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# Approach to Writing from Readers' Perspectives: Incorporating Self-Evaluation, Peer Feedback, and Self-Reflection into Academic Writing

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## Abstract

In teaching academic writing, it is important that teachers encourage students to consider the expectations of readers, which vary depending on the genre and context of writing. Peer feedback, a collaborative learning method, provides students with opportunities to read peers' writing and give and receive feedback. This study investigated the perceptions of first-year university students' writing and revising academic essays through self-evaluation, peer feedback, and self-reflection. A total of 122 students wrote and evaluated the first drafts of their essays, read their peers' essays to evaluate good and problematic areas, revised the drafts, and reflected on the peer feedback. The results indicated that self-evaluation enhanced students' attention to readers' expectations and that peer feedback was considered useful by the majority of them. While their essay scores and views on peer feedback did not correlate, the high-graded essay group appreciated peers' comments on the essay organization. In contrast, the medium-graded group valued comments on the content, whereas the low-graded group viewed citation-related comments as useful. The results suggest that clear, specific, and critical feedback comments were received positively. Self-evaluation and peer feedback enhance students' collaborative learning, analytical skills, and awareness of readers and their own writing.

**Keywords:** second language writing, collaborative learning, essay writing, revision, peer feedback, self-evaluation, reader awareness

## 1. Introduction

Academic writing plays a vital role in higher education worldwide. Many university programs and courses often require students to write a wide variety of coursework and assignments. Typically, university students write assignments, and only their teachers read and assess them. However, written genres such as graduation theses and research articles have different readers whose expectations vary. In any genre, writers are expected to write a target text for readers (e.g., [1–3]). More precisely, writers need to consider readers' expectations about the text they compose and adjust their writing appropriately to meet them.

In English as a second language (ESL) and foreign (EFL) contexts, first-year university students are taught academic writing and its rules in English language classes. This applies to the EFL context in Japan, where this study was conducted. Not surprisingly, it is challenging for novice writers to understand academic writing rules because not many students experience academic writing or learn rules of citation before entering university. For instance, it is common for first-year university students to be unfamiliar with an essay, the main genre in universities, that is, a piece of writing that presents information or the writer's ideas logically in the structure of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion [4]. Furthermore, first-year university students tend not to be aware of their writing features and behavior, partly because of limited experience of writing and receiving feedback from teachers and peers.

In teaching and learning academic writing, peer feedback plays a vital role (e.g., [5]), which is often used complementarily with teacher feedback. In peer feedback, student writers exchange their drafts with peers in the form of written, oral, or a combination of written and oral feedback [6]. Peer feedback is regarded as peer support [7] because peers actively take part in giving feedback on drafts and helping peers to improve them. Activities involving peers are named differently among researchers depending on the purpose or focus of the activities although they are called interchangeably: peer revision [8], peer review [2, 9], peer evaluation [10], and peer response [1, 11–14]. While peer evaluation emphasizes judgment or grading, “peer feedback stresses the provision of rich feedback without grades or formal evaluations ([6], p. 82).”

Peer feedback has been used and valued in various classroom settings (e.g., [7, 9–10, 15]) owing to many merits and positive effects on students' development of writing in a first language (L1) and a second language (L2). More specifically, it creates opportunities for students to learn from each other and collaborate. For instance, Rollinson examined the effect of peer feedback in the ESL writing class and argued that peer readers can provide useful feedback on peers' writing if they are trained and peer feedback sessions are set up properly [16]. Additional advantages are related to the development of writing fluency, mitigation of writing anxiety, and improvement in the sense of readers [10].

Crinon and Marin stressed the important role readers play in peer feedback [7]. They investigated how young French learners' L1 writing ability was developed in collaborative revision activities through peer feedback. This study revealed that the readers of texts played a tutor's role and benefited from peer feedback more than the writers of the texts who were given feedback comments. This finding indicated that the readers perceived and learned various generic and textual features from peers' texts, which enabled them to improve their texts in terms of coherence and quality [7]. Similarly, it was suggested that students may become critical readers by reading and analyzing peers' texts in peer feedback, and consequently, they are likely to read and revise their texts critically [16]. This implies that peer feedback plays a crucial role in the development of critical reading and writing skills.

In EFL contexts, peer readers' comments in peer feedback were investigated with a focus on Japanese university students' writing and revision activities [17]. The results showed that the content of texts was the most frequent aspect of peer feedback comments, followed by vocabulary. Another study that examined peer feedback by Japanese university students indicated that peer readers focused on the writing style, which is a local issue [14], more than on the so-called global issues of content or organization of writing [18]. However, the study revealed that students with higher writing ability were able to take peers' advice on content and organization in revising their drafts. Ono found that the number of praises was higher than that of shortcomings in Japanese university students' feedback comments [19]. Moreover, the most frequent aspect in their feedback comments

was the content of texts, followed by language [19]. These findings are almost in accordance with Hirose's study [17], but incongruent with Sawaya and Yokoyama's [18]. Furthermore, skilled writers and less-skilled writers were found to differ in the way they made comments [19]. The former tended to clearly explain reasons or justification for praises or shortcomings and explicitly suggest ideas for revisions. In contrast, the latter hardly provided suggestions for improvement of texts, especially in terms of content and organization. These findings suggest that teachers should encourage students to focus on global issues instead of minor local issues, make specific, constructive comments, describe reasons for praises and shortcomings, and provide suggestions for the improvement of peers' texts.

