

Written Feedback and Oral Interaction: How Bimodal Peer Feedback Affects Japanese EFL Students

Keiko Hirose

Aichi Prefectural University, Japan

This classroom study examined the effects of written-plus-spoken peer feedback (PF) combined with teacher feedback in EFL writing instruction at a Japanese university. In two classes, students with no previous PF experience participated in the bimodal PF for half the class time regularly over 12 sessions. In pairs, they exchanged compositions with new partners and interacted by writing and speaking in English. Based on post-course questionnaire responses, this study investigated student perceptions of diverse aspects of the bimodal PF. Pre- and post-course English compositions were compared to examine the effects of the instruction on student writing ability. All compositions and written PF produced by the students were also examined quantitatively. The overall results showed that students had positive perceptions of the bimodal PF. Although the semester-long instruction did not appear to significantly improve students' writing ability and confidence in English writing, the results suggest that written-plus-spoken PF is a promising combination that helps to enhance students' motivation towards writing in English and to potentially improve their writing ability. Significant differences found between the two classes were also discussed.

Key words: written-plus-spoken peer feedback, EFL writing instruction, peer feedback receiver/provider, student perceptions

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In peer feedback (PF), students receive comments about their work from their peers. It has long been advocated for second language (L2) writing pedagogy, and its use has been justified by numerous concepts, such as the process approach to the teaching of writing, collaborative learning theory, language development resulting from social interaction, and the well-established role of student-student interaction in L2 acquisition theory (Liu & Hansen, 2002). PF aims to offer students opportunities both to work collaboratively with peers and to improve writing abilities individually. It plays a major role in L2 writing classrooms, and the past literature has noted significant benefits such as raising the writer's awareness of the reader, developing evaluative skills, and promoting affectivity, as summarized in Hyland and Hyland (2006).

Despite these wide-ranging justifications and benefits, PF is not yet in widespread use in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. In fact, the effectiveness of PF is still a controversial issue in L2 writing research and pedagogy. Previous studies in the English as a second language (ESL) context have reported mixed findings (e.g., Mangelsdorf, 1992), and some pointed to problematic implementation of PF with students from Asia, as they have traditionally not had much experience with collaborative learning (e.g., Carson & Nelson, 1996). However, the employment of PF has gradually become more common in Asian EFL classrooms and numerous studies have been conducted especially based on its implementation at the university level. For example, Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) surveyed university students in Hong Kong and Taiwan concerning their perceptions of PF. The study found that the vast majority of these students (93%) preferred PF included along with teacher feedback (TF) in the course.

As of today, a major line of research has found the positive effects of PF on revision. In Japan, recent decades have seen a rise in the incorporation of PF in university-level English writing instruction, and the number of empirical studies examining its effects has been increasing. Investigating its effects on revision by comparing compositions before and after the PF, Kamimura (2006) reported the

positive effects on both high and low proficiency Japanese students' subsequent L2 writing. The study also found different effects on revision according to student proficiency level. Given a choice between the first language (L1) and L2, the students all chose to use L1 for PF. The results implied that L1 use helped bring many benefits, suggesting that the same might not have resulted from L2 use. Examining EFL university students' peer revision processes in Puerto Rico, Villamil and Guerrero (1996) found that the use of their L1 (Spanish) played an important role in facilitating revision. In fact, 95% of their interactions were conducted in L1. These previous studies in EFL classrooms seem to point to the positive effects of L1 use especially on revision. In contrast, the effects of L2 use on EFL students who share L1 remain uncertain because to date only a few studies have examined them.

In addition to student L2 proficiency level and language choice, other factors of PF have been identified as influential, such as anonymity (whether or not the feedback provider/receiver know each other) and mode (spoken, written, or both). Comparing anonymous and non-anonymous written PF, Hosack (2005) reported Japanese students' preference for the anonymous type, in which writer and reader are unknown to each other. Existing research in Japanese university classrooms suggests that student gender affects preference for the anonymous format. In a comparative study of Japanese students' attitudes towards anonymous written feedback and non-anonymous written-plus-spoken feedback, Coomber and Silver (2010) found a gender difference in the female students' inclination towards the anonymous format and dislike towards the face-to-face type. Regarding the mode of PF, the solo use of the written mode (e.g., Hosack, 2005) and the combination of written and spoken modes (e.g., Kamimura, 2006) have been used, whereas the solo use of the spoken mode, especially in L2, has rarely been employed or researched in the Japanese classrooms. Face-to-face spoken PF may be predicted to meet with resistance, similar to that of Chinese students who were reluctant to speak in English and to criticize peers' writing in Carson and Nelson (1996).

PF is most often employed with TF in the writing instruction. Zhang (1995) reported that ESL students overwhelmingly preferred TF to PF, questioning oft-claimed affective advantages of PF over TF in ESL writing classrooms. Past

studies, on the other hand, have found that EFL students considered PF and TF complementary rather than dichotomous, suggesting judicious use of both forms (Jacobs et al., 1998). Furthermore, PF and TF have been shown to play respective roles not fulfilled by the other form (e.g., Tsui & Ng, 2000). Considering Japanese EFL students' lack of PF experience, TF is combined with PF in the Japanese classroom (e.g., Kamimura, 2006).

