Self-directed Revision in L2 Writing Classes at a Japanese University: A Study of Students' Views

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Abstract

While the provision of formative feedback is an essential element of the process approach to teaching second language writing, learners must also take responsibility for revising their own written work, and teachers need to devise methods by which they can be encouraged to do so. Three classroom activities were used in order to stimulate self-directed revisions by a group of Japanese undergraduates. These activities were found to be highly effective, with learners making three times as many revisions to their writing as did a control group. This article focuses on affective factors, and investigates the attitudes of these learners towards the process of self-directed revision. At three points during the writing process learners completed a questionnaire, and in order to provide further insight, six were interviewed in depth. Results indicated that although students realised the utility of the three treatments, their attitudes towards self-directed revision remained somewhat ambivalent.

Key words: second language writing, revising, self-directed revision

Introduction

In recent years, with computers steadily replacing pen and paper as the medium through which writing is done, revising written work has become considerably easier, as making changes to an electronic document is a far less time-consuming process than redrafting one written by hand. While writers have always revised their work, technology has thus served to reinforce the role of revision, fundamentally changing the balance between the time and effort required to redraft and the benefits of doing so. In turn, the relative ease of revising a piece of writing has enhanced the value of receiving feedback on early drafts, with writers now likely to be more willing to make changes to their compositions in response to this feedback. Both feedback and revision have therefore become more central to how

we write, and this is perhaps even more true when writing in a second language, as the work of less experienced or proficient writers is even more likely to benefit from revision. Teachers of ESL and EFL writing classes thus have a duty to think carefully about how best to utilize feedback and how best to encourage their students to effectively revise their writing. This paper examines student attitudes towards one attempt to do that.

Teacher feedback and revision

Since the rise of the process approach in writing instruction, there has been widespread acceptance of the importance of teacher formative feedback and re-drafting in developing the writing abilities of second language learners (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, although the importance of teacher feedback itself is rarely disputed, there is much more discussion regarding the specific forms that this feedback should take (see, for example, Shintani, Ellis & Suzuki, 2014; Van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuiken, 2012). One of the most charged debates within the field of second language writing has been regarding the value of grammar correction as a component of teacher feedback.

While acknowledging the value of feedback on content and organization, Truscott (1996) argued that feedback on grammar diverts teacher and student time and attention from more profitable activities, and as a result, although it may reduce grammar errors on specific drafts, is both ineffective and counterproductive with regard to long-term learning. Despite opposition from other scholars, most prominently Ferris (1999, 2004, 2006) and Chandler (2003, 2009), Truscott has consistently defended this position (Truscott 1999, 2007, 2009; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). But even among those who agree that error correction is worthwhile there is no consensus on how it is best provided. Although Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) concluded that the type of correction had only a negligible effect on improving the quality of students' writing, others (for example, Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Shintani & Ellis, 2013) have found particular correction techniques to promote more effective revision. Furthermore, although not a theoretical justification, it cannot be ignored that students and institutions continue to expect teachers to provide grammar focused feedback. Timpson, Grow and Matsuoka (1999), for example, found that over 90% of the 1228 Japanese university students they surveyed believed error correction to be necessary. For many teachers then, regardless of

their personal views, abandoning grammar correction would be difficult in practice; a more realistic option being to ensure the feedback they provide on grammar is as effective as possible for as many students as possible. As Straub (2000), working in L1 education, points out:

> There are as many good ways of responding as there are good ways of teaching writing… What works for one teacher, in one context, may or may not work for another… It depends on the particular teacher, the individual student, and the specific circumstances. (p. 24)

Thus, flexible and context-specific methods are perhaps most appropriate: not only might different students benefit from different types of correction, this may also be true of different errors (Shintani, Ellis & Suzuki, 2014).

Over and above the theoretical debates regarding feedback, there are also more prosaic issues. Lee and Schallert (2008), Makino (1993), Yoshimura (2010) and Zamel (1985) all lament the time and effort required to provide useful feedback on students' papers. And not only is this task time-consuming, it is far from easy to do well, with Goldstein (2004) offering the following (non-exhaustive) list of concerns:

> What should I respond to first? What should I ignore at this time? How should I respond? Will each student understand and be able to effectively use my commentary? Will they learn from my commentary for future writing? What if they have difficulty? How will I know? What will I do? (p. 63)

However, while opinions vary on the timing, type and amount of feedback teachers should provide, there is a broad consensus that teacher feedback is effective in helping students to improve their writing and to develop their language skills. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that although his or her role is important, the teacher is not the sole provider of feedback on student writing.

Feedback by students, for students

Students themselves can be a rich and valuable source of feedback on both their own writing and that of their peers, and student-centred feedback and revision, in the forms of peer review and self-directed review, have become widely-used components of L2 writing classes (Yu & Lee, 2016).

