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Student Perception on Giving Peer Feedback in EFL Writing and its Implications

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Abstract

The qualitative case study reported in this paper explored Japanese senior high school students' perceptions on *giving* peer feedback in an EFL writing class. The study unveiled two contrasting findings. The survey data revealed that the students perceived *giving* peer feedback positively and recognized the benefits. The students identified the process of *giving* feedback as an experience of reading non-standard, imperfect English essay actively. The benefits they saw in *giving* feedback were related to the improvements in their own English proficiency: the reviewing of their own English usage, the application into their own writing of what they learned from *giving* peer feedback, and the exposure to the wide variety of English their classmates used. On the other hand, the observational and interview data unveiled the students' irritation and impatience in *giving* feedback on essays written by their peers in imperfect, non-standard English. It depicted the intolerance toward students' own non-standard English. The study stresses the importance of *giving* peer feedback in EFL writing sessions with regards to 1) the students recognizing its benefits, and 2) the students needing to develop tolerance and perseverance in dealing with their own non-standard English.

Introduction

As the communicative approach gained its momentum over the grammar-translation method in the 1990s, the Japanese EFL classrooms began to witness an increased amount of pair and group work. The use of peer feedback was also not ignored. A large amount of research on peer feedback was conducted, varying in its purpose, nature, and results. Some studies emphasized the effectiveness of peer feedback (Keh, 1990; Hedgcock&Lefkowitz, 1992; Tsui&Ng, 2000; Nakanishi, 2006) while others criticized its ineffectiveness

(Conner&Asenavage, 1994; Zhang, 1995).

Despite the differences in their results, most of the research on peer feedback focused on the end product, the *given* peer feedback. Some examined the student feedback *given* on paper in writing and dissected it using different approaches. Others studied the students' reactions to the *given* feedback, while some others studied how much the *given* student feedback was reflected in their second essays. However, when the focus is shifted from the *given* feedback to the process of *giving* feedback, the educational and social benefits unique to peer feedback came into the picture. This is precisely what this research paper is focused on, the students' perceptions on *giving* peer feedback in an EFL writing session, rather than the end product, that is, the *given* peer feedback.

Literature Review

Studies on peer feedback can be categorized into the four types outlined below: 1) students' preferences, 2) comparisons of teacher feedback and student feedback, 3) the constraints of peer feedback, and 4) the benefits of peer feedback.

1) *Students' preference of feedback type*

There are studies that focused on learners' preference in terms of peer and/or teacher feedback. Zhang (1995) conducted research involving 81 university students in an ESL setting. Her study attempted to examine the changes in the students' preferences as regards teacher and peer feedback when social support was provided in the classroom. She concluded that 93.8% of the students preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback.

Tsui & Ng (2000) observed 27 high school students in an ESL setting to determine the effectiveness of the peer feedback. They attempted to clarify whether secondary L2 learners benefited from peer comments or not. They found that the students preferred teacher feedback, and that the teacher feedback was incorporated a lot more than the peer comments in the revision of their writing. In addition, they stated that the reasons for the preference were based on the teachers' experiences and the directness of the feedback. Regarding the peer feedback itself, they found that 88% of the students stated that *given* peer feedback was more beneficial than *receiving* it.

Moreover, Chaudron (1984) examined 23 university students in an ESL setting and found that nearly all the students preferred teacher feedback over peer feedback. He stated that some students did see benefits of receiving peer feedback, but they doubted the validity of

the peer feedback.

Regarding the validity of the feedback and its relation to the students' preference of the types of feedback, Nakanishi (2006) concluded in her study that the validity and the preference of feedback varied according to the language proficiency level of the reviewers (pp.103-109). She had 13 teachers, 25 university students of higher-English proficiency, and 25 university students of lower-English proficiency review one common composition. She found that the teacher feedback outweighed the student feedback in quantity and in quality. Similarly, the students with higher-English proficiency gave much more direct and coded feedback than those with lower-English proficiency. Her results aligned with the students' preference for the types of feedback they received. In other words, the students preferred teacher feedback to that of the high English proficiency students, while the high English proficiency student feedback was preferred to that of the lower English proficiency students. Likewise, Mendoca & Johnson (1994) stated that the corrections made in the peer feedback tended to arouse doubts on the side of the receivers, especially when their fields of study differed, resulting in an increase in the students' preference for teacher feedback over peer feedback. Interestingly, Sumida (2010) examined two-year college students' perceptions of EFL writing instruction through a survey analysis, concluding that the learners regarded receiving feedback from teachers and peers to be a lot more effective than from teachers alone. His study showed that the students acknowledged the fundamental differences of the two and considered both to be significant. Similar results were reported by Tsui and Ng (2000) and Wakabayashi (2008).

