000 international students from 50 tertiary institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia during the 2013 academic year. The largest proportion of students were from China. The main finding of the research was that Asian students, in particular, Chinese students were the least satisfied with their experiences and were less likely to recommend the institute they were studying at to other prospective students. The reasons for Asian students in the study being

less satisfied with their educational experience were not presented, however, as the study focused on the quantitative results of the survey, despite a qualitative component being included in the survey.

Research into international students' experiences has been conducted predominantly using qualitative methods to gain a richer understanding of participants' experiences. Recently, research has used more innovative research designs to gain rich insights into international students' beliefs about their learning experience. These include metaphor analysis (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011), visual techniques (Skyrme & White, 2011), retrospective interviews (Turner & Hiraga, 2013) and a combination of data collected from a retrospective perspective and a longitudinal perspective (Skyrme, 2013). Skyrme investigated the challenges faced by Chinese students when writing academic English at a New Zealand university and how they attempted to adapt to the conventions of writing academic English. Interestingly, the study also discovered that the first-year participants often accepted and appreciated the advice of their senior classmates who were in the second year of their course.

There is a large volume of published work that has focused on international students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and more recently mainland China. Much of this research, especially earlier studies, has characterised East Asian students as rote learners who are skilled at memorisation and although they are usually diligent students, some researchers have argued that they are also reticent and passive learners who are reluctant to participate in classroom discourse, have poor critical thinking skills and place too great an emphasis on course assessments. Some research has found that these students are reluctant to ask questions in class, unwilling to respond to questions, and appear to be over-dependent on the teacher (Braddock, Roberts, Zheng, & Guzman, 1995; Cheng, 2000; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Jackson, 2002; Jones, 1999; Tsui, 1996; Turner & Hiraga, 1996). However, some researchers have challenged these negative stereotypes and their studies have yielded quite different results (Baker, Isaac, Li, & Marshall, 2005; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; LoCastro, 2001). These researchers observed the positive views toward English shown by Asian students. In her study of Japanese university students, LoCastro found that students were striving to construct "an identity that includes being a competent speaker of English while retaining one's L1 and the L1 culture" (p. 83). These students generally had positive attitudes towards the L2 and had the desire to achieve native speaker competency in English. Some research has also argued that Chinese students' concept of rote learning goes far beyond the simple and passive repetition of information, but extends to memorising, understanding, practicing, and reviewing and as a result of this active learning, students

acquire a deep understanding of the material they have learned (Li & Cutting, 2011). Some studies have compared the learning styles and preferences of students from different Asian countries. Littlewood (2010), in his study of university students' perceptions of the "ideal English lesson", found that learners from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Singapore had a greater preference for communication-oriented lessons, compared with learners from Japan. Duff (1986) found in her study of Asian ESL students that Chinese students produced more words, asked more questions, and interrupted more than Japanese students. Some research has also focused on cultural traits and has found that Chinese students are very deferential and have a high regard for their teachers even to the extent of not disagreeing with their teacher over the grade they were awarded (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995). Furthermore, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) argue that Chinese students' and teachers' notion of an "active" learner may be quite different from that of Western teachers. For Chinese teachers and students, active learning is reflected in "cognitive involvement, lesson preparation, reflection and review, thinking, memorization and self-study" (p. 71). This is in contrast to the Western idea that an active learner is one who is active in talking and asking questions (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

In the past 15 years, a growing body of literature has investigated the experiences of international students at tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Some research has explored the academic, social, and financial needs of international students (Butcher & McGrath, 2004) whilst other research has explored the learning expectations of international students (Baker, Isaac, Li, & Marshall, 2005). Baker et al. concluded that the learning expectations of international students were similar to those of the domestic students in the study in terms of the qualities of a "good" teacher, effective teaching approaches, learning support and assessment. Both international and domestic students expected the teacher to provide them with clear, detailed guidelines and requirements for each assignment with one of the Indian participants pointing out the need for teachers to listen to the views of students and in particular those of international students.

Much of the research on international students in New Zealand has focused on the educational experiences of NESB students (Campbell & Li, 2008; Ho, Li, Cooper, & Holmes, 2007; Li & Campbell, 2006). Campbell and Li's study found that Asian students were generally very satisfied with their educational experience, but encountered language difficulties which hindered their progress at university. Ho et al.'s report for Education New Zealand used a qualitative approach to investigate Chinese secondary and post-secondary school students' experiences and views of their lives in New Zealand. Their research also showed that Chinese students were generally satisfied with their

educational experience in New Zealand although they had experienced some difficulties including acquiring the necessary language skills, participating in class discussions, making oral presentations and collaborating with their peers on group projects. Much of this research on international students in New Zealand has focused on the experiences of multicultural groups, that is, New Zealand domestic students and international students, and reflecting the demographic composition of the international student population in New Zealand (Section 1. 2), such research has often focused on Asian students, and, in particular, students from Chinese-speaking countries (Baker & Clark, 2009a, 2009b; Baker, Isaac, Li, & Marshall, 2005; Holmes & Tan, 2003). The consensus amongst researchers is that, although international students generally have positive views of their educational experience in New Zealand, students from Asia tend to be less satisfied than students from other countries.

Although research has tended to focus on the general learning experiences of international students, some of it has focused on international students' perceptions of student interaction in multi-cultural groups, reflecting the emphasis placed on GW in many tertiary classrooms in New Zealand today. Some New Zealand research has specifically targeted the perceptions of Chinese students and the perceptions of domestic students towards Chinese students (Holmes & Tan, 2003). These studies have found that there is often conflict between the two groups due to differences in language and culture (Holmes & Tan, 2003). Holmes and Tan concluded in their study that there were too few benefits of GW due to difficulties with language and cultural differences.

With the increasing popularity of GW in New Zealand tertiary institutes, many papers now include a tutorial participation mark as part of students' final grade and this, too, has been explored in some of the literature. Baker et al.'s (2005) study found that although international and domestic students shared similar expectations of learning at two New Zealand tertiary institutes, there were some differences in their perceptions of class participation with Asian students supporting the inclusion of a mark for participating in class. The authors point out that it is not surprising that Asian students would be in favour of a participation mark since it is likely that they would want their contribution to classroom participation to be recognised and rewarded. Baker et al.'s research demonstrated that Asian students were willing to participate in class and give their opinions and did not rely on rote learning as a learning technique. Other studies which have examined Chinese students' learning experiences in lectures and tutorials have found that students were aware of the need for students to participate in their groups, were concerned that they had not contributed to their groups and were aware of the negative consequences this could have on the group (Guan & Jones, 2011). These results are

consistent with the findings of Clark and Baker's (2011) research which showed that both Chinese and domestic students were aware of the problem of social loafing in GW and held the belief that it was unfair, especially in situations where students received a single shared group grade. However, unlike the findings of Guan and Jones' study, Clark and Baker discovered that the Chinese students, despite feelings of guilt, held the belief that it was better for the group if the domestic students did the majority of the work because the group would receive a higher grade due to the advanced language skills and greater familiarity of the assessment requirements the domestic students had. Holmes (2008) found that Chinese students disliked the group discussions and presentations because they had the belief that New Zealand students communicated in a way which made the Chinese students feel they were unequal and made it difficult for them to assume any leadership roles. However, some Chinese students were able to overcome this and adapted their style to that of the New Zealand students. Holmes' findings are in contrast to some studies which have found that students have positive beliefs about GW (Campbell & Li, 2008). Holmes' study focuses on harmony in Chinese students' intercultural communication from an "Asiacentric" approach and argues that research on interaction between Chinese and Western students is usually conducted from a Eurocentric theoretical perspective and Eurocentric epistemologies which emphasise "freedom, control, individualism and rationality" (p. 102) which often does not reflect Asian students' true voice.

Little research has focused specifically on cooperative learning in New Zealand. As noted by Baker and Clark (2009a), cooperative learning has been a neglected area of research in New Zealand, despite its growing popularity overseas and, more recently, in New Zealand. They add that very little research has been conducted on cooperative learning at tertiary institutions in New Zealand, especially on the effectiveness of cooperative groups. Furthermore, as Strauss, U, and Young (2011) point out, studies conducted on group assignments in multi-cultural groups have focused on how students interact with each other and little research has provided practical guidelines on how these group assignments can be successfully implemented. Li and Campbell (2008) also argue that despite the extensive research on cooperative learning, there has been little research on Asian students' views of GW and group assignments. Campbell and Li (2008) researched students' beliefs about cooperative group discussions and group assignments and found that whilst Asian students had positive beliefs about the group discussions, they held negative beliefs about group assignments which included a shared grade. Asian students in their study held the belief that they benefitted from their interaction with other international students and domestic students during group discussions. They shared the belief that they

were able to develop their English language skills, learn from each other by broadening their knowledge of different cultures and help each other understand the requirements of the assignments. cIn addition, they were able to improve their teamwork skills. However, they held the belief that group assignments were unfair and that diligent students who contributed well were disadvantaged.

Further research by the same authors (Li & Campbell, 2008) also found that students had not received training in teamwork skills which had made their experience with group assignments problematic. Baker and Clark's (2009a, 2009b, 2011) research has focused on cooperative learning with multi-cultural groups in business/management courses at polytechnics in New Zealand. Baker and Clark's (2009a) study found that domestic and international students and lecturers responded favourably to the social aspects of working in cooperative groups. Overall, participants enjoyed interacting with multi-cultural cooperative groups and the opportunity to learn about different cultures. Students also valued the opportunity to receive help from group members and to share the workload. The students in this study had received some training in GW, but according to the researchers, the lecturers had not been following the principles of cooperative learning posited by Johnson and Johnson (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988). Consequently, most of the Chinese students were unfamiliar with cooperative GW and, in spite of the social benefits of GW, tended to dislike participating in GW, preferring competitive, individual work instead. Furthermore, although just over half of the students in Baker and Clark's (2009a) study had received some training in group procedures and resolving problems within the group, conflict did occur when groups were faced with a member who was not contributing and was seen as lazy by the group. Clark and Baker (2011) focused on this issue of social loafing by investigating students' attitudes towards accountability, one of the five principles of cooperative learning. The majority of students in their study were dissatisfied with their GW experience because of the lack of participation and unequal contributions on the part of some students. Their study revealed that Chinese students were very aware of whether they had or had not contributed equally to their group despite an awareness among many of them that group members were expected to participate and contribute equally to the group.

An important issue identified by Baker and Clarke (2009a) was that most of the lecturers were unable to follow Johnson and Johnson's recommendations due to lack of time. Based on the findings of their research, a further study was conducted in which Baker and Clark (2009b) piloted guidelines for using cooperative learning in a business course at a polytechnic. The results showed that students held more positive beliefs about their GW experience following the training. The study focused on students'

beliefs about another of Johnson and Johnson's cooperative learning principles, positive interdependence. The results of the study show a clear alignment between the success of a group and the extent to which groups showed signs of positive interdependence. Positive interdependence was evident by the following strategies employed by successful groups: encourage inclusiveness and participation, allocate tasks, develop and make use of individual members' strengths. Students who were members of successful groups held the belief that important factors for the implementation of successful GW included an understanding that the success of the group is more important than individual success and that communication was essential for positive interdependence.

In terms of assessment, Baker and Clark's (2011) research found that Chinese students did not believe that the way in which they were assessed in their groups was fair. Many Chinese students did not think that a group grade was fair especially when students who had not participated or contributed equally to the assignment would receive the same grade as those who had participated and contributed equally. Likewise, they did not think it fair that poor quality work on the part of another group member should affect the grade that the group received. Chinese students in the study also had strong views that high marks were the goal of assessed GW. Strauss and U (2007), researched lecturer's perceptions of the issue of group assessment in multi-cultural classrooms across various disciplines at a New Zealand university. Their research found that the success of group assessment was often limited because of students' lack of experience with group projects and group assessments in addition to the relative immaturity of undergraduate students. Consequently, students at this level are often ill-equipped to take responsibility for their learning during GW. Strauss and U argue that if group assessment is used in the university classroom, then there is a need for students to be trained how to approach difficulties they may encounter within their group in addition to being taught the necessary language needed to communicate effectively in a group and team building skills.

Baker and Clark (2009a) point out the lack of research on cooperative learning in New Zealand tertiary institutions. Their research has focused predominantly on GW in tertiary technical institutes which tend to be more vocationally oriented and, therefore, the context is quite different to that of an academic university setting. Furthermore, much of the research on Chinese students studying at New Zealand tertiary institutes has been conducted with students in business related courses (Baker & Clark, 2009a; Skyrme & White, 2011). Skyrme and White note that undergraduate business courses at New Zealand tertiary institutes attract very high numbers of international students, especially those

from China. It is likely, then, that this would account for the high volume of research with this student population.

## **2.3 Language learner beliefs**

This section provides an overview of the nature of beliefs and a review of developments in research on learners' beliefs before reviewing the research on learners' beliefs about EAP and writing courses and learners' beliefs about GW and PR in EAP and writing classes.

### **2.3.1 The nature of beliefs**

Philosophers and psychologists have long been discussing and analysing the nature of beliefs (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Although beliefs have been widely studied in the field of education, it is only since the mid-1980s that applied linguists have seen the significance of the role of beliefs in their field (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003). Since then, a considerable amount of research has been published on beliefs in the context of language learning. Research has found that learners have deeply held beliefs about what they are taught, how they are taught, and the learning process (Bernat, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009; Cotterall, 1995; Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Kalaja, 1995; Wenden, 1986).

The complex nature of beliefs has been recognised by a number of researchers in the field (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003; Bernat, 2008; Pajares, 1992). Pajares points out that since beliefs cannot be easily observed and measured, they become a difficult area to study. Pajares also points out that beliefs are notoriously difficult to define because “they travel in disguise and often under alias” (p. 309). He provides the following examples of these aliases, while noting that these are only a few which have appeared in the literature: *attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy* (p. 309). Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) did not define beliefs in her research, but referred to them as *preconceptions* (1985), *preconceived ideas* (1987), and *preconceived notions* (1988).

In addition to the difficulty of defining beliefs, the distinction between beliefs and knowledge has also been the source of debate in much of the research on beliefs. According to Pajares (1992), beliefs are considered in the cognitive domain and regarded much like knowledge. Pajares notes that an implicit distinction commonly used is that “belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge

is based on objective fact” (p. 313). Despite this distinction between knowledge and beliefs, Pajares believes that cognitive elements must have their own affective and evaluative component. Therefore, while beliefs are part of the cognitive domain, they also include affective feelings and are therefore part of the affective domain, which includes attitudes and emotions (Nespor, 1987). Woods (2003) presented an integrated view of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK) and considers knowledge and beliefs to be interrelated constructs, rather than independent ones. Woods suggested that beliefs and knowledge should not be regarded “as being qualitatively different, but rather as extremes on a spectrum” (p. 205) - knowledge being with “the more publicly accepted, factual, demonstrable and objectively elements” at one end of the spectrum and beliefs with “the more idiosyncratic, subjective and more identity-related elements” at the other end, with the boundary between the two described as being “flexible, changeable, and fuzzy” (p. 206).

### **2.3.2 A review of developments in research on learners’ beliefs**

Barcelos (2003) categorises the studies which have been conducted on learner beliefs according to three different approaches: 1) the normative approach; 2) the metacognitive approach, and 3) the contextual approach. Kalaja (1995), however, identifies two approaches through which learner beliefs can be investigated: the mainstream and the alternative approach. The mainstream approach corresponds to the normative and meta-cognitive approach in which beliefs are viewed as cognitive entities in the mind of the learner that are stable, whilst the alternative approach corresponds to the contextual approach, which regards beliefs as socially constructed. Kalaja’s (2003) discursive approach uses discourse analysis and belongs to the alternative approach. Kalaja (1995), argued that beliefs are non-cognitive and social in nature and, since beliefs are socially constructed, they emerge from interaction with others. Bernat (2008) advocates studying beliefs from an ecological perspective which is suited to contextual and interpretive research framework, but does not exclude any research methodology. The following section provides further details regarding Barcelos’ categorisation.

The normative approach, generally associated with Horwitz and the *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), defines beliefs as “preconceived notions” or “misconceptions” about language learning (Horwitz, 1988) or “opinions and ideas” which when held by language learners are neither correct nor true (Barcelos, 2003). Beliefs are viewed as being relatively static and stable mental representations that, according to Barcelos, have usually been regarded as learners’ misconceptions. Woods (2003), argued that much of the research on learner beliefs has been teacher-centred with the

focus on identifying these misconceptions and correcting them, the outcome of which would be that learners would have “more realistic goals about language learning, reduce anxiety about language learning and develop more effective language learning strategies” (p. 202). Studies within the normative approach tend to use quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis, typically Likert-type questionnaires such as the BALLI which is described further in this section. .

The metacognitive approach, which is mainly associated with the research of Wenden, defines learner beliefs as metacognitive knowledge which is relatively stable, but which may change over a period of time (Wenden, 1999). Knowledge and beliefs are both related to cognition and refer to what a learner knows, believes and thinks about the processes of learning a language. Wenden (1986), argued that beliefs are a component of a learners’ metacognitive knowledge. According to Flavell (1979), metacognitive knowledge “consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises” (p. 907). Wenden (1999) points out that although learner beliefs and metacognitive knowledge are often used as synonyms, they are, however, different. Wenden distinguishes between the terms beliefs and knowledge due to the subjective nature of beliefs and because they are “value-related and held more tenaciously” (p. 436). In contrast, knowledge is factual and objective. Studies within the metacognitive approach use mainly semi-structured interviews and self-reports.

In the contextual approach beliefs are defined as being “contextual, dynamic and social” (Barcelos, 2003, p. 20). Beliefs are context-embedded with researchers exploring learners’ beliefs within the context of the learners’ actions (Barcelos, 2003). Studies following a contextual approach tend not to use questionnaires, but use methods which allow learners to express their beliefs through diaries, narratives, biographies, observation, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires. Within the contextual approach, research has been conducted using various diverse theoretical frameworks including studies from a neo-Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective (Alanen 2003), Bakhtinian perspective (Dufva, 2003), and Deweyan perspective (Barcelos, 2003). Some studies have also studied learner beliefs using a combination of frameworks such as Aro (2009) whose research on the emergent beliefs of Finnish elementary school children was conducted using the Bakhtinian and dialogical, Vygotskian, sociocultural frameworks.

The Vygotskian perspective defines beliefs as being constructed through interaction, that is, they are social but they are also individual and become part of a learner’s cognitive system. Furthermore, they

are constructed through mediated action such as speech. Alanen (2003) used a sociocultural approach to researching learner beliefs. In her study, beliefs were observed through interaction between the interviewer and learner as the learner responded to questions regarding their beliefs about language learning. Alanen argued that from a sociocultural perspective, beliefs are stable since they become part of a learner's cognitive system and also variable because they are formed in a social context. For Alanen, beliefs are "mediational means" because they are "used to regulate learning, problem-solving activities, thinking etc." (p. 67).

Central to the Bakhtinian dialogical approach is the notion of "voice", that is, the idea that what is spoken by someone reveals not only the language that was spoken, but also reflects the speaker's opinions, beliefs and world-view (Dufva, 2003). Dufva's research on the beliefs of Finnish language learners used data collected from interviews, discussions, and written narratives in which participant's own 'voice' was evident. Another concept which is derived from Bakhtinian theory is the function of dialogic speech and writing in constructing experience. Bakhtin did not distinguish between oral and written discourse since they are both composed of voices and are always dialogic (Hosenfeld, 2003). In the Bakhtinian approach, beliefs are regarded as subjective experience and are dynamic. They are viewed as being both individual and social (Dufva, 2003). They are individual because they express a personal view point and social because language is acquired as part of a learner's knowledge through spoken or written discourse in a social context since this knowledge is gained partly through being exposed to the words and thought formulated by others (Alanen, 2003; Dufva, 2003). Bakhtin and Dewey both emphasised the social nature of experience (Hosenfeld, 2003).

The concept of experience is central to Dewey's philosophy (Barcelos, 2003) and beliefs are regarded as being part of this experience (Dewey 1938, as cited in Barcelos, 2003). Dewey (1933, as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2012), argued that beliefs are:

matters of which we have no sure knowledge about, but feel confident to act upon, as well as matters that we expect to be true, but which may be questioned in the future. (p.6)

Dewey emphasised the subjective nature of beliefs and their cognitive character concerning what an individual knows or rather what the individual thinks s/he knows, in addition to the changing character of beliefs. Dewey regarded beliefs as both "obstacles and promoters of knowledge at the same time" (Barcelos, 2003, p. 176). Although beliefs can create barriers because they promote reflective thinking which can create doubts and problems, they can also help in gaining new ideas and interpreting them

(Barcelos, 2003). These different approaches to researching learner beliefs reflect different definitions about beliefs and the different methods employed in both collecting and analysing the data. However, although the three approaches differ in their view of defining beliefs and in methods of researching beliefs, they all suggest that beliefs have a significant impact on learners' actions and behaviour in terms of their language learning (Barcelos, 2003).

In SLA literature, the study of language learner beliefs began with the work of Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988). Horwitz developed the BALLI, a questionnaire designed to measure the following learners' beliefs about language learning: the difficulty of language learning; foreign language aptitude; the nature of language learning; communication and learning strategies; and learner motivation and expectations. Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) used the BALLI to identify the beliefs about language learning held by both university teachers and students. Horwitz's (1987) study showed that ESL learners' beliefs varied according to cultural background and previous learning experience and that these beliefs were likely to influence learners' learning behaviour in the ESL classroom and may make it difficult for them to accept some classroom activities.

Horwitz is considered to be the first researcher to attempt to identify the beliefs of language learners in a systematic way and since then the BALLI has been widely used by researchers to investigate learners' beliefs about language learning in general, and differences between students' and teachers' beliefs (Kern, 1995; Peacock, 1998, 1999), and has been a popular tool to investigate the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and the use of language learning strategies (Yang, 1999). Although Horwitz's (1985, 1987, 1988) BALLI has been widely used in studies on language learners' beliefs, some researchers have raised concerns regarding the validity and reliability of the instrument (Kuntz, 1996). According to Kuntz the limitations of the BALLI include the following: the beliefs about language learning in the instrument were based on what teachers believed students would hold about language learning and the research only employed descriptive statistics to examine the results of the inventory. Benson and Lor (1999) have also argued that questionnaires provide limited information regarding learners' beliefs.

In recent years, researchers have used the BALLI, modified versions of the BALLI, or self-designed questionnaires to gain a deeper understanding of language learners' beliefs in specific contexts (Bernat, 2004, 2006; Cotterall, 1995; Diab, 2006; Sakui & Gaies, 1999). Although these studies use

Likert-style questionnaires as their main data instrument, they are relevant to the present study which also explores language learners' beliefs in a specific context.

Diab (2006), examined the beliefs of Lebanese university EFL students about their learning of English and French. The study used the BALLI, but added context-specific items directly related to the Lebanese context. The findings also demonstrated that the beliefs of these language learners were particular to the specific language learning context in Lebanon. However, Bernat (2006) argues that language learners' beliefs may not be context specific. Bernat's study compared her results of the BALLI which investigated EAP learners' beliefs about language learning at an Australian university with the findings of an American study. The research found that there were many similarities across the various categories of the BALLI despite the two different contexts.

These studies used questionnaires as the main method of data collection to investigate learners' beliefs and are discussed here under the normative approach. However, as Barcelos (2003) acknowledges, there is sometimes not a clear distinction between the approaches. For example, Cotterall's (1995) study could be classified under the normative approach (Barcelos, 2003) or under the contextual approach (Bernat, 2006) since it employs a Likert-style questionnaire to investigate beliefs but is contextualised in the specific language learning situation of an EAP classroom at a New Zealand university.

Around the same time that Horwitz was conducting research using the BALLI, Wenden was also attempting to identify and categorise language learners' beliefs. In contrast to Horwitz' research which relied on the BALLI, studies in the metacognitive approach do not use the BALLI but rather allow the learner to talk about some of their beliefs. Wenden (1986) conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 advanced-level adult ESL students enrolled at an American university. The study was designed to elicit the beliefs of this group of learners about language learning and the findings showed the importance to teachers of having an understanding of their learners' beliefs and that students should be given the opportunity to engage in activities in which they explore their beliefs and how these beliefs influence how they respond to learning. Wenden (1987) also argued that the beliefs learners hold about language learning could influence their approach to language learning. There has been some criticism of these traditional approaches since with this type of research language learners' beliefs are not connected with their social context (Barcelos, 2003).

There have been a growing number of studies within the contextual approach in the past few years with researchers employing a range of innovative methods: classroom observations followed by simulated recall (Barcelos, 1995, as cited in Barcelos, 2003); diaries (Hosenfeld, 2003); metaphor analysis (Ellis, 2001) and discourse analysis (Kalaja, 1995, 2003). All of these methods allow the researcher to explore the emergent nature of beliefs and to gain a deeper understanding of the learner as they experience their learning context. In his review, Pajares (1992) describes the following processes that students go through before accommodating a new belief: first, they must recognise that they are confronted with an anomaly; next they need to believe that the new knowledge “should be reconciled with existing beliefs” (p. 321); third, they must attempt and then fail to assimilate the new concept with what they already believe. It is only after completing this process that students will accommodate a change in belief.

Hosenfeld (2003) used diary entries to record her beliefs about learning Spanish as a foreign language. Her study demonstrated that a language learner’s beliefs are often not stable, but that a number of beliefs are emergent. According to Hosenfeld, stable beliefs refer to those beliefs that learners already have when they begin their learning whereas emerging beliefs appear during the learning period. During learning, beliefs may emerge which the learner perceives as being new and which then influence their reaction to a learning activity. Emerging beliefs may become stable “during a specific time, in a specific context, and for a specific learner” (Hosenfeld, 2003, p. 39). In recent years, some researchers have studied the emerging nature of beliefs and have found that beliefs are not static but rather that they can change. Peng’s (2011) study employed semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and learner diaries to explore one university student’s beliefs about language learning and found that this student’s beliefs changed significantly after he had started his university study. Yang and Kim (2011), also used learner diaries in addition to interviews, stimulated recall tasks and language learning histories to investigate two study abroad students’ beliefs about language learning and also found that their beliefs were constantly evolving.

Early studies on language learners’ beliefs in SLA literature employed questionnaires to investigate learners’ beliefs about language learning which were conducted from an etic perspective and therefore did not allow for learners’ voices to be heard. This was then followed by research using interviews with an emic perspective. Beliefs were regarded as being static and unlikely to change. Recent research continues to explore learners’ beliefs from an emic perspective, however, they are seen as dynamic and connected to the social contexts of learners. This study uses a contextual approach in

which students describe their beliefs in their own words. In this study learners' beliefs are viewed as dynamic and emergent in their social context. Some beliefs can evolve during time as learners are exposed to new learning activities whilst some beliefs remain static. Beliefs are regarded as having different degrees of strength that is, they can be strong or weak. They are subjective and anecdotal, and they are held to be true by the individual learner, but not considered to be wrong or incorrect by the teacher/researcher.

### **2.3.3 Studies on learners' beliefs about group work in ESL/EFL/EAP courses**

This section reviews the literature on learners' beliefs and views about the GW activities they have participated in during their post-secondary English language course. Such insights into their beliefs and opinions will add to researchers' and teachers' understanding of the social/affective, psychological, and academic benefits and drawbacks of GW. Learners' beliefs about GW will also affect the extent to which the implementation of such activities are successful. As Garrett and Shortall (2002) point out, as language teaching has become more learner-centred researchers have become more interested in the perceptions of learners. Studies on learners' perceptions of GW have, however, produced mixed results. McDonough's (2004) study of EFL Thai university students focused on interaction between students during pair and GW and found that students did not view the activities as being useful despite providing each other with opportunities for learning. The findings suggest that these language learners did not regard their peers as helpful resources from whom they could learn and consequently depended upon their teacher for L2 knowledge. Garrett and Shortall's questionnaire study of 103 Brazilian EFL students found that although beginner and intermediate learners regarded the student-centred activities, which included group/pair work, as being more fun than teacher-centred activities they saw neither type of activities as being more beneficial than the other and elementary-level learners did not regard either type as more fun than the other, but viewed the teacher-centred activities as providing greater opportunities for learning. The qualitative data from the questionnaire revealed that beginner level students held the belief that they could learn more grammar from the teacher rather than participating in grammar activities with a peer. They appreciated the help they received from their teacher and held the belief that they could improve their pronunciation and learn "correct" English from their teacher. Similar to the findings of McDonough's study, these students did not appear to regard their peers as resources for learning since they held the belief that they had not received feedback and had no one to correct their mistakes in the student-centred activities. A similar belief was also held by elementary students in the study who regarded teacher-centred fluency

activities to be more beneficial in promoting learning opportunities because the teacher was available to correct their mistakes whereas in student-centred activities the teacher would not be aware of whether learners were making mistakes.

Fushino (2011) explored first-year Japanese university students' perceptions of a semester-long group project based on developing their cultural understanding in their EFL cultural understanding class and found that overall students held positive beliefs about GW. Students received some training in cooperative group skills before the project began and completed a reflective survey upon completion. The most important contribution group members had made to their peers' learning was the importance of cooperation which was followed by obtaining current knowledge, language-related development and co-constructing knowledge with peers. Although students did not cite trust as an example of what they had learned through the GW, most students did agree that they had developed trust through their participation in the group project. Ghaith (2002) investigated the relationship between cooperative learning and perceptions of academic and personal support given by teachers with Middle Eastern students studying in a university English class in Lebanon. The study found that when groups had a strong sense of positive interdependence, that is, they worked together to achieve a common goal, ensured all group members learned the assigned material, shared resources and divided the task amongst the group members, their perception was stronger that their teacher cared about their learning and wanted their students to succeed. In a later study, Ghaith, Shaaban, and Harkous (2007) examined the connection between two forms of positive interdependence: positive goal interdependence and positive resource interdependence and Middle Eastern university students' attitudes towards various characteristics of their intensive English course. Their study indicated that setting common goals and sharing resources among learners fosters academic achievement.

Cotterall's (1995) study examined the beliefs of language learners in an EAP course at a university in New Zealand and remains one of the most significant studies on the beliefs of EAP learners about language learning at a New Zealand university. A questionnaire was administered to 139 adult EAP students to determine their beliefs about language learning and to discover their readiness for autonomy in language learning. Cotterall argued that learners' beliefs about their abilities are influenced by previous learning experiences and perceptions of these experiences. Cotterall's concern was that learners' previous language learning experiences in their home countries may affect their beliefs about language learning, in particular their belief regarding their ability to succeed, in this case in a New Zealand university EAP programme. Cotterall further asserted that "beliefs will affect (and

sometimes inhibit) learners' receptiveness to the ideas and activities presented in the language class, particularly when the approach is not consonant with the learners' experience" (p.203). Cotterall found that students held strong beliefs about the role of the teacher, about feedback, about themselves as learners and their role, about language learning and about learning in general. She concludes that these beliefs will influence how responsive students are to activities introduced in the language classroom, especially if students have not had much exposure to these types of activities.

In recent years, a growing number of researchers have attempted to explain L2 communication behaviours using a Willingness to Communicate (WTC) approach (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998; Wen & Clément, 2003; Yashima, 2002). WTC is a concept which was first used in L1 communication studies (Zhong, 2013) and although this research is not specifically targeted towards GW, WTC studies conducted in L2 classrooms can yield interesting results regarding learners' beliefs about GW (Zhong, 2013). Zhong's study of five Chinese learners (three students were deemed to be "high communicators" and two students "low communicators") studying at a language school in a tertiary institute in New Zealand, used interviews, learner diaries, and observation and found that the two groups had different views towards the group/pair work activities. The "high communicators" valued GW and viewed it as both a learning opportunity and a social opportunity. They reported that they were able to discuss questions and help each other and viewed learning as a social activity which involved sharing their knowledge. It appears that these learners did regard their peers as learning resources. However, the "low communicators" held very negative beliefs about GW and did not trust their peers to give them reliable feedback nor to have the ability to correct their errors. These two students also held the belief that GW was ineffective because group members did not take any responsibility in their group. In another study, which also used observations, interviews and learner diary entries, conducted at a language school in New Zealand, Cao (2013) focused on the beliefs of one case study participant from a Chinese background. The longitudinal study found that the learner, who was a shy student, was more willing to communicate in GW activities than in whole-class activities. The learner preferred GW to teacher-centred activities and preferred GW to pair work when all members of the group were participating and taking turns to talk. However, half way through the course, her beliefs about the positive aspects changed as she was a member of a group project in which her group mates did not cooperate and acted irresponsibly. This supports the findings of other studies that cooperation and responsibility are important factors in successful GW (Fushino, 2011; Ghaith, 2002).

### **2.3.4 Studies on learners' beliefs about peer review in EAP and writing courses**

There have been many studies over the past few decades which have investigated NESB learners' attitudes and beliefs about PR at the tertiary level from the perspective of the student receiving feedback. However, as Lundstrom and Baker (2009) point out, less research has focused on the student providing the feedback, that is, the reviewer. Research on learners' views of PR has produced mixed results with many studies finding that students react negatively towards PR while other studies have found that students have positive views of PR. Despite the many studies that have reinforced the value of PR in the L2 writing classroom many studies have found that students do not value PR. One of the main reasons for these negative perceptions is students' lack of confidence in the quality of the feedback they have received from their peers since students have not yet fully developed their proficiency in writing (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Carson, 1998). Consequently, the research has shown that students tend to prefer feedback from their teacher rather than from a peer (Nelson & Carson, 1998). Nelson and Carson also found that students tended to regard the main purpose of PR to be a mistake finding and fixing exercise and consequently students believed that teachers were more skilled at finding errors than they were. Zhang (1995) found that over 90% of ESL students at two American colleges preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback. However Zhang's study required students to make a choice between whether they would prefer teacher feedback or peer feedback rather than allowing students to view both types of feedback as complementary. Watanabe (2008) found that students in her study were not concerned about their peer's level of English proficiency, but placed a greater importance on their peer's willingness to share ideas. A number of studies have found that students are often reluctant to provide peer feedback during PR because of a lack of confidence in their own ability even after participating in the PR (Mangelsdorf, 1992). Although Mangelsdorf's research showed positive beliefs about PR, it also showed that 15% of the students surveyed held negative beliefs about PR and many of the students held the belief that PR did not lead to improvements in their writing nor did they have the belief that PR enabled them to develop confidence in their own ability to provide effective feedback. Furthermore, almost 80% of the negative comments concerning PR referred to students' lack of trust in their peer. Whilst this is only a minority of the students surveyed, it is interesting that it was the Asian students who reported negative attitudes towards PR.

Less research has focused on the negative effects of anxiety on PR (Murau, 1993). Murau conducted a study examining the attitudes of graduate students towards PR. Her study was set in a weekly writing

workshop and involved an average of five to ten non-native English-speaking students who would receive feedback on their draft with a voluntary native English speaking tutor. Her findings showed that students felt much more comfortable writing in their L1 than they did writing in their L2. Her study found that 92% of the students held more negative feelings than positive feelings towards PR. These negative feelings were due to the students feeling anxious, embarrassed, or not comfortable having someone read their writing.

A number of studies have investigated students' views in cross-cultural ESL classrooms. Nelson and Carson (1998) in their study of Chinese speaking and Spanish-speaking ESL students in an advanced university writing class found that both groups of students preferred to receive feedback from their teacher rather than from a peer. However, their study highlighted the differences between students from different cultural backgrounds. Despite both the Chinese and Spanish students preferring teacher feedback, Nelson and Carson argued that PR may be less beneficial for students from cultures with a large power distance (perception of authority) than for students who come from cultures which value individualism after their study found that Chinese participants were reluctant to give critical feedback on their peer's writing and were more concerned with maintaining group harmony compared with the Spanish participants who were more comfortable disagreeing with their peer's writing and giving constructive feedback. Liu and Chai (2009) also found that Chinese university students in an EFL writing class were sometimes reluctant to criticise their peers' writing despite their overall willingness to participate in PR. However, Liu and Chai do point out that their willingness may be attributed to the participants' advanced level of English and the training they had received in PR. In addition to some students' reluctance to give feedback, research has also found that students sometimes experience fear during PR and worry that errors in their writing may result in their writing being ridiculed by their peer. Liu and Chai found that one of the reasons participants in their study enjoyed PR was that some of the mistakes made by their peers were "funny and ridiculous" (p. 39).

These findings contradict other research which suggests that students from Asia do value PR even though they may not value it as highly as feedback from their teacher. Whilst all case study students in Yang, Badger and Yu's (2006) study found that students were more positive about teacher feedback, they also recognised, to a lesser extent, the value of peer feedback and some students also suggested that it would be useful to receive peer feedback prior to receiving feedback from the teacher. Participants in the study reported that PR was helpful because they were able to learn from the strengths of their peer's writing and it gave them the opportunity to discuss their writing with their

peers to gain a deeper understanding of their weaknesses in their writing and to attempt to solve these problems. In contrast to Nelson and Carson (1998), Yang et al. argue that PR can be valuable because it develops learner autonomy and is beneficial for students from cultures which give great authority to the teacher. Zhang's (1995) research implied that "Peer feedback is probably deemed the second best thing" (p. 217) in the absence of teacher feedback. Yang et al.'s and Zhang's studies both show that although peer feedback is less valued than teacher feedback, students still view it as having some value. Other studies have also found that students see some value in PR with aspects of the activity being seen as helpful (Chaudron, 1984; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). However, Mangelsdorf's study also found that some of the negative responses were due to a lack of confidence in their peers' ability to provide feedback. Findings from Liu and Chai's (2009) questionnaire indicated that the majority of students were willing to participate in PR, trusted the peer feedback they received and reported that PR was useful in improving their own writing. The interview also confirmed this finding with four out of the five interviewees stating their willingness to participate in PR. The reasons these students enjoyed PR included being able to identify and correct errors in their own writing, learning new ideas and word usage, and gaining a sense of their own proficiency of the language. The interview also revealed that these students took PR seriously with four interviewees stating that they read the feedback they had received carefully and took this feedback into account when revising their writing. Furthermore, they shared the belief that their peers also took the feedback they had been given seriously. Hu (2005) also found that students took PR seriously and believed that PR contributed to their academic skills and knowledge, whilst other findings have suggested that PR helped students to develop audience awareness and to develop their ideas.

While some of these studies have employed qualitative approaches to explore learners' beliefs about PR, they have usually used interviews or open-ended questionnaires. As Zhao (2011) points out there is a lack of research which has used data from diaries. Her case study of Chinese EFL university students' views about PR focused on the influence of their English ability on their experience of PR and revealed rich data regarding learners' beliefs about their concerns with both their own and their peers' English ability both from the perspective of the reader and the writer. Students also complained about the quality of feedback received and expressed a lack of trust in the feedback especially when the feedback was not relevant. Students also struggled with accepting their peers' feedback especially in cases where they were working with lower level students.

## 2.4 Action Research

Action research (AR), also known as *teacher research* or *practitioner research*, has a long history in education and draws on qualitative methods. AR originated from the work of the German social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who is widely regarded as being first to use the term *action research*. As mentioned earlier in this review (Section 2.1.2), Lewin also had a strong influence on the development of social interdependence theory, which forms the basis of cooperative learning, and had a profound impact on research associated with group dynamics (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007).

Using AR as a methodology in education dates back to the mid-1950s (Corey 1953, as cited in Nolen and Putten, 2007). Corey (1953, as cited in Johnson and Button, 2000) argued that AR was valuable to teaching because it is carried out by educators who wish to improve their own teaching practice. AR has become increasingly popular in the field of ESL since the late 1980s. Although definitions of AR are varied, Crookes (1993) has outlined the following four common characteristics: AR is small scale and localised; it is evaluative and reflective; it can be collaborative in nature; and data gathering provides the impetus for change. Bruce-Ferguson (2003) explains that while many AR researchers emphasise the importance of collaboration, individual AR may be conducted when the aim of the research is to improve teaching and learning in that individual researcher's specific context, as was the situation for this researcher<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on ESL learners' beliefs about academic GW and PR activities. Despite the substantial amount of research conducted in the field of cooperative learning, this review indicated that there is a gap in the literature on cooperative/collaborative GW/PR at the tertiary level in a New Zealand context. Furthermore, such studies that have been conducted in the New Zealand university context have been conducted in classrooms outside the realm of ESL/EAP classrooms. The review indicates that there is a need for in-depth qualitative studies focusing on the beliefs of NESB students about academic GW/PR activities in a first-year undergraduate EAP course at the university level in New Zealand and also for further research to be conducted on PR from the perspective of the

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<sup>5</sup> See Jack Whitehead's website: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw> for examples of individual AR

student reviewer. The review also highlights the need for NESB students to be trained in cooperative techniques. This chapter concluded with an overview of AR and its association with cooperative learning. The following chapter describes the methodological approach employed in the current study.

## CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Overview

This chapter describes the methodology and research design used in this study and is divided into three main sections. The first section explains the methodological approach of the study (Section 3.1). The second section details the research design (Section 3.2). The rationale for using the data collection methods is provided first (Section 3. 2.1) and this is then followed by the alignment of the research questions with the data instruments (Section 3.2.2). This is followed by an overview of the research design and details of the AR framework within which the study was conducted (Section 3.2.3) and a brief account of the reflection<sup>6</sup> with the major outcomes which influenced the changes made in Cycle II (Section 3.2.4). Next is a description of the participants in both cycles (Section 3.2.5) and ethical considerations (Section 3.2.6). The data collection procedures are then explained (Section 3.2.7), followed by details of the data management (Section 3.2.8), and data analysis (3.2.9). The third section discusses the trustworthiness of the study (Section 3. 3) and a summary concludes the chapter (Section 3.4).

### 3.1 A qualitative research methodology

Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) argue that the researcher's purpose, the choice of research questions, and the way in which beliefs are perceived in the research will determine the choice of research methodology. The following sections explain how a qualitative approach within an AR framework was the most appropriate methodology for the current study.

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher conducts research from an emic view (insider's perspective) rather than from an etic view (reality based on objectivity). Qualitative research therefore attempts to reconstruct the meanings that the participants make out of their world without letting subjectivity influence this reconstruction (Creswell, 2007). The objectives of qualitative researchers, therefore, differ from those of quantitative researchers: "judgment is not the goal; rather, the goal is to understand the informants' world and to determine how and with what criteria they judge it" (Bogdan & Biklen,

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<sup>6</sup> A more detailed explanation of this reflection is provided at the end of Chapter Four, Results: Cycle I.

2007, p. 245). Qualitative research aims to produce rich description from the data and is therefore best suited to a small number of participants. Qualitative research is an approach for those “seeking not to know how many or how well, but simply how” (Shulman, 1988, p. 7). Although numbers can feature in qualitative research, the focus is on gaining a deeper understanding of how participants interpret their lives, construct their world and attribute meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

The qualitative research process does not follow a rigid structure. It allows for the research questions to be modified as the research develops and new issues may emerge from the data analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). Qualitative data is inductively analysed with the researcher looking for pattern and themes in the data (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory is a major qualitative research tradition. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out, a researcher using a grounded theory approach “does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (p.12).

The purpose of this study is to explore the emergent beliefs of ESL learners about GW/PR activities in a specific context. This study employed a contextual approach to explore the beliefs of NESB students about GW/PR. A qualitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study. The present study aimed to obtain data from the participants to gain a deeper understanding of learners’ beliefs and to use this data to improve the GW/PR experiences of students in future EAP courses.

### **3.2 Research design**

This section describes the research design of the present study. It begins with an explanation of the research methods and the rationale for employing each data collection instrument in the study. This is then followed by the research questions and their alignment with each data instrument. The research design within an AR framework is presented next which describes each of the stages of the AR in relation to the two Cycles and provides a brief explanation of the changes that were made to the course in Cycle II, which are described in detail at the end of Chapter Four. Next, is a description of the participants and ethical considerations and this is followed by the procedures of the data collection, data management, and data analysis.

### **3.2.1 Data collection methods**

This section provides the rationale for using learner diaries, a semi-structured interview, and a group evaluation exercise to explore the beliefs of learners in the present study. The data collection procedures are described later in the chapter (Section 3.2.7).

#### **Language learner diaries**

A language learner diary was the primary source of data collection in both Cycles of this study (Appendix C: Learner diary prompts for Cycles I and II). The aim of this study was to explore learner beliefs about GW/PR and to compare the beliefs between participants in Cycle I who had not received targeted training with those in Cycle II who had. The researcher, therefore, decided to use the same diary prompts in both Cycles in order to be able to make a direct comparison between these beliefs. The emphasis of the findings was on the effects the revisions had on learners' beliefs, that is, whether the changes made to the course in Cycle II made a difference to those learners' beliefs about their GW experience rather than to explore their beliefs about the training they had received.

Learner diaries are a form of self-disclosure in which language learners reveal their feelings and thoughts. They have been described by Nunan (1992) as "important introspective tools in language research" (p.118) which "give us access to the participants' voices" (Bailey & Nunan, 1996, p.199). The introspective nature of learner diaries, provides students with the opportunity to reflect on and provide insights into cognitive, social, and affective factors in their language learning experience and their perceptions of such experiences, which may not be able to be observed (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). They are therefore valued by many researchers for this authentic data which other sources cannot always provide (Bailey, 1983; Carson & Longhini, 2002). Researchers are able to access the phenomena under investigation from a perspective other than their own (Mackey & Gass, 2013). Learner diaries have been used successfully as a research tool in the field of SLA for the past few decades (Bailey, 1990; Halbach, 2000; Peck, 1996). In recent years, they have also been used to explore language learners' beliefs (Hosenfeld, 2003). These studies have found that diaries provide a rich source of information regarding the language learning process and allow the researcher to explore learners' beliefs about their language learning experiences and to gain insights into the dynamic nature of beliefs. Learner diaries provide rich data and as Bailey and Nunan (1996) explain, "they often tell stories of discomfort, but moments of success – at times even triumph – emerge as well" (p.199).