A large body of research has investigated both the benefits of peer review to language learners and the issues arising from its use, with Yu and Lee (2016) providing a comprehensive overview of the research carried out in the preceding decade. Studies have indicated that peer review can provide students with a greater sense of audience than when writing for a teacher (Berggren, 2015; Keh, 1990; Tsui & Ng, 2000), offer a different, and complementary, focus to teacher feedback (Xu & Liu, 2010), encourage a more critical attitude to revision than is usually displayed in response to teacher feedback (Tsui & Ng, 2000), and help students develop into more autonomous writers and learners (Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006). A further clear benefit alluded to by Rollinson (2005) is that through peer review, students are able to receive feedback from multiple sources, with this wider range of perspectives likely to stimulate greater reflection on their writing.

Compared with peer review, less research has looked at self-directed review of writing – revisions students make independently of any feedback from an external source. Early studies in ESL settings found that the number of self-directed revisions exceeded those that were attributed to either teacher or peer feedback (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Paulus, 1999), although it should be noted that investigating self-directed revision was not the specific goal of these studies, and the authors did not rule out the possibility of students having received feedback from a third-party source other than a teacher or peer. Research conducted more recently in EFL classes has further suggested that self-directed review can benefit L2 writers. Nakanishi (2008) found that training in self-feedback strategies was effective in helping beginner-level writers improve their compositions, and also that even without this training, students were able to make some improvements. Comparing the benefits of self-review and peer review to the reviewer, rather than the receiver of feedback, Wakabayashi (2013) found that students who reviewed their own texts could improve them to a greater extent than those who reviewed that of a peer. Diab, in research making comparisons with peer and teacher feedback, found that self-directed review offered the advantages of being more effective than peer review in helping students to correct rule-based errors (2010), and more effective than teacher feedback in reducing lexical errors (2016). Finally, Coomber (2016) found that although students who had simply been asked to revise their own work were able to make improvements in a wide range of areas, those

who had undertaken awareness-raising activities were able to both make more self-directed revisions and more successful ones.

Student attitudes to peer review and self-directed revision

There is ample evidence that students themselves understand and value the role that peer review can play in improving their written work. For example, students have reported that peer feedback offers opportunities to consider different perspectives (Mangelsdorf, 1992), learn from the strengths and weaknesses of classmates (Yu & Hu, 2017), reflect more deeply on their writing (Yu & Hu, 2017), and discuss their writing in their L1 (Allen & Katayama, 2016; Ho & Savignon, 2007). Yet problems with the implementation of peer review have also been identified. Some studies have suggested that students from East Asian backgrounds find peer review difficult for specific cultural reasons (Carson & Nelson, 1994; Nelson & Carson, 1998). However, more recent small-scale studies carried out in Japanese universities have suggested that students enjoyed giving and receiving peer feedback on written work (Hirose 2008), and that they both considered peer review to be effective and would like to do it again (Wakabayashi, 2008). In a larger study looking at the attitudes of 125 Japanese undergraduates to peer review, Morgan, Fuisting and White (2014) found that over 90% considered their classmates' feedback to have been helpful, and large majorities expressed no affective concerns about either giving or receiving feedback. It may be the case that while in an ESL setting in a foreign country alongside classmates of various nationalities, students have greater concern about the face-threatening aspects of peer feedback than they do in a more familiar home environment, in which Japanese students appear comfortable with peer review and cognizant of its benefits.

In the case of peer review, it therefore seems clear that, in general, students appreciate its benefits. But as Tigchelaar (2016) points out, far less research has looked in detail at students' views on self-directed revision. Zhang (1995) compared ESL students' views on teacher, peer and self-directed feedback, finding that over 90% favoured teacher over non-teacher feedback, and that 60% preferred peer feedback to self-directed feedback. In Nakanishi's (2008) study, 52% of students who had been trained in self-directed feedback believed it had been useful for them: a majority, but barely. Srichanyachon (2011) interviewed 10 students regarding their views on the same three types of feedback, and found that while

seven of the participants identified teacher feedback as the most effective, only one stated they would like to use self-directed feedback in the future. These results do not appear encouraging for teachers wishing to utilize self-directed revision in their classes, yet it is important to note that these different feedback options need not be framed as a choice. When learners are asked directly to state a preference, it is of no great surprise that, overall, teacher feedback is the most popular option. In itself, this cannot be taken to mean that they do not value, or do not benefit from, non-teacher directed feedback; however, it seems from the limited evidence available that students are not convinced of the value of reviewing their own work. Importantly though, as Lam (2013) points out, "teachers need to inculcate students with an idea of writer responsibility through self-assessment, since making the text succinct and comprehensible to readers is the job of authors" (p. 456). Beyond the classroom, obtaining feedback on writing from a third-party is less likely, and those students who use English in their post-university futures will almost certainly need to review and revise their own work. Before teachers can persuade students of its value, more research needs to be done into student attitudes towards self-directed revision, a goal this study aims to contribute to.

The context of this study

Hirose (2003) and Yasuda (2014) provide informative overviews of how writing is taught in Japan, with Hirose noting that students do not usually receive any specific instruction in L1 academic writing during any stage of their education, and that the writing they are generally required to do prior to university level is largely of a personal, expressive type. With respect to pre-university English writing, Hirose states that:

> Japanese students' experience is practically non-existent. L2 writing instruction in high school is oriented toward translation from L1 to L2 at the sentence-level. (p. 184)

Thus, it seems that many Japanese students arrive at university with little, if any, experience of writing at length in English, and lacking experience with expository or argumentative genres even in their L1. Moreover, prior to university, it is unusual for any elements of the process approach to be utilised, and students rarely, if ever, receive formative feedback or are asked to revise their writing (Casanave, 2003; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2001; Yasuda, 2014). Once at university, their previ-

ous lack of exposure may lead them to struggle with academic writing (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996).