As overviewed above, past studies have shown that a multitude of factors exert influences on the effects of PF, requiring further investigations in classroom research. In such explorations, the amount of student PF experience should be taken into consideration, because many previous studies have examined the effects of PF based on students' limited experience, such as doing PF only a few times per course instead of frequently throughout the course. More extensive use of PF is desirable to examine its effects in a longitudinal fashion. Longitudinal classroom research makes it possible to investigate students' perceptions of PF derived from abundant experience of working with peers of diverse characteristics, as well as its longer term effects on their writing ability.

Motivated by the above arguments, a previous study compared writing instruction with non-anonymous, written-only and written-plus-spoken PF in L2, in Japanese university classrooms (Hirose, 2012). These two types of PF were adopted expecting that the spoken-only mode in L2 may be difficult for targeted inexperienced Japanese EFL students. The study examined the effects of the two PF types on student perceptions and subsequent writing. Given either type of instruction for one semester, the students overall had positive perceptions of PF, but their writing did not significantly improve at the end of the semester.¹ Differences were also found between the two. Only those students who experienced written-only PF improved writing quantity marginally. On the other hand, the students who did written-plus-spoken PF (a) wrote significantly longer English compositions for PF, (b) enjoyed writing feedback significantly more, and (c) showed significantly higher enjoyment levels in writing in English after the semester-long instruction. These findings implied that written-plus-spoken PF

¹ A longitudinal study with longer instruction was not possible because writing courses of more than a semester were unavailable to the researcher/teacher.

worked better in terms of motivating students to write English, possibly because the addition of the spoken feedback helped them to ease writing feedback by providing changes, accommodations, and expansions of written feedback.

To make more general statements about the benefits and constraints of the bimodal PF in L2, it is necessary to apply it further to the Japanese EFL context and investigate Japanese students' perceptions of its effectiveness as well as its effects on writing ability and attitude via longitudinal classroom research. It is important to examine its effects in more than one class, because "every class reacts differently" to PF (Mangelsdorf, 1992, p. 282). Furthermore, it is desirable to elucidate what aspects of the bimodal PF influence student perceptions and contribute to promoting its effects, so that these aspects can be considered to maximize the potentials of the bimodal PF.

THE PRESENT STUDY

This study is a confirmatory study that examined the effects of written-plus-spoken PF in L2 in Japanese EFL writing classrooms. As a follow up to the previous study (Hirose, 2012), the present study tested whether the following findings obtained from the previous study would apply to other groups of Japanese students at a similar English proficiency level:

1. Japanese EFL students perceive written-plus-spoken PF positively after accumulating semester-long experience in English writing classes.
2. Japanese EFL students perceive peer reading most positively, then talking about feedback, and writing feedback the least among PF activities.
3. Japanese EFL students perceive the benefits of PF from the perspective of a feedback receiver rather than a provider.
4. English writing instruction incorporating written-plus-spoken PF helps to motivate Japanese EFL students to write English and raise motivation towards English writing.
5. The instruction with the written-plus-spoken PF has potentials to exert positive influences on Japanese EFL students' writing ability.

Two intact writing classes were used to investigate whether the above findings are consistent across classes.

The writing instruction in the present study replicated written-plus-spoken PF used in the previous study. It consisted of explicit teaching of English paragraphs (e.g., the topic sentence and coherence) and paragraph organization forms such as *time order* and *cause and effect* followed by paragraph writing practice and PF and TF. Previous research conducted in Japanese EFL classrooms found that teaching of English paragraphs solely by analyzing and studying model paragraphs did not improve students' English writing ability (Hirose & Sasaki, 2000). This finding suggests that students need to write paragraphs themselves to apply their knowledge. The class objective was to allow students to learn about English paragraphs and to write English in and out of class throughout the semester. PF was integrated in English paragraph instruction to motivate students to write with reader consciousness, paying attention to learned knowledge about English paragraphs. Well-written compositions were considered effective in giving them models to learn from, whereas those even poorly written were considered effective in providing chances for offering suggestions and corrections. Furthermore, reading as well as writing PF was regarded as an opportunity to learn to write in English.

Thus, the present instruction may be unique in terms of its combination of conventional English paragraph instruction with PF. PF did not meet the assumption of its use in the process approach to writing instruction. Although the importance of revision was not neglected, emphasis was placed rather on extensive paragraph-level writing than a quality composition through revising processes. This focus on quantity was decided by taking into account the background of those Japanese EFL students who had not only little knowledge about English paragraphs, but also limited English writing experience and difficulty with producing quantity (see Hirose, 2005). In the present study, therefore, the effects of PF were not measured in light of revisions; instead, students' writing before and after the semester classes were compared, and such affective factors as enjoyment with and confidence in writing in English were examined.