Students' perceptions of peer feedback have been investigated, and the results have not reached a consensus. This is because peer feedback is conducted differently depending on individual teaching contexts, and teachers' instructions may also vary depending on the purpose and focus of this activity. For example, 12 high-proficient ESL graduate students from different majors participated in peer review sessions and regarded them as useful [2]. Importantly, the students carefully selected which comments they should incorporate into their revisions, and the inclusion of peer feedback in the teaching of L2 writing was supported. Furthermore, a questionnaire survey of 121 first- and second-year ESL students in Hong Kong and Taiwan revealed that most (93%) had positive views on peer feedback as a form of feedback [20]. In contrast, Nelson and Carson found that 11 ESL students with Chinese or Spanish language backgrounds did not perceive peer feedback positively and preferred teacher feedback [21]. However, those students valued peers' negative feedback that specified problematic areas of their writing, whereas they perceived comments regarding grammar and sentences as relatively ineffective. Thus, peer feedback is not always received positively by students, and peers' comments concerning global issues are likely to be seen as useful by students.

Considering mixed findings of previous studies, more studies need to determine L2 university students' perceptions of peer feedback, especially in EFL contexts. It is also worth investigating how first-year university students, who tend to have limited knowledge and experience in academic writing, perceive peer feedback. Moreover, it is questionable whether they can identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions of Japanese first-year university students' writing and revising essays through self-evaluation, peer feedback, and self-reflection. Four research questions were formulated for this study.

1. What aspects of essays do first-year university students focus on the self-evaluation of essays?
2. Do first-year university students find peer feedback useful in revising an essay?
3. Is there a relationship between essay scores and views on peer feedback?
4. What positive or negative views do first-year university students have on peer feedback?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

The participants were 122 Japanese first-year students at a university in Japan. Fifty-nine students from three classes participated in this study in 2018, whereas

63 students from three classes participated in the study in 2019. All participants provided written informed consent before the study. All of them majored in law or political science and were enrolled in either regular English language classes or the intensive English language course, in both of which they were studying English as an EFL. The former class takes place twice and the latter four times per week. Generally speaking, students in the intensive English course tend to be more motivated to study English because they plan to study abroad. All of them had studied English for at least six years before entering the university.

Their English proficiency was intermediate, ranging from Level B1 to Level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They were taught how to write an essay and cite sources in the previous semester and had the experience of paragraph writing and essay writing. Thus, by the time of this essay assignment, the participants were supposed to understand the structure of the essay and paragraphs and citation rules. Some participants also wrote essays in other English classes; therefore, their writing expertise varied to some extent.

## **2.2 Materials**

Two essay topics were selected in accordance with the textbook used. One topic was creating an original robot, while the other was explaining an interesting job (see Appendix 1). Expected readers (i.e., classmates and teachers) of the essay were specified in the writing prompts. On the assignment paper, the following instructions were given concerning essay writing: First, write an essay of approximately 400 words. Second, pay attention to the structure of the essay, which is supposed to have an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Third, make sure that each paragraph has a topic sentence and several supporting sentences, whereas a concluding sentence is optional. Fourth, provide adequate details and appropriate examples, by adjusting the concrete or abstract information. Fifth, cite at least one source and use citations appropriately. Do not plagiarize. Under the instructions, the assessment criteria were also written, which included a) content and source use: 10 points, b) organization and logic: 10 points, c) language use: 5 points, and d) reader awareness: 5 points.

A self-reflection worksheet regarding writing the first draft was prepared, where the writer was asked to write about how they intended to convey their ideas (see Appendix 2). Self-reflection was set for heuristic purposes [16]. More precisely, the writer had the opportunity to reflect on their writing process and product critically. In addition, the participants were instructed to evaluate the strengths of their draft and points to be improved considering the following aspects: content, source use, organization and logic, language use, and reader awareness. These aspects corresponded to the criteria used to mark essays, which were shared with the participants. The specific aspects in the self-evaluation sheet were intended to help the writer critically analyze and identify what is good or not in each aspect of the draft. It is regarded as a preparation stage before conducting peer feedback because writers need to be critical readers of peers' essays.

The written peer feedback sheet was structured in a problem-solving format (see Appendix 3). More specifically, readers were encouraged to fill in the section of "problems and their reasons" and "suggestions for improvement" regarding content, the overall structure, paragraph structure, logic, and source use. If readers found good points about each aspect of the essay, they were advised to provide positive comments. In giving feedback comments, it is important to provide both praise and comments regarding improvement because the former often strengthens the writer's confidence and the latter helps the writer revise and improve the draft [14, 21]. In response to the peer feedback, the peer feedback sheet also had a section

named “self-reflection after revisions,” in which the writer reflects on the revision process. The writer was supposed to check which peer feedback comment is incorporated in revising the essay. More specifically, the writer was instructed to judge whether the suggestion was “fully accepted,” “partly accepted,” or “not accepted” and provide the reason.

In the self-reflection questionnaire, the writer answered the following questions. (1) How did you revise the draft and in what point does the final draft differ from the first draft? (2) Was peer feedback useful in revising the draft? Select one of the four: very useful, useful, not useful, not useful at all. (3) Provide the reason for your choice as detailed as possible. The questionnaire was written in Japanese.

### **2.3 Procedures**

The participants learned a writing process in class, where brainstorming, making an outline, writing a draft, revising, and editing were explained. They had already learned the essay structure and citation, had written a paragraph and an essay, and had experienced peer feedback when paragraph writing was assigned. Following the instructions, the participants first brainstormed ideas using a mind mapping approach for eight minutes and then talked about them in pairs asking questions or explaining ideas. After that, they were advised to decide what they wanted to write about based on the ideas on the mind map and make an outline from it. The participants were instructed to write a draft of a 400-word essay as homework, reflect on the writing process, and evaluate it by providing strengths and points to be improved in the draft. After writing the draft and self-evaluation, both were submitted to an online system.