2) Comparisons of teacher feedback and peer feedback

Teacher feedback and peer feedback are fundamentally different. The strength of peer feedback can be found in its social, cognitive and affective aspects all of which cannot be fully supplemented by the teacher feedback. Conversely, the strength of teacher feedback can be identified in its methodological and linguistic aspects (Rollinson, 2005, p.24; Liu&Hansen, 2002, p.8). Teacher feedback and peer feedback complement one another to provide the most effective feedback. Thus, for example, when peer feedback is compared to teacher feedback in its accuracy over grammatical corrections, the effectiveness of teacher feedback naturally outweighs the other. However, despite such fundamental differences, there have been a large number of studies concerned with a comparison of the two.

There is research examining how much influence peer feedback had on the final draft of

students' compositions when compared to the teacher feedback. Connor and Asenavage (1994) reported on eight university students in an ESL environment, showing that approximately 35% of the teacher feedback was reflected in the final drafts, while it was only 5% for the peer feedback (pp.266-267). They pointed out that the majority of the teacher feedback appearing in the students' final draft was of direct corrections.

In a study comparing the effects of different editing methods on EFL writing quality at high school level, Shizuka (1993) found that the quality of the final draft improved the most when the direct corrections were made by the teachers. Nakanishi (2006) compared the features of the teacher feedback and peer feedback in her study involving Japanese university students and reported that teachers made far more "grammatical" corrections than the peers (p.106). Approximately 12% of the teacher feedback focused on the language, while it was only 4% for the peer feedback.

Similarly, Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) compared the final drafts of 30 FSL (French as a Second Language) students that received either teacher or peer feedback. They found that while the final drafts written after the peer feedback tended to improve in their content, structure and vocabulary, those with the teacher feedback exhibited improvements on their language use the most. Shizuka (1993) however, went so far as to question the effectiveness of the direct corrections offered by the teachers. He stated that direct corrections in the teacher feedback tended to appear as they were instructed in the final drafts, but suspected that in the long run, such direct corrections may prevent learners from developing self-feedback skills to revise and improve their own writing (p.20).

In the studies comparing the teacher feedback and peer feedback, the scores of the students' first and revised compositions were often examined. In most cases, the score of the revised composition was better than the first one. Simply put, the "revision" improves the score regardless of the type of feedback the students receive. Nakanishi (2006) conducted a study involving four types of feedback (self-feedback, peer-feedback, teacher-feedback, and peer-&-teacher feedback) and compared the scores of the revised composition. She concluded that the improved scores of the second draft were due to the effect of "revision" rather than the types of feedback the writers received (pp.171-172). Similarly, Yakame (2005) studied the revised composition of students who received peer feedback and concluded that their scores improved because the students simply added sentences to increase the volume of their compositions (pp.108-109).

Furthermore, Sumida (2010), Wakayabashi (2008), and Kambara (2011) suspected the

writing topic selection resulted in the score improvement. They all suggested that the score of the revised compositions increased depending on the topic. Wakabayashi (2008) cited one of the limitations of her study was the failure to adjust the composition conditions for the first and the revised ones (p.106). Thus, regardless of what type of feedback the students received, the score for the second composition increased in general.

3) *Constraints of peer feedback*

Outlined below are some problematic aspects of peer feedback including time constraints, cultural dispositions, and both the students' and teacher's characteristics and beliefs.

Time constraint has been the major obstacle in implementing peer feedback (Rollinson, 2005, pp.25-26). Whether it is given orally or written, the process of giving peer feedback itself is a time consuming activity. In addition, most learners are not accustomed to reviewing papers. Pre-training on how to give feedback may be needed, which naturally demands more time (Liu&Hansen, 2002, pp.151-155; Nakanishi, 2008, p.46). Moreover, usually in secondary education, the EFL curricula have been set in advance, often leaving no room for peer feedback sessions. Yu (2013) stated that Chinese EFL teachers were occupied with aligning their content and schedule around the common term examinations that it was nearly impossible to incorporate peer feedback (p.76).