### **Semi-structured interview**

In addition to the learner diary, a semi-structured interview (Appendix D: Interview guidelines) was employed as a complementary data collection tool in Cycle I of the present study. Although at the beginning of this study, it was the researcher's intention to follow the same data collection procedure in both Cycles (Section 3.2.6), it was not possible to conduct an interview in Cycle II. Interviews in Cycle I had been conducted with four case study participants, who had volunteered from a large sample of participants (42), after the completion of the course when final grades had been submitted. This enabled students to discuss their beliefs about GW/PR openly and to be assured that this would not affect their course grade. However, the small number of participants in Cycle II (14) made it more difficult to recruit volunteers and although some students had expressed interest in volunteering both at the beginning of the course when ethical approval was sought and again towards the end of the course, these students withdrew their expression of interest in the weeks following the completion of the course.

Nunan (1992) describes interviews as being “the elicitation of data by one person from another through person-to-person encounters” (p. 231). These interchanges can include individual or group face-to-face verbal interviews or interviews conducted via telephone. In the present study, four participants volunteered to be interviewed individually in a face-to-face encounter using a semi-structured framework. A semi-structured interview “has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequences and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given” (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). In the past three decades, interviews, including semi-structured interviews, have been used extensively to explore learners' beliefs (Benson & Lor, 1999; White, 1999). Barcelos (2003) points out that verbal reports such as interviews allow students the opportunity to talk about their experiences of language learning and the researcher to gain further insights into learners' beliefs by asking them to provide further details on the aspects of specific interest to the researcher. Similarly, Gillham (2000) emphasises the “richness and vividness” (p. 10) that can be yielded through interview data.

### **The group evaluation exercise**

A group evaluation exercise (Appendix E) was used as a complementary data collection tool in Cycle II of the current study. The evaluation exercise used was one designed by the University of Otago's Higher Education Development Centre (HEDC) and was given as part of a workshop on effective GW attended by the researcher in the previous year. This instrument was added ad hoc and was not part of

the original research plan. Although the evaluation exercise was not considered by the researcher to be a substitute for the interviews, it provided insights into learners' beliefs about their latest GW experience, in addition to their suggestions for effective meetings (Section 5.1).

The main aim of the group evaluation exercise was to obtain the self-evaluation of learners' experiences with specific aspects of GW in the EAP course. The group evaluation exercise in this study was a questionnaire which consisted of a series of open-ended questions which invited students to respond to their most recent GW experience. Unlike Likert-scale questionnaires which according to Dufva (2003) do not measure learners' beliefs, but rather beliefs imposed upon learners by teachers or researchers, open-ended questions allow the researcher to gather honest, authentic, rich, and diverse responses from participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In addition to its purpose as a data collection instrument, the group evaluation exercise also formed part of an informal group processing session or debriefing exercise (Section 2.1.2) as recommended by Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1988).

### **3.2.2 Research questions**

This section is divided into two parts: the first part presents the alignment between the research questions related to GW and the data instruments and the second part presents the alignment of the research questions related to PR and the data instruments. These research questions were introduced in the Introduction chapter of this thesis along with the reasons for choosing these particular research questions (Section 1.3).

*What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

This research question sought to understand the beliefs of students about how GW should be successfully implemented. This question was answered in Cycle I from data analysed from the fifth diary entry which required students to think about the effectiveness of the tutorials. Specifically, students were asked how the tutorials could be improved, how they felt about the emphasis placed on GW, how GW could be assessed fairly and to also write five rules for GW. This diary entry did not require students to directly discuss their negative experiences of GW, rather its aim was to have students consider how GW should be implemented, based on their recent experiences. At the time that students were writing this diary entry, they had participated in a number of GW activities during the tutorials and had completed their group presentation assessment. The third and fourth diary entries in

Cycles I and II also gave students the opportunity to share their beliefs about how GW should be implemented.

The group evaluation exercise in Cycle II also provided data to answer this research question. The third statement: “Since we will be working as a group, here are my suggestions for effective meetings” was similar to the prompt in the fifth diary entry, however it focused on effective meetings rather than on GW. The meetings referred to the meetings that students would have to arrange outside of class to work on their group presentation, and so it was expected that learners’ responses could provide answers to this research question. The group evaluation exercise was given to students half-way through the course, after they had had several weeks’ experience with GW and as they were preparing for the group presentation. Students had already held meetings with their groups in their own time and had written in their diary entries about some of the difficulties they had encountered during these meetings such as a lack of leadership. This prompted the researcher to include this item on the group evaluation exercise. This item referred to students working with a new group on their group presentation.

*What are learners’ beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of **group work** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

Many of the learner diary prompts required students to reflect on whether they held positive or negative beliefs about their GW experience. One diary prompt asked this directly: *What are some positive and negative aspects of doing a group presentation?* (Diary entry 3). Other prompts asked this more indirectly by asking students whether they held the belief that the GW was helpful or useful: *Do you think that working together as a group is a useful learning experience? Give reasons* (Diary entry 4). *Do you think working in a group helps you to be more successful with English?* (Diary entry 6) and *Did working in a group give you more motivation to improve your English skills or to study English more?* (Diary entry 6). Other questions required students to comment on whether they would like to do this kind of activity (group presentation) again (Diary entry 4) and what their beliefs about GW were in general (Diary entry 4).

In the case study interview in Cycle I, several questions were asked to gain further insights into learners’ beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of GW: questions 1, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 12 (Appendix D).

On the group evaluation exercise in Cycle II, the first two statements: “Here is what *I liked* about my last experience with group work” and “Here is what *I did not like* about my last experience with group work” were included to ask learners about their beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages about their most recent experience with GW in the course.

*What are learners’ beliefs about participation during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

One prompt directly sought to answer this sub-research question: *Do you think some tasks are a private, individual process or do you think interaction and feedback from others is useful?* (Diary entry 7).

*What are learners’ beliefs about their peers’ contribution to their learning during **group work**? (SRQ2)*

Several diary prompts asked students either directly or indirectly to write about whether they held the belief that all group members contributed equally to the learning of others in the group: *Do you feel that the other group members contributed to your learning?* (Diary entry 6), *Describe how you and your group members worked together – did you encounter any problems?* (Diary entry 3), *Do you think that working together as a group is a useful learning experience? Give reasons* (Diary entry 4), *How do you feel about the emphasis placed on pair work and group work?* (Diary entry 5).

*What are learners’ beliefs about their own contribution to their peers’ learning during **group work**? (SRQ3)*

One prompt from Diary entry 6 aimed to discover whether students held the belief that they had contributed to the learning of others: *Do you feel that you contributed to the learning of other group members?* As with the previous sub-research question other questions from the diary entries mentioned above also gave students the opportunity to comment on whether they believed they had contributed to the learning of others. The fourth statement on the group evaluation exercise: “Here are the qualities that I believe I contribute to the group” was also asked to add further insights into students’ own contribution to their peers’ learning.

*What are learners’ beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **group work** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ3)*

Students were not asked directly about their beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during GW, but were asked indirectly about these roles in the university classroom: *What do you think is the role of the learner in classes at a New Zealand university? What do you think is the role of the teacher*

*in classes at a New Zealand university? Do you think the role of the teacher is different at universities in your home country? (Diary entry 7).*

In the interview, question 7 also asked the case study participants about their beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher in tutorials.

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **group work**? (SRQ2)*

In addition to the questions in the interview that sought answers to the research questions, three additional questions were also asked: questions 4 and 6 were asked to see whether students had experienced any conflict between obtaining good grades and participating in GW and questions 2 and 3 were asked to gain insights into the effectiveness of the learner diary as the main research instrument carried out in this study. These were included in the interview because learners in Cycle I appeared to hold mixed beliefs about the use of a group grade in the course and because students had not been required to reflect on the effectiveness of the learner diary in the diary prompts.

The following section provides the alignment between the research questions as they relate to PR and the data instruments. Since PR was just one type of cooperative activity students participated in, students were only requested to respond to this activity in one of their diary entries (Diary entry 2). Students were required to respond to the following prompts:

- 1) How did you feel about reading your classmate(s) essay draft?
- 2) How did you feel about writing a response to your classmate(s) essay draft?
- 3) How did you feel about having your classmate(s) read your essay draft and give suggestions for revision?
- 4) What kind of suggestions did you receive from your classmate(s)?
- 5) What kind of suggestions are most helpful to you?
- 6) In general, do you find the PR activity helpful?

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of **peer review** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **peer review**? (SRQ3)*

The first three prompts had students respond to questions beginning with: *how do you feel...* to elicit their beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of PR. The final two prompts asked students to consider how *helpful* the PR exercise was in terms of the suggestions they received and the PR activity in general which again would elicit beliefs about the benefits and/or disadvantages of PR.

*What are students' beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **peer review** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ3)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

All of the prompts in this diary entry asked students directly about their beliefs about giving and receiving feedback on each other's essay drafts. These prompts were also designed to give students the opportunity to express their beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer and the role of the teacher regarding feedback in PR exercises.

### **3.2.3 The research within an AR framework**

This section begins by presenting an overview of the research design, situated within the context of an AR framework. This study was conducted within a specific situation - an EAP course at one university - and only involved participants enrolled in that course. An issue was identified by the researcher in a specific context and subsequently investigated by her in that context (Section 1.2). AR is cyclical in its nature and involves a continual process of evaluation and reflection. Data were collected through diary entries and a case study interview in Cycle I, and this data determined what action would need to be taken to improve the implementation of GW/PR in Cycle II.

AR originates with a problem which demands solutions as well as emphasising the need for action. Action can be seen as the core process in AR. Stringer (1996) claims that "paying attention" to the principles of social interaction (relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion) is the foundation for an AR process. Stringer presents the following three fundamental phases of AR:

**Phase 1. Look:** participants *define and describe* the problem to be investigated and the general context within which it is set. [Gather relevant information (Gather Data). Build a Picture: Describe the Situation (Define & Describe)]

**Phase 2. Think:** they *analyze and interpret* the situation to extend their understanding of the nature and context of the problem [Explore and Analyze: What is happening here? (Hypothesize) Interpret and explain: How & why are things as they are? (Theorize)]

**Phase 3. Act:** to formulate *solutions* to the problem.

[Plan (Report)

Implement

Evaluate] (p. 39)

The present study is now described in relation to Stringer's steps outlined in the AR criteria above.

### **Phase 1: Look**

The problematic issue which triggered the idea of this AR study was discovered when the researcher was teaching an EAP paper in the year previous to the beginning of this study (Section 1.2). Students seemed to have conflicting beliefs about the GW/PR activities, an integral part of the tutorials in that paper. The researcher believed that a greater knowledge of learners' beliefs about GW/PR activities would lead to a better understanding of students and their needs and this would lead to improvements

in how these activities would be implemented and assessed in future courses. Although it was not possible to conduct the study with this particular class, it was decided to carry out the research in the same course in the following year (2005). Data were gathered from learners' diary entries and a case study interview in Cycle I. The diary entries were particularly rich in data and built a vivid picture of the beliefs and experiences of these ESL students.

### **Phase 2: Think**

The results of the data from the diary entries (Section 4.1) and the case study data (Section 4.2) provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the situation under investigation and moreover revealed the situation from the perspective of the learners.

### **Phase 3: Act, plan, implement, and evaluate**

The researcher has presented the *Act*, *Plan*, *Implement*, and *Evaluate* stages of Phase 3: *Act* as four separate steps:

#### **Step 1: Act**

Learners expressed a range of beliefs in their diary entries and in the case study interview as well as making suggestions such as how the activities could be more successfully implemented. These recommendations were taken into consideration by the researcher during the following step of the AR phase: plan.

#### **Step 2: Plan**

The purpose of this step was to plan in more detail how these recommendations could be successfully implemented and integrated into the course in Cycle II.

#### **Step 3: Implement**

The researcher implemented the major recommendations in the EAP paper during the first semester 2007 for Cycle II of the research. The recommendations are limited to those which are directly related to GW/PR (Section 4.4).

#### **Step 4: Evaluate**

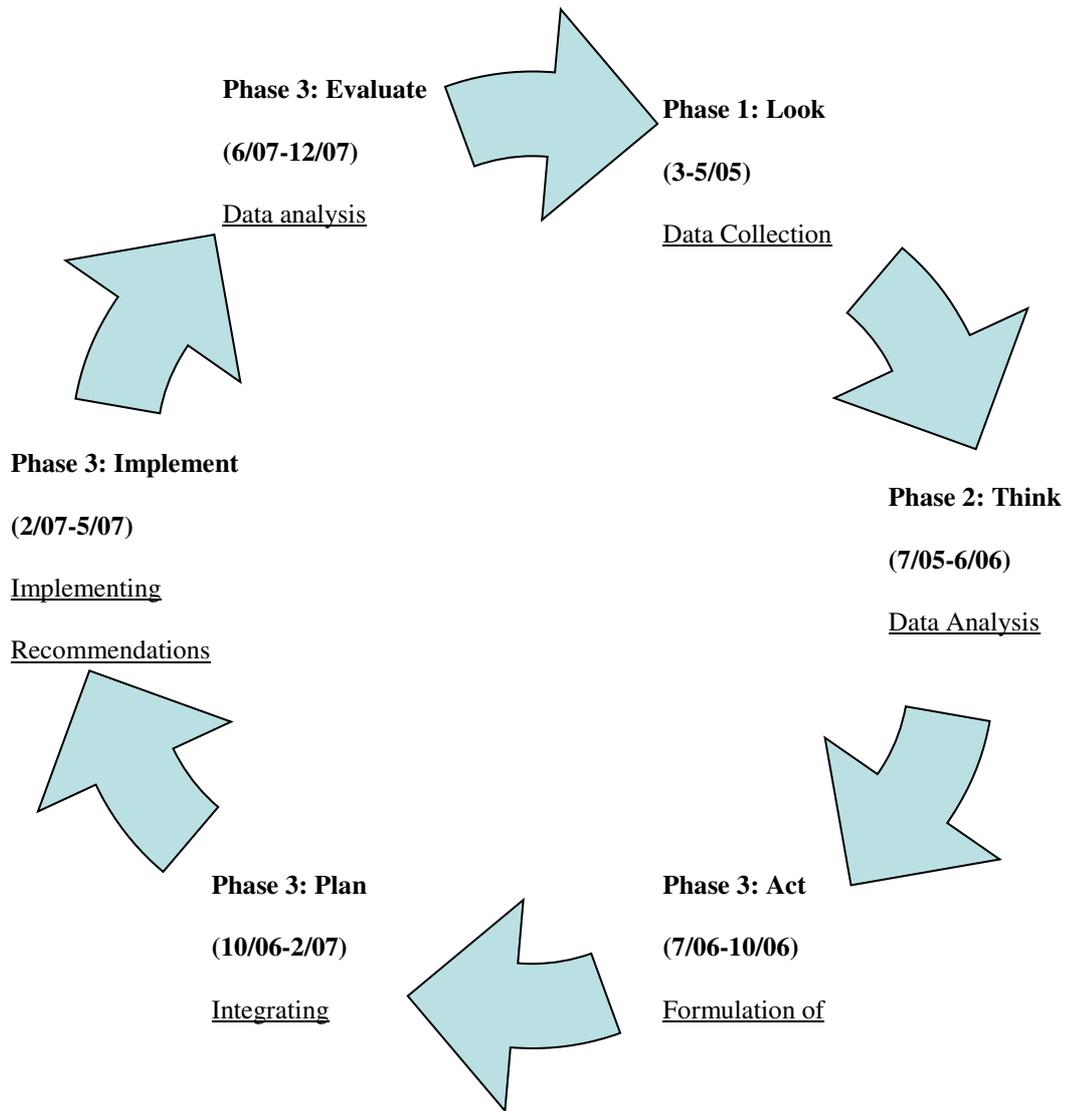
The GW/PR activities were evaluated at the end of the course in 2007 through analysing the data collected from the diary entries and the group evaluation exercise in Cycle II. Recommendations based on the researcher's interpretation of students' recommendations, suggestions, and comments are included in the final chapter of this thesis. Figure 1 shows the cyclical nature of AR and describes the

three phases of the data collection procedure. As can be seen in Figure 1, the first phase of the AR began during the early months of 2005, the second phase was carried out from around the middle of 2005 until the middle of 2006, and the third phase began in the middle of 2006 and was completed at the end of 2007. Data collection in Cycle I was carried out towards the beginning of the semester with students completing a background questionnaire (Appendix F) and writing weekly learning diary entries - a total of eight including the first learner diary - over the course of the semester. Finally, an interview with four volunteers was conducted after the EAP course had ended. In total, forty students completed the background questionnaire, forty students submitted diary entries, and four students were interviewed.

Cycle II followed a similar procedure to Cycle I. Cycle II was conducted on a smaller scale and consisted of four main stages. The first stage of Cycle II was the administering of the background questionnaire. This was followed by the second stage in which students wrote their learning diary entries, for which there were a total of five. The third stage was having students complete a group work evaluation at the end of one tutorial. In total, eleven students completed the background questionnaire, fourteen students submitted one or more diary entries, and fourteen students completed the group evaluation exercise.

### **3.2.4 Reflection: An overview**

An important component of any AR project is a reflection period (Phase 2: “Think”) followed by a period in which these reflections are transformed into improved classroom activities (Phase 3: “Act”, “plan”, “Implement”). In this study, the themes and codes which emerged from the analysis of the diary data in Cycle I were very influential in making the changes to the implementation of GW and PR in Cycle II. Consequently, more tutorial time was allocated to creating a more comfortable environment and discussing the benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR and to overcoming problems that may arise. In terms of the training in GW, learners were taught about the five principles of cooperative learning and participated in cooperative activities. For the training in PR, students were taught the necessary language, learned how to respond appropriately to their peers’ writing through practice. A more detailed account of the reflection and the changes made to Cycle II is provided at the end of Chapter Four, results for Cycle I (Section 4.4).



**FIGURE 1: THE RESEARCH STEPS FOR CYCLES I AND II IN THE AR FRAMEWORK**

### **3.2.5 Participants**

#### **Selection of the participants**

In both Cycle I and II, students were asked to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. For the case study interview the researcher and the tutors had also asked their tutorial groups for volunteers. Since this was towards the end of the course and the interview would not be conducted until after the course had ended, only four students volunteered. All interviewees were female and were confident speakers with high levels of English proficiency and were considered by their tutor to be good language learners: they consistently achieved high grades, were diligent students, regularly attended lectures and tutorials, participated well during tutorials, appeared to be motivated, had a positive attitude towards GW/PR and had written particularly insightful diary entries throughout the semester. In this study they are identified by the following pseudonyms: Haruko, Ho-Sook, Sahar, Vega and they came from Japan, Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, and Sweden respectively.

#### **Participants: Cycle I**

Information about the participants was gathered through the administration of a background questionnaire (Appendix F) and the first diary entry (Appendix C) which were given to students during the first week of lectures. The following section provides the bio-data obtained from the learners' background questionnaire and this is then followed by the most relevant information from the first diary entry

#### **The background questionnaire**

Although this study does not intend to examine the influence of sociocultural and educational factors, they were still regarded as significant background factors that would influence learners' beliefs about GW/PR and therefore the researcher included items in the background questionnaire that referred to sociocultural factors such as ethnicity, exposure to languages other than their mother tongue and English, and length of time in New Zealand. Prompts referring to educational factors were provided in the first learner diary regarding prior English language learning experience. Through the reflective nature of the present study and the insightfulness of the study informants, the researcher hoped to provide a deeper understanding of the beliefs and experiences of each of these particular students rather than to attempt an explanation of their beliefs based on the cultural and ethnic group they belong to.

The background questionnaire was divided into two main sections: (1) General Information and (2) Language Skills Assessment. The first section was designed to elicit bio-data which was important since cultural and linguistic background and length of time spent in New Zealand or other English speaking countries may influence learners' beliefs about their language learning experience. Table 2 shows that participants represented cultural backgrounds typical of students enrolled in an EAP course at a tertiary institute in New Zealand: the majority of students came from Asia with the largest number coming from China.

**TABLE 2: STUDY PARTICIPANTS (CYCLE I)**

<b>Home Country</b>	<b>Total</b>
China	18
The Republic of Korea	5
Japan	4
Thailand	3
Sweden	3
Taiwan	1
Vietnam	1
Afghanistan	1
Iran	1
Maldives	1
Sudan	1
Mexico	1
Czech Republic	1
Samoa	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

Table 3, on the following page, shows that many of the participants had lived in New Zealand for at least one year and almost half of them were able to speak a language in addition to their first language and English. The majority of participants were enrolled in a Bachelors degree programme and were majoring in a range of subjects with Commerce and Science related subjects being most popular.

The second section of the background questionnaire was related to language skills assessment. Students were required to rate their proficiency level in the four English language skills on a nine-band scale. Table 4 shows that the mean for reading was 5.9, writing was 5.3, listening and speaking were both 5.8. This table shows that students tended to rate themselves lower for writing than they did for reading, listening and speaking. Students tended to rate themselves realistically, although some students rated themselves lower than their actual level. Many of the participants gave further explanations about their level: some students commented on the new experience of using English in an ESL context while students who had been living in New Zealand prior to starting university commented on the weaknesses in their language skills and the areas that needed improvement. When asked about what they were best at in English, students tended to respond with one of the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, or writing. A small number of students provided further explanations such as chatting with their homestay family or reading a particular book.

When asked about what they found difficult in English, students again responded with one of the four language skills, but also added specific areas of difficulty such as pronunciation, essay writing, spelling, or grammar. Some students offered more insightful comments with their answers: “Sometime it doesn’t make a sense by translating from first language” [BQ/Rong/2/4] and “I found it’s really hard to talk to young kiwis. Becoz most of them do not really want to listen to me. So, I usually don’t speak during discussion at the tutorial class. I am afraid to speak” [BQ/Shu Faang/2/4]. Two students recalled their difficulty to understand jokes: “To understand jokes” [BQ/Jun/2/4] and “I like to watch *Friends*, *the Simpsons* and *South Park* and I can understand them almost without any difficulty. But when it comes to real life situations, like in lecture, I always can’t get the jokes” [BQ/Cong/2/4].

**TABLE 3: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION (CYCLE I)**

<b>Student Pseudonym</b>	<b>Home Country</b>	<b>First Language</b>	<b>Length of Time in NZ</b>	<b>Length of Time in other English-Speaking Country</b>	<b>Other Languages Spoken</b>	<b>Degree/Qualification Currently Studying for</b>	<b>Major</b>
Abdul	Maldives	Dhivehi	1 year	None	Hindi	MA	Geography
Aiyumi	Japan	Japanese	7 weeks	None	None	C.O.P	Exchange student
Chayond	Thailand	Thai	5 years	None	None	B.Sc.	Computer Science
Chen	China	Mandarin	2.5 years	None	None	BA	Film
Cong	Hong Kong	Cantonese	4 months	Australia: 4 years	Mandarin	BA	English/Linguistics
Dae-Ho	Korea	Korean	1 month	None	None	C.O.P	Commerce
Dao	China	Cantonese	2 years	None	Mandarin	B.Sc.	Chemistry
Dusana	Czech Republic	Czech	2 years	None	Russian/German	B.A	Linguistics
Faaae	Samoa	Samoaan	10 years	None	None	Mus.B.	Music
Haruko	Japan	Japanese	6 years	None	None	B.Sc.	Physiotherapy
Herminia	Mexico	Spanish	2 months	None	None	C.O.P	Social Anthropology
Ho*	China						
Ho-Pyong	Korea	Korean	6 months	None	Spanish	C.O.P	Management
Ho-Sook	Korea	Korean	3 years	None	None	M.A	Linguistics
Jamal	Sudan	Arabic	4 years	None	Nuer	B.Sc.	Chemistry
Jiao	China	Chinese	4 years	None	None	B.Com	Economics
Jin Sook	Korea	Korean	1 month	None	None	C.O.P	Environment Engineering
Joo-Eun	Korea	Korean	6 months	None	None	B.A	International Business
Jun	China	Cantonese	2.5 years	None	Mandarin	B.Sc.	Human Nutrition
Lien	China	Mandarin	2 years	None	None	B.Sc.	Computer Science
Ling	China	Mandarin	2.5 years	None	None	B.Com	Marketing Mgmt
Nahid	Iran	Persian	5 years	None	Turkish, Dari	M.Sc.	Computer Science
Nhu	Vietnam	Vietnamese	3 years	**	None	B.Cs.	Computer Science
Noriko	Japan	Japanese	1 month	Hawaii: 1 month	Thai, Romanian	C.O.P	Exchange student

Obb	Thailand	Thai	13 years	None	None	B.Com	Finance
Peder	Sweden	Swedish	1.5 months	None	German	**	Physics
Rong	China	Mandarin	3 years	None	None	B.Com	International Business
Sahar	Afghanistan	Farsi	4.5 years	U.S.A: 5 years	Pashto, Persian, Urdu	**	Computer Science
Sarawut	Thailand	Thai	3.5 months	None	None	B.A	Political Studies
Shen	Hong Kong	Cantonese	2.5 years	None	Mandarin	B.Sc.	Computer Science
Shing	Hong Kong	Cantonese	3 years	Canada: 6 months	Mandarin	B.Com	Information Science
Shuang	China	Mandarin	3 years	None	None	B.Com	Accounting
Shu Fang	Taiwan	Mandarin	2.5 years	None	Taiwanese	B.Com	Marketing
Takeo*	Japan	Japanese					
Vega	Sweden	Swedish	1 month	None	Arabic	B.Sc.	Psychology
Viveka	Sweden	Swedish	2 months	S.Africa:10 months	None	B.A	Psychology
Xia	China	Mandarin	3 years	None	Spanish (a little)	B.Com	International Business
Yan Yan	China	Mandarin	2 years	None	None	B. Applied Sc.	Food Science
Yimin	China	Mandarin	1.5 years	None	None	B.A.	Accounting
Yue Wan	China	Mandarin	2 years	None	None	B.A.	Linguistics
Yue Ying	China	Mandarin	2 years	None	None	B.Com	Marketing
Zhen Juan	China	Mandarin	1 year	None	Japanese	B.Sc.	Computer Science

\*Did not complete demographic questionnaire    \*\*Did not answer question

**TABLE 4: STUDY PARTICIPANTS – SELF ASSESSMENT (CYCLE I)**

1 (unable to use English)    2 (very little English)    3 (little English)    4 (limited English)    5 (modest English)    6 (competent user of English)    7 (good English)    8 (very good English)    9 (expert user of English)

Student pseudonym	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Abdul	7	7	7	7
Aiyumi	4	4	2	2
Chayond	6	5	7	7
Chen	5	6	7	7
Cong	5	6	7	7
Dao	4	4	4	4
Dae-Ho	6	4	5	4
Dusana	8	7	8	7
Faaae	8	4	5	6
Haruko	5	4	5	5
Herminia	9	9	4	8
Ho*				
Ho-Pyong	6	6	6	6
Ho-Sook	6	6	6	6
Jamal	3	3	4	2
Jiao	5	5	7	7
Jin Sook	5	4	3	2
Joo-Eun	5	5	6	6
Jun	7	7	8	7
Lien	7	6	6	6
Ling	5	5	4	6
Nahid	6	6	7	6
Nhu	6	5	6	5
Noriko	**	**	**	**
Obb	6	4	6	4
Peder	7	6	6	6
Rong	5	5	7	6
Sahar	7	7	8	8
Sarawat	7	6	7	5
Shen	6	6	6	6
Shing	6	6	6	5
Shuang	5	5	7	5
Shu Fang	5	5	6	5
Takeo*				
Vega	7	4	6	5
Viveka	7	7	7	7
Xia	6	4	7	6
Yan Yan	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
Yimin	5	4	5	5
Yue Wan	6	5	6	7
Yue Ying	6	5	6	6
Zhen Juan	8	6	7	7
<b>MEAN( N=39)</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>

\*did not complete demographic questionnaire

\*\*did not answer question

When asked about what they wanted to learn from the course, the majority of students stated that they wished to improve those skills that were necessary for university study: academic reading and writing, writing an essay, speaking in an academic context, improving fluency, expanding vocabulary, and grammar. Some students wished to improve their communicative competence: “I know that writing is the most important aspect in a language. But I also want to improve my fluency in it’ [Cong/BQ] and “to improve all skills at academic standard, possible with some everyday English” [Jun/BQ].

Finally, students were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments. Although twenty-five students did not complete this part of the background questionnaire, some students did offer some insightful comments focusing on the need to improve speaking skills not only for everyday life but also for university presentations: “Learning foreign language is a very hard work and one has to be not only passionate about it but also try to be aware of the language every minute of the day (to pick accent, slang, idioms etc)” [BQ/Dusana/2/6], “although I’ve been living here for 10 years, I still lack the confidence to use English competently. Oh, I also need to improve on my speaking skills during presentations because I stutter a lot when I’m nervous” [BQ/Faaae/2/6], and “I really want to improve my accent and intonation, too. However, it’s not within the scope of this course” [BQ/Cong/2/6].

This section of the questionnaire revealed insightful comments from some of the participants and also raised the issue of confidence and anxiety in learning and communicating in a second language. Some students were confident using English in everyday situations because they felt relaxed but they did not feel confident in using English for academic purposes. In general, students wished to improve both their ability in understanding and using academic language as well as improving their communicative ability.

### **The first learner diary entry**

The first learner diary entry required students to write about their personal English language learning history (Appendix B: Learning diary guidelines and Appendix C: Learning diary prompts for Cycles I and II). This was designed to supplement the information gained from the background questionnaire. The first diary entry, written by learners in the second week of the semester, revealed that the majority of students had similar prior English language learning experiences in their own countries. This section describes how students felt about their previous language learning experiences, especially their early language learning experiences. It also describes the style of classroom learning that these students had experienced and their beliefs about this approach as well as the impact it had on their future language learning experience when they arrived in New Zealand.

The majority of students had been learning English for many years – most from junior high school but some as early as kindergarten. Some of these students had felt initial resentment towards having to learn a foreign language at a very young age, however, many were later grateful for the head start they had had when they had to learn English as a compulsory school subject. Many students explained that they were told from a young age that English would be very important for their future lives.

Many students wrote about their negative experiences of studying English at school in their home country, explaining that they were taught a textbook kind of English with an emphasis on grammar, reading, and written exercises to pass future examinations and that there was very little opportunity to interact with fellow classmates. With the emphasis on preparing for examinations, students complained that there were very few opportunities for GW or pair work in their classes. Some students wrote that this style of learning had a negative impact on their motivation to study: “These experiences of learning English make me feel tired. Actually, I quite like English. However, pressure from school, from parents, make me feel I do not want to learn English anymore” [Yimin/D1]. Some students observed that the emphasis on grammar actually hindered the communicative aspect of language learning because it “makes people hesitate to make mistakes in real conversation because we do know the correct sentences in head that we should listen and say, but do not get used to do so” [Aiyumi/D1]. Because students had been learning to write English accurately, sometimes for many years, and because they were aware of the grammar rules and often knew the correct way of saying something, they were reluctant to make a mistake in their speaking. Many students expressed their frustration at not being able to communicate effectively after they had arrived in New Zealand.

Some students wrote about their desire to ‘fit in’ with the new culture and language after arriving in New Zealand and consequently criticised their teacher from their home country: “I felt my teacher spoken English with strong local voice” [Ling/D1]. These beliefs regarding English teachers from their own linguistic and cultural background also led to a desire to lose their own accent when speaking English. Some students wrote that this was best achieved by communicating with “the local people in New Zealand” because, as one student pointed out, “it can adjust your local voice”. Conversely, several students believed that this style of learning provided them with a solid foundation in English. As one student commented “learning English was boring but effective” [Shen/D1]. A few students saw the best of both worlds, highlighting the benefits of both learning English in their own country and learning in an ESL context. “But the teaching style in China still has some useful aspect for me. Because I learned many vocabularies, it makes me easier to updating my English in New Zealand” [Zhen Juan/D1].

The first diary entry showed students' willingness to write about their personal language learning histories. They appeared to want to share their previous and current language learning experiences, with their tutor through the diary entry. The following section provides the same information as the previous section for Cycle II.

### **Participants: Cycle II**

This section provides details of the participants enrolled in Cycle II. In this Cycle, the participants were limited to those enrolled in the researcher's own tutorial group. It was not feasible to include students enrolled in other teacher's tutorial groups because the success of this part of the study depended on the inclusion of cooperative/collaborative activities in addition to some training in each tutorial. At this stage of the project, the researcher herself was still learning about training in cooperative learning methods and it would not have been practical for her to teach other teachers in the implementation of cooperative/collaborative learning methods. Bio-data from the background questionnaire are presented first and this is followed by learners' previous language learning experiences which they wrote about in their first diary entry.

### **The background questionnaire**

Table 5 shows that all of the students except for one came from Asia and more than half of the group came from China, which is similar to the demographic range shown in Table 4. Table 6 shows that nine out of the ten students who had responded to the question had lived in New Zealand for more than one year.

**TABLE 5: STUDY PARTICIPANTS (CYCLE II)**

<b>Home Country</b>	<b>Total</b>
China	8
Japan	2
Thailand	2
Brunei	1
Spain	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

**TABLE 6: STUDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION (CYCLE II)**

<b>Student Pseudonym</b>	<b>Home Country</b>	<b>First Language</b>	<b>Length of Time in NZ</b>	<b>Length of Time in other English-Speaking Country</b>	<b>Other Languages Spoken</b>	<b>Degree/ Qualification Currently Studying for</b>	<b>Major</b>
Aiguo*		Chinese					Microbiology
Chalong*	China	Mandarin					
Feng		Mandarin					
Jian	Hong Kong	Cantonese	3 years	None	English	**	Design
Kenjiro	Japan	Japanese	8 years	None	English	B.A	**
Ruolan	Brunei	Hokkien	12 years	Brunei (8 years)	Mandarin, Cantonese	B.Sc.	Computer Science
Sara	Spain	Spanish	8 weeks	England 2 months Ireland 2 months	French	B.A	English and Linguistics
Sawat*	Thailand	Thai					
Seiji	Japan	Japanese	3 years	None	None	B.A	Linguistics
Ting	Hong Kong	Cantonese	6 years	None	English	B.A	Psychology
Wei	Hong Kong	Cantonese	3 years	None	Mandarin, English	Not sure	Computer Science
Wencheng	China	Mandarin	Nearly 3 years	None	None	B.SC	Computer Science
Xia	China	Mandarin	4 years	Malaysia 1 year	English	B.Com	Accounting
Yubi	China	Mandarin	3.5 years	None	None	**	Computer Science

\* Did not complete demographic questionnaire

\*\* Did not answer question

**TABLE 7: STUDY PARTICIPANTS – SELF ASSESSMENT (CYCLE II)**

Student Pseudonym	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Aiguo*				
Chalong*				
Feng*				
Jian	5	5	6	6
Kenjiro	3	4	4	5
Ruolan	7	6	6	6
Sara	7	6	5	5
Sawat*				
Seiji	5	5	5	5
Ting	5	6	6.5	6.5
Wei	5	5	5	6
Wencheng	5	5	5	5
Xia	4	5	6	7
Yubi	5	5	6	5
<b>Mean (N=10)</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.6</b>

\* Did not complete demographic questionnaire

Table 7 shows that the mean for reading was 5.1; writing was 5.2; listening was 5.4 and speaking was 5.6. The table shows that students tended to rate themselves higher on speaking and lower on reading. Similar to the participants in Cycle I, when responding to what they were best at in English, the majority of students in Cycle II replied with direct answers such as: speaking, reading, listening, and spelling. Likewise, the majority of students listed the area they found most difficult: listening (including comprehending different English accents), speaking, reading, writing, essay writing and academic writing, scientific English, grammar and learning new words. Again, responses were brief with no further explanation given. When responding to what they wanted to learn most from the course, answers were again similar to those given in Cycle I with the majority of students stating that they wished to improve those skills that were necessary for university study and one student citing the

opportunity to make new friends. Most students cited academic reading and writing as the main skills they wished to learn most. One student wished to improve speaking and listening skills.

### **The first learner diary entry**

All of the students who wrote the first learner diary entry had studied English in their home country prior to coming to New Zealand – many for several years. A number of the students emphasised the importance of learning English and the expectations for them to succeed in learning English prior to coming to New Zealand: “The course was compulsory so student had to take it seriously in order to gain the high school entries” [Aiguo/D1]. Students also wrote about the importance of studying English to be able to study abroad and to improve their future employment opportunities.

Despite the apparent importance of learning English, many of the students wrote about the negative aspects regarding their experiences learning English in their home country. Some students wrote about the lack of attention given to speaking and listening and the emphasis placed on rote learning. Some students gave examples of memorising word lists and sentences out of context. Some students also wrote about the lack of contact with native English speaking teachers and how if there were contact with native English speaking teachers, students may be “not confident enough to speak and they are scared that other students might laugh at them when they speak when something wrong [Ting/D1].

Some students also wrote about how they were not allowed to speak their L1 at school. Three students referred specifically to fines and incentives to speak English at their respective schools in their home country: “...we were not allowed to speak Thai; if you do you will have to pay 20 cents each time” [Sawat/D1], “we were not allowed to speak our own language, otherwise, we will get fine or other penalty from our head of principal” [Xia/D1] and “candies would be given as gifts if the pronunciations were well performed in the class” [Wei/D1].

Although students were quite critical about the way in which they had learned English in their home country, they also pointed out positive aspects of their earlier language learning experience. Some students held the belief that learning grammar provided them with a solid foundation in English and prepared them for their university lives: “Because we learn grammar first, Japanese are well known as good essay writer actually, it is hard to find the Japanese who worry about writing for assignment” [Seiji/D1].

However, students agreed that learning a foreign language in the target country was the best way of learning that language: “...living in an English-speaker country is the best thing for improving your

English skills...sometimes you have to face with difficult situations because misunderstandings of the language but definitely this is the best way of learning a language” [Sara/D1].

Learners wrote about the difficulties they experienced in adjusting to the new style of learning English. Students wrote about how they had had little experience of GW or pair work in their home countries.

...with this way of learning it was so hard for me to adjust my life when I first came to New Zealand. In every class, you got to participate either in a group work or individually. I was so shy and lack of confident. It was so hard that I almost gave up my study and go home. [Sawat/D1]

Overall, students appeared to accept the different learning style in New Zealand and enjoyed learning English as a second language by becoming immersed in the target language and culture:

In New Zealand. Firstly, teachers are native therefore it was good to learn English pronunciation rather than learning pronunciation in Japan. Secondly, because other students are from all over the countries, I had to use only English to communicate to the other students and I had to learn how to construct the phrases or sentences in English whenever I want to express my opinion. [Kenjiro/D1]

The Brain is flooded with English so you are kind of leaning it both actively and passively. It can be exhausting sometimes though. [Aiguo/D1]

### **3.2.6 Ethical considerations**

Before each Cycle was conducted, the researcher applied for and obtained ethical approval from the University of Otago Ethics committee. The application for ethical approval consisted of an “ethical procedure information sheet” (Appendix G), and “consent form” (Appendix H). The information sheet included the working title of the thesis and explained to students the purpose of the study, the tasks that students may be asked to participate in, and the protection of their personal information and identity. It was noted in the information sheet that data may be collected from students’ assignments, for example, the learner diaries. The researcher was aware of the potential conflict surrounding the use of the learner diaries as both research instrument and a graded assessment and she took certain measures to mitigate this risk. The learner diaries constituted 10% of students’ final grade, however, students were not graded on the content of their diary entries, but instead on the word length, coherence, format, and whether they had covered all of the points in the diary prompt (Appendix B). Furthermore, analysis of the diary data did not begin in either Cycle until the final grades had been submitted. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their identities. Although the

information sheet explicitly stated that the researcher would be investigating the views and opinions of students enrolled in the course, at the time that ethical approval was sought, the researcher had not reached a final decision about the data collection instruments which would be used in the study. Since Cycle II intended to follow the same data collection procedures as Cycle I, she made the decision to use the same information sheet and consent form for each Cycle. The consent form reiterated to students that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.

The participants in this research were informed about the study during the second lecture of the first week of the semester in both Cycles. Although participation in this study was solicited, participation was strictly voluntary. Students read the information sheet and consent form and if they agreed to take part in the study, they wrote and signed their names on the consent form. In Cycle I, 42 out of the 67 students signed the consent forms (7 consent forms were returned unsigned and 18 students either did not attend lectures in that week or had not yet enrolled in the paper). In Cycle II, all 14 students enrolled in the researcher's tutorial group signed the consent forms.

### **3.2.7 Procedures in data collection**

This section presents the data collection procedures used in the study for the learner diary, the interview, and the group evaluation exercise.

#### **The learner diary**

Details of the learner diary prompts and the place of the learner diary in the EAP paper were provided in the Introduction chapter (Section 1.2). For the collection of the diary data, students were instructed to submit an electronic copy, as a Word attachment, to their tutor by the due date. Students in Cycle I who were not in the researcher's tutorial group were required to email their diary entry to their tutor and the researcher. Students were given a set of guidelines, which set out the formatting requirements for the diary entries. Each diary entry was to be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman font 12.

#### **The interview**

An interview with each of the four case study participants was conducted by the researcher at the end of the course. The interviews were conducted at the University of Otago and were audio-taped with the permission of each participant. Each interview took approximately forty-five minutes and was conducted in English according to a set of interview guidelines.

Each interview began with a briefing, in which the researcher reiterated the purpose of the study, assured each participant that their responses would remain confidential and that their identity would remain anonymous. Participants were also reminded that their interview would be tape recorded and were asked if they had any questions before the interview started. The interviews started with several preliminary questions pertaining to participants' previous English learning experience in their home country as well as in New Zealand, prior to coming to the University of Otago (Appendix D: Interview guidelines). This preliminary set of questions was then followed by the main part of the interview. These questions were not asked in particular order but were concerned with the participants' beliefs about the following three areas: GW, the learner diary and the role of the learner/tutor. The GW questions required participants to give their opinions on various aspects of GW: how the group members were selected, the proficiency level of all group members, positive and negative aspects of GW, and the possible opportunities for learning in the process of GW. The questions pertaining to the learner diary were concerned with the usefulness of the diary as a learning tool and their inclusion in the internal assessment for students' final grade in the paper. The questions regarding the role of the learner and tutor in the language classroom were concerned with the participants' beliefs about the importance of traditional methods and individual work in addition to how they perceived the role of the learner and the tutor.

### **Group evaluation exercise**

Participants in Cycle II completed the paper-based group evaluation exercise, which was given during a tutorial, half way through the course (Appendix E: Group evaluation exercise). The evaluation form was used to discover whether students held the same beliefs as they had expressed in their diary entries. The evaluation exercise was divided into the following two steps: The first step required students to comment on their experience in GW. Students were asked to state what they liked and what they did not like about their last experience with GW, give their suggestions for effective meetings, and explain the qualities they believed they contributed to the group. The second step was discussion based. After each group member had shared their responses, the group leader then led a discussion to reach an agreement on suggestions to improve GW.

### **3.2.8 Data management**

Following the collection of data, it then needed to be organised in preparation for analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) define data management as "the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage and retrieval" (p. 428). This section explains the data management of the diary entries, interview, and group evaluation exercise.

## **The learner diary**

*The data management of the diary entries followed three phases:*

- 1) **Organising the raw data.** Each diary entry was downloaded and saved as a Word document in a folder. One folder was used for all of the entries for each weekly diary prompt. In Cycle I there were, therefore, a total of eight folders and in Cycle II, there was a total of five folders.
- 2) **Identification of the participants.** A number was assigned to each student for consistency in the labelling process (see 3 below). In Cycle I, students were assigned a number from 1 and in Cycle II they were assigned a number starting from 101. At a later stage in the study, the researcher decided to replace these numbers with pseudonyms. Any information which could identify the participants or their tutorial group was deleted by the researcher.
- 3) **Formatting the data.** Each entry was checked so that it met with the formatting requirements. Each entry ranged from 1-3 pages. The researcher added the diary entry and student number to the top left hand corner of each page: 2/3 referred to diary entry 2 and student number 3. Each of the entries was then printed and analysed separately. Except for changes to formatting, there were no changes or corrections made to learners' grammar or spelling. All diary entries quoted in this study appear as they were originally written, including all grammatical errors, to present more trustworthy data.

## **The interview**

To begin the process of managing the interview data, the researcher listened carefully to each interview to gain a sense of the overall content. The researcher then transcribed each of the four interviews. The following conventions were used in the typing of the transcripts: The researcher was referred to as R and the participant by the first initial/s of their pseudonym. Haruko was, therefore, referred to as H and Ho-Sook was referred to as H-S. Each turn was labelled numerically, for example, on the transcript, "3. V" refers to the third turn taken by Vega in the interview. The transcription is verbatim except in rare cases when grammatical errors have hindered comprehension and have therefore been corrected. Utterances such as "um", "ah", and "mmm" were recorded as they were heard, but pauses were not identified in the transcription. If a participant laughed, this was recorded in parentheses as (laughs) or (laughing). In a very few instances the recording was inaudible and could not be transcribed and so in these cases were consequently transcribed as (inaudible).

### **Group evaluation exercise**

After participants had completed the group evaluation exercise, the researcher removed the learners' names and I.D. numbers and replaced them with their assigned pseudonym. Step 2 of the exercise produced four discussion notes.

After the data management process had been completed, the analysis of the data could begin. The next section explains the data analysis procedure used in this study.

### **3.2.9 Data Analysis**

This section describes the data analysis procedure for the diary entries, interview and group evaluation exercise. The analysis of the data included both inductive and deductive approaches. Some themes were discovered inductively through constant review and comparison of diary entries, interview and group evaluation exercise and so the data were organised based on what emerged from the data. This is particularly relevant to AR as teacher-researchers may have their own preconceived ideas at the beginning of a research project. Other themes were developed deductively based on the research questions which framed this study. The research questions were revised several times throughout the study as the research evolved.

