Potential Benefits of Peer Response in Writing Classes

Fujieda Yutaka (藤枝 豊)

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 curriculums 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 basal 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, 2003; 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

Jan-Paul Malocsay

Keisuke Kisoishi’s classic 1905 film “The Ballad of Narayama” (Narayamabushiko) tells the story of a village so poor that old folks no longer able to earn their keep are by custom left on a mountaintop 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. Nijii is 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 Hisako Matsui on families caring for suffers of Alzheimer’s disease: “Yuki” (1998) and “Oriune” (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—those who have had 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 600 residents. Most are former professionals like themselves, people with broad experience and wide-ranging interests.
The structure of such a community is a subject in itself and difficult for biological families to arrange. Its end-of-life arrangements seem close to ideal. Help with “assisted living” keeps residents in their homes for as long as possible. When nursing home care becomes necessary, they move to the community's own facility, still close to those who have become their neighbors and friends in what may be described as their choice of extended family. That aspect of continuity is increasingly important—and difficult for biological families to arrange—in a country where children are apt to live and work far from their aging parents.

The cost of such arrangements are necessarily high. The hefty monthly fee would be guaranteed by a deposit that might well represent the largest, most important investment Sue has ever made. The community's investment in its residents would be based on complex calculations. For example, it must make a difference that this community is designed for highly motivated types of individuals. Would their preference for active over passive lifestyle lead to longer life, on other matters what afflictions of old age they suffer? Would their expectations of dying be high as—well and witnessed by supportive friends with a vested community interest in the highest possible standard of care?

It doesn't really matter that Sue is a single woman. The arrangements she has made would seem pretty wonderful to any older American. The longer we live on average, the higher our expectations of the latter end of life. The value Americans put on independence rises accordingly. Trouble is, with longer life comes the possibility of slower dying, and dying, willfully, makes demands of us all.

More In The Mainstream?

Alzheimer's disease is a major concern of those who think about slow dying. One in eight Americans over 65 now has that disease. Add another twenty years of life and that number rises sharply, to half the population over 85.

My mother had Alzheimer's resulting in a complex form of dementia whose treatment began with the usual experimental and ended in a familiar paradigm: drugs effective against her worst symptoms reduced her to a vegetative state. I am writing about her because she died, one might say, in the mainstream, dependent on a system of healthcare whose complex deficiencies I found shocking and disturbing. I'm not alone in this. Being in charge of someone dying is one in an isolating experience, it is time consuming and exhausting. At the same time it makes you feel part of a very large crowd. Suddenly, it seems, everyone you meet has a story to share. Most clearly mean well, though the message in general is: "It never gets better; it only gets worse." Some actually say that.

Now that it's over, I know that my mother's dying torment was mercifully brief for an Alzheimer's victim—half a year, not the year after year so many other caregivers told of witnessing and suffering through themselves. And yes, caregiver suffering is a significant part of a rather grim picture. Thirty percent of Americans now are involved in some kind of eldercare, even as traditional family care itself grows increasingly dependent on our system of so-called managed healthcare.

That word managed has an alarming resonance in the world we live in now. Thinking how to explain it to readers in a country as strong on management as Japan, I find myself wondering how and when we Americans started thinking of ourselves as living with a choice of worlds this side of the grave. How is this different from the Buddhist concept of the floating world of impermanence? Could the aspect of choice distinguish the two, maybe being a matter of accepting destiny, choice a matter of doing it (as) easy as pie.*4 (Attested)

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nakagawa@takatsuki.ed.jp

*7 Two company's crews, there's a crowd. (2人はよく連れ。3人は仲間数人と言うように。3人寄ると英語ではガチでバラエティを発想をもとるもの異味深い。)
8. Also, a whale is more of a fish in which the life force is not the same as in a horse. It is a living organism that can survive in the ocean. This is why whales are considered to be marine mammals.

9. The concept of a fish being similar to a horse also applies to the idea of using whale meat as a source of protein. This is because whales are considered to be part of the ocean ecosystem and are not seen as living beings in the same way as horses.
follows. It must be said that my mother contributed to the sadness and torment of her decline by being who she was. As the eldest of her eleven surviving children born before World War II, the other children all—I always felt I knew her best and pitted her most whose woman's woes might have furnished a script for Kroo Mizoguchi. Still, her children did right by her. Most were scattered far and wide, but without the moral and material support of my siblings, I could never have done what needing doing in her later years. We are a joyous hunch so the situation was summed up accordingly: "We send her the ammogenesis you stand in the line of fire."