Twenty-minute peer feedback sessions took place in a computer-assisted language learning classroom, where the English class was usually held, and thus, the participants were familiar with the classroom environment. They were instructed to read peers' essays in pairs and make comments on a digital peer feedback sheet using their L1 (i.e., Japanese). This is because the use of L1 enables writers to express their thoughts and comments fluently. Although peer feedback can be given in oral and/or written forms, a written form was used in this study so that the researcher could follow the participants' comments and progress in revision [16]. Compared to oral feedback, the written feedback form allows writers and readers to consider, collaborate, and reflect on essays more actively [16]. Before the peer feedback sessions began, the following instructions were given to the participants: (1) explaining the purpose of peer feedback, (2) emphasizing the value of honest evaluation, (3) encouraging them to give praise and constructive comments, (4) encouraging them to give clear and specific comments, and (5) making sure that the writer, not the reader, can decide what and how to revise [14]. Additionally, examples of effective and ineffective feedback comments were shown to the participants. These examples were made available on the computer screen, so they could look at them anytime during peer feedback sessions. The participants were also informed that they could ask the teacher any questions during the peer feedback session.

Each participant took part in peer feedback sessions twice in pairs; therefore, they had opportunities to read and evaluate two essays written by peers. Providing students with more than one peer feedback session with different peers is important because it allowed them to receive more comments from different readers' viewpoints and also to read multiple drafts to learn variations of writing. Furthermore, even when one peer cannot make useful or appropriate comments, another peer may provide constructive feedback. Thus, two rounds of peer feedback sessions could guarantee a positive experience for both readers and writers to some extent. After the participants received feedback comments, they were advised to read them

thoroughly and revise their draft based on accordingly and what they had learned from the peer feedback sessions. At this point, it is noteworthy that the researcher emphasized that the writer has ownership over the essay and a right to decide what to revise and that they do not have to take all the advice given by peers [16]. Thus, the participants were encouraged to think carefully about how to revise and make a decision about it by themselves. After completing the final draft, they filled in a questionnaire, where they wrote about how they revised the draft and what they thought about the peer feedback activities. Their peer feedback sheets, which were filled with feedback comments, final drafts, and questionnaires were collected.

## 2.4 Scoring and data analysis

The final drafts were scored based on the criteria created by the researcher for this study. It had four aspects. First, content and source use (10 points) serve to identify whether the essay corresponds to the essay question or theme, whether the essay is interesting to read, and whether sources are cited appropriately. Second, organization and logic (10 points) focus on the essay, paragraph structure, and logical flow of the essay. Third, language use (5 points) identifies whether an essay is written in an appropriate language. Finally, awareness of readers (5 points) identifies whether the writer considers readers' expectations and adjusts the content and expressions accordingly. A total of 122 essays were marked using the criteria described above by the researcher. SPSS Statistics 27 was used to perform a chi-square test and analyze the correlations between the essay scores and the views on the usefulness of peer feedback.

Considering the analysis of self-evaluation of the first drafts, the participants' responses were divided into strengths and weaknesses of their essays and categorized into five aspects: content, citation, organization and logic, language use, and reader awareness, which followed the criteria used in the rubric. The number of each category was calculated.

The self-reflection questionnaire regarding peer feedback was analyzed using the free software named KH Coder 3 [22]. This software is used for text mining or quantitative content analysis, which is an automated analytical method for extracting a large amount of textual data. It enables the user to analyze textual data objectively by quantifying frequent words and identifying and visualizing the relationships between different words. In this study, the written comments of the participants were analyzed using KH Coder 3. First, the words used frequently in the comments were quantified and listed to determine the aspects of the peer feedback the participants perceived positively or negatively. Second, the function of the co-occurrence network was employed to reveal the relationship between the different words pointed out by the participants. Third, correspondence analysis was conducted to determine whether essay scores corresponded to the evaluation of peer feedback. More specifically, we analyzed which groups of writers are associated with certain concepts of revision and peer feedback.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1 Basic results of the essays

The essays were divided into three groups (i.e., high, medium, and low) depending on the scores. **Table 1** shows the descriptive features of the three essay groups. The results of one-way independent analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that these groups differed significantly in scores ( $F(2, 119) = 284.263, p < .001, \eta^2 = .83$ ).

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	SD	Min	Max
High	42	28.38	0.492	28	29
Medium	63	26.14	0.737	25	27
Low	17	23.18	1.334	19	24
Total	122	26.50	1.855	19	29

Note: Full mark is 30.

**Table 1.**  
 Descriptive statistics of the essay scores.

Tukey's post-hoc test indicated that each group significantly differed in mean scores ( $p < .05$ ).

### 3.2 Writers' self-evaluation of essays

The results of the participants' self-evaluation of their first drafts showed that the number of positive comments related to strengths ( $n = 407$ ) of the essays was nearly twice as many as those related to weaknesses ( $n = 220$ , see **Table 2**). This tendency was observed for every aspect of the evaluation criteria. This implies that writers tend to focus more on the strengths of their writing than on their weaknesses. This tendency was also observed in peer feedback comments previously conducted with Japanese university students [19].

Among the positive comments, the number of comments concerning "reader awareness" was the most frequent ( $n = 108$ ), accounting for 26.54% of the positive comments. This finding suggests that most of the writers paid attention to readers' expectations of the essay and made an effort to accommodate their essays to their readers (i.e., classmates and a teacher). The second most frequent positive comments were related to "organization and logic" ( $n = 93$ , 22.85%), indicating that the writers carefully constructed the introduction, body, and conclusion of each paragraph. The participants made fewer comments on "citation" ( $n = 52$ , 12.78%) and "content" ( $n = 70$ , 17.20%), which implies that they were not necessarily confident in these areas of essays.

