Confidence in writing: The effect of feedback

Rachael Ruegg

Dennis Koyama

Abstract

Many writing instructors believe that the better the quality of the feedback, the more the students' writing will improve. However, there are many factors that combine to determine the improvement a student makes. One important factor to take into consideration when planning any kind of instruction, but particularly writing instruction which involves so much feedback, is confidence. Students' confidence levels can be affected by a variety of variables but the feedback they receive may be one of the most important variables affecting how confident a student feels about their writing skills. The present study examines the relationship between the frequency of written feedback (self-feedback, peer-feedback and teacher-feedback) students receive on their writing and the changes in their perceptions of their writing ability over a period of one year.

INTRODUCTION

Instructors of writing spend an extraordinarily long time giving feedback to students. Whereas instructors of other kinds of classes spend the bulk of their time preparing materials for lessons, instructors of writing seem to spend more of their time giving feedback to students themselves or training the students to revise their writing or give feedback to their peers (herein called 'peer-feedback'). Many instructors believe that the better the quality of the feedback, the more the students' writing will improve. However, there are many factors that combine to determine the improvement a student makes. One important factor to take into

consideration when planning any kind of instruction, but particularly writing instruction which involves so much feedback, is confidence. Students' confidence levels can be affected by a variety of variables but the feedback they receive may be one of the most important variables affecting how confident a student feels about their writing skills. The research question for the present study is: What is the relationship between the frequency of written feedback (self-feedback, peer-feedback and teacher-feedback) students receive on their writing and the changes in their confidence in their writing ability?

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Responding to students writing is an area of research, as Ferris (2004) describes, that has received much and varied attention in second language education. Some researchers (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Chaudron, 1984; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1984, among others) have written in support of feedback to students in the belief that responding to students writing plays an important role in the development of the students' writing abilities. Other researchers, however, have documented how feedback to student writing may result in adverse effects (e.g., Sheppard, 1992), unintended consequences, misunderstandings (e.g., Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2001), or ambiguous results (e.g., Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986). Perhaps the most outspoken researcher opposed to giving feedback to students is Professor John Truscott.

Truscott (1996) stated that teachers should not give feedback even if students want it, if it could have detrimental effects on their writing. Truscott claimed that grammar correction has harmful effects on student attitudes and that it absorbs

time and energy in writing classes. He noted specifically:

> Learning is most successful when it involves a limited amount of stress, when students are relaxed and confident and enjoying their learning….People do not like to be told that they are wrong, especially to be told repeatedly that they are constantly making mistakes. Even students who believe that correction is a necessary part of learning do not enjoy the sight of red ink all over their writing and probably find the experience discouraging (Truscott 1996: 354).

In light of Truscott's points, it is easy to concede that students might feel discouraged by the sight of red ink all over their writing. His conclusion is that correction is not only unhelpful, but it may actually hinder the learning process by causing a loss of confidence in the students who receive this kind of feedback. Some researchers have noted that students who fear feedback may practice avoidance strategies, or simplify their writing (Truscott, 1996), to avoid further red ink from the teacher. Sheppard (1992) found that when he gave error correction to one group of students and content feedback to another group, the group that had received the error correction wrote significantly less subordinate clauses, this was suggested to be an avoidance strategy encouraged by a fear of making mistakes.

In studies reviewed by Knoblauch and Brannon (1981, cited in Truscott 1996) and by Hillocks (1986, cited in Truscott 1996) it was shown that:

> Students who did not receive correction had a more positive attitude towards writing than those who did. The uncorrected writers….wrote more, presumably because of their better attitude…..All else being equal, a class students enjoy is preferable to one they do not enjoy, and a good attitude

towards writing is preferable to a bad one (Truscott 1996:354).

