Potential Benefits of Peer Response in Writing Classes

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1. Introduction
Response to writing plays an important role in fostering the improvement of writing. It is regarded as one pedagogical means to encourage learners to facilitate further writing development. Generally, feedback has two types: written commentary by teacher, and verbal interaction between teacher and student or among writers. Writing teachers and researchers have acknowledged that feedback provides a powerful underpinning for revision processes as well as language learning. Thus, feedback is perceived as a critical component to help writers produce better subsequent drafts and attain greater writing proficiency (Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

In current Japanese English educational context, instruction in the writing of English seems to be considered less serious. Indeed, the recent English curricula in junior/senior high school have emphasized the development of speaking fluency rather than the development of writing. In writing classes, the rule-governed grammar translations of Japanese into English become an integral part because the writing classes depend more on the entrance examination practices and on text-making performance.

In this paper, I will describe potential benefits of peer response applications in writing classes. The purpose of this paper is to suggest that writing classes should go beyond the usual approach to surface-level translation practice as well as make a small change of writing classrooms.

2. General Issues of Response of Writing
Empirical research indicates that response to writing considers feedback as an aspect of teaching writing both in and out of composition classes. Studies of teacher written feedback, teacher-student conferences, and peer feedback have identified both the benefits and drawbacks of grammar treatment (Ferris, 2002, 2003; Leki, 1991; Truscott, 1996, 1999; Zamel, 1985), negotiation of text meanings (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Liu, & Hansen, 2002; Nelson & Murphy, 1993), and the cultural impact on writing development in cooperative sessions (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Goldstein, 2005). Although such critical viewpoints of each feedback still remain controversial among writing researches, feedback approaches seem advantageous as an accessible task in writing pedagogy.

3. Peer Response
Peer response is one common technique among writing teachers in L2 writing classrooms. Empirical research on peer feedback mainly emphasizes the effect of peer feedback dealing with commentary analyses. Much of the research reveals that peer feedback encourages students to develop their written texts explicitly based on the peers' constructive comments and to apply the written commentary into their subsequent drafts. Some scholars hold a negative view on peer response, although many acknowledge peer feedback serves as a form of

DYING IN AMERICA

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Keisuke Kinoshita's classic 1950s film "The Ballad of Narayama" (Narayamabushii:ke) tells the story of a village so poor that old folks no longer able to earn their keep are by custom left on a mountainside to die. As so often in Japanese cinema, the film invites participation in the protagonist's moral dilemma. This son must carry his mother up the mountain and leave her there. Girl demands it, his duty to community survival. The son deeply, helplessly, tragically opposed, for a reason as profoundly human as the bond between mother and child.

No doubt like many a Japanese viewer of that film—or the later version by Shohei Imamura—I felt the power of its story return with a fearful vengeance when my turn came to carry my own old mother up the mountain of her dying.

I don't mean to over-dramatize my own performance of the duty involved in helping a parent on that final difficult journey. My thought is that the central metaphor of "The Ballad of Narayama" speaks to a state of affairs now deeply troubling East and West. Japanese concerns are addressed in feature-length films by Hisakatsu Matsui on families caring for sufferers of Alzheimer's disease: "Yuki" (1998) and "Oirome" (2001). More recently, Naomi Kawase's "Mogari no Mori" has won a prize at the Cannes International Film Festival.

The phrase "healthcare crisis" is in constant use in American media now and "end of life care" is just one of many issues competing for attention. Ironically, the crisis is rooted in material prosperity and longer life. We like to think that ordinary old folks no longer face the old-fashioned alternatives: work till you drop; or dwindle in the state of idleness lamented in the traditional song "Ole rockin' chair's got me."

The old rocking chair is a wheelchair now, for reasons good and bad. The good has to do with livelier expectations for the latter end of life. After my mother died, my eighty-year-old friend Sue wrote: "Don't be afraid to make big changes." Translation: "You've done your duty. Now get on with your life. Make a new life. Don't be a stick in the mud."

A Fortunate Minority

Sue offers good advice I hope to follow. It comes from a lady who represents a fortunate minority—who those who have the wisdom, discipline, and foresight to manage their lives and resources well. In Sue's case, family support came early in life. Her parents believed in education. She herself became a highly successful teacher of music. She never married, but has always had friends who lend one another family-style support. She too has been a supportive friend to friends now gone. (Is there a Japanese equivalent of our Yankee individualist notion that friends are the family we choose for ourselves?)

