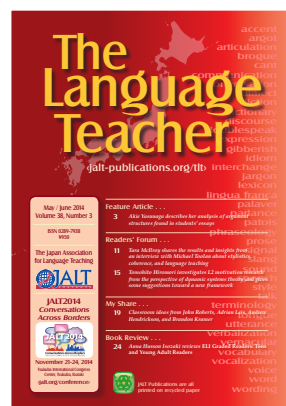


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Adoption of the process-oriented writing approach in a Japanese high school classroom

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The present study investigated whether peer and teacher feedback in the process-oriented approach would influence student writing development in an exam-oriented senior high school in Japan over one academic year. Pre- and post-essay tests were administered both to the experimental group and the control group to assess the development of students' writing skills. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted at the end of each school term in order to examine student attitudes toward feedback. The results indicate that students improved significantly in the quality and fluency of their writing. Although the impact of teacher feedback was found to be stronger when the project started, student focus shifted from teacher feedback to peer feedback over the year. Students deepened interdependence among peers, increased self-correction, and assumed a sense of writer responsibility by the end of the project.

本論は、受験重視の日本の高校で、英語ライティング授業にプロセス・アプローチを導入し、1年間に及ぶ過程において、ピア（生徒間）及び教師によるフィードバックが生徒のライティング能力の向上に影響を与えるか否かを検証した。研究では生徒のライティング能力の変化を測るために、被験者群と統制群による自由英作文の事前・事後テストを行った。また、生徒のフィードバックに対する意識の変化を調査するため、各学期の最後にアンケートとインタビューを実施した。自由英作文のテストでは、生徒のライティング能力の質と流暢さの向上において、被験者群と統制群の間で有意差が確認された。また、フィードバックに対する生徒の意識では、当初は教師の影響が強かったが、次第に生徒間によるフィードバックに焦点が移行していった。研究の最後には、生徒間で相互の信頼と依存性が高まり、自己による誤り訂正が増え、生徒のなかに書き手としての責任感が生じてきた。

According to Adas and Bakir (2010), “writing is . . . the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire” for many EFL learners (p. 254). Japanese learners are no exception. In Japan, there is serious concern regarding college-aged English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' inability to produce a single, coherent paragraph (Gilfert, Niwa, & Sugiyama 1999; Kamimura, 2010). One possible reason could be the lack of writing practice in high school education (Gilfert, Niwa, & Sugiyama 1999). According to Kobayashi and Rinnert (2002), “many Japanese high school students have little experience writing an essay or even a paragraph in English” (p. 92). Therefore, an effective approach to help students improve their communicative writing skills in high school classrooms is needed.

The process-oriented approach

One of the most commonly used approaches in both first (L1) and second language (L2) writing classrooms is the process-oriented approach (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Kamimura, 2006; Paulus, 1999). The process-oriented approach is characterized by multiple stages of drafting, revising, and editing and it attaches great importance to “meditational means,” namely intervention by teachers or peers, in learning and development (Silva, 1990).

Teacher and peer feedback

Although teacher error correction is regarded as of great value by ESL/EFL students (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Hyland, 1998; Lee, 2008), and student preference of teacher feedback over peer feedback is reported (Hedgcock &

Lefkowitz, 1992; Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006), peer feedback has been found to increase students' awareness and confidence in writing (Kamimura, 2006; Nelson & Murphy, 1992; Tsui & Ng, 2000), raise audience awareness (Kamimura, 2006; Min, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000:), increase generation of ideas (Kamimura 2006), and encourage students' control over their writing, as well as foster a sense of autonomy in writing activities (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al., 2006). In the classroom it is often suggested that teacher and peer feedback are "complementary rather than redundant" (Caulk, 1994, p. 186). In ESL/EFL writing classrooms at the tertiary level, rigorous studies have been conducted and have shown that peer and teacher feedback in the process-oriented approach can benefit learners (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 1998; Kamimura, 2006; Paulus, 1999; Yang et al., 2006).