Unsurprisingly, given the lack of previous attention to writing skill outlined above, in the Japanese university classes that I teach early pieces of student work tend to be highly variable. As they progress, however, many learners do improve their writing in terms of accuracy, organisation, and content. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon to receive essays containing basic surface errors with formatting, punctuation, grammar and spelling. These mistakes may be trivial, yet are symptomatic of a deeper problem. The same papers often fail to address the essay question, fall short of the required word limit, or have poor overall structure. In short, it seems that in order to meet deadlines, many students rush off written assignments at the last minute, and make little attempt to reread and revise their work before submission. Providing feedback on such drafts offers as little benefit to learners as it does satisfaction to the teacher. In order to motivate students to reread and revise the first drafts of written work at least once before submission, I introduced three additional in-class activities. The current paper is the final one in a series of articles examining the outcome of this intervention (see Coomber 2016, 2019), and focuses on student attitudes towards self-directed revision.

Method

The research was carried out in two classes following the same second-year writing course at a Japanese university. Over the course of a semester, students submitted four drafts of a 600-word essay, as outlined in Table 1:

One class, consisting of 23 students, was designated a control group; the other, consisting of 21 students, a treatment group. After submitting their first drafts in week 6, students in the control group were simply asked to revise the essays and resubmit them in week 9. No instruction on how or what to revise was provided, and the control group spent weeks 7 and 8 of the course working on tasks unrelated to essay writing. On the other hand, the treatment group spent these two weeks doing the following three activities, which had been designed to encourage them to revise their drafts.

(1) **Poster presentation.** In week 7, students were asked to make a 5-minute poster presentation on their essay topics without using any notes. It was hoped that this would encourage them to reread their drafts carefully, and that while doing so they would notice points that required revision.

(2) **Grammar Workshop.** Students spent the week 8 lesson locating and remedying the errors in 12 sentences taken from their first drafts, with no more than one sentence taken from any student's essay. Sentences which showed common error types made by many students were selected for the workshop in order to raise awareness of similar issues in their own work.

(3) **Checklist.** Students were required to submit the checklist shown in Appendix 1 with their second drafts. This was intended as a simple way in which students could check themselves whether their essays followed the structure that we had studied in class.

After collecting both classes' second drafts in week 9, all revisions were counted and classified using the taxonomy shown in Appendix 2. As shown in Table 1, written and oral teacher feedback was then provided on the second drafts, and after these had been revised, the third drafts were peer-reviewed.

Table 1: Schedule

Week 6	First draft deadline **Questionaire 1**
Week 7	Treatment 1: Presentations on essay topics
Week 8	Treatment 2: Grammar Workshop Treatment 3: Checklist
Week 9	Second draft deadline **Questionnaire 2** **Interviews**
Week 10	Essays returned with teacher feedback Mini-conferences
Week 11	Third draft deadline Peer review of essays
Week 12	Final draft deadline **Questionnaire 3** **Interviews**

Questionnaires

In order to ascertain the views of the learners in this study towards making self-directed revisions, questionnaires were completed immediately after students had submitted their first, second and final drafts, as shown in Table 1 above. Questionnaire 1 (Appendix 3) comprised 16 Likert-statement items, shown in Tables 2-4. In order to discourage non-committal responses, a six-point scale was used. Statements 1-5 investigated students' general views on writing in English, statements 6-10 related to the process of writing multiple drafts and receiving feedback, and statements 11-16 focused on the learners' evaluation of their own effort during the writing process. The statements have been grouped this way in the tables for ease of presentation; when administered, the order was slightly different. In Questionnaire 2 these 16 items were repeated, and six additional items regarding the three treatments added to the treatment group version (Appendix 4); in Questionnaire 3, a further four items on teacher and peer feedback were added (Appendix 5). Finally, an open comment box allowed the opportunity to add further comments. The questionnaire was provided in English and Japanese and was piloted with four students from a different, but similar level class, and minor adjustments made to clarify some items. All questionnaires were administered during class time. It was both stated in writing and emphasized verbally that responses were anonymous and unconnected to grades.

Interviews

To gain greater insight into student views on the three treatments, six volunteers from the treatment group were interviewed. Two interviews were conducted with each student: one after submission of the second drafts, one after the final drafts had been graded and returned.

The interviews were based on the questions listed in Appendix 6. Both were semi-structured, allowing for researcher and interviewee to expand upon points of interest if desired (Denscombe, 2010). It was explained in writing and emphasized verbally that participation was entirely voluntary and unrelated to grades, and that pseudonyms would be used when reporting answers. Interviews ranged in length from 11 to 17 minutes; in accordance with the preference of the interviewee some were conducted entirely in English, others in Japanese, and others in both languages.