In brief, the present study was characterized by the following features: (a) PF was conducted using English during pair work in two Japanese university classrooms;

(b) written-plus-spoken PF was incorporated in regular in-class activities over a semester (14-week) course; (c) weekly homework compositions were assigned for PF; and (d) instruction was provided by the same teacher to two classes of students with no prior PF experience, and (e) TF was added to both compositions and written PF, not only to supplement but also to monitor and facilitate PF. The study focuses on students' perceptions of PF and effects of instruction on their writing.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 29 Japanese university students majoring in foreign languages. They were students in two intact English writing classes taught by the researcher in the same semester in 2006-07. The students of the two classes, Class A and Class B, had both similarities and differences (see Table 1 for their profiles, respectively). In terms of majors, the students of Class B were a heterogeneous group from four different departments, whereas those of Group A were a homogeneous group from the same department. Furthermore, students of Class B had more diverse language learning experiences because most of them had spent a year abroad not only in English-speaking countries such as Australia but also in countries such as China, France, Germany, Mexico, Spain, and Switzerland.

TABLE 1
Profiles of Two Classes of Students

	Class A	Class B
Class Size	14	15
Gender	2 males and 12 females	1 male and 14 females
Make-up		
Year	2nd year	4th year
Age	19-20	22-23
Major	English	French, Spanish, German, & Chinese

Despite such difference as majors, ages, and language learning experiences, there were no significant differences between their English writing abilities. With regard to the English compositions they wrote at the outset of the classes, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant difference between them (see Table 6 further below for details). Although students of Class B were older by two years, they had much less English instruction in the university because they majored in languages other than English. As far as the English proficiency levels of the students were concerned, students of both classes were estimated to range from 550 to 800 in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), not different from the proficiency level of those in the previous study (Hirose, 2012). Their English proficiency levels were mostly intermediate and regarded higher than average for Japanese university students.²

Course Content

Written-Plus-Spoken PF and Paragraph Writing Instruction

The classes met separately once a week for 90 minutes each, over a 14-week semester. For 12 weeks, students of both classes were instructed on English writing entirely in English. As homework prior to each class, students were required to write a composition with a minimum length of one paragraph. Based on the homework compositions, the first half of the class time (45 minutes) was devoted to PF. In this part, they spent about 20 minutes pairing up with partners and reading each other's compositions and writing feedback. The remaining time was spent reading feedback and engaging in spoken feedback. In every class, students first exchanged compositions with new partners. Each composition was read and commented on by only one peer. Pair work was employed to allow the exchange of

² According to the most recent official data, the average TOEIC score of Japanese university students was 553 in 2010 (Institute for International Business Communication, 2011, p. 8).

compositions and written and spoken PF efficiently.³ New pairs were formed to permit the chance to communicate with as many classmates as possible, not only those they knew well but also those they did not.

The students exchanged the single-sided A4-sized PF sheet with each other, after filling it out. The PF sheet included identification of the topic sentence (taken from the course content), explanation of what the reader liked, what confused the reader, and suggestions of what the reader wanted further details about. In other words, the prompts given in the sheet were geared towards feedback in terms of “praise, criticism, and suggestions” (Hyland & Hyland, 2001), respectively. The prompts also enabled students to provide comments on content and/or language. Furthermore, the reader was instructed to underline any incomprehensible sections directly on the composition. After reading the partner’s feedback, the pair was free to talk about any topic that arose from those two compositions and responses.

The other half of the class (45 minutes) was spent on English composition instruction using paragraph writing coursebooks. After the PF sessions, instruction consisted of learning about English paragraphs by way of reading and analyzing sample paragraphs provided in the coursebooks. Both classes were expected to write compositions related to paragraph organizations covered in a previous class. They were encouraged, but not required, to revise earlier compositions for assignments.

TF and Teacher Intervention about PF

Students received written TF on all their writing afterwards. During spoken PF sessions, the teacher gave comments and answered questions individually with pairs. In the following class, the teacher returned both their compositions and partners’ PF sheets, with written TF, which included not only holistic evaluative comments such as “very good,” or “good comments” but also specific comments such as “This needs examples” on the composition and “I agree” with praise,

³ When the total number of students was uneven, the class had one group of three. In this case, spoken PF sessions did not work as efficiently as in pairs, because the three read only one peer’s composition.

criticism, and suggestions provided on the PF sheet. In addition, the teacher pointed out grammar or spelling mistakes. Therefore, no specific TF techniques were employed in the present instruction. Instead, TF was meant to complement PF, compensating for areas overlooked by students and also complimenting the good composition/PF writer. Together with TF on student writing, the teacher also illustrated good PF samples in class to facilitate PF.

Data

Post-Course Questionnaire of Student Perceptions of PF and Writing in English

At the end of the courses, students answered a post-course questionnaire consisting of 19 statements written in English (see Table 2).⁴ Each question (Q) statement was answered on a 5-point scale (1: *strongly disagree*; 2: *disagree*; 3: *neither disagree nor agree*; 4: *agree*; 5: *strongly agree*). The PF section (16 items) questioned perceptions of various aspects of PF activities, the preferred kinds of PF both given and received, and the perceived effect of the sessions. The second section (3 items) inquired about perceptions of English writing in terms of ability and confidence, and general views of the writing instruction. Cronbach's Alpha showed reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.87 for Class A, and 0.77 for Class B, respectively.