However, very little research has been done at the secondary level. The present study, therefore, investigates the effect of both teacher and peer feedback on the development of students' writing skills in a Japanese high school classroom.

Method

Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does process-oriented writing lead to an improvement in students' writing skills in quality and/or quantity?
2. If so, how and what improvements does it lead to?

Participants

The participants of this study attended a strongly exam-oriented academic senior high school in Japan. The school is ranked second highest in its regional division. Each year, more than 95% of its graduates go on to university or college, of whom 40% go to national or municipal universities. Students are divided into three classes according to their academic achievement: High achievers constitutes one class, and the remaining students are equally divided into two regular classes. The participants belonged to one of the two regular classes in the second year (age 16–17), consisting of 20 boys and 17 girls. The control group was the other regular class. The second-year students were chosen for the study because they had already learned enough grammar and vocabulary to use in writing.

Research design

The investigation was conducted over one academic year. The pre- and posttests, each comprised of a short timed essay question, were conducted to examine whether students' writing skills improved after the experiment. The essay topic of the pretest was "Failure and success always teach us something. Write about your most impressive experience in this regard." In the posttest, the topic was "Write about the best present you have ever received, and the reason why you think it is the best." The tests directed students to write between 100 and 120 words. The students were given 15 minutes for each test and the use of dictionaries was not permitted. These reflect the most common conditions when students take college entrance exams, success in which is the ultimate goal of English learning at Japanese high school. No notice was given before each test; therefore, students were not prepared in advance. In order to examine the quality of students' writing, the tests were scored holistically, in accordance with the TOEFL writing (TWE) scoring guide: 6 indicates the best performance and 0 means irrelevant or no writing (Weigle, 2002). Word number was counted to examine quantity of writing.

At the end of the experiment, questionnaires and interviews were conducted to investigate students' attitudes toward peer and teacher feedback as well as toward the revision process. The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part contained eight questions about students' perceptions of the feedback they received. These were scored on a four-point Likert scale instead of a five-point scale to avoid the evasive answers often seen in students' reactions (Appendix A). The second part asked students about their attitudes and reactions toward the feedback and draft writing; these were answered in an open-ended style (Appendix B). The interviews focused more on students' reactions to their revision process as well as their attitudinal changes during the project (Appendix C).

Constraints

Since the school was strongly exam-oriented, it was difficult to adopt a completely new teaching approach. The control group received textbook-based grammar/structure instruction in a teacher-centered classroom. In the experimental group, the peer feedback sessions were incorporated into the classroom activities, but half the class periods were conducted in the traditional

style. Teacher feedback conferences took place outside the classroom and essay writing was assigned as homework.

Procedure

Before students started peer feedback, they were briefly taught how to give feedback, such as indicating strengths or locating and correcting errors. The teacher also showed a model of giving feedback. The time allotted for peer feedback was about 20-30 minutes in class. Because students had had no such experience previously, they were not familiar with either writing in English or reading English writing. Therefore the peer feedback sessions in the first term (three months) were meant to be feedback training. Students were directed to first write corrections on the peer's writing sheet in red pen, and then give comments orally. The focus of this activity was for students to understand the content of each other's writing. In the second and third terms, students were encouraged to ask peers more about content, as noted in Berg's peer feedback sheet (1999; Appendix D). The peer feedback was given in Japanese so that students could communicate with each other easily (Kamimura, 2006; Yang, et al., 2006).

On the basis of a process model of writing instruction (Hyland, 2003), the students began to write their first drafts once their subthemes were decided. They gave peer feedback to each other in small groups before submitting their drafts first to a native English-speaking teacher and next to a Japanese teacher. Students wrote three drafts and went through the abovementioned feedback and revision process each time.

Students first received written comments and error corrections on their drafts by the native English-speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALT)—one American and one British, and had conferences with them in groups. The feedback was given in English. Following this, student groups met with a Japanese teacher of English (JTE; the researcher), who gave oral and written feedback in Japanese. Thus, if students had any difficulty understanding the ALT feedback, the JTE could help them. The conference feedback was mandatory in the first and second terms; however, it was made optional in the third term in order to examine student attitudes.

