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Exploring attitudes toward peer feedback in the L2 writing classroom

Ian MUNBY and Haidee THOMSON

Abstract

This study explores the attitudes of first- and second-year Japanese university students towards peer feedback in the EFL writing classroom. Survey data were collected in 2014 by Thomson from 73 students at a private university. This data was compared with further data collected by Munby eight years later in a close replication of the original study involving 48 students from the same private university and 59 students from a national university. The results showed that overall students had limited prior experience in providing and responding to feedback from their peers but generally had positive expectations of the activity. Following experiential sessions of giving and receiving responses to each other's writing, a post-training survey showed an increase in expressed positive attitudes towards peer feedback. Furthermore, participants generally rated peer feedback as useful for improving their writing. Participants from Thomson (2014) rated self-check as being more useful than peer feedback, whereas the reverse was true in the current study. Finally, teacher feedback on student writing was generally perceived to be much more useful than both peer feedback and self-check in the writing process.

Keywords: EFL writing classrooms, peer feedback, teacher feedback.

Background and literature review

Most classroom practitioners would probably agree that it is necessary to include a writing component in the curriculum of an English language course. The underlying justification for teaching writing is twofold. First, it is generally agreed that the activity of writing in a second language will help drive the language acquisition process. While some researchers have argued that L2 writing skills are contingent on L1 writing skills, and are not related to L2 proficiency, Sasaki and Hirose (1996) find evidence in the secondary and tertiary learning context in Japan that overall L2 proficiency is the most significant factor accounting for L2 writing ability. Second, L2 writing is often taught in order to train learners for "real world" writing tasks outside the classroom, such as writing business emails in English. Tribble (2012) suggests that "without a capacity to write effectively in the target language, foreign language learners will not have access to roles which would otherwise be available to them, for example in an international community which uses that language for trade or other types of contact" (p.12).

A crucial part of training in second language writing is commonly viewed to be the provision of written corrective feedback (WCF) to help the learner improve their writing skills and quality of written output. The traditional channel of feedback delivery in the language learning classroom is from the writing teacher. This feedback customarily takes the form of a grade, accompanied by what Grabe and Kaplan (1997) describe as "much red ink throughout the essay" (p.378). However, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) admit that "written teacher feedback has most typically been regarded by L1 and L2 researchers as a necessary evil - burdensome to writing teachers and limited in its effectiveness for helping student writers improve" (p.254). From this perspective, it often appears that the only reason teacher WCF is

provided is to conform to the expectations of language learners rather than being driven by teacher beliefs that these corrections result in permanent improvements in a learner's writing skills. Alternatively put, a teacher can unwillingly spend time improving a piece of student writing by editing it, while not believing that WCF is likely to result in any improvements in the student's next composition. From a similar angle, many commentators including Robb et al. (1986), Truscott (1996), and Zamel (1987), have argued that teacher WCF of learner writing has little value, even having harmful effects, and should consequently be abandoned. Since the 1990s, this sentiment has been echoed in the work of Krashen who states that: "What makes you a better writer in terms of writing style and accuracy is reading (input)" (Wang; 2022, p.17), suggesting that there is no value in teacher WCF. These "laissez-faire" views took root during the communicative language teaching (CLT) boom of the last three decades of the twentieth century, and they may have been inspired in part by a reaction to the behaviorist influences in ELT championed by the American psychologist Skinner. He believed that languages were learned by successful imitation of proficient users or the teacher in the L2 classroom. The suggestion here is that the path to proficiency or improvement in writing skills for learners was to follow the dictates of the teacher's red pen.

In contrast, some commentators objected to the lack of teacher correction of L2 learner writing. Ferris (2004), for example, argued that there was little evidence to suggest that error correction of student writing in an L2 was either effective or ineffective. To this day, research into the effects of WCF has been inconclusive. For example, a longitudinal study by McGrath (2021) using error analysis of 30 students at a Japanese university did not find conclusive evidence of improvements in the accuracy of his subjects' writing.

While the jury remains out on the relative merits and demerits of

teacher WCF, the CLT boom of the end of the last century also brought in other trends that may have influenced our approach to how to respond to student writing. The first was that CLT emphasized the empowerment of the learner and conceptualized progress towards higher levels of proficiency in an L2 as a journey towards autonomy, and independence from the teacher and teacher WCF. As a result, the role of process in L2 writing found itself under the spotlight with multiple pre-writing and drafting activities growing in popularity among ELT writers and practitioners. These learner-centered activities placed the student alongside the teacher in all stages of the writing process as noted by Grabe and Kaplan (1996). At the same time as changing the roles of learner and teacher in the writing process, CLT also appeared to open the door to social constructionist theories of collaborative learning where gains in knowledge and learner development are seen to occur due to social interaction (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2014).