Collectivism, often a symbol of East Asian cultures, may be a cultural disposition which impedes the effective implementation of peer feedback. In their study, Carson and Nelson (1998) suggested such collectivism to be the reason behind Chinese students' tendency to withhold critical comments. They stated that Chinese students were reluctant to critique their peers in order to maintain group harmony within the class and to avoid exerting authority over their peers. With similar notions in mind, Nakanishi (2006) conducted a study involving 48 Japanese college students. In order to adjust such cultural dispositions, she asked the students to give two kinds of peer feedback, one of which was named and the other anonymous. Her results showed that the anonymous evaluation contained lower scores and more comments on points to be improved. She also stated that the students commented more specifically and directly when their feedback was anonymous. On the other hand, in the feedback including their names, the students gave higher points and commented more on the good points. Their wording was much more polite. Her study showed that conducting peer feedback anonymously allowed the Japanese students to critique their peers more effectively (p.124).

Student characteristics and beliefs often interfere with the implementation of peer feedback. Rollinson (2005) stated that many students might need to be persuaded to value peer feedback (p.26). Some of them might not accept the notion that their peers were qualified to read and critique their writing in place of a teacher. They might feel that only a better writer, in most cases a native speaker or the teacher, was qualified to judge or comment on their work. This is more apparent in a foreign language setting than that of L2 because the exposure to the target language is extremely limited and the only model accepted is the teacher. At the same time, Masaki (1997) stated that some students remained hesitant in critiquing their peers' writing due to their lack of confidence in their English ability.

Teacher characteristics and beliefs, although not often pointed out, may hinder the implementation of peer feedback. Rollinson (2005) stated that teachers often questioned the value of peer feedback and wondered how they could reconcile such a time consuming activity with course or examination constraints. He also pointed out that some teachers had difficulty handing over a significant degree of responsibility to the students. They feared being unable to supervise each and every peer feedback taking place. Moreover, "the teacher may find it difficult not to interfere by providing feedback in addition to that of the student readers, which might well reduce the students' motivation and commitment to their own responding" (Rollinson, 2005, p.26).

Indeed, Yu (2013) conducted her qualitative research with 26 Chinese EFL teachers and found that there was a gap between their beliefs and practice regarding the peer feedback. Although most teachers acknowledged the significance of peer feedback, they did not put it into practice due to various constraints, including their own beliefs. For example, some teachers believed that their students did not possess enough English proficiency to make peer feedback meaningful. According to her study, nearly all the teachers who incorporated peer feedback in their class gave teacher feedback after peer feedback. This not only increased the workload of the teacher, but it clearly illustrated how the teachers thought peer feedback was not sufficient. Her study concluded that EFL teachers lacked the awareness of the value and potential of peer feedback and thus needed to be persuaded.

Moreover, a teacher-centered approach and large class size prevent teachers from implementing peer feedback in their classroom. Zaman and Azad (2012) found that although the Bangladeshi teachers had a very positive attitude towards peer feedback in their study of teachers' perceptions of peer feedback, none of the teachers attempted to incorporate it into their classroom due to the large class sizes (p.150).

4) Benefits of peer feedback

The advantages of peer feedback have often been summarized as follows: Learners receiving more feedback than from the teacher's alone, learners receiving comments from other learners' perspectives, learners gaining audience awareness, learners focusing on ideas for better revision, learners being able to improve their self-revision skills, learners being able to enhance critical reading and critical thinking skills, and learners building a sense of community in the classroom (Chaudron, 1984; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Liu & Hansen, 2002) .

One of the most influential benefits is depicted in the Cone of Experience (Dale, 1954, p.43). Dale stated that students retained more in the active participation than through passive participation. Moreover, in defining active participation, he concluded that the students learn more by teaching one another. This is precisely what peer feedback is about. By having students become involved as evaluators, the learning benefits of such students are incomparably better than more passive approaches. Making corrections on peer's essays are typical examples of such benefits. In the process of *giving* peer feedback, the students consult their friends and teacher; they take the initiative in making corrections; and they extend their language retention period through such hands-on experiences.

As is self-evident, the amount of feedback the learners receive increases when peer feedback is added to teacher feedback. This benefit has been reported by Sumida (2010) in his study of Japanese college students. The students acknowledged that receiving feedback from their peers and teacher was more beneficial than the teacher's alone. Unlike the top-down structure of teacher feedback, peer feedback allows the learners to receive comments from the learners' perspectives. It encourages and motivates them in improving their written work.

Liu and Hansen (2002) stated that the benefits of peer feedback are found in its social aspect (see Table 1). They stated that peer feedback enhanced the communicative power of learners, allowed them to receive authentic feedback, and established collegial ties and friendship. Learners may also gain audience awareness through peer feedback (p.8). Keh (1990) asserted that using peer feedback allowed learners to gain a greater sense of audience when their text was reviewed by several readers, instead of just by one teacher (pp.299-303).