This study employs a grounded theory approach in which the diary entries from different participants were constantly compared to create meaningful categories. A data-driven approach was used in the current study, although it is not the intention of the researcher to develop a complete theory. However, the study yielded theoretical insights that might be useful for further pedagogical development in the area of learner beliefs and GW/PR (Chapter Seven).

The following steps were used to code and analyse the data. The initial step in the analysis of the data was a surface reading of the first diary entry/transcript/group evaluation sheet to gain an overall, general understanding of the contents of that particular data. In the next step, referred to as "open coding", each diary entry/transcript/group evaluation sheet was re-read and individual words, phrases, and sentences which expressed some form of behaviour, thought, feeling, view, opinion, belief, or theme were underlined - sometimes an entire diary entry was underlined in cases when the researcher believed that all of the content was relevant and of potential interest. Key words and phrases were also circled which may also be used as in vivo codes, codes which are labelled using the students' own words.

These codes were then manually cut and pasted onto index cards. For the diary entries, each card was labelled on the upper right corner with information containing the diary entry number, student number,

page number and the number of the unit of meaning. In the figure below, the number “2.44.1.4” therefore shows that the code has been taken from the second diary entry, from student number 44 and that this particular excerpt came from page one of this student’s diary entry and that it was the fourth unit of meaning from that entry.

The next stage was to reduce this vast amount of data into a more manageable size. Patterns between the codes were then identified and each set of codes were placed under a category. To achieve this, the researcher re-read the diary entries with their assigned codes to determine if a code recurred often enough to include in this stage of the analysis. Some codes that were deemed to be very similar were merged into one code. This would sometimes involve finding a new code or using one of the code names in preference for the other. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the process of code development in the following way: “some codes do not work; others decay...Other codes flourish, sometimes too much so” (pp.61-62). At this point the newly formed codes were now considered **categories**.

Each index card therefore contained one excerpt relating to one or more categories. The researcher cut the handwritten notes containing the assigned categories and paper clipped them to the index card. A code may have one or several categories assigned to it due to the overlap of ideas and therefore the card may have one or several categories paper clipped to it. In Figure 2, the categories identified were: “desire to help others of a lower level” and “benefits for the writer (other)”.

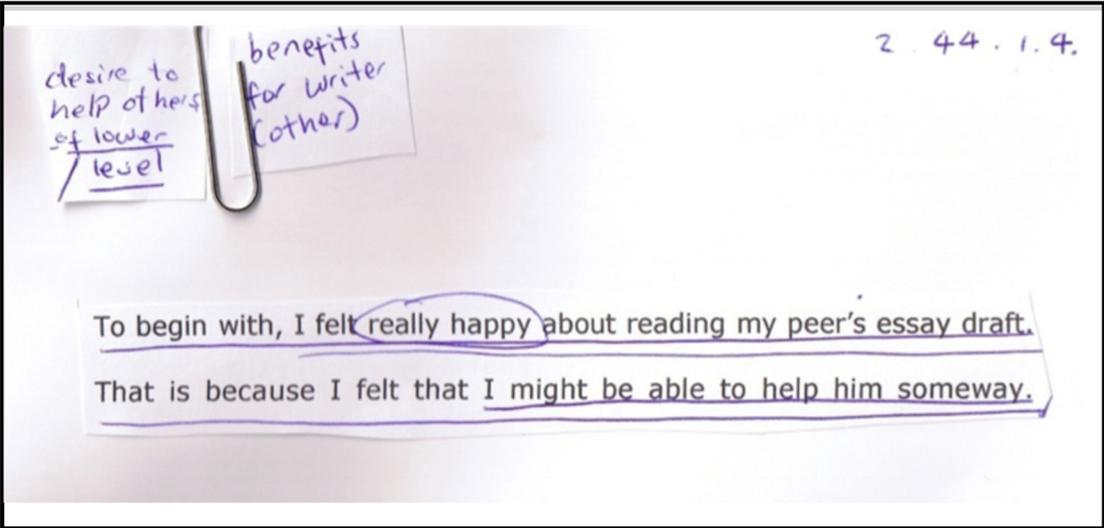


FIGURE 2: INDEX CARD

### **Identifying categories**

The first units of analysis were the **codes**, the second units of analysis were the **categories** and the third units of analysis became the **themes** that emerged from the data.

The process of analysis for the interview followed the same procedure as the diary entries. Each index card, however, was labelled with information identifying that the data had been collected from an interview, and providing the participant number, the number of the turn. The group evaluation exercise followed some of the stages that the researcher had carried out with the analysis of the diary entries and interview. The initial stage of the analysis consisted of reading each of the evaluation sheets to gain an overall sense of the contents. The next stage involved re-reading the text to identify the separate trains of thought and these were labelled units of meaning by the researcher. Again each unit of meaning was separated by a forward slash (/). Since the evaluation exercise consisted of four questions each relating to a particular issue, for example, what the student liked about the last experience with GW, the stages of analysis were much more straightforward than that of the diary data. The next stage consisted of identifying key phrases. The researcher re-read each evaluation exercise individually underlining key words or phrases. This was followed by writing potential codes for each unit of meaning. In contrast to the diary entries in which the units of meaning were manually cut and pasted onto index cards, the units of meaning identified in the group evaluation data were cut and pasted into a large artist's drawing pad along with the handwritten codes. This was possible due to the small amount of relevant data. As with the diary data, all of the text was separated into units of meaning. Cross analysis of the individual evaluation exercises were then compared and combined to create themes.

### **3.3 Trustworthiness of the study**

It is important with any study that the researcher has addressed the issue of quality in the research design and throughout the research process and has taken measures to ensure the soundness of the study's findings. While quantitative research employs the measures of reliability and validity to evaluate the quality of a study, qualitative research is evaluated by its "trustworthiness" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba posed the simple question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p.290). They proposed four criteria for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this section, each of these are discussed as they relate to the present study.

### **3.3.1 Credibility**

The credibility of findings in qualitative research can be compared with the concept of internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility therefore refers to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings and there are various methods which can be employed to establish this. Credibility for this study was sought through triangulation of data methods, prolonged engagement in the field and peer debriefing.

Triangulation was employed in terms of using multiple data sources. A learner diary was chosen as the main data collection instrument in both Cycles and a semi-structured interview (Cycle I) and a group evaluation exercise (Cycle II) were used as secondary instruments used to explore the beliefs of learners about GW and/or PR. Patton (1990) recommends using a variety of data collection methods to achieve optimum results. Employing a variety of methods helps minimise the possible weaknesses of any one approach and at the same time provides the researcher with the opportunity to gain a wider perspective on the beliefs of the participants in the study.

To further ensure credibility of the study, prolonged engagement was also employed through the longitudinal nature of the research design. Data were also collected regularly throughout the semester long data collection period. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), prolonged engagement can refer to the researcher spending an extended period of time in the setting in which the research is being carried out in or spending a significant period of time with the participants. This was able to be achieved in this study through the researcher's role as lecturer and co-ordinator of the EAP course.

Finally, the researcher carried out peer debriefing with a PhD support group (PhD students Applied Linguistics Club [PALC]) in the Linguistics Programme at the University of Otago. PALC consisted of the researcher's primary PhD supervisor and founder of the Club and several PhD students studying under the supervision of that supervisor. The support group met regularly, usually on a fortnightly basis and was an opportunity for each member to share aspects of their research and to discuss issues relevant to PhD students as emerging academics. The Club members were provided with a small selection of diary entries and were asked to do the following: (1) read the diary entries and identify any relevant issues and (2) try to group these issues into main themes. The results from all group members were then compared to those found by the researcher. The results showed very similar categories and themes.

### **3.3.2 Transferability**

Transferability in qualitative inquiry corresponds to external validity in quantitative research. The purpose of transferability is to determine whether the results of a particular study can be transferred to other contexts and whether researchers are able to apply those findings to their own research. Transferability is enhanced by providing a thick, rich description of the context of the study, the data collection, data analysis and presentation of the findings of the study. This enables other researchers to compare contexts and draw conclusions as to whether transferability has been achieved, since the researcher him/herself is not able to establish transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, in order to provide sufficient details for other researchers to compare the proposed contexts and to make their own judgements about its transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the context of the research (Section 1.2), the participants in both Cycles (Section 3.2.5), in addition to a detailed account of the data collection methods (Section 3.2.1), data analysis (Section 3.2.9), the changes made to Cycle II (Section 4.4), and the findings of the research (Chapters Four and Five), making it possible for researchers to transfer the findings of this study to their own research contexts if relevant.

The participants in this study were NESB students, from predominantly Confucian-Heritage cultures, enrolled in a first-year EAP course at a New Zealand university. Therefore, it is possible, that the findings of this study may be applicable to other EAP students who come from similar cultural backgrounds studying at a Western university. However, it should also be noted that this study is limited to a particular student population, in a specific type of academic course at one university in New Zealand and, as such, these findings may not apply to ESL students from different cultural backgrounds, studying in different academic programmes or in a different university setting.

### **3.3.3 Dependability**

Dependability is similar to the concept of reliability in quantitative research. Dependability refers to whether or not the results of a study are consistent over time and across researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In qualitative research, the nature of reality is understood to be changeable and it is, therefore, usual for the researcher to make changes to the research design as part of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the dependability of the study, however, it is necessary for the researcher to make explicit any changes that were made to any aspect of the research design. To achieve this it is essential that a detailed description of the data collection and data analysis have been provided.

To fulfil the dependability criterion, any changes to the design of this study that arose during the research process have been made transparent and documented in the text. The primary change made in this study was to the research design of Cycle II. As noted earlier (Section 3.2.1 and Section 3.2.6), it was intended that Cycle II would follow the same data collection procedure as Cycle I, however, two major changes were made during the research process. First, semi-structured interviews were not conducted in Cycle II, and secondary data were instead collected from an evaluation exercise. This change was due to the unavailability of potential interviewees in Cycle II. The evaluation exercise was added ad hoc after the researcher had attended a seminar on reflective practice at the research site and also after she had developed a deeper understanding of the importance of group processing as an essential component of cooperative learning methods which were integral to the study in Cycle II (Section 2.1.2 and Section 3.2.1).

Changes were also made to the research design of Cycle II in terms of sample sizes. In Cycle I, data were collected from all of the students enrolled in the EAP paper who had given their consent whereas in Cycle II, data were only collected from the researcher's own tutorial group. The researcher decided to limit data collection to members of her own tutorial group in Cycle II because she had limited experience with cooperative learning methods and this was the first time she had introduced training in GW/PR to her one of her courses (Section 1.2).

Finally, to ensure dependability of the findings and interpretations of the study, a trustworthy and detailed record of the data coding process was kept by the researcher (Section 3.2.9). During the analysis of the data, themes and codes were constantly compared across each participant's diary entries, semi-structured interview (Cycle I), and group evaluation exercise (Cycle II).

### **3.3.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is similar to objectivity in quantitative research and can be achieved by an audit trail (Padgett, 1998). Confirmability ensures that the findings of the study accurately reflect the perspectives of the participants. The research design and process need to be transparent and detailed descriptions of the data collection and analysis need to be provided.

This study aimed to establish confirmability through providing a detailed description of the data analysis and coding (Section 3.2.9). The analysis of the data was based on grounded theory and therefore through constant comparative analysis confirmability was further enhanced. Furthermore, an audit trail was created and reported through a transparent description of the data collection procedures (Section 3.2.7) and data management (Section 3.2.8). Finally, the researcher's

interpretations of the data have been supported with extensive quotations from learners' diary entries, semi-structured interview (Cycle I) and evaluation exercise (Cycle II) in the results chapters (Chapter Four and Chapter Five). Presenting verbatim quotations allows readers to understand how the participants' interpretations of their world were reconstructed by the researcher.

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented the main features of the qualitative approach that formed the methodological basis of the study within an AR framework. The research design has been described and the data collection instruments have been discussed and related to the research questions. Descriptions of the processes of coding and analysis have been detailed and the methods for achieving trustworthiness of the study have been considered. The chapter has also provided a detailed description of the learners and has shown that many of these learners had not had much experience of GW prior to arriving in New Zealand. The following chapter presents the results of Cycle I: the diary data and the case study interview and concludes with the reflection.

## **CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS: CYCLE ONE**

### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the results of the diary and interview data exploring the emergent beliefs about GW and PR held by the ESL learners in Cycle I of the EAP course. This chapter is divided into four main sections: (1) emergent beliefs about GW (Section 4.1.), (2) emergent beliefs about PR (Section 4.2), (3) case studies (Section 4.3), and Reflection on Cycle I (Section 4.4). The first section presents the most salient themes from the diary entries regarding learners' emergent beliefs about GW. The second section presents the results of the diary entries which explored learners' emergent beliefs about PR. The third section presents the diary and interview data from the case studies of Haruko, Ho-Sook, Sahar, and Vega. Each case study is divided into two main parts: the first part provides a brief biography of each case study participant, based on information collected from the background questionnaire and the first and final learner diary entries. The second part presents the most dominant themes which emerged during the data analysis of each case study participant's diary entries and interview which are presented together. Throughout the three sections, the results have been presented under thematic headings that are related to the main research questions and sub-research questions (Section 1.3). The range of beliefs which emerged during the data analysis are explored, in detail, with extracts from the participants' diary entries and, for the case studies, extracts from their diary entries and interview. Following the presentation of findings, the fourth section provides the Reflection which explains the themes/codes which influenced the changes made to Cycle II and the training that students received in GW and PR. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings from Cycle I.

### **4.1 Emergent beliefs about group work**

This section describes the most salient themes which emerged following the analysis of the diary entries of those participants who were enrolled in the first-year university paper. The following four dominant themes emerged regarding learners' beliefs about GW activities: factors that contribute to successful group work (Section 4.1.1); benefits for the learner (Section 4.1.2); challenges for the learner (Section 4.1.3); teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom (Section 4.1.4). The focus of this section is on the range of beliefs per topic discussed.

#### **4.1.1 Factors that contribute to successful group work**

The diary data revealed that students held strong beliefs regarding group activities and what makes GW successful. Students expressed their concerns throughout their diary entries about the implementation of GW and how it could be successfully implemented. These beliefs were associated with practical issues such as meeting logistics and organisation, issues relating to how the teacher implemented GW such as the purpose of the GW activity or assessment and the group grade in addition to social/affective factors such as participation, attitude, and communication. This theme is only concerned with students' beliefs regarding what makes GW successful or group assessment successful. It does not include the actual benefits of GW (Section 4.1.2) or challenges with GW (Section 4.1.3). The data described here provides answers to the following main research question:

*What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

##### ***Logistics***

Meeting logistics was a recurring topic throughout the diary entries. Since little time was allocated during the tutorials to group assignments, it became necessary for students to meet together outside the tutorials. Time management became an issue of concern for students with many suggesting that students must go to meetings on time and need to notify members in advance if they are unable to attend the meeting. Students held particularly strong beliefs regarding student lateness and other lapses in meeting etiquette:

I will make those rules if I present again. The first one is to reserve deposit money from each member. That deposit can be used in case that each person commits a fault as a penalty. The second rule is not to be late for an appointment. If a member is late, the one would be fined. The next rule is to do each assignment before meeting. A person who is not ready for a meeting should irritate the others ready for doing the work. [HoPyong/5]

In addition to regular meetings, keeping in contact with other group members through e-mail, phone, and texting were also considered necessary if GW were to be successful.

##### ***Organisation***

Good organisation also became an important issue for successful GW. Students suggested that the students themselves should become more involved in the implementation of GW and make rules for all of the students to follow to ensure the smooth running of the group and the successful completion

of the task. As a result of these suggestions, the topic for the fifth diary (Appendix C) required students to reflect on the effectiveness of the tutorials and tutorial activities and write five rules for GW. The idea of having students write rules for GW had already been suggested earlier by one of the tutors on the course, Dr. Vijay Malan, who was completing his PhD at the time. These rules are part of the AR process (Section 3.2.3 - Phase 3, Step 1: Act), in which students gave their feedback on the GW activities.

Students also emphasised the importance of completing assigned individual work before the meetings and completing tasks by the agreed time. Students also suggested that the workload should be divided equally and fairly amongst the group members in the very early stages of the GW assignment or activity. Students also emphasised that everyone must know exactly what they needed to do for the GW activity or assignment.

Students emphasised the importance of having a group leader, especially for the group presentation, and suggested voting someone as group leader to ensure that the group members were organised. Some students suggested that the leader could be responsible for spreading the workload, resolving any conflicts in the group, and fostering a greater understanding amongst group members. It was also suggested that the group leader should give other group members the opportunity to give their opinion and ensure that everyone paid attention to each group mate's idea. Comments such as the following were common:

The work needs to be divided evenly to make sure that every body gets the same share, and one person does not end up doing the most of the work. Group members must make an effort to attend group meetings, therefore it should be compulsory for every body to come to every meeting. Groups should make one member the leader, and the leader should lead the discussion and ensure every member participates.  
[Viveka/5]

Clearly, students were very concerned about the lack of leadership in their groups and the possibility that the majority of the workload could fall on one group member. Likewise, students also expressed their concerns that one group member may contribute very little and expect their group members to do most of the work. Overall, learners held the belief that an organised group was more likely to be more successful in any group task assigned to them than a disorganised group.

### ***Purpose***

Learners held the belief that for GW to be successful, they must be aware of the purpose of the group activity or group assessment:

It can be problematic to join different ideas and find a common ground therefore its important for the lecturer to think of what the purpose of the group work is. If it is for the students to learn how to collaborate or if it is a certain result from the group work that is expected. For example a result that can not be achieved without group work. Then the kind and form of the group work can be customized after this consideration. Furthermore the assessment can be done depending on the purpose of the group work. [Vega/5]

This is a particularly insightful observation since it expresses concerns which were raised by other students in the paper. These students held strong beliefs about how the teacher should implement GW: the teacher must first think about why he/she has made the decision to have students work together as a group rather than have students work individually on a particular activity or assignment. In this quote, Vega demonstrates a high level of awareness by implying that sometimes it is not the outcome or end result of an activity which is always important in GW, but sometimes it is the collaborative nature of the activity and the ‘journey’ to the end result which is important and it is this purpose which needs to be made clear to the students by the teacher.

### ***Group grade***

There was some variation amongst learners’ beliefs regarding whether group assignments should be awarded a group grade or whether they should be individually assessed. Some students found it difficult to give an opinion on this issue, whilst other students held the belief that although assigning group grades was unfair, the benefits gained from GW outweighed the unfairness of a group grade. It was not unusual for students to describe a change in their beliefs about receiving a group grade for the presentation:

At first time, I thought it might be unfair being given a group grade as there are always some free riders in the group. However, I recognised that it is fine since individuals can show not only their knowledge, but also the ability how they manage the job in a group. [Jiao/3]

Not surprisingly, students were very concerned that some group members would contribute very little to the group’s effort, and yet still be awarded the same group grade. Jiao had the belief that an individual’s effort was evident during the group assignment and that it was the responsibility of group

members to collaborate and manage the task. Students also held the belief that the group grade reinforced the idea that GW was important: “We chose our team and are required to practice together. Group grading makes us have an idea of an importance of team working” [T’an Gong/3].

Some students held the belief that a group grade was fair as it reflected the time and effort that all group members had contributed to the group task. As the following student pointed out group assessment was fair even though in his case he expected his group would receive a lower group grade due to a lack of cooperation and communication amongst group members:

I think it is a very sensible and fair way for group grading. The result is depending on the performance of each member. I probably will be given a non-satisfy result ... It is absolutely fair as I did not have good cooperation and communication with them. To avoid it, cooperation is required. [Shen/3]

### ***Participation***

Another major issue raised was that of participation within the group. Learners held the belief that the group assignments and tasks required the cooperation of every member in the group. Learners shared the belief that everyone needed to contribute to every part of the project, adding that although someone may be particularly skilled at one aspect of the project, they might still need some advice. Learners had the belief that every member had equal responsibility in the project. Even though the group may have had a leader, the positions were still equal. Learners also held the belief that it was important for all members to be kept informed of each other’s progress so that they all knew how the whole project was progressing. Group members should also help each other to ensure deadlines are kept.

Learners held strong beliefs that in order for GW to be successful, all students needed to contribute equally to the group. One student suggested the following activities to further ensure participation of all students as a part of the GW process:

A kind of competition activity could also be hold in the class, like a debating activity. This kind of activity could encourage students to participate, this is because most students do not like to lose for the game, and this could be done in the class by dividing the class into two different parts of the argument. Before start to argue, they will have time to prepare for the topic and then debate. The last tutorial activity can be done in the class could be the group discussion, tutor give time for students to discuss about their group work, like presentation, during the discussion. [Shing/5]

### *Attitude*

Learners mentioned the attitude of students and how this could affect their own attitude, affecting the outcome of the group project. Learners also had strong beliefs about the importance of respect for each other and the need to try to understand the ideas from the other members' point of view. Learners shared the belief that it was particularly important for each student to respect other group members' opinions since there was a tendency for some students to ignore ideas that opposed their own. They held the belief that all ideas should be considered and that this could generate better ideas. Students had the belief that each group member had to realise the benefits of doing GW and in doing so they could then find an efficient way to work together. Students shared the belief that the relationship between each group member affected how well the group would perform. Feedback was also regarded as a valuable part of the GW experience. Giving and receiving feedback in their groups was considered to be very important and created an atmosphere in which ideas could be exchanged. Giving comments and correcting mistakes was also thought to be important. Learners mentioned that it was important for everyone to focus on the work of others as well as their own:

I don't think my presentation group mates contributed much to my learning, and they mainly focused on their own parts and didn't mention other's working. I guess the reason is we were all busy and got some other assignments to do at the same time. However, my essay summary group mates were more dedicated and they were keen to get new ideas from me. I gave my summary to them, and they gave me some useful advice to enhance my writing. So I felt that my English writing is improving. Also, I learned some knowledge from my group mates. To my surprise, one of my friends told me that my English speaking indeed improved recently. [Noriko/4]

Students brought up the issue of independence stating that group members should not rely on others in the group. Students needed to take responsibility for their own work and take their work seriously. Group members should be creative and think on their own. Students also stated it was necessary to show consideration for others and remember that it was GW, not individual work.

### *Communication*

Students realised the importance of communication, pointing out that teamwork could not exist without communication. Students had the belief that communication could help to resolve conflicts in a group and keep everyone informed as to each other's progress. Students shared the belief that participation was an important dimension of teamwork and that it was important to ask other group members for help since this made members feel they were part of the group:

Being supportive, however, is very important to me. Support can be shown by triggering ideas and new thinking paths when a friend has reached a “dead end”. But also, just a compliment, a nice word or even a simple smile can be supportive by adding a bit more strength. We all need to take time to be more encouraging! [Viveka/6]

Each member must be involved by sharing their ideas and thoughts. Students were aware that there was little value in giving only ‘yes’/ ‘no’ responses: “do not just give ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, we want the reasons”. It was important for everyone to cooperate with each other during meetings. One student also suggested that groups hold a final meeting after they had received their grade and feedback to evaluate their performance and success as a group. The general belief was that GW was helpful when everyone was participating:

I feel particularly helpful to my peers when they asked me question on whatever sorts of problems. These problems could be English meaning, pronunciation, grammar, structure or things beyond the scope of our learning such as my courses information. These questions might not always contribute to our work, but this build a bridge of communication. Whenever I asked similar questions to my group mates, they were eager to answer too. We learnt from talking about our own experiences. [Vega/6]

This first theme, factors that contribute to successful GW, shows the strong beliefs held by learners in terms of how to successfully implement GW and it was of particular importance in terms of the AR framework which is central to this thesis. The theme dealt with the factors that contribute to successful GW and also included suggestions for improving GW. These beliefs and suggestions were taken into account when the researcher began revising the course for Cycle II (Section 4.4). Although subsequent themes also reflected learners’ beliefs regarding improvements to the course they were a predominant feature of this theme. This corresponds to Phase 3, Step 1: Act in which recommendations were formulated based on the results discussed here and Phase 3, Step 2: Plan in which the researcher revised the group activities based on the recommendations from Step 1. The beliefs expressed by the learners which emerged from this theme (and subsequent themes) demonstrated their high level of reflectiveness and showed that they were also a responsible group of students who took their learning seriously. Their level of responsibility and insightfulness is in line with what is expected of university graduates and these traits are strongly emphasised and encouraged at the University of Otago. What is rather interesting, however, is to find such characteristics in students enrolled in a first-year undergraduate paper.

Whilst the first theme was concerned with issues that learners raised regarding what makes GW successful, the second theme focused on the actual benefits of GW for the learner. Whilst these two themes were closely linked since they both dealt with positive aspects of GW, they have been discussed separately here since the first theme dealt with *potential* benefits of GW, that is, benefits that *could* arise from the *successful* implementation of GW activities whereas the second theme was concerned with the *actual* benefits of GW for this particular group of language learners. Also, the beliefs described under this theme were often based on learners' recent negative experiences of GW and, consequently were suggestions for improving GW in future courses.

#### **4.1.2 Benefits for the learner**

It became evident very early in the analysis of the data that the benefits of GW would become a salient theme. Students often reflected on the benefits of GW from their own perspective, and how they had personally benefitted from the GW experience as well as the opportunities GW could offer. They also held the belief that other group members may have benefitted either from their own contribution to the group or from other group members. Learners held the belief that the GW activities were mutually beneficial, for themselves and for their group members. Even though some students did not enjoy GW there was still a tendency for them to recognise the benefits and see in GW an opportunity to promote learning. This theme provides answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits of **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **group work**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **group work**? (SRQ3)*

#### ***Learning from others***

Overall, learners enjoyed working together with other NESB students during GW. Although there was some concern about learning their mistakes there was also a belief that it was possible to learn from other ESL students, particularly when the student had a higher level of language proficiency. Students even had the belief that working with these higher level English speaking students was a potential motivating factor and an opportunity to improve their own language skills. The following diary excerpt is based on a student's experience of GW in the tutorials.

It gives me big motivation. I have found that my expression is not as good as other members. I was shocked that they were also from non-English speaking countries like me, but some spoke English very well. [Dao/4]

Interestingly, students regarded the opportunity to work in groups consisting of different cultures as an important benefit of GW and this was particularly evident during the group presentation.

Some learners shared the belief that this interaction between students was more important than any gains made to improving English language proficiency. This can be seen in the following quote from a Swedish student:

The big advantage with a group presentation has perhaps not that much to do with the aspect of learning English. I think the big advantage is the cultural clash you experience while doing a group work like this. That is really something you learn a lot from. If this, on the other hand, is a part of the goal with this course I do not know. [Peder/3]

The opportunity to share ideas was also a valuable part of the GW experience, and learners held the belief that it was important to be able to express their thoughts, opinions, and views in an academic manner to group members.

### *Benefits for others*

Although learners discussed the impact GW had on them, learners who had higher levels of English proficiency also wrote about how they had helped others and how others had benefitted from their participation in the GW activities:

During the process of group work in this course, I had many wonderful opportunities to contribute to the learning of other group members and encourage them to improve. I had a different style of working compare to my peers. I was able to make precise and valid points about the topic that we were discussing and I did research before the meeting rather than during the meeting so that I could present myself with a lot of references. My preparation encouraged other members to participate and come up with more good ideas. I can say that I stimulated the atmosphere. [HoSook/6]

The desire to help others appeared to derive from a sense of personal satisfaction from helping others. This was evident in the following quote from Haruko who took a 'do as I do' approach.

I think many students need to learn how speak to, listen and support **other** people in a group, even if they do not want to support or they disagree to others. Because when they start working in a real world, they always have to cope with others with respect. I did not tell my

group members about my thought, but I tried to show them how I acted in a group. I hope they could learn something from my action. [Haruko/6]

Significantly, higher level students were very aware of the lower level students in their group and were aware that GW required essential social skills which some students needed to be taught. Such skills are necessary for GW in university classrooms and are desirable skills to possess in their future working lives.

### *Learning for the “real world”*

One of the most noticeable findings was the way in which students related the experiences of GW to their future lives. Students recognised the importance of developing communication skills and the importance of being able to cooperate with other people. Students also appeared to be aware that these two skills were often linked: working together can improve communication skills and good communication skills are beneficial when interacting with others in a group.

When discussing the importance of communication skills and how working in groups could enhance these skills, learners related this to their future careers and how they would need to be able to communicate their ideas effectively with colleagues. Students also wrote about the practical skills gained through giving a group presentation which they would most likely be required to do in their future careers. Students wanted GW to be successful, even though it was not always successful.

The social skills that can be further developed through working together in groups were especially important. The following quote emphasised the importance of developing social skills which, as this student pointed out, would be needed throughout life.

You learn to or at least get a chance to try to get along with your group members. Either you like their manner of working or not, you have to cooperate and compromise in order to get a successful result. A group as a smaller society, consisting as few as just couple of people, you not only learn from each other but you also get to practice how to socialize with other people, which is a very useful skill to acquire as we will have to go on and meet people for the rest of our lives. [Ho-Sook/4]

Ho-Sook compared a group, even a small group consisting of only two people, as being a small society.

### ***Benefits for self***

Not surprisingly, there was a tendency for students to focus on what they had personally gained from the GW assignments or activities. Surprisingly, however, this was more evident when they connected the GW experience to their future lives, as discussed previously. The benefits to the self which are discussed here, do not include those aspects already covered and surprisingly these beliefs were not as strong as those beliefs explored earlier.

When a particularly unsuccessful group activity was being discussed, learners would conclude with the potential benefits of that activity: what they could have gained had that activity been more successful. The following quote sums up learners' beliefs about benefits to the self:

All in all, I made new friends and get more interesting ideas from the group presentation, so it's not only good for enhance my English speaking and writing, also I feel more confident to speak in front of others. [Shuang/3]

### ***Fun and enjoyment***

The fun and enjoyment that students could experience through GW was also referred to, although it was usually mentioned towards the end of learners' diary entries as can be seen in the following excerpt: "Last but not least, group activities are more relaxed and more fun than you face a topic individually" [Zhen Juan/4].

Although learners did not hold strong beliefs about the fun and enjoyment aspect of GW, they acknowledged that GW gave them the opportunity to make new friends that they would otherwise not have been able to make.

This theme showed that learners made comparisons with their peers' language ability and their own ability. For lower level learners, this provided them with the motivation to improve their English, while for the higher level students, it provided them with the opportunity to help their peers. Students saw the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience through GW which would not only help students in their current academic context, but also help them develop team skills which would likely be valuable in their future careers.

#### **4.1.3 Challenges for the learner**

As with any classroom activity, GW was not without its problems and difficulties and it was inevitable that this would become a dominant theme throughout the diary entries. Students wrote frankly about

the challenges that they faced with GW in this EAP course, and also in the other courses they were currently studying or had previously studied. Interestingly, the results of the analysis of the diary entries showed that learners' beliefs about GW evolved during the course of one semester. These emerging beliefs are particularly evident as learners developed their own strategies for overcoming some of the difficulties and challenges they encountered throughout their GW experience. The findings presented here provide answers to the following two main research questions and sub-research question:

*What are learners' beliefs about the disadvantages of **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

*Do learners' beliefs about **group work** change during a one-semester course when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ4)*

### ***Fear of group activities***

Learners used words such as 'fear', 'frightening', and 'panic' when they were explaining how they felt about having to participate in group activities and take part in a group presentation. This anxiety sometimes resulted in learners' reluctance to participate in GW, especially in the first few weeks of the course. The following excerpt refers to a student's experience of GW in the tutorials.

I cannot speak English well so it is quite difficult and frightening for me to say something in groupworking, and I get to think that I'm useless. [Yue Ying/3]

For some students the feeling of anxiety was particularly strong: "I view a group work as a constant state of panic and a field of conflict" [Shen/3].

### ***Fear of making mistakes***

Learners also expressed a fear of making mistakes in both their group presentation and GW activities. Students frequently expressed their fears about giving a group presentation stating that it was always a "very nerve racking and a scary thought" and that "the nerves feeling and the 'butterflies in the stomach' are always there no matter how many times I do a presentation" [Yue Ying/3]. Yue Ying continued to explain how mistakes could affect the group presentation:

In a group presentation, if one person makes a mistake, it might make the rest of the group nervous and therefore affect their part of the presentation as well. [Yue Ying/3]

### *Comparisons with other students*

Learners compared their level of proficiency with that of their fellow group members and some learners held the belief that their group members were more competent than they were. Students were very aware of their own language ability and those who held the belief that their level was lower than the other group members consequently expressed feelings of anxiety.

As the course progressed, however, a new belief emerged amongst lower level students. In the earlier stages of the course these learners held the belief that they would not be able to communicate with their higher level peers and this resulted in a lack of confidence. However, a new belief emerged: working with higher level students could motivate lower level students to work hard to improve their language skills by hard work and participating in GW activities. Learners began to understand that through hard work they could improve their language skills. From feeling frustrated and losing confidence, lower level students gradually began to feel motivated to study harder and to improve their language skills. Many of the learners acted upon this new belief by studying harder and actively participating in GW. This new belief enabled these learners to turn a source of anxiety and conflict into an opportunity to improve their English language skills:

In doing group work, I find that my English skills are quite poor and others' are really nice. I have a difficulty even in speaking English or conversation. At first, I lose my confidence because of this, but little by little I get to think that I have to do much more. I can compare my English skills with others', so I feel frustration but it also stimulate my motivation to study English. I like talking with my friend, so groupworking was really fun for me and also it gave me a lot of feeling and motivation, so I think it is quite good work!! [Noriko/6]

Noriko offered an insightful look into how some students compared their level of English to classmates who were, according to their belief, more advanced in English than they were. Although at first these learners experienced feelings of anxiety and conflict, they were able to overcome these feelings and saw an opportunity to improve their ability. This shows the emerging beliefs of these learners who realised that their English skills were lower than their group members at the beginning of the course, which affected their confidence and willingness to participate, but demonstrates how this led to a change in belief as they became motivated to improve their English skills.

### *“Competition is the best”*

Despite learners recognising some of the benefits of GW, there was still a tendency for learners to favour more traditional, individualistic approaches to language learning. Learners had a strong belief

that there was still a place for competitive learning as opposed to GW in the language classroom. It was evident that GW could work against some learners.

In my own opinion, having competition is always the best and the only way to get things improve. Battle between company, match between soccer team, in the university, some exam compare those student with each to decide the passing line. For me this works well. [Abdul/4]

### ***“I just don’t get it”***

A recurring issue amongst students was the reason behind making some activities, for example writing a summary, a group activity. Abdul also pointed out that having three students working together on a writing activity was “just...making a big deal out of it” (Abdul/6). He held the belief that the activity could be successfully completed by one person. This highlighted the importance of explaining to students the purpose of the group assignment or task. Students also pointed out the possible tendency to inadvertently rely on other group members, therefore losing opportunities for learning:

I sometimes could have chances to lean on other members in group work even though I didn’t mean it. As a result, I might have lost chances to learn the way that I solve problems for myself. [Yue Wan/4]

### ***Challenges with group work outside the classroom***

Students were expected to meet up with their group members outside of class to work on group assignments. Problems frequently arose both when attempting to arrange a time convenient to all group members and also during the meetings when trying to get all group members to agree on a topic. Learners’ beliefs about the implementation of GW changed as they sought ways to overcome these challenges. The following diary entry refers to a student’s participation in the group presentation assessment:

As I mentioned earlier there were some problems in the beginning and I really think we had some serious difficulties in our first meeting outside class, when everyone wanted different topics for the presentation. This was by the way how we dealt with this task; we made an appointment and decided what everyone should do until next meeting. Anyway, we finally managed to decide topic, and following meetings got better. [Peder/3]

This shows how students formed a new belief about how best to work together as a group and how they acted upon this new belief: they arranged another group meeting, divided the task amongst the group members and discussed and agreed upon on a topic. After the initial few weeks of GW, learners wrote more about the need to learn how to compromise with other students when discussing their assignment and to be more tolerant of other students’ opinions during the meetings.

### *Challenges in groups with native English speakers*

Sometimes learners described their experiences of GW in their major subjects in which they were required to work with native English speakers as well as NESB students. These learners expressed a strong willingness to participate in groups with native English speaking students, especially New Zealand students since this provided them with an opportunity to further improve their English speaking and listening skills as well as to increase their knowledge and understanding of local culture. However, for these learners the experience tended to be more negative compared with that of GW exclusively with NESB students.

On the other hand, I was shy when I spoke within a native English speakers' group. I had a group essay in finance 202 last year within another two kiwis. They looked like very friendly, but they only allocated some calculation to me. Therefore, they were discussing about the essay intensely and I just working on my own calculation part. They just left me alone and asked me to do the silent job. [Obb/4

Students wrote about feeling left out and uncomfortable in these situations despite their group members being friendly. Ironically in a personal communication the researcher had with Obb, it was revealed that these domestic students held the belief that Asian students were “clicky”, and “shy” and did not want to participate in GW. It appeared that at times there was a mismatch between the beliefs of domestic students and NESB students.

#### **4.1.4 Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom**

A salient theme that emerged from the diary data was the role of the teacher and the role of the student in the classroom. Although a number of students wrote that they had never considered the role of the university student they did, nonetheless, provide some insightful beliefs about what they considered their role to be. In particular, they held very strong beliefs regarding the role of the teacher as the only ‘expert’ in the university classroom. The results presented here provide answers to the following main research question and sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the roles of the teacher and student during **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training in **group work**? (RQ3)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **group work**? (SRQ2)*

### *Teacher as 'expert'*

A recurring pattern was a belief that many learners held that the teacher was the 'expert'. Students held the belief that the role of the teacher was the same in New Zealand as in their own country – that of the experienced 'expert' who could be relied upon to give accurate, complete feedback. It should be pointed out here that some learners did highlight differences in the role of the teacher in New Zealand compared with their own country. These differences were mainly concerned with learning styles with some learners noticing the emphasis placed on GW at the University of Otago. The diary data appeared to confirm that students did prefer feedback from the teacher because they regarded the teacher as a professional: "I want professional opinion" [Yimin/6]. Students seemed to have a mistrust of feedback received from classmates.

### *Students' role in the university classroom*

For this group of learners, the role of the student was the same in New Zealand as in their own country – that was to study, learn, complete assignments, attend lectures etc. Some students, however, cited the emphasis on rote learning in their home country in contrast to the emphasis placed on GW in New Zealand. The following quote sums up the belief held by many learners that the role of a student is a responsible one:

As a learner in classes, they should take responsibility of their own learning and they are very active in asking questions. This shows that students have to have the ability to study and discipline themselves. These reflect on how much work they put on preparation for lectures and exams. The learner is responsible of his or her own education. [Jin Sook/7]

Interestingly, one particular student did not seem to see the benefits of GW. He held the belief that the role of New Zealand university students appeared to be the ability to participate in GW activities. He made the following comparison between Japanese and New Zealand students:

Although we, Japanese have few opportunities to do something in group work compared to New Zealand students, we are said to be well-organised workers with other members in organisations. So, I would like to know why most papers in New Zealand universities give tasks to students as a group. [Takeo/4]

#### **4.1.5 Summary of learners' emergent beliefs about group work**

This part of the chapter has presented the results of the diary data which has provided insights into learners' emergent beliefs about academic GW activities in Cycle I. Table 8 presents the four main themes and their corresponding codes which emerged from the analysis. It is apparent from this table that learners held strong beliefs about their GW experience. Based on both their positive and negative experiences of GW in the course, students had developed an understanding of how GW should be successfully implemented and how this was dependent on a range of factors. The table also illustrates the range of beliefs learners held about the benefits and drawbacks of GW which indicates that there was a mixed response to GW. It also suggests that learners were willing to write about the difficulties that they had experienced with GW.

#### **Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Table 8 shows that learners held the belief that successful GW is dependent on various factors. The *logistics* of holding meetings outside of tutorials became an important issue with learners holding strong beliefs about the need to attend meetings on time and to maintain regular contact with group members. Good *organisation* was also a key factor in the successful implementation of GW. Learners held the belief that each member should contribute equally to the group activity/assignment and that it was each student's responsibility to ensure that they had completed their part of the task before the deadline. Learners had the belief that one way in which this could be achieved was if students were given a greater voice in the GW process such as being given the opportunity to choose a leader for their group. Learners also shared the belief that not only did the *purpose* of the GW activity/assessment need to be made explicitly clear to students, but also the reason why the activity/assessment was being carried out collaboratively rather than individually. Learners expressed mixed beliefs about the fairness of sharing a *group grade* with some students unable to give their opinion. *Participation* was also considered essential for the success of the group: all learners need to participate and contribute equally. Participation included students completing their assigned task and also keeping group members informed of their progress and ensuring that everyone was on target to meet the deadlines. Learners also held strong beliefs about the *attitude* of group members and the importance of treating each other with respect. Tolerance and empathy towards their peers were also considered to be highly valued traits especially when listening to the ideas of others and giving and receiving feedback. Despite the qualities needed to ensure the smooth running of GW, the learners also valued their independence and shared the belief that students need to take responsibility for their own work. Learners also held the belief that *communication* was very important in helping to resolve conflicts and ensuring that all group members participated equally.

### **Benefits for the learner**

Learners' beliefs about the benefits of GW were evident from the beginning of the course, but also some beliefs about the benefits of GW emerged as the course progressed. Learners held the belief that they could learn from students whose English was more advanced than their own and that working with higher level students also motivated the lower level students to improve their English language proficiency. Some students, however, held the belief that they learned more about different cultures and different ways of thinking. These higher level students also shared the belief that they were helping their lower level peers to improve their English language skills. Although the students were only in the first year of their degree programme, they shared the belief that the skills they would learn through participating in GW would be useful in their future careers. Students also enjoyed the opportunity to make new friends through GW, however, this belief was not as strongly held as the other benefits they had written about.

### **Challenges for the learner**

Not surprisingly, learners experienced strong feelings of anxiety which sometimes affected their willingness to participate in GW. As would be expected, this was more apparent in the first few weeks of the course when the students were not familiar with each other and, for many, unfamiliar with learning in an environment in which there was a strong emphasis on GW. Learners were also anxious about making mistakes, especially in their group presentation. Insightfully, learners were aware of how their mistakes could cause problems for their presentation group members, by causing them to become nervous and make mistakes. As the course progressed, learners developed their own strategies for overcoming the difficulties that they had experienced earlier in their GW activities/assignments. This led to their awareness of the factors needed to make GW successful discussed previously. Although the comparisons the learners made between their own and their peers' linguistic competence could be a benefit to lower level students, it was also the source of anxiety causing conflict to lower level students as they felt frustration at not being able to communicate on the same level as some of their peers, leading to a lack of confidence in their own ability. As the course progressed, however, a new belief emerged which encouraged lower level students to be inspired by higher level students. Some learners, however, remained firm in their belief that competitive learning was still a valuable aspect of a university course and some students did not understand why a particular activity or assignment was to be completed cooperatively when it could be successfully completed individually.

**TABLE 8: LEARNERS' EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK (CYCLE I)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Code 4</b>	<b>Code 5</b>	<b>Code 6</b>	<b>Code 7</b>
Factors that contribute to successful GW	Logistics	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Group grade</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Communication</i>
Benefits for the learner	<i>Learning from others</i>	<i>Benefits for others</i>	<i>Learning for the "real world"</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	<i>Fun and enjoyment</i>		
Challenges for the learner	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	<i>Fear of making mistakes</i>	<i>Comparisons with other students</i>	<i>"Competition is the best"</i>	<i>"I just don't Get it"</i>	<i>Challenges with GW outside the classroom</i>	<i>Challenges in groups with native English speakers</i>
Teacher' and students' roles in the university classroom	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>	<i>Students' role in the university classroom</i>					

## **Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom**

Learners held the belief throughout the course that the teacher was the professional who was qualified and suitably experienced to give feedback to students. It was clear that students trusted the feedback from their teachers much more than they did the feedback from their peers. Students wrote about the emphasis placed on GW at the university and some contrasted this with the traditional approaches they had experienced in their home country.

The findings discussed in this section have explored learners' beliefs about various GW activities and assessments students participated in both inside and outside the classroom. The following section focuses on the learners beliefs about a specific activity, PR.

### **4.2 Emergent beliefs about peer review**

This section describes the most salient themes which emerged following the analysis of the diary entries written on the topic of PR. The following five dominant themes emerged regarding learners' emergent beliefs about PR: benefits for the writer (Section 4.2.1); benefits for the reader (Section 4.2.2); challenges for the writer (Section 4.2.3); challenges for the reader (Section 4.2.4); and teachers' and students' roles in peer review (Section 4.2.5).

#### **4.2.1 Benefits for the writer**

The benefits described under this theme are concerned with the benefits that the writer of the essay draft received from the PR exercise. The findings presented here provide answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits of **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **peer review**? (SRQ3)*

#### ***Reader responsibility***

Student writers benefitted from the feedback they had received in the PR activity because, generally, the readers had taken the PR seriously with some students sharing the belief that it was their 'ethical duty' to help their peer. Learners wrote about the importance of giving written feedback on their

fellow classmate's essay draft: "As a result, I see that I would really benefit my peer with my own experience" [Takeo/2].

#### **4.2.2 Benefits for the reader**

This theme explores the benefits of PR from the point of view of the reader who was reading and providing a written response to their peer's essay draft. The findings presented here provide answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits of **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **peer review**? (SRQ3)*

#### ***Desire to help others***

In addition to the benefits the writer received as a result of their peer's responsibility in providing feedback, the reader also received satisfaction from the activity, knowing that their partner would benefit from this feedback: "If my suggestion could improve his essay better, I would be so appreciated" [Yan Yan/2]. The following excerpt is typical of the comments in the second diary entry.