Against this background of learner empowerment and learning through social interaction, we can observe a parallel growth in the popularity of eliciting peer responses to improve student output in the writing classroom. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) describe a typical classroom process involving peer response as follows: "As an example, students would enter class with their first or second draft completed. Students would then get together, or be assigned in groups of two, three, or four. The students would exchange or pass around the papers and receive comments from the other students in the group" (p.379).

Commentators have listed several benefits of the practice of peer feedback. Note that peer feedback, peer response, peer review, and peer reaction are used coterminously in this paper. To begin with, Harmer (2018) points out that peer review encourages more active learner participation in the writing process and "gets around the problem of students reacting too

passively to teacher responses" (p.115). Regarding WCF from the teacher, he also suggests that "it is sometimes difficult for students to see such responses from their teacher as anything other than commands that have to be obeyed. This reduces their self-reliance in the editing process" (p.115). Harmer also comments that peer review could be positive since it is "less authoritarian than teacher review, and helps students to view both colleagues and teachers as collaborators rather than evaluators" (p.116). In a similar vein, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) add that the exchange of peer reactions to writing may help to build classroom community.

Besides resetting, or rebalancing teacher and student roles in the writing process, there may also be practical benefits for the student writer. For example, Tribble (2012) claims that students are "quick to recognize that their peers can see problems in their texts more easily than they can themselves" (p.129). In addition, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) claim that "peer response activities provide opportunities for student writers to receive more feedback than the teacher alone is able to provide" (p.255). Furthermore, they claim that the activity fosters the development of critical skills which learners can use to analyze and revise their own writing. Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) also emphasize the important role that peer feedback plays in increasing metacognitive awareness in learners. Kobayashi (1988) describes the same phenomenon in terms of raising audience awareness. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) even suggest that the giver of feedback may benefit more than the receiver of peer responses. Even Krashen (2021), despite his reservations about the value to the learner of writing as "forced output", is enthusiastic about the revision process in composition since he claims it helps learners solve problems and makes them smarter. Finally, if the peer feedback is of good quality, there is the encouraging prospect that the teacher's WCF workload could be reduced.

In contrast, despite the burgeoning theoretical and practical justifica-

tion for adopting peer feedback into the writing process, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) note there are several potential drawbacks to the approach. For example, they admit that peer feedback can focus excessively on surface errors, be unclear, unhelpful, or even incorrect. Furthermore, far from having community-building benefits, the opposite effect can result if feedback is perceived to be hostile, aside from being simply misleading. In situations such as these, it is inevitable that teacher feedback will be preferred. Lending support to this notion, Zhang (1995), in his study of eighty-one ESL learners, found an overwhelming preference for teacher feedback compared to peer feedback. In a similar vein, Wu et al. (2022), in a study comparing the effectiveness of teacher and peer feedback with thirty Chinese college students found that "the reliability of up to three peer feedback givers' holistic scoring is equivalent to that of one teacher feedback giver's scoring", implying the superiority of teacher feedback. Finally, it could be erroneous to assume that discussions about student writing among classmates will be necessarily beneficial to student writing. In a study investigating the effects of talk on the writing of argumentative essays by second language students in a New Zealand high school, Franken and Haslett (2002) find that "the opportunity to work with a peer before and during writing had limited and specific effects on the texts the student wrote" (p.209).

However, in a positive light, Wu et al. (2022) also found that "peers performed almost as well as teachers in making comments on the content and organizational aspects of English essays" (p.101). With regard to learner attitudes to peer feedback, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) suspect that much depends on the cultural background of the learners. They point out that students educated in North American institutions have likely encountered peer response and other forms of group work while in secondary school or even earlier. In contrast, international students and

other newcomers may or may not have experienced peer review, depending on the model of language and literacy of their home countries.

All things considered, the potential advantages of peer review seem to outweigh the disadvantages, especially when peer review is made part of a feedback process that includes teacher feedback. Added to this, reference to the practice is included in writing course descriptions in the syllabus guidelines of the university where most of the data in both the original study and the replication were gathered. These guidelines state: "Students produce edited drafts based on teacher and peer feedback". In other words, peer feedback is enshrined in the curriculum and is therefore probably expected in the classroom by employers and perhaps learners too. Nevertheless, uncertainties regarding student beliefs about the approach prompted Thomson (2014), who had five writing classes at the time of the initial probe, to investigate.