Hyland and Hyland (2001) looked at different kinds of end comments given by teachers. In particular they wanted to identify the roles played by praise, criticism and suggestion and the effects mitigation of comments had on students' reception of end comments. They found that mitigation made the comments incomprehensible to students and that more direct praise, criticism and suggestions were more likely to be understood and therefore more effective in terms of improvement. It is reasonable to believe that comments that are understood are less likely to engender a lack of confidence, whereas the misunderstanding of comments may be enough to decrease confidence levels. They state that most teachers realize the need to be careful when wording written feedback because writing is very personal and it is easy to damage students' motivation and self-confidence. In addition, "Teachers have to weigh their choice of comments to accomplish a range of informational, pedagogic and interpersonal goals simultaneously" (2001: 187) because of being not only the teacher but also often the "proofreader, facilitator, gatekeeper, evaluator and reader all at the same time" (2001: 187). They go on to explain that feedback research focusing on praise and criticism in the second language literature is fairly scarce. The teachers in the Hyland and Hyland study were well aware of the possible effects of both negative and positive feedback and both teachers approached this issue by trying to give plenty of positive feedback as well as constructive comments.

Hyland (1998) shows that feedback in many instances leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Sometimes it is because the feedback is of poor quality,

sometimes because it focuses on the wrong issues, resulting in the feedback being ignored, misunderstood or misinterpreted by learners. Misunderstanding of feedback is one factor that potentially results in demotivation. One student, 'Samorn', reported having lost confidence in her grammatical ability which may have made her more reliant on the teacher's feedback and less willing to do self-editing. Writing feedback, then, can play a crucial role not only in developing writing and revision skills but also in students' confidence in their writing which can lead to a change in their overall language confidence and potentially even affect a change of future career path. Hyland notes:

> A lack of positive feedback on what she had previously considered to be a strong point, her grammar, contributed to Samorn becoming demotivated and taking steps to avoid writing by changing her future course from the business one involving writing to a more orally focused tourism one (1998: 278).

What this points out is that although Samorn had asked for feedback on grammar (and had expected both constructive feedback and praise). The feedback she wanted and received in fact demotivated her and caused her to lose confidence in her writing skills. It is thus clear that even students who want a lot of feedback can lose confidence as a result of receiving feedback, and by extension, this means that merely tailoring the amount and kind of feedback to suit individual students is not enough to ensure that the feedback helps the students. The feedback dilemma is a lot more complex than that.

Learners' attitudes towards writing can be enhanced by socially supportive peers (Chaudron, 1984) and that when student reviewers realize that their peers are

experiencing the same problems with their writing it can lead to increased confidence. In an attempt to identify if feedback has an effect on student confidence, Hirose (2008) conducted a study in which peer-feedback was used every week as an integral part of a writing course. She used an end of course questionnaire to ascertain both students' perceptions of the feedback itself and of their writing ability. One item on the questionnaire asked students to rate their confidence: "I feel more confident in my written English now than 3 months ago" (2008: 552). She used a five point Likert scale, where: 1 = *strong disagreement, 2 = disagreement, 3 = neutrality, 4 = agreement* and *5 = strong agreement*, the mean score for this question was 3.53 indicating students seemed moderately positive in terms of a growth in their confidence. However, Hirose's study did not have a control group (a common critique of feedback studies, see Ferris, 1999) so there is no way of knowing how they would have answered the same question given different feedback practices.

Berger (1990) collected data from drafts of two essays, the feedback evaluation forms for those two essays and a questionnaire to find out the pedagogical effects of peer- and self-feedback. She found that the different treatments did not change students' attitudes towards their writing ability. Both peer- and self-feedback groups felt that their ability improved. Notably, she does not state whether any analysis was undertaken to examine the difference between the amount of perceived improvement between groups. Berger's study sheds some light on the effects (both pedagogical effects and changes in student perception) of peer- and self-feedback but does not take teacher-feedback into consideration. A further limitation with this study is the treatment and data collection period. Only two

essays were analysed. It would be more likely for differences between groups to be found after a longer treatment period. She explains a distinction made by Gere (1987, cited in Berger 1990) between semi-autonomous and non-autonomous feedback. Non-autonomous feedback entails students filling out a prepared editing guide, checklist or evaluation sheet while editing.