Audience awareness enables the learners to conduct self-feedback and self-assessment at every stage of the writing process. In other words, they are able to revise and edit their work as it progresses from a reader's point of view. Rinnert & Kobayashi (2001) also noted

that peer feedback required leaners to become more aware of their own writing style, and simultaneously, forced them to guess where readers might have problems reading their writing (p.203).

Table 1   Benefits and Constraints in Using Peer Response (Liu & Hansen, 2002; p.8)

	BENEFIT	CONSTRAINT
Cognitive	1. Exercise thinking 2. Take active role in learning 3. Engage in exploratory talk 4. Build critical skills 5. Demonstrate and reinforce knowledge 6. Build audience awareness	1. Uncertainty concerning peers' comments 2. Lack of learner investment
Social	1. Enhance communicative power 2. Receive authentic feedback 3. Gain confidence and reduce apprehension 4. Establish collegial ties and friendship 5. Influence learners' affective state	1. Discomfort and uneasiness 2. Lack of security in negotiating meaning 3. Commentary may be over critical
Linguistic	1. Enhance metalinguistic knowledge 2. Explore linguistic knowledge 3. Gain additional language skill practice 4. Enhance participation and improve discourse 5. Find right words to express ideas	1. Too much focus on surface structure 2. Lack of L2 formal schemata 3. Difficulty in understanding foreign accent
Practical	1. Applicable across students proficiency levels 2. Flexible across different stages in the writing process 3. Time-efficient in some cases 4. Reinforces process writing	1. Time constraints 2. Counter-productive feedback 3. Lack of student preparation

To conclude this review of current literature regarding peer feedback, we can see that most of the research introduced here focused on the *given* feedback. Comparisons between teacher feedback and student feedback were made, often resulting in the teacher feedback outweighing the other in quality and quantity. Such studies have failed to focus on the process of *giving* peer feedback. They disregarded how the students felt as they gave their feedback and what they thought of the whole process. The practical research case study reported in this paper aims to reveal the students' perception of *giving* peer feedback and find out its implications.

Practical Research

Methodology

(1) Participants

   The participants in this research were 73 first-year senior high school students. The academic level of this school against the national standard was considered to be high with nearly all the graduates advancing to a four-year university. The students were divided into two levels according to their English proficiency (intermediate and advanced), and all the participants of this study belonged to the intermediate level. All the participants took four 50-minute EFL classes per week taught by the researcher.

(2) Procedure

   First, the participants wrote English compositions on a given topic: *my turning point in life*. The compositions were collected in class by the instructor. Later, the instructor photocopied each composition onto a peer feedback sheet with the writers' names hidden (see Appendix A). Second, these photocopied sheets were handed out to be evaluated by the participants. They gave feedback directly onto the peer feedback sheet in class using red pens. Third, the English compositions with the peer feedback were each returned to the writers, who then revised their compositions and submitted their second drafts in class.

(3) Instruments

   As described above, four instruments were used: peer evaluation sheet, questionnaire, interview notes, and observation notes.

   i) Peer evaluation sheet

      The peer evaluation sheet consisted of four parts. First, the participants twice summarized the compositions they read – once in 50 Japanese characters or less, and once in English. They then made changes and comments directly onto the composition referring to a proofreader's guide. Next, they evaluated the composition according to five criteria - content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics – using a scale of four. Finally, they gave comments and advice to the writer in Japanese (see Appendix A).

   ii) Questionnaire

      The questionnaire was given to the students when they submitted their second draft. Nearly 10 minutes were allotted for the participants to answer two questions.

      a) Do you think *giving* peer feedback on EFL composition is beneficial to you?

      b) What is your reason for answering YES or NO to the above question?

iii) Interview notes

Interviews were conducted with the five participants who answered that they felt that *giving* peer feedback on EFL composition was *not* beneficial to them. All the interviews were conducted separately under very casual settings. The interview time varied from five to ten minutes and was all conducted in Japanese.

iv) Observation notes

The students were observed under two circumstances: when giving peer feedback, and when writing up their second draft. The observer was the instructor. Notes were made after class based on the recollection of the observer.

Analysis

The responses to the questions on the questionnaire were analyzed according to the qualitative data analysis scheme – data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp.55-66).

Results

(1) Questionnaire

Question #1   Do you think *giving* peer feedback is beneficial to you?