Considering the comments concerning the weaknesses of the essays, the most frequent aspect pointed out was "language use" ( $n = 67$ ), which accounted for 30.45% of the total number of comments on weaknesses. This indicates that "language use" is the most concerning aspect for the participants. Furthermore, the total number of comments regarding "language use" was the most frequent ( $n = 151$ ) among the five aspects. This result implies that L2 student writers are concerned about local issues of "language use," which supports the finding that the language-related style of writing was the most prominent aspect of students' feedback comments [18]. Furthermore, "citation" ( $n = 43$ , 19.55%) and "organization and logic" ( $n = 46$ , 20.91%) were also pointed out as shortcomings.

Aspects	Content	Citation	Organization and logic	Language use	Reader awareness	Total
Strength	70	52	93	84	108	407
Weakness	37	43	46	67	27	220
Total	107	95	139	151	135	627

**Table 2.**  
 Number of comments given in the self-evaluation.

It is noteworthy that some participants pointed out both strengths and weaknesses of the essays. These results suggest that students were good at finding the strengths of their writing. However, writers seemed to find it challenging to analyze and identify problematic areas of writing, especially with regard to the global issue of content by themselves. This may be because reading self-written texts critically requires critical and objective views.

### 3.3 The relationship between essay scores and views on peer feedback

The results of the questionnaire analysis revealed that 89 students (72.95%) found peer feedback very useful and 19 participants (15.57%) found it useful, whereas 14 participants (11.48%) regarded it as not useful (**Table 3**). These results indicate that the majority of participants (88.52%) had positive views on peer feedback. This means that the participants thought peer feedback was worthy and they benefited from this experience in revising their essays. This finding is in accordance with those of previous studies [2, 20].

However, as shown in **Table 3**, some participants found peer feedback not useful regardless of the essay groups; the high-graded group had eight participants (19.05%) who viewed peer feedback as not useful, which was more than four (6.35%) and two participants (11.76%) in the medium- and low-grade groups, respectively. These findings suggest that as writing expertise increases, writers do not tend to find peer feedback useful.

To determine the association between essay scores and writers' views on the usefulness of peer feedback, a chi-square test was conducted, and the result did not show a significant difference ( $\chi^2(4) = 6.006, p > .199$ ). This result indicates that the essay scores are not associated with the participants' views on the usefulness of peer feedback. Similarly, a Pearson's correlation coefficient showed that there was no correlation between essay scores and the recognition of the usefulness of peer feedback ( $r = .159, p = .080$ ). Although the statistical analyses indicate that essay scores do not correlate with the view on peer feedback, the participants' comments are worthy of investigation. The next section details the analysis of comments that reflect peer feedback.

### 3.4 Co-occurrence network of positive comments on peer feedback

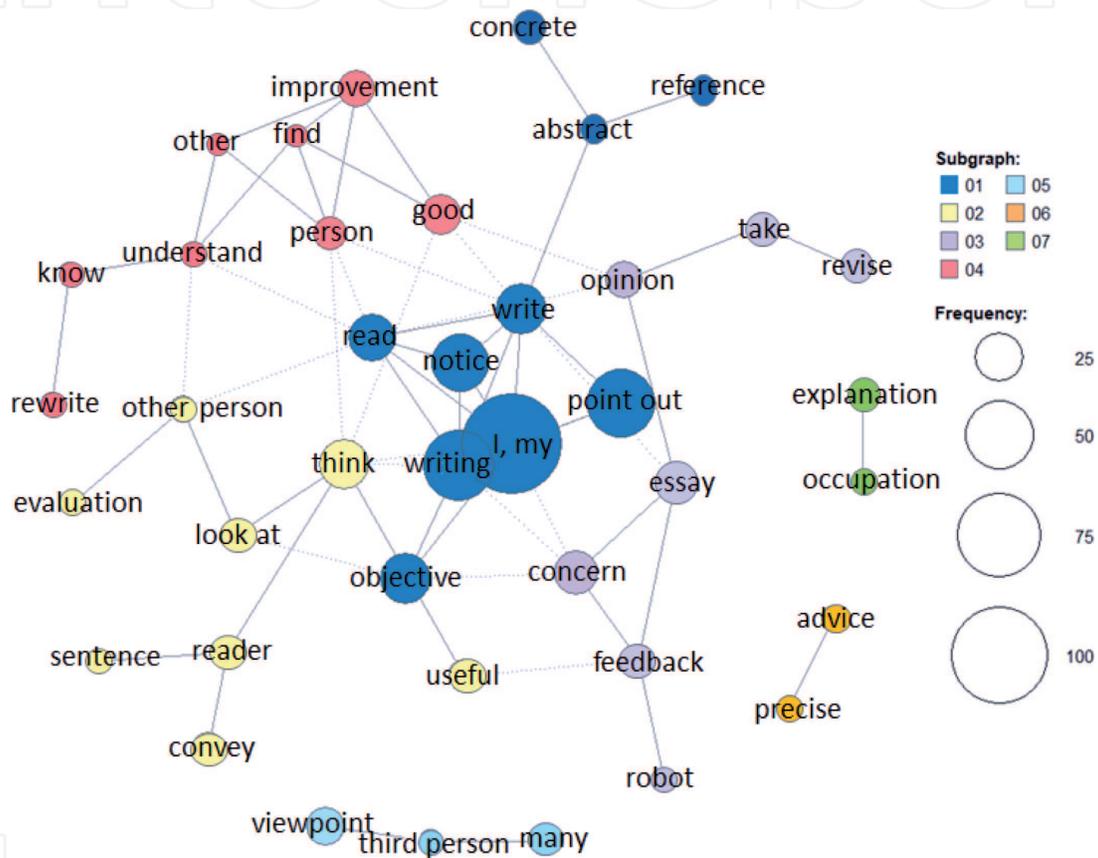
Analysis of the participants' comments regarding the usefulness or unusefulness of peer feedback revealed 125 positive and 39 negative comments. Among the 122 participants, 14 provided both positive and negative comments on various aspects of peer feedback.