Results and Discussion

Summary of revisions

It was found that, overall, students in the treatment group made three times as many self-directed revisions to their first drafts as did those in the control group. While 14 of the 21 students in the treatment group made 15 or more revisions to their first draft, this was true for only 3 of the 23 students in the control group. What is more, the revisions made by the treatment group achieved a higher degree of success in improving their essay drafts. A detailed exploration of the number, type and success of the revisions made by both groups is provided in Coomber (2016), while Coomber (2019) examines the revision strategies employed by three individual students in greater detail. The focus of the current paper, however, is a different aspect of the study: specifically, the students' attitudes towards the treatments and the revision process, as revealed by the questionnaire and interview data.

Questionnaire data

The sixteen statements shown in Tables 2-4 are those which were common to all three questionnaires. For ease of presentation, responses from the three 'agree' and three 'disagree' categories have been combined, and are expressed as percentages to account for the different number of students in the two classes. Due to the small sample size it seems wise to treat these figures with caution; nevertheless, some tentative conclusions may be drawn.

Items 1 to 5, shown in Table 2, were intended to provide background information on learners' attitudes to English writing in general. Although it appears that, in general, writing in English is not something these learners particularly enjoy (statement 1), the responses to statements 2, 4 and 5 indicate that a large majority recognize the value of studying writing, suggesting they would be likely to approach their writing both seriously and positively. Most of these figures indicate only minor changes over the semester, although it is interesting to note that the number of students in the treatment group who stated they enjoyed writing in English rose from seven to 12 over the course of the semester, with five of the 12 choosing 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree', compared to only one of the original seven.

General attitudes to English writing

Table 2: Results of Questionnaires 1 to 3, Items 1-5

Statement	Percentage of learners agreeing					
	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		Questionnaire 3	
	C	**T**	**C**	**T**	**C**	**T**
1) I enjoy writing in English.	36.4	33.3	33.3	47.6	47.8	57.1
2) Writing classes are not useful for me.	9.1	4.8	4.2	4.8	8.7	0.0
3) Studying writing is boring.	18.2	14.3	29.2	19.0	17.4	14.3
4) English writing ability will be important for my future.	86.4	81.0	87.5	95.2	95.7	85.7
5) Writing is a good way to improve my English ability.	81.8	85.7	87.5	95.2	95.7	90.5

C = control group; T = treatment group

Table 3 shows items 6 to 10, which focus on the drafting and feedback process. While almost all learners appreciate the value of multiple-drafting (statement 6), there is less consensus regarding the roles of teacher and learner during this process. Most striking is the difference in the responses to items 7 and 8 on the first and second questionnaire. When completing Questionnaire One, unaware that I would not be checking their first drafts, both classes were fairly evenly divided on the issue of whether teachers should check all drafts (statement 7). However, the process of revising and resubmitting these drafts without my having checked them seems to have reinforced the feeling that teacher feedback is necessary on all drafts. Particularly surprising to note is that despite having just made an average of 16 successful self-directed revisions each on their papers, over 80% of students in the treatment group agreed with item 7 on Questionnaire Two, and the proportion of those who agreed with item 8 had almost quadrupled. While this is somewhat disappointing, it may simply reflect the fact that, having invested considerable effort in revising their work by themselves, these students had developed both a greater understanding of how difficult this is to do and more appreciation of the value of teacher feedback. This interpretation, although tentative, seems to be sup-

ported by the fact that after revising their own drafts, there was almost unanimous agreement that this was the student's responsibility (statement 10), an increase of almost 20% in the level of agreement from Questionnaire One, suggesting that the greater desire for teacher feedback does not necessarily imply a failure to realise the value of self-editing. In contrast, the control group, who had made less than half the number of self-directed revisions as had the treatment group, had not changed their views on this issue.

Attitudes to drafting and feedback

Table 3: Results of Questionnaires 1 to 3, Items 6-10

Statement	Percentage of learners agreeing					
	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		Questionnaire 3	
	C	T	C	T	C	T
6) Writing several essay drafts is a good way to improve writing ability.	95.5	90.5	95.5	100	91.3	95.2
7) The teacher should check all essay drafts.	45.5	52.4	70.8	81.0	60.9	61.9
8) Finding problems in my essay is the teacher's responsibility.	22.7	9.5	29.2	38.1	21.7	19.0
9) The teacher should point out all the problems in my essay.	18.2	38.1	33.3	33.3	26.1	33.3
10) Finding problems in my essay is my own responsibility.	86.4	76.2	83.3	95.2	81.8	95.2

C = control group; T = treatment group

Two points are clearly apparent from the responses to items 11 to 15 (Table 4), all looking at learners' assessment of their own effort during this course. Firstly, both classes consider themselves to have taken their essay writing seriously: only once did a majority of students disagree with one of these statements. Secondly, both groups appear to have put in increasing effort as the course progressed, perhaps not surprising as the essay grade was determined by the final draft only. For the most part, the differences between the two classes are small. However, the increase from 42.9% to 81% of the treatment group who claimed to have read their essay carefully before submission (statement 12) stands out, and may indicate that

one or more of the treatments gave these students greater motivation to re-read their drafts than those in the control group, which showed a far smaller change between questionnaires.