In the tutorial, I pointed out some limitations and statements that I could not understand well. He appreciated that and said he would revise some. Of course, I was happy because my indication was useful to him.  
[Rong/2]

#### ***Learning from others***

Learners also shared the belief that PR had been rewarding since it had provided them with the chance to read their peer's essay. The opportunity to learn new ideas and view an idea from a new and different perspective was frequently cited with some students referring to this as being "refreshing". Learners wrote about the new ideas they had learned and many commented that they would not have thought of addressing the essay topic in the way that their partner had. Learners gave some details about the kind of feedback they had received from their peers and included both positive and negative feedback. Although as can be seen in the previous excerpt, learners were sometimes rather vague about the feedback they had given. It was not known whether students had actually given more detailed feedback in their response.

Unfortunately, some learners benefitted from the PR by regarding the exercise as an opportunity to “freeload” off the work and effort of their peers. The following belief from one student was unfortunately echoed by others in the course:

Essay writing is not one night writing, especially academic writing. We need reference to support our ideas. Regarding others essay can not only obtain some fresh ideas but also have references. Maybe the reference, which my classmates used, also could support my ideas. Search journals and information always takes time and sometimes the information and contents are just not related that I want. I don't think the behaviour is called plagiarism. [Chayond/2]

This student appeared to regard the PR as an opportunity to save himself some time and rather than conduct his own research and find his own sources of information, he saw an opportunity to use the relevant resources from his peer's essay draft. Although students were not discouraged from using the sources from their peers' reference list, the course did have an information literacy component to it in which students, following one library session with the Subject Librarian (Humanities), were expected to search for and locate the sources relevant for their essay either individually or in pairs. Whilst learners were encouraged to see the benefits of reading their peer's essay drafts, the primary benefit was expected to be related to improving one's own writing, for example, developing a sense of audience, expanding vocabulary, or gaining a fresh perspective. However, some learners also wrote quite freely about using the ideas from their peer's draft, again without realising that this could be considered plagiarism: “I collect their thinking for my topic and then put them in my final essay” [Yue Wan/2].

#### **4.2.3 Challenges for the writer**

Although learners held some positive beliefs about PR, they also held some negative beliefs about PR. This theme presents the findings related to the conflict experienced from the perspective of the writer. These findings provide answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the disadvantages of **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

### ***Fear of sharing - plagiarism***

Learners held the belief that sharing ideas during the PR exercise could have adverse effects on the writer because their peer would be able to read their essay draft and perhaps gain ideas from their own writing. Learners were very aware of the issue of deliberate and accidental plagiarism and one tutorial had focused entirely on the issue. The potential for accidental plagiarism was the major challenge that faced learners during the PR activity with comments such as the following being quite common: “We have the same topic and I was afraid of sharing out our ideas and opinions” [Jamal/2]. Jamal was referring here to the writer sharing their ideas with the reader. Learners held the belief that there was the possibility of inadvertent plagiarism on the part of the reader. Learners did not hold the belief that such plagiarism would be deliberate, but rather that the reader could accidentally remember ideas or sentences/phrases from the writer’s essay which could lead to plagiarism.

### ***Fear of making mistakes***

Another source of conflict for the writer was the embarrassment that they would feel should they have made mistakes in their draft. Students wrote about the embarrassment they would feel if their peer told them of their mistakes. The following concerns were typical:

Moreover, I was worried of the spelling mistakes that could be there or the grammar mistakes, because I am not good on these things. Also, I will be really embarrassed if he pointed them to me. [Jamal/2]

It should be noted, however, that none of the students wrote that they were embarrassed when they read the feedback they had received from their peer. The embarrassment that learners felt occurred only before and during the PR and not following the PR. Before learners had completed the PR, many of them wrote about their discomfort at having to complete the exercise. Words such as “uncomfortable”, “bothered”, “ashamed”, “nervous”, “anxious” and “scared” were frequently used by students to express their feelings about the impending PR. It was clear, as is shown in the words of the following student, that sometimes they were influenced by previous experience:

I am kind of prudency about letting a classmate read my draft. Teacher won’t make fun with me because of my writing, but my experiences tell me, classmates always do. [Shen/2]

### ***Poor feedback***

Although the majority of students had responded in a very responsible manner to the PR and had carefully considered the feedback they had given to their peer, some learners wrote that their peer had not taken the PR seriously. Some learners wrote that they did not think their peer was interested in giving a response and had consequently provided vague, inadequate feedback:

My partner only said that my body part of essay was not proper and I should rewrite whole body section. I felt like that he read roughly and considered evaluation annoying. [Yimin/2]

Interestingly, the learners who had had this negative experience often wrote that their peer had appreciated the feedback that they had received. Some learners wrote that their peer had tried very hard to provide sufficient feedback but that they were unable to understand the feedback.

#### **4.2.4 Challenges for the reader**

This theme explores learners' beliefs about the difficulties of being the reader in PR. The findings presented here answer the following research question and sub-research question:

*What are learners' beliefs about the disadvantages of **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

#### ***Difficulties in giving feedback***

The first theme described how the readers had taken their role seriously and how this had benefitted the reader. This was not an easy task for the reader and many students agonised over how to present their feedback. In the following excerpt, Yue Wan explained her process of thinking when considering her response, demonstrating again the reflectiveness and diligence expressed by many of these participants:

When I wrote him a response about his essay, I thought about a lot of things. What I was doing is a response to one of my classmates, I was very careful to estimate his work, or he could have been disappointed by my response. I needed to think about how to put my comment nicely so as not to upset him. Choosing the vocabulary without irritating him bewildered me. However, complementing on his good things was comfortable for me because people like to be praised, usually. [Yue Wan/2]

By the end of this entry her belief about this exercise had changed. She had overcome the difficulties she explained at the beginning of the diary entry and she now held positive beliefs about the PR exercise, claiming that she had learned through the process.

#### ***Fear of plagiarism***

It was also the belief of learners that reading and reviewing their peers' draft could cause them to accidentally plagiarise their peers' work. This is similar to the fear they had as the writer giving their essay to their peer to review. Learners were curious about what their classmates had written in their

drafts but were reluctant to read their peers' essays due to the fear of plagiarism. Many learners shared the following belief: "I thought it is impolite and improper to look their writings before deadline due to the possibility of imitation" [Lien/2].

### ***Comparisons with other students***

Learners were very aware of their level of English and how it compared to the level of their peer. Learners usually held the belief that their level was lower than that of their peer. Comments such as "having my partner read my draft was shameful because I felt my partner spoke English fluently" [Shu Fang/2] and "his draft made me feel shame" [Takeo/2] occurred throughout the second diary entries.

### **4.2.5 Teachers' and students' roles in peer review**

Learners held very strong beliefs about the professional role of the teacher and the amateur role of the student reviewer during PR. The findings presented here provide answers to the following research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **peer review** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

### ***Teacher as 'expert'***

Similar to the GW activities, learners held the belief that the teacher was the 'expert'. Learners shared the belief that the teacher was the experienced 'expert' who could be relied upon to give accurate, complete feedback. Learners had a mistrust of feedback received from classmates: "As this suggestion is not given by teacher, I believe I may not going to 100% follow it" [Sarawat/2]. Sometimes learners referred to the PR in later diary entries such as the following student who insightfully pointed out that students have not received the amount of practice that teachers have in providing critical feedback.

As undergraduate student I do think most feedback should be given from teachers, since student often are not critical enough. I do not know why this is, but I have experienced (in this course too) classmates handing me back my essay saying "it is good". In that case it is a waste of time. It probably takes a lot of practice to read a piece of work critically and that is why teachers are best suited doing it. [Peder/7]

Learners also expressed their belief that the teacher was the ‘expert’ by indicating their relief that their essay draft was going to be reviewed by their peer rather than their tutor, for example: “When tutor asked us to swap our essay draft, I was little bit relaxed. I knew that means we did not need to hand the essay draft to teacher” (Takeo/2). This suggests that students took the feedback from their tutor more seriously than they did the feedback from their peers. It was some learners’ belief that the PR afforded them more time to work on their draft until they received the ‘real’ feedback from their tutor.

### ***Student as ‘novice’***

Some learners held particularly strong beliefs about their role as reader and giving feedback on their classmate’s essay. The following excerpt summed up the beliefs of many students:

It was a little hard time to estimate others’ essays. After all, I am not an expert of estimation of writing. I think it was little bit strange for novices to estimate others’ essays. I tried to give him a little help, though. [Yue Wan/2]

### **4.2.6 Summary of learners’ emergent beliefs about peer review**

The themes which emerged from the analysis of the diary data are presented in Table 9. It is apparent from this table that although learners shared some positive beliefs about PR, they also held more negative beliefs about the experience and held strong beliefs about the role of the teacher and the student. The table also indicates that learners held strong beliefs about the issue of plagiarism both from the perspective of the writer sharing their draft with their peer who may plagiarise their work and from the perspective of themselves as the reader who could plagiarise their peer’s essay. The results show that in both situations plagiarism would likely be accidental but the fear of this occurring was still of great concern to the learners. The table also shows that learners held various beliefs about feedback from both the perspective of the writer and the reader. Whilst many learners had benefitted from the feedback of their peers, others had received poor feedback due to either a lack of interest on the part of their peer or a lack of language skills. The findings also suggest that there had been instances of “freeloading” with some students regarding the PR as an opportunity to use the references or ideas found in their peer’s work or not contributing to the PR but benefitting from the feedback they received.

**TABLE 9: LEARNERS' EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW (CYCLE I)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Reader responsibility</i>		
Benefits for the reader	<i>Desire to help others</i>	<i>Learning from others</i>	
Challenges for the writer	<i>Fear of sharing - plagiarism</i>	<i>Fear of making mistakes</i>	<i>Poor feedback</i>
Challenges for the reader	<i>Difficulties in giving feedback</i>	<i>Fear of plagiarism</i>	<i>Comparisons with other students</i>
Teachers' and students' roles in PR	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>	<i>Student as 'novice'</i>	

The second part of this chapter presents the findings of the diary and interview data of the case study participants.

### **4.3 Case studies**

This part of the chapter further explores the emergent beliefs of ESL learners about GW and PR by focusing on the diary and interview data of the four participant case studies: Haruko, Ho-Sook, Sahar, and Vega. These four students were enrolled in the EAP paper in Cycle I and each had volunteered to be interviewed at the end of the course. All four case study participants were considered to be successful language learners. Each of the following case studies begins with a brief biography which includes bio data collected from the background questionnaire, the first diary entry, which required students to describe their previous English education experience, and the eighth, final diary entry in which students were asked to reflect on their language learning experiences in general. Next, the learner's beliefs about GW are presented and this is followed by their beliefs about PR. A brief summary concludes each case study. An *invivo* code which the researcher believes sums up the participant's beliefs about the GW experience is included at the beginning of each learner's 'story'. This *invivo* code is given in quotation marks at the beginning of each of the four cross-analyses and is a direct quote from one of that participant's diary entry. Excerpts from participants' diary entries are presented according to the number of their diary entry and quotes from their interview are recorded according to the number of the turn. Haruko/D3 and Haruko/I/T10 therefore refer to Haruko/diary entry 3 and Haruko/I/Turn 10 respectively.

### 4.3.1 Case study one: Haruko

Haruko came from Japan and had lived in New Zealand for seven years at the time that Cycle I of this study was conducted. Haruko was more mature in age than the majority of students in this paper, having attended junior high school in Japan about 20 years earlier. Unlike many NESB students Haruko had never attended a language school in New Zealand, having come to New Zealand for the main purpose of finding employment. Prior to moving to Dunedin, Haruko had worked in Auckland for six years and at the time this study was conducted she was in the first year of a BSc degree, majoring in Physiotherapy and working as a supervisor at a local gym. On the Language Skills Assessment scale from the background questionnaire (section 2), Haruko rated her level in each of the four skills as follows: Reading: 5; Writing: 4; Listening 5; Speaking 5. Her self-ratings were below the mean for the participants of Cycle I (Section 3.2.5) and were below her actual proficiency level in English. In the second question of the background questionnaire (Have you any additional comments about your level?) she wrote the following: “I have confident to use English on casual and work base, but feel so much less confidence in academic purpose (e.g. studying chemistry and physics are so hard...). To the third question (What are you best at in English?) she wrote: “as above #2 and teaching Group Fitness classes!”

Haruko’s final diary entry illustrated the ups and downs of language learning she had experienced since arriving in New Zealand. Haruko had very high expectations of herself and had experienced difficulty using English in her everyday life, especially in the workplace in her first two years in New Zealand. Haruko explained how, during this time, she deliberately did not make any Japanese friends so that she would not speak her native language. Although Haruko’s decision to avoid speaking Japanese caused her anxiety, she argued that this strategy worked well for her and gave her confidence in speaking English thus, ultimately, overcoming the anxiety she felt when first speaking English in New Zealand. Several years later, when she started university, she was very confident in her English language ability as she was able to communicate effectively in English at work and in social situations. She had held the belief that her prior experience living and working in New Zealand would have given her a solid foundation in the language and would have prepared her for communicating in an academic context. However, she soon realised that she would need to make the transition from using an L2 in the workplace to using it in an academic context.

Haruko expressed her anxiety at having to “use totally different English from before” [Haruko/D8] now that she was at university. Initially, she had held the belief that she would only need to develop her academic reading and writing skills, but she soon discovered that she was lacking academic

speaking and listening skills, too. She explained the struggle she had trying to cope with the speed of the lectures and tutorials and how she felt unable to ask questions due to her lack of speaking ability. Although Haruko used English effectively in work and social situations, her ability to communicate in an academic context was lower than that of her classmates at that time. As a result of the stress that this caused her, Haruko stated that she lost her motivation to learn English as she continued to lose confidence in her ability to communicate effectively in English. Haruko's first diary entry also revealed that there had been no GW/PR in her English classes at her junior and high schools in Japan.

### **Haruko's diary and interview results: "another opportunity for me" [Haruko/D4]**

This section presents the findings of Haruko's diary and interview results which explore her beliefs about GW and this is then followed by the results of her second diary entry which explores her beliefs about PR.

#### **a) Emergent beliefs about group work**

Four salient themes emerged from the analysis of the diary and interview data: factors that contribute to successful group work; benefits for the learner; challenges for the learner; and teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom.

#### **Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Haruko held very strong beliefs about how GW should be successfully implemented.

#### ***Logistics***

For Haruko, the logistics of holding group meetings outside of tutorials became a recurring theme throughout her diary entries. In her fifth entry, when asked to write five rules for GW, four of her five rules were associated with logistics:

- Go to meetings on time
- If anyone cannot make the meeting the person has to contact each member at least two hours before the meeting
- Make a schedule (timetable) and structure of meetings at the beginning of the assignment
- Limit meetings to an hour (we lose concentration in a long meeting)

Haruko's frustration with her group members was often reflected in her diary entries. She often wrote about group members not showing up for meetings or arriving late. For Haruko, it was the practical issues of implementing GW that became the most important factor for ensuring successful GW. Haruko often worked in the evenings and so it was a priority to her that time was used efficiently and

effectively. Haruko suggested that group members should work together to create a timetable of meetings which all group members could commit to. Haruko held the strong belief that for GW to be successful, it was necessary to spend some time at the beginning of the assignment preparing this timetable and also deciding on the structure of the meetings. Haruko had the belief that meetings need to be quite formal with a clear purpose and limited to one hour so that group members could remain focused. It was Haruko's belief that the successful completion of group assignments depended, to a large extent, on the success of group meetings.

### ***Organisation***

Haruko wrote that it was essential for each group to have a group leader and this was the subject of her fifth rule:

- Have a leader who can go forward at the meeting and is always neutral to listen to everyone

The importance of having a leader was a dominant thread throughout Haruko's diary entries:

Using meeting to communicate did not work well till we got a leader. Before we got a leader, we could not put ideas together and the meeting was not creative. I think we really need a leader for the group presentation meetings. [Haruko/D3]

Haruko held the belief that the role of the leader was to ensure the smooth running of the meetings reiterating the importance Haruko placed on the group meetings. Haruko had the belief that the leader's role is similar to that of a chairperson in that it is their responsibility to take charge of the meeting, keep everyone focused on the task, and be impartial. She also had the belief that the leader should have the final decision in regards to which ideas should be included in the assignment and should be responsible for ensuring that the meetings are productive and creative.

### ***Group grade***

Haruko was in favour of a group grade and held the belief that it was a fair method of assessment since it usually ensured the full participation of group members. However, she was aware that it was not always fair. For GW to be successful, Haruko held the belief that assessment always needed to be fair. Therefore, she expressed the belief that there should be an additional individual assessment to complement the group grade. She suggested that each student should write a blind evaluation of each group member at the conclusion of each assessment. Haruko wrote that there was quite often a student who did not contribute to the group and so this may encourage less active students to participate more.

### ***Good relationships***

Haruko had the strong belief that for GW to be successful, it was essential to build a good relationship amongst group members. She suggested that tutorials should include more ice breaker activities at the beginning of the course and that at the beginning of each tutorial, students should draw to find their seat so that they are sitting next to someone new in each tutorial. It was Haruko's belief that GW is more successful when friendships have developed with group members. Haruko contrasted GW with individual work and argued that when students are working individually, they do not need to care about the feelings of their classmates. However, when working cooperatively, considering the feelings of other's becomes very important: "if we do not have this good relationship, the group work could not work well and the group will fall apart" [Haruko/D5].

### **Benefits for the learner**

Although Haruko provided a range of suggestions regarding the improved implementation of GW, she still held the strong belief that all group members benefitted from GW.

### ***Learning from others***

As discussed in Haruko's biography, Haruko had entered university a confident English speaker who could communicate effectively in work and social situations. However, she was soon faced with the difficulty of adjusting to the demands of using academic English. Initially, Haruko thought that she would only need to improve her academic reading and writing skills, but it soon became apparent that she would need to improve her academic speaking and listening skills too. In her final diary entry, Haruko had written how her lower academic English ability had led to a loss of motivation to improve her English and to a lack of confidence in her ability in the beginning of the course. A later diary entry showed a change in this belief: "But this experience [group activities and group assignments in the course] made me feel I needed to work on speaking as well, and gave me more motivation to improve the skill" [Haruko/D6].

Through her participation in GW, Haruko had realised that she still had trouble expressing her thoughts in English in academic contexts and the diary excerpt above shows how GW helped her to regain the motivation to improve her English speaking skills. She concluded this diary entry by writing that she would like to do similar group activities at the university and that she may even make herself talk about the news with her friends outside the classroom. Haruko was referring to a particular group discussion in which students had discussed a current news item. This indicated that Haruko was able to transfer what she had learned in the classroom to her life outside the classroom.

### ***Benefits for others***

For Haruko, the main benefit for her group mates was the inclusion of a group grade for the group presentation and summary. Haruko took the EAP paper in order to improve her knowledge of English and her aim was to pass this paper [Haruko/I/T102]. It was apparent throughout the interview that she had a relaxed attitude towards grades. She held the strong belief that learning the skills that were acquired through the process of working together in a group was far more important than the grade achieved at the end of the project. She wrote that when working individually, students did not have the opportunity to help each other, in fact she had the strong belief that it encouraged competition. However, when working collaboratively, in order to receive a high group grade it was essential that all members listened to and understood each other. She finished by writing that GW “definitely encouraged me to support other members” [Haruko/D6]. It was therefore evident that from Haruko’s point of view, this was an important benefit to the other group members.

Another benefit for Haruko’s group mates was that she claimed group grades made her work harder – not only for her own benefit, but also for the benefit of her group mates. She explained: “I felt good pressure to do my part well as I did not want to make my members feel bad from my work” [Haruko/D3]. She perceptively wrote that having a group grade meant trusting each member of the group and understanding that each member of the group had a responsibility to the other group members.

### ***Learning for the “real world”***

It became evident early in her diary entries and interview that Haruko saw in the GW activities and assessments an opportunity to gain skills, which would be of use not only in her university life, but also beyond her life at university. This was perhaps not surprising since she had experienced work life both in Japan and New Zealand prior to enrolling at the University of Otago: “but um I thought it mmm it could be good because we can use that style when we go to the work yeah after university” [Haruko/I/T26].

Haruko was referring here to the GW activities she had participated in during the tutorials and she elaborated by saying that it was necessary to work with colleagues in a teamwork situation in the workplace. Haruko held the belief that GW was of particular importance for the majority of students who had not yet entered the workforce because it taught students the necessary social skills needed for team work. Because her group mates were often lacking such skills, Haruko realised the importance of being able to adapt and change the way she interacted with them in the GW activities: “So I was thinking I should adjust a little bit, to their age” [Haruko/I/T168].

Haruko argued that students needed to be taught how to speak and listen to their group members and also how to support them – even if they did not want to support their group members or if they disagreed with them. Again, she showed an ability to connect these skills to students’ future lives:

because when they start working in a real world, they always have to cope with others with respect. I did not tell my group members about my thought, but I tried to show them how I acted in a group. I hope they could learn something from my action. [Haruko/D6]

It was clear that Haruko was very considerate of her group members and wanted to give them the benefit of her experience. At the same time it seemed that she was reluctant to actually ‘spell this out’ to her teammates, preferring instead to lead by example. Haruko’s words also showed that she was not a passive learner and that she was actively thinking about her actions and the actions of others.

Haruko related her own previous work and life experiences to the experience of working together as a group in a university classroom. She had the belief that GW could provide students with the opportunity to learn how to deal with other people – a skill not always acquired at university when working with students of the same age group.

### ***Benefits for self***

For Haruko, the greatest benefit of GW was the opportunities it provided for her. Haruko frequently used the word “opportunity” in her diary entries. Even when there were aspects of GW that she did not like she saw in it an opportunity for herself. These opportunities were sometimes academic related, such as learning new ideas and sometimes socially related, such as developing friendships: “So I would like to do a similar activity again, because it will be another opportunity for me to see others’ ideas and make more friends” [Haruko/D4]. She later wrote that GW provided more opportunities for her to learn how to express herself more effectively and gave her more experience in pronouncing English words. She added that “those opportunities give me more confident to speak English and thus it helps me to be more successful with English” [Haruko/D6].

Another significant benefit of GW for Haruko was the increased confidence she gained from collaborating with her group mates. Haruko explained that whilst her group was preparing for the group presentation, all of the group members had to speak in English since their first languages were all different. This increased her confidence in her English ability and she wrote that she did not fear speaking English with her group members because she now held the belief that her English “was not too bad” [Haruko/D4]. She added that she also felt more confident in her group because none of her group members used difficult words.

### ***Fun and enjoyment***

Haruko valued the opportunity provided by GW to develop relationships with other group members and to form friendships. She explained how it could sometimes be difficult making friends:

It is quite hard for me to make friends at the university since maybe I am older than others. But I could make a good friendship in our group and also it was great to see that everyone helped each other. Thus it was a great experience for me to work together as a group. [Haruko/D4]

### ***Benefits of the learner diary***

In her interview, Haruko spoke about the benefits of the learner diary. She held the belief that the main benefit of writing the diary entries was the opportunity it provided her to reflect on her work: “If I didn’t write diary maybe I didn’t think about why I am doing. Yeah, it was kind of reviewing why we were doing” [Haruko/I/T96].

Another benefit of the learner diary for Haruko was the opportunity to improve her own writing skills: “I think of the diary as kind of good practice how to write...and how we can express what we want to say” [Haruko/I/T88].

### **Challenges for the learner**

Haruko pointed out two aspects of GW in the course which had been problematic for her. The first was her participation in the group presentation and the second was associated with conducting GW outside of the classroom.

### ***Fear of group activities***

Haruko expressed her anxiety at doing the group presentation and acknowledged that she was a little nervous since it was her first experience doing a group presentation. Although Haruko appeared to be quite a confident student she also experienced anxiety in both written and oral GW activities. There was only one point in the interview when she mentioned her nervousness with the GW/PR: “I felt a little bit nervous cause I haven’t done anything with the group or with the pair so...I felt a little bit nervous” [Haruko/I/T26].

Haruko’s diary entries, however, contained many references to her anxiety with GW, especially when reflecting on the group presentation.

When I heard about giving a group presentation at first, I felt ill at ease about it I thought the presentation was quite a big burden. I did not feel nervous on the information that we were going to talk but I did feel anxious of my performance on that day. [Haruko/D3]

### *Challenges with group work outside the classroom*

One major problem arose due to uncertainty regarding the roles of each group member. This resulted in a lack of leadership within this group: "...we really needed a leader um but nobody knows how the group was working" [Haruko/I/T34]. Haruko continued this train of thought by stating that everyone in her presentation group was fairly equal regarding their proficiency level [Haruko/I/T40]. She did, however, assume the role of 'unofficial leader' within the group, which could be due to her maturity and past experiences:

...they didn't call me leader, but um yeah I was thinking that in the meeting it should be like that. Yeah cause otherwise we just keep talking and um we can't work on what we are doing, that takes maybe hours and hours. And just say ok we only need one hour. And then do this, this, this today, and then decide this, this, this, this. [Haruko/I/T42]

Haruko's diary entries also revealed the need for groups to be organised and she stressed that each group member needed to know what their specific task was in order to complete the activity or assignment successfully and on time:

In the beginning we wasted a lot of time. We weren't sure what we were supposed to be doing and so we kind of fell apart and didn't do a good job of the work. [Haruko/D6]

Some difficulties within the group arose due to members' character traits. In her interview, Haruko said that in her opinion all group members were of a similar level in terms of their English proficiency, but that some members were very quiet and also softly spoken [Haruko/I/T50]. In contrast, other group members were reluctant to listen to others and were only interested in giving their opinion [Haruko/I/T162]. She had the belief that the younger members in the group had much to learn in the way they communicated with others. Although she had a positive attitude and enjoyed working with the younger students, she was very aware of their young age and inexperience and she held the belief that there were times when they did not respect her. Haruko held the belief that she was still learning how to interact with others in a group and was confident that her less experienced groupmates would also learn how to communicate with others [Haruko/I/T164]. Haruko described how sometimes it was difficult for the group members to meet as a group due to conflicting timetables: "Working as a group, it was hard to find time to get together as everyone's timetables were different and some of us were working in nights" [Haruko/D3]. She explained how they recognised the importance of cooperating with each other and found other ways of communicating such as via email.

### **Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom**

Haruko held strong beliefs about the roles of the teachers and students in the university classroom.

#### ***Teacher as 'expert'***

Although Haruko held the belief that GW had been beneficial for her, she also had a strong belief that students could learn more from the tutor than they could from other students: "In the tutorial we can get more higher knowledge from tutor" [Haruko/I/T144]. She held the strong belief that to develop and improve language proficiency, the teacher, as the 'expert', played a far more valuable role than the student.

#### ***Students' role in the university classroom***

Haruko explained that her role as a student was quite different when she attended university in Japan 15 years previously compared with her role as a university student in New Zealand because of the emphasis on GW at the University of Otago. She had the belief that the role of the student in New Zealand was to learn how to interact with other students and to learn how to support and help their peers. She also held the belief that universities in New Zealand provide "a great base knowledge and information" but that it was the responsibility of students to practice these useful skills and to put them into practice and "then it becomes our own knowledge for our life" [Haruko/D7].

### **Summary of Haruko's emergent beliefs about group work**

Haruko held particularly strong beliefs about the group meetings held outside the classroom with time management and meeting etiquette being of primary concern for her. Table 10 shows that she was particularly concerned about the logistics of arranging meetings and how the meetings themselves were organised. Table 10 also indicates that Haruko had the belief that having a good relationship with group members was also an important factor for successful GW. Haruko pointed out that GW was more successful when friendships have developed amongst the group members. Although she valued the social aspects of GW, Haruko had the belief that meetings should be professionally organised and that all GW should have a leader. This adds strength to the argument that GW prepares students for the workplace since Haruko was clearly drawing on her own past and current experience and skills she had learned in the workplace and transferring them to an academic context. Haruko showed a deep level of awareness of her place in the group: she was aware that her academic language skills were not as high as many of her peers, but she was also aware that her social skills were more highly developed than her peers which gave her deeper insights into how GW should be implemented – though she indicated that she was still learning how to interact within a group and apply what she had learned to outside the classroom. Her diary entries revealed that Haruko had empathy with her peers and was concerned about their feelings despite her belief that they did not always respect her.

Despite her belief that there were many benefits of GW, Haruko always held the belief that the teacher was the 'expert'.

Whilst many of Haruko's beliefs remained stable, some of her beliefs did evolve over the course of the semester as can be seen in Table 11. This table shows how some of Haruko's beliefs changed as she experienced GW in the EAP course. The table shows how Haruko's confidence fluctuated throughout her language learning journey. She had experienced difficulties communicating when she arrived in New Zealand and then developed more confidence as her English improved due to her interactions in the workplace with other native and non-native English speakers. Having become comfortable communicating in English for work and in everyday situations, Haruko entered university with the belief that she would be able to communicate as effectively in the academic context. She soon realised, however, that she needed to develop her academic English in all four skills. Haruko lost confidence again in her ability, however, the GW activities gave her the motivation to improve her skills and reach the level that her peers were at. In the first few weeks of the course, Haruko had strong beliefs about how academic GW should be implemented and gave suggestions for improvements in her diary entries. The following section presents Haruko's beliefs about PR.

#### **b) Emergent beliefs about peer review**

The following three dominant themes emerged regarding Haruko's beliefs about PR: benefits for the writer; challenges for the writer; and challenges for the reader.

##### **Benefits for the writer**

Initially, Haruko had been very reluctant to participate in the PR. However, there was a change in Haruko's beliefs and following the PR, she had the belief that it had been a useful experience for her. In her diary entry, Haruko wrote about the benefits she had received from participating in the PR. Haruko wrote that when she first heard from the tutor that they were expected to do the PR, she did not think about reading or giving feedback on her peer's essay draft and consequently this entry focused on how she had reacted to the PR.

**TABLE 10: HARUKO'S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Code 4</b>	<b>Code 5</b>	<b>Code 6</b>
Factors that contribute to successful GW	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Group grade</i>	<i>Good relationships</i>		
Benefits for the learner	<i>Learning from others</i>	<i>Benefits for others</i>	<i>Learning for the 'real world'</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	<i>Fun and enjoyment</i>	<i>Benefits of the learner diary (interview only)</i>
Challenges for the learner	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	<i>Challenges with group work outside the classroom</i>				
Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>	<i>Students' role in the university classroom</i>				

**TABLE 11: SUMMARY OF HARUKO'S BELIEF CHANGES IN GROUP WORK**

Prior to enrolling at university	Enrolment at university	At the beginning of the EAP course	At the end of the EAP course
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No GW experience in an academic context</li> <li>• Using the target language was difficult</li> <li>• No contact with Japanese speakers and work would lead to language improvements</li> <li>• Increased confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could communicate effectively</li> <li>• Had confidence in ability to use academic English for speaking and listening in an academic context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety in speaking and listening in academic contexts especially in groups</li> <li>• Feared group presentation</li> <li>• Realisation of the need to improve four skills in academic English</li> <li>• Frustration with students over their lack of meeting etiquette and social skills</li> <li>• Lack of leadership in groups led to ineffective meetings</li> <li>• Difficulty making friends</li> <li>• Despite this difficulty, had positive beliefs about GW and wanted it to be successful</li> <li>• Favoured group grade. Considered it to be fair. Had the strong belief that group grades motivated <u>all</u> students to contribute</li> <li>• Understood what GW <u>should</u> be like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed confidence interacting with groups</li> <li>• More confident with her role as a group member/assumed unofficial role as leader</li> <li>• Leadership in groups leads to more effective meetings</li> <li>• GW gave motivation to improve academic speaking</li> <li>• Further benefits of GW – applying GW outside the classroom</li> <li>• GW gave opportunity to find new ways of expressing herself /improvements in language</li> <li>• Group presentation develops confidence further</li> <li>• Made new friends through GW</li> <li>• Still in favour of group grade but not always fair</li> <li>• Very strong beliefs about how GW could be improved</li> <li>• Suggestions for improving GW in the course</li> </ul>

### ***Learning from others***

Haruko was quite reluctant to participate in the PR exercise at first. However, she recalled a biology class in which she had had to do a similar exercise and she had received very useful feedback on her work from another student – “I then thought that it would be great to have some feedback for my essay draft and learn something from reading others” [Haruko/D2]. This is a clear indication of how Haruko was able to overcome a particular challenge and turn it into a learning opportunity and when reflecting on the PR she was very positive about the feedback she had received. She wrote that she had received much feedback from her friends with helpful suggestions. She also expressed her relief that her friends were able to understand what she was trying to say in her essay. She gave details about the feedback that she had received and explained that the most useful feedback was comments about the mistakes she had made in grammar and her lack of linking paragraphs together. Haruko had the belief that it was important to receive critical feedback even though this could be difficult: “It was better to have tough suggestions because I could learn more, even if they made me feel bad” [Haruko/D2].

### **Challenges for the writer**

This theme explores Haruko’s beliefs about the difficulties she faced having her essay reviewed by a peer.

### ***Fear of making mistakes***

In the beginning of the course, Haruko felt nervous about having her draft read by another student. She explained that she always felt nervous when anyone looked at her work – whether it was an exam, an assignment, or a job assessment. She admitted that she was not concerned about reading or assessing the work of others, but that she just did not want to show her work to anyone else – “especially to ones who I knew, as it was still draft and I needed to work on it more to make it better” [Haruko/D2].

Haruko concluded the entry by suggesting the PR could be better implemented by having it as a blind review: “because we could be critically tougher since we would not have to worry about our friends feeling. Then we could have more useful suggestions” [Haruko/D2].

### **Challenges for the reader**

This theme explains Haruko’s beliefs about giving feedback to her peer.

### *Difficulties in giving feedback*

Haruko faced the dilemma of whether to give feedback on her peer's essay draft "critically tough or soft". Based on her prior experience of receiving feedback, she decided that "having tough suggestions were better than soft and friendly ones" [Haruko/D2].

### **Summary of Haruko's emergent beliefs about peer review**

Table 12 shows that Haruko considered both the benefits and drawbacks of PR from the perspective of herself as the writer and the reader. The table indicates that Haruko is concerned most with the issue of feedback. She had found the feedback she had received to be helpful and was relieved that her peer was able to understand the meaning of what she had written. However, she also had difficulty in giving feedback to her peer and was concerned about how critical she should be. The table also shows that Haruko was concerned about mistakes and what her peer would think if there were errors in her writing. Table 13 is quite revealing because it provides the changes in Haruko's beliefs about PR. The table reveals that prior to the PR, Haruko was very nervous about a peer reviewing her draft because of concerns over its quality. She was especially nervous of someone she did not know reviewing her work. The table reveals how some beliefs changed after the PR: Haruko now held the belief that the PR was a useful exercise and it had given her more confidence to have her work reviewed by a peer in future since the peer had understood her work. Also, before the PR Haruko had held the belief that giving feedback would be easy. However, her belief began to change during the PR as she realised the difficulty in giving feedback to a peer who was also her friend.

**TABLE 12: HARUKO'S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Learning from others</i>
Challenges for the writer	<i>Fear of making mistakes</i>
Challenges for the reader	<i>Difficulties in giving feedback</i>

**TABLE 13: SUMMARY OF HARUKO’S BELIEF CHANGES IN PEER REVIEW**

Prior to the PR	During the PR	Following the PR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very reluctant – her peer would not understand her work</li> <li>• reluctant to show draft to others – especially to peers she does not know</li> <li>• reading peer’s draft would be easy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficult to be critical when you know the writer</li> <li>• concern over hurting feelings of the reader</li> <li>• decision to give ‘tough’ over ‘soft’ criticism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relief that her peer could understand her draft</li> <li>• appreciated the feedback</li> <li>• suggested blind PR – still concerned about giving critical feedback to friends</li> </ul>

### 4.3.2 Case study two: Ho-Sook

Following a brief biography of Ho-Sook, the results of Ho-Sook’s diary entries and interview are presented.

Ho-Sook came from the Republic of Korea and had lived in New Zealand for three years at the time Cycle I of this study began. Ho-Sook had never attended high school in her home country having spent all of her high school years in New Zealand before attending the University of Otago. Ho-Sook was majoring in Linguistics and intended studying for an MA after completing her BA. On the Language Skills Assessment section of the background questionnaire, Ho-Sook rated herself six on the nine band scale in all four skills but pointed out that listening was her best skill and that she found writing the most difficult. Ho-Sook responded to the second question (have you any additional comments about your level?) by writing: “Although having been studying for several years, my English still needs to improve”. For question 5 (What do you hope to learn most from this course?), she answered: “How to successfully acquire English as a second language (Refined English if possible)”. Ho-Sook rated herself a competent six in all four fields on the nine band scale from the background questionnaire which the researcher believed to be a realistic assessment of her proficiency level.

Ho-Sook explained that prior to coming to New Zealand she was confident in using English, had no difficulty communicating in English on her overseas trips, and held the belief that she would be a confident and effective communicator after arriving in New Zealand. However, after her arrival in New Zealand, she initially lost her confidence in communicating in English. It was clear that there was a mismatch between what Ho-Sook expected when she came to New Zealand and the reality of communicating in an ESL context. She also referred to the differences between the English she had learned in the Republic of Korea and the English she needed to communicate in New

Zealand which had contributed to unrealistic expectations of her ability to use the L2 upon her arrival in New Zealand. She acknowledged that “learning a language is an endless journey” [Ho-Sook/D8] and sometimes this journey was a source of anxiety.

Ho-Sook related how the first few months of her life in New Zealand were a constant struggle and how “everyday was full of unpleasant surprises” [Ho-Sook/D8]. Although she knew the words she wanted to say, it took her a few seconds to verbalise what she wanted to say and consequently she reached the point where she would say “ ‘Hello, how are you, fine good thank you and you?’ all at once even before the other person could respond” [Ho-Sook/D8]. This was a constant source of anxiety for Ho-Sook.

### **Ho-Sook’s diary and interview results: “You will reap what you sew” [Ho-Sook /D5]**

#### **a) Emergent beliefs about group work**

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the diary and interview data: factors that contribute to successful group work, benefits for the learner, challenges for the learner, and the teachers’ and students’ role in the university classroom.

#### **Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Ho-Sook held the belief that logistics were essential in determining the success of the group, but also held the belief that a group grade was an impediment to successful GW.

#### ***Logistics***

Ho-Sook acknowledged the difficulties for group members to arrange a time to meet due to conflicting schedules. She explained how they had to compromise so that they were all able to attend the meetings even if it meant having a late dinner or cancelling personal appointments. She stressed the importance of communicating with each other through texting, e-mailing or phoning each other. She also realised the importance of time management: “I learned that it is very important to manage time and energy therefore bringing better results” [Ho-Sook/D6].

#### ***Group grade***

Ho-Sook held the belief that while GW could be effective and there were certainly benefits to GW, one downside of it was the issue of having group grades rather than individual grades. As Ho-Sook pointed out, this could be particularly contentious if one student had been assigned a task that was more difficult than the tasks assigned to the rest of the group members, but that student would still receive the same grade as the other group members. Ho-Sook held the firm belief that group grades

were very unfair if a student had worked harder or had produced a higher quality piece of work than the other group members. She was of the belief that the group grade was particularly unfair for the group presentation assessment since “your abilities or skills may not be fully reflected in you presentation since the work is portioned” [Ho-Sook/D3]. Ho-Sook held the very strong belief that for GW to be successful, the group grade should only be a very small part of the assessment and that students should be awarded an individual grade which would reflect their effort and ability. However, she also pointed out the difficulty of grading individuals when they were working together as a group. This student had the strong belief that this method of assessment was unfair but also acknowledged the difficulty of awarding individual grades:

...its very hard to mark individuals yeah. Because you are only submitting them one work done by all your members. And I wish like there is some other way of marking yeah other people but I don't know how. [HoSook/I/T86]

### **Benefits for the learner**

Ho-Sook had struggled with the issue of a shared group grade and this had, at first, a negative effect on her beliefs about the usefulness of GW. However, as the course progressed there was a change in her beliefs about the effectiveness of GW.

### ***Learning from others***

Although Ho-Sook had lived in New Zealand for a number of years and considered her level of English proficiency to be higher than that of the other group members, she was, to her surprise, still able to learn from other group members:

I wanted to get good grades and I really didn't expect to get like other skills like kind of practical parts like it was good that I learned some of those practical things but I didn't really expect it. [Ho-Sook/I/T82]

Ho-Sook had initially been reluctant to participate in GW as her focus was on achieving high grades, and it was her belief that this was best achieved through working individually rather than working together as a group.

### ***Benefits for self***

Ho-Sook held strong beliefs about the benefits she had received from participating in GW. It became clear in her later diary entries that Ho-Sook wanted to make the most of every opportunity there was for her to learn and develop skills. The following excerpt shows that Ho-Sook was a very active student who enjoyed the opportunity to interact with her group mates. It also showed that she used the

time spent on GW to actively practice group social skills which can be difficult for first-year students to learn.

You get more time to reflect what you have learned – not in a passive way (mechanically reading notes or text book) but in an active way as you discuss, compromise, learn to view things from different angles and adopt new ideas. I think what we have learned come to life when we involve people. [Ho-Sook/D5]

This challenges the stereotype that Asian students are passive learners and shows that Ho-Sook was not a passive learner, but that she was involved in active, autonomous learning. Another benefit of GW for Ho-Sook was the opportunity to work in groups with other NESB students who she felt comfortable working with:

I do feel quite comfortable. I think it is because being all non-native speakers, we have the same problem and we feel easier around each other than with native speakers. To be honest, I cannot help myself feeling a little humiliated when I am working with native English speakers. Sometimes I worry that they will judge my ability as a student based only on my ability in speaking English. [Ho-Sook/D4]

In her interview, she stated that the other group members were “pretty good people to work with” and this Ho-Sook said was “because when we started to research they actually went out and like did their own research rather than like, I didn’t have to tell them anything” [HoSook/I/T34].

### ***Learning for the ‘real’ world***

Ho-Sook held the strong belief that a group is “a smaller society” [Ho-Sook/D4]. She was aware of the various roles within the group as well as the dynamics which make or break a group. She also recognised the usefulness of GW in her future life and the importance of learning how to interact with others towards a common work-oriented goal:

You also get to practice how to socialize with other people, which is a very useful skill to acquire as we will have to go on and meet people for the rest of our lives. As working toward the same aim, you learn to understand and when necessary, to adopt other people’s perception. [Ho-Sook/D4]

Ho-Sook held the belief that participating in any kind of GW activity or assessment gave students the opportunity to practice social skills such as understanding other students’ points of view.

### ***Benefits of the learner diary***

In her interview, Ho-Sook reported that she benefitted from keeping a regular learner diary because it gave her the opportunity to reflect on her work. She liked the idea of being able to “think twice” about her work: while she was working on her project and again after it had been submitted. Ho-Sook also claimed that through the learner diary, she was able to gain a deeper understanding of her behaviour in the group and that it had made her become more aware of what she had been thinking during the GW activity.

I thought oh I never thought about it this way but yeah. I didn't really realize that I was thinking or acting that way but, while I was writing it, I had to come out, um, understand yeah, the whole purpose and what I did and what I was doing like. [Ho-Sook/I/T68]

### **Challenges for the learner**

As mentioned earlier, Ho-Sook's negative experience of GW had influenced her beliefs about the factors that are needed for successful GW. This theme describes the conflicts Ho-Sook experienced with GW.

### ***Difficulties with group grades***

Ho-Sook held the belief that a group grade was an impediment to successful GW and she had also experienced difficulties with them during the course. For Ho-Sook, there appeared to be a conflict between achieving high grades and working in a group. She had the belief that GW could be enjoyable, but when it was assessed then it became stressful and the element of fun disappeared:

...I was really stressed about the grade, maybe it was just like GW and for fun or just group work it would be really great but I was really stressed because of the lower grade... [Ho-Sook/I/T58]

Ho-Sook returned to this issue later in her interview. She had the firm belief that working individually was much more effective for her than GW. She claimed in her interview that she learned more when she worked by herself [Ho-Sook/I/T108] although throughout her diary entries she wrote much about the benefits she had received through GW. Unfortunately, it appeared that the conflict over achieving high grades overshadowed the benefits of GW for Ho-Sook. She held the strong belief that obtaining high grades was more difficult when working with others in a group rather than working individually. She found it very unfair that even though one student may work very hard, high grades were dependent upon all group members' proficiency level. Ho-Sook also made it clear that she sought group members who were also concerned about grades:

...one of the group members was my friend and I knew that she ...really cared of her grades, I knew she was going to do good...we just picked those people who were, looked like they were quite anxious students. [Ho-Sook/I/T28]

Related to the issue of group grades was Ho-Sook's particularly insightful beliefs about the tutorial GW versus the assessed GW:

It was less stressful but like our attitude kind of changed, oh its not going to count so. It became a little negative and talk about other things. Yeah. So we kind of talked about it and then we (inaudible) got sidetracked and then talked about other things. So it wasn't that productive, it was very relaxing and yeah. I think like when we get actually graded it is kind of good because when you get into it like when we are not that's a really interesting topic or we have really good motivation you know we need to concentrate. [Ho-Sook/I/T64]

During the interview, Ho-Sook appeared not to be in favour of assessed GW claiming it was too stressful and not enjoyable, but here she appeared to be asserting that assessed GW was more productive because students had the motivation to succeed. Even if the topic was not interesting they were instrumentally motivated to concentrate and achieve the goals of the GW which, ultimately, was the achievement of a high grade. This motivation was lacking when the GW was not assessed and consequently Ho-Sook had the belief that students regarded GW as an unimportant aspect of the tutorials in which they could spend time chatting about unrelated subjects. However, the diary entries had revealed that it had been the group grade that had caused difficulties for Ho-Sook.