Tsui and Ng (2000) add that students from some countries see the teacher as the only source of knowledge and thus may not use the comments offered by their peers. In their study of Chinese learners they found that the learners preferred teacher-feedback and that teacher-feedback also lead to more changes than peer-feedback, possibly for this reason. They point out though that peer-feedback results in the writer having more agency because the peer is an equal. When a teacher gives feedback on the other hand, especially as the teacher is also the evaluator of the writing, students may feel that it's better to act on all the feedback regardless of whether they agree with it or not and whether it is expressing their original idea or something different. Therefore, Truscott (1999) maintains that the influence of feedback on students' beliefs is a worthy topic for investigation. While other researchers claim that at the end of the day, regardless of who gives the feedback, it is the writer's decision whether they incorporate the feedback or not (Tsui & Ng 2000). They propose that the agency created by peer-feedback gives students increased confidence in their writing.

Connors and Lunsford (1993) looked at teachers' rhetorical comments on students' writing. They analysed the teacher comments on 3,000 student papers and found many patterns of teacher commentary that they suppose influence

students' confidence. The main factors that they indicate may affect students' confidence levels are a lack of comments at all, very brief comments and comments which are evaluative rather than suggestive. It is from this point of departure that this exploratory study investigated student perceptions of their confidence levels in their writing as a result of peer-, self-, and teacher-feedback.

CONTEXT

All students in the English department are required to take 'Basic Writing' in their first year at the university. Basic Writing meets once a week for 90 minutes and moves from paragraph writing in the first semester to writing five paragraph essays in the second semester. In their second year all students are required to take 'Advanced Writing'. Advanced Writing meets twice a week for 90 minutes and involves writing various different kinds of essays in the first semester and completing a research paper in the second semester. The present study was conducted in four intact classes of Advanced Writing over a period of one academic year.

Students in the English department are streamed into four ability tiers for their second year classes, tier one being the highest ability level and tier four being the lowest. The classes involved in this study included classes from tiers one, two and four. The data includes two classes from tier one, one class from tier two and one class from tier four. The students ranged in ability from pre-intermediate level to advanced level students.

INSTRUMENTS

The instruments of the study were two different questionnaires that were written and piloted in Japanese language (For English versions of the questionnaires, see appendix A for the pre-questionnaire and appendix B for the post-questionnaire). The pre-questionnaire was administered during the first two weeks of the first semester. This questionnaire elicited information about students' past experiences of learning to write, their past experiences of receiving feedback and their self assessment of their own writing ability.

The post-questionnaire was administered at the end of the academic year. This questionnaire elicited students' self-assessments of their writing ability, their improvement over the year, as well as their opinions about the amount of feedback they had received, how helpful the feedback was and how much of the feedback they had understood.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were 86 English majors in their second year of study at a private university in central Japan. According to a questionnaire completed at the start of the academic year, their prior essay writing instruction and feedback experience were as follows:

In terms of their writing instruction prior to entering KUIS, most students ($N = 72$, or 84%) had received specific instruction on how to write essays in Japanese (see Table 1).

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Table 1: *Japanese essay instruction*

Have you ever learnt to write essays in Japanese prior to coming to KUIS?		
Yes	72	84%
No	14	16%

Of the 84% who had learnt to write essays in Japanese, their experience of receiving peer and teacher-feedback varied from 51 students (71%) receiving no peer-feedback on those essays to 1 student (1%) receiving peer-feedback often. The details are shown in Table 2.

Table 3: *Teacher-fedback on Japanese essys*

Table 2: *Peer-feedback on Japanese essays*

When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer-feedback?		
Never	51	71%
Once	4	6%
A few times	15	21%
Often	1	1%
Every essay	0	0%

When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive teacher-feedback?		
Never	3	4%
Once	1	1%
A few times	29	40%
Often	29	40%
Every essay	10	14%

Table 3 shows the range of students who had received teacher-feedback on essays written in Japanese with a majority of students (94%, or $N = 68$) receiving feedback from teachers at least "a few times" and 10 students (14%) indicated they received teacher-feedback on every essay.

When compared to writing in Japanese, fewer students had learnt to write essays in English prior to entering KUIS; around half (see Table 4).

Table 4: *English essay writing instruction*

Have you ever learnt to write essays in English prior to coming to KUIS?		
Yes	50	58%
No	36	42%

Of the 58% who had learnt to write essays in English prior to studying at KUIS their experience of receiving peer- and teacher-feedback on those essays is shown in Tables 5 and 6, respectively.