Positive comments were analyzed using a co-occurrence network, and the results are shown in **Figure 1**. As shown in **Figure 1**, the participants' positive comments made seven communities, which are shown as subgroups. The most central community (subgroup 1) is related to writers' awareness raising toward problematic areas of their writing from an objective point of view. In other words, the writers had positive views on constructive comments given by their peers. According to **Figure 1**, it is implied that peers pointed out problematic areas critically and it was received positively. Furthermore, the relationship between reading and writing is linked and noticed through peer feedback, as the following comment shows:

*Peers' comments enable me to notice things that I was not aware and reading others' writing made me find how to improve my essay. (18E1-3)*

Degree of usefulness	Essay score			Total (%)
	High (%)	Medium (%)	Low (%)	
Very useful	26 (61.90)	49 (77.78)	14 (82.35)	89 (72.95)
Useful	8 (19.05)	10 (15.83)	1 (5.88)	19 (15.57)
Not useful	8 (19.05)	4 (6.35)	2 (11.76)	14 (11.48)
Total	42	63	17	122

**Table 3.**  
 Students' views on the usefulness of peer feedback.



**Figure 1.**  
 Co-occurrence network of positive comments on peer feedback.

By reading peers' essays, the writers were exposed to peers' writing and learned the features of good essays, which helped developing critical reading skills for their writing [7, 16].

The second community (subgroup 2) is associated with peers' evaluations and readers' expectations. Having the essay evaluated by peers encourages writers to consider their writing from new perspectives, and peer feedback allows writers to make sure that their ideas in the essays are conveyed to readers.

The third community (subgroup 3) is related to the importance of absorbing peers' opinions and feedback comments in their writing. More precisely, 16 students mentioned that they had some concerns about their writing, but peer feedback helped them to resolve the problems or concerns. Resolving writers' concerns and reducing their writing anxiety have been reported as advantages of peer feedback [10]. Since this community had the essay topic "robot" as the keyword, especially those who wrote about it, tend to think this way.

The fourth community (subgroup 4) focuses on the revision and improvement of essays. In this community, feedback comments seemed to help writers understand how to revise their essays, as the following participant's comment shows:

*I was able to make my essay better because peers pointed out things from the reader's perspective that I did not notice. I incorporated peers' opinions into my essay when revising it, and even when I did not accept a suggestion, I reconsidered my writing and thought about the reason I decided not to take it. Then, I got to know my essay deeply and considered why I wrote it the way it was written.*  
(19E1-92)

The writer's ownership is clearly presented, carefully selecting advice to take. This revision behavior is regarded as a characteristic of advanced writers [2]. It is important that students understand that they are decision-makers and that they do not need to take every advice and suggestion from peers when they come up with a better way to revise or when they think points pointed out should not be revised.

The fifth community (subgroup 5) is related to the amount of advice the writers received from peers. They appreciated a lot of advice or feedback from a third-person's point of view. This means that peers succeeded in pointing out or suggesting things that writers did not realize, which helped them revise the essays and learn new things.

The sixth community (subgroup 6) has only two nodes, namely, "advice" and "precise," which implies that the writers were satisfied with peers' concrete advice and suggestions. Making specific, precise comments is key to successful feedback [14]. Presumably, the instructions given to the participants before peer feedback may have played a role in encouraging them to give advice and suggestions as detailed as possible.

Similarly, the seventh community (subgroup 7) also has two nodes: "explanation" and "occupation". These are related to another essay topic, in which the participants were asked to choose their job of interest and explain its features. Because all writers chose their occupation as an essay topic, not everyone was familiar with the selected occupation. Therefore, from the reader's perspective, readers seemed to point out the lack of explanation or ambiguity of certain expressions about the occupation chosen.

Although communities 5, 6, and 7 are independent without a strong connection to the other communities, some participants pointed out more than one positive comment on peer feedback. As shown in **Figure 1**, participants' positive views on peer feedback were demonstrated through various aspects of peer feedback.

### 3.5 Co-occurrence network of negative comments on peer feedback

**Figure 2** visualizes the negative comments received by the participants. Compared to positive comments ( $n = 125$ ), the number of negative comments ( $n = 39$ ) was substantially lower, which suggests that most participants had positive views on their peer feedback experience. However, it is important to pay attention to the participants' negative comments to identify the challenges the participants encountered during peer feedback.