Recently Sue and a woman friend her age both sold their houses in the North and moved South to join a retirement community in Florida. They share a small house in a community of 680 residents. Most are former professionals like themselves, people with broad experience and wide-ranging interests.
You have a good taste in clothes.

You are such a good boy [girl].

That's wonderful idea.

Thank you for your nice smile.

You are a night owl, aren't you?

Smile when you say that.

Here's looking at you, kid. [若の頃に乾杯]

自分の経験から、以上述べたようなユーモア表現の多くは、英語の習得を目的として、どの生徒にもよく通じて生徒との良好な人間関係に役立ってきた。

6. おわりに

このレポートへの取り組みを通して、私なりにジョークやユーモアへの理解が深められ、今更ながら英語母語者とのコミュニケーションにはユーモアのセンスが欠かせないことを実感している。レポートの単位については、諸国間の関係あり書き尽くせなかった点も多いが、当初の目標に沿って何とかまとめられたと感じ、私自身ユーモアへの理解が益々深まっている。ユーモアのセンスは日本語・英語にかかわらず周囲の人たちとの親しい人間関係を楽しくするのにも欠かせないものであった。つまり、Reader's Digest 製の Laughter, the 8

scaffolding of writing.

Peer response influences the revisions of writing through providing more insightful comments on other's written products. Peer feedback sessions are effective for students to review their own drafts and to examine their texts in-depth as well. This peer feedback approach also contains complex and controversial issues in institutes or classroom contexts (Liu and Hansen, 2003). ESL settings where multi-cultural learners exist often have difficulties sharing suggestions and ideas with peers because ESL students have few experiences of feedback activities. Moreover, cultural beliefs influence the interactions with the learners and affect writers' behavior of the revision processes in the peer response workshop. Learners from the Oriental cultures, for example, become reluctant to remark on their products and are rather more likely to work toward keeping a harmonious balance with others (Carson and Nelson, 1996; Goldstein, 2005). Such ideological aspects impede writers from negotiating the meanings with their peers or improving the quality of the written texts with more specific advice.

Previous inquiry of peer feedback exhibits ESL learners' behavioral patterns underlying cultural issues in peer response activities. Carson and Nelson (1996) explore how Chinese ESL learners tried to interact with each other during peer work by taking video-tapes of the peer feedback activities. This study reveals that Chinese learners harmonized with each classmate as the primary purpose of the collaborative session. Connor and Asenavage (1994) compare different types of comments by teachers, tutors, and writers with peer feedback to find the impact on ESL writers' subsequent drafts. The researchers realize that peer feedback had few influences on revising whereas the other three comments were more effective. However, students sometimes hesitated to share opinions with their peers for fear of hurting the other person's feelings.

As for another issue of peer response, Nelson and Murphy (1993) investigate how learners incorporate both written commentary and oral feedback into their subsequent revisions. Their findings show that the writers developed their compositions with peers' suggestions, provided that peers facilitated a supportive manner. This present study finds a similarity in the research results of Goldstein and Conrad (1990). Goldstein and Conrad investigate how teacher conferencing influenced the processes of students' subsequent drafts. Their research illustrates that students utilized the teachers' suggestions and ideas on their revisions in cases where teachers maintained an exclusive negotiation of meaning during the conferences. In sum, further inquiry into the effectiveness of peer response on writing development is still needed. Although much controversy over the benefits of peer feedback still remains, many scholars affirm the validity of peer response as an interactive approach in writing classes.

4. Benefits of Peer Response

As mentioned earlier, English writing classes in junior/senior school in Japan at present appear to have been marginalized recently since communication proficiency in English is the primary focus of the national curricula. In Japanese English education, writing itself demands exclusive translations of Japanese into English or sentence-making tasks in English. Therefore, it seems that students have few opportunities to have experience of paragraph writing in English and to share their ideas toward each other's writing. To diversify learners' current practice of writing in English, peer feedback should be performed. Through the ideal issues of English writing practice in junior/senior school, the significant benefits of peer response to enhance students' writing in

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5. Conclusion

In this paper, the potential advantage of peer feedback activity as in writing classrooms was described. The benefits of peer response still maintain a neutral stance, however, it is undeniable that feedback sessions have no small effect on the development of writing process and successful revisions on subsequent drafts. Furthermore, the feedback approach has enormous significance in requiring change in writing instruction. Classroom writing in junior/senior high school put a greater emphasis on translations of Japanese into English with complete grammatical accuracy rather than on producing paragraphs of meaningful stories. Students have insufficient opportunities for discussing their own writing products with peers. Nor do they raise their awareness of the audience; required in writing in English. A collaborative work such as peer response will initiate a constructive step for progress in writing classes, if the present circumstances of writing classes in junior/senior high school are taken into account.