Table 5: *Peer-feedback on English essays*

When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer-feedback?		
Never	37	74%
Once	1	2%
A few times	9	18%
Often	2	4%
Every essay	1	2%

Table 6: *Teacher-feedback on English essays*

When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you receive teacher-feedback?

Never	2	4%
Once	2	4%
A few times	14	28%
Often	17	34%
Every essay	15	30%

Eighty-four of the participants had studied writing at KUIS for a year in their first-year Basic Writing class. The other two students had transferred from another university and therefore had not taken the KUIS Basic Writing class. In Basic Writing, students meet once a week in classes of 25-30 students for 90 minutes. They spend one semester learning to write paragraphs and then move on to five paragraph essays in the second semester. The number of paragraphs and essays that they write during the one year course varies depending on the teacher and students, as does the amount and types of feedback. The amount of feedback students received during Basic Writing is shown in Figure 7, which shows one student (1%) never received any peer-feedback. The remaining 83 students received peer-feedback at least "a few times", with 28 students (33%) receiving peer-feedback "often", and 40% indicated they had received peer-feedback on "every essay" (N = 34).

Table 7: *Peer-feedback during Basic Writing*

When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive peer-feedback?

Never	1	2%
Once	0	0%
A few times	21	25%
Often	28	33%
Every essay	34	40%

Table 8: *Teacher-feedback during Basic Writing*

When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive teacher-feedback?

Never	1	1%
Once	1	1%
A few times	6	7%
Often	12	14%
Every essay	64	76%

METHOD

A principal components analysis (PCA) was performed (with VARIMAX rotation) on the responses to both questionnaires. The use of a principal components analysis is a valid way to investigate the degree to which the instrument is measuring what it claims to measure (Brown, Cunha, Frota, & Ferreira, 2001: 266). Tabachnik and Fidell (2001) also note that by examining the patterns of correlations between items, PCA can be used to determine the underlying trait of the measured qualities. Several perspectives were considered when determining the factors in the surveys, an examination of Eigen values above 1.00, a scree plot analysis, and the general interpretability of the rotated factors.

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In order to ascertain what effect different feedback practices had on student confidence, initially the answers to the final four questions of the pre-questionnaire (which was about students' self-assessment of their own writing ability) were deducted from their answers to the first four questions of the post-questionnaire (the identical questions, nine months later). The resulting figure represents the change in confidence over the academic year. Students were then separated into three groups for each analysis, one group consisted of the students whose confidence had decreased over the one year period, one group consisted of students whose confidence had remained the same and the other group consisted of students whose confidence had increased.

The students with differing changes in confidence in each writing skill over the one year period were then compared in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received. One-way ANOVA was employed to ascertain difference between these three groups of students in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received. This included their perceptions of the quantity of feedback, how helpful the feedback was and how much of the feedback they understood.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for the four questions relating to students' confidence in their writing ability at the beginning of the academic year are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: *Pre-questionnaire student confidence descriptive statistics*

Question	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
9	86	1	5	3.58	0.804
10	86	1	5	3.53	0.793
11	85	1	5	3.31	1.035
12	86	1	5	3.16	0.931

The descriptive statistics for all questions in the post questionnaire are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: *Post-questionnaire descriptive statistics*

Question	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
1	86	1	6	4.07	0.943
2	86	1	5	3.92	0.936
3	86	1	5	3.42	0.860
4	86	1	6	3.64	1.061
5	86	2	4	3.27	0.495
6	86	2	4	3.17	0.490
7	86	2	4	3.06	0.517
8	86	2	4	3.30	0.575
9	86	1	5	2.65	0.878
10	86	1	5	2.67	0.583
11	86	1	5	2.74	0.654
12	86	1	3	2.21	0.596
13	86	1	3	2.49	0.526
14	86	1	3	2.27	0.541
15	86	1	3	2.33	0.496
16	86	1	3	2.57	0.543
17	86	1	3	2.52	0.525
18	86	1	3	2.41	0.582
19	86	2	3	2.64	0.483
20	86	2	5	3.80	0.764
21	86	2	3	2.86	0.349
22	86	2	3	2.73	0.445
23	86	2	3	2.77	0.425
24	86	2	3	2.85	0.360
25	86	1	5	3.74	0.935

The tables that follow show the results of the PCA. Asterisks indicate loadings of .50 or higher, and the bold-faced type indicates the highest loading for each question. The communalities (noted as h^2 in the tables) are presented in the furthest right column of the table. According to Brown, Robson, and Rosenkjar (2001), communalities quantify the total proportion of variance that the factors account for in each survey question. Finally, at the bottom of each table, a row is given with the proportion of variance noted. This proportion of variance is the overall variance accounted for by each factor in the rotated solution.