Research questions investigated by Thomson (2014) and now the current replication study are as follows:

Research Question 1. What is the extent of previous student experience of peer feedback in the writing classroom?

Research Question 2. Do student attitudes to peer evaluation change as a result of this experience of peer feedback?

Research Question 3. How do the students rate the overall usefulness of self-check, peer-check, and teacher-check for improving their writing?

A secondary purpose of the study was for us, as teachers of writing, to decide if peer review is worth including in the writing process in our current teaching situations based on the survey results and answers to the research questions above.

Methodology

Participants

In the original study (Thomson, 2014), 73 participants were recruited from five intact writing classes which met once a week at a private university in Hokkaido. Participants responded to a pre-training survey and then following several experiences with self-check and peer-feedback, 57 participants completed post-training surveys. In a close replication of this study in 2022, Munby collected pre-training survey data from 48 first- or second-year English majors enrolled in three intact writing classes meeting once weekly in the same private university in Hokkaido. In addition, 59 participants from two compulsory general English classes at a national university were also recruited. These classes met once weekly and were made up of first-year non-English majors. In total, the current study reports results from 107 participants, with 102 subjects (there were 5 absences) completing post-training surveys. The English proficiency level of the participants ranged from low to high intermediate, which is similar to that seen in Thomson (2014).

Surveys

The surveys (see Appendix) were borrowed from Thomson (2014) with the intention to replicate as closely as possible the original method. The pre-training survey consisted of seven questions (questions 1–7), and the post-training survey consisted of eight questions (questions 3–10) with questions 3–7 repeated from Survey One. Each question was translated into Japanese so that participants could easily and quickly respond.

In order to address the first research question, questions 1 and 2 in the pre-training survey ask about the participants' past experience of giving and receiving feedback on their classmates' compositions with a simple

Date:	Check ✔
Title:	
Are there capitals at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns?	
Does every sentence contain a noun and verb?	
Are there any sentences that could be joined together?	
Is the layout similar to the Moodle example?	

Figure 1　Self-checking checklist

dichotomous yes-no format. With regard to RQ2, questions 3–7 in the pre-training survey address learner orientation towards the prospect of giving and receiving peer feedback. These questions were a mix of dichotomous format combined with a Likert style format. The same questions were used to detect changes in these attitudes in the post-training survey. Finally, questions 8–10 in the post-training survey were designed to answer RQ3 enquiring about the subjects' perception of the comparative usefulness of self-check (checking one's own writing), feedback from peer-check, and teacher-check, again in dichotomous format.

Procedure

In the original study (Thomson, 2014), writing tasks started with the presentation of a writing genre and model script using models presented online, on Moodle, or from a textbook (Munby & Zemach, 2013). Students were instructed to follow these models in their own writing. Students wrote their first draft and then used a checklist (see Figure 1, for example) to check for surface-level errors in their writing such as spelling, verb agreement, and so on making use of Microsoft Word spelling and grammar review functions.

The use of checklists for structured feedback is recommended by several experts in the field, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) and Nation and Macalister (2021), for example. Figure 1 shows the guiding self-check

Name of the writer:	Date:
Name of the reader:	
Title:	
Underline any sentences which are difficult to understand.	
Mark any corrections on the email	
Why are they applying?	
What program are they applying for?	
What do they want to know?	
When are they arriving for the homestay?	

Figure 2 Peer checking checklist 1

questions which focus the writer on searching for surface-level errors such as capitalization, ways to improve the grammar, and checking that their writing format is similar to the model text.

After this first edit, they gave their writing to a classmate who went through another checklist to identify the location of various required content for that specific writing task. In Thomson (2014), the peer-check originally focussed on error identification and correction, but a lack of confidence and ability for students to identify errors in the writing of their peers was observed. However, once the peer-check was changed to focus on finding information within the draft the students appeared more engaged in reading their peers' writing. For example, the checklist in Figure 2 was used to accompany an email writing task where students were instructed to write an email to their homestay family in Canada in preparation for studying abroad. Task instructions included stating the purpose of their trip and their arrival time, for example. Questions were adjusted based on the genre and topic of writing.