English Compositions and PF Sheets Written over the Semester

All English compositions and PF sheets that the students wrote over the 12-week sessions were measured in terms of numbers and mean total words per composition/sheet, respectively.

⁴ The post-course questionnaire used for the previous study (Hirose, 2012) was revised to further capture students' perceptions of PF. The number of statements concerning PF more than tripled. As in the previous study, although the original questionnaire had another scaled section on TF (5 items), the present paper focuses solely on the students' responses to the sections about PF and writing in English.

Pre- and Post-Course English Compositions

At the beginning and end of the semester, students wrote an argumentative composition taking one of two given positions and supporting it in 30 minutes (see Appendix A for prompts). Different topics were used to avoid the possible influence of students' thinking about the pre-course topic over the semester (as in Hirose & Sasaki, 2000). Both topics were considered familiar to them (i.e., concerning themselves). Students were not informed about the topics beforehand and could not use dictionaries.

Data Analysis

Regarding the ratings for each Q statement of the post-course questionnaire, the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric test for comparisons between two groups, was conducted to investigate whether there were significant differences between the two classes. Due to this study's small sample size, applying parametric procedures to the results was regarded as inappropriate.

The total quantity of English compositions and PF sheets written during the 12-week sessions was counted by the numbers and total words. Each student's total numbers of words for compositions and PF sheets were divided by 12, not by the exact numbers of compositions and PF sheets students actually wrote. Mean total numbers were calculated this way to reflect students' attendance rates. The Mann-Whitney U test was performed to determine whether there were significant differences between the two classes regarding mean composition/PF numbers and mean total words per composition/PF sheet.

The pre- and post-course compositions were compared in terms of overall writing quality and quantity. Regarding quality, all compositions were scored by three English-speaking university instructors according to the adapted version of Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981) ESL English Composition Profile (Yamanishi, 2004). Ratings were assigned equally (10 points each) for the five criteria of content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and

mechanics.⁵ Each student's score was the sum of the three raters' scores (the full total score = 150). Reliability estimates for the total composition scores are inter-rater reliability estimates based on the coefficient alpha formula. Most inter-rater reliability estimates for the pre- and post-course composition total scores were acceptably high (0.96 and 0.61 for Class A, and 0.73 and 0.73 for Class B, respectively). For the measure of writing quantity, total number of words was counted. The pre- and post-course compositions were then compared within each group, respectively, using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test, a non-parametric equivalent to the matched-pairs *t*-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Post-Course Questionnaire Items

Table 2 provides the means and *SDs* of the 5-point scale questionnaire items by students of each class. They revealed similar tendencies in the majority of items. The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test showed that the two classes significantly differed in five out of 19 items. The following reports the results of each questionnaire section respectively.

Student Perceptions of PF Activities

The overall results found that students had positive perceptions about most aspects of PF activities. Students of both classes most enjoyed reading peers' feedback (Q3: $M_A=4.36$; $M_B=4.73$) and peers' compositions (Q1: $M_A=4.21$; $M_B=4.73$). Subsequently, students enjoyed discussing each other's compositions (Q4: $M_A=4.14$; $M_B=4.6$), and students least enjoyed writing responses (Q2: $M_A=3.29$; $M_B=4.20$). They agreed that they looked forward to PF (Q14: $M_A=3.86$; $M_B=3.93$) at a little less than the *agree* level.

⁵ The previous study used Jacobs et al.'s (1981) Profile, which was differentially weighted for the five criteria, to evaluate compositions.

TABLE 2
Means and SDs of Post-Course Questionnaire Items: Class A vs. Class B

Questionnaire item	Class A <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Class B <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>z</i>
I. Peer feedback			
1. I enjoy reading my partners' compositions.	4.21 (0.89)	4.73 (0.46)	1.57
2. I enjoy writing responses to my partners' compositions.	3.29 (1.07)	4.20 (0.68)	2.29*
3. I enjoy reading my partners' responses to my compositions.	4.36 (0.84)	4.73 (0.59)	1.31
4. I enjoy talking with my partners about each other's compositions.	4.14 (0.77)	4.60 (0.51)	1.51
5. I like having my compositions corrected by my partners.	3.71 (0.61)	4.60 (0.51)	3.08**
6. I like having my compositions commented on by my partners.	4.07 (0.62)	4.87 (0.35)	3.08**
7. I want to say good things about my partners' compositions.	4.07 (0.73)	4.33 (0.62)	0.83
8. I want my partners to say good things about my compositions.	3.36 (1.08)	3.33 (0.98)	0.20
9. I want to find mistakes (grammar, spelling, content, and others) in my partners' compositions.	3.50 (0.85)	3.13 (0.83)	1.07
10. I want my partners to find mistakes (grammar, spelling, content, and others) in my compositions.	4.14 (0.77)	4.33 (0.49)	0.55
11. I think I can give helpful suggestions about my partners' compositions.	2.50 (0.65)	3.07 (0.59)	1.92
12. I think my partners can give helpful suggestions about my compositions.	3.79 (1.12)	4.40 (0.63)	1.48
13. I think my partners are as good at giving suggestions as my teacher is.	3.00 (0.88)	3.93 (0.88)	2.47*
14. I look forward to peer feedback activities.	3.86 (0.66)	3.93 (0.80)	0.07
15. I read my partners' comments and corrections carefully to improve my writing.	3.86 (0.86)	4.27(0.59)	1.09
16. Peer feedback has helped me to communicate with my partners in English.	3.71 (0.73)	4.47 (0.52)	2.51*
II. Writing in English			
17. I enjoy writing in English more now than I did 3 months ago.	3.86 (0.53)	3.80 (0.78)	0.07
18. I think writing instruction in this course has had a positive effect on my English ability.	4.43 (0.51)	4.40 (0.51)	0.13
19. I feel more confident in my written English now than 3 months ago.	3.14 (0.77)	3.53 (0.92)	1.09