### ***Challenges in groups***

Ho-Sook indicated in her diary entries that she had had much experience of GW in classrooms. Surprisingly, however, she wrote that: "...it always comes to me as a whole new experience. Every time it is different and there is no easy way out expect just working together" [Ho-Sook/D3]. Not surprisingly, Ho-Sook referred to several difficulties she and her other group members had encountered while working on the group assignments. The first problem involved the lack of contribution of one member towards the assignment: "...sometimes they weren't working, like the other person wasn't and we just had to tell the person off to pay more, like attention" [Ho-Sook/I/T56]. Ho-Sook claimed that the groups in which she was a member did not experience any difficulties in their actual work but that the difficulties arose from dealing with other group members:

...dealing with people...it was consuming, we didn't really have difficulties in our work but I actually had to manage people to do the work. And sometimes we had like different ways of like understanding the criteria. (inaudible) we just never reached a conclusion so I just did

my stuff and they did theirs as well (inaudible) and then you know I would like edit it. We discussed this like problems of how you can just do it but they don't always think like me. [Ho-Sook/I/T56]

It appeared that this group had difficulties discussing issues such as the assignment criteria in addition to working together to achieve their goals. It also appeared that Ho-Sook expected the other group members to think the same way she did.

### ***Fear of group activities***

At times, Ho-Sook expressed conflicting beliefs about GW. Although she referred to the benefits of GW, she also wrote that she always faced it with a sense of dread: "I view a group work as a constant state of panic and a field of conflict" [Ho-Sook/D3].

### **Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom**

Ho-Sook held especially strong beliefs about the role of the teacher at university and her role as a student, despite not having previously considered her role.

### ***Teacher as 'expert'***

Ho-Sook had the firm belief that teachers played a vital role in students' lives since "they have power to shape one's characteristics and attitude toward learning and the way one perceive matters. They motivate and cultivate students" [Ho-Sook/D7]. In addition, the feedback received from teachers, according to Ho-Sook, was an essential part of the learning process. When writing about receiving feedback during GW activities, Ho-Sook wrote that "interacting with fellow students is more comfortable and relaxing but to be honest I tend to pay more attention to the feedbacks I get from my teacher(s)" [Ho-Sook/D7].

Ho-Sook held the strong belief that language students learn more from their tutor than from fellow classmates during tutorials. This could be due to the tendency for students to "get side tracked" during GW as has already been discussed. Ho-Sook had the belief that the tutor held all of the answers and that problems were better solved by asking the tutor rather than attempting to solve the problem by working with other students. Ho-Sook continued by pointing out that there was a certain mistrust between students because they were aware that students were of the same level. Tutors and lecturers, however, were somewhat idealised:

Maybe its kind of like prejudice but yeah um you kind of mistrust the students because we think they would be on the same level but they can make mistakes but I, we think that our tutors or lecturers are like perfect

or better than us, and you tend to trust them more, yeah, than we trust each other. [Ho-Sook/I/T102]

Ho-Sook was also more willing to accept the advice of the tutor than that of fellow students. When asked if she would ever question the feedback she received from a tutor she replied “No, not really” [Ho-Sook/I/T104] even when she disagreed with the tutor. When asked if she would question feedback from another class member, her answer was “yes” [Ho-Sook/I/T106].

However, it was clear that Ho-Sook did not view all native English speakers as ‘experts’. When commenting on native English speaking classmates from her mainstream classes she did not have the belief that their proficiency in English made them an ‘expert’ in that subject:

...they’re natives and they speak good English doesn’t mean that they have ability to work on certain events ... as non-native speakers because they can’t really express themselves, really, in English it doesn’t mean that they ...don’t have the ability to do, for example, like maths...it’s just I view English as one way of expressing yourself it doesn’t really say that you’re able student. [Ho-Sook/I/T126]

It was evident that this student regarded tutors/lecturers as ‘expert’ not because they were native speakers of the language, but because she regarded them as being qualified, experienced, and having a sound knowledge of the subject area.

### *Students’ role in the university classroom*

With regards to the roles of students and teachers, Ho-Sook explained that she had “never, not until now, taken time and thought about my ‘role’ as a student” [HoSook/D7] despite being a student most of her life. Reflecting on her role as student HoSook insightfully claimed that “being a student involves more than just acquiring knowledge or skills” [Ho-Sook/D7]. She wrote that it was necessary for a student to know why they were studying and that if someone decided to become a student this must be a decision carried out willingly. She also argued that students must be ready to apply what they have learned to their life outside the classroom. This is a sentiment echoed throughout Ho-Sook’s diary entries when looking at the benefits of GW. Ho-Sook also held the belief that teachers were also learners and she had the strong belief that learning was a continuous journey for both students and teachers.

Although Ho-Sook enjoyed the benefits of cooperating in a group and made the connection between these social skills and her future professional life, she was also focused on the final product. It was apparent throughout her diary entries and the interview that obtaining high grades was paramount in Ho-Sook’s university life:

...you still kind of set a goal and you say I am going to get like 90 over 90 and it kind of gets you the motivation to work because for myself I am going to get over 90 so like...I decided to do something, push myself to work on it, and also I think really great, good grades is my whole purpose in your life, but I think it is really important to have good grades because it kind of proves to you that you worked hard on your assessments and like being a student is like...a job, like profession, you have to do it kind of properly if you can. [Ho-Sook/I/T80]

Ho-Sook held the belief that being a student was a profession and it was interesting how she related being a student to the “real world” of having a job or profession.

### **Summary of Ho-Sook’s emergent beliefs about group work**

Table 14 indicates that Ho-Sook benefitted from GW, but that she also experienced difficulties with GW. Ho-Sook held the strongest beliefs about the inclusion of the group grade in the course. The table shows that the issue of a group grade was both an issue affecting the success of GW and a source of conflict for her. The achievement of high grades was Ho-Sook’s main goal in the course. She held the strong belief that group grades were unfair and that students should be rewarded, that is receive a higher grade, if they had performed a more difficult task, worked harder, or produced a higher quality piece of work than their group mates. Ho-Sook also found the group grade stressful and it affected her enjoyment of GW. She enjoyed GW but not when it was assessed. For Ho-Sook, group grades equalled lower grades. She maintained that the grades for each assessment should be based mainly on an individual grade, although she did acknowledge the difficulties of awarding individual grades for assessed GW. She was in favour of GW being graded because when it was not graded, students were not motivated and GW was not effective. Ho-Sook also experienced difficulties with other group members such as a member not contributing, problems discussing the assignment, and working together to achieve their goals and differences in opinion with GW. Ho-Sook held the very strong belief that the teacher was the most important person in the classroom in terms of their ability to provide accurate, trustworthy feedback because they were qualified and experienced and she distrusted the feedback given to her by her peers. The findings show that Ho-Sook was a highly reflective student who regarded GW as a “smaller society” and she took her role as a student very seriously. She valued the opportunity to develop social skills through GW which she knew would be very valuable in her professional post-university life. Ho-Sook enjoyed the opportunity the learner diary gave her to reflect on her work, her behaviour in the group, and her thought processes during GW.

**TABLE 14: HO-SOOK'S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Code 4</b>
Factors that contribute to successful GW	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Group grade</i>		
Benefits for the learner	<i>Learning from others</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	<i>Learning for the 'real' world</i>	<i>Benefits of the learner diary</i>
Challenges for the learner	<i>Difficulties with group grades</i>	<i>Challenges in groups</i>	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	
Teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>	<i>Students' role in the university classroom</i>		

Table 15 below indicates that some of Ho-Sook's beliefs evolved during the semester. In terms of GW, Ho-Sook became more willing to participate in GW as the course progressed and she began to experience a change in her beliefs about the benefits of GW. In the beginning of the course, Ho-Sook held the belief that GW should not be assessed because it would prevent her from achieving a high grade. However, by the end of the course, she held the belief that GW should be assessed but by individual grades and not a group grade. This change in belief was due to her experience of GW in the tutorial when students were unfocused and unproductive.

**TABLE 15: SUMMARY OF HO-SOOK'S BELIEF CHANGES IN GROUP WORK**

<b>Prior to enrolling at university</b>	<b>In the beginning of the EAP course</b>	<b>At the end of the EAP course</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before coming to NZ: communicated easily in English</li> <li>• After arriving in NZ: English became difficult and communication became a source of anxiety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to participate in GW.</li> <li>• High grades best achieved individually NOT through GW. Group grade=low grade</li> <li>• Few opportunities for learning in GW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More willing to participate in GW</li> <li>• GW should be assessed but members assigned individual grades</li> <li>• Opportunities to learn through GW. Learned new skills from group members</li> </ul>

## **b) Emergent beliefs about peer review**

This was the first time that Ho-Sook had participated in PR and it was also the first time that she had given feedback in a written form to a peer, despite the relatively long time she had spent in the New Zealand educational system. The following three dominant themes emerged regarding Ho-Sook's beliefs about PR: benefits for the writer; benefits for the reader; and challenges for the reader.

### **Benefits for the writer**

Ho-Sook wrote about the benefits of PR for the writer from her own perspective.

#### *Learning from others*

In her second diary entry, Ho-Sook focused on the benefits that she had received as the writer in the PR. Ho-Sook held the strong belief that feedback was of great value to the development of her proficiency in English. Ho-Sook preferred receiving feedback to giving it even though she did not always completely agree with the feedback. She appreciated having someone with a different point of view read her writing.

### **Benefits for the reader**

In her second diary entry, Ho-Sook held strong beliefs about the learning opportunities that were available for her in the PR.

#### *Learning from others*

Ho-Sook also held the belief that giving feedback was another opportunity for self-learning: "During the process of making suggestions, I realised that I was making them not only for the writer but also for myself" [Ho-Sook/D2]. Through the experience of giving feedback to her classmate, Ho-Sook realised that she needed to develop her writing skills, especially in expanding her vocabulary and learning how to "deliver my thoughts and expressions without demeaning them" [Ho-Sook/D2].

### **Challenges for the reader**

Although Ho-Sook responded positively to the PR exercise, this new activity was not without its challenges.

#### *Difficulties in giving feedback*

Ho-Sook expressed feelings of anxiety when she was giving feedback on her peer's essay draft: "I was not too comfortable with it because I thought I might upset her by giving her the impression that I was trying to correct her" [HoSook/D2]. Clearly, Ho-Sook was anxious about taking on the role of

‘reviewer’ and it was evident that she took this new role seriously. She continued by explaining that she:

Struggled in choosing my words, trying not to sound too harsh. I knew that this feedback was more important than instant feelings and it

was for her benefit, yet I was reluctant to make any direct comment. As a result, when I gave her the suggestions, they turned out quite weak and diminished from their original meanings. I think they were not as honest as when I first came up with them. [Ho-Sook/D2]

Here Ho-Sook appeared to have some regret in how she had given feedback to her peer.

### **Summary of Ho-Sook’s emergent beliefs about peer review**

Table 16 shows that Ho-Sook focused on the benefits that she had received from the PR and that these benefits were related to feedback. The difficulty she had received during the PR was also related to feedback. This indicates the importance of feedback that Ho-Sook placed on the PR. It is also likely that her focus on feedback is related to achieving a high group grade which had been her primary concern with the GW. There was no indication of any change in her beliefs about PR.

**TABLE 16: HO-SOOK’S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Learning from others</i>
Benefits for the reader	<i>Learning from others</i>
Challenges for the reader	<i>Difficulties in giving feedback</i>

### **4.3.3 Case study three: Sahar**

Following a brief biography of Sahar, this section presents the results of Sahar’s diary entries and interview.

Sahar had lived in New Zealand for five years and had attended high school there. She was in her first year at university at the time the study was conducted. Although Sahar came from Afghanistan (she was born in Hawaii but left there with her family at the age of one) she had previously lived in Iraq for five years and in Pakistan for two years prior to going to New Zealand. Her mother tongue was Farsi and she also spoke Pashto, Persian, Hindi and Urdu. On the nine band assessment scale, Sahar gave herself the following rating: reading 7; writing 7; listening 8; speaking 8. To question 2 (*Have you any additional comments about your level?*), she wrote “My speaking level is 8 but that depends

on who I am speaking to”. Sahar thought that she was best at reading non-academic texts, for example, young adult novels and she found spelling and “putting my essay material together” to be the most difficult. To the final question (*What do you hope to learn most from this course*), Sahar wrote “essay writing, spelling, be more confident about my knowledge of English”.

**Sahar’s diary entries and interview results: “if the members of your group are not hard working then you are doomed too” [Sahar/D3]**

**a) Emergent beliefs about group work**

Four themes emerged from the analysis of Sahar’s diary entries: factors that contribute to successful group work; benefits for the learner; challenges for the learner; and the teachers’ roles in the university classroom.

**Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Similar to her peers, Sahar also held strong beliefs about the practical factors that contributed to successful GW.

***Logistics***

Sahar shared the same belief as many of her peers about the importance of arranging meetings to work on their group assignments. She wrote that the group members had arranged a meeting to discuss their presentation, but that none of the other group members were able to make it. She wrote about her frustration with these group members who gave very little notice that they could not attend the meeting [Sahar/D3].

***Guidelines for group work***

In her interview, Sahar spoke about her experience of GW in the tutorials. She said that when students were participating in GW activities during tutorials it became very noisy, making it difficult to concentrate [Sahar/I/T94]. Sahar also mentioned that other group members worked faster than she did and that she often felt left behind. She suggested that guidelines ought to be provided by the lecturer detailing what makes a successful group [Sahar/I/T118]. She held the strong belief that everyone within the group needed to understand that they were required to come to tutorials and meetings on time and that all group members should understand that they all have their own opinion [Sahar/I/T116].

**Benefits for the learner**

Sahar also held quite positive beliefs about her experience with GW both in the tutorials and outside the classroom.

### ***Benefits for others***

Sahar held the belief that her group members had benefitted from her participation in the group because she was able to help them with aspects of the work which they had found difficult. It was interesting that when Sahar considered the ways in which her group members had benefitted from her participation, she also took the opportunity to see in this a learning experience for herself. It appears that through helping and supporting her peers, Sahar was also developing her own problem-solving skills and developing the skills required for helping and supporting group members.

Group work encourages helping and supporting your peer but it also encourages in helping and supporting your own self. When doing group work you come across people who have a lot of difficulty in some areas that you didn't even think was hard. It is a good feeling being able to help them and maybe try and solve the problem for them. It also makes you realize that it is not too difficult or impossible to be done. It is kind of like talking to yourself. [Sahar/D6]

It also showed that Sahar was developing an awareness of the needs of others in the group. Sahar referred to the support that group members received from each other as well as the opportunity to exchange ideas. The following excerpt also showed that Sahar had the belief that group skills were needed and that students could develop these skills through participating in GW:

When you're working in a group, you get involved with other people and learn to work as a team and support each other. Also group presentation makes you exchange ideas and listen and give comments on individual presentations by your group members and possibly learn from their mistakes. [Sahar/D4]

According to Sahar, most of the group members that she had worked with were more proficient in English than she was. When the researcher asked how she would have felt if the other group members had been of a lower level, Sahar replied that she would have helped them. She explained that she felt it was her responsibility if they did not understand [Sahar/I/T59].

It was clear that Sahar was very aware of her role in the group. If she considered her ability to be higher than that of the other group members then she held the belief that she had a responsibility towards these students by helping them.

### ***Benefits for self***

Sahar held the belief that she had benefitted from working in a group and that her group had contributed to her learning both inside and outside the university classroom:

...with all the group tasks that we did together, I learned a lot of things from them that would be very useful for my university and outside university life. These tasks include the group presentation, summary writing and all the smaller tasks done in tutorials. [Sahar/D6]

Sahar was one of the few students in Cycle I who referred to the tutorial activities in her diary entries even though they were not directly part of the course assessment. Sahar was of the belief that GW was valuable and she was able to transfer what she had learned through GW to her life outside university.

### **Challenges for the learner**

Sahar also experienced conflict with GW both during the tutorials and outside the classroom.

#### ***Fear of group activities***

Like many of the students, Sahar experienced feelings of anxiety whilst giving the group presentation:

Giving a group presentation is very nerve racking and a scary thought...Although I have done a few presentations in the past at school, the nerves feeling and the “butterflies in the stomach” are always there no matter how many times I do a presentation. [Sahar/D3]

Sahar had previous experience in giving presentations, but she always found them a source of anxiety. She held the strong belief that she did not want to give another group presentation again at university because of the stress that it caused her and also because she thought the experience was embarrassing [Sahar/D4).

#### ***Comparisons with other students***

As mentioned earlier, Sahar held the belief that she had benefitted more from her group members than they had from her:

I would have hoped to contribute in the learning of others but I don't think I actually did. They mostly contributed in my learning of English. The group that I mostly worked with spoke and knew a lot more English than me, so I had no way of improving their English. [Sahar/D6]

This was a source of conflict for Sahar because she wanted her group members to benefit from her participation in the group. However, she held the belief that her peers were not able to learn from her since their level of English was higher than Sahar's. Sahar was very aware of her level of English and how it compared with that of her group members. This had, unfortunately, led to her belief that it was not possible for lower level students to contribute to the learning of others in the group.

### ***Challenges with group work outside the classroom***

Sahar experienced challenges with GW when participating in GW outside the classroom. The main difficulty was due to one student not contributing and being perceived as “lazy” [Sahar/D3].

### **Teachers’ role in the university classroom**

Sahar focused on the role of the teacher and did not appear to hold strong beliefs about the role of the student.

### ***Teacher as ‘expert’***

Although Sahar had the belief that it was useful to interact with other learners especially as they could give her many new ideas, she still held the belief that the tutor was the ‘expert’: “but the tutor they know more” [Sahar/I/T26]. She had the belief that the tutor was more important than the students because students were still learning the language and she could not be certain that they were correct:

I think the tutor is more important because if we are I think wrong about something, no, like, I write something is right, and the students are (inaudible) are thinking the same thing as me that it is right but it is wrong. [Sahar/I/T98]

### **Summary of Sahar’s emergent beliefs about group work**

Table 17 shows that Sahar also held the belief that it was the practical issues which were the most important factors which contributed to successful group work. Students needed to follow meeting etiquette and, as the table shows, should be given guidelines explaining how to participate in GW. These guidelines would be useful for learners participating in GW both in the tutorials and outside of tutorials. Sahar understood that team skills were needed and that these should be taught, but she also had the belief that students could learn these through participating in GW. She also demonstrated how she had learned team skills through helping and supporting her group mates when they found the work difficult. Sahar also understood that these group skills would be useful both in the university and outside university. Sahar had the belief that there were many benefits of GW including exchanging ideas and helping, supporting and encouraging group members. However, as shown in the table, Sahar had also experienced conflicts in GW. She did not want to give another group presentation because it was very stressful and her group had had a frustrating experience with a member who they considered to be lazy. Sahar was also very aware of how her level compared with her peers’ level. Although she gave examples of how she had helped her peers, she held the belief that she had not contributed to their learning since their English was more advanced than her own.

The table also shows that Sahar held the belief that the teacher’s role was that of the ‘expert’ whose feedback could be trusted over that of her peers’.

**TABLE 17: SAHAR’S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>
Factors that contribute to successful group work	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Guidelines for group work</i>	
Benefits for the learner	<i>Benefits for others</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	
Challenges for the learner	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	<i>Comparisons with other students</i>	<i>Challenges with GW outside the classroom</i>
Teachers’ role in the university classroom	<i>Teacher as ‘expert’</i>		

#### **b) Emergent beliefs about peer review**

The following four dominant themes emerged regarding Sahar’s beliefs about PR: benefits for the reader; challenges for the writer; challenges for the reader; and teachers’ role in PR.

##### **Benefits for the reader**

Sahar had enjoyed reading her peer’s essay draft and it was her belief that she had benefitted from the experience of being the reader.

##### ***Learning from others***

Sahar had the belief that she had benefitted from reading and giving feedback on her peer’s essay draft. She wrote that reading the draft had made her realise how disorganised her own essay was and that she needed to spend more time on the structure of her essay. Sahar went into quite a detailed account about how her partner had structured her essay, for example, the number of main points the essay included, the number of body paragraphs and how much evidence and support was included in each body paragraph. Sahar held the belief that reading her peer’s draft had given her ideas on how to improve her essay and that she had learned how to develop her writing.

##### **Challenges for the writer**

The main challenge for Sahar as the writer was her reluctance to have a peer read her essay before it was complete and consequently she did not want to participate in the PR.

### ***Fear of sharing***

Sahar had experienced PR previously in class and had usually responded negatively to it. In her earlier entry, Sahar had written that she felt a lack of confidence when her classmate had read her essay because it was still a draft. She was concerned that she had not included enough evidence to support her ideas and was worried that her introduction and conclusion were too short and were not strong enough. Sahar did not want a classmate or friend to read her essay draft because it was not the final version of the essay and it had not yet been given to the teacher for feedback. In a diary entry she wrote towards the end of the course, Sahar wrote that “I used to hate it when someone read my essay before I was completely finished and had handed it in” [Sahar/D7], but then she wrote about the change in this belief:

However after going through the process in tutorials I realised that it is actually a very good idea to have someone examine your work and comment on it before you hand it in. [Sahar/D7]

### **Challenges for the reader**

For Sahar, the main difficulty of being the reader was in giving feedback to her partner.

### ***Difficulties in giving feedback***

Sahar wrote about the difficulty of giving feedback on her peer’s essay. Although Sahar had identified strengths in her partner’s essay, she struggled when she came to write her comments addressing the weaknesses of the draft: “I felt a little guilty as I knew she had worked hard on her essay and shouldn’t really receive any negative remarks” [Sahar/D2]. She wrote that she would prefer to give feedback verbally since she did not want her partner to think she had been “unfair” or that she was more “knowledgeable than them” [Sahar/D2]. She concluded the entry by writing that she had decided to write what she had done well in the essay and then focus on one main weakness rather than address several weaknesses.

### **Teachers’ role in PR**

Sahar focused on the role of the teacher during PR and did not seem to hold strong belief about the role of the student.

### ***Teacher as ‘expert’***

Sahar also shared the belief that the teacher was the “professional” and she also referred to her peer as not being a “professional” although she did write that she had found some of her peer’s feedback helpful. Sahar also wrote that the PR had been useful because it had given her a “preview” and had

given her an idea about how the tutor would grade her essay and what they would like to see in their students' essays.

### Summary of Sahar's emergent beliefs about peer review

Table 18 shows that Sahar had the belief that the PR was beneficial for her from the perspective of being the reader and that she was able to learn from reading her peer's draft. It was evident that Sahar had read her peer's draft very carefully as she could still remember how her partner had structured her essay and Sahar had compared this with her own draft. Sahar understood by reading the draft that she needed to reorganise her own essay and so she had learned how to better develop her writing through being a reader in the PR. However, as Table 18 indicates, Sahar also experienced conflict during the exercise. She held the belief that her draft should not be seen by her peer because it was still only a draft and she was reluctant for a peer to give her feedback. Table 19 shows a change in this belief, however, and by the end of the course she held the belief that peer feedback could be useful before submitting the final draft to the teacher. The table also shows that Sahar experienced difficulties giving feedback. Sahar worried about how to give negative feedback and how not to be viewed unfavourably by her peer. The table also shows how Sahar held the belief that the teacher was the 'expert'. Sahar held the belief that the teacher was the professional and clearly, the student was not a professional.

**TABLE 18: SAHAR'S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>
Benefits for the reader	<i>Learning from others</i>
Challenges for the writer	<i>Fear of sharing</i>
Challenges for the reader	<i>Difficulties in giving feedback</i>
Teachers' role in PR	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>

**TABLE 19: SUMMARY OF SAHAR'S BELIEF CHANGES IN PEER REVIEW**

<b>Prior to the PR</b>	<b>During the PR</b>	<b>Following the PR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reluctant to participate in the PR – lack of confidence, draft not finished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>still reluctant to participate – same reasons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had the belief that PR was valuable</li> <li>saw the value in feedback from peer before submitting final draft</li> </ul>

#### **4.3.4 Case study four: Vega**

Following a brief biography of Vega, this section presents the results of Vega's diary entries and interview.

Vega was born in Iran and lived there for four years before moving to Sweden where she grew up. Vega had only been living in New Zealand since the beginning of the year that this study was conducted. She started learning English when she was ten years old and continued until she was in her second to last year in high school. The background questionnaire revealed that Farsi was her mother tongue, but it was only her third best spoken language and her best spoken language was actually Swedish. Vega considered English to be her second best spoken language. Vega rated herself seven in all four skills on the nine-band skills assessment scale. She wrote that she was best at writing poems in English and writing when she could choose her own topic. She also wrote that she found it difficult "to organise my thoughts and express myself in the very best way possible". She hoped to learn "how to write proper academic essays etc and to expand my vocabulary" in the EAP course.

In her final diary entry, Vega wrote about the high expectations she had always expected from herself – both academically and in her everyday life. She explained how she expected herself to speak "perfect" English because she was often told how proficient her English was. It was evident that Vega had very high expectations of her language learning and expected to achieve a very high level of English proficiency. She did, however, recognise that this may be unrealistic as she later admitted that it was a mistake to have such high expectations of oneself. She explained that it took her many years to realise that "'not best' does not equal 'bad'. There is a middle way. It's called 'good'. And pretty often 'good' is enough. Though, still today I am struggling with this problem" [Vega/D8].

Vega also wrote about the conflict of being proficient in more than one language and how, lately she had found it quite difficult to study, especially writing. She referred to "the mess of 'Swenglish'" in her mind. She found that having two languages was quite confusing, describing it as being almost like a battle between Swedish and English, constantly going on in her mind.

#### **Vega's diary entries and interview results "It proved a Nobel Prize winner wasn't necessary" [Vega/D2]**

##### **a) Emergent beliefs about group work**

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the diary and interview data: factors that contribute to successful group work; benefits for the learner; and challenges for the learner.

## **Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Similar to other participants, Vega also focused on the practical factors contributing to successful GW.

### ***Logistics***

Vega held the belief that time was the major factor that contributed to the success of the group. Firstly, she had the belief that for GW to be successful a sufficient amount of time needed to be allocated to complete the task and to schedule meetings outside the tutorials. Vega pointed out that the amount of time given to students to prepare their group presentation had not been adequate:

First of all, two weeks of preparation time for the group presentations were definitely not enough! We talked lots about the importance of preparation before the presentations. So I find it strange that we were given such short time to work on them. If that presentation's everything in your life perhaps two weeks is enough 'cause then you can work on it all day everyday. But for us, the students of LING 121 that wasn't the case. I personally didn't have many other assignments. But for some people, that was a hectic time. [Vega/D3]

Secondly, Vega also had the belief that meeting etiquette was important for the group's success. Groups needed to organise themselves so that they had enough time to complete the assignment, especially when they were meeting outside the tutorial and group members may not be able to attend a meeting:

When doing group work you should be working as a group. Meaning you must find times when everybody is free. That isn't always the easiest. And once you've actually made an appointment, something happens and somebody cannot make it. This could be irritating, not to mention stressing if a deadline's coming up soon. We must allow for emergencies (that's simply life!) and therefore some extra time. [Vega/D3]

Vega also held the belief that the more people in a group the more difficult it became to reach a decision. The higher the number of group members also reflected a more noticeable difference between the level of knowledge and ability amongst the group members:

...the more people in the group its more difficult to make a decision and also the more people you have the more level of knowledge or ability or stuff, so its more difficult to work together I mean its not impossible...but you have to learn all these skills... [Vega/I/T56]

Interestingly, although Vega held the belief that working in larger groups was a problem she was still aware that doing so required the acquisition of new skills and it was, therefore, a further opportunity

for learning. Vega also pointed out in her interview that a larger group also made it more difficult to arrange a time to meet group members outside the tutorial [Vega/I/T68].

### ***Group grade***

Vega also held the belief that the group grade assigned to students for the group assignments should be divided into a group grade and an individual grade. Vega had the belief that having only the group grade limited the success of the group assignment. For the group presentation, Vega wrote that:

Perhaps in some situations not the entire mark should be a group mark. For a group presentation the total mark could be divide into two; one half representing a common group mark ant the other being an individual mark for the particular person. In case the presentation would be worth 25% of the final mark then 15% (the larger part) could be marked according to what was achieved as a group and 10% (the smaller part) could be individually marked. [Vega/D5]

Vega also shared the belief with other students that the group grade was sometimes unfair because the grade each student received may not always be representative of students' individual ability or efforts but rather that of all of the group members combined [Vega/D3].

### **Benefits for the learner**

Although Vega did not hold the belief that GW was the most effective approach to language learning, she did see some value in GW.

### ***Benefits for others***

Vega had the belief that the other group members had benefitted from her involvement in the group: "...I'm very good at compromising and actually do my best to push other, less confident people, forward" [Vega/D4].

Vega also held the belief that although she was sometimes concerned that others in the group would think that she thought herself to be more advanced or more knowledgeable than her group members were, she still had the belief that she had contributed to others' GW experience:

Saying this, I have to add that of course I still try to be helpful as much as I can and I think I might have told my group members some stories which taught them something they did not know earlier. [Vega/D6]

### ***Benefits for self***

It was clear from Vega's diary entries that she took a serious approach to her language learning experience at university.

Vega wrote about the importance of interaction during GW in one of her later diary entries:

Group work means interacting with other people and interacting with other people means practicing speech, grammar, pronunciation, writing skills and so on. The more English you practice the more comfortable you will be and that will improve your language skills. I believe group work facilitates that improvement to some degree. [Vega/D6]

It was apparent that Vega regarded interaction with group members as an opportunity for her own language development and that she had the belief that it was important to practice speaking, pronunciation, writing and grammar and that this could be achieved through GW.

Vega did not fully support GW, but she did have the belief that it could be beneficial to her:

As I mentioned in my previous journal I do believe group works are useful, even though it may not be my preferred way of working. Simply because everyday we interact with other people and therefore one must learn, sooner or later, how to work together with these people in best possible way. [Vega/D6]

Vega also held the belief that GW was often used because it was easier to administrate:

You don't always have to work in a group. Its easier time-wise. I suppose its easier for the tutor to sort of deal with a group rather than all the individuals... [Vega/I/T62]

The interview revealed that, overall, Vega appeared to be happy with her group members, stating that they all "got along very well" and that they "all gave ideas so it just became better and better and better" [Vega/I/T34].

...well first of all, you have to have fun while doing something like that cause if you don't like what you're doing and if you don't, if you are standing there trying to present a topic to talk about something and you're bored then everybody else is going to be bored as well. But if you are involved and you are enthusiastic then other people get that as well. So, I wanted to have fun while doing it and also I wanted to learn something about the topic and I also wanted to improve my information skills and speaking in front of groups...Well it really wasn't much that I have to get a group, it's about improving myself. [Vega/I/T46]

This excerpt shows that Vega held the belief that GW was an opportunity for self-improvement.

### ***Benefits of the learner diary***

Vega had positive beliefs about the usefulness of the learner diaries and held the belief that they had practical benefits as well as providing the student with the opportunity to reflect on the assignments:

Well, it helped in a lot of different ways because it helped you to practice writing and also sort of speaking and assessing yourself in English and it makes you think about the assignments that you've done and other things that you have done and analysed that... [Vega/I/T42]

She also stated that "it wasn't a heavy burden and it was fun to write it" [Vega/I/T40].

### **Challenges for the learner**

Although Vega did hold the belief that GW could be useful, overall she favoured an individualistic approach to language learning.

### ***Fear of group activities***

Another source of anxiety for Vega was her perceived role in the group. Vega was a confident speaker of English and was not afraid to share her opinions within the group. However, she worried about what the other group members thought of her:

When working on a project with other people I have to bridle myself to make sure I don't take too much space, make too many decisions, don't talk too much or too loudly and that I don't push other people down (even though unintended). [Vega/D4]

In this diary entry, Vega was concerned that because she was a confident speaker her groupmates may have thought that she was too confident and dominated the group. In the following excerpt from her interview, Vega was still concerned about how she was perceived in the group. She held the belief that she should be able to communicate freely with group members regardless of whether they were a lower or higher level than herself. However, despite her relatively advanced English language skills, Vega expressed feelings of anxiety and had a fear that she would be perceived as being less intelligent than others.

Well I think our group worked well most times. It's just that I have this fear of being the dumbest person. ... I am not a person who couldn't express my opinion and just agreeing with people whether someone is supposed to be above or below me or the same level or whatever, I say what I want if I feel like it. If I don't well I don't talk. But yeah sometimes I am just yeah well what if I was talking too much now or what if I am too dumb and then what if I move too many positions well, that's what I am worried about, so, I don't know other people too. [Vega/I/T66]

### ***"Competition is the best"***

Vega had the strong belief that whilst GW was important, individual work also played an important role in the university classroom because she wanted to be able to show what she could

achieve on her own as well [Vega/D4]. Vega also stated that working in pairs could be easier than working in groups of more than two “simply because more people sometimes means more time consuming and harder decision making” [Vega/D5].

Although Vega was not really concerned about the level of the other students in her group she was aware that if the other students had been of a lower level then it would have been more difficult for her to express herself:

It would be more difficult for me if they were lower than me then I would feel that, I can't really express the way my thoughts the way I want to, and I can't talk the way I want to and so on. [Vega/I/T36]

Vega also wrote about the challenges of having to consider other group members' feelings when participating in GW. She had the strong belief that it would have been easier for her had the group presentation been an individual presentation rather than a group one:

That way I could work on it whenever I had time and I could make any decision I wanted without having to consider other people's opinions and feelings. [Vega/D3]

### **Summary of Vega's emergent beliefs about group work**

Table 20 shows that Vega shared some of the beliefs that her classmates had held regarding the key factors of successful GW. She held the belief that logistics was a key factor in the successful implementation of GW, especially outside the classroom, since more time was needed to prepare for group assignments. Vega was the only student in the study to be aware of the impact that a larger group had on student interaction since additional skills were needed to deal with students of different abilities or who were bringing different knowledge to the group which is more likely to occur in larger groups. Vega also held strong beliefs about the group grade. Vega was not completely against a group grade but had the following concerns: 1) group grades did not always accurately reflect individual student's actual ability or effort and 2) group grades did not give her the opportunity to demonstrate what she was capable of achieving individually. Vega suggested that the group grade should also include an individual grade.

The table also shows that Vega held both positive and negative beliefs about GW and shows that Vega was not concerned about the role of the teacher and feedback in GW. Vega was very aware of how she interacted with her group members and was concerned how she was perceived by her group mates. Vega was quite an advanced and confident speaker and wanted to participate actively and naturally in the group, but worried that this may be misinterpreted and that her group members would

perceive her negatively. Despite this concern, Vega did have the strong belief that GW was an opportunity for her to develop her own language skills further by interacting with her group members and she did not allow her concerns to be a barrier to the development of her own language and social skills. Whilst GW was not her preferred method of learning, she was aware of its value in her university life and in her future professional life. Throughout her diary entries, Vega focused on the GW experience predominantly from her own perspective. When considering whether she had contributed to her group members’ learning, she had been rather vague and had not provided any further details which suggests that she had not considered GW from her group mates’ point of view. Vega had also found the learner diary to be useful since it had provided an opportunity for her to develop her language skills and to reflect on her assignments. The findings appear to suggest that Vega perceived herself as an individual working in a group rather than as part of a group. There appeared to be no change in Vega’s beliefs about GW during the semester.

**TABLE 20: VEGA’S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>
Factors that contribute to successful group work	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Group grade</i>	
Benefits for the learner	<i>Benefits for others</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	<i>Benefits of the learner diary</i>
Challenges for the learner	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	<i>“Competition is best”</i>	

**b) Emergent beliefs about peer review**

The following three dominant themes emerged from the diary: benefits for the writer; challenges for the writer; and teachers’ role in PR.

**Benefits for the writer**

Vega was initially reluctant to participate in the PR because she did not see the value of the exercise. However, as the course progressed Vega began to recognise its benefits.

***Focus on feedback***

One of the reasons why Vega had been reluctant to participate in the PR was because she did not see the value in receiving feedback from her peer. However, after she had received the feedback from her partner, she realised that it was beneficial to know that a peer was able to understand what she had written. For Vega, the benefit of the PR was not so much about the feedback she had received, but about developing her confidence as a writer. In addition to this, she now held the belief

that the PR was useful because a fellow learner was capable of letting her know whether her writing was comprehensible or not. It would appear that her reference to a “Noble Prize winner” was an exaggeration of someone who is professionally qualified and an expert in their field:

I guess the peer review process wasn't that bad after all. In the end, having a classmate reading my draft was a good way to determine whether somebody who's somewhat equal to me could understand what I was trying to say. That's what I really needed to find out and it proved that a Nobel Prize winner wasn't necessary to tell me that. [Vega/D2]

Although Vega did not have much confidence in the ability of a peer to provide quality feedback, her diary entry revealed that she had read her peer's feedback and taken into consideration one of the suggestions:

One of the first suggestions that I received, was that perhaps I should state my thesis clearer in the introduction. I changed my writing a bit and felt more satisfied myself. The outcome must have been good because I didn't hear anymore about that. [Vega/D2]

Vega revised her thesis statement based on her peer's suggestion. It is not clear whether Vega was referring in this last sentence to any further PR of her essay or to feedback received from her tutor, however it is clear that she did not receive any further suggestions from anyone to improve her thesis statement.

In addition to knowing that her essay made sense and to receiving at least one useful suggestion in the PR, Vega also wrote about the importance of receiving positive feedback on her draft and the effect that had had on her:

Also I got positive feedback, mostly about the structure of my essay. That made me feel good, as some kind of proof that at least I could do something right in case the rest of my life failed. [Vega/D2]

This excerpt also indicates that Vega took her role as a student very seriously and it was important for her to know what she was doing well in her language learning journey.

### ***Learning from others***

Vega wrote that she gave effective feedback to her peers during the PR:

...I felt I gave my classmates good advice. They may not have been the best or most correct, but probably useful anyway. The more feedback you get the more things will be seen, from different perspectives. No matter who the contributor is. [Vega/D2]

It appears that Vega carefully considered the feedback she gave to her peers and held the belief that her feedback would have been useful. Although it is still evident that Vega did not consider peer feedback to be as effective or accurate as tutor feedback, she now had the belief that feedback from anyone was useful, if only to receive feedback from different viewpoints.

### **Challenges for the writer**

Vega's strongest belief regarding the negative aspect of PR focused on the issue of plagiarism.

#### ***Fear of sharing - plagiarism***

Vega was very concerned that PR could provide opportunities for the student reviewer to plagiarise from their peer's essay: "What if the person reading my material had the same essay topic and used my ideas as their own?" [Vega/D2]. Vega did not seem to be concerned with the issue of accidental plagiarism, but rather the problem of another student deliberately copying her work.

### **Teachers' role in PR**

Vega focused on her beliefs about the teacher's role in PR and did not hold strong beliefs about the role of the university student.

#### ***Teacher as 'expert'***

Vega held strong beliefs about the role of the teacher in giving feedback both prior to and following the PR. However, her beliefs about peer feedback were particularly strong before completing the PR:

"Why should my classmates read my essay? I wanted professional opinions; that's why I took this paper. How would my classmates be able to give me that?" [Vega/D2]

However after the PR, Vega recognised the value of peer feedback. She still held the strong belief that this type of feedback was inferior compared with that provided by the teacher, but she was more open-minded about peer feedback and held the belief that it was of some value.

### **Summary of Vega's emergent beliefs about peer review**

As can be seen from Table 21, Vega held very strong beliefs about feedback. The table shows that she considered peer feedback both from her own perspective as the writer and from the perspective of her peer receiving her feedback. The table also shows that she regarded the teacher as the 'expert' who could be relied on to give trustworthy feedback and that she was reluctant to give her essay to her partner in case her peer plagiarised some of her work. Table 22, however, illustrates the changes in Vega's beliefs about PR following the activity. Prior to the PR, Vega held very strong beliefs about the usefulness of peer feedback. Vega had very little confidence in her peers' ability to

provide effective and accurate feedback and pointed out that she had taken the course to receive professional feedback from her tutor. As is seen in this table, she did take the exercise seriously and although she had little confidence in peer feedback, it appeared that she carefully considered her feedback she would give to her partner. The table shows the change in Vega’s beliefs following the PR: she now held the belief that the PR had been useful because her peer was able to understand her writing. Vega had not previously considered that this would be one of the benefits of peer feedback as she had been focusing on the quality of the peer feedback, but knowing that her peer had been able to understand her essay had been a significant benefit for Vega. Finally, Table 22 shows that Vega changed her belief that only feedback from her tutor was significant to appreciating that all feedback was useful to some extent.

**TABLE 21: VEGA’S EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code 1</b>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Focus on feedback</i>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Focus on feedback</i>
Challenges for the writer	<i>Fear of sharing plagiarism</i>
Teachers’ role in PR	<i>Teacher as ‘expert’</i>

**TABLE 22: SUMMARY OF VEGA’S BELIEF CHANGES IN PEER REVIEW**

<b>Prior to the PR</b>	<b>During the PR</b>	<b>Following the PR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to participate in the PR</li> <li>• Held the belief that there was no value in peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thought carefully about the feedback she gave to her partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Held the belief that peer feedback could be useful.</li> <li>• Peer could understand her essay</li> <li>• Revised thesis statement according to peer’s advice</li> <li>• Held the belief that more feedback received, the better – from anyone</li> </ul>

**4.3.5 Summary of case studies**

The diary entries and interview data from the case study participants showed a range of strong beliefs regarding their GW and PR experience. In terms of GW, Haruko, Sahar, and Vega were all concerned mainly with the logistics of implementing GW, especially outside the classroom. Haruko and Sahar

were also concerned with meeting etiquette with Haruko holding particularly strong beliefs about the importance of having a leader and Sahar having the belief that students should receive some training in GW. Ho-Sook held very strong beliefs about the issue of a group grade which she regarded as being very unfair. Vega suggested that the group grade should also include an individual component. Haruko, Ho-Sook, and Sahar all held the belief that the teacher was the ‘expert’ and that students could learn more from the teacher than from their peers.

In terms of PR, all of the case study participants had taken the PR very seriously and they all held very strong beliefs regarding feedback. They all had found the feedback they had received to be useful, though Vega initially did not trust peer feedback. Haruko had worried about giving feedback to her peer whilst Sahar had worried about a peer reading her draft. This chapter has presented the findings from the analysis of the diary data and the case study interviews for the participants who took part in Cycle I of this study. These findings had a major impact on the pedagogical decisions made about training for Cycle II. The following section presents a discussion of the themes/codes which were influential in making changes to the training for Cycle II and the training that students received for GW and PR respectively.

#### **4.4 Reflection on Cycle I**

Reflection is a key element in an AR framework. This reflection is based on the findings of learners’ diary entries in Cycle I (in particular from the fifth diary in which students were requested to reflect on the tutorial activities and suggest ways in which they could be improved), as well as the researcher’s ideas for training based on the cooperative learning literature and research. The following section explains the types of training and activities that were used for the implementation of GW in Cycle II and also provides the learners’ suggestions for rules for improving GW activities. Next, the training students were given for the PR is explained.

##### ***Group work***

At the end of Cycle I, learners’ diary entries were analysed and the researcher began to revise the course, taking into consideration these learners’ beliefs about GW and how GW should be successfully implemented, in addition to the recommendations of researchers in the field of cooperative learning. This was also a time of reflection for the researcher who would need to become familiar with how to implement successful GW activities in Cycle II. To have successful cooperative learning groups, Johnson and Johnson (1999b) argue that it is necessary for teachers to know how to form cooperative groups, monitor the process and outcomes of the GW experience, and explain the expectations for the group as well as individual members. In Cycle I, students were given very few guidelines about group

formation: they were told that their groups needed to have a minimum of three members and a maximum of five members, they could only form groups with students who were enrolled in their tutorial group, and they were encouraged to form groups with students from a different cultural background.

The learners in Cycle I were a particularly insightful group of students who had brought with them to the EAP course strong beliefs about GW, and consequently the themes/codes which emerged from the analysis of their data led to many of the changes to Cycle II (see Table 8). The following section presents the training given to students and below each step of the training is an explanation of which themes/codes were influential in that particular part of the training.

A recurring theme in learners' diary entries in Cycle I was how GW could be successfully implemented (factors that contribute to successful group work)

The following presents an overview of the training learners received in Cycle II.

- 1) The importance of GW: a discussion of the value of GW – its use in the university classroom and its role in students' post-university lives.

Learners were aware of the importance of GW in the university classroom and they also had the foresight to look beyond their university lives and related their current experiences to their future careers. Learners' negative beliefs about GW in the classroom influenced the decision to include a discussion on the value of GW in the university classroom. Two codes, *competition is the best* and *I just don't get it* highlighted the need for students to understand the value of GW, which is of particular importance for those students who do not like GW. The codes, *challenges in groups with native speakers* and *teacher as 'expert'* were included in the discussion on how GW is used in the university classroom. Although not used directly in the discussion on the value of GW, they did influence the discussion on the widespread use of GW in university classrooms and how one of the expectations of GW is that students see the value in learning from their peers. The researcher had not expected these first-year students to regard their current university GW experience as an opportunity to prepare for their future careers, and since GW was becoming increasingly important in today's workplace, *learning for the "real world"*, was included in the discussion on the value of GW.

- 2) Sharing of GW experiences: a discussions of the benefits and drawbacks of GW and how the problems could be overcome.