Pre-questionnaire

After examining the scree plot (see appendix C), and the Eigen values (the percentage of variance accounted for by a given component), a four component solution was determined to be best. Table 11 shows the component loadings after VARIMAX rotation for all students' responses. Component one, was identified as a background in writing component. Students noted how often they received feedback and if they had had instruction in writing (Japanese or English). Component two seemed to point up confidence in writing. Component three was about receiving feedback on English writing, whereas Component four identified feedback on Japanese writing. As indicated by the communalities value (i.e., h^2), the proportion of variance accounted for by Component one is 0.27, which indicates that 27% of the variance is accounted for by this component. By extension, then, the variance accounted for by the whole questionnaire is 0.78, or 78%.

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Table 11: *Extracted Components from Students' Responses to the Pre-questionnaire*

Question	Item/Factor	1	2	3	4	h^2
1	Have you ever learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS?	**0.92***	0.00	0.02	-0.16	0.87
4	Have you ever learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS?	**0.86***	0.07	-0.39	0.16	0.93
8	When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive teacher feedback?	**0.80***	0.12	0.07	-0.01	0.93
7	When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive peer feedback?	**0.79***	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.92
12	Overall, how good do you think you are at writing essays in English?	0.00	**0.84***	-0.12	-0.02	0.96
10	How good do you think you are at giving support for each main idea in your essays?	0.12	**0.82***	0.01	-0.05	0.97
9	How good do you think you are at organizing the ideas in your essays?	0.12	**0.80***	-0.04	-0.10	0.63
11	How good do you think your grammar skills are when writing essays?	-0.02	**0.57***	-0.25	0.23	0.66
6	When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you receive teacher feedback?	0.00	-0.15	**0.97***	0.09	0.66
5	When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer feedback?	-0.02	-0.13	**0.96***	0.12	0.68
3	When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive teacher feedback?	0.02	-0.01	0.09	**0.96***	0.44
2	When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer feedback?	0.00	-0.01	0.10	**0.96***	0.71
	Total variance accounted for	0.27	0.21	0.17	0.13	0.78

* loadings above .50
[bold] highest loading for each variable

<u>Post-questionnaire</u>

Similar to the pre-questionnaire, a scree plot (see appendix D) analysis and Eigen values guided component determination. The component loadings after VARIMAX rotation for all students' responses are displayed in Table 12. A six component solution was determined to be best. Components one, two and three were all related to the different feedback forms received by the students. Component one was identified as Teacher-feedback, and component two and three were identifying Self-feedback and Peer-feedback respectively. Component four was related to confidence, while component five was related to improvement. The final component, six, was loaded on by question three of the post-questionnaire and this question addressed the amount of peer-feedback students completed. The communalities value (h^2), shows that 65% of the total variance was accounted for by the post-questionnaire.

Table 12: *Extracted Components from Students' Responses to the Post-questionnaire*

Question	Item/Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	h^2
24	Overall, how helpful was Teacher feedback?	**0.79***	0.29	0.07	0.01	-0.03	0.05	0.72
21	How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving your grammar?	**0.76***	0.23	0.17	0.13	-0.02	-0.02	0.75
22	How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving the organization of the ideas in your essays?	**0.72***	0.07	0.34*	0.01	0.00	0.20	0.64
23	How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving the support you gave for each main idea in your essays?	**0.68***	0.02	0.23	-0.02	0.19	-0.11	0.70
11	How was the amount of teacher feedback you received?	**0.68***	-0.05	-0.05	0.11	0.08	0.01	0.69
15	Overall, how helpful was self feedback?	-0.02	**0.77***	0.06	0.03	0.18	-0.05	0.70
13	How helpful was self feedback for improving your ability to organize the ideas in your essays?	0.17	**0.76***	-0.02	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.70