The first community (subgroup 1) identifies that the participants wanted more comments or concrete suggestions from peers to improve their drafts. This implies that they could not benefit from peer feedback effectively because of insufficient feedback. Regarding this point, one participant requested a follow-up session between the writer and reader after peer feedback as follows:

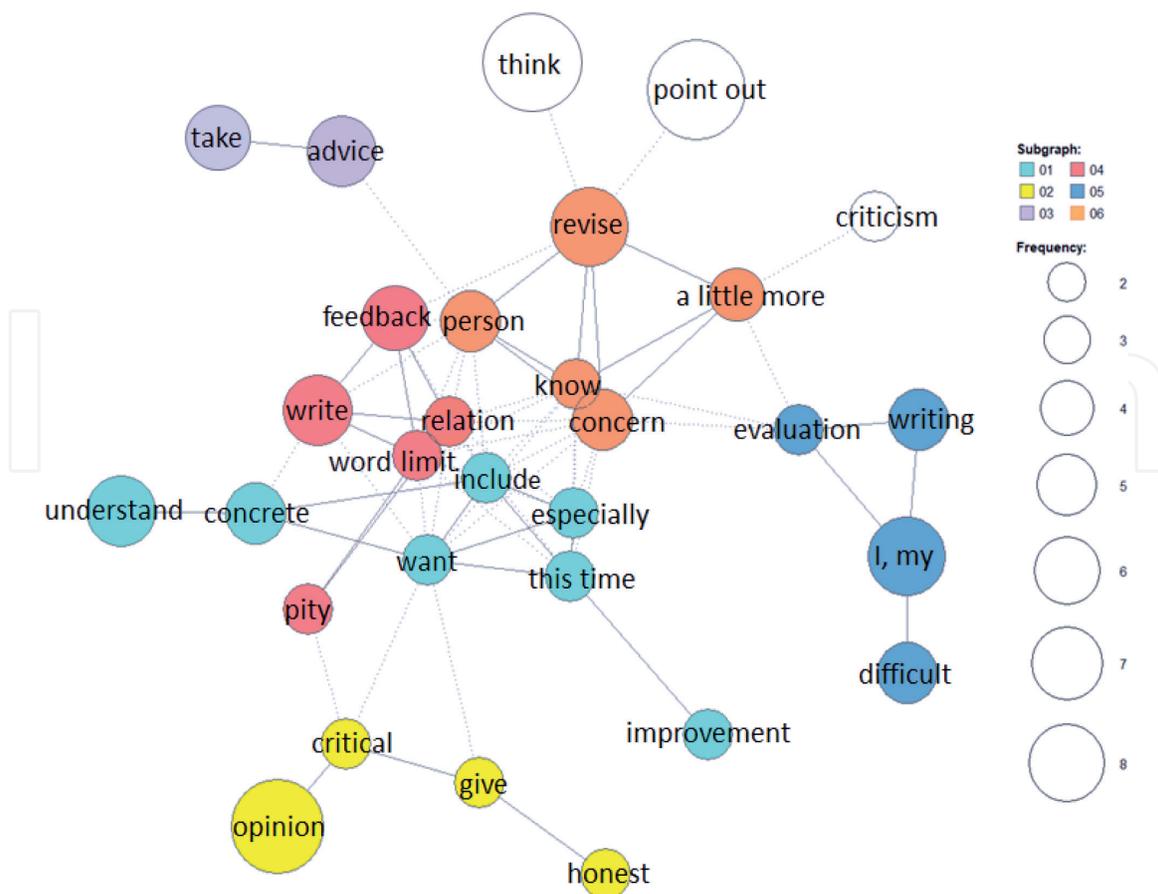
*Most of the comments I received were not concrete, and thus, I did not know how to revise (my essay) and I could not make use of them. I was particularly concerned that I couldn't use any citation in the body paragraphs of my essay due to the word limit. I hoped to know my peers' thoughts on which part I could possibly omit. I wished I had had the opportunity to directly ask the reader what I was concerned about after I received the comments. (18E1-14)*

Written feedback comments were occasionally not fully understood by the receiver. Therefore, it may be a good idea to give students a short follow-up session to exchange their opinions directly or ask questions freely to benefit from peer feedback effectively. A combination of written and oral feedback seems to enhance the interaction between students, which leads to providing and receiving more concrete suggestions.

The second community (subgroup 2) is related to a lack of critical opinions from peers. Some participants mentioned that they hardly received advice or suggestions and struggled to revise their essays as follows:

*Although my peer pointed out some parts (of my essay), most of the comments were © (very good), and honestly, it was not easy to find out how to revise the essay. (19E1-115)*

The lack of criticism in peer feedback comments was reported previously (e.g., [19]), and this seems to be one of the reasons students do not regard peer feedback as useful. The following participant suggests that anonymous feedback should encourage readers to provide more critical comments.



**Figure 2.**  
 Co-occurrence network of negative comments on peer feedback.

*Since I didn't receive concrete opinions, I didn't know what is lacking (in my essay). As I was ready to receive harsh comments, I wanted more suggestions. As readers of the essay hesitate to make critical comments with their names shown, I thought that peer feedback in an anonymous way would work better. (19E1-101)*

This suggestion is reasonable because students may be hesitant or reluctant to give critical comments to their peers. At the same time, it is crucial that teachers encourage students to give constructive and critical comments because they are more beneficial for receivers than just giving praises, and they can learn more from each other by critically reading and evaluating essays [7, 16].

The third community (subgroup 3) refers to a lack of advice that receivers wanted to take and the difficulty in taking advice from peers. More specifically, while some participants received advice, they found challenging to reflect it on their essays. It is not negative if students carefully select which advice they should incorporate into their writing because it means that they consider the revision and act as decision-makers [14].

The fourth community (subgroup 4) is related to the feeling of pity when writers could not revise the essay based on feedback due to the word limit. In some cases, writers pointed out that the feedback comments were not comprehensible, and therefore, they could not make use of them.

The fifth community (subgroup 5) identifies the struggle to improve the essay due to a lack of suggestions. The following participant points out the limitations of peer feedback by novice writers:

*I thought that even if those who have not been used to academic writing evaluated each other's essays, we could make only a little progress (in revisions). (18I-56)*

It is true that some students may not be able to provide useful comments and suggestions, and that especially less-skilled writers tend to struggle to make comments on global issues and suggestions [19]. However, experiencing a reader's perspective is helpful in revising the essay while critically reading and evaluating the peer's essay [7]. Furthermore, more coaching is necessary before and during peer feedback sessions [10].