Learners' self-evaluation

Table 4: Results of Questionnaires 1 to 3, Items 11-16

| Statement	Percentage of learners agreeing					
	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		Questionnaire 3	
	C	T	C	T	C	T
11) I put a lot of efforts into writing a good essay.	86.4	71.4	79.2	81.0	82.6	85.7
12) I read my essay carefully before submitting it.	59.1	42.9	66.7	81.0	78.3	90.5
13) I thought carefully about the organisation of my essay.	72.7	71.4	83.3	81.0	91.3	90.5
14) I thought carefully about the grammar and vocabulary in my essay.	68.2	52.4	70.8	71.4	78.3	85.7
15) I thought carefully about the content of my essay.	86.4	76.2	75.0	84.7	87.0	100
16) I can improve my essay without help from my teacher or classmates.	9.1	9.5	12.5	9.5	21.7	4.8

C = control group; T = treatment group

Perhaps the most interesting point to emerge from the data in Table 4 is the response to item 16. After handing in their first drafts, less than 10% in both classes agreed that they could improve them without third party assistance. Both classes then proceeded to do exactly that, with the treatment group making three times the number of improvements to their essays. It is therefore rather surprising that in this group the proportion of students agreeing with this statement fell, while in the control group it rose. This cannot be accounted for merely through a lack of self-confidence: by the time they completed the final questionnaire, students would have seen from the teacher feedback on their second drafts that the majority of their self-directed revisions had been successful.

It seems more likely that this can be explained by an ambiguity in the wording of item 16: the phrase 'without help' was intended to mean 'without direct feedback'; however, it may be that the treatment group interpreted 'help' to include the three treatments, and answered accordingly. The control group, on the other hand, received no help of any kind, yet most students still improved their essays to some extent.
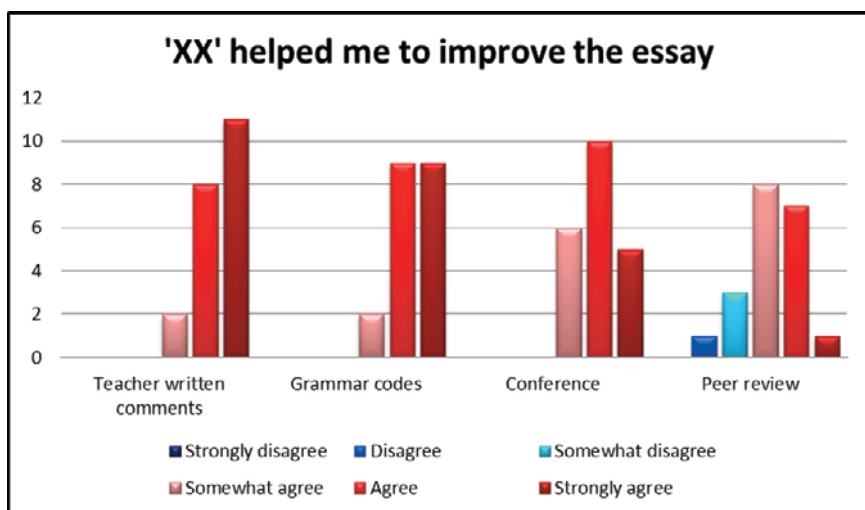
Views on the three treatments

Questionnaires Two and Three included additional items investigating all revision-promoting activities carried out during the course. Figure 1 illustrates the treatment group's opinions of the three treatments, Figure 2 their views on teacher and peer feedback.
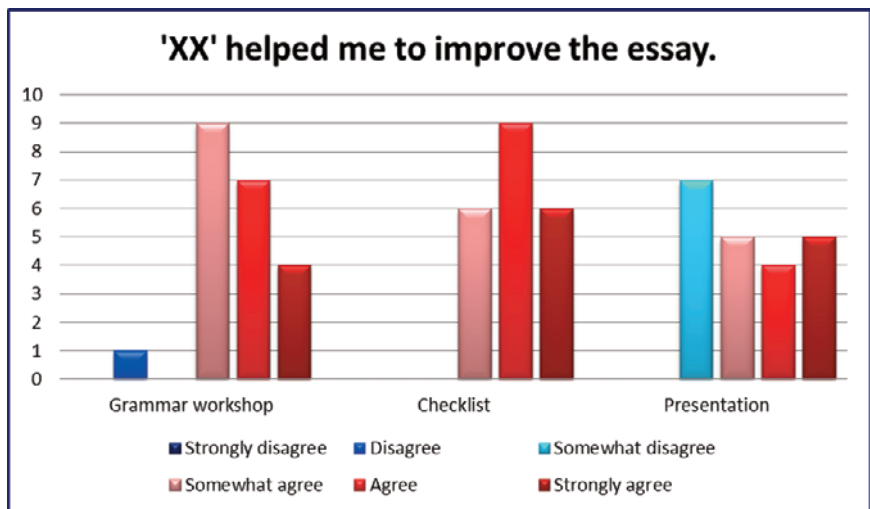
Figure 1: Questionnaire Three: Treatment group, items 20-22

Overall, it is clear that students valued all the treatments, and of the three it appears that the checklist was viewed as the most useful, with learners agreeing unanimously that it helped them improve their essays: possibly because they were able to re-use the checklist with the third and final drafts, whereas the value of the other two treatments was largely limited to producing the second drafts. In contrast, a third of the class did not feel that the presentation had been particularly useful. This may be because, compared to the other two treatments, it offered no specific

pointers as to how to improve their writing; alternatively, given that most students seem to find making presentations fairly stressful, it could be that negative attitudes to the activity in general affected their views of its usefulness.