Of the 73 participants, 67 answered that *giving* feedback was beneficial to them. Five answered that it was not beneficial to them; and one answered "neither".

Question #2   What is your reason for answering YES or NO to Question #1?

For those who answered *yes*, the improvement in their overall English skills appeared the most as the benefit of *giving* peer feedback. In order of perceived benefit, they were 1) English composition skill, 2) grammatical skill, 3) reading skill, and 4) vocabulary skill (see Appendix B).

First, regarding the English composition skill, the participants replied that *giving* peer feedback enabled them to learn from peer's writing and mistakes, compare their own work to those of peers, and review their own writing. They further mentioned that they could imitate peers' writing in their second draft.

Second, the participants felt that *giving* peer feedback strengthened their English grammar. In order to confirm if the grammatical corrections they made on the peer feedback sheet were correct or not, they had to consult dictionaries, grammar books, and other classmates. Moreover, they mentioned that they became more careful so as not to make the similar

grammatical mistakes as their peers.

Third, as for the reading skill, the majority of responses reflected how their proofreading of the compositions was carried out attentively and carefully. It appeared that reading imperfect compositions written in "raw" English without any set of answers required much attention on the part of the reviewers.

Fourth, regarding vocabulary skills, the participants mentioned checking the spellings, witnessing peers using vocabulary they had never used before, and actually using a set of vocabulary they had learned from *giving* peer feedback onto their second draft.

Aside from the general English skills, other responses by those who answered *yes* included learning from comparing one's writing with those of peers, being able to realize one's own mistakes, being motivated by the idea of peers reading one's work, and being able to provide detailed feedback.

First, regarding learning from the peer comparison, the participants noted that they learned where they stood among their peers in regards to their English proficiency. Some responses pointed out the surprise of discovering how much their own and peers' writing differed in quantity, quality, and topic.

Second, as for being able to notice their mistakes, the participants discovered some patterns in mistakes made by their peers; and those patterns were taken into account when they wrote the second draft. They also learned how misinterpretations occurred in EFL writing. The majority of them pointed out that *giving* peer feedback made them conduct self-checks, or self-feedback, while writing.

Third, some participants thought that *giving* peer feedback motivated them in writing English compositions. They said that it was inspirational that somebody actually gave feedback to their writing, just as they were giving feedback. The last point was being able to provide individualized, detailed feedback. Unlike the teacher feedback, the participants felt that they were giving more individualized feedback with, for instance, grammatical explanations and examples.

For the five who answered that *giving* peer feedback was not beneficial, the main reason given was their own lack of English proficiency and therefore ability to make meaningful judgments. They further pointed out that even if they could locate a mistake, they did not possess enough knowledge to make necessary correction or give advice.

(2) Interview

The five participants who answered *no* to the questionnaire were then interviewed casually in order for them to clarify their reflections. Of the five, two had low-intermediate level of English proficiency, while three were high-intermediate.

All of them reiterated that they lacked enough knowledge of English to "correct" their peers' compositions. The low-intermediate participants stated that they could not locate mistakes and problems within the composition. They said that their time was spent merely trying to figure out what was said in English. Thus, they felt extremely useless in the process of giving peer feedback. Those with high-intermediate English proficiency felt that none of the students in class possessed enough English knowledge to give feedback to another student. One felt that it was a waste of time to give feedback when neither the reader nor the writer knew the "right" English.

Regarding the peer feedback itself, one participant of low-intermediate proficiency stated that he feared he might be "contaminated" by non-standard, incorrect English. Since he lacked a basic knowledge of English, he worried that he might accept the grammatical mistakes made by peers as correct, and end up learning them in such a way. One participant with high-intermediate proficiency insisted that the teacher feedback was the only feedback he wanted. He saw no significance in peer feedback.

As for the method of incorporating peer feedback into the EFL writing classroom, one participant said that it was difficult to give and receive peer feedback only on paper. He said that it was meaningless without an oral explanation and that he could not make corrections or advise well enough on paper. By the same token, he could not understand the corrections and advice given to him on his own paper and wished to ask the peer reviewer directly, face to face, for more details.

(3) Observation

The participants were observed under two circumstances: first, during the procedure in which the participants gave peer feedback to anonymous writers, and second, during the process when the writers began working on their second draft, after receiving the anonymous peer feedback of their first draft.