Our chief concern was to make it possible for her to live in her own home. Beginning in the 1980s I came for extended working visits increasingly important as she began to fail. She was grateful for our help, but resolutely independent too. In 2003, I could see that she needed full-time help. She put up fierce resistance to my coming back to live in the tiny studio I had built in the garden many years before. Another sock American phrase comes to mind: "She made my life a living hell." It took some doing to keep giri firmly in mind, the only way I knew to cope. On several occasions I had to remind her of a promise made many years before: "I will never desert you, but I reserve the right to tell you plainly what I think."

For my part, I felt obliged to remember that old saying, "the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree." I have no child or spouse to speak plainly to me. All the more reason to keep giri firmly in mind in another sense: the duty every elderly person owes family and society to remain as fully engaged as possible, exercising mind and emotions as much as any part of the aging body. Being 67 and my mother's son imparts an extra measure of caution: vigorous exercise of the self-critical faculty seems absolutely vital. And there let the matter rest, on principle—the one the ancient Romans put so well: De mortuis nix nixi bonum. (Say nothing of the dead unless it be good.)

As for the living, I want to beware of being—or seeming to be—unappreciative and unfair where our healthcare system is concerned. Its glaring defects are apt to obscure the hard work and earnest good intentions of many individuals hired to care for the dying. Still, some part of me wishes that I could name even one particular angel of mercy working in that system—a person whose compassion cut through the fog of routine, regulations, and suffering as highly resistant to the human touch as Alzheimer's. But there was no such person. There was only another part of me that kept saying: "This is your mother; the compassionate touch has to come from you."

My dutiful state of mind in that regard got a fearful jolt one day. A well-meaning lady, thinking to console me, repeated something my mother said in a rare lucid interval in the nursing home. According to her, my mother said: "My father was never there for me. My son is the father I never had."

I wasn't a bit consolated. I was shocked. I had always known that her dad was, to put it politely, inadequate. I had always assumed that my mother's peculiar ferocity was rooted in the loss of her mother at thirteen, just when a girl might have a special need for maternal guidance and reassurance. Given that, could she have avoided marrying so early and unwisely? I knew all about that aspect of her difficult life. I thought I knew her perfectly well, yet his other dimension of her pain took me by surprise.

I was overcome with an odd mixture of pity, grief and shame at a very bad time—just minutes before the doctor took me aside to say that my mother might well die that day. She was lying unconscious, dying of pneumonia, a condition commonly referred to back in ole rockin' chair days as "the old person's friend."
I shared that old-fashioned sense of the situation, of death as “blessed release” as people then would say. (Blessed in that style of venerable phrase is pronounced as two syllables.) But pneumonia did not befell her after all. She lived to suffer another six weeks, asking me over and over again: ‘Is this a nightmare? Tell me this is a nightmare.’ She had nothing else to say in her last weeks of life and no wonder, given the horrors of continued healthcare whose aspect of “managed” moved her back and forth between hospital and nursing home as required by formulas based on a factor as unaccounting as cost.

A Film Not For Showing

I can’t go on. The whole story would make tedious, gruesome reading. My own documentary film version might be too hard-hitting for showing in Japan. I’ll never make a film, but the script for that one keeps writing itself into my nightmares. (I’ve been prone to nightmares since I was small.) When I heard that Kawase’s prize at Cannes this year was for a film on Alzheimer’s I thought ah, are the grim realities of care outside the family more of an issue now? Will Kawase’s view be less realistic, less hopeful than Matsu’s? Can the Japanese genius for understatement make art of such sordid circumstance?

My mother’s ashes were handed to me in a plain white cardboard box symbolic of her wishes: no funeral, no family gathering, no memorial, just simple cremation. She had led her complex reasons why. The box was surprisingly heavy. When she was mad we compared her to a banty hen. She was the best of good housekeeping moms, just not somehow affectionate, and so we conspired against her. And not just me. Her elderly threats were turned to joke. When she railed against grue words we held a contest to write her epitaph. The winner: “Tragically Obnoxious.”

Her last delight in life was riding in the car. We had just come home when she suffered the stroke that took her away in an ambulance, never to return. Her house was the center of her universe. Without it, she was truly, cruelly lost.

In its place, Alzheimer’s built a paranoid fantasy of having been kidnapped.