For the discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of GW, the codes which emerged from the themes *benefits for the learner, teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom* and *challenges for the learner* were influential in guiding the conversation. The discussion, as would be expected, included the 'pros' and 'cons' of GW from the point of view of the learner and included *benefits for self* and the *fun and enjoyment* aspect of GW. This was important because for GW to be successful, it needs to be seen as beneficial for the learner him/herself and the social/affective benefits need to be made clear to students. However, other codes from these themes were more influential such as *learning from others* and *benefits for others*. *Learning from others* was particularly valuable as it introduced the learners to the concept of "positive interdependence" (Section 2.1.2) and the notion that there is value in learning from the contribution and ideas of fellow students. *Benefits for others* was also useful because it demonstrated to students the value of helping other learners in the group and the importance of contributing to their peers' learning. This is also in line with the principle of "positive interdependence": understanding the importance for each group member to contribute to the learning of others in the group. The theme *teachers' and students' roles in the university classroom* also had an impact on this discussion. The issue of *teacher as 'expert'* was discussed and students talked about the role of the teacher and the value of peer feedback. The code *students' role in the university classroom* was used as an opportunity for students to talk about the differences between being a student in New Zealand and in their home country.

The theme *challenges for the learner* provided an important opportunity to discuss some of the potential drawbacks of GW, such as *fear of group activities, fear of making mistakes, comparisons with other students* and students also discussed how these difficulties may be overcome. The discussion began with students talking about problems they had encountered in GW with native English speakers in their other papers, which was included because learners did refer to their group work experiences outside the EAP classroom which usually involved New Zealand and other native English speakers. A later discussion, influenced by the codes *challenges with group work outside the classroom* and *logistics*, took place as learners were preparing for their group presentation and highlighted the problems that students could experience when participating in GW outside the language classroom. These codes also provided the basis for a discussion regarding how such problems might be avoided.

### 3) Ice-breaker activities

A recurring theme throughout the diary entries was the importance of friendship and for students to get along well with each other. This highlighted the need to introduce ice breaker activities at the

beginning of the course and to ensure that all students knew each other since they would be working in different pairs/groups throughout the semester.

- 4) The five principles of cooperative learning: students were introduced to the concept of the five principles of cooperative learning, though the researcher decided not to introduce the students to the terminology.
  - a) Positive interdependence: students discussed the following characteristics aimed to encourage positive interdependence and looked at effective and ineffective explanations of the common purpose and clearly defined goals:
    - Common purpose: the teacher needs to make the purpose of the group assignment clear and students need to understand that this is the main objective of the group. Each member needs to understand the purpose and ensure that all group members understand the purpose. This common purpose leads to the development of group goals.
    - Clearly defined goals: students were taught how clear goals can help students maintain their focus. Students were given practice on how to develop group goals based on the purpose of the assignment.

Having clearly defined goals is a crucial element in achieving positive interdependence. Having a common purpose was added to the training because learners had strong beliefs regarding the issue of *purpose* as one of the *factors that contribute to successful group work*.

In addition to establishing a common purpose and mutual goals, positive interdependence can be enhanced by assigning roles to students. A class discussion on the usefulness of assigning roles to each member of the group, based on Johnson and Johnson's (2009) recommendations, took place as part of the GW training. Suggestions from Cycle I (Appendix C – Diary 5) regarding the assignment of roles were then given to the students and in small groups they were asked to discuss the comments and then discuss what types of roles could be useful for GW in an academic context. The issue of a group leader was also a recurring theme in the diary entries, especially for the code *organisation*. It was agreed that such roles may differ according to the type of group task students were participating in. For the purpose of our course, and based on students' opinions, it was decided that the following roles could be useful for various GW activities/assignments since their aim is to help the group function, that is, they are roles that help the group achieve its goals and maintain effective working relationships:

- Group Leader
- Explainer of Ideas or Procedures (shares one's ideas and opinions)
- Recorder (writes down the group's decisions and edit's the group's report)
- Encourager of Participation (ensures that all members contribute)
- Roles that help students formulate what they know and integrate it with what they are learning
- Researcher/Runner (gets materials for the group and communicates with the other learning groups and the teacher)
- Roles that help ferment students' thinking and enhance higher-level reasoning:
- Reality Tester (tests the validity of the group's work by comparing it with the instructions, available time, and common sense)

b) Individual accountability: “no hitchhiking”. Students identify their role and understand that each member is responsible for completing the assigned tasks and for assisting others to complete their assigned tasks.

A recurring theme was *factors that contribute to successful group work* and several of the codes under this theme – *organisation, purpose, group grade, participation, attitude, and communication* influenced the researcher's decision to emphasise these factors during training. However, there had been a lack of consensus amongst students regarding the group grade with a number of students advocating an individual component. The researcher decided to keep the group grade since students were given a tutorial participation grade which was an individual component of the final grade. It was explained to the students that the tutorial participation mark accounted for 20% of their final grade and that this grade consisted of each individual student's participation in the tutorials. The researcher/teacher believed that by teaching students the principles of cooperative learning and through their participation in cooperative activities, students would understand that each group member is responsible for completing their own task in addition to ensuring that their fellow group members achieve their goals. The codes under the theme *factors that contribute to successful group work* also influenced the following training on mutual interaction and small group skills.

c) Mutual interaction: in groups, students were given examples of successful groups and unsuccessful groups, for example, groups which took a “divide and conquer” approach. Students were taught the importance of promoting each other's success by sharing resources, and helping, supporting, and encouraging each other's efforts, in addition to strategies for developing these skills. Students were also provided with guidelines

regarding GW outside the classroom. Students exchanged phone numbers and discussed the most suitable ways for them to keep in touch (e-mail, text, and telephone calls), organising a meeting schedule and organising meetings.

d) Small group skills: students were taught group social skills such as communication skills (listening politely, disagreeing politely, clarifying what others have said, providing constructive feedback), and conflict resolution (finding solutions to a problem, exploring alternative positions).

e) Group processing: students completed the group evaluation exercise.

The group evaluation exercise was influenced by both a university seminar the researcher had attended, the principles of cooperative learning and learners' desire to become involved in the process of implementing GW.

5) Tutorial cooperative activities: several cooperative learning methods (Table 1) were included in tutorials to encourage learners to work together to learn, share ideas and help each other to learn (Slavin, 1995).

The researcher decided to include these activities because students had had strong beliefs about the importance for learners to work together to learn (*participation*), share ideas (*communication*), and help each other to learn (*benefits for others*)

It should be pointed out that time spent on training was limited and some of these activities were able to be completed in relatively short periods of time (10-15 minutes). Other activities such as communication skills were taught as part of the course components on academic speaking and listening.

Students had been requested in their fifth diary entry in Cycle I to give five rules of GW and this also provided an interesting insight into how students perceived GW and how GW could be improved. Some students commented that they liked the idea of writing their own rules and that this could be used as a group activity at the beginning of the semester. This also raised the issue of the importance of introducing GW early in the course and to continue with it throughout the semester. Amongst the most commonly cited rules were:

- Group work means equal work
- Groups need a leader to allocate roles and tasks and who is responsible for organising group, but is equal to all group members
- Roles and tasks need to be clearly defined within the group
- Group members should evaluate each other
- Members should play an active role within the group
- Group members should not already be close friends
- Group work should be organised so that students know the purpose and goals of each activity/assignment
- Group members need to feel that they are respected by other group members

### *Peer review*

Researchers have recommended various types of training for successful collaborative PR which were reviewed in the previous chapter (Section 2.1.3). In this study the students' training was based on the training guidelines designed by Berg (1999b). Due to time constraints, only six of her eleven recommended activities were followed (parts of some activities have been eliminated or adapted). The following presents six of Berg's (1999a) "considerations for preparing students to participate in peer response" (p. 238-239). An explanation of how these suggestions were implemented in the course follows each of the considerations.

#### *1. Comfortable classroom atmosphere and trust among students*

*A number of in-class get-to-know each other activities and out-of-class pair and group projects are conducted.*

At the beginning of Cycle II of this study, learners participated in several ice-breaker activities, as part of their training for GW, that were designed to establish a comfortable environment and to develop trust amongst group members. These activities were all conducted during the tutorials.

#### *2. The role of peer response in the writing process*

*Writing as a process is explained. Researchers' suggested benefits of having peers, as opposed to just teachers, respond to one's writing are discussed.*

The teacher/researcher explained to students that they would complete two drafts of their essay before submitting the third and final draft to their teacher. The first draft would be reviewed by their peer/s and the teacher/researcher would provide feedback on the second draft. As recommended by Berg (1999b), the teacher/researcher explained the purpose of PR and the benefits of peer feedback in

addition to teacher feedback to the students. In this study, students first completed this as a brainstorming activity and this led into a whole-class discussion.

### 3. *Class peer response to writing*

*Students respond as a class to an unknown ESL student's paragraph, noting the clear statement of the main idea and some good details, and also some unclarities and obvious flaws in organisation, support, unity, grammar, and spelling. We then discuss appropriate revisions, stressing the importance of revising for clarity of meaning and rhetorical-level aspects rather than cosmetic sentence-level errors.*

In this study, a paragraph written by an anonymous ESL student was given to students as a sample of writing which clearly had strengths and weaknesses. The exercise followed the guidelines recommended by Berg (1999b): A student read aloud the paragraph and any unfamiliar words were explained to them. The students were asked to identify the main idea and supporting details and this led to a general discussion of its flaws. Students then discussed in small groups what they liked and what they did not like about the paragraph. Following a discussion of these strengths and weaknesses, students then worked together in pairs to revise the paragraph. The difference between revising and editing were also discussed and students were encouraged to look for global errors rather than just local level errors.

### 4. *Appropriate vocabulary and expressions*

*Appropriateness of language in responding to someone's writing is addressed by comparing inappropriate comments, such as "your writing is really bad", with appropriate ones, such as "It would be great if you gave an example here". We also talk about and give examples of being specific and making clear to the author that the opinions expressed are not fact, but only one particular student's impression of a peer's writing.*

In this study, students were given examples of student feedback and worked together in groups to decide which comments were appropriate and which ones were not appropriate. Students were also required to discuss the reasons why/why not and to rewrite the inappropriate comments. We also looked at the importance of providing positive feedback and looked at examples of vague feedback and how to provide more specific feedback.

### 5. *The response sheet*

*The "peer response sheet for an essay" is introduced to the students as a tool designed to provide adequate time to consider the writing and help them focus on some important areas of the writing assignment.*

Students were provided with a "peer response sheet" in which they gave their written feedback, in addition to in-text comments and verbal feedback. The "peer response sheet" required student

reviewers to provide their feedback in terms of what they liked about their peer's essay, what they did not like about their essay and also required them to identify the thesis statement of the introduction paragraph and the topic sentences of the body paragraphs, the supporting ideas and the evidence given to support these ideas. Students were also required to comment further on the introduction paragraph (for example, whether it included some general, but interesting background to the topic) and to comment on whether the student had summarised the main points of the conclusion.

6. *Conversations among authors, responders, and the teacher*

*Within each group, we talk about their collaborative paragraph, the peer response, the revisions they made, and students are encouraged to ask questions and express concerns. A whole-class discussion about some of the difficulties in judging classmates' comments and students' lack of confidence in their revision abilities concludes the activity.*

In this study, this exercise was conducted along the lines of that in Step 3 above. Students worked together, this time to provide their feedback on an anonymous student's essay with the "peer response sheet".

The researcher believed that by incorporating the above recommendations into learners' training, students would have more positive beliefs about the PR experience and that this would be reflected in the learner diaries. The first recommendation above was concerned with creating a comfortable atmosphere and developing trust among students. This is important when introducing students to PR since giving feedback to a peer and receiving feedback from a peer can be a source of anxiety for students. Therefore, the diary prompt asked students how they *felt* about reading and responding to their peer's essay draft and how they *felt* about a peer reading and responding to their draft. The second recommendation aimed to inform students about the benefits and purpose of PR as part of the writing process. If learners understand the purpose and benefits of PR, they may respond more favourably to the PR. This was aligned with the first three questions of the second diary prompt. It also corresponds to the final question of the prompt regarding whether learners found the PR helpful. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth recommendations provided students with appropriate language and practice in doing PR in addition to discussing the difficulties learners may encounter such as their lack of ability in PR skills. These were also aligned to the diary prompt because if students have the appropriate language and have practiced PR they would be better informed to answer the questions regarding the kind of suggestions they received and whether they found these helpful or not. The final discussion regarding the difficulties of PR may also encourage students to feel more comfortable with PR and respond more favourably to the first three questions of the prompt.

The PR was only conducted once during the course and consequently the amount of time allocated to this training had to be limited. The researcher believed that the above guidelines were most significant because they would provide the support, knowledge and practice that the participants in Cycle I had not been given and which had often contributed to difficulties with PR. The researcher did not include the following five training guidelines (Berg, 1999a, p. 238-239):

1. *Professional writers using peer response*

*Students examine the “acknowledgments” in their textbook. Through a class discussion, they arrive at the conclusions that all authors, student as well as professional, ask others to read their work, and that doing so is an indication of a smart writer. Several other examples of professional writers acknowledging their “peer responders” in journals such as the TESOL Quarterly and Journal of Second Language Writing are also studied.*

There was no required textbook in this EAP course, however, students were encouraged to look at the “acknowledgments” in their other course textbooks and note the help the authors received in the writing of their book.

2. *The teacher using peer response*

*Several drafts of a conference proposal with comments from my colleagues are examined, focusing on the progression from the first to last draft and how peers’ comments helped improve the proposal.*

3. *Response to a collaborative writing project*

*As an activity to practice using the peer response sheet, students get into groups of two or three and respond to an academically-structured paragraph written by another group of students. Based on the response, the student groups revise their collaborative paragraphs.*

4. *Revision guidelines*

*With students’ revisions of collaborative paragraphs as a basis, students are introduced to what has been found in the literature to improve writing. We also discuss some good revision strategies and how peer response helps authors understand that there is sometimes a discrepancy between intended and perceived meaning.*

5. *Sample peer response sessions*

*As a last activity in the peer response training process, we saw two video examples of peer response. In terms of level of student engagement, language used, and topic discussed, one video clip is an example of an unsuccessful interaction and the other is part of a successful one.*

## **4. 5 Summary**

This chapter has shown that learners have very strong beliefs about GW/PR. The findings have shown that even without training, these first-year university students had strong beliefs about how GW/PR should be implemented and though students had not received training, they still benefitted from GW/PR. The difficulties they did experience indicated that learners would benefit from some training in these activities. Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated the value of learners' beliefs and how these beliefs can be influential in making significant changes to the implementation of GW/PR.

The following chapter presents the results of Cycle II: the learner diaries and the group evaluation exercise.

## **CHAPTER FIVE - RESULTS: CYCLE TWO**

### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the diary entries and group evaluation exercise which explored the beliefs of ESL learners about academic GW and PR in Cycle II. This chapter is divided into two sections: (1) emergent beliefs about group work (Section 5.1.) and (2) emergent beliefs about peer review (Section 5.2). The chapter concludes with a summary.

Cycle II, which was conducted two years following Cycle I, was conducted with a smaller sample of students and collected data from five diary entries. Background information about the participants was also collected from the background questionnaire and the first diary entry and was presented in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.2.5). The findings presented here explore the beliefs of learners after they had received some training in GW and PR described in the Reflection (Section 4.4).

### **5.1 Emergent beliefs about group work**

Three themes emerged from the diary entries and group evaluation exercise in Cycle II: factors that contribute to successful group work; benefits for the learner; and challenges for the learner. The findings from the diary entries and group evaluation exercise are presented together. Tables 23 and 24 which follow the presentation of these results show the themes and changes in learners' beliefs respectively. Table 25 provides learners' responses to the group evaluation exercise.

#### **5.1.1 Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Learners' beliefs about the factors that contribute to successful GW were explored in their diary entries and in the third and fourth part of the group evaluation exercise: "since we will be working as a group, here are my suggestions for effective meetings" and "here are the qualities that I believe I contribute to the group". Learners' responses to these can be seen in Table 25 under the headings "suggestions for effective meetings" and "qualities I believe I contribute to the group". The researcher focused on effective meetings since many of the factors for successful GW in Cycle I referred to the group meetings outside tutorials. The data presented here provide answers to the following main research question:

*What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

### ***Logistics***

Learners in Cycle II did not have such strong beliefs about *logistics* compared with participants in Cycle I and reported fewer difficulties with the practical issues of implementing GW compared with participants in Cycle I. *Logistics* had been a recurring pattern throughout Cycle I based on learners' negative experiences and their frustration with these practical issues. Finding solutions to these problems was critical for GW to be successful. However, when learners were asked directly for their suggestions for effective group meetings and the qualities that they believed they brought to the group in the group evaluation exercise earlier in the semester, practical issues were still regarded as very important for the success of the group. Table 25 illustrates the range of suggestions which can be summarised here as meeting etiquette (be punctual, be reliable, reply to texts and emails) and time management. What is interesting in this table is that it shows that some learners had already been applying some of the training they had received: "I schedule weekly progress check" [Aiguo/E/4] and "we have a timetable for our meeting every week" [Wei/E/3].

### ***Cooperation***

Learners shared the strong belief that cooperation was a necessary factor for successful GW. The following student refers to cooperation as an ethic: "I feel cooperation ethic and reliable is very important as a group" [Xia/D3]. The following student is very aware that successful GW consists of different factors, of which cooperation is one.

...these are under the condition that the whole team cooperates efficiently. Group work is like a big combination of everything. It requires individual analysis and research as well as group negotiation, discussion and cooperation. [Wei/D4]

Learners held the belief that if group members participated fully in all group activities then this would lead to a more relaxed comfortable study environment: "...to be active in a group or become a group leader may make the others less nerves and have a relaxed learning environment" [Yubi/D4]. Students shared the belief that students achieved better results if all group members were contributing equally to the group task and it was also considered important by students that group members showed the group that they were making an effort.

Learners were also of the belief that group members were more likely to cooperate and participate within the group once they became better acquainted with their group members. As learners became

more comfortable with each other, they would be more likely to share ideas. Learners shared the belief that cooperation is needed for successful GW because they are working together to achieve a common goal. The following learner also pointed out that if students are not helping and supporting each other then they are merely working individually within the group.

What I have got from my experience is that helping or supporting other member in a group would make the group to achieve the goal with more qualified and satisfied product than each member working individually in the group. [Chalong/D4]

Learners also shared the belief that it was the responsibility of every student to help each other both to achieve the goal of the group, which could either be the successful completion of a group task or a high grade for a group assignment, and to improve each other's own learning:

It seems that every individual in a group has the responsibility to help achieve the group goal as well as help each other group members to improve the ability of learning. [Yubi/D4]

Table 25 also shows learners' beliefs about the importance of cooperation as an important factor in successful group meetings in the group evaluation exercise. A common belief amongst participants was that working together as a group or team was important for successful meetings: "try to cooperate" [Ruolan/E/3]; "teamwork" [Xia/E/3] and [Ting/E/3]; "discuss as a group" [Ting/E/3]. One learner mentioned the importance of sharing the workload: "share experience and evenly do part of project" [E/Aiguo/3], whilst another pointed out that her group were already functioning effectively: "I think our groupmates are effective enough everyone work as a group" [E/Sawat/3]. Learners shared the belief of the following student: "Working in a group is all about commitment. If you do not prepare to commit your time and energy, you will not expect to get good marks" [Wencheng/D4].

### ***Respect***

Learners held the strong belief that respect for all group members was a very important factor contributing to successful GW:

In my idea I believe it is about the respects that we have on each other. For example, when it is time for other members to speak, I do keep silent and listen to them carefully without interrupting their speeches. When it is my turn to describe my idea, they would do the same thing as I did. [Chalong/D4]

## ***Communication***

Communication, which is necessary for participation, was also cited as an important factor leading to success in GW: “In my view point, the most important thing that influences group performance is the communication between members” [Feng/D4].

Learners held the belief that communication was an important factor for the success of GW. The responses in Table 25 show that learners valued communication during the meetings. Comments included: “bring out at least one point to discuss” [Chalong/E/3]; “everyone give ideas and talk as a group” [Kenjiro/E/3]; “communicate clearly – non-bias” [Ruolan/E/3]; “brainstorming” [Sara/E/3]; and “try to make everyone to talk” [Feng/E/3]. Whilst these comments refer specifically to discussing a particular task during a meeting, other comments were related to communication outside of the meetings or to general communication during a meeting: “reply txt, emails” [Wencheng/E/3]; “don’t be shy and talk about problems” [Ting/E/3]; and “we should talk to each other more often” [Jian/E/3].

### **5.1.2 Benefits for the learner**

Learners were very aware of the benefits of GW not only from their own perspective, but also from the perspective of their peers. Students were very aware of their own and their peers’ participation in the group and showed a willingness to learn from their peers. This theme provides answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners’ beliefs about the benefits of **group work** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners’ beliefs about participation during **group work**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners’ beliefs about their peers’ contribution to their learning during **group work**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners’ beliefs about their own contribution to their peers’ learning during **group work**? (SRQ3)*

### ***Learning from others***

Learners shared the belief that they were able to learn from each other in a variety of ways. Some learners held particularly strong beliefs that there was no individual student who dominated the group or contributed more to the group than others but rather all group members contributed: “I should say, we learned from each other rather than one of the members being dominated” [Ting/D3]. Some students held the belief that their group mates had contributed more to their learning:

As a group member, I do felt contributed to the learning of other group members, but I also felt that I learnt a lot from them at the same

time...we all got different experience and we are constantly learning from other people. [Wencheng/D4]

Some learners were more confident that they had contributed to the learning of others in the group:

I certainly do contribute to the learning of my other peers, because I have many opinions on everything, which I am also curious to know about other peer's opinions. [Ruolan/D4]

When students were working in a group in which they were the only member from a particular culture they often wrote about the positive effect they had on the group since their group members were exposed to another culture: "I was the only European in the group so, I think I have contributed to spread their knowledge as well as me with them" [Sara/D4].

Overall, learners shared the belief that they had learned from their group members and that this learning had been mutually beneficial for all group members. Learners had the belief that some of this learning had taken place through correcting each other's mistakes. Comments such as the following were quite typical in the diary entries and were indicative of students' willingness to correct each other's mistakes: "if we made mistakes when we were discussing, we corrected each other so we will not make that mistake next time" [Jian/D4].

Learners also wrote about specific skills that they had been able to improve upon including speaking, listening, and discussion skills, as well as increasing their confidence: "it is particularly useful for non-native English speakers, because we can improve our speaking and be more confident to speak through working in groups" [Jian/D3].

Learners held the belief that GW provided them with an opportunity to learn from other learners' mistakes:

When people in your group make a mistake, we could correct them, or if they do things really well, we could learn from them as well. Therefore, I think working with a group helps a lot. [Ting/D4]

Learners shared the belief that not only could they learn from the mistakes made by their peers, but they could also learn from the aspects that they did well. Students seemed to be conscious of the mistakes made, whether by themselves or by others and also of the aspects of GW they themselves or their group mates had been particularly successful in. These learners seemed to see an opportunity to either learn from these mistakes or to learn from what others had done well:

With working in the group I believe it certainly help me improve my English...you learnt from people different culture and different languages but you also learnt from their mistake as well. Apart from learning from other people I also pick up the good behavior of the way to speak English and more concern about grammar. [Sawat/D4]

Learners also held the belief that the opportunity to learn from students who came from different cultural backgrounds was particularly valuable:

One of the good things to work in group is to know new people, you learn different things from different cultures and listen different opinions and points of view. [Sara/D4]

Learners also shared the belief that GW gave them the opportunity to learn new ideas from their peers and how this could help clarify some aspects of a topic:

I also have a feeling that I listen as well as accept other members' ideas in my group more because in some aspects they also have what I don't have which is great for me to learn new interesting things. For example, sometimes they help to generate or clarify the idea of the topic that I do not understand for me in their own understanding which make it easier for me to understand the main point. Moreover, by discussing about other members' opinions might sometimes lead to a complete new idea that I have found useful for the work development. [Chalong/D4]

As was pointed out earlier, *learning from others* was not an issue raised as often as *mutually benefiting* from each other. Learners held the belief that learning from others was a mutually beneficial opportunity in which all students gained from learning from each other rather than it being a one-way process in which only they, themselves, benefit. However, it is still inevitable that learners will view learning from their own point of view and the comments made by the students quoted in this section demonstrated that students can be introspective and reflect on how they, as individuals, have benefitted from the GW experience. Furthermore, they show awareness that students see opportunities for themselves by learning from the mistakes of others as well as learning from students who have been successful in some way. In addition, they also value the opportunity to learn from students of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These learning opportunities can only be experienced by interacting with others, in this case through GW. As one student asserted: "The new ideas I gain from them I consider them as valuable as gold, because sometimes I myself cannot learn those things from books" [Chalong/D4]

### ***Benefits for others***

Learners shared the belief that they had contributed to the learning of others by having the opportunity to help their group members:

I feel that I contributed to the learning of other group members because I understand several languages and when others cannot understand some English words, I can explain it in another language when necessary. [Ruolan/D4]

Some learners also held the belief that they were able to help their group mates by putting them at ease and thereby encouraging them to actively participate in the group:

I am not afraid to help others in need, and help start conversation in a group as well as I can be humorous and make others comfortable so I contributed by making others converse more in the group and get to know each other. [Ruolan/D4]

Learners who had more prior experience with group presentations than their group members were able to use this experience to help others in their group:

As I have several group presentation experiences in the past, I gave my suggestion for effective group presentation. I also did some sentence reconstruction for some team members that have not stay in New Zealand for very long. [Feng/D4]

Although learners tended either to discuss the benefits of GW in terms of benefits for themselves or in terms of mutual benefits there were a number of comments which focused solely on benefits for others. Significantly, learners' beliefs regarding what they had contributed to the group were related to the sharing of the workload, with the majority of students having the belief that they had shared the workload: "I believe I share workload. I do my own bit" [Sawat/E/4]; "do my job well. Try my very best" [E/Ting/4]; "I believe do my own part and talk as a group member" [Kenjiro/E/4]; and "willing to help, give and take" [Ruolan/E/4]. Some learners referred to specific strengths they contributed to the group such as the contribution of ideas and research skills: "easy to find other information which we researched" [Seiji/E/4]; and "gather and collect information for our group presentations" [Xia/E/4].

Learners shared the belief that their contribution to the group had been in creating a friendlier, relaxed working atmosphere: "I believe I could cheer up my groupmates" [Ting/E/4]; "make the environment more friendly" [Chalong/E/4]; and "lovely and friendly smile" [Yubi/E/4]. One student commented that she "just want[s] to enjoy working together" [Ruolan/E/4].

Learners also focused on the help and support that they were able to offer each other:

Working in a group really helps and support my peers because we can teach each other what we already know and this is helpful with people at similar levels of language understanding. [Ruolan/D4]

### *Learning for the “real world”*

Learners seemed to focus on the importance of the skills they had learned through GW and the impact these would have on their future lives and careers. Learners shared the belief that GW was an opportunity to improve and further develop team work skills and that the ability to cooperate with colleagues in their future working lives was a necessary skill to have:

I think it is an effective exercise because after graduation, most of us will be more or less involved in the situation of cooperating with peers. Hence I believe that it is essential to train my group working skills. [Feng/D4]

Students also wrote about how GW could provide students with the opportunity to interact and discuss topics with group members which would also prove useful in their future working lives: “you can learn how to cooperate and communicate with other people, this is quite useful skills when later on we work in the society” [Jian/D4].

The following excerpt was typical of the beliefs held by learners that communication skills would be as important as technical skills in their future careers:

We should pay attention to our communication skills as well as our technical skills, so that when we get a job, we know how to work with others. [Wencheng/D4]

The following student also saw the advantages of GW as enabling her to develop skills that would be beneficial both in the workplace and also when participating in work-related events:

From this experience, we are well prepared for the working situation in the future, such as discussing with colleagues in a meeting or international conferences. [Ruolan/D4]

Learners also held the belief that having to do a group presentation as part of their course assessment was important for their future working lives:

It will be very useful for your future as well, to make expositions helps you to speak better in front of many people and this fact helps you either in a future job or in being more confident in your daily life. [Sara/D4]

Learners held the belief that the group presentation was beneficial since it provided them with the opportunity to develop their confidence, which would be worthwhile when speaking in public in the future.

Some learners also compared GW with individual work, but seemed to be more in favour of GW. The following student held the strong belief that students who did not participate in GW were at a disadvantage compared with students who have experience in GW:

Most importantly, it gives students a chance to work with others. It is obvious that ability of working in a team is essential for many positions in the society today, whereas for students who grow up working alone, it is hard for them to listen to other people. Group work enables us to understand different thinking of other people instead of thinking only ourselves are correct. [Feng/D4]

These students showed that they were aware of the significance GW has on their future lives, especially their working careers. They held the belief that GW was important in developing teamwork skills, learning to cooperate with others, and improving discussion and communication skills with some students being quite specific and referring to interaction between colleagues, developing skills that were not only necessary for the actual workplace but also in work related areas such as attendance at conferences as well as aiding in everyday life.

### ***Benefits for self***

Learners held strong beliefs about the benefits of GW for themselves. Learners had the belief that GW motivated them to work harder since they had to consider their group members and not just themselves:

If you work alone, you might not have the motivation to finish the work on time, but working as a team, you are not working for yourself anymore. Your behaviour will affect your team and the score that you are getting. So even though you are not very motivated at the time of the assignment, you still have to force yourself to turn up to meetings and work on your topics. Most of us are not motivated all day every day, but working in a group can let your group mates motivate you while you are down. To be honest, without the motivation of my group members, I wouldn't work as hard as I did. [Wencheng/D4]

Learners had the belief that GW motivated them to work harder since they did not want their group mates to think they were lazy:

When I worked in a group I don't want to be known as the lazy one so as a result I worked harder and participate in my group work. [Sawat/D4]

Another student pointed out that he was able to develop his English speaking skills because he had to participate within the group and could not be lazy:

I think working in a group give me more motivation to improve my English skills or to study English more. Such as I felt that because one is working in a group, it is not possible to slack off. [Jian/D4]

Learners also shared the belief that GW led to improved English skills and motivated them to speak more English:

...I also gained more motivation to improve English skill from my experience of group work. It is mainly because, to be able to communicate well with the other group members, I became more active to improve my English, especially spoken English. [Yubi/D4]

Overall, learners were also motivated to study more English as a result of the GW assignments. Some learners also saw the importance of seeing GW as a process of learning rather than merely focusing on the end result:

Also, the most important part of group learning is to enjoy the process of learning. The relaxed and enjoyable group study environment provided me more motivation study English. Learning English as a group is a good learning experience for me. [Yubi/D4]

Learners who had the belief that their level of English was weaker than their group mates were particularly motivated to improve their English skills. The following student also seemed to be aware of others in the group making mistakes as well as himself:

Through this group working experience, I realised that I have to improve my English. This is because when one member has problems about constructing one sentence or he/she's confused about the usage of one word, I was also unsure of giving a confident answer. It certainly motivates me to learn more. [Feng/D4]

Learners also wrote that GW stimulated their interest in learning English due to the opportunity of meeting new people:

...to work with a group has helped me to know more things about New Zealand, to realize the variety of people who is living here, to look at the country from the point of view of different people and cultures. [Sara/D4]

It was clear from the diary data that GW motivated students in one way or another. Some learners shared the belief that they were motivated to work harder due to either the added responsibility of

working with others or out of a desire not to appear lazy in front of their peers. Others were motivated to improve their English speaking skills since they were required to communicate in English with their group mates and other learners shared the belief that GW motivated them to become more interested in learning English due to the different people they were able to meet while participating in GW at university.

Another student was also aware that people in her group would be depending on her to contribute to the group and complete her assigned tasks: “it is good for you as well, to face with a responsibility and the fact that people depend on you and what you made” [Sara/D4]. This student returned to this train of thought at the end of her diary entry and reinforced the importance of the responsibility that she felt towards her group members. This was seen as a very positive experience for this student:

It also teaches you to be responsible because one part of the presentation depend on you, then, every people in the group depend to each other and that makes you feel special as an indispensable part in the group.  
[Sara/D4]

It appeared then that students took their role within the group seriously. Students enjoyed the opportunity of being leader in their group and shared the belief that they had further developed their leadership skills through assuming this role. Learners shared the belief of the following student who regarded being assigned the task of group leader as a responsibility:

...Furthermore, some other abilities can be improved. For example, organizing and distributing the work may improve our teamwork. If you are the group leader, you can also learn how to be a leader and how to organise the group... [Aiguo/D4]

Evidently students were aware of the responsibility that GW entailed. However, the learners held positive beliefs about this responsibility as it was something that they could benefit from. In some cases, students seemed to just like the feeling of responsibility, in other cases they seemed to gain satisfaction that they were an important part of the group with others depending on them whilst others appreciated the opportunity to develop skills associated with responsibility.

Students emphasised that they appreciated the support given to them by other group members. Some students seemed to lack confidence in their language ability but through the support of others they became more confident and able to fully participate in the group:

Fortunately, most of my group members were very nice and kind and they were pleased to help me. They would not laugh at me or look down on me. Therefore, I was not frightened to speak English. [Wei/D4]

Other learners also commented on the importance of support from other group members and gave this as a reason for preferring GW over individual work:

I would prefer to stay at front with my group members because they make me feel like I have someone is supporting me. Also during the practice, I can ask my group members to comment on my pronunciation, structures of the sentences and speed of my presentation. [Chalong/D4]

And: “Most importantly, I feel supported when I’m working with others. And I think that working together is more interesting than working alone” [Feng/D4]. Some students commented directly on how knowledge of the language is important when communicating with group members:

The opportunity to work in a group made me see the importance of the language and how people tried to communicate with the others to expose their ideas about the group work. [Sara/D4]

Learners also held strong beliefs that GW encouraged and improved their communication skills:

Working in a group is useful because it encourages communication and discussion which really helps to understand not only the English language but to understand each other. [Ruolan/D4]

Learners also appeared to be aware of the importance of language as well as the importance of communication in understanding group members from different language backgrounds. These learners held positive beliefs about the opportunity to communicate and discuss relevant issues that was offered by GW. They seemed to have an awareness of the importance of language and communication and how these skills could be improved through GW. Furthermore, some students saw the importance of such skills in communicating with students whose first language was not English.

Learners had strong beliefs about the value of working together. Students also mentioned that GW made it easier and faster for ideas to flow: “ideas come out fast” [Jian/E/1], “more ideas” [Wencheng/E/1], “sharing ideas” [Yubi/E/1], and “I can have more idea when I talk with other people” [Wei/E/1]. Some students referred to the process of working together in a group and the importance of decision making, discussion and participation within the group: “Can make a decision quick” [Jian/E/1], “exchange the information each other get know each other. It means that good experience for group work” [Seiji/E/1], and “all members participated in discussion and we are all willing to listen to others, respect others and give useful suggestions” [Feng/E/1].

Some learners focused on the end result of the group activity: “easier to get stuff done” [Wencheng/E/1] and “worked together on one thing, I felt a qualified product” [Chalong/E/1]. It was clear from these responses that students realised the importance of cooperation whether it was to improve the process of the GW experience or to aid in achieving an end product.

Communication was only seen by a minority of students as a reason they enjoyed their last group activity and their reasons included seeing it as a means to achieving their goals and completing the final product, facilitating the discussion of their group presentation and being interesting.

### ***Fun and enjoyment***

Learners shared the belief that GW could be fun and enjoyable despite much of the GW in the course counting towards students’ final grade for the paper (whether through a shared group grade or their individual tutorial participation grade), and the added pressure that this would bring to students. Friendship and the opportunity to make new friends were cited by some students as reasons for enjoying GW with some students writing that GW was an easy way of making new friends. Students worked together well enough to form friendships with their group mates with some developing strong friendships:

I would say yes to do this kind of activity again. The group presentation I participated in last time brought me three good friends in the class, so why not having more chances to make new friends? [Wei/D4]

Another student compared the GW experience to a journey – rather than looking at the end product as is often the case. This student enjoyed the process of working together as a team: “The presentation that we did is certainly a very interesting and unforgettable journey for me” [4/Wencheng]. It was clear that these learners found some form of enjoyment through participating in GW activities and assignments.

The previous section has focused on the aspect of *fun* and *enjoyment* from the individual learner’s point of view. This section focuses on learners’ beliefs about GW as being mutually beneficial as students supported each other which led to them becoming better acquainted with each other and eventually developing friendships. Learners held the belief that the support that group members gave to each other was a major contributing factor to developing new friendships:

We could also make some new friends by supporting each other and working as a group as we communicate more and have a chance to know each other better. [Ting/D4]

In the group evaluation exercise, students commented on the friendliness of the group and also that working in a group could be less stressful: “Everyone was friendly. I found when you work as a group work is less stressful. My group mates were responsible and fun to work with” [Sawat/E/1], “friendly. No stress. Relax” [Yubi/E/1], and “great and happy working experience – enjoyable” [Ruolan/E/1]. Students appeared to recognise the value of getting along with fellow group members and how this could lead to a more stress free experience.

### ***Shared Problems: “all in this together”***

Learners held the belief that since they were all non-native speakers of English, they all shared the same common problems:

It is easy to work with a group in which none of the members are native speaker of English. My group was composed by a Chinese girl, a Japanese boy, a Thai boy and me, from Spain. This fact makes you feel comfortable in the group because it looks like all of them have the same problems with the communication as you. The fact that all the people in my group has English as a second language also encourage me to interact more with them, somehow, it helps to think that everybody has the same problem as you with the communication. [Sara/D4]

It was interesting that learners wrote so much about the mutual benefits that could be gained from GW rather than just focusing on the benefits for themselves. Learners shared strong beliefs about the factors which make GW successful and the benefits of GW for students. However, as one student pointed out GW can “be both easy and difficult for us” [Jian/D3].

### ***Shared goals***

Some difficulties were able to be dealt with as they arose due to students’ ability to work well together as well as their awareness of the group goals:

Working with a group encouraged me to help and support my peers. Because we have same purpose and we keep an eye on each other’s work and overcome the difficulties together, then toward our final masterpiece. [Xia/D3]

Another student explained how difficulties involving reluctant group members were able to be resolved:

Even when group members are giving each other a hard time, we will still have to manage and work our way through completion and discipline each other. [Ruolan/D3]

When discussing uncooperative group members and the effect this could have on group grades, one particularly optimistic student revealed: “But to be optimistic, you can think it as a challenge of organizing the teamwork and learn a lesson from it” [Wei/D3].

### **5.1.3 Challenges for the learner**

This theme provides answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners’ beliefs about the disadvantages of **group work** when they **have** received targeted training?* (RQ2)

*What are learners’ beliefs about participation during **group work**?* (SRQ1)

*What are learners’ beliefs about their peers’ contribution to their learning during **group work**?* (SRQ2)

*What are learners’ beliefs about their own contribution to their peers’ learning during **group work**?* (SRQ3)

Learners tended to be both self-critical as well as critical of other group members. One student felt uncomfortable telling other group members what to do: “I did not like myself when I try to tell other members what to do, seems quite bossy?” [Feng/E/2] and another student did not like “... having enough knowledge to help my group” [Wencheng/E/2]. Sometimes criticism was aimed directly at particular students: “one particular member being lazy on work” [Aiguo/E/2]; “some people didn’t do their jobs/didn’t do as well as expected” [Chalong/E/2]; and “disagreement – Egoistic (some people do not like agreeing, for some reason. Sometimes people think they are too good for anyone {makes things hard to work with})” [Ruolan/E/2]. At times criticism was more general and neither directly aimed at themselves or others: “sometime we have too many idea and we can’t even decide which one we are going to use. We have to waste lot of time to solve it out” [Wei/E/2]; and “didn’t cooperate the main idea for the group presentation yet” [Xia/E/2]. Three students were very satisfied with their last experience with GW: “I don’t have anything I didn’t like about last meeting” [Kenjiro/E/2]; “...nothing really. I like my groupmates, they’re great!!! A+” [Ting/E/2] and one student recounted a prior problem with GW that was not encountered during her last GW experience: “when I have to rely on other people responsible, I found it rather stressful. Moreover, I got none of these from my groupmate” [Sawat/E/2].

#### ***Fear of group activities***

Learners sometimes had the belief that GW was still an activity to be feared. Sometimes learners were nervous at the beginning of an activity, as one student pointed out because “you just don’t know what type of people you will be working with” [Sawat/D3]. Despite these feelings of anxiety, however, she

later wrote in the same entry that she preferred giving group presentations to individual ones because of the support given by group members.

Some students wrote about how GW had helped them overcome anxious feelings: "...you have to face with your fears and shyness and this is a good way to do it" [Sara/D3]. Some students overcame feelings of anxiety through the help and support of their group mates. One student, who had never done a presentation before wrote: "I was so nervous; however my group members taught me the tricks and how to be a good speaker. I have learnt so much from them" [Sawat/D3].

Students sometimes wrote about how they had overcome difficulties by creating an opportunity for learning:

I may feel nervous about giving a group presentation in front of a class sometimes, as I am worried that my points are not clear enough or if it is not as good as the other group members. But to make it a fun experience, I would take it like an advantage to learn how to be more confident about myself and to be knowledgeable about the chosen topic.  
[Ruolan/D3]

This student was optimistic about GW as she held the belief that it was an opportunity to overcome her weaknesses.

Some learners had the belief that GW had built up their confidence. Sometimes this was due to being in groups with other NESB students whose level of English was similar to their own [Yubi/D3]. Students also realised that confidence can have an impact on language learning:

...working as a group can develop my confidence in English and also make me a good active participant. Because I think the confidence is vital for improving English skills. [Chalong/D2]

Learners' anxiety came from a variety of sources, sometimes through a lack of confidence in their own performance or even in the performance of others. Several students were anxious about speaking in public or communicating with their teammates. Despite this however several students wrote how their confidence levels had increased through doing GW, in particular the group presentation.

### ***Challenges with GW outside the classroom***

Learners shared the belief that there could sometimes be difficulties with GW. The following student found it difficult working with two group members who had never had a group presentation before:

...but Seiko and Meilin [pseudonyms] seemed that it was their first experience to do a group presentation, so sometimes they said

something wrong. However, I could not fix their all wrong because sometimes I was not that sure about their questions. [Seiji/D4]

Sometimes, students commented on difficulties within the group due to a conflict of personality amongst group members:

However, there are some negative aspects such as argument between group mates. We have different point of view towards things, to get an answer that everyone agrees is difficult. [Ting/D3]

In many cases, however, learners held the belief that difficulties provided opportunities to learn or to develop personal skills. One student said that it could be difficult working with others due to everyone having different opinions and, in addition, there may have been times when students may not have felt comfortable working with particular group members. However, she added that:

this helps us to understand and cooperate with each other, regardless of the disagreement with one another, but compromising helps each other to mature. [Ruolan/D3]

Another student found the group presentation in particular a difficult task:

It was so hard to do a group work this time. So I wish I do not have that kind of exercise again but, I really know it is necessary to study with mates with cooperation. Therefore, I might say, I do not want again, but if I have done that, I would feel that I spent great time for study. [Seiji/D3]

### ***Group grade***

Problems with group grades occurred when students had different goals regarding what they wanted to achieve. Students may not have necessarily been lazy, but they may have just had low expectations of what they wanted to achieve:

...there are different goals set by different group members. Someone might aim to get an A, but some of them might just want to pass. The effort levels where different group members contribute are different. Therefore, the final presentation might appear to be someone has done a splendid job, but someone just did OK, this will cause a too low mark for those people who aim to get A's. [Feng/D3]

It was clear, however, from reading this students' diary entry that this problem did not occur in this particular case. Another student commented:

Since the mark is given base on the performance of the group, it might not be fair to the people who actually did the work but still got low marks due to their lazy team mates. [Wencheng/D3]

Again, this was not a problem for this particular student or group as he commented earlier:

But sometimes you do get some people who don't want to participate or just aren't motivated at all. Although we didn't have this kind of problem in our team, from some of the presentations that we saw, straight away we can see some unprepared students that just aren't working hard enough. [Wencheng/D3]

Learners shared the belief that it was important to think ahead and so they were able to overcome potential difficulties before they even arose due to this forward thinking:

...we will be given a group grade. Thus, it is important to choose the group members that I think they are responsible and will attend group meetings regularly, on time, prepared, and in the mood for work. Also they are willing to and able to actively participate on the GW. Otherwise, the total grade will fall if working with the person who is not active. [Jian/D3]

This shows that learners clearly knew what kind of students to look for in potential group members and therefore some potential challenges were able to be avoided.

#### ***“I just don't get it”***

Although the consensus amongst learners was that GW was beneficial, one student still held negative beliefs about GW and did not appear to have understood the purpose of GW:

I would rather do individual presentation, because I can do everything on my own and I do not have to get together and discuss what I should do or what other group members should do. [Kenjiro/D3]

Unfortunately this student did not understand the value of discussing the group task with his group members. He held the belief that there was little value in group discussions and did not recognise the opportunities for learning or the benefits of communicating and interacting with students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This emphasised, to the researcher, the importance of continually monitoring students during group activities, checking that all students are aware of the purpose of the activity, reinforcing the goals of the GW and reflecting on the activity after it has been completed.

#### **5.1.4 Summary of learners' emergent beliefs about group work**

Table 23 shows that learners held very strong beliefs about their GW experience and, in particular, held a wide range of beliefs regarding the benefits of GW. Due to the smaller, more manageable size

of the sample employed in Cycle II (N=14), it was possible to conduct a cross analysis of all of the data collected. Table 24 summarises the results of the third and fourth diary entries and the group evaluation exercise for each individual student. The table provides a snapshot of the beliefs held by this group of students about GW. The cross analysis of results shows whether there is agreement or conflict between the different sources of data or whether a change in beliefs occurred. Overall, the table shows that the data provided quite consistent results between the two diary entries and the group evaluation exercise.

### **Factors that contribute to successful group work**

Table 23 shows that learners shared the belief that the most important factors needed for successful GW were *logistics, cooperation, respect, and communication*. Learners in Cycle II experienced fewer difficulties with the practical issues in GW and held stronger beliefs about the value of cooperation, respect, and communication. Learners showed a greater awareness of the importance for all students to participate and contribute to the group. Learners also held the belief that students needed to respect each other and help each other to achieve the group goals. Communication was also regarded as important and learners had the belief that a group leader was important.