With reference to the peer checklist in Figure 3, the question "What details would you like the writer to add?" was used at the peer-check stage to encourage the reader to think of ways that the writer could improve the

Name of the reader:	
Name of the writer:	
Date:	
Title:	Check ✔
Are there capitals at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns?	
Does every sentence contain a noun and verb?	
Are there any sentences that could be joined together?	
Is the layout similar to the Moodle example?	
What words or phrases does the writer use that you would like to use?	
What details would you like the writer to add?	

Figure 3　Peer checking checklist 2

writing with additional content. Furthermore, the question: "What words or phrases does the writer use that you would like to use?" was included to encourage the transfer of new lexical items from writer to reader.

After students had completed the self-check and peer-check on their writing, they submitted it to the teacher for a final check. In Thomson (2014) the teacher observed a reduction in surface errors and greater reader awareness within the students' writing as a result of several iterations of this checking process with different writing tasks.

In the current replication, the pre-training survey was administered during the first week of the spring semester of 2022. The students were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that it would have no effect on their grades. The surveys were distributed and collected face-to-face during class time. The post-training survey was administered during the fourth week of classes after the third peer feedback training session was completed. Unguided, or unstructured written comments were also collected from the second-year group following the completion of the post-training survey.

In the private university writing classes, which are held in computer

Table 1

Writing tasks completed by the five groups in the replication study.

	2 first-year groups (private university) n=33	One second-year group (private university) n=15	2 first-year groups (public university) n=59
Week 2	Formal email 1	Formal email	Love-hate relationships
Week 3	Formal email 2	Advantages and disadvantages (Draft 1)	Compare and contrast (Draft 1)
Week 4	Compare and contrast*	Advantages and disadvantages (Draft 2) * ⊥	Compare and contrast (Draft 2)

* Peer-checking checklist 2 (form) was used (see Figure 3)

⊥ Anonymous comments about peer feedback were written, printed out, and collected.

rooms with printers, the standard lesson procedure is for the teacher to introduce the writing task to the students at the beginning of class and to allow them all available class time to complete it and print it out at the end. This allows one week for the teacher to make corrections and return them to the students the following week for revision. In brief, the writing process can be described as a three-step process of (i) model and/ or task instruction presentation, (ii) planning and drafting by the student, (iii) checking by the teacher, and (iv) revision and resubmission. In the case of the public university, writing tasks were also completed for homework, brought to class, but later uploaded to an online forum to allow for comparison of first and second drafts (resubmissions) by the teacher.

The training given for this replication study involved inserting two more steps (self-check and peer-check) into the regular routine described above before the teacher-check. To enable the self-check and peer-check to take place in lockstep with all members of the class involved at the same time, students were instructed to complete their first draft at home, print a hard copy, and bring it to class with them, a procedure recommended by Grabe and Kaplan (1996), as mentioned earlier. The writing tasks for each of the five groups in the current study are detailed in Table 1 below.

Each session began with a self-check, lasting 5–10 minutes, followed by a peer check by one or more partners lasting 15–30 minutes. The subjects were invited to do the following:

(i) Self-check that the format and contents of the writing were satisfactory by checking task specifications (with the formal email tasks) or by comparing their writing with models for the essay writing task (see Table 1). The two groups at the private university followed essay models and tasks from a writing textbook (Munby and Zemach, 2013).

(ii) Self-check for errors in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling, for example, marking the suggested corrections, improvements, or omissions with a red pen.

(iii) Exchange papers with a partner and check their classmates' writing, marking the suggested corrections, improvements, or omissions with a red pen.

(iv) Peer-check using the peer-checking checklist. With reference to Table 1, note this was only used in three of the fifteen sessions.

(v) Return peer-checked writing to the original writer and discuss their reactions.

With the three groups in the private university, following step (v) above, students edited and re-submitted their work with the original to allow comparison. The writing was then checked by the teacher (first author) outside the lesson time and returned to the students for final editing and resubmission at the end of the following week's class. With the two groups in the public university, self-checked and peer-edited scripts were returned to the teacher following the peer-feedback sessions and checked by the teacher outside the lesson time using a turquoise pen so the students could distinguish teacher WCF from peer feedback. These compositions were returned to the students for final editing and resubmission during

their free time and uploaded to an online forum for re-scoring. Note that self-check may occur at any time outside the self-check session, for example, before resubmission.

The teacher gave all writing tasks submitted as part of training in the replication study a score, and the subjects did not assign scores to their peers' writing. These scores are part of their final grade, but they were not revealed to the students until after the post-training survey was completed to avoid a situation where grades might influence the subjects' perception of their experience and survey response.