Note. 5 is the highest possible agreement.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

This study found that students of both classes had positive perceptions of

written-plus-spoken PF in L2 after a semester-long experience, confirming the first and second findings of the previous study (listed in *The Present Study* section). Peer reading was deemed most positively, whereas writing feedback was regarded much less enjoyably (see Hosack, 2005; Tsui & Ng, 2000, for similar findings). Besides confirming that peer reading greatly contributed to student positive perceptions of PF, the present study adds that spoken PF in English was also highly enjoyed at more than the *agree* level. Having played dual roles of provider and receiver, students appreciated receiving PF more and found writing feedback the least enjoyable and probably the most challenging of the PF activities.

Regarding student perceptions as PF receiver and provider (from Q5 to Q13), the results demonstrated a disparity between their attitudes towards providing and receiving feedback, thus confirming the third finding of the previous study. On the one hand, students wanted to say good things about partners' compositions while conversely, they were less likely to want their partners to say good things about their own work (Q7: $M_A=4.07$; $M_B=4.33$ vs. Q8: $M_A=3.36$; $M_B=3.33$). Similarly, they did not want to find mistakes in partners' compositions as much as they wanted mistakes in their own compositions identified (Q9: $M_A=3.5$; $M_B=3.13$ vs. Q10: $M_A=4.14$; $M_B=4.33$). Furthermore, students of both classes showed little confidence in giving helpful suggestions, whereas they believed their peers were good at giving helpful suggestions (Q11: $M_A=2.5$; $M_B=3.07$ vs. Q12: $M_A=3.79$; $M_B=4.40$). In fact, for both, Q11 received the lowest mean in the PF section of the questionnaire. They read peers' comments and corrections carefully to improve their writing at about the *agree* level (Q15: $M_A=3.86$; $M_B=4.27$).

Concerning the dual roles of students, the disparity between student expectations as feedback receivers and providers was highlighted. Students wanted peers to be more critical of their own writing whereas they did not want to be critical of their peers' writing. These contrastive findings might disclose a self-perceived gap between the roles of *friendly reader* and *ambitious English learner* to improve writing ability. Alternatively the tendency not to trust themselves as much as they trust their peers could reflect modesty or a lack of confidence in Japanese students. Their willingness to receive negative PF might have derived from their experience with receiving supportive positive feedback from peers who were found willing to provide such feedback. Their PF experience as a provider (=12 sessions) was probably not long enough to build up confidence in providing critical feedback or

helpful suggestions. By putting their willingness to receive negative feedback from peers into practice (recall their responses to Q10), students should be trained to offer critical feedback on peer writing. Thus, the present instruction requires pedagogical improvements to foster more confident, critical PF providers in a collaborative manner.

As displayed in Table 2, significant differences were also found between the two classes in their perceptions of PF concerning five PF-related questionnaire items: writing feedback on peers' compositions (Q2: $M_A=3.29$; $M_B=4.20$), having compositions corrected by peers (Q5: $M_A=3.71$; $M_B=4.6$), having them commented on by peers (Q6: $M_A=4.07$; $M_B=4.87$), maintaining trust in peers giving suggestions as well as the teacher did (Q13: $M_A =3.00$; $M_B =3.93$), and perceiving PF as helpful in communication with peers in English (Q16: $M_A =3.71$; $M_B =4.47$). (See Figure 1 for each class's responses to the enjoyment level of writing feedback.) Furthermore, there was a consistent pattern in which Class B displayed more positive responses than Class A. Having enjoyed writing PF significantly more, Class B especially liked having their compositions commented on by their partners (Q6). In fact, 13 out of 15 students strongly agreed with this item, which had the highest mean score of all questionnaire items.