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#	Question							
14	How helpful was self feedback for improving your ability to give support for each main idea in your essays?	0.11	**0.75***	0.18	0.29	0.02	-0.06	0.69
12	How helpful was self feedback for improving your grammar?	0.14	**0.69***	0.24	-0.07	0.21	0.19	0.47
9	How was the amount of self feedback you did?	0.23	**0.50***	-0.23	-0.23	0.20	0.2	0.73
19	Overall, how helpful was Peer feedback?	0.23	0.06	**0.82***	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	0.48
17	How helpful was Peer feedback for improving your organization of ideas in your essays?	0.24	-0.05	**0.79***	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.63
16	How helpful was Peer feedback for improving your grammar?	0.00	0.23	**0.74***	0.15	-0.21	-0.09	0.63
18	How helpful was Peer feedback for improving the support you gave for each main idea in your essays?	0.15	0.05	**0.67***	-0.01	0.28	0.15	0.70
2	Now, how good do you think you are at giving support for each main idea in your essays?	-0.08	0.09	-0.09	**0.80***	0.26	-0.13	0.63
1	Now, how good do you think you are at organizing the ideas in your essays?	0.03	0.05	-0.02	**0.79***	0.31	0.01	0.68
4	Overall, how good do you think you are at writing essays in English now?	0.13	0.02	0.04	**0.63***	0.36	0.39	0.68
25	How much of the teacher feedback did you understand?	0.29	0.04	0.19	**0.62***	0.04	0.11	0.58
20	How much of the peer feedback did you understand?	-0.1	0.21	0.34	**0.39**	-0.09	0.3	0.73
7	How much have your grammar skills improved since April?	0.19	-0.01	0.13	0.13	**0.77***	0.19	0.42
8	Overall, how much has your ability to write essays improved since April?	-0.08	0.29	0.02	0.21	**0.74***	0.08	0.68
5	How much has your ability to organize the ideas in your essays improved since April?	0.02	0.24	-0.2	0.22	**0.73***	-0.1	0.68
6	How much has your ability to give support for each main idea in your essays improved since April?	0.11	0.18	0.02	0.37	**0.68***	-0.24	0.57
3	How was the amount of peer feedback you did?	0.01	0.17	0.05	0.05	-0.05	**0.84***	0.71
10	Now, how good do you think your grammar skills are when writing essays?	0.15	-0.18	-0.26	0.46	0.28	**0.48**	0.52
	Total variance explained	0.23	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.65

* loadings above .50
[bold] highest loading for each variable

Following this, one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to ascertain significant relationships between the different feedback practices and the students' change in confidence over the academic year.

Organisation

In terms of organisation, there were 11 students whose confidence had decreased, 33 students whose confidence had remained the same and 42 students whose confidence had increased. These three groups of students were then compared in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received.

One-way ANOVA was employed to ascertain whether there was any significant difference between the perceptions the students in the three groups had of the feedback they had received. While there was no significant difference between the three groups in terms of the questions about the amount of feedback received (questions five to seven), or the questions about the helpfulness of self-feedback and teacher-feedback (questions eight and eleven), there was a significant difference in the students' perceptions about the helpfulness of peer-feedback (significant at the 0.05 level); $F(2) = 4.502$, $p = 0.014$. A post-hoc comparison of means was employed, in this case a Scheffe test, to find out which groups had significantly different answers and the direction of the relationship.

The Scheffe test showed that students whose confidence in their ability to organize ideas in their essays remained the same over the one year period felt that peer-feedback was significantly more helpful than those whose confidence in their ability to organize ideas decreased ($p = 0.014$).

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Content

In terms of confidence in their ability to support their ideas in their essays, 11 students decreased over the one year period, 39 students remained the same and 36 students increased. These three groups were also compared using one-way ANOVA in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received.

The results of the ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in terms of students' perceptions regarding the amount of self, peer or teacher-feedback they had received. Whereas there was no significant difference between the students perceptions of the usefulness of peer or teacher-feedback between the three groups, there was a significant difference in terms of their perceptions of the usefulness of self-feedback; F (2) $= 3.616$, $p = 0.031$.