Results and discussion

The results of the surveys in the original study and the replication have been divided into three tables (Tables 2–4 below) to address the research questions separately.

RQ1. What is the extent of previous student experience of peer feedback in the writing classroom?

Table 2

Responses to questions 1 and 2 (Pre-training survey) regarding the subjects' prior experience of giving and receiving peer feedback on their writing.

		2014 *N*=73	2022 *N*=107
1. Have you ever given suggestions to a classmate about how to improve their writing?	Yes	14%	24%
	No	86%	76%
2. Have you ever received suggestions from a classmate on how to improve your writing?	Yes	29%	35%
	No	45%	40%
	Cannot remember	26%	25%

Note: 2014 = the original study by Thomson (2014), 2022 = the current replication study.

With reference to Table 2, the results suggest that the practice of including peer feedback in the approach to writing in secondary school education in Japan is not common. Further, it seems likely that there has been little change in this situation since the original study was conducted in 2014. Even with the second-year students in these studies, only a minority of students claim to have experience in giving or receiving feedback, the suggestion being that they did not engage in the practice in first-year writing classes at university, despite the reference to peer-editing in the syllabus. As mentioned earlier, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) attribute the experience, or a lack of experience, of peer feedback to cultural backgrounds in school education. In a study of attitudes toward peer feedback on student writing among a group of university students in Thailand, Kuyyogsuy (2019) found that only a minority of subjects had previous experience of the activity, and suggested that it was due to teacher-centered approaches in Thai secondary education that probably also predominate in Japan. Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) also view the lack of previous experience with peer feedback in the writing classroom as a potential disadvantage, and we shall return to this in our later discussion of the need for more training.

RQ2. Do student attitudes to peer evaluation change as a result of this experience of peer feedback?

Results from the pre-training and post-training surveys are shown in Table 3. Before the training, most participants had positive attitudes towards reading and exchanging feedback on each other's writing before engaging in the activity. For example, 70% of the students in the original study and 80% in the replication expressed interest in reading their classmates' writing. Further, 56% of the subjects in the original study and

Table 3

Responses to questions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (Pre- and Post-training surveys) regarding the subjects' attitude toward reading their classmates' writing and to giving and receiving peer feedback on their writing.

		2014		2022	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	Number of participants	*N*=73	*N*=57	*N*=107	*N*=102
3. Are you interested in reading other classmates' writing?	Yes	78%	75%	80%	74%
	No	5%	13%	8%	14%
	Not sure	17%	12%	12%	12%
4. How do you feel about other classmates reading your writing?	I like the idea	56%	73%	60%	73%
	I don't like the idea.	25%	20%	20%	17%
	Not sure	19%	7%	20%	10%
5. How do you feel about making suggestions for improving other students' writing?	I love the idea	15%	27%	10%	20%
	I like the idea	59%	45%	50%	53%
	I don't like the idea.	10%	14%	24%	17%
	I hate the idea	1%	2%	2%	1%
	I don't know	15%	12%	14%	9%
6. Do you want to receive suggestions for improving your writing from a classmate of your choice?	Yes	78%	67%	76%	78%
	No	3%	6%	7%	7%
	Not sure	19%	27%	17%	15%
7. Do you want to receive suggestions for improving your writing from a classmate chosen by the teacher?	Yes	74%	55%	73%	75%
	No	4%	17%	8%	8%
	Not sure	22%	28%	19%	17%

73% in the replication claimed to like the idea of having classmates' read their writing. Additionally, a majority in both studies claimed to either like or love the idea of making suggestions to improve their classmates' writing. Furthermore, approximately three-quarters of the participants wanted to receive suggestions from classmates about improving their writing. Responses to the post-training survey indicate that subjects had continued to have positive attitudes to reading and exchanging feedback on each

other's writing, with many showing an increase in positive attitudes towards peer-editing. For example, there were slight increases in both studies in the number of subjects who either liked or loved the idea of giving and receiving suggestions for improving each other's writing. In the original study, the proportion of students who claimed to like making suggestions decreased from 59% to 45% (a decline of 14%) but most of this change is countered by a 12% increase in those who loved the activity. Similarly, in the current study, the number of students who claimed to love the activity saw an increase of 10%. In both studies, responses to question 4 show that there were slight declines in the number of students who reported disliking the idea of other students reading their writing (25% to 20% in the original study, and 20% to 17% in the replication). In the original study, there was a small increase of 4% in the number of students who responded that they did not like the idea of making suggestions on their classmates' writing, while in the current study, there was a 7% decrease in the number of participants disliking making suggestions on others' writing.