During the process of *giving* peer feedback, the majority of the participants worked individually following the peer feedback guidelines at first. Once they completed the whole process, they began to consult those sitting nearby for advice on certain points they could

not give feedback on. Meanwhile, some of the participants, regardless of their English proficiency, reacted openly to peers' essays. Some were surprised at the level of English they displayed. Some were irritated by being unable to decipher an essay written in non-standard, grammatically-flawed English. The positive and negative comments by the participants while *giving* peer feedback were in such terms as (researcher's translation): *"Wow!" "This guy knows how to use English." "This writer should be in the advanced class." "What does he want to say?" "How can you read it, Sensei? It's incomprehensible!" "Native speakers would never say it this way, right?"* (see Appendix C for remarks in Japanese). As the class period approached its end, many participants voiced the need for more time to give peer feedback.

When the anonymous peer feedback sheets were returned to the students, some students reacted emotionally, verbalizing their feelings. Some criticized the anonymous peer reviewers for pointing out the mistakes and attempted to prove that their peer reviewers had wrongfully pointed out the mistakes. It seemed that the participants were fighting back at the unseen anonymous reviewers. Some students appeared to be threatened by the given peer feedback and seemed desperate in trying to justify the mistakes pointed out in the feedback sheets. One participant nearly begged his instructor for an approval that his paper was sufficient and that the peer reviewer made unnecessary revisions. The participants were making full use of dictionaries and English textbooks, and consulting the teacher and classmates in writing up their second draft. Some of the comments expressed out loud by the participants when reading the anonymous peer feedback sheets were: *"Why can't you get it?" "You should be able to read it and understand it." "I checked the dictionary. It can't be wrong!" "What I wrote is right, isn't it?"* (see Appendix C for remarks in Japanese).

Discussion

After analyzing the above results using qualitative data analysis scheme (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the study raises the following three main characteristics, further discussed below: 1) the benefits and constraints students saw in *giving* peer feedback, 2) the students' definitions of *giving* peer feedback, and 3) the students' reactions to anonymous peer feedback.

(1) The benefits and constraints students saw in *giving* peer feedback

The majority of the participants (67/73) answered that giving peer feedback was beneficial to them. This is similar to the finding by Tsui & Ng (2000) in which 88% of the participants

thought *giving* peer feedback was more beneficial than *receiving* it (p.158). On the other hand, less than one-tenth of the participants (5/73) answered that giving peer feedback was not beneficial to them. The reasons given by the participants aligned with the benefits and constraints of peer feedback summarized by Liu and Hansen (2002, p.8) (see Table 1). The findings are significant in that they revealed that the students recognized and acknowledged the benefits and the constraints of *giving* peer feedback.

First, in all the responses noting benefits, cognitive, linguistic, and practical aspects are evident. Cognitively, some participants mentioned of gaining audience awareness. For example, one wrote, *"through the process, I can see what kind of writing is easy to comprehend, and on the other hand, what kind of writing causes confusions for the readers."* Others touched upon taking active roles in learning: *"I had to use all my resources in giving peer feedback, and I think the process contributes to improving my grammatical skills in return."* Linguistically, the students found benefits in improving their English skills. Some referred to gaining additional language skills. For instance, one wrote, *"I discovered some new English expressions."* Another wrote that he noticed a certain tendency for grammatical mistakes while giving peer feedback, and hoped not to repeat similar mistakes in his own writing: *"[Through the process of giving peer feedback,] I get to see what kind of grammatical mistakes are made often, and it helps me when I write."* As for practicality, one of the students wrote: *"Regardless of the language proficiency of the peers, we can all learn something through giving peer feedback. From those who are good at English, we learn how to construct the composition. From those who are not good at English, we can learn the solutions of improving not-so-good compositions."*

Second, the responses illustrating the constraints of peer feedback could all be witnessed in cognitive, social, linguistic, and practical aspects. Cognitively, two participants of high-intermediate English proficiency expressed uncertainty concerning peers' comments: *"I believe none of us has enough knowledge of English skill to give peer feedback. I doubt the appropriateness of the feedback I give, and of that I receive."* Socially, some participants with lower-intermediate English proficiency expressed discomfort and uneasiness. One wrote, *"I hate giving peer feedback because I don't have any confidence in my command of English and I can neither point out the mistakes nor correct them."* Linguistically, one participant focused too much on surface. He said that he was hesitant in marking the paper directly because he wasn't sure what he wrote would be right. Another student said in the interview, *"I don't want to pick up some incorrect English knowledge through reading peers' writing. I*

don't want to be 'contaminated' by non-standard English." As for a practical aspect, a majority of the participants pointed out the time constraints. They stated that they needed much more time in giving peer feedback: *"I couldn't finish giving feedback. One class period is not enough."*

(2) The students' definitions of *giving* peer feedback

The results of the questionnaire revealed how the participants defined the process of *giving* peer feedback (see Appendix D). Two definitions emerged from the results: 1) pointing out the mistakes and 2) reading imperfect English. The significance of these definitions is that it made it apparent that the students were intolerant toward non-standard English writing, and that a realistic depiction of present-day English language was essential in an EFL writing class.