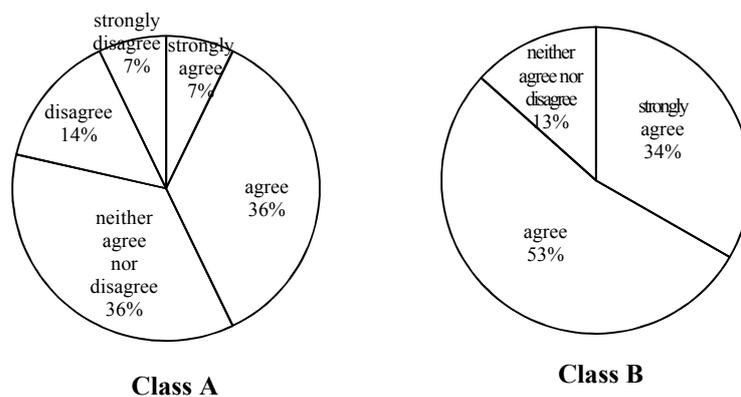


FIGURE 1
Responses to “I enjoy writing responses to my partners’ compositions” (Q2)

An important question remains unresolved as to what may have caused such differences between the two classes. The differences could have been connected with differences in class configurations. More specifically, Class B's more varied class make-up in term of majors and language learning experiences could have helped to create more opportunities for exchanging feedback. These significant findings should be further examined in relation to the content of feedback (i.e., how frequently were corrections, supportive or critical comments, and suggestions made in both written and spoken PF) and composition content. The significant differences between the two classes in the questionnaire are also discussed in *the Students' English Writing Over the Semester* section below.

Student Perceptions of the Instruction and Writing in English

The results of the second questionnaire section, about receiving instruction and writing in English, found that the students shared relatively positive views about both, as well as toward English writing (recall Table 2). Students reported a positive reaction towards the writing instruction on their English ability, agreeing with Q18 ($M_A=4.43$; $M_B=4.4$). Although enjoyment levels of in-class writing feedback differed significantly between the two (recall Figure 1), the students noted increased enjoyment of writing after the instruction (Q17: $M_A=3.86$; $M_B=3.8$) (see Figure 2 for each class's responses). As shown in Figure 2, there were similar patterns in their responses and no students disagreed with the increased enjoyment level of writing. On the other hand, their confidence in English writing abilities was not greatly boosted. They only marginally concurred with boosted confidence in English writing abilities (Q19 $M_A=3.14$; $M_B=3.53$). Therefore, the present study also confirmed that the one-semester instruction incorporating the bimodal PF positively affected students' attitudes towards writing (the fourth finding of the previous study), while not having substantially boosted their confidence in English writing.

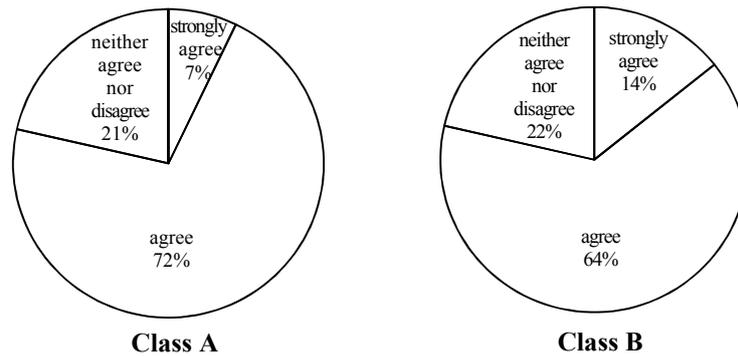


FIGURE 2
Responses to “I enjoy writing in English more now than I did 3 months ago”
(Q17)

Students’ English Writing over the Semester

Quantity of English Compositions and Written Feedback

Table 3 shows the total quantity of English compositions and PF sheets of each class produced over the whole semester, in terms of both the number of compositions and PF sheets, and also total words per composition/feedback sheet. Assigned to write a minimum of one paragraph, students of Class A wrote a mean of 10.7 compositions with an average of 1.2 revisions (range: 0 – 4). In other words, they wrote on a mean of 9.5 different topics (see Appendix B for a list of composition topics of one student, who wrote 12 compositions, of which one composition was revised). Similarly, students of Class B wrote a mean of 11 compositions with an average of 1.6 revisions (range: 0 – 3); they wrote on a mean of nine different topics. Students of both classes wrote on a new topic instead of revising a previous composition (using a new organizational pattern). This finding might have derived from several reasons. First, revision was not mandatory.

Second, the class scheduling was more likely to push students to write on a new topic each week. Revisions based on PF and TF were not possible for the next immediate lesson, because students were already waiting until the next lesson to receive written PF and TF on any earlier compositions (recall *the Course Content section*).

TABLE 3
Means and Ranges of English Compositions and PF Sheets Written over the Semester: Class A vs. Class B

	Class A	Class B
Total Compositions	10.7 (9 – 12)	11.0 (8 – 12)
Total New (Unrevised) Compositions	9.5 (5 – 12)	9.0 (6 – 11)
Total Words per Composition	168.8 (117.8 – 236.3)	184.9 (144.6 – 230.5)
Total PF Sheets	9.4 (7 – 11)	9.8 (6 – 12)
Total Words per PF Sheet	44.7 (28.2 – 58.2)	79.3 (48.4 – 105.5)

Class A produced compositions with a mean total word of 168.8, whereas Class B produced compositions with 184.9 words. The Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no significant difference ($z = 1.35, p > .05$) in the mean total words of the compositions.