In retrospect, in order to find out if there had been a statistically significant difference in the observations before and after training in these studies, it would have been necessary to adopt a different approach in the surveys. To begin with, we would need to present questions 3–8 as statements. For example, instead of asking the question: "Are you interested in reading other classmates' writing?" we would invite the subjects to rate their level of agreement with statements such as "I am interested in reading other classmates' writing" on a Likert scale of 1–5 from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this way, it would be possible to calculate means and standard deviations for responses to each statement in the pre- and post-surveys to determine whether their level of interest had changed as a group. Similarly, this approach would allow for statistical comparison between the original study and the replication.

Additionally, each subject would need to assume a code name or number (to maintain anonymity) or to complete the survey online in order to perform a paired t-test on individual pre- and post- responses to find out if differences were significant or not.

That being said, these results show that there was a dissenting minority of students in both studies who had negative feelings about the activity of giving and receiving feedback on their classmates' writing. For example, responses to question three suggest that there was a decrease in interest in reading the writing of other students after the peer-review experiences. We investigate the possible reasons for these unfavorable attitudes in the context of the following, third and final research question.

RQ3. How do the subjects rate the overall usefulness of self-check, peer-check, and teacher-check for improving their writing?

In order to investigate the perceived overall usefulness of the self-, peer- and teacher-checks by students, survey questions 8–10 were asked after students had experienced several iterations of these feedback types on their writing. Responses shown in Table 4 indicate that, in both studies, participants valued the teacher-check of their writing considerably more than either peer-check or self-check. These findings echo the results of previous studies by Zhang (1995) and Wu et al. (2022) where subjects unanimously preferred teacher-check to peer-check.

Self-check was found to be useful (including sometimes useful) by 98% in the 2014 study, and by 97% in the current study. In contrast, peer-check was found to be useful (including sometimes useful) by 88% in the original study and by 100% in the current study. In the current study, peer-check appeared to be preferred over self-check with 63% rating peer-check as useful compared with only 44% for self-check. These findings suggest that

Table 4

Responses to questions 8, 9, and 10 (post-training survey) regarding the subjects' rating of the overall usefulness of self-check, peer-check, and teacher-check for improving their writing.

		2014	2022
8. Rate the overall usefulness of self-check for you.	Useful	54%	44%
	Sometimes useful	44%	53%
	Not useful	2%	3%
9. Rate the overall usefulness of peer-check for you.	Useful	45%	63%
	Sometimes useful	43%	37%
	Not useful	12%	0%
10. Rate the overall usefulness of teacher-check for you.	Useful	96%	95%
	Sometimes useful	4%	5%
	Not useful	0%	0%

most participants perceived a benefit in checking their own writing and also receiving feedback from peers. 12% of participants in the 2014 study responded that peer-check was not useful, while there were no negative responses regarding peer-check in the current study. Teacher check was clearly perceived as useful by the majority (over 95%) of participants in both studies, in contrast with self- and peer- check which ranged between 35%–55% for useful responses. There is no surprise here that students perceive teacher feedback to be more useful than that of fellow language learners or themselves.

Anonymous comments submitted by one group of subjects in the replication study illustrate many of the advantages listed earlier in this study relating to peer-check. To begin with, despite indications to the contrary in the original study, several subjects reported that peer-check was useful for identifying errors that were not detected in self-check. For example, on the subject of peer-checking, one wrote: "this method is easier to find mistakes than self-check". Another wrote: "we sometimes cannot realize our mistakes, so having our own writing checked by someone else is

very useful in terms of improving our writing skills". In addition, some comments echoed observations by Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) that peer-checking allowed for opportunities for students to receive more feedback on their writing than teacher feedback alone. For instance, one subject wrote: "When my teacher is busy, my friends help me".

Furthermore, researchers suggested that giving and receiving feedback was useful for building a sense of community in the writing classroom as a place where ideas are shared, and this claim is supported by comments such as " I think it's good because I can hear the impressions of other people". There is also evidence in the comments that giving feedback benefits the provider as much as or more than the recipient. One participant wrote: "in addition, it is good both teaching and being taught". Another wrote: "we will probably notice many things as you give advice". There is also support in comments such as "I think it makes us acquire the ability to argue" for the idea that giving and receiving peer feedback fosters the development of critical thinking skills. Finally, it is worth noting that even though a minority of subjects reported not liking exchanging peer feedback on their writing, this does not mean that teachers should avoid this step in the writing process, or dismiss its value. Another participant's comment supports this view: "I can't say I like having my writing re-worked by other classmates, but I think it is necessary".