A Final Resting Place

The box rides forty miles in the passenger seat. This is my wish, not hers. This quiet small valley watered by a spring-fed stream suits my notion of earthly paradise. The cool clear water ripples over pebbles with a whispering sound and pools deep silences where springtime floods rage against banks of stubborn rock. Yet water wins all battles over stone. Beaches of stream-worn fragments change shape and location constantly. The rocks themselves are rich in shells from vanished seas—vivid impressions of life’s defenses seeking and failing long before humans sought meaning in the passingness of things.

I sat with the box sitting next to me for the longest while, numb with grief, not for her loss but for her life. I had thought I was ready, but it seemed I was not. A month had passed, time to think about Sue’s advice: “Don’t be afraid to make big changes.”

A Japanese friend sent me immediate money but a solemn fragrance in the air took precedence. It mingled odors true to life—cool springwater, sun-warmed rocks, symphonic leaves, the bitter tang of summer ripening into fall.

A fossil shell worth keeping caught my eye, fit momento for such a day. I spilled her ashes awkwardly. I found I had nothing to say. Nonplussed, dry-eyed, I felt convicted in a court of love. Can girl do its work without support from winch? Is that where ritual comes in, to make up for that common human deficit?
比較表現の考察
—授業実践の実例と諸問題について—

中川 右也

1. はじめに

人間は、世界の事物を認識する際、別の対象物と比較して、その差異を理解し手動けることが多々ある。この人間の認知活動の言語表現においても顕著に現れる。我々は、そうした言語表現の中で比較表現を焦点として、教育現場での比較表現の教壇法の再考を試みることをねらいとする。

2. 同等比較における検証すべき和訳

 Jord (positive degree) を用いた等々比較 (comparision of equality) では、のような検証すべき和訳を見つけることが多い。

(i) Taro is as tall as Hanako. (Attest) (5)

（大関は花子と同じくや高い）

例文のtall は「長い」で訳した場合、slow learners にとって、次の英文の和訳に注意することが少からずあるだろう。

(ii) Taro is as old as Hanako. (Attest)

（大関は花子と同じく年齢ある）

slow learners は、例文の和訳が「同じく比べる年齢をとっている」ではなく、「同じく」となるかが理解し難しいようである。このような混乱を避けるため、例文の和訳が検証すべきものであるかに相違はなさない。通例、比較表現で用いられる形容詞は tallやoldなどの尺度形容詞 (measure adjective) とbeautifulやhappyなどは評価形容詞 (evaluative adjective) に分けられる。この両者の違いは、前者が相対的意味を相対的意味を有するのに対し、後者は絶対的意味を有するという点にある。

尺度形容詞がhow疑問文を比較表現で用いられる場合、例えばoldは「年齢の」という意味にはならず、尺度表現「年齢の」を意味する。この点において、英語と日本語は共通する。日本語においても、「どのくらいの高さ」と言わざるべし、「どのくらいの高さ」と言わざるべし、無標 (unmarked) の尺度形容詞を相対的意味に用いる例文の場合は、ただ苛む尺度が同等であると言及しているにすぎないため、大関と花子が花子よりも低い場合もあることに注意してみていただきたい。両者は「大関は花子と同じくや高い」とすべきである。

しかし、tall の反意表現であるshortなどの有標 (marked) の尺度形容詞を同等比較で用いた場合は、次の例のように両者とも高さを表すことを前提 (presupposition) として、絶対的意味での解釈になる。

(iii) Taro is as short as Hanako, (Attest)

（大関は花子と同じく高さが低い）

tall とshortにおける同等比較表現の意味の領域の範囲は、次の図のように示される。

(iv) short

as tall as

as short as (大関1968: 114)

評価形容詞が同等比較で用いる場合、また、有標の尺度形容詞と同様絶対的意味を呈す。

3. 同等比較の応用

同等比較の意味論において次のような生徒の誤答がよく見られる。

(iv) *He has as many as books I.

このような誤答を書く理由は、as ～as の一例で "数形詞" か "数詞"の数の数いかなるかを強調した証明がなされているかではいないだろうか、それにより "尺度の数が同じくらいなのか" の基準には入らねえとは、例として言語の高さ (形容詞) 、意味 (数詞) 、書き (数詞) 、本の数 (数形詞) のもて之类のこなす説明が示唆するものであると誤解される。又、この段の異なって、本の「数」を意味することを理解されれば、次のような対応状況に亦対応できる。