Results

Two native English speaking teachers scored the pre- and posttests after the project was over. The

inter-rater reliability was 0.86. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the pretest and posttest classified by the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. ANOVA results (means and standard deviations on the pretest and posttest)

Test	Treatment	Number of subjects	Mean	SD
Pretest	Treatment group	37	2.54	1.15
	Control group	37	2.07	0.94
Post-test	Treatment group	37	3.39	0.75
	Control group	37	2.35	1.13

Because there was a difference in the means of pretests between two groups, multiple comparisons were conducted. The result indicates that there were significant differences in both the treatment section and the essay score section (See Table 2).

Table 2. ANOVA on treatment and two tests

SV	SS	df	MS	F
Treatment (A)	21.19	1	21.19	14.24 **
Subject (S)	107.17	72	1.49	
Test (B)	11.92	1	11.92	18.61 **
AxB	2.98	1	2.98	4.65 *
SxB	46.10	72	0.64	
Total	189.36	147		

+p < .10 *p < .05 **p < .01

Note. SV=source of variation; SS=sum of squares; df=degree of freedom; MS=mean square; F=F value.

It also indicates that the interaction effect between the treatment and essay score shows a significant difference. Because the interaction effect is present between the treatment section and test section (AxB), the simple effect on each level of the two sections were analyzed. The posttest indicated a significant difference between the experimental group and control group, while

there was no significant difference between the two groups in the pretest (see Table 3).

Table 3. ANOVA on interaction effects between the treatment (The experimental group: A1, The control group: A2) and test scores (pretest: B1, posttest: B2)

S.V	SS	df	MS	F
Treatment (A) at B1	4.14	1	4.14	3.67 +
Subject (S) at B1	81.27	72	1.13	
Treatment (A) at B2	20.03	1	20.03	20.03 **
Subject (S) at B2	72.00	72	1.00	
B at A1	13.41	1	13.41	20.94 **
B at A2	1.49	1	1.49	2.33 ns
SxB	46.10	72	0.64	

+p < .10 *p < .05 **p < .01

Table 4. ANOVA on interaction effect between the treatment (Experimental group: A1, Control group: A2) and word count (pretest: B1, posttest: B2)

S.V	SS	df	MS	F
Treatment (A) at B1	395.15	1	395.15	0.51 ns
Subject (S) at B1	55364.49	72	768.95	
Treatment (A) at B2	19621.96	1	19621.96	20.39 **
Subject (S) at B2	69279.08	72	962.21	
B at A1	30001.35	1	30001.35	98.06 **
B at A2	175.62	1	175.62	0.57 ns
SxB	22029.03	72	305.96	

+p < .10 *p < .05 **p < .01

The experimental group showed a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest, while the control group showed no significant difference. Regarding the number of words written by students in the pretests and posttests, the

mean scores of both groups increased. However, ANOVA analysis indicated that there was a significant difference between the two tests in the experimental group ($p < .01$), although there was no significant difference between the two groups at the pretest and between the two tests in the control group (Table 4).

The results showed that the process approach led to an improvement in students' writing, both in quality and quantity.

Teacher feedback

The questionnaire data in the second term indicated students' strong influence from both the ALT and JTE feedback (Appendix E). The impact of teacher feedback exceeded peer feedback overall. The conference feedback by ALTs seemed to have a strong impact on students' learning especially at the beginning of the project. Most interviewees reported their excitement at the conference with ALTs. Although ALT feedback was not always easy to understand, JTE feedback seemed to complement it. Shota explained this:

When I got ALT feedback, I understood that I needed to correct my errors but couldn't understand how to deal with them. Then JTE explained what was wrong and how to correct the errors. I somehow understood what to do.

Thus students depended heavily on teacher feedback during the first and second terms.