Nevertheless, there was also some evidence of issues connected with the disadvantages of peer feedback. One drawback mentioned earlier in this paper was that the second language learner writer may not possess the level of L2 proficiency necessary for improving their classmates' writing. One subject wrote: "*I think it is a good thing to check my essay with peer students. Because, I am not as good at English grammar than my friends". This is a very important consideration that is possibly not given enough salience in the literature. Since one can expect a range of levels in most

English language classes, it is logical that the lower half of the class, probably including the writer of the last comment, would not have the language ability necessary to improve the grammatical or lexical accuracy of their classmates' writing. Proficiency was not measured against response in this study, so we can only speculate, however it seems plausible that such a situation may lead the higher-level students to rate the usefulness of peer feedback less positively than their lower-level peers.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) list misleading peer feedback as a key disadvantage to efforts to improve student writing by having classmates check each other's writing. In anonymous comments volunteered in the replication study, one participant stated "peer feedback sometimes fails". In both studies, it was noted that there were numerous cases of peer feedback that needed correction by the teacher and they are likely to have negatively affected the subjects' attitude to the activity. While we mentioned earlier that one potential benefit of peer feedback was that the teacher's workload could be reduced, correcting unsuccessful peer feedback is also time-consuming for the writing teacher. Among several categories of observed misleading feedback, the most striking were cases where correct sentences were changed to incorrect sentences, for example, by a student crossing out a word or words in their partner's sentence. In one instance, "I was blessed with good relationships" was changed to: "I blessed good relationships". Similarly, correct vocabulary choices were changed to incorrect ones as in "I hang out with my friends" which was altered to "I play with my friends". Similarly, errors identified by learners were then 'corrected' to different errors. For example, "* This is because I need more English skills for abroad program" was changed to "* Overseas program is require more English skills". Alternatively, incorrect sentences were only partially corrected. "*If I don't understand mean of the key words in the sentence"

was changed to "*If I don't understand meaning of the key words in the sentence" where the article "the" needs to be added (*the* meaning). To add to the confusion, correct sentences were corrected unnecessarily and modified to alternative correct sentences. For instance, with the sentence "In addition, because it is located near a mountain, a lot of insects come in", the recommended correction was: "In addition, a lot of insects come in because it is located near a mountain". While it would be wrong to dismiss misleading peer feedback as being counterproductive in the writing classroom because they represent useful contexts for teaching, such cases underline the need for a teacher to check learner writing after peer responses have been provided. This procedure was recommended as essential by Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) and it applies not only to peer feedback entered directly onto student compositions but also to notes entered in the feedback forms completed by students. To take an example, in response to the question in the form in Figure 1: "What words or phrases does the writer use that you would like to use?" one student had written: "*in term of" instead of the correct form "in terms of", therefore requiring intervention by the teacher.

Despite the above reservations, the majority of the feedback given by students in these studies appears to be useful, and this did not apply solely to comments regarding grammatical and lexical accuracy, it also applied to writing task content. For example, in the replication, some students pointed out to their classmates that key information in the specifications for a formal email writing task was missing. This was hugely beneficial advice, making it hard to quantify the value of peer feedback compared with teacher WCF in the way described by Wu et al. (2022), mentioned earlier in this paper.

Nation and Macalister (2021) suggest that the quality of peer feedback can be improved through the provision of training. They cite work by Min

(2005, 2006) which shows that a total of five hours of training results in "many more comments being incorporated into the revision, in peer comments becoming by far the greatest source of revisions, and in better revisions" (p.161). This quantity of training clearly exceeded the amount of time allocated to training, or practice, in giving and responding to feedback from classmates in the studies presented here. Further research is needed to confirm whether or not the perception of the usefulness of peer-check by students such as these will be even greater if more time is invested in peer-check training.

Min (2005, 2006) used checklists extensively in her research and the contents of these lists may also affect learners' perception of the value of exchanging reactions to each others' writing. We believe that checklists focussing on a limited set of surface errors may be useful, but given the huge range of types of errors that students make, there is the risk that questions such as "Does every sentence contain a noun and verb?" may cause learners to miss other types of errors. Furthermore, in the replication, there were cases where students had checked the above sentence while failing to notice the omission of a verb as in: "For example, the Fighters baseball team". In addition, further research needs to confirm whether or not checklist questions focusing on the content of the writing, rather than the form, such as "What did you like or enjoy [about your classmates' writing]?", as recommended by Tribble (2012, p129), result in improved perceptions of peer feedback.