First, more than one third of the participants (27/73) defined the process as *"pointing out the mistakes"*. For example, one wrote, *"I can improve my grammatical knowledge because I read to find the mistakes."* Another wrote, *"[The process of giving peer feedback] is like the error-recognition questions on the entrance exam."* Of these participants, one-third (9/27) additionally answered *"making corrections"* as part of pointing out the mistakes. Interestingly, three of them (3/9) were the participants who responded that giving peer feedback was not beneficial. One of the responses reads as follows: *"Our English proficiency is not so high. So, the process of making us point out the mistakes accurately and expecting us to correct them is too time consuming, and it is even doubtful that the corrections are right."* Rather than defining the process merely as "pointing out the mistakes," these participants placed greater expectations on the function of peer feedback as simultaneously offering corrections. On the other hand, those who responded positively said that they could strengthen their grammar as they needed to check to make sure the corrections they were making were correct: *"By pointing out the mistakes and making corrections, the process is inscribed in our memories. So, we don't repeat the same mistakes. Through it, we are reviewing our own grammar knowledge unintentionally, but aggressively."*

Second, nearly one-third of the participants (23/73) defined the process as *"reading other people's writing."* Under this definition, the most commonly expressed feature was *"reading imperfect English"* followed by *"reading ambiguous English,"* and *"reading various kinds of English."* One wrote, *"I learned a lot from giving peer feedback because reading composition written in imperfect English was a new situation for me."* Another wrote, *"I am reading*

and evaluating a composition with no correct answers." Others wrote that they had to read carefully and attentively because compositions were written with *"raw English"* unlike those in English textbooks. This definition indirectly confirmed the lack of student exposure to varieties of non-standard English writing. It showed that they were exposed only to texts written in Standard English, and thus reading non-standard English compositions left a strong impact on the participants, which was closely reflected in their definition of the process of giving peer feedback.

(3) The students' reactions to anonymous peer feedback

The students' reaction to anonymous peer feedback unveiled their intolerance towards non-standard English writing, while showing the effectiveness of anonymity in overcoming certain cultural dispositions, especially collectivism.

Some of the expressions heard in the classroom during the process of giving anonymous peer feedback highlighted the non-standard English. However, after receiving anonymous peer feedback, comments expressed frustration at the feedback and looked for support as their own non-standard English came under attack.

The students tried to justify their writing by validating it with the use of dictionary, consulting their instructor, their peers and counter-attacking the anonymous reviewers. What all this illustrated was that the students, although non-native speakers of English and still at a relatively early stage of learning English, lacked tolerance and/or immunity towards non-standard English writing.

The effectiveness of anonymity over the culturally-disposed barrier of collectivism also stood out in the observational study. The participants were able to maintain group harmony within the class and were not forced to take authority over their classmates. They could critique the composition objectively without worrying about any after-effects of their reviews. This allowed the peer feedback to be implemented effectively, fulfilling its purpose. Nevertheless, it is true that anonymity did bring about some over-critical reviews, impolite wording, and insufficient responses. Despite this, the anonymity in this study can be said to have reduced the cultural barrier against the effective implementation of peer feedback in EFL writing classrooms.

Conclusion of Practical Research

Some limitations of this study could be found in its inapplicability to other situations, the students' tendency to answer in the favor of their teacher/researcher, and the limited amount

of interview data as a qualitative research. A longer term study would be beneficial so as to see how the students' attitudes developed over time as they improved their English ability, and became more accustomed to the peer feedback method.

However, consideration of the results of this practical research pointed out a strong need for incorporating peer feedback in EFL writing sessions for two apparent reasons. The first one is the students' recognition of the benefits of *giving* peer feedback as reflected in the questionnaire and supported by the observational data. The second is the need for a realistic representation of English in EFL classrooms. The students' lack of tolerance was shown in how they defined the process of giving peer feedback, and how they reacted in giving and receiving peer feedback on their non-standard English writing. This study made it clear that incorporation of *giving* peer feedback in EFL writing sessions is crucial because students do indeed acknowledge the benefits of peer feedback. There also seems to be a need for the students to develop tolerance and immunity towards non-standard English writing as the majority of English speakers in our present-day world are non-native speakers whose English may be far from standard.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the findings from this study, there are two implications for teachers incorporating peer feedback into their EFL writing lessons: 1) the need to acknowledge students' recognition of the benefits of *giving* peer feedback, and 2) the need to develop students' perseverance and willingness to communicate even when faced with non-standard varieties of English.