### **Benefits for the learner**

Overall, learners held the belief that all group members had contributed to the group and that GW had been mutually beneficial. As can be seen from Table 23, learners shared a wide range of beliefs regarding GW. The table also shows that learners viewed these benefits from their peers' point of view in addition to their own. Learners in Cycle II also held the belief that they supported and encouraged their group members and that they had also been supported and encouraged by their group members. Learners also were more aware of how their group mates perceived them and they did not want others to think that they were lazy. Participants in this Cycle were also very aware that GW required group members to be responsible and there was a greater sense that learners were dependent on each other to achieve their goals. Learners also held the belief that their confidence developed as a result of the GW. Learners also held the belief that GW was important for their future careers.

### **Challenges for the learner**

Learners in Cycle II experienced fewer challenges, however, they still experienced some anxiety with GW, but showed that difficulties were often able to be overcome and in some cases, created an opportunity for learning. Table 23 shows that learners still experienced some fear of group activities and also some challenges meeting with their groups outside the classroom. It also shows that there were still some issues surrounding the inclusion of a group grade. There were mixed results regarding

the issue of a group grade, however, challenges did arise when group members held different expectations about the grade they wished to achieve. Some learners claimed that having a group grade made them plan ahead and carefully consider who they wanted to work with in their group.

It is apparent from Table 24 that the learners in Cycle II were generally very satisfied with their GW experience. The data in the table shows that the group evaluation exercise supports the findings of the diary entries. The table indicates that despite some challenges, such as anxiety, the learners were very aware of the benefits of GW. However, in terms of the group presentation there was still a small number of learners who would prefer to do an individual presentation.

## **5.2 Emergent beliefs about peer review**

Learners in Cycle II also held strong beliefs about the positive and negative aspects of their PR experience. In Cycle I, learners had worked in pairs to complete the PR whereas in Cycle II, students were given the choice of working together either in pairs or in small groups. The following four dominant themes emerged regarding learners' emergent beliefs about PR: benefits for the writer (Section 5.2.1); benefits for the reader (Section 5.2.2); challenges for the reader (Section 5.2.3); and teachers' and students' roles in peer review (Section 5.2.4).

### **5.2.1 Benefits for the writer**

The benefits of PR described under this theme are concerned with the benefits from the perspective of the student as the writer and provide answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits of **peer review** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during **peer review**? (SRQ3)*

**TABLE 23: LEARNERS' EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT GROUP WORK (CYCLE II)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>	<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Code 4</b>	<b>Code 5</b>	<b>Code 6</b>	<b>Code 7</b>
Factors that contribute to successful group work	<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Communication</i>			
Benefits for the learner	<i>Learning from others</i>	<i>Benefits for others</i>	<i>Learning for the "real world"</i>	<i>Benefits for self</i>	<i>Fun and enjoyment</i>	<i>Shared problems: "all in this together"</i>	<i>Shared goals</i>
Challenges for the learner	<i>Fear of group activities</i>	<i>Challenges with GW outside the classroom</i>	<i>Group grade</i>	<i>"I just don't get it"</i>			

**TABLE 24: SUMMARY OF LEARNERS' BELIEFS IN GROUP WORK (CYCLE II)**

<b>Student Pseudonym</b>	<b>Diary Entry 3</b>	<b>Diary Entry 4</b>	<b>Group Evaluation</b>
Aiguo	Students can learn from each other. Helping and supporting each other leads to achieving group goals quicker	Positive beliefs about GW, but would prefer individual presentation	Overall satisfaction with GW. One negative comment
Chalong	Very positive beliefs about GW. Overcame difficulties	A little anxious, but held the belief that supporting each other will help achieve the group goals	General satisfaction, but noted that some group members did not do their assigned tasks
Feng	Very positive belief about GW. No negative comments	Communication is most important. Experienced some difficulties, but would enjoy repeating group presentation again	Very satisfied with GW, but did not like himself for telling other group members what to do
Kenjiro	Very positive beliefs about GW and overcame difficulties	Recognised benefits of group presentation, but preferred individual presentations	Very satisfied with GW. No negative comments
Jian	Very positive beliefs about GW. No negative comments	Positive beliefs about GW. Some difficulties, but preferred group presentation to individual presentations	Overall satisfaction with GW. One negative comment
Ruolan	Very satisfied with GW. Pointed out potential difficulties	Helping and supporting each other very important. Students can learn from each other. Some difficulties, but can be overcome. Prefers group presentation to individual presentation	Enjoyed GW. Cited several benefits, but also three drawbacks

Sara	Very positive beliefs about GW. No negative comments	Very satisfied with GW. Some disadvantages, but would love to repeat group presentation	Overall satisfaction with GW. Only negative comment was agreeing time to meet
Sawat	Mainly very positive beliefs. One negative comment	Very happy with GW. Some negatives, but would love to do group presentation again	Very satisfied with GW. No negative comments
Seiji	Very positive beliefs about GW. Overcame difficulties. Did not like the idea of GW at first, but now enjoys it	Some difficulties with GW, despite recognising benefits. Would prefer individual presentation	Had good experience with GW, but appears to prefer individual work
Ting	Very positive beliefs about GW. No negative comments	Group members can correct each other. Some negative comments, but would love to repeat group presentation	Teammates cooperated well. Enjoyed GW. No negative comments
Wei	Very positive beliefs about GW	Very positive beliefs about GW. Cited some potential difficulties, but would like to repeat group presentation	Overall satisfaction, but noted some negative points
Wencheng	Very positive beliefs about GW. No negative comments	Learned from others. Some difficulties, but these could be overcome. Preferred group presentation to individual presentation	General satisfaction with GW. One negative comment
Xia	Very positive beliefs about GW. Overcame any difficulties	Enjoyed GW. Some difficulties, but would like to repeat group presentation	Overall satisfaction with GW
Yubi	Very positive beliefs about GW. No negative comments	Held the belief that each individual group member has the responsibility to achieve the group goal	Very satisfied with GW. No negative comments

**TABLE 25: LEARNERS' RESPONSES TO THE GROUP EVALUATION EXERCISE**

<b>Student Pseudonym</b>	<b>What I liked about my last experience with GW</b>	<b>What I did not like about my last experience with GW</b>	<b>Suggestions for effective meetings</b>	<b>Qualities I believe I contribute to the group</b>
Aiguo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very kind members</li> <li>• Nice people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>One particular members being lazy on work</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Share experience and evenly do part of project</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Time organised.</i></li> <li>• <i>I schedule weekly process check</i></li> </ul>
Chalong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Had chance to talk with non -native English speakers. New cultures</i></li> <li>• <i>Worked together on one thing. I felt a qualified product</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Some people didn't do their jobs</i></li> <li>• <i>We didn't do as well as we expected</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bring out at least one point to discuss (do something)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Make the environment more friendly</i></li> </ul>
Feng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No one's absent</i></li> <li>• <i>All have done the part that we decided to do in previous meeting</i></li> <li>• <i>All members participated in discussion</i></li> <li>• <i>We are all willing to listen to others, respect others and give useful suggestions</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I did not like myself when I try to tell other members what to do, seems quite bossy?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Set goals about what to achieve in the current meeting</i></li> <li>• <i>Specify what each member needs to do before next meeting</i></li> <li>• <i>Try to make everyone to talk</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I have several presentation experiences so I'm able to structure the meetings and presentation effectively</i></li> <li>• <i>Try to make everyone to expression their opinions during the meeting</i></li> </ul>
Jian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ideas come out so fast</i></li> <li>• <i>Improve our speaking skill</i></li> <li>• <i>Can make a decision quick</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We got too much ideas coming out</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Talk to each other often</i></li> </ul>	
Kenjiro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We can discuss about what we want to say</i></li> <li>• <i>We can argue about what we are going to say for our presentation</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I don't have anything I didn't like</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Everyone give ideas and talk as a group</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I believe I do my own part</i></li> <li>• <i>I talk as a group member</i></li> </ul>

Ruolan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation</li> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• Regular contact</li> <li>• Great and happy working experience &amp; enjoyable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disagreement</li> <li>• Egotistic (some people do not like agreeing for some reason)</li> <li>• Sometimes people think they are too good for anyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to enjoy rather than thinking it's just working</li> <li>• Communicate clearly – non bias</li> <li>• Try to cooperate and be happy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular contact</li> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• Willing to help, give and take</li> <li>• Just want to enjoy working together</li> </ul>
Sara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I've meet with people of different nationalities and different cultures</li> <li>• It has been a good experience for me</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To agree with the time of the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take in consideration the opinions of all the group</li> <li>• brainstorming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My nationality → other points of views about the issues</li> <li>• Punctuality</li> <li>• Some of my ideas</li> </ul>
Sawat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone was friendly</li> <li>• I found when you work as a group, work is less stressful</li> <li>• My group mates were responsible and fun to work with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I have to rely on other people responsible, I found it stressful. Moreover, I got none of those from my group mates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think our groupmates are effective enough. Everyone work as a group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe I share workload</li> <li>• I do my own bit</li> </ul>
Seiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange the information each other</li> <li>• Get know each other. It means that good experience for group work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not easy to meet with group because of other classes</li> <li>• Individual is easy to work better than group work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have to bring own opinion before group work</li> <li>• Be confidence with each other, not selfish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I listen to other group members' opinions</li> <li>• I find other information which I researched</li> </ul>
Ting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We all worked together, had a nice talk</li> <li>• Everyone got their information to discuss as a group</li> <li>• Cancelled the stuff that we don't need and talked about stuff that we need ☺</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing really. I like my groupmates. They're great!!! A+ ☺</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the materials</li> <li>• Don't be shy and talk about problems</li> <li>• Discuss as a "group"</li> <li>• Team work!!!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe I could cheer up my groupmates</li> <li>• Do my job well</li> <li>• Try my very best</li> </ul>

Wei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I learned how to work with my group mates</i></li> <li>• <i>I can have more idea when I talk with other people</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sometime we have too many idea and we can't even decide which one we are going to use. We have to waste a lot of time to solve it out</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We can have a timetable for our meeting every week or we can have our meeting in weekend. Because everyone is free normally</i></li> </ul>	
Wencheng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Easier to get difficult stuff done</i></li> <li>• <i>More ideas</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Not having enough knowledge to help my group</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reply to TXT, emails</i></li> <li>• <i>Don't be late. Think about others</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Share work</i></li> </ul>
Xia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Interesting to communicate with each other</i></li> <li>• <i>Our agreement is easy going</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Didn't cooperate on the main idea for the group presentation yet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Teamwork</i></li> <li>• <i>Enthusiasm</i></li> <li>• <i>Self-discipline</i></li> <li>• <i>Mutual understanding</i></li> <li>• <i>Reliable</i></li> <li>• <i>No one interrupt</i></li> <li>• <i>Be organised</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gather and collect information for our group presentation</i></li> <li>• <i>Arrange the time to make sure our meeting efficient</i></li> </ul>
Yubi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Friendly – no stress</i></li> <li>• <i>Relax and sharing ideas</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sometimes feel left out when meeting with all the people comes from English countries</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Everyone should prepare something before he come to meeting</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ideas</i></li> <li>• <i>Keep in contact</i></li> <li>• <i>Lovely and friendly smile 😊</i></li> </ul>

### ***Focus on feedback***

It was evident in the second diary entry that learners had thought carefully about the feedback they had given to their peer/s before completing the response sheet. In their diary entry, learners gave detailed descriptions regarding the type of feedback they had given on their peer/s draft. The feedback had tended to focus on global errors such as text coherence and cohesion, development of introduction, main and subordinate ideas, organisation and logical flow of ideas, and clear thesis statement and topic sentences. Student reviewers had also given advice on local errors, but to a lesser extent and these had been mainly focused on vocabulary and punctuation rather than on aspects of grammar.

It was clear that learners valued the feedback that they had received from their peer/s. They wrote that they had benefitted from receiving both “good” and “bad” feedback from their peer/s. Receiving compliments from their peer/s gave them confidence in the quality of their writing. The criticism they received helped learners to realise the weaknesses of their draft and what they needed to do to improve it. Furthermore, learners considered carefully which aspects of the peer feedback they were going to incorporate into their revised draft, with most students writing that they were going to incorporate some of their peer/s suggestions into their next draft.

Students also appreciated it when their draft was read by a peer who was considered to be a good writer as the following student pointed out:

I feel it was good for me to read my draft essay by her because she could give me good suggestions. Since a good writer for essay is able to become a good reader of it and then can give us good advice.  
[Kenjiro/D2]

This student was particularly insightful since he realised that a student who has the ability to write an effective essay also has the ability to be a skilled reader, and therefore a competent peer reviewer.

### **5.2.2 Benefits for the reader**

This theme explores the benefits of PR from the point of view of the student who was reading and providing feedback on their peer’s essay draft. The findings presented here provide answers to the following main research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners’ beliefs about the benefits of **peer review** when they **have** received targeted training?* (RQ2)

*What are learners’ beliefs about participation during **peer review**?* (SRQ1)

*What are learners' beliefs about their peers' contribution to their learning during peer review?*  
(SRQ2)

*What are learners' beliefs about their own contribution to their peers' learning during peer review?*  
(SRQ3)

### ***Desire to help others***

Learners genuinely wanted to help their peers and gained satisfaction from helping them. Students wrote about “how good it felt” to be able to provide feedback on their peers’ drafts. Students of all levels held the belief that they were able to contribute to their peers’ learning:

To begin with, I felt really happy about reading my peer’s essay draft. That is because I felt that I might be able to help him somehow. However, reasons for that may be that I am a better English speaker than he is. Furthermore, I have been taught how to write proper Academic writing before. As a result, I see that I would really benefit my peer with my own experience. On the other hand, that doesn’t mean that I am perfect. That only means that I might be aware of such knowledge that he is probably not aware of. [Seiji/D2]

### ***Learning from others***

Learners held the strong belief that they had benefitted from reading their peer/s draft. Learners especially appreciated reading a complete, well-written draft because they held the belief that they could expect to receive some useful and constructive feedback from that peer. Students wrote that reading their peers’ drafts was beneficial because it gave them the opportunity to read an essay written from a different perspective, to find mistakes and inappropriate language or style of writing. It also gave learners the opportunity to read well-written essays with coherent sentences and logically connected paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting sentences.

Students also enjoyed the opportunity to do the PR in groups since they were able to read more than one essay and therefore see different styles of writing. One student wrote that “all of my group mates had some beautiful sentence structure which I have never seen before” [Xia/D2]. Another student who had participated in a peer response group wrote that:

I think taking part in a group can be very helpful for the success in English. The reason is because participating as a group could encourage students to share and express their ideas. And after they get to know more about each other, they are likely to share more ideas because there are fewer barriers between them. The new ideas I gained from reading their essays I consider them as valuable as gold, because sometimes I myself can not learn those things from books. [Wencheng/D2]

This student clearly valued the social nature of the peer response group and benefitted from reading his peers' essays.

### **5.2.3 Challenges for the reader**

The findings from this theme provide answers to the following main research question and sub-research question:

*What are learners' beliefs about the disadvantages of **peer review** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about participation during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

#### ***Difficulties in giving feedback***

If students were writing about the challenges for the reader, they often did so from the point of view of their peer. They expressed their concern for their partner who was reading their draft and wrote frankly about the difficulties their partner would have had whilst reviewing their draft. Some students held the belief that their draft did not yet meet the required standard of an academic first-year essay and apologised in their diary entry for the trouble that this may have caused their peer: "I must apologise and say honestly, my draft was unorganised...so, really, it was very hard to read for my partner" [Feng/2].

The main difficulty that students had encountered in the PR from their own point of view had been with understanding their peers' drafts. This was usually due to either errors in language: "I had no idea what he was trying to say" [Kenjiro/D2], or to a lack of structure in the essay: "I tried to read the whole essay in spite of the fact that I couldn't figure out the main points of it" [Seiji/D2]. However, students who had been working in peer groups were often able to overcome these problems:

Sometimes I can't understand what they are trying to say in some sentences, however, my group peers can explain and help me to understand the meanings. [Sara/D2]

### **5.2.4 Teachers' and students' roles in peer review**

The findings presented here provide answers to the following research question and its sub-research questions:

*What are learners' beliefs about the roles of the student and teacher during **peer review** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as reviewer during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during peer review? (SRQ 2)*

### ***Teacher as 'expert'***

Learners held the belief that the teacher was the 'expert' and that they gave the most important, professional feedback. Students wrote comments such as "our English level is not as good as the teachers" [Ting/D2] and that peer feedback "is different from teacher, who are expert" [Yubi/D2].

### ***Students as developing reviewers***

Although learners clearly valued the feedback they received from their teacher and shared the belief that the teacher was the 'expert' who could be relied on to give accurate and more reliable feedback than students, they also held the belief that peer feedback was valuable and useful. Students accepted the PR and held the belief that it was an important part of the writing process. They shared the belief that PR was effective as an initial opportunity to receive feedback on their draft before they submitted the second draft to their teacher for their feedback. The excerpt from the following learner sums up the beliefs of the learners in Cycle II:

By the process of peer review, student can acquire different comments other from teacher as classmates probably will read your essay by different view. Although they cannot suggest as good as teacher do, those comments are also useful as a reference. Students can have a general idea about the mistakes and correct it before handing it in order to get a good marking from teacher. [Jian/D2]

Although learners held the belief that the feedback from their teacher was superior to that of their peer/s, they were also of the belief that learners could provide useful feedback which could help improve their draft before giving it to the teacher.

Learners also provided other examples of how students were taking their role as reviewer seriously and also being valued by their peers in their role as a reviewer:

So I seize the opportunity and started to explain to him the essay structure...I spent around a whole hour on teaching him the concepts and nothing but them. After finishing the tutorial...he said: you should be a teacher 😊. [Chalong/D2]

Other students also wrote about their surprise at how their peer/s had approached them following the PR requesting further advice on their drafts.

### 5.2.5 Summary of learners' emergent beliefs about peer review

Learners in Cycle II responded favourably to the PR. They took the exercise seriously and thought carefully about the feedback they gave as well as carefully considered the feedback they received and made decisions regarding which aspects of their peer/s feedback to incorporate into their second draft. Table 26 shows that learners held a range of beliefs regarding PR and it also shows that learners held strong beliefs about the actual feedback they gave and received. In comparison to Table 9 (Section 4.2.6) which illustrated learners' beliefs about PR in Cycle I, learners in Cycle II were more concerned about the PR from their peers' perspective. Learners were not concerned about being embarrassed by their peers' feedback nor were they concerned about the peer/s being unkind in their feedback.

**TABLE 26: LEARNERS' EMERGENT BELIEFS ABOUT PEER REVIEW (CYCLE II)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Code 1</b>	<b>Code 2</b>
Benefits for the writer	<i>Focus on feedback</i>	
Benefits for the reader	<i>Desire to help others</i>	<i>Learning from others</i>
Challenges for the reader	<i>Difficulties in giving feedback</i>	
Teachers' and students' roles in peer review	<i>Teacher as 'expert'</i>	<i>Students as developing reviewers</i>

### 5.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the results from the diary and group evaluation exercise data. The findings show that learners in Cycle II also held strong beliefs about GW/PR. Overall, learners were more positive about their GW/PR experience and emphasised cooperation, respect, and communication. Learners showed a greater concern for their group members/peers and were more likely to view these experiences from their peers' point of view. The following chapter provides the discussion of the results which were presented in the previous two chapters.

## CHAPTER SIX - DISCUSSION

### 6.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the key findings from Cycles I and II and is organised around the research questions regarding ESL learners' emergent beliefs about GW and PR which were first introduced in Chapter One. This chapter is divided into two main sections: learners' emergent beliefs about group work (Section 6.1) and learners' emergent beliefs about peer review (Section 6.2). Each section begins with a summary of the key findings which is then followed by an interpretation of those results in reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. A summary concludes this chapter (Section 6.3).

### 6.1 Learners' emergent beliefs about group work

This part of the discussion chapter is divided into three main sections: beliefs about the factors which make group work successful (Section 6.1.1), beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of group work (Section 6.1.2), and beliefs about the teachers' and students' role in group work (Section 6.1.3).

#### 6.1.1 Beliefs about the factors which make group work successful

*What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about implementing **group work** when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ1)*

Learners in Cycle I held very strong beliefs about the factors that make GW successful. These beliefs were based on learners' experience of GW in this EAP paper and in their other courses and also their prior experiences of GW. Consequently, students were very keen to offer advice, through their diary entries, to the researcher and tutors on how GW could be improved. Learners shared the following strong, insightful beliefs about implementing successful GW:

For group work to be successful, students need to:

- 1) Follow meeting etiquette and develop time management skills when working on group assignments outside the classroom
- 2) Have rules and, importantly, have a role in developing these rules
- 3) Be told the purpose of the GW activity or assignment and the purpose of the group grade
- 4) Cooperate with their group members
- 5) Ensure that everyone in the group contributes and knows that they are expected to do so

- 6) Have a positive attitude
- 7) Respect their group members
- 8) Understand the benefits of GW
- 9) Be responsible for their own work
- 10) Have effective communication skills in order to be able to resolve conflicts in the group, communicate their progress to the group and be able to share their ideas and thoughts

The learners in Cycle I had not received any instruction in GW and yet their beliefs about the factors that make GW successful share some characteristics of the five principles of cooperative learning posited by Johnson and Johnson (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988) which were discussed in the literature review (Section 2.1.2). The five principles of cooperative learning - positive interdependence, mutual interaction, individual accountability, social/teamwork skills, and group processing - are important elements in achieving successful implementation of GW. It became evident when students in Cycle I were sharing their beliefs about the factors needed to successfully implement GW that they were developing an awareness of positive interdependence. Some students already held this sense of positive interdependence as a belief they had brought with them to the EAP course. The above list of factors required for the successful implementation of GW, according to these learners, includes characteristics associated with positive interdependence: “cooperate with group members”, “ensure that everyone in the group contributes and knows that they are expected to do so” and “be responsible for one’s own learning”. Positive interdependence is synonymous with cooperation hence why it is at the “heart of cooperative learning” and is therefore essential to the success of any group (Johnson & Johnson, 2002a). Learners shared the belief that cooperation was an essential factor in ensuring the success of the group. It became evident in learners’ diary entries that groups had suffered through certain group members not contributing and so learners had strong beliefs about the importance of all members contributing to the effort of the group. They also held the belief that it was important for group members to understand that they were expected to contribute. Students also realised the importance of being responsible for their own work and for completing their part of the task on time. This corresponds to the first responsibility that students need to understand to ensure positive interdependence: the responsibility to learn the assigned material (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). However, this also shows that students were not aware of the second responsibility: the responsibility to ensure that all group members learn the assigned material. As Johnson and Johnson (2002a) argue, for positive interdependence to exist students must be promoting and facilitating each other’s efforts to learn.

In this study, mutual interaction took place when students were meeting face-to-face during GW in tutorials or outside the class, and also took place when students were texting, phoning, or e-mailing each other. This study was able to provide in-depth insights into how these learners participated in GW outside the language classroom through their diary entries. When students were given the group assignment they showed a willingness to meet up outside tutorials to decide how they were going to complete the task. However, lapses in meeting etiquette and a lack of time management skills amongst some students often left their group members feeling frustrated and anxious. Some learners wrote about dividing up the task during the first meeting and then completing their part of the task individually and away from their group members. This demonstrated that some groups had taken a “divide and conquer” approach to the task. However, even though learners in Cycle I had not received any training in GW, it did not appear that any of the groups were functioning as *pseudo learning groups* (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). Although a small number of learners were not interested in GW, learners did not hold the belief that they or their group mates had deliberately engaged in behaviour that would be detrimental to the group such as hiding information from each other, trying to misguide each other, distrusting each other or other behaviour which hinders the attainment of the goals or learning outcomes of GW which has been found in some research on students participating in untrained GW (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b).

Group members were also aware of the need to possess the necessary social or team skills required for successful GW. Learners shared the belief that for GW to be successful, students needed to have a positive attitude and respect their group members and they held the strong belief that effective communication skills were essential for successful GW. This was especially evident with good language learners such as the case study participants. In the case study, Sahar held the belief that students could learn and develop such skills through their participation in GW. However, she also had the belief that students needed to be taught these skills through guidelines provided by the tutor. This belief was also shared with Haruko who had written in her diary entries about the need for students to be taught how to speak and listen in a group. Learners also wanted to know what the benefits of GW were and Sahar had suggested that this should be included in the guidelines. Students had also expressed their concern that the purpose of the GW or group assignment was not always clear which could also be included in the training and then given more explicitly for each GW activity or assignment. Students wanted to know not only how to resolve conflicts in their group, but they also wanted to have the skills to be able to communicate their progress to their group members and to share their ideas and thoughts with the group. Without these skills, students experienced challenges within the group and frustration at not being able to deal with these problems. Haruko had held the

strong belief that a leader was essential to help resolve such challenges and keep group members focused on the task. Vega also held the strong belief that meeting etiquette was essential and that students need to have an understanding of the importance of organisation in the group. Vega also held the belief that for GW to be successful, the size of the group should be limited.

Group processing is considered by proponents of cooperative learning to be an essential component of successful GW and it was interesting that students in this study had requested to be more involved in the implementation of GW by developing their own group rules. Although they gave their suggestions individually in their diary entries, it does show that these students wanted the opportunity to be involved in deciding how GW should be implemented. By involving learners in the decision process regarding how GW should be implemented by having learners develop their own group rules, students are given the opportunity to reflect on their past experiences of GW and find ways to improve their performance in subsequent GW activities. This can be regarded as an aspect of group processing because it involves students in a type of self-evaluation since they formulated these rules based on their less successful experiences of GW. The inclusion of some form of group processing also leads to students having a stronger sense of positive interdependence.

In terms of individual accountability, learners had expressed a range of beliefs regarding how they should be assessed, although they were never directly asked about whether there should be some individual accountability included in the group grade. Many learners had held mixed beliefs about the group grade, however they had held very strong beliefs about the issue of social loafing. In the case study, Ho-Sook had held particularly strong beliefs about the unfairness of the group grade especially when a group member was not contributing to the efforts of the group. Students, however, had been awarded an individual grade for their participation in the tutorials which had included participation in GW activities. Sahar had been one of the very few students who had referred to the tutorial activities, albeit somewhat vaguely. However neither Sahar nor any of the students in either Cycle I or Cycle II had mentioned participation in tutorials and tutorial activities as being included in the final course grade and so it is not known for certain whether students approved of participation in tutorials as counting towards their final grade. It could be inferred that since students did not complain or criticise the participation component of their final grade that they accepted it and perhaps expected to be graded for their participation. This finding is consistent with Baker, Isaac, Li and Marshall's (2005) research which also suggested that Asian students expect to be rewarded for participating in class.

Some students had the belief that group grades were fair whilst others had the belief that they were unfair, though not without their benefits. Some students did not hold strong beliefs about the issue and consequently found it difficult to express an opinion. The case study participants also held mixed beliefs about the group grade. Haruko held quite positive beliefs about the group grade since it motivated students to participate. However, she held the belief that group assessment could be improved by adding a peer evaluation component to the group grade. This was in contrast to the beliefs held by Ho-Sook and Vega that the group grade was very unfair. Ho-Sook held the belief that students' grades for GW should be primarily individual with a small group grade component whilst Vega held the belief that the grade should be divided equally between a group grade and an individual grade - or perhaps even a greater weighting for the group mark and a smaller weighting for an individual grade.

The learners in Cycle II shared the belief that the following factors were needed for the successful implementation of GW:

- 1) Logistics
- 2) Cooperation
- 3) Respect
- 4) Communication

Unlike the learners in Cycle I whose beliefs about the factors that are needed for GW to be successful had been influenced by their prior experience of GW in the course when they had not received any training in GW, learners in Cycle II were writing about their beliefs about the factors which contribute to successful GW following some training in GW in addition to being influenced by prior learning experiences. The findings showed that learners had a stronger sense of positive interdependence and also held stronger beliefs about all five principles of cooperative learning.

Learners' stronger sense of positive interdependence was demonstrated in their belief that shared goals, commitment, and cooperation were major factors contributing to the success of GW. Learners were much more aware that everyone in their group was working toward a shared goal. Because they had this stronger awareness, learners held stronger beliefs about the importance of encouraging, helping and supporting their group members. Learners wrote more about having the same purpose and working together to complete their assignment. Learners spoke less about completing "my work" and wrote more about completing "our final assignment" or as one student wrote "our final masterpiece". Learners shared the belief that all of the group members were linked in a way that they could not complete the task successfully without the success of each group member. Students were

much more aware that they were in a “sink or swim together” situation and they therefore had a greater understanding of the importance for each group member to contribute to the learning of their group members which is in line with the principles of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999a, 1999b, 2002a, 2009; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). Learners held the belief that the success of the group was inextricably linked to the level of commitment they showed to the group. Learners held stronger beliefs about the importance of every group member participating and contributing to the group. The words “cooperate” and “cooperation” were used more frequently by learners in this group. What is most significant about these findings is that the learners showed a strong belief about the second responsibility which ensures positive interdependence: the responsibility to ensure that all group members learn the assigned material. The findings are in line with other research which has found that students have the belief that cooperation and responsibility are of great value in GW (Cao, 2013; Fushino, 2011; Ghaith, 2002).

Regarding mutual interaction, learners had more success in arranging out of class group meetings. Based on the training they received, groups set up timetables and established work schedules. Rather than writing about the issue of meeting etiquette, learners were more focused on the importance of having goals for each meeting and being prepared for the meeting. Therefore, as a consequence of their training, learners were much more concerned about the content of their meetings and the relationship between the meetings and the achievement of their mutual goals than the learners in Cycle I. The findings also indicated that students experienced less anxiety and stress which is expected in groups which involve mutual interaction. They also demonstrated a greater trust in their group members.

In terms of individual accountability, learners did not appear to be concerned with the issue of the group grade, although there was still some concern with two of the learners about lazy students in their group. It appears that learners were much more careful about choosing their group mates with many choosing students who would be responsible. Individual accountability was also evident with learners showing a greater responsibility for reporting their progress on a specific task to their group members. Similar to the beliefs of learners in Cycle I, there was also some variation amongst the beliefs of learners in Cycle II regarding the inclusion of the group grade for the assessment of the group presentation. However, overall learners in Cycle II held more positive beliefs about receiving a group grade. Furthermore, these participants appeared to accept that they were going to receive a group grade and were more likely to plan ahead and begin to think early in the course about the group members they would like to work with. These learners were also aware of the possible difficulties

which could arise from a group grade, but were not actually experienced by the majority of the group members. These findings support Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy's (1984) argument that learners' hold more positive beliefs about a single group grade after they have experienced cooperative learning.

Team skills were also considered to be important with these learners. Learners held the belief that having a good attitude was very important. Learners also gave specific examples of how they or their group members had shown a positive attitude using words such as "enthusiasm", "self-discipline", and "not selfish". Learners also shared the belief that communication was an important factor for successful GW and they also provided examples of how they had communicated effectively and stressed the importance of "negotiation" and "discussion" with the group. Learners were more likely to be active listeners, accept constructive criticism from their group members and resolve conflicts more successfully.

Learners in Cycle II had been directly involved in the group processing aspect of cooperative learning by participating in the group evaluation exercise following learners' most recent GW experience. Students were given the opportunity to communicate openly about their latest experience with GW with their group members.

### **6.1.2 Beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of group work**

*What are learners' beliefs about the **benefits** and **disadvantages** of group work when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the **benefits** and **disadvantages** of group work when they **have** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

Learners in both Cycles held strong beliefs about the aspects of GW they had or had not enjoyed and these are discussed here in terms of their social/affective, psychological, and academic benefits and disadvantages. The benefits for each category are presented first, followed by their disadvantages with the findings from both Cycles discussed together.

#### ***Social/affective benefits***

1. Having exposure to different cultures: learners in both Cycles enjoyed working in groups with students from different cultures
2. Making new friends: learners in both Cycles developed friendships with some of their group members

3. Developing social/team building skills: learners in both Cycles were aware of the need to possess social and team building skills. Learners in Cycle I developed some skills through participating in GW, whilst learners in Cycle II were explicitly taught these skills and were then able to practice and develop these skills.
4. Understanding the value of GW in their future lives: learners in both Cycles recognised the value of GW in their future, professional careers
5. Developing responsibility: learners in both Cycles developed a sense of responsibility towards their fellow group mates. Learners in Cycle II had a much greater sense of responsibility towards their group mates
6. Developing respect: learners in both Cycles developed respect for their group members

Overall, learners in both Cycles held some positive beliefs about the social and affective benefits of GW. It was clear that they enjoyed the social opportunities that GW provided and they welcomed the opportunity to work with other NESB learners and learn more about different cultures and make new friends. They were also aware that GW was different to individual work and that social and team building skills were needed for GW to be successful. Learners in Cycle I who did not have these skills had the opportunity to learn from others in their group who had an aptitude for GW and who already possessed some GW skills. However, although learners in Cycle I held the belief that they had developed team skills, the findings indicate that students still needed to be taught these skills. Students who held more negative beliefs about GW in Cycle I nevertheless held the belief that they were learning important social skills and team building skills which they would need in their post-university lives. Learners in both Cycles were also aware of the importance of GW in their future post-university lives. Students accepted that GW was going to be a significant aspect of their undergraduate careers and that it was important to learn the necessary team building and social skills as they would be required in their professional lives. Students also saw the value of working in multi-cultural groups which is another important experience, especially with the growing number of international students who are applying for residency upon graduation and seeking full-time employment in the New Zealand workforce (Section 1.2).

In addition to the above beliefs, learners in Cycle II also held the following beliefs about the social/affective benefits of GW:

1. Developing empathy: learners in Cycle II were more likely to view situations from their group members' perspectives

2. Learning about cooperation: learners in Cycle II placed a greater emphasis on the importance of cooperation. Learners were much more aware of the need to establish an atmosphere of cooperation as students work together to achieve a common goal (“sink or swim”/ “all in this together”). Learners in Cycle I often did not recognise the importance of cooperation and adopted a “divide and conquer” approach
3. Developing positive interdependence: learners in Cycle II developed a stronger sense of positive interdependence - an awareness amongst students that others in the group were depending on them and they therefore had a greater sense of responsibility
4. Criticising ideas and not people: learners in Cycle II were taught how to criticise ideas rather than their group members
5. Gaining enjoyment: learners in Cycle II had a more enjoyable experience of GW
6. Developing leadership skills: in Cycle II, group members benefitted from taking turns at being a leader in their group
7. Learning to support peers: learners in both Cycles tried to support their group members but learners in Cycle II had a stronger sense of feeling supported

A noticeable difference between the two groups of learners was the additional beliefs students held in regards to the social/affective benefits they experienced. This appears to indicate that through being introduced to a cooperative approach, which emphasises the social skills students need to develop, students developed a greater awareness of their own and their peers’ place in the group as well as developing the necessary social skills to function successfully within a group. This study found that learners who had received some training shared the belief that the GW had been beneficial because group members had cooperated together, ensured that each member contributed, respected each other and supported each other. This study’s findings confirm the research which has found that support is an essential aspect of students’ psychosocial development (Johnson & Johnson, 1999b). The study’s findings are also in agreement with those that have found that there is a strong relationship between cooperative learning and learners’ willingness to help each other and to the extent that they care about the learning of their peers (Ghaith, 2002). The study’s findings show that the participants enjoyed the process of working together in a group and were less focused on the end product. It also found that while some students already had these skills, many students still needed to be taught them. The results confirm that positive interdependence leads to cooperation amongst students (Dörnyei, 1997). In this study, groups in Cycle II who had a stronger sense of positive interdependence held the belief that cooperation was essential to successful GW and reported greater cooperation with their group mates compared with participants in Cycle I.

Groups in Cycle II benefitted more from having a group leader and by each member taking turns to be the leader. In Cycle II, learners held strong beliefs about the value of having a group leader whereas some of the difficulties experienced by group members in Cycle I had been related to the absence of a group leader. Learners had also been introduced to the idea of all students assuming a role in the group which was described in the Reflection (Section 4.4). However, learners did not refer to these roles in their diary entries and since much of the GW students wrote about took place outside of the class, it is not clear whether students did assign these roles. Some students had alluded to having taken on a particular role when asked about the qualities they believed they contributed to their group in the group evaluation exercise: “I schedule weekly process check” (Aiguo) and “arrange the time to make sure our meeting efficient” (Xia). It seems more likely, however, that these were tasks that students contributed rather than being officially responsible for that aspect of the GW.

This study has found that learners who received some training in cooperative approaches to GW held more positive beliefs than these learners who had not received training. The training was not extensive and it is evident that learners did not always include what they had learned in their training in their GW outside the class. However, the study has found that the language learners in Cycle II of this study experienced more social and affective benefits compared with those learners in Cycle I. The findings also show that learners in Cycle II were more likely to view their peers as resources, that is, sources of knowledge and information. This is in contrast to some research which has found that students are dependent on the teacher because they do not regard their peers as helpful resources (McDonough, 2004; Zhong, 2013).

### *Social/affective disadvantages*

1. Social loafing: learners in both Cycles experienced group members who did not contribute, but it was a greater concern to learners in Cycle I. Learners in Cycle II reported fewer incidents of social loafing and were more prepared to deal with this problem

The main social/affective disadvantage for students in Cycle I was the issue of social loafing where a group member did not participate and therefore contributed little to the group or to the learning of others. This finding supports previous research which has identified social loafing as a major disadvantage of GW (Buckenmyer, 2000; Clark & Baker, 2011). As Chapman and Arenson (1993) point out social loafing can be avoided if students understand basic team work skills. For students in Cycle II, social loafing did not emerge as a significant drawback of GW and this would appear to suggest that students did benefit from receiving some training in GW. It could also be suggested that

the five principles of cooperative learning which these students were informally introduced to helped to reduce the likelihood of social loafing amongst these students. Early research on social loafing focused on this issue in the workplace (Clark & Baker, 2011) and since one of the aims of GW at the tertiary level is to prepare students for their future careers, it would appear that greater emphasis should be placed on mitigating social loafing in university classrooms. Students also held the belief that GW was important for their future working lives, however no student directly made the connection between social loafing in classroom groups and social loafing in the workplace. This finding seems to be consistent with the views of Ricketts, Bruce, and Ewing (2008) who argue that students may not always be aware that GW skills such as cooperation and leadership skills can be transferred from the classroom to the workplace.

### *Psychological benefits*

1. Motivation to improve English: lower level learners in both Cycles were motivated to work towards attaining a higher level of English.
2. Confidence: learners in Cycle II developed greater confidence than their peers in Cycle I. They had more confidence speaking in public and had the confidence to help group members

Learners in both Cycles were motivated to improve their level of English through participating in GW. However, there were differences between the two groups in terms of their reasons for this motivation. Learners in Cycle I were motivated to improve their proficiency of English because they had made a comparison between their own level of English and that of their group members and consequently aspired to attain that higher level of language proficiency. Participants in Cycle II, however, were also motivated to develop their English skills because they had a greater sense of responsibility towards their group members and did not want to be perceived as being lazy. They did not wish their group members to think that their lower level of English was due to laziness or a lack of effort. Learners in Cycle II were also more confident than the participants in Cycle I. They had more confidence speaking in front of the class during the group presentation and had the confidence to help their group members regardless of their own and their group mates' level of English. The results of this study are consistent with much of the literature on cooperative learning which has found that cooperative learning often results in enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem amongst students (Dörnyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1999b, 2002b). These findings also support prior L2 research which has found that cooperation has a positive motivational effect in language classrooms which employ collaborative approaches to learning (Dörnyei, 1997).

### ***Psychological disadvantages***

1. Anxiety: participants in Cycle I experienced anxiety through comparison with group members. They also had a greater fear of making mistakes and a greater fear of GW activities. Participants in Cycle II also experienced some anxiety, but to a much lesser extent

The students in Cycle I were very much aware of the ability of their group mates and whether their peers were more proficient in English than they were. When learners held the belief that their English was less proficient than their peers' then this would lead to anxiety amongst these learners. Consequently, this would lead to students experiencing fear at the thought of participating in GW. Regardless of learners' level of English, learners' beliefs about making mistakes also caused them anxiety as they were very fearful of making mistakes. This was due to their perception of how they would be viewed by their peers, but also their awareness of how their mistakes could affect the rest of the group, which was particularly evident during the group presentation. However, it was evident that learners in Cycle II experienced less anxiety than those in Cycle I. These results confirm the association between cooperative GW and reduced levels of anxiety found in previous research (Dörnyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 2002b).

The following summarises and discusses learners' beliefs about the academic benefits and disadvantages of GW.

### ***Academic benefits***

1. Developing linguistic skills: in both Cycles, GW created learning opportunities in which lower level students could improve their language skills and develop oral communication skills
2. Helping each other: learners in both Cycles helped each other to complete tasks and assignments
3. Learning from each other: learners in both Cycles learned from their group members but in Cycle II, the contribution of learning was shared more equally amongst all students

In terms of the academic benefits experienced by learners, learners in both Cycles developed and improved their language skills through GW, though as mentioned earlier, their motivation for doing so varied between the two groups. One of the more interesting findings was in relation to the linguistic benefits both groups received. Learners shared the belief, in both Cycles, that working with group members who had higher English proficiency levels than they had would create learning opportunities in which lower level students could improve their oral communication skills. Not only was there an

opportunity for students to learn and develop their language skills, but also working with higher level students could motivate learners to work towards attaining a higher level of English since lower level students aspired to reach the level of proficiency that their peers had already achieved. A striking difference, however, between the two groups of students was the motivation which led to lower level students wishing to improve their English skills. The students in Cycle I were motivated to improve their English skills after comparing themselves with their NESB peers and realising that their peers' English skills were more advanced than theirs and so, naturally, they now had a strong incentive to reach the level of their peers. Students in Cycle II, however, were motivated to improve their English skills for the good of the group. They realised that if their English skills were lower than their peers then the group would not be as successful since they held the belief that it would be their lower English levels that would bring down the group. Furthermore, students in Cycle II held the belief that if their English were lower than their peers then they may be perceived as being lazy.

In addition to the linguistic benefits, learners also benefitted academically because learners in both Cycles showed a willingness to help each other to complete tasks and assignments and shared the belief that they had learned from their group members. However, as mentioned earlier, the difference between the learners in the two Cycles was that learners in Cycle I did not have the belief that it was their responsibility to make sure that each of the group members had completed their task. They were willing to help their group mates if their peer/s had asked them for help or if they could see that they were a weaker student who was having difficulty. However, learners in Cycle II showed a stronger sense of positive interdependence and therefore placed a greater value on cooperation. Since they were more aware that they "sink or swim" together, these learners were more likely to ensure that their group members had completed the task. Furthermore, the contribution to learning appeared to be more evenly distributed amongst group members with stronger learners also holding the belief that they had benefitted from GW. The findings of this study are in line with Campbell and Li's (2008) research which found that students had the belief that they could develop their linguistic skills through working with students who had higher levels of English.

### *Academic disadvantages*

1. Group grades: learners in Cycle I were more likely to regard the group grade as unfair
2. Purpose of the GW activity/assessment: learners in Cycle I complained that the purpose of the GW activity had not been made clear
3. Value of traditional, individualistic and competitive approaches to language learning: these approaches were still valuable

Learners in Cycle I held strong beliefs about the disadvantages of GW. As discussed earlier, they were more likely to regard the group grade as unfair. In addition, they were often confused about the purpose of the GW activity or assignment. There were times when students did not understand why they were required to complete an activity/assessment in groups rather than individually and did not understand whether it was the process of working together in groups or the final product which was important. Learners in Cycle I also held the belief that traditional, individualistic and competitive approaches to language learning were also important with some students preferring these traditional approaches. The findings from Cycle II also indicated that for some learners the traditional approaches were the preferred method of learning. Learners in Cycle II held more positive beliefs about the shared group grade, although they were still aware of its disadvantages. These learners accepted the inclusion of a group grade and carefully considered who they would like to work with in their group. The shared group grade motivated students to work together to achieve the group goals and ensure that everyone contributed. This was achieved by group members helping and supporting each other. Learners also suggested that there should be an individual component to GW to ensure fairness. These results further support the idea that group grades promote positive interdependence because students are aware that they “sink or swim together” (Johnson & Johnson, 2002b; Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991; Joliffe, 2007). Furthermore, the findings are in contrast to some research on GW in undergraduate business courses which found that students held the belief that group assignments were unfair (Campbell & Li, 2008).

### **6.1.3 Beliefs about the teachers’ and students’ role in group work**

*What are learners’ beliefs about the roles of the teacher and student during **group work** when they **have not** received targeted training? (RQ3)*

#### ***The role of the learner as “corrector” during group work***

1. Correction of mistakes: learners in Cycle I were more reluctant to correct each other’s mistakes than learners in Cycle II
2. Trust: learners in Cycle I were less likely to trust their group mates correcting their language errors

Learners in Cycle II were more willing than learners in Cycle I to correct each other’s mistakes and to accept having their mistakes corrected by their group members. Furthermore, learners in Cycle II shared the belief that they were learning from each other by having their mistakes corrected by their peers. This seems to indicate that the implementation of GW had been more successful in Cycle II

and that learners were more confident and more comfortable with corrections made by their peers compared with students in Cycle I. Interestingly, these students did not have the belief that they could learn the mistakes of their peers, but rather that this was an opportunity for them to learn from the mistakes of their peers.

Learners in Cycle I shared strong beliefs that they were less likely to trust feedback given by a peer. In terms of GW, feedback given in the form of correcting peers' written/oral mistakes (pronunciation, spelling, grammar etc.) would not be taken as seriously as if the teacher had made the corrections. These results seem to be consistent with other research which has found that learners have the belief that they learn the "correct" English from their teacher rather than from their peers (McDonough, 2004). Learners in Cycle II trusted their peers more and this supports the findings of Fushino (2011) who suggested that students developed trust in their peers through their participation in GW.