One limitation of these studies is that, except for a few anonymous comments in the replication, they did not reveal very much about the reasons why some students harbored negative feelings about providing and receiving comments on each others' compositions. Nation and Macalister (2021) suspect that embarrassment stemming from the interpersonal strains of individual feedback may be an issue. Their

suggestion of organizing collaborative feedback, where pairs or small groups of students exchange ideas on each other's writing, may prove to be a useful way to avoid it and also represents an interesting avenue for future research. With classroom collaboration in the spotlight here, it should be noted that many of the perceived benefits of peer feedback can be made available through collaborative writing. This involves inviting learners to co-produce a piece of writing using Google docs where two or more writers can sit side by side, discuss their ideas, and write simultaneously on a single document. With collaborative writing, peer evaluation of another student's efforts to put ideas into words can still occur within the context of the collaborative task, and may be less intimidating. In other words, learners can negotiate meanings, attempt to co-construct error-free sentences, and then evaluate them, rather than simply evaluate them.

Conclusion

The original study and the current study surveyed the attitudes of first- and second-year students with regard to peer feedback in the writing classroom. With most language learning activities, learner attitudes are likely influenced by previous experience. However, survey results indicated that most Japanese university students in this study had never been invited to give or receive feedback from classmates on their writing. Despite this lack of experience, most of the subjects in the original probe and the replication viewed the activity positively and survey results in both studies indicated that the vast majority of them considered peer feedback to be useful for improving their writing. These findings suggest that peer feedback is worth including as part of the writing process in university-level English programs in Japan as long as it accompanies and precedes teacher WCF.

Bio

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Appendix

Peer Feedback In The Writing Classroom

This survey is about attitudes toward peer feedback in the writing classroom. Your decision to participate or not will not impact your class grades.

ライティングにおけるピア・フェードバックに関する学習者側の見解についての調査です。参加するかしないかの判断が，授業の成績に影響することはありません。

Please answer the questions by checking the boxes. Do notwrite your name on the paper.

質問項目にチェックを入れてお答えください。用紙に名前を書かないでください。

I agree to allow my answers to this survey to be used for research purposes.

☐ Yes ☐ No

私は, このアンケートへの回答が研究目的で使用されることに同意します。

Thank you for your cooperation.

ご協力ありがとうございます。

BEFORE (Survey 1)

1. Have you ever given suggestions to a classmate about how to improve their writing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

ライティング力を向上させる方法を，クラスメートにアドバイスしたことがありますか。

2. Have you ever received suggestions from a classmate on how to improve your writing?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Cannot remember

ライティング力を向上させる方法を，クラスメートからアドバイスしてもらったことがありますか。

BEFORE & AFTER (Survey 1 & 2)

3. Are you interested in reading other classmates' writing?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

他のクラスメートのライティングを読んでみたいと思いますか。

4. How do you feel about other classmates reading your writing?

他のクラスメートに自分のライティングを読まれることについてどう思いますか

☐ I like the idea ☐ I do not like the idea ☐ Not sure

5. How do you feel about making suggestions for improving other students' writing?

他のクラスメートのライティング力を向上させるために，あなた自身が他のクラスメートにアドバイスをすることについてどう思いますか。

☐ I love the idea ☐ I like the idea ☐ I do not like the idea

☐ I hate the idea ☐ I don't know

6. Do you want to receive suggestions for improving your writing from a classmate of your choice?

あなたが選んだクラスメイトから，文章を改善するための提案を受けたいですか？

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

7. Do you want to receive suggestions for improving your writing from a classmate chosen by the teacher?
先生が選んだクラスメイトから，文章を改善するための提案を受けたいですか？
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

AFTER (Survey 2)

8. Rate the overall usefulness of self-check for you
ライティングを自分で添削することは有用性を総合的に判断してください。
☐ Useful　有用 ☐ Sometimes useful　時に有用
☐ Not useful　有用ではない

9. Rate the overall usefulness of peer feedback for you
同級生による添削は有用性を総合的に判断してください。
☐ Useful　有用 ☐ Sometimes useful　時に有用
☐ Not useful　有用ではない

10. Rate the overall usefulness of teacher feedback for you.
教師による添削は有用性を総合的に判断してください。
☐ Useful　有用 ☐ Sometimes useful　時に有用
☐ Not useful　有用ではない