Peer Feedback

When the writing project began, peer feedback seemed to have only a slight influence on students' writing. All the interviewees confessed that in the first and second terms, they did not trust peer feedback, because they knew that their peers' achievement level was no different from their own. They also stated that at first they found it uncomfortable to point out mistakes or errors in peers' writings, and that their lack of vocabulary in general prevented them from understanding the content of their peers' writing, making it difficult to provide feedback. However, in the second term, their attitudes toward peer feedback gradually changed. For example, Yui, who had complained earlier about the difficulty of peer feedback, stated that her attitude had changed from negative criticism to constructive criticism during the term. She explains this in the following manner:

I had only tried to find mistakes or errors at peer feedback sessions before, but in the third term I started to read peers' writings with much more ease and depth. I liked the topic so much. . . . Also, getting feedback from my peers told me how much they understood my writing. It helped me to write again.

Peer comments thus seemed to encourage students to improve their writing. Below are the excerpts of students' comments in the third term:

- I found it easy to read your writing because you wrote about club activities. I understand how you felt. I enjoyed reading this a lot.
- I can tell you spent a lot of time writing this passage because you use so many difficult words. I like the explanation of your feelings toward your friend.
- I understand the incident that took place between you and your mother. I think the passage will be better by adding the account of your feelings.
- Your writing has become better because you write more about your opinion than before.

Over the months, students began to focus on content and raised their audience awareness. Not only receiving, but also giving feedback enhanced students' writing. Akiko and Tomo, whose trust in peers had been almost zero throughout the project, admitted that reading their peers' writing sometimes gave them ideas about how to better organize a passage. Their peers' writing had a different flow and tone, which they sometimes adopted in their own writing. Yui also said that for her, giving feedback was more meaningful than receiving it, in that it gave her confidence as a reader. Her peers' works were written using easy English words, and understanding their writing led her to realize how easily she could communicate in the language she was learning. Thus, students raised their awareness not only as writers but also as readers. Students gradually became more able to communicate their ideas and thoughts through giving and receiving feedback.

Interdependence

Students' attitudes toward feedback changed dramatically in the third term. In the first and second terms when the conference feedback by teachers was mandatory, students knew teachers would give them detailed feedback. Therefore, they wrote their first drafts without even attempting to avoid errors. However, in the third

term when they chose not to receive conference feedback, their attitude toward avoiding errors became more serious. The questionnaires noted that about 80% of the students stated that they had become more careful in peer feedback. The remaining students mentioned their efforts to carefully read and understand their peers' writing tasks. In the interview, Yuka stated, "Without teacher oral feedback, we had to conduct draft writing and peer feedback carefully. We knew we needed to work harder by ourselves, and the whole group became more active in peer feedback." Because of the increased reliance on peer feedback, students became more responsible for their own writing and their interdependence deepened. (Appendix F shows an example of students' drafts.)

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the process-oriented approach contributed to students' improvement in writing skills. Students displayed significant improvement in both writing quality and quantity. The process approach fostered this improvement in two different ways. First, teacher feedback facilitated students' English usage as well as grammar/structure and organization in their writing. In this approach students relied on the JTE feedback for grammar instruction and the impact of the ALT feedback made students aware of the difference between use and usage of the English language. Second, peer feedback fostered a sense of writer responsibility through raising audience awareness. Given the freedom of choice, students chose to be reviewed by peers rather than by teachers. They started to try harder to communicate their own ideas correctly, and became more active in peer feedback sessions. In a teacher-controlled classroom, students seemed to have developed the passive attitudes of following instructions and trying to complete given tasks. However, the incorporation of peer feedback made students aware that they could cooperate with each other to communicate their ideas and thoughts through giving and receiving feedback. While teacher feedback mainly functioned as part of classroom instruction concerning grammar and structure, peer feedback provided more independent and self-reliant learning opportunities through mutual scaffolding. Thus, students became more responsible for their own learning. In this sense, peer feedback might be a good way for Japanese students to learn to become autonomous learners in the high school context.

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Appendices

The appendices for this paper are available on the TLT website <jalt-publications.org/tlt>.