Figure 2: Questionnaire Three: Treatment group, items 23-26

While students generally viewed all the treatments positively, it is clear from Figure 2 that, in line with the findings of Zhang (1995) and Srichanyachon (2011), teacher feedback remains the most highly-rated means by which to improve writing. All three types of feedback I provided met with unanimous approval, reflecting the majority in both classes who stated that the teacher should provide feedback on all essay drafts. Unsurprisingly, views of peer review were rather more mixed: given that each person received feedback from a different classmate it is inevitable that the utility of this feedback would be more variable. Overall, the questionnaire results suggest that while learners seem to rate teacher-directed revision most favourably, perhaps lacking confidence in their own ability to self-revise, they also realised the value of the treatments in helping them to do so.

Interviews with learners

The interviews carried out with students from the treatment group give some further indications as to the possible role of the treatments in encouraging revision, as well as additional insight into learners' views. This section briefly discusses

some of the comments made by these learners regarding both the three treatments and the essay writing process in general.

Satoshi was one of six students who made substantial revisions to the content of their essays between the first and second drafts, making meaning-focused changes in all paragraphs of his essay bar the introduction. Satoshi, in common with two other interviewees, mentioned during interview that he found the poster presentations especially useful in reviewing the content of what he had written, stating that:

In the presentation I had to communicate my ideas…while I was writing the essay I could understand what I wrote myself… but the presentation is spoken, so I wondered whether this information was good… it was a good opportunity to make changes… the presentation was great… to me it was the presentation that made me think about a lot of things…

The need to present the contents of the essay seems to have influenced other learners' revisions in different ways. Tomoko, who like Satoshi made substantial revisions at both surface and meaning-level, noted the following during her interview:

Presentation have to use easy sentence... so I re-read my essay, changing sentence for my presentation so presentation's meanings are easy than my essay… in second draft I checked my presentation description and I used my presentation sentences.

Rather than extending content then, Tomoko's strategy was to simplify that which she already had in order to make it more comprehensible to her classmates. Whether students extended content or simplified their language, it seems that both strategies were prompted by the greater audience awareness afforded by oral presentation, encouraging students to think again about whether their views were both adequately supported and clearly explained.

Treatment Two, the grammar workshop, was viewed favourably by all six interviewees. Of the three treatments, it is this which can be most directly connected to individual revisions, and of the 21 students in the class, 20 had made revisions to points covered in the workshop, including all those interviewed. In contrast to their comments about the presentations, most spoke only briefly about the grammar workshop, the most common comment being that it encouraged them to check the essays more carefully. One learner, Kazuki, offered an interesting perspective, noting that:

When I saw other people's sentences I sometimes couldn't understand
what they were trying to explain, and I thought that my essay is proba-
bly the same…

However, while it seems that the grammar workshop did influence the revi-
sions students made (Coomber, 2016, 2019), the interview data provide little in-
sight into precisely how it did so.

Although most of the interviewees also claimed that the checklist had been
useful for them, an alternative opinion was offered by Ayako, who pointed out that
many students, including herself, did not use the checklist as had been intended,
only skimming over it and checking 'Yes' regardless of whether or not they had
actually completed the action. Nevertheless, for the learners who did make use of
it, the checklist seems to have been appreciated, with three describing it as useful
or convenient, and two, Tomoko and Kazuki, mentioning that they found it the
most useful of the three treatments, Tomoko noting that it helped her look for
specifics, and Kazuki that:

This is the easiest way to check. Until now I've checked by myself, but
the teacher pointing things out makes me more aware of them… be-
cause of the checklist I could change points that I didn't notice by my-
self… that was the best thing.

Somewhat surprisingly, the most positive overall assessment of the treatments
was given by Takuya, a student who had made relatively few revisions to his first
draft, but nevertheless stated that:

I think three steps is needed… all things needed for us to improve my
skills and writing essay skill… for example only grammar shop did not
improve our skills enough so three things is needed… so vital things.

Despite this view, Takuya had made only 12 revisions, most of them fairly
minor. Perhaps this illustrates the point that beyond helping learners to notice what
they need to change, these treatments may also have a role in helping them confirm
what they have done well.