A post-hoc Scheffe test conducted to find out which groups differed significantly and in what way found that students who increased in their confidence in their ability to support ideas in their writing felt that self-feedback was significantly less helpful than those whose confidence increased ($p = 0.036$).

Grammar

In terms of their confidence in their grammar skills in writing, 18 students decreased, 40 remained the same and 28 increased. One-way ANOVA was employed to find significant difference between these three groups of students in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received.

No significant differences were found between any of the groups in terms of their

perceptions of the amount of self, peer or teacher-feedback they had received or the helpfulness of self, peer or teacher-feedback.

<u>Overall writing ability</u>

In terms of the confidence students had in their overall writing ability, 13 decreased over the one year period, 28 remained the same and 45 increased. A One-way ANOVA was employed to find any significant differences between these three groups of students in terms of their perceptions of the feedback they had received.

The ANOVA found no significant difference between the three groups in terms of the helpfulness of the feedback, however, a significant difference was found between the groups in terms of perceptions of the amount of peer-feedback they received; $F(2) = 5.259$, $p = 0.0073$.

A Scheffe post-hoc comparison of means showed that students whose overall confidence in writing increased felt that they had received more peer-feedback than those whose confidence decreased ($p = 0.025$).

CONCLUSION

For the students in this study, self-feedback did not appear to have any affect on students' confidence in their writing. As the nature of self-feedback means that it is more proofreading than an evaluation, students may not feel that their writing actually improves as a result of self-feedback. That said, it is an important skill for writers to be able to proofread their writing for errors and ambiguity. This finding, then, should be treated with caution and in light of the goals of academic teaching

of writing.

In addition to this, students who reported that they had done more peer-feedback had higher overall confidence in their writing ability. Since the more peer-feedback a student does the more examples of their peers' writing they are exposed to, it might be the case that reading peers' preliminary drafts allows students to compare themselves more favourably than simply reading a polished example essay.

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Appendix A: Pre-questionnaire

1. Have you ever learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS?
     A: Yes
     B: No
2. When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer feedback?
     A: Never
     B: Once
     C: A few times
     D: Often
     E: Every essay
3. When you learnt to write essays in Japanese before coming to KUIS how often did you receive teacher feedback?
     A: Never
     B: Once
     C: A few times
     D: Often
     E: Every essay
4. Have you ever learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS?
     A: Yes
     B: No
5.   When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you receive peer feedback?
     A: Never
     B: Once
     C: A few times
     D: Often
     E: Every essay
6.   When you learnt to write essays in English before coming to KUIS how often did you

receive teacher feedback?

    A: Never

    B: Once

    C: A few times

    D: Often

    E: Every essay

7. When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive peer feedback?

    A: Never

    B: Once

    C: A few times

    D: Often

    E: Every essay

8. When you learnt to write essays in Basic Writing how often did you receive teacher feedback?

    A: Never

    B: Once

    C: A few times

    D: Often

    E: Every essay

9. How good do you think you are at organizing the ideas in your essays?

    A: Terrible

    B: Poor

    C: Not so good

    D: Good

    E: Very good

    F: Excellent

10. How good do you think you are at giving support for each main idea in your essays?

    A: Terrible

    B: Poor

    C: Not so good

    D: Good

    E: Very good

    F: Excellent

11. How good do you think your grammar skills are when writing essays?

    A: Terrible

    B: Poor

    C: Not so good

    D: Good

    E: Very good

    F: Excellent

12. Overall, how good do you think you are at writing essays in English?

    A: Terrible

    B: Poor

    C: Not so good

    D: Good

    E: Very good

    F: Excellent

Appendix B: <u>Post-questionnaire</u>

<u>Please read every question and all the options before choosing an answer.</u>
<u>Please do not refer to your essays until asked to do so.</u>