References
が打ち解けた雰囲気になる。
いくつか例を挙げてみる。
〇「生まれ変わり」がテーマのスピーチで、
"My wife seriously believes that I'm a reincarnation of a cockroach."（私の妻は私をゴキブリの生まれ変わりだと真剣に信じています）と言って自分の愚かさをさりげ出してみたりする。
〇ゲストを紹介するスピーチで、
Ladies and gentlemen, my memory is excellent. There are only three things I can't recall. I can't remember names. I can't remember faces, and I can't remember what the third thing is.
皆様、私の記憶力は抜群で、思い出せないものは3つだけです。名前が覚えられません、顔が覚えられません。そして、3つめが何であるか、思い出せないのです。
トミー・ゲリス (2001: 78) と言って自分の記憶力を笑い物にする。
〇レーガン氏が大統領の任期を終えて少なかった頃、ある児童書に施設訪問した。大勢の子供たちから大きなキッズ向けプレゼントとして氏は、「Thank you. I like this very much. And this is very useful to me, outside of work now.」「これはこれほど、私の役に立つこと間違いなし」とお礼の言葉を述べて人々に笑わせた。
こういったユーモアには自分を笑える余裕があり、そんな人間は魅力ある人である。このように自分自身を笑いの種にすることは、Self-deprecating Humorといい、一番上等な種類のユーモア感覚と言われている。

4－2 期待外し
話の途中に先の話が違うだろうと聞き手に先を読んでおいて、その後を考えをもって語る（外す）。これはAnticlimax (期待外し) と同じであるが、ユーモアに近い手法で、聞き手は心地よく肩すくみを食べて驚くのであろう。例えば、自己紹介で、
I'm Kent Gilbert. I'm from U.K. People call me Harry Potter. I'm Harry Potter when he has grown up a little. Thank you very much for inviting me to your party.
聞き手は、 Brazz WARを続け、思いやりのない人である、ところが緊張した彼がのある名のハリーポッターの気取りの兄妹を言っていたので大笑いする。あるいはゲストを紹介するスピーチで、
In many ways the man I'm about to introduce has been like a son to me. Insolent, ungrateful and disrespectful. (Seriously, I'd like to introduce...)
これからご紹介するのは、いろいろな意味での私の息子のような人物です。なあなあ、彼は、敬意を廃す、無礼な男で（英語日ごとに紹介します）
聞き手「息子のような人物」と聞いて、笑いの余地を予想するが、逆のけなし言葉に肩すくみを食う。
どこかが完璧だったり面白がるのがあるので、但しこの場合は、紹介する側とされる側が裏切る間所であることが条件である。

4－3 大げさな表現
英語には大げさな表現が多い。Thanks a million.
A thousand apologies といった表現がすっかりファブリックの、この他、I kill for coke.（コカ・コーラが飲めるなら何でもするよ。）Over my dead body!（絶対にダメだ！）I'm dying to know her past.（私は彼女の過去が知りたくてならない）など、大げさな表現がやたら多い。こういった表現を英語学び入門者に説明していただく想像をAdjacency と言う。英語国語は事実を大げさに表現するのが好きで、杉村 (1978: 9) によると、「誇張法を取り入れた話法は、メトリックであり、相手にドラマチックに要件を印象づけたり、コミュニケーションをしやすくすることもできる」実際、英語母国者語者は日常会話の中で誇張的な表現をよく用いて、もとモーケス会話の話しでは大げしさを求める。
次の英語の会話例を見てみよう。寒い中、バス で待っている2人の友達が完璧と言って何かを暖まろうとしている。
A: Is this bus ever going to come? I'm freezing to death.
B: Probably not. How long have we been waiting now?
A: I don't know. Feels like hours.
B: Look, I'll tell you what, when we get to town I'll treat you to a cup of something hot.
A: If I live that long.