Conclusion

In summary, in line with previous research (for example, Nakanishi, 2008;
Srichanyachon, 2011; Zhang, 1995) the results of this study suggest that learners

may be ambivalent about the value of reviewing and revising their own writing. Although students in the treatment group indicated that they found all three treatments useful, questionnaire responses showed that their efforts at self-editing, though meeting with considerable success, also served to reinforce the feeling that teacher feedback was necessary. Hawe and Dixon (2014) make the case that by creating opportunities for students to assess and revise their own compositions in writing classes, teachers can help them develop into autonomous learners. However, it seems likely that, in order to aid development of autonomous learning skills in the long-term, it is not enough for a particular activity or style of learning to *be* effective – it must also be *perceived to be* effective by the learners. Thus, the fact that student views on the three treatments used in this study were largely positive is a key finding, suggesting that if teachers incorporate such activities into writing classes, learners will not only revise their own work more extensively and effectively, but may also be more likely to do so in future, having come to realise the value of self-directed revision. However, it may also be the case that a more explicit explanation of the rationale of these activities would have been beneficial in terms of convincing students of their utility.

While the questionnaire and interview data revealed that the three treatments were viewed positively overall, it is also important to note that, inevitably, not all students found every treatment useful. For example, among the interviewees, Mayumi didn't really connect the presentation to revising her second draft, stating that as we had focused in class on presentation skills such as voice inflection and eye contact she didn't think so much about the content; Ayako, as noted, did not make use of the checklist. Moreover, in the second interviews conducted after students' final drafts had been graded and returned, three of the six interviewees identified the written teacher feedback on their second drafts as the most useful component of the course in terms of improving their writing, with two opting for the checklist and one stating that everything we had done had been useful.

Nevertheless, of the six students interviewed, all claimed to have found at least one of the treatments helpful in making revisions to their first drafts, perhaps underlining the importance of using a variety of techniques to encourage learners to revise. Individuals approach the writing process in different ways: while many students may submit a first draft completed in a rush to meet a deadline, others will have already reviewed and revised extensively by this point. Despite this, it

seems that even those who take time composing and revise extensively while writing may also appreciate the benefit of returning to their texts, and as Tigchelaar (2016) points out, by providing learners with some form of guidance in the skill of self-directed revision, teachers can "plant the seeds for more effective development of autonomous writers." (p. 26)

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Appendix One: Checklist

Please complete this checklist and submit it with your essay next week.

Essay Second Draft Checklist	Check ✔
1. I have read the layout guidelines and example on pages 14-15 of my supplementary materials booklet. My essay follows these guidelines.	
2. My essay has four or five paragraphs.	
3. My essay is at least 500 words.	
4. My introduction begins with an interesting hook.	
5. My introduction gives background information about the topic.	
6. The last sentence of my introduction is my thesis statement.	
7. My thesis statement answers the question directly.	
8. My thesis statement includes the topic of each body paragraph.	
9. My essay has 2 or 3 body paragraphs.	
10. Each body paragraph focuses.	
11. Each body paragraph has a clear topic sentence giving the main point of the paragraph and mentioning a counter-argument.	
12. Each body paragraph has at least two different types of support.	
13. Each body paragraph ends with a concluding sentence.	
14. The conclusion includes a summary of the main points of the essay.	
15. The conclusion includes a recommendation.	
16. The conclusion finishes with powerful final comment.	
17. I have read every sentence carefully at least twice to check for grammar mistakes.	
18. I have checked all sentences starting with So, But or And.	
19. I have not used computer translation for any part of my essay.	
20. I have not copied any of this essay from the internet or anywhere else.	

Name: _____

Appendix Two: Taxonomy of Revisions

Dimension A (type of revision)

1. <u>Surface changes</u> (changes involving simple repair which do not have a substantial effect on the meaning)

    a) grammar (including changes in tense, agreement, word form, word order, etc), divided into:

    a.i) a point covered in the grammar workshop or checklist

    a.ii) a point not covered

    b) vocabulary

    c) mechanics (spelling, capitalization, format and punctuation)

2. <u>Meaning changes</u> (changes relating to subject matter and ideas)

    a) organization (e.g. moving a clause, sentence or paragraph)

    b) complex repair (clarifying existing points at sentence or clause level)

    c) extension of existing content (e.g. elaborating on or adding an example of an existing point)

    d) addition of new content, divided into:

    d.i) minor (e.g. adding a new supporting point)

    d.ii) major (e.g. adding a new main point)

    e) deletion of content

Dimension B (effectiveness of revision)

1. <u>Revision is an improvement on the original</u>

    a) corrects a clear error

    b) improves the style, level of detail or clarity

2. <u>Revision is worse than original</u>

    a) makes an error worse

    b) introduces an error where none previously existed

    c) has a negative effect on style, level of detail or clarity

3. <u>Revision cannot be judged either better or worse than the original</u>

Notes

i)   I worked on the general principle of counting each individual change which had been made.

> **e.g. He didn't have rice enugh → He didn't have enough rice**

This counts as one 1a revision (word order) and one 1c revision (spelling)

ii)   Rather than including a 'substitution' sub-category in Dimension A, as do many taxonomies, if new content was added in replacement of old content this was counted as two changes: one 2e revision and one 2d revision, as it would have been possible to add the new content and retain the old, so two decisions have actually been made.

iii)   surface and meaning are terms of convenience: of course, changes in grammar and vocabulary can affect meaning. Some degree of judgment is needed here. Thus, for example,

> **Therefore people buy more cell phones in the future →**
>
> **Therefore people will buy more cell phones in the future**

would count as a grammar change (1a.i), but

> **Therefore people will buy more cell phones in the future →**
>
> **Therefore people should buy more cell phones in the future**

would count as a meaning change (2b). Often this judgment depended to an extent on knowledge of typical mistakes made by Japanese learners at this level.

iv)   Dimension B will, of course, involve some fairly subjective judgments, especially with regard to meaning-related changes.