1. Now, how good do you think you are at organizing the ideas in your essays?
 A: Terrible
 B: Poor
 C: Not so good
 D: Good
 E: Very good
 F: Excellent
2. Now, how good do you think you are at giving support for each main idea in your essays?
 A: Terrible
 B: Poor
 C: Not so good
 D: Good
 E: Very good
 F: Excellent
3. Now, how good do you think your grammar skills are when writing essays?
 A: Terrible
 B: Poor
 C: Not so good
 D: Good
 E: Very good
 F: Excellent
4. Overall, how good do you think you are at writing essays in English now?
 A: Terrible
 B: Poor
 C: Not so good
 D: Good
 E: Very good
 F: Excellent
5. How much has your ability to organize the ideas in your essays improved since April?
 A: Not at all
 B: A little
 C: A lot
6. How much has your ability to give support for each main idea in your essays improved since April?
 A: Not at all
 B: A little
 C: A lot
7. How much have your grammar skills improved since April?
 A: Not at all
 B: A little
 C: A lot

8. Overall, how much has your ability to write essays improved since April?
  A: Not at all
  B: A little
  C: A lot

<u>Please pull out your essays from this year and refer to them when answering the next questions.</u>

9. How was the amount of self feedback you did?
  1: Very insufficient
  2: A little insufficient
  3: Just right
  4: A little too much
  5: Far too much
10. How was the amount of peer feedback you did?
  1: Very insufficient
  2: A little insufficient
  3: Just right
  4: A little too much
  5: Far too much
11. How was the amount of teacher feedback you received?
  1: Very insufficient
  2: A little insufficient
  3: Just right
  4: A little too much
  5: Far too much
12. How helpful was self feedback for improving your grammar?
  1: Not helpful at all
  2: A little helpful
  3: Very helpful
13. How helpful was self feedback for improving your ability to organize the ideas in your essays?
  1: Not helpful at all
  2: A little helpful
  3: Very helpful
14. How helpful was self feedback for improving your ability to give support for each main idea in your essays?
  1: Not helpful at all
  2: A little helpful
  3: Very helpful
15. Overall, how helpful was self feedback?
  1: Not helpful at all
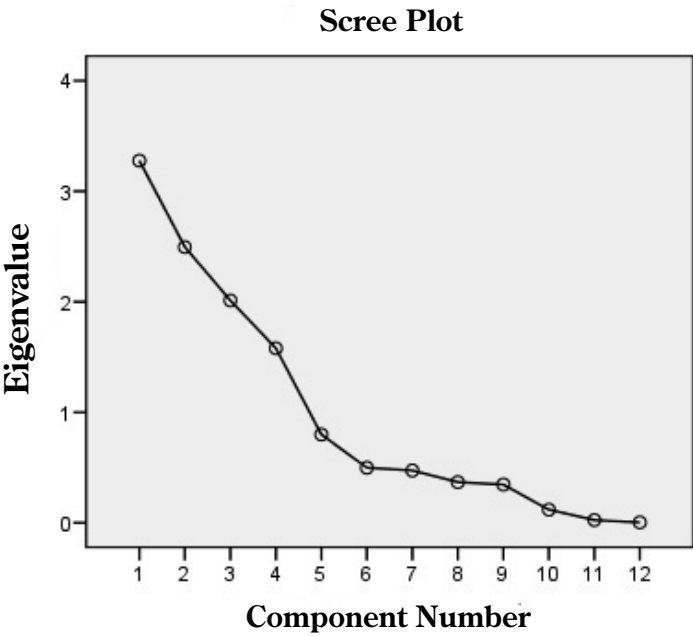 2: A little helpful
  3: Very helpful
16. How helpful was Peer feedback for improving your grammar?
  1: Not helpful at all

   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

17. How helpful was Peer feedback for improving your organization of ideas in your essays?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

18. How helpful was Peer feedback for improving the support you gave for each main idea in your essays?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

19. Overall, how helpful was Peer feedback?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

20. How much of the peer feedback did you understand?
   1: None
   2: A little
   3: Some
   4: Most
   5: All

21. How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving your grammar?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

22. How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving the organization of the ideas in your essays?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

23. How helpful was Teacher feedback for improving the support you gave for each main idea in your essays?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

24. Overall, how helpful was Teacher feedback?
   1: Not helpful at all
   2: A little helpful
   3: Very helpful

25. How much of the teacher feedback did you understand?
   1: None
   2: A little
   3: Some
   4: Most
   5: All

Appendix C

Scree Plot

Appendix D

Scree Plot