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Appendix A

English Writing Project Questionnaire A (at the end of the 2nd term)

Please choose 1, 2, 3, or 4, depending on how strongly you agree with each statement.

*4 means strongly agree, 3 agree, 2 disagree, and 1 strongly disagree

How did your peer/ALT/JTE give feedback?

gave detailed corrections as carefully as possible	1	2	3	4
gave corrections on grammar and structure	1	2	3	4
pointed out awkward expressions	1	2	3	4
corrected awkward expressions	1	2	3	4
corrected sentence order or organization	1	2	3	4
suggested deletion or addition of sentences	1	2	3	4
gave useful information about topics/content	1	2	3	4
gave praise	1	2	3	4

Appendix B

Questionnaires B (at the end of the 3rd term)

English Writing Project Questionnaires (March) (M/F)

The project you have worked on over the year has just finished. Please reflect on the process of the poster production for each term, and answer the following questions in detail.

1. Which poster was the best (did you enjoy most / work on hardest / learned from most)?

The one in the () term

Please write the title. ()

Please explain why you think it's best.

2. You wrote three drafts individually in each term. Which topic did you enjoy most? Why?

3. As for the feedback on draft writings, both the ALT and JTE gave written and oral feedback in the first and second terms. However, in the third term, only written feedback was given basically. What did you think of this change?

Regarding ALT feedback:

Regarding JTE feedback:

4. Compare the feedback (written comments/correction and oral feedback) in the first and second terms and that in the third term (written comments/ correction and optional oral feedback). Was there any difference in learning through those two different types of feedback?

If there was any difference, please write the reason why/how the feedback caused different learning.

5. As for peer feedback, was there any difference in content / time /depth of learning between

peer feedback in the first, second and third term feedback?

Please consider this separately for both the draft writing process and the poster producing process.

When giving peer feedback, what were you careful about doing? Write about it.

Did your attitude change in each term? Why or why not?

What did peer feedback mean to you? If there was a change in your attitude, write about it.

Which do you think bring about more learning: giving or receiving peer feedback? Why?

Thanks for your cooperation.

Appendix C

Interview questions

3rd term: 1. How did you deal with peer feedback?

2. Did your attitude toward peer feedback change over the terms? Why?

3. Did you think peer feedback session was useful? If so, how?

4. Was teacher conference feedback useful? If so, how? If not, why?

5. How did you revise each draft? Why?

Appendix D

Peer feedback points: (printed on the draft handouts)

1. Underline the thesis sentence.

2. Underline the part you suspect grammatically incorrect.

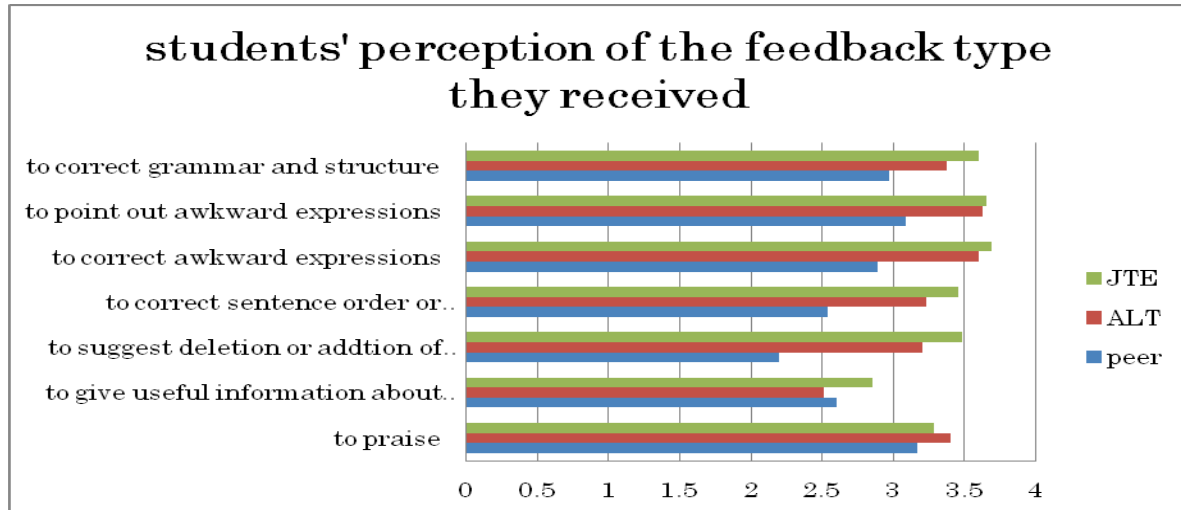
3. Ask your peers about things you find it difficult to understand.