Appendix Three: Questionnaire 1

During this course I will be doing some research investigating different ways in which teachers can help students to improve their English writing ability. This questionnaire is part of that research. You do not need to write your name on the questionnaire, and it has no connection to your grade in, so please give honest answers to the questions. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

この授業を通して、教員が、学生の英文ライティング能力の向上を助けたさまざまな方法を研究します。このアンケートは、その研究の一環です。アンケートは無記名で構いませんし、成績評価には無関係ので、質問に正直に答えてください。ご協力に感謝します。

Matt.

1) I enjoy writing in English.
英語で書くのが好きだ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

2) Writing classes are not useful for me.
ライティングの授業は私には役に立たない。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

3) Studying writing is boring.
ライティングの勉強は、つまらない。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

4) English writing ability will be important for my future.
英文ライティング能力は、将来的に私にとって重要だ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

5) Writing is a good way to improve my English ability.
ライティングは、私の英語能力の向上に良い方法だ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

6) Writing several essay drafts is a good way to improve writing ability.
レポートの下書きをいくつか書くことは、ライティング能力の向上に良い方法だ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

7) The teacher should check all essay drafts.
   教員は、すべてのレポートの下書きをチェックするべきだ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

8) Finding problems in my essay is the teacher's responsibility.
   私のレポートの問題発見は、教員の責任だ。

   1   2   3   4   5   6

9) The teacher should point out all the problems in my essay.
   教員は、私のレポートのすべての問題を指摘するべきだ

   1   2   3   4   5   6

10) I put a lot of effort into writing a good essay.
    良いレポートを書くために、かなり努力した。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

11) I read my essay carefully before submitting it.
    レポートの提出前に丁寧に見直しをした。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

12) I thought carefully about the organisation of my essay.
    レポートの構成について注意深く考えた。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

13) I thought carefully about the grammar and vocabulary in my essay.
    レポートの文法と語彙について注意深く考えた。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

14) I thought carefully about the content of my essay.
    レポートの内容について注意深く考えた。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

15) Finding problems in my essay is my own responsibility.
    私のレポートの問題発見は、自分の責任だ。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

16) I can improve my essay without help from my teacher or classmates.
    私は、教員やクラスメートの手助けなしで、自分のレポートを改善
    できる。

    1   2   3   4   5   6

他のコメントがあったら、下の空欄に、自由に意見を書いてください。
(英語でも日本語でも構いません):

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Appendix Four: Additional Items in Questionnaire Two

17) The checklist helped me understand what points were important.
チェックリストのおかげで何が大事か分かった。

1   2   3   4   5   6

18) The poster presentation helped me think more deeply about the content of my essay.
ポスタープレゼンのおかげでレポートの内容についてもっと深く考えた。

1   2   3   4   5   6

19) Looking at the textbook and my notes helped me improve the essay.
教科書と自分が書いたメモの復習のおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   2   3   4   5   6

20) The grammar workshop in class helped me to improve the essay.
授業中の文法の練習のおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   2   3   4   5   6

21) Using the checklist helped me to improve the essay.
チェックリストのおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   2   3   4   5   6

22) Doing a poster presentation about the essay topic helped me to improve the essay.
ポスタープレゼンのおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   2   3   4   5   6

Appendix Five: Additional Items in Questionnaire Three

23) The teacher's written advice helped me to improve the essay.
教員によるコメントのおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**

24) The grammar codes (ww, pl, vt etc) helped me to improve the essay.
文法の誤りを示す略語(ww, pl, vt etc)のおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**

25) Talking to the teacher in class helped me to improve the essay.
授業中教員と相談したおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**

26) Talking to my classmate during Peer Review helped me to improve the essay.
ピア・レビュー時にクラスメートと話したおかげでレポートが改善できた。

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**

Interview One: Post-second draft

1) How do you think your essay is going?
2) What was the most difficult thing about writing this essay?
3) About how long did you spend writing the first draft?
4) Did you re-read the first draft before submitting it?
5) Did you make many changes to your essay between the first and second draft?
6) About how long did you spend making revisions for the second draft?
7) Do you think your second draft is better than your first draft?
8) Did the presentation have any influence on the way you wrote your essay?
9) Did the grammar workshop have any influence on the way you wrote your essay?
10) Did the checklist have any influence on the way you wrote your essay?

Interview Two: Post-final draft

1) Were you happy with the final draft of your essay?
2) Are you satisfied with your essay score?
3) What do you think was the most useful part of this course for improving your writing?
4) What did you think about writing 4 drafts of the essay?
5) If you did this course again, is there anything you would like me to change in the course?
6) If you did this course again, is there anything that you would like to do differently yourself?
7) What do you think you have learned from this course?