Regarding the total words per PF sheet, on the other hand, there was a significant difference ($z = 4.36, p < .001$) between the two classes. During the written PF sessions, Class B wrote significantly longer, nearly twice as much, feedback than Class A, with a mean of 34.6 words per sheet. This difference is noteworthy because those students who produced more written PF expressed benefits of PF more favorably, indicating in the post-course questionnaire how they especially enjoyed writing feedback more (Q2). Although there was no definitive causal relationship between the enjoyment of writing feedback and the quantity of written PF, Class B's greater production of written PF may be related to their higher enjoyment level of writing PF and appreciation of receiving PF. From the perspective of PF receivers, greater production by Class B led them to receive significantly more written PF than Class A. This could have contributed to other significant differences: i.e., more positive appreciation of receiving peers'

corrections and comments. Subsequently, two other significant items followed: their greater trust level in peers' suggestions (Q13) and in the effectiveness of PF to communicate in English (Q16). In the long run, students should feel the consequent benefit of providing PF. In a comparative study of the two separate groups, PF providers and receivers, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) revealed that those who provided PF improved more significantly in their writing ability than did those who received.

In connection with the results of the post-course questionnaire section, the findings of the present section suggest the importance to motivate students to write feedback. In other words, the present findings imply that facilitating PF writing production is the key to implementing written-plus-spoken PF. There is no question that Class B had more to talk about when engaging spoken interactions after reading PF, possibly leading to differences in spoken PF too.⁶ Student writing, including compositions on which PF is based, is the springboard for PF activities. Through collaborative interactions both in writing and speaking, PF should motivate students to improve their writing ability. Whether the present instruction had positive effects on students' writing abilities is reported in the next section.

Pre- and Post-Course Composition Total Scores and Words

Table 4 and 5 provide pre- and post-course composition total scores (quality) and total words (quantity) of each class, respectively. As shown in the Tables, the majority of the two classes improved their scores and words in post-course compositions. Table 6 presents means, *SDs*, and ranges of pre- and post-course total scores and words of each class. Comparing pre- and post-course total scores and words within each class, the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test showed different findings between the two. Class A's post-course scores were marginally higher than pre-course scores ($z = 1.84, .05 < p < .01$), whereas Class B's pre- and

⁶ It is likely that the quantity of spoken PF also differed between the two classes. According to teacher observation, Class B tended to actively engage in spoken PF longer than Class A. The teacher sometimes had to stop Class B's spoken PF sessions in order to move to the English paragraph instruction section.

post-course scores showed no such statistical differences ($z = 0.77, p > .05$). Similarly, Class A's post-course compositions were significantly longer than their pre-course compositions ($z = 3.68, p < .01$), whereas those of Class B were not ($z = 0.83, p > .05$). Therefore, the effects of the instruction on student writing improvement appear to have been somewhat different depending on class. Nevertheless, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test found significant differences neither in the post-course composition scores nor in total words between the two classes.

TABLE 4
Comparing Pre- and Post-Course Composition Total Scores

	Pre > Post	Pre = Post	Pre < Post
Class A	4 (28.6%)	0 (0%)	10 (71.4%)
Class B	4 (26.7%)	1 (0.07%)	10 (66.7%)

TABLE 5
Comparing Pre- and Post-Course Composition Total Words

	Pre > Post	Pre < Post
Class A	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)
Class B	4 (26.7%)	11 (73.3%)

TABLE 6
Pre- and Post-Course Composition Total Scores and Total Words

Class	Measure	Pre-Course			Post-Course		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Class A	Composition Total (150)	95.71	6.94	86 – 114	99.86	7.24	85 – 109
	Total number of words	146.43	35.41	88 – 221	170.14	31.14	85 – 213
Class B	Composition Total (150)	98.67	6.76	89 – 110	100.2	10.71	72 – 118
	Total number of words	178.07	33.46	119 – 222	197.67	52.30	144 – 318

Confirming the potential effects of PF on students' writing ability (i.e., the fifth finding of the previous study), the present findings further suggest that the writing instruction incorporating written-plus-spoken PF may help students to improve writing significantly. Students of Class A, who tended to regard PF less positively

than those of Class B, achieved significant word increase and marginally significant improvement in overall quality. These findings seem to imply that the focus on writing quantity in the writing instruction with the use of PF produced positive results, and quantity precedes quality in writing improvement (see Hirose, 2005, for similar findings). Although it is impossible to rule out the possibility that students' extensive writing over the semester (i.e., weekly writing assignments out of class and PF writing in class) contributed to the quantity increase, it is not indubitably possible to refute the effects of PF on students' motivation to write compositions and PF.