4. Mark * on the part that you find awkward with regard to organization/cohesion.

5. Point out interesting/good points you find about the writing.

Appendix E

The feedback type that students perceived they received from peers and teachers



Appendix E

Example of students' writing (revised parts in bold)

Draft 1

It's important that clothe is comfortable to wear. Why? A comfortable wear is the physical comfort and the psychological comfort concerns that the breathe can natural, it neither hot nor cold, it feels soft, it is easy to move.

A physical comfort concerns that the color, design, silhouette of clothes are much liking, fashion trend.

Why do we wear?

Clothes keep one's body warm and prevent a drop in temperature when it is cold. Those block sunbeam and prevent a rise in temperature when it is hot. In other words, those have the role to protect one's body from different climates, regional environments.

And those function as a expression of personality, group be longing, the succession of social custom ad living culture. Beside those also function that those express different characters. On the other, we need to consider the clothe's choice by 'TPO.'

And those keep a body's safety and clean. And those function to support different living activity. These days clothes of different function have appeared. Our range of activities expanded and our life was comfortable.

It's important that clothes is comfortable to wear. A comfortable wear is the physical comfort and the psychological comfort. But physical comfort is the most important of all.

Draft 2

Why do we wear **clothes**? Clothes keep one's body warm and prevent a drop in temperature when it is cold. **Clothes** block sunbeams and prevent a rise in temperature when it is hot. In other words, **clothes role is** to protect one's body from different climates **and** regional environments. **For example, a veil and a turban and a loose clothes protect people from sunlight and dust in a desert tract. It is also well ventilated. And a fur**

protect against severe cold in a cold region. I have an interest in other reason why we wear clothes.

Clothes function as an expression of personality, **belonging to a group**, the succession of social custom and **culture**. Clothes also express different characters. When we choose clothes, we think various things. Is the clothes comfortable to wear? Is the design well? Do the clothes suit me best?

On the other words, we need to consider the clothe's choice by 'TPO.' 'TPO' is Japanese English. 'T' is time. 'P' is place. 'O' is occasion. **We wear a uniform to school. If we don't obey, that is unpleasant for many people. I want to consider the clothe's choice by 'TPO.'**

Draft 3

Why do we wear clothes? Clothes keep one's body warm and prevent a drop in temperature when it is cold. Clothes block sunbeams and prevent a rise in temperature when it is hot. In other words, **the role of clothes** is to protect one's body from different climates and regional environments. For example, **veils, turbans, and** loose clothes protect people from sunlight and dust in **the** desert. **They also keep people well ventilated. Also, fur protects** against severe cold in **cold regions**. I have an interest in other **reasons** why we wear clothes.

Clothes function as an expression of personality, belonging to a group, the succession of social **customs** and culture. Clothes also express different **characteristics**. When we choose clothes, we **consider** various things. **Are** the clothes comfortable to wear? Is the design **good**? Do the clothes suit me **well**? **In other words**, we need to consider **clothes** by 'TPO.' 'TPO' is Japanese English. 'T' is time. 'P' is place. 'O' is occasion. We wear a uniform **at** school. **School is the place where we study. School is not the place where we go all dressed up. I consider that there is a school uniform so that we can concentrate on our work.** If we don't obey **this rule**, that is unpleasant for many people. I want to consider **'TPO' when I chose an outfit.**