The findings of this study support those of Cotterall (1995) who argues that language learners hold strong beliefs about various aspects of their learning experience including beliefs about the teachers' and students' roles, feedback, and about language learning and that these beliefs affect how learners respond to classroom activities, especially when they are participating in unfamiliar activities.

### ***Changes in beliefs***

*Do learners' beliefs about **group work** change during a one-semester course when they **have not** received training? (RQ4)*

*Do learners' beliefs about **group work** change during a one-semester course when they **have** received training? (RQ4)*

The findings from this study found that whilst some learners' beliefs remained stable, other beliefs changed during the course of the semester. Learners in both Cycles developed confidence as they became more familiar with GW and this appears to have resulted in more positive beliefs about GW. Learners in Cycle II also developed more confidence and trust in their peers and as they became more familiar with cooperative approaches, they developed a stronger awareness that all group members were dependent on each other. Learners in Cycle II also experienced a change in beliefs regarding the group grade with more students supporting the idea of a shared grade. This supports the research of Johnson, Johnson, Holubec and Roy (1984) who argued that students have more positive perceptions after experiencing a shared group grade.

## **6.2 Learners' emergent beliefs about peer review**

This part of the discussion chapter is divided into two main sections: beliefs about the benefits and drawbacks of peer review (Section 6.2.1) and beliefs about teachers' and students' roles in peer review (Section 6.2.2).

### **6.2.1 Beliefs about the benefits and drawbacks of peer review**

*What are learners' beliefs about the benefits and disadvantages of **peer review** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ2)*

The following discussion presents learners' beliefs in terms of the social/affective, psychological and academic benefits and drawbacks of PR.

The greatest difference between the beliefs of learners who had received some training in PR and those who had not received any training was in terms of its social and affective benefits and disadvantages.

#### **Social/affective benefits and disadvantages**

1. Responsibility: participants in both Cycles felt a responsibility towards their peers and regarded it as their 'ethical duty' to help provide useful feedback.
2. Desire to help: participants in both Cycles had a genuine desire to help their peers.
3. Trust: participants in Cycle I developed more trust in their peers' feedback after they had completed the PR. Participants in Cycle II were more willing to trust their peers' feedback before they had participated in the PR.
4. Communication and collaboration skills: participants in Cycle II received more compliments on their writing from their peers. These learners appreciated these compliments and wrote about how this had developed their confidence in their writing. Learners in Cycle II also valued the criticism they received from their peer.
5. Participation: participants in Cycle I focused on the task of reading and reviewing their peer's draft and there was little participation between the peers. There was far greater participation amongst participants in Cycle II. Learners in peer groups also appreciated the opportunity to work with more than one peer.
6. Friendship: participants in Cycle I did not regard the PR as an opportunity to make friends or develop friendships. Participants in PR in Cycle II valued the opportunity to develop friendships.

7. Embarrassment and anxiety: participants in Cycle I worried that their peers would laugh at their writing and that this would cause them embarrassment. Participants in Cycle II did not express concern that their writing would be laughed at by their peer/s or that PR would be embarrassing for them. It was also evident in the way in which they worded their feedback so as not to cause offence. Furthermore, although learners did refer to some of their peers' writing being "inappropriate" no student wrote in their diary entries that they found some of their peers' mistakes "funny" or "ridiculous". Students in both Cycles developed a sense of audience, but students in Cycle II developed a greater awareness perhaps due to the increased oral interaction between peers and the training they had received.
8. Feedback: participants in Cycle I worried about how to present their feedback to their peer without offending them or hurting their feelings. Learners in Cycle II did not express this concern but were concerned for their peer who had to read a draft which was not of a very high standard. Learners in Cycle II benefitted from receiving oral feedback from their peer(s) in addition to written feedback.

This study found that learners regardless of whether they had received any training took the PR seriously, had a genuine desire to help their peer and, after some initial reluctance with some learners in Cycle I, willingly took part in the PR. Some of this reluctance stemmed from a lack of trust in the ability of their peer to provide reliable and accurate feedback. Learners in Cycle II had greater trust in their peers' ability. Learners in Cycle I focused on the task of reading and evaluating their peer's draft whereas for learners in Cycle II the PR was more of a social activity. Learners were still focused on the task, but there was much more communication and collaboration amongst the peers. The study has found, therefore, that when students have received some training in PR, there is a greater degree of participation amongst students and greater opportunities for students to develop friendships. Learners in Cycle I also felt threatened by the PR and did not trust their peers to act responsibly and consider their feelings when providing feedback. Learners in Cycle I worried that their peers would laugh at their mistakes and would embarrass them. Interestingly, this concern was not warranted because one of the serious concerns that learners in Cycle I had was how to provide feedback which did not cause offence or hurt to their peer. It was clear that participants in both Cycles were very aware of their partner's English proficiency level and provided feedback accordingly. In many cases, students carefully monitored the wording of their suggestions so that their partner understood the intention and meaning of their feedback. This supports the findings of previous research which found that students developed a perspective of audience through their experience in PR (Chaudron, 1984; Lockhart & Ng, 1993; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Zhu, 2001). This study has therefore provided an

insight into how students can worry unnecessarily about particular classroom activities. Learners in Cycle I wanted to participate in the PR, but worried about the potentially threatening aspect of it and were aware that they and their peers lacked the necessary skills. The study has therefore found that there is a need for students to receive some training in PR. Although learners in Cycle II were not asked directly about the training they had received, since they completed the same diary prompts, it would appear that learners benefitted from being taught the phrases used in providing feedback and from the activities which focused on the advantages and disadvantages of PR and the activities which emphasised the social aspect of PR. It is also evident that learners benefitted from the training in cooperative GW at the beginning of the EAP course.

The findings support the views of some researchers who suggest that when PR has been well planned it offers students opportunities for improved communication amongst students from different cultures and gives students a sense of group cohesion (Hansen & Liu, 2005). The results of this study are also consistent with previous research which found that PR encourages students to participate in the classroom activity (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006). There was never any evidence in this study that students wanted to participate in the PR because it provided them with an opportunity to laugh at their peers' writing which is in contrast with Liu and Chai's (2009) study which found that this was one of the reasons that students enjoyed PR. The present study found that PR is a very social activity and confirms previous research which has suggested that PR has positive effects on students' collaboration skills (Hyland, 2000; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). The results of this study are also consistent with previous research which suggests that students take PR seriously both from the perspective of the reader and the writer (Hu, 2005; Liu & Chai, 2009).

Much of the research has focused on students' unfavourable attitudes and views about PR (Nelson & Murphy, 1992). Some researchers have suggested that students' unfavourable view of PR is due to students feeling uncomfortable providing written feedback to their peer when they are sitting next to them. However, in this study learners in Cycle II held more positive beliefs about PR when they provided oral feedback in dyads and this was also seen in the peer response groups. Mutual interaction - students in a comfortable environment appreciated the interaction between peers. This would suggest that oral feedback in addition to written feedback provides a more comfortable environment for PR. Some researchers have also suggested that learners respond unfavourably to PR because they lack trust in their peers' ability to provide reliable feedback (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Rollinson, 2005; Zhao, 2011). These findings are in contrast to those of the present study which found that students' confidence in their peers' ability increased after they had experienced PR and, in

Cycle II, after they had received some training in PR. Some students, especially in Cycle I, however, lacked confidence in their own ability to provide useful and accurate feedback which is consistent with findings from other studies (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Zhao, 2011). From the perspective of the writer, students sometimes worried that their peer would not be able to understand their writing. Learners in Cycle II were more confident in providing feedback and this is in agreement with Zhao's (2011) suggestion that students' confidence should increase after receiving training in providing effective, useful feedback.

### **Academic benefits and disadvantages**

1. Exposure to peers' ideas: participants in both Cycles valued the exposure to different points of view and ideas.
2. Language skills: learners in both Cycles valued the opportunity to develop and practice their language skills, but only participants in Cycle II referred to the opportunity to discuss, argue, and debate the feedback.
3. Feedback: participants in Cycle I gave some details about the feedback they had given to their peer but were often vague and some participants complained of receiving poor quality feedback. Participants in Cycle II gave very detailed descriptions of the feedback they had given and received.
4. Revision: participants in both Cycles incorporated some of the revisions suggested by their peers into their second draft and held the belief that the PR had improved the quality of their second draft. Learners in Cycle II gave much more detail about which suggestions they had incorporated into their next draft.
5. "Freeloading": some participants in Cycle I regarded PR as an opportunity to copy ideas from their peer's draft and to save time by using the same sources that their partner had used. This did not appear to be a problem in Cycle II.
6. Plagiarism: participants in Cycle I were concerned that their peer may accidentally copy their ideas or sentences or that they may accidentally plagiarise their peer's work after they had read their peer's draft.

In terms of the academic benefits of PR, participants in both Cycles held the belief that they had benefitted academically from the PR. Learners in both Cycles valued the opportunity to read an essay from another perspective and to gain ideas from their peers. Learners in both Cycles were often surprised when they read their peers' draft because it had been written from a different perspective or had included new language. Learners wrote about how "refreshing" this was. Learners in both Cycles

were also able to practice and develop their language skills, but only learners in Cycle II wrote about how they had been able to discuss, debate and argue about the feedback with their peers. This indicates that the learners had benefitted from the training they had received on providing written and verbal feedback. It also suggests that PR is more successful when learners provide both written and verbal feedback. The learners in Cycle II who had worked together in small peer groups emphasised the benefit of being able to seek clarification and advice from their peers. Learners also wrote about how they had used the suggestions provided by their peer in their second draft with learners in Cycle II providing much more detail regarding the type of feedback received and which aspects they had included in their subsequent draft. Learners in Cycle II were more likely to accept the suggestions made by their peers. Participants in both Cycles focused on the global errors such as content and ideas rather than local errors with learners in Cycle II going into great detail about the types of errors they and their peer had made. Learners in Cycle II had also written in detail about the positive aspects of their peer's writing in terms of language, organisation and content. The level of detail provided by the learners in Cycle II would appear to suggest that learners were more engaged with the task.

The analysis of the data yielded some interesting results regarding learners' beliefs about the academic disadvantages of PR. Some learners in Cycle I had not understood the purpose of PR and had taken it as an opportunity to copy ideas from their peers to include in their own essay. Some students had also written that looking for sources was time consuming and that they were able to save time by using the same sources as their peer. This shows the importance for there to be some discussion of PR and for students to understand its purpose and it also indicates that this aspect of the training in PR had been successful. Learners in Cycle I also held the belief that plagiarism was a serious issue. They were concerned that they may inadvertently copy the ideas or language of their peer's draft and accidentally use them in their own draft. This was especially evident when students were writing about the same topic. Learners in Cycle I also shared the belief that their peer could accidentally plagiarise their ideas and it appears that they were justified in this belief with readers using their ideas and sources. Learners in Cycle II did regard their peers as resources but for different reasons. They were more likely to regard their peers as sources of knowledge who could add to their learning by giving them a fresh perspective on an issue rather than merely copying their ideas. For learners in Cycle II, the disadvantages were more practical: their peer had given an incomplete draft or they could not understand the language their peer had used. It is likely that learners in Cycle I had also had these experiences but these learners focused on the more important issues which affected them such as poor quality feedback, freeloading and plagiarism. This would also suggest that learners would benefit from further training in seeking clarification from their peer.

The findings of this study do not support some research which has argued that for Asian students in cross-cultural groups, PR is less effective (Nelson & Carson, 1998). In contrast to these studies, the current study provided no evidence that Asian students were disadvantaged by working with peers from European countries. The findings also do not support some previous studies which found that students were less likely to take their peers' suggestions into consideration when revising their drafts (Connor & Asenavage, 1994). The results of this study do support the findings of research which has found that students from Asian backgrounds are reluctant to criticise their peers (Liu & Chai, 2009; Nelson & Carson, 1998). However, after receiving some training learners in Cycle II appeared to be more willing to criticise their peers' work as can be seen in the level of detail they provided in their diary entry regarding the feedback they gave and their willingness to discuss and disagree about the feedback that should be given in the essay. Nelson and Carson (1998) argue that PR is not successful with Asian background students, however, PR was used successfully with students from Asian cultures especially with those in Cycle II.

These findings support much of the research which has found that students do see the value of PR and that they are able to gain some benefit from the experience (Hu, 2005; Liu & Chai, 2009; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994). Previous research has also found that students have the view that they have benefitted linguistically (Liu & Chai, 2009; Hu, 2005). Hu's AR study found that students had more favourable attitudes and reacted more positively to the PR and gave more quality feedback following the training they received. It also supports Zhao's (2011) research which found that diary data reveals rich data.

### **6.2.2 Beliefs about teachers' and students' roles in peer review**

*What are learners' beliefs about the **roles** of teachers and students during **peer review** when they **have/have not** received targeted training? (RQ3)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the student as "reviewer" during **peer review**? (SRQ1)*

*What are learners' beliefs about the role of the teacher regarding feedback during **peer review**? (SRQ2)*

Students in both Cycle I and II held strong beliefs about the roles of the teacher and students during PR.

1. Teacher as 'expert': participants in both Cycles regarded the teacher as the 'expert'. Learners in Cycle I held the belief that only the teacher could be relied upon to give reliable feedback

2. Student reviewer as 'novice': participants in Cycle I held the belief that students were not capable of providing such feedback. Participants in Cycle II had greater confidence in the ability of their peer as a reviewer
3. Student as 'reviewer': students in both Cycles took the role of reviewer seriously, carefully considering the feedback they gave to their peer

Learners in both Cycles held the belief that the teacher was the 'expert'- the qualified professional whose role it was to provide quality feedback that was reliable and accurate. Learners in both Cycles shared the belief that teacher feedback was more valuable than peer feedback and frequently referred to the teacher as "the expert" or "the professional" and to themselves as "the learner" or "the student". Although it was found that learners took their role as reviewer seriously, it appears that participants in Cycle I did not take the actual exercise seriously. When they were told that they were going to have their essay draft reviewed by a peer before submitting it to their tutor, there was an initial sense of relief amongst students because it would be a peer rather than their teacher who would be reading and giving feedback on their first draft. This suggests that they did not take the feedback from their peers as seriously as they did feedback from their teacher and also implies a reluctance amongst students to give a draft of their work rather than a polished final version to their teacher. Learners in Cycle II were more likely to hold the belief that their peers were capable of providing suggestions for improving their draft. This suggests that learners valued their peers' contributions to their learning and that they regarded them as legitimate resources and sources of information. Although participants in both Cycles had a greater preference for teacher feedback, learners in Cycle I held the belief that they and their peers were capable of providing useful feedback. Learners in Cycle II held the belief that peer feedback was especially useful if their reviewer were a proficient writer. They held the belief that PR was an important part of the writing process and that revising their draft based on peer feedback was important before submitting the draft to the teacher.

The results of this study support the findings of Zhang (1995) whose results indicated that students considered peer feedback to be secondary to teacher feedback. Although participants in Zhang's (1995) and the participants in the current study regarded teacher feedback as superior to peer feedback, they still saw the value of PR. In Yang et al.'s (2006) study, students suggested that they participate in PR first before submitting their draft to their teacher. These findings appear to be consistent with the results of this study: participants valued PR and held the belief that they had benefitted from the experience and regarded it as an important part of the writing process. The next step of the writing process being the more highly valued feedback from their teacher.

These results further support the idea that students prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback for the reasons that they hold the belief that the teacher is the professional who is qualified and experienced to give quality feedback which is accurate and useful (Nelson & Carson, 1998). However, it challenges the idea that the teacher is the only source of authority in the language classroom who can be relied upon to give appropriate feedback. The study supports the findings of other research which argues that students benefit from receiving different kinds of feedback (Caulk, 1994; Yang et al., 2006).

These results differ from many of the published studies which have found that students have negative views of PR (Murau, 1993; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Zhang, 1995). However, they are consistent with those that found that students have more favourable views if they have received training in PR (Liu & Chai, 2009). This study found, however, that students held more positive beliefs about PR even after receiving limited training in PR. The training was not extensive and did not include all of Berg's (1999b) recommendations. However, learners had also been exposed to some training in cooperative approaches to language learning at the time they completed the PR. It is also evident that although Berg's (1999b) training guidelines do not specifically refer to any of the five principles of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1988; Johnson & Johnson 1999b, 2002b), the elements of these five principles are inherent in the guidelines. The results of this study confirm the findings of Nelson and Murphy (1993) who found that cooperation was an important factor in the success of PR.

In addition to the findings discussed above which seek to answer the research questions, the results of the data analysis raises other important issues and highlights the complex nature of group dynamics. The beliefs of these learners show that there are other factors that are being considered and that the achievement of the assigned task is just one of these issues. Learners were very aware and conscious of how they were perceived in their groups by their peers. Issues of self-presentation were evident as learners negotiated their place in the group: some were concerned about whether they were contributing too much (and being labelled a "show-off") or not contributing enough (and being thought of as "lazy"), whilst Vega worried about not taking "too much space" in her group. Haruko regarded groups, including pairs, as "a smaller society" in which rules of socialisation need to be taught and practiced. Learners were also strongly in favour of having a group leader to organise group members and create a comfortable environment in which all members contributed equally. Many learners also wanted to become leaders of their group and they were aware that they would need to be taught the skills to become effective leaders.

The issue of self-presentation was also apparent in students' experiences of providing feedback during the PR. Learners were concerned about providing feedback on their peer's draft because they did not want to upset their partner. Learners were also concerned about how their peers would respond to their writing. Some students wrote that they would be embarrassed if their partner pointed out spelling or grammatical mistakes to them and students used words such as "ashamed", "anxious" and "bothered" to describe their upcoming PR.

### **6.3 Summary**

This chapter has found that first-year university students hold very strong beliefs about many aspects of their language learning experience. It has showed that learners, especially those from Asian countries, are not reticent, passive learners who are reluctant to interact with their peers, nor are they dependent on the teacher or reluctant to disagree with the teacher. The learners in both Cycles were willing to participate in GW/PR and generally, took their role as group member or peer reviewer seriously. They expressed a willingness to be part of the process of implementing GW and held strong beliefs regarding what makes GW successful. These learners were, overall, optimistic about their GW/PR and regarded them as opportunities for learning. The following chapter presents the main findings of this study and discusses the implications and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION

### 7.0 Overview

This thesis has explored ESL learners' emergent beliefs about academic GW and PR in an EAP course at a New Zealand university. The study has shown that first-year undergraduate NESB learners hold very strong beliefs about language learning upon entering university and whilst some of these beliefs remain stable, other new beliefs may emerge over the relatively short period of one semester.

GW/PR have become prominent features of university academic life reflecting their importance in the "real world", both in terms of the workplace and everyday social interactions. There has been extensive research conducted on GW and PR in the university classroom in the past few decades as well as an increasing number of studies on the experiences of international students studying at Western universities. Whilst some studies have examined university ESL learners' beliefs and views on GW and PR, there are still gaps in the literature. Fewer studies have explored the emergent beliefs of ESL students about the specific aspects of GW and PR explored in the current study and, furthermore, less research has been conducted on ESL learners' emergent beliefs about academic GW in the context of an EAP course at a New Zealand university. Likewise, there has been little such research on PR in a tertiary EAP course in New Zealand. Studies on GW/PR in an EAP context, and especially learners' beliefs about these approaches are of particular importance since the aim of a first-year EAP course is to prepare students for their academic life ahead and, indeed, their life beyond university.

AR was chosen as the methodological framework in which the study was designed due to the pedagogical nature of the research topic. Taking a qualitative approach, data were collected predominantly from learner diaries with the addition of case study interviews in Cycle I and a group evaluation exercise in Cycle II. A demographic questionnaire was also administered to both sets of students to provide background information on the participants.

This final chapter begins with a summary of the study's key findings (Section 7.1). This is followed by a discussion of the study's original contribution to current knowledge about ESL learners' beliefs about GW/PR (Section 7.2). The pedagogical implications of this study are then presented in terms of a) learner diaries, learners' beliefs, and the EAP course; b) assessment; c) group work and d) peer review (Section 7.3). The limitations of the study are then considered (Section 7.4) and suggestions for future research are provided (Section 7.5). This thesis concludes with a final reflection (Section 7.6).

## **7.1 Key findings**

EAP courses tend only to be offered to students in the first year of their undergraduate programme or in pre-university foundation programmes. The main aim, therefore, of an EAP course is to prepare students for a professional academic setting with a focus on teaching the four skills of academic speaking, listening, reading, and writing. With a greater emphasis in universities today on preparing students for their professional post academic careers, many EAP teachers are now incorporating GW/PR into their curriculum. This study has found that students in their first year at university hold very strong beliefs about their language learning experience. The study has shown that learners can make a significant contribution to improving the implementation of GW. It has shown that even without training or prior experience, some learners bring with them to the classroom important beliefs about the value of learning from the ideas and contributions of their peers. It has shown that first-year students take their role as student very seriously and, in general, are willing to participate in GW/PR. The study has also shown that students held strong beliefs about participating in group meetings outside the classroom. The study has found that students do benefit from some training in GW/PR, but that the training does not need to be extensive to have a positive impact on the implementation of GW/PR and learners' beliefs. In terms of PR, the study provided a deep insight into the beliefs of learners as both the writer and the reviewer. The study found that both the writer and reviewer benefitted from PR though in many cases it was the student reviewer who benefitted more from PR.

## **7.2 Original contribution to knowledge**

This study contributes to current knowledge on cooperative GW at the tertiary level by providing deep insights into language learners' beliefs both inside and outside the university classroom. It has filled a gap in the literature by focusing on learners' beliefs about cooperative group work in an EAP course at a New Zealand university. This study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

- It has highlighted the importance for teachers to have an understanding of the beliefs of their language students
- It has demonstrated how language learners' beliefs can be influential in making changes to a course
- It has added to the knowledge that language learners bring with them a complex set of beliefs regarding how courses should be implemented
- It has shown that first-year university students can have some insightful, valuable beliefs
- It has demonstrated the value of cooperative learning methods in a university EAP course

- It has added to the recent research on the emergent nature of beliefs
- It has demonstrated that while learners are focused on completing successfully the assigned task, there are other factors involved such as self-presentation which also needs to be taken into consideration when training students
- It has shown that training in GW/PR does not have to be extensive; changes can still be implemented successfully in a relatively short amount of time

### **7.3 Pedagogical implications**

A quote earlier in this thesis (Section 2.1.2) warned that GW is more than just putting students into small groups, giving them a task and telling them to cooperate (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). The rich data which emerged from this present study has confirmed this view. Consequently, this study has a number of implications for classroom practice in the area of learner diaries, learners' beliefs, EAP course design, assessment and training students in GW and PR.

#### ***Learner diaries, learner beliefs, and the EAP course***

The learner diary entries showed that students, regardless of whether or not they had received training, held strong beliefs about how GW/PR should be implemented. They shared beliefs regarding the benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR and indicated the changes in some of their beliefs. The learner diaries showed the importance for teachers to have an understanding of their learners' beliefs about classroom activities so that they can improve the learning experience of all students. The diary entries in this study also provided in-depth accounts of learners' beliefs outside the EAP classroom. Learners also offered insights into how the GW/PR activities can be better implemented. Their beliefs about the factors which contribute to successful GW/PR, benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR, the role of the teacher and student can be of great value for teachers wanting to make their classes more learner-centred and wanting to gain further insights into what their students think about GW/PR. The learner diaries also gave insights into the beliefs of those students who did not understand the value of GW/PR and preferred individual work. Understanding learners' beliefs is especially important in multi-cultural classrooms where learners and the teacher are from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, knowledge of learners' beliefs are of particular value and should be of interest to the many L2 teachers and researchers who, like the researcher in this study, have not themselves been L2 students. Learners' beliefs about their language learning experience provide an important dimension to teachers' and researchers' understanding of learners' behaviour and actions in the writing or EAP

classroom. Learners' beliefs about GW/PR affect how they respond to the activity and if learners are of the belief that there is little value in GW/PR then this causes challenges for the teacher wanting to implement GW/PR in their classroom. Knowledge of learners' beliefs may affect how the teacher implements these activities in the classroom. It may lead to teachers deciding to spend more or less time on particular activities, incorporating learners' beliefs into cooperative activities or improving future courses. Research has shown that teachers are often reluctant to incorporate cooperative learning into their classrooms due to a lack of both preparation time and a lack of time in the classroom (Baker & Clarke, 2009a). However, exploring learners' beliefs through learner diaries with prompts focused on course assessments and tutorial activities means that the teacher is aware of learners' beliefs as they are being experienced by the students and beliefs expressed in the diary entries can be used as class activities or included in student training. For example, when learners wrote their five rules for effective GW, this was able to be used as a cooperative activity in the following tutorial in which students brainstormed and discussed the pros and cons of the rules suggested by their classmates. This involved very little preparation for the teacher and was able to be completed within fifteen minutes. One result of this in Cycle I was that the majority of groups voted to have a group leader. The learner diary showed that an EAP course which is going to include cooperative learning techniques needs to be learner-centred.

### ***Assessment***

It is important that students perceive the distribution of grades as being fair. It is therefore recommended that the final course grade includes a tutorial participation grade since there appears to be an expectation on the part of students to receive a reward for the effort they made when participating in tutorials, including the GW activities. It is important that the tutorial participation grade is explicitly linked, in information provided to students during tutorials, with participation in GW. In this study, learners in both Cycles were awarded a shared group grade. In future courses, the researcher recommends that the group grade includes an individual grade. This is to reinforce the idea of individual accountability in the group and to ensure fairness. An individual grade would also meet the needs of those learners who do not respond well to GW and who prefer individual assessments.

### ***Training students in group work***

The study showed that students do benefit from training in cooperative learning which fosters the five principles of cooperative learning. By focusing on these principles learners can acquire important group skills which can teach students how to deal with challenges in the group and alert them to potential sources of valuable learning.

It is important for teachers to spend some time developing students' cooperative skills and teaching them strategies for being comfortable within a group. It is important, too, for students to receive some training in conflict resolution and time management.

The study also showed that students do learn from each other and that it is important for teachers to include in their curriculum activities which enable students to interact and work collaboratively together. Students can exchange ideas, knowledge, and skills and stronger students can help weaker students. It is essential that students do not view each other as competitors, but rather as resources from whom they can learn.

The diary entries can also be used as a resource for training students in cooperative GW/PR. Anonymous excerpts, with the permission of the writer, can be used to guide discussions on the benefits and drawbacks of GW/PR. Teachers and students need to be aware that different students hold different beliefs and this can affect student behaviour in groups. It cannot be assumed that students bring with them the same attitudes, motivation and goals to the group.

It is crucial that students understand the purpose of cooperation and the purpose of each cooperative activity and assessment. It is important for students to understand that in a cooperative approach, the emphasis is often on the process rather than the final result.

The study also showed that students benefit when they can choose their group members rather than be assigned to groups. However, it is also important that students choose group leaders to keep groups focused on the task and assist in conflict resolution.

### ***Training students in peer review***

From a practical viewpoint, PR is useful because, if it is completed during class, it enables students to receive immediate feedback on their draft. Students benefit from their reviewer/s spending a fixed amount of time reading, discussing, and providing feedback on their draft.

Despite the success of the training in PR, the researcher would make further changes to the implementation of PR in her future EAP/writing courses. First, the researcher would include several PR sessions throughout the semester and students would review each other's writing at various stages of the writing process. Some researchers have recommended students write three drafts of an essay before submitting it to their teacher. Students would begin PR in dyads to build confidence and trust in their own and their peers' ability before moving on to working in small groups of three.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the study**

There are several significant limitations of this study which need to be taken into account when examining and interpreting the results of the final study.

A major limitation of this study is the dual role of the teacher and researcher. Although this is accepted practice in AR, this integration of roles has been criticised with the suggestion that the researcher/teacher's lack of impartiality could result in the research outcomes being compromised. The second major limitation is in regard to the learner diaries constituting part of students' final grade for the course. There is always the possibility, therefore, that students may have written what they believed the researcher/teacher wanted them to write rather than write about their actual beliefs. To minimise this, students were encouraged to write honestly about their GW/PR experiences. Tutors emphasised that their beliefs would enable themselves and the researcher to improve upon GW/PR activities in the future. Tutors also stressed that this was an opportunity for students 'to have their say' about tutorial activities and that reflecting on such activities and their own experiences would be beneficial to their own language learning.

Another major limitation is that the research is context specific. The research was carried out in the same EAP course over two semesters at one university and included only the beliefs of two groups of NESB students, with a much reduced sample in Cycle II. The qualitative, emic research methodology employed in the study also resulted in the diary entries, interview, and group evaluation exercise being analysed using descriptive and interpretive methods. Due to the personal involvement of the researcher, the results of this research will be more subjective and partial. The small-scale, context specific, subjective research thus results in "lack of application to broader SLA contexts" (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 7).

The final limitation of the study is related to the data collection of the research instruments. Students were required to write all of their diary entries in English. It is therefore likely that had they written their diary entries in their L1 they would have been able to communicate their ideas more effectively and accurately. Since there was such a diverse range of first languages amongst the students and also due to the large amount of diary data, however, it was not practical for the researcher to have students write in their L1 and then have their diary entries translated. The group evaluation exercise was also completed by students in English and the case study interviews were also conducted solely in English. This was also due to the practical logistics of conducting the research in learners' L2. Another limitation of the diary entries was the use of the same prompts for both Cycles. Consequently, students

were never asked directly which aspects of the training they had received were most effective or which activities they had learned most from.

The following section provides suggestions for future research in light of these limitations.

### **7.5 Future research**

There are several avenues of research resulting from this study on ESL learners' beliefs about GW/PR in an academic setting which could be explored in future research. A longer duration of a study would reveal further insights into the dynamic nature of learners' beliefs about GW/PR and how some beliefs develop over time, whilst others remain stable. A longitudinal study which extends over the course of NESB students' university careers would provide particularly rich data into the emergent nature of these learners' beliefs. Such a study could explore learners' beliefs as they progress from their first year at university through to their final year at university in their major classes as well as first year EAP courses if available. Since a growing number of international students are remaining in New Zealand following graduation to pursue either postgraduate study or to enter the local workforce, it would be interesting to follow these students further into their postgraduate or post-university professional careers. Alternatively, future research on NESB learners' beliefs could focus on a cross section of students and compare the beliefs of international students in different years and from different majors. Research conducted on NESB students in non EAP/ESL courses would also provide additional rich data as their beliefs would be explored in multicultural groups with other NESB students, international students who are native English speakers and domestic students which would include New Zealanders, Maori, Asian and Pacific Island students. Research could also explore how GW is implemented in university classrooms and compare those which use cooperative learning techniques and those classes which do not follow any established approaches to GW.

Another avenue for future research would be to conduct an in-depth exploration into the difference in the beliefs of good language learners and less successful language learners. The beliefs of good language learners could contribute further to knowledge on strategies of good language learners which could be used to develop training programmes on implementing successful GW/PR. On the other hand, in-depth knowledge on the beliefs about less successful language learners could be used to develop strategies which could help these students be more successful in GW/PR.

In terms of future research which focuses specifically on PR, learners' beliefs could be further explored by using additional writing activities. Following recent developments in researching learner beliefs which employ more innovative methods, metaphor analysis could also be used to gain further

insight into learners' beliefs about PR. This study employed mainly dyadic peer feedback and focused on one PR session. Further research could therefore explore learners' beliefs and changes in their beliefs as they progress from PR in dyads to small groups of three or four students.

Research could also be conducted on learner beliefs about GW/PR using different theoretical frameworks within a contextual approach. Similar studies could explore learner beliefs from a neo-Vygotskian, Bakhtinian or Deweyan perspective or use variation in these frameworks.

## **7.6 Final reflection**

I began this journey with an interest in gaining a deeper understanding of my students' beliefs about GW after reading about their experiences and beliefs about various aspects of the course and language learning in general. I had expected the study to be a comparison between the negative beliefs of learners who had not received training and the more positive beliefs of those who had received some training. However, comparing the beliefs of learners in Cycle I to the principles of cooperative learning, it appeared that these students had brought with them to the language classroom some very valuable and strong beliefs about their language learning experience and beliefs which already reflected a strong sense of interdependence.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Course outline

#### English for Academic Purposes

**Course Coordinator:** Jane Hislop

**Lecture Times:** Monday 5.00pm-5.50pm and Wednesday 9.00am-9.50am

**Tutorial Times:** There will be one two-hour tutorial held weekly, starting in the second week of the semester. Check the course outline at the back of this syllabus for tutorial weeks, because not every week has a tutorial.

**Tutor:** xxx

**Room:** xxx

**Email:** xxx

**Office Hours:** xxx

**Text:** *LING 121* Course Reader 2006 (available from Printery)

#### Course Description

This course is designed for students from non-English speaking backgrounds to develop confidence and competence in using English in an academic environment. Students will develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and will also learn how to communicate ideas effectively and articulately. There will be an emphasis on developing students' awareness of how they can become independent language users and how they can use these skills in their future language learning. Lectures and tutorials will focus on preparing and delivering presentations, understanding and taking notes on the main points of lectures, reading academic texts, writing essays, talking in groups and evaluating group work.

#### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Recognise text structures and identify main points in written texts

- Be able to write clear and accurate academic English, and structure written texts beyond the paragraph level
- Participate in small group projects which will result in an presentation
- Develop discussion skills and tutorial strategies
- Critically examine a variety of out-of-class resources for students of English for Academic Purposes.
- Develop strategies for vocabulary development
- Improve listening comprehension and note-taking skills

### **Teaching Methods and Workload Expectations**

There is a strong emphasis in this paper on students gaining an awareness of how they learn languages and also developing skills that they can use immediately in their other papers. It is anticipated that most tutorials will involve students in small group work based around particular activities relevant to that week's module.

In order to get the most out of this course, students will need to attend lectures and actively participate in tutorials. Since tutorials will be based on pair work/small group work, it is important that students arrive on time and prepared. Note that participation in tutorials counts as 20% of the final grade.

### **Assessment**

Summary	20%
Group spoken presentation	20%
Essay	30%
Tutorial participation	20%
Journal	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Essay** (1500 words)

Students will produce an essay on a topic chosen from a list. The essay will follow the structure of an argument essay as well as using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. These will be covered in lectures and tutorials. Two marks will be awarded for the library research activity completed in tutorials in the third tutorial (March 20-24). Note that the third tutorial takes place in the library. 8

marks will be awarded for the essay draft and 20 marks will be awarded for the final version. Date due: Essay draft: Thursday April 13. Final version of essay: Friday May 12.

### **Group Written Summary**

This assignment will incorporate reading and writing skills as well as library skills. Students will be given details of this assignment in the seventh tutorial (May 1-5). Note that this tutorial takes place in the library. Date due: May 19.

### **Group Spoken Presentation**

As a group, students will research a topic of interest from a set list and develop a speech about it. Each student will take responsibility for the delivery of one section of the speech. Students will also be required to hand in a précis of their presentation, which will be worth 5% of the total marks. Date due: During tutorials 8 and 9.

### **Learner Diary**

Students are required to write a regular learning diary in which they write about their learning experience. Topics will be given and may include writing about their learning strategies and learning experiences. The purpose of keeping a journal is to intensify the student's own awareness and control over learning processes. Journals will be handed in to tutors twice during the semester. Date due: Thursday April 13 and Monday May 22.

## **APPENDIX B: Learner diary guidelines**

### **Writing a Learning Diary**

#### **Getting Started**

- You will write a total of eight diary entries (prompts will be given during tutorials)
- Each entry is to be between 400 and 500 words
- Please write the word count at the end of your diary entry
- Please type your diary entries and use double-spacing
- Submit a hard copy to your tutor (Vijay or Jane) and an electronic copy to Jane
- Put the hard copy of the diary entry in your tutor's box in the reception area on the first floor of the Burns Building
- Please ensure your name, student number, tutorial group and diary prompt appear on the diary entry

#### **Why is it necessary to keep a learner diary?**

Learner diaries provide an opportunity for an informal, personal type of writing in which students can make observations, reflect on assignment questions and their experiences in learning English without the constraints of creating a formal text. By keeping a learner diary, you can develop an awareness of your own learning.

#### **How will my diary entries be graded?**

You are expected to hand in eight diary entries. Each diary entry will be given a mark out of 100. Out of the eight diary entries, your five best will count towards your final grade. Each diary entry will therefore be worth 2 percent each. Tutors will not be correcting grammatical errors or spelling mistakes except when there is a recurring error. You will not be assessed on the linguistic accuracy of any of your diary writing. The following points will be taken into consideration when marking your diary entries:

- Has every point in the diary prompts been addressed?
- Is the diary entry written coherently? Your diary entry should be in the style of a short essay (no bullet points!)
- Word length – not less than 400 words, not longer than 500 words

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Covered all 5 points	50 marks
Coherence	30 marks
Word Length	10 marks
Format	10 marks
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 marks</b>

## **APPENDIX C: Learner diary prompts for Cycles I and II**

### **Diary entry 1**

Describe your personal English language learning history. Include the following points:

- How long have you been learning English?
- Where did you learn English? (in your own country? in another country? At school?)
- What types of activities or lessons were common in these classes?
- What are some positive and negative aspects of studying a language this way?
- How do you feel about learning English as a result of these experiences?

### **Diary entry 2**

This week's diary entry relates to the peer review of your essay draft during this week's tutorial. Please answer as honestly as possible. There is no right or wrong answer.

- How did you feel about reading your classmate(s) essay draft?
- How did you feel about writing a response to your classmate(s) essay draft?
- How did you feel about having your classmate(s) read your essay and give suggestions for revision?
- What kind of suggestions did you receive from your classmate(s)?
- What kinds of suggestions are most helpful to you?
- In general, do you find the peer review helpful?

### **Diary entry 3**

The focus of this week's diary entry is on the group presentations. Think about how you and the other members of your group worked together. Remember, it is important to give your honest opinion – there is no right or wrong answer. Include the following points:

- How do you feel about giving a group presentation?
- Would you rather give a group presentation or an individual one? Give reasons.
- How do you feel about being given a group grade for your group presentation?
- Describe how you and your group members worked together (e.g. did you arrange to meet outside class? How did you communicate with other group members – e-mail? Group meetings? Did you encounter any problems?)
- What are some positive and negative aspects of doing a group presentation?

#### **Diary entry 4**

Now that your group presentations are over, I'd like you to reflect on the experience of working together as a group.

- Do you think that working together as a group is a useful learning experience? Give reasons.
- Would you like to do this kind of activity again? Why/why not?
- How confident do you feel when you are speaking English as a group with other non-native English speakers?
- How do you feel about working in groups, which include native English speakers? (for example, in your other courses)
- How do you feel about group work in general? (this could refer either to the LING 121 course or other courses you are taking).

#### **Diary entry 5**

This week I would like you to think about the effectiveness of the tutorials and tutorial activities. Please give reasons for your answers.

- How can tutorials be improved? Suggest 3 tutorial activities and elaborate.
- How do you feel about the emphasis placed on pair work and group work?
- Write 5 rules for group work.
- Suggest how group work can be assessed fairly.

#### **Diary entry 6**

In this week's diary entry, I would like you to reflect on the group activities and the effectiveness of these types of activities. Please answer the following questions and give reasons for your answers.

- Do you think working in a group helps you to be more successful with English?
- Did working with a group encourage you to help and support your peers?
- Do you feel that you contributed to the learning of other group members?
- Do you feel that the other group members contributed to your learning?
- Did working in a group give you more motivation to improve your English skills or to study English more?

### **Diary entry 7**

In this week's diary entry, I would like you to consider the difference between teachers and students at the University of Otago and your home country.

- What do you think is the role of the learner in classes at a New Zealand
- Do you think the role of the learner is different at universities in your home country?
- What do you think is the role of the teacher in classes at a New Zealand university?
- Do you think the role of the teacher is different at universities in your home country?
- Do you think some tasks are a private, individual process or do you think interaction and feedback from others is useful?

### **Diary entry 8**

This is your final diary entry. I would like you to reflect on your English learning experiences in New Zealand. This is a very general topic and you are free to write about any aspect of your learning experience.

## APPENDIX D: Interview guidelines

### Preliminary questions

Can you tell me about your English learning experience in \_\_\_\_\_ (participant's home country)?

Describe how you learned English in \_\_\_\_\_. Do you find learning English interesting?

1. When doing GW in the tutorials, how did you get into your groups? (Consider: how did you decide which group to join? How did you decide the other group members? What were some of the factors that made you decide? Were grades an issue? Did you speak the same language as your group members? How would you rate the ability of the other group members? Was this a factor in deciding groups? How would you have felt if the other group members had a lower/higher level of English proficiency than you? How do you believe the other group members formed the group?
2. How do you feel about the learner diary being part of the assessment for this paper?
3. How useful would you rate the learner diary? (Consider: useful in the opportunity to use authentic language? Becoming aware of own learning style).
4. How important are good grades for you?
5. When doing GW, what do you think is more important: the assignment and getting a good grade for it or the process of acquiring skills and opportunities for improving language you may get from GW?
6. Have you experienced a conflict between what you wanted to study and what you have had to study to obtain a good grade?
7. Can you describe in as much detail as possible how you see the role of the learner/tutor during tutorials?
8. Can you describe in as much detail any problems you may have encountered during GW? If yes, how did you overcome them?
9. Do you think there is a place for more traditional methods such as working individually?
10. What do you think makes a successful group?
11. How successful do you think you were? Give reasons.
12. What were some of the negative/positive aspects you experienced during GW?

## APPENDIX E: Group evaluation exercise

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: Experience in GW and requirements

Please write your comments for the following four points.

1. Here is what *I liked* about my last experience with GW.

2. Here is what *I did not like* about my last experience with GW.

3. Since we will be working as a group, here are my suggestions for effective meetings.

4. Here are the qualities that I believe I contribute to the group.

### Step 2: Discussion

The leader first makes sure that each member of the group tells the others what he or she wrote for the four points. Then he or she leads a discussion to reach unanimous agreement on GW suggestions. As a group summarise the discussion. Nominate one group member to write this summary on a piece of paper and submit to your tutor.

## APPENDIX F: Background questionnaire for Cycles I and II

Dear student of LING 121: English for Academic Purposes,

In order to meet your learning requirements I would like to know your own opinion of your language skills. Please write as much as you can to help *me* to help *you*.

### 1. General information

First Name:

Family Name:

I.D. Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother tongue: \_\_\_\_\_

Other languages spoken: \_\_\_\_\_

Home country: \_\_\_\_\_

What degree/qualification do you hope to gain from Otago? \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in New Zealand? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever lived in another country where English is spoken? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please state how long you lived there? \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Language Skills Assessment

1. Using the nine-band scale below decide which level you think best describes your standard of English for each skill. Write the number in the appropriate space underneath.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(unable to use English)	(very little English)	(little English)	(limited English)	(modest English)	(competent user of English)	(good English)	(very good English)	(expert user of English)

Reading level: \_\_\_\_\_

Writing level: \_\_\_\_\_

Listening level: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking level: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you any additional comments about your level? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are you best at in English? (Please give an example): \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you find difficult? (Please give an example): \_\_\_\_\_

5. What do hope to learn most from this course? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!!!

Jane

(This is confidential. Your answers will only be seen by the course lecturer)

## **APPENDIX G: Ethical procedure information sheet**

### **Students' views of an English for Academic Purposes course**

Dear.....,

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate I thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and I thank you for considering my request.

I am currently studying for a PhD degree in the Linguistics Programme at the University of Otago. As part of the requirements for this degree, I have decided to carry out a project concerning the views of non-English speaking students toward this year's LING 121: English for Academic Purposes course. To do this, I need to collect relevant information and opinions from students who are currently enrolled in LING 121.

Please keep in mind that whether you decide to take part in my project or not is completely up to you. I would really appreciate it if you decide to participate. Yet, if you decide not to participate, it will be perfectly all right and I will also be grateful for your reading this information sheet and considering my request. Let me stress that you may decide not to take part in the project or withdraw from participation in the project at any time without any disadvantage of any kind to yourself.

#### **What will participants be asked to do?**

If you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to answer a brief questionnaire and you may be interviewed for your experience, views and comments concerning this year's LING 121 course. The researcher might look at assignment tasks, with particular reference to learner diaries for further data collection. To some degree, general classroom observation at irregular intervals may also be conducted. Your feedback will be of great importance and value to my research and will also be taken into consideration when developing this course in the future. I am really interested in your personal opinions and your feedback will be treated with respect and confidentiality.

In case you are asked questions, which you feel uncomfortable with, keep in mind your right to decline to answer any particular question(s). You may also withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage of any kind to yourself.

I, the researcher will be the only person who will have access to the data contained in the questionnaires, the assignment tasks and tapes (audio/video) of the interviews and class observations. It may also be necessary for the supervisors and examiners to inspect some part of the data.

Results of this project may be published but any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant.

You are welcome to request a copy of the results of the project if you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only my supervisors, the examiners, and myself will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions about this project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either: -

**Jane Hislop (Researcher)**

or

**Dr Elke Stracke (Primary Supervisor)**

Linguistics Programme

Linguistics Programme

Department of English

Department of English

University of Otago

University of Otago

Thank you again for showing interest in this project and reading this information sheet.

**Jane Hislop**

## APPENDIX H: Consent form

### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF AN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP) COURSE

#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I,....., (name in capital letters) have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that: -

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. The data [audio-tapes/questionnaires/assessment data] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;
4. The exact questions asked in the interview will not have been decided in advance. The questions asked would depend on the way in which the interview develops. I can refuse to answer any question(s) that I don't feel comfortable with and/or I may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and available in the library but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.