The positive findings concerning the post-course compositions in the present study hinted at the possibility of long-term improvement in writing (Leki, 1990). Although the argumentative topics requiring position-taking and opinion-stating were employed for the pre- and post-course compositions in the present study, the course content of the two classes did not specifically focus on the argumentative writing style, and students did not intentionally write in the argumentative style at any time during the course (recall Appendix B for a list of composition topics). On the other hand, a study that reported significant improvement of students' writing after the PF (Kamimura, 2006) used the argumentative for the pre- and post-course tasks, and the argumentative style was solely practiced in the class. Nevertheless, it should be added that the Japanese EFL students in the present study had not yet reached the acceptable level in terms of quantity. As shown in Table 6, both classes of students produced total mean words of less than 200 in 30 minutes. Providing a similar writing task, the independent writing task of TOEFL iBT is usually a minimum of 300 words in 30 minutes (Educational Testing Service, 2006). Similarly, Jacobs et al. (1981) gave the 200-300 word length as an acceptable level for L2 compositions written in 30 minutes.

CONCLUSION

This classroom study investigated how two classes of Japanese EFL students perceived bimodal PF, and it investigated what the effects of the instruction were on

their attitude to and ability in English writing over a one-semester course. The results showed that writing instruction incorporating written-plus-spoken PF in English had the potential to exert positive influences on student motivation towards writing and improvement in writing, giving support to all the findings of the previous study (i.e., 1 to 5 in *The Present Study* section). Furthermore, facilitated paragraph writing (exemplified in the quantity of compositions produced over the semester) and an increased enjoyment level in writing (reported at the end of the course) seem to illustrate positive signs of implementing PF. Encompassing two writing classes, the study highlighted not only similarities but also differences between the two. This final section discusses limitations of the study and suggests directions for future research and instruction.

First, this study was small and more research is required to confirm its findings. Follow-up studies should examine the effects of longer writing instruction, with students of different English proficiency levels. Further investigation of how PF affects EFL students' writing processes and motivation towards writing English should be made in much greater depth using interviews in longitudinal research. The present study, for example, did not uncover what aspects of written-plus-spoken PF affected students' attitude towards writing.

Second, it was also beyond the scope of the present study to examine what aspects of writing students used to interact with each other both in written and spoken PF. More specifically, there was no examination of which aspects of writing (e.g., content of compositions or English paragraph structures) students attended to when giving feedback. It was also not clear whether quantitative differences in written PF between the two classes accompanied qualitative differences. Further research should investigate specifically what content of PF students provided each other in written-plus-spoken PF. For example, content in light of "praise, criticism, and suggestions" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001) should be analyzed. Future research also needs to examine longitudinally whether and how peer interactions will change as well as examine whether and how attitudes or motivation towards English writing evolve.

It is also important to compare pre- and post-course compositions by means other than overall quantity and quality. Other indexes of writing improvement, especially for such short courses as a 14-week semester, should be explored and established

for both classroom and research use. It is equally important to revisit what types/topics of writing tasks should be used for comparison. The present study employed different topics for pre- and post-course compositions, but some might argue the possible influences of different topics on quantity and quality (e.g., Reid, 1990). In future classroom studies, it is desirable to analyze all the compositions the students wrote over the course to trace any signs of improvement in them.

Although making hasty conclusions should be avoided, the results of this study suggest that written-plus-spoken PF in English is a winning combination for university EFL writing instruction. Until PF gains widespread credence, EFL teachers ought to consider applying PF in their own ways and examine its effectiveness from diverse perspectives, as done in the present study. Assuming possible positive effects of the spoken PF on student subsequent writing, the spoken-only PF (in L2) should be implemented too, particularly after students get used to exchanging written-plus-spoken PF. If PF is to find its rightful place in the EFL writing classrooms, it will be in unique and responsive forms that take their cues from the experiences and perceptions of students, such as those who participated in this study, as well as those of teachers who incorporate PF in their writing instruction.

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THE AUTHOR

Keiko Hirose is professor in the School of Foreign Studies at Aichi Prefectural University in Japan, where she teaches applied linguistics and TEFL. Her main research area is in second

language writing, with special interests in contrastive rhetoric, assessment, and pedagogy.

Email: khirose@for.aichi-pu.ac.jp

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APPENDIX A

Pre- and Post-Course Composition Prompts

The *pre-course* composition prompt:

In the readers' column in an English newspaper, there has been a heated discussion about the issue of *university students and part-time jobs*. Some think that students should not have part-time jobs, whereas others believe they should work part-time. Now the editor of the newspaper is calling for the readers' opinions. Suppose you are writing for the readers' opinion column. Take one of the positions described above, and write your opinion.

The *post-course* composition prompt:

In the readers' column in an English newspaper, there has been a heated discussion about the

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issue of *English learning and studying abroad*. Some think that people have to study abroad to improve their English, whereas others believe people can improve their English in Japan and don't need to study abroad. Now the editor of the newspaper is calling for the readers' opinions. Suppose you are writing for the readers' opinion column. Take one of the positions described above, and write your opinion.

APPENDIX B

A Sample List of One Student's Composition Topics

1. My family
2. My trip this summer
3. Part-time jobs
4. Learning foreign languages
5. Student suicides
6. English and Korean (revised composition of "Learning foreign languages")
7. The origin of Christmas in Japan
8. A convenient music player
9. The examination ordeal
10. Reunions
11. Good food
12. The importance of water