The constraints of peer feedback, as mentioned in the literature review, weigh so heavily on the teachers that it seems nearly impossible to conduct peer feedback in class regularly. However, as shown in the study, the students are well aware of the benefits of *giving* feedback to their peers. They find *giving* feedback strengthens their own English skills. Furthermore, the students need to be exposed to non-standard varieties of English to develop tolerance and acceptance toward their own non-standard English, and to nurture perseverance and willingness to communicate even when faced with such non-standard English. This is because non-standard English is prevalent in our present-day society when the English language is used as a lingua franca and when the majority of its speakers are non-native speakers. The students' rejection of non-standard English is indeed a rejection of their own non-standard, developmental-stage English. It is crucial that the English language is presented realistically

in accordance with the present-day society, and that our students possess the means and the will to communicate with others even when faced with non-standard varieties of English.

In conclusion, this paper examined the students' perceptions on *giving* peer feedback. Through the practical research, it was found that the students recognized the benefits of *giving* peer feedback, while being intolerant toward essays written in non-standard English. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the incorporation of peer feedback is essential in EFL writing classes. Teachers need to acknowledge that their students themselves recognize the benefits of *giving* peer feedback, and that their students need to obtain the means and willingness to communicate even when encountering non-standard English.

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Appendices

Appendix A　Sample peer feedback sheet

1. Summarize the essay in Japanese.　50文字前後に要約

（原稿用紙マス目）

2. Summarize the essay in English.　英文 1 文に要約

3. Give feedback directly on the essay.　（直接書き込む、赤ペンで）
※下線を引くだけや「？」を書き込むだけは避け、具体的なフィードバックを！
校正記号例：

削除	~~the~~	校正前に戻す	~~the~~ ⓞⓚ	大 / 小文字	ⓐ ⓢ	スペース	␣
挿入	⌄	段落変更	¶	文法ミス	Ⓖ	スペリング	ⓢⓟ

4. Evaluate the essay by circling the appropriate rating.　※「評価」というよりも「印象」

内容	1 (very poor)	2 (poor to fair)	3 (average to good)	4 (good to excellent)
構成	1 (very poor)	2 (poor to fair)	3 (average to good)	4 (good to excellent)
語彙	1 (very poor)	2 (poor to fair)	3 (average to good)	4 (good to excellent)
文法	1 (very poor)	2 (poor to fair)	3 (average to good)	4 (good to excellent)
形式	1 (very poor)	2 (poor to fair)	3 (average to good)	4 (good to excellent)

5. Write a comment addressed to the writer.　日本語・英語可

Appendix B　Students' perceived benefit of *giving* peer feedback

	Code	No. of Responses
English-skill related	English composition skill	15
	Grammatical skill	14
	Reading skill	12
	Vocabulary skill	5
Non English-skill related	Comparing one's writing with those of peers	10
	Being able to realize one's own mistakes	8
	Being motivated by the idea of peers reading one's work	2
	Being able to provide detailed feedback	1

Appendix C　Student remarks in Japanese

Observation 1: **Student remark when *giving* anonymous peer feedback**	Observation 2: **Student remark when *receiving* anonymous peer feedback**
「こいつスゲーなぁ」 「上級だよ！」 「何が言いたいの？」 「ありえない！」 「先生、これよく読めますね。大変だ。」 「ネイティブはこう言いませんよね。」	「なんでわからない？」 「フツウ、わかるだろう！」 「辞書にそうあった。ちゃんと調べた。」 「間違えてないですよね？」 「俺、あってますよね？」

Appendix D　Students' definitions of *giving* peer feedback

Code	Definition: Giving feedback means…	No. of Responses	Responses to Q1 Yes	No	Neither
Pointing out the mistakes	to look for mistakes	18	17	0	1
	to make corrections of the mistakes	9	6	3	0
Reading other people's writing	to read imperfect English	14	14	0	0
	to read ambiguous English	8	8	0	0
	to read various kinds of English	3	3	0	0
No definition	to give feedback (redundant response)	4	4	0	0
	nothing mentioned	17	15	2	0