The sixth community (subgroup 6) is associated with an insufficient number of critical comments from peers and difficulty in revising based on peers' comments. Some comments from peers may not be always precise and comprehensive.

*Peers' comments were not appropriate and abstract, and therefore, I did not know what to revise in my essay. (19I-57)*

Providing appropriate and concrete advice is not easy for novice writers. However, even if they receive inappropriate advice or suggestions they disagree with, they can make a decision about revisions. In this sense, peers' feedback comments allow writers to consider their essays actively even when they decide not to follow the advice they received.

### 3.6 Correspondence analysis of essay scores and peer feedback

The results of the correspondence analysis of essay score groups and positive comments on peer feedback are shown in **Figure 3**. It was found that some keywords such as "read," "notice," "feedback," and "reader" were related to all three groups, whereas some words and phrases had a specific association with particular groups.



These responses indicate the important role of readers in peer feedback. The experience of a reader's viewpoint in peer feedback enhances students' awareness of their writing [7, 16].

In addition, positive comments given by the medium-graded group are associated with "content" of essays. The participants appreciate the feedback concerning "content" of the essay as follows:

*My peer taught me (how to revise) the content, which I was not aware of due to my subjective view. I had not recognized that the final sentence in a conclusion was not relevant to the essay content when I was writing, but my peer pointed it out and I was convinced (to revise it). (18E1-4)*

*When I was writing my essay, it was difficult to find deviation of my argument and appropriacy of content because of my accomplished feeling. But I found that analyzing objectively from a third-person's perspective could tell me many things to be improved. I also thought that it was good to have more than one person read the essay because they can clearly indicate things to change. (18E1-19)*

Thus, feedback comments regarding global issues are viewed as beneficial. In line with this point regarding the content of essays, "notice," "body," "occupation," and "precise" seem to stand out in this group. These keywords suggest that the participants received feedback on the explanation of the occupation they chose as an essay topic in the body of the essay. Specific comments concerning the main theme of the essay seem to be appreciated and viewed positively.

In contrast, the low-graded essay group paid attention to "citation" in their positive comments. They found advice on citations from peers useful. Moreover, reading peers' essays also helps to learn source use.

*It was good that, by reading others' essays, I realized that my way of citations is not appropriate. (18E1-28)*

Since the participants were supposed to cite self-selected sources in their essays, they seemed to learn appropriate citing rules and conventions by reading each other's essays. This suggests that reading peers' texts helps find solutions and suggestions to improve their texts [16].

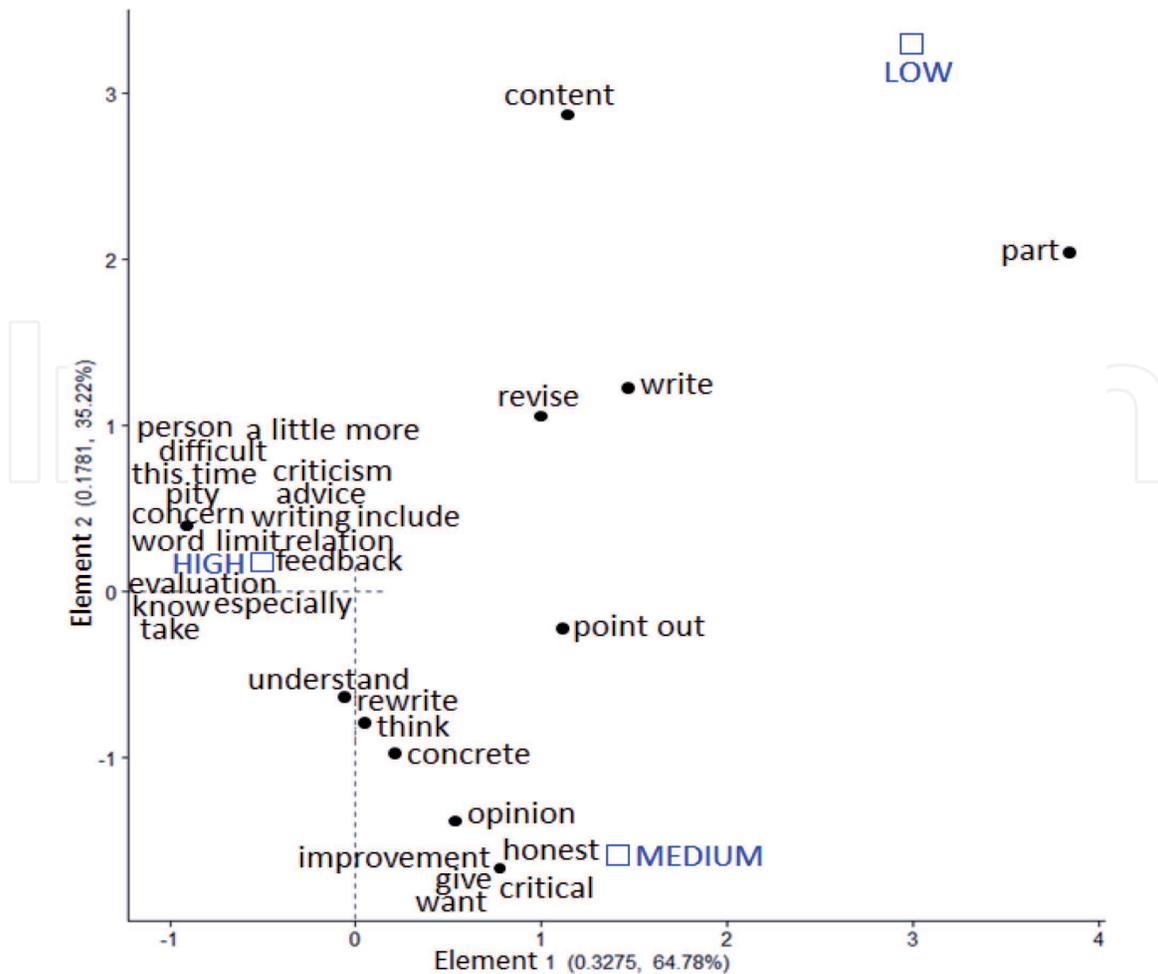
The negative comments on peer feedback and its relationship with the essay score groups are shown in **Figure 4**. **Figure 4** shows that "write" and "revise" are related to all three essay groups. The low-graded group is associated with "content"-related feedback. To be more precise, two writers made the following points:

*My peer seldom gave me comments. I wished I could have had more comments on the content. (18E1-18)*

*I didn't exactly know how to revise the content because the comments I received were not concrete. (18E1-28)*

Unlike the medium-graded group, which had positive views on content-related feedback, the low-graded group did not seem to be satisfied with the feedback comments regarding the content. This implies that the latter group could not improve the content of the essay in the revision process and that it was difficult to revise the content of the draft without receiving clear advice.

The word "part" is also related to the low-graded group as follows:



**Figure 4.**  
 Correspondence analysis of essay scores and negative comments on peer feedback.

*While I was happy to receive many positive comments on my essay, I hardly found parts that I wanted to revise (based on the peers' comments). (19E1-95)*

Receiving positive comments only was not necessarily viewed positively by the participant. A lack of constructive feedback or giving ambiguous comments does not help writers revise. Providing clear advice is critical by specifying which part of the essay writers need to consider revising.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that it is important to provide English language learners with opportunities to analyze their writing, read and evaluate peers' writing, and reflect on their writing process and outcomes through a learning cycle of self-evaluation, peer feedback, and self-reflection. This study obtained the following four findings. First, first-year university students paid the most attention to "reader awareness" and regarded it as their strength in essays, whereas they viewed "language use" as weakness. Furthermore, the appropriacy of "content" and "citation" was relatively difficult to evaluate in self-evaluation because the former could be viewed subjectively and the latter requires adequate knowledge of source use. Second, the majority of participants (88.52%) viewed peer feedback positively, although 11.48% of them found it not useful for various reasons. Third, there was no significant correlation between essay scores and views on peer feedback as some students considered peer feedback not useful regardless of their writing expertise. Fourth, correspondence

analysis indicated that essay score groups had different views on the aspects of essays. More precisely, the high-graded group tended to appreciate peers' comments on paragraphs, which led to revisions of the organization of essays. The medium-graded group valued content-related comments, whereas the low-graded group found comments on citation useful.

Although a number of positive comments were shown by the participants, the way peer feedback is conducted needs caution depending on its purpose and context. This study employed digital written feedback showing the names of writers and readers in a classroom, but anonymous feedback may enhance students' ability and motivation to make more critical, constructive feedback comments. For instance, "double-blind" peer feedback may work better in some contexts. Another point is that a combination of written feedback and a follow-up oral interaction session could be worth conducting. Finally, explicit instructions should be provided before conducting peer feedback. More specifically, teachers need to inform students which aspects of writing they need to focus on with an emphasis on global issues and encourage them to give specific, critical comments with reasons and suggestions, which lead to effective collaborative learning and the development of critical reading and writing skills.

Future studies may consider the effects of different ways of peer feedback and students' perceptions of them. As asynchronous/synchronous online classes have been conducted in recent years worldwide, students may benefit from peer feedback via digital tools. A writing approach from the readers' perspective helps foster competent writers.

## Appendix 1. Prompts for essay writing tasks

Writing Task 1: You are a robot designer. What type of robot would you design? Why? Explain its purpose and features and the reason for developing it and give it a name. Expected readers are your classmates and a teacher.

Writing Task 2: What kind of job are you interested in? Describe features of the job and explain reasons why you are interested in the job. Expected readers are your classmates and a teacher.

## Appendix 2. Self-evaluation worksheet

After you finish writing the draft of your essay, let us reflect on your writing and evaluate it by yourself.

1. When writing a draft, how did you intend to convey your ideas to readers? (You may answer in Japanese).
2. Fill in the self-evaluation sheet below in Japanese.

Aspects for reading a draft	Strengths	Points to be improved
Content		
Source use		
Organization and logic		
Language use		
Reader awareness		

## Appendix 3. Peer feedback worksheet

### Peer Feedback

Essay writer's name ( ) Reader/Evaluator's name ( ) .

Read a peer's essay and fill in the worksheet below in Japanese.

Aspects for reading the essay	Feedback comments	Self-reflection after revisions
	Problems and their reasons If the essay is well-written, you may write ⊙.	Suggestions for improvement Choose one of the following marks and write its reason. I fully accepted the suggestion: ○ I partly accepted the suggestion: △ I did not accept the suggestion: ×
<b>Content</b> Does the essay correspond to the essay question? Is the essay interesting?		
<b>Overall Structure</b> Are the introduction (a thesis statement), body, and conclusion appropriate?		
<b>Paragraph Structure</b> Are there a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence?		
<b>Logic</b> Do ideas flow in a logical manner? Is an example or evidence shown?		
<b>Source Use</b> Are sources cited appropriately? Is there a list of references?		

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