“Sorry, I don’t good English”: Japanese L2 students’ written peer feedback in the face-to-face and anonymous review modes

Sugene Kim

Nagoya University of Commerce & Business | Japan

Abstract: To verify and extend the previous research claim that L2 students from collectivistic Asian cultures are resistant to criticizing others’ work due to a desire to preserve group cohesion, this study explored whether anonymity helps ameliorate their alleged reluctance to give negative feedback. Nineteen Japanese L2 students reviewed essays in the face-to-face and anonymous modes, and their feedback comments were comparatively analyzed according to the types, levels of negativity, and mitigation strategies implemented. The results showed that Japanese L2 students adopt an extremely polite interpersonal rhetorical stance regardless of the peer review mode. Criticism almost always assumes a mitigated form, and it is not uncommon to employ multiple mitigation strategies or lexical hedges in a single comment. The pragmatic competence with respect to hedging disagreement or requests did not correlate with the language used or the reviewer’s L2 proficiency. These observations suggest that the use of mitigating devices is transferred from learners’ L1 repertoire, indicating that cultural attributes might not be a major factor influencing Asian students’ reluctance to provide negative feedback in peer interactions.

Keywords: peer review, written peer feedback, anonymity, mitigation, hedging

journal of WRITING RESEARCH

Kim, S. (2023 - accepted for publication). “Sorry, I don’t good English”: Japanese L2 students’ written peer feedback in the face-to-face and anonymous review modes. Journal of Writing Research, *15*(2), 199-223. DOI: 10.17239/jowr-2023.15.02.02

Contact: Sugene Kim, Department of English Studies, Nagoya University of Commerce & Business, 4-4 Sagamine, Komenoki-cho, Nisshin, Aichi 470-0193 | Japan – sugene_kim@nucba.ac.jp. Orcid: 0000-0001-9514-7416

1. Introduction

Peer review is an important component of collaborative learning in which students provide feedback on each other's written work. As the process requires them to engage in an active peer interaction, it instantiates Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is a socially situated activity that occurs in a social context with clear mutual goals. Empirical studies have shown that participation in peer review not only helps to improve students' writing skills by developing genre knowledge (Crinon, 2012; Sandstrom, 2021) but also activates (meta)cognitive processes conducive to self-regulation by engaging students in critical thinking and reflection (Nicol et al., 2014). According to Lundstrom and Baker (2009), second language (L2) students who review others' writing improve their own writing by transferring the skills they learned in the process. Stronger peers are also shown to benefit from the activity (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000), as they can "refine their knowledge of L2 writing by providing mediated assistance [to weaker peers]" (Kim & Chang, 2022, p. 1371).

Despite the pedagogical benefits and prevalent use of peer review in the contexts of English as both a second and a foreign language (ESL and EFL), some studies have observed that students from group-oriented Asian cultures, in which verbal negotiations are less valued than preserving group harmony, do not reap these benefits because of their reluctance to criticize others' work (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Nelson & Carson, 1998). Mangelsdorf (1992), for instance, noted that "the peer review task may be resisted by students not familiar with a collaborative, student-centred environment" (p. 280). F. Hyland (2000) adds to this, reporting that Asian ESL students exhibit discomfort with the peer review task, presumably because criticizing others' work goes against maintaining group cohesion.

Given that all the aforementioned studies were conducted in ESL contexts with a relatively small number of participants, attempts have been made in Asian EFL contexts to verify and further explore the cultural mediation of peer feedback in the L2 writing classroom. Coomber and Silver (2010) investigated whether anonymizing the peer review process ameliorates Japanese L2 students' reluctance to critique others' work. The survey results indicated that the participants favored both the face-to-face and anonymous modes almost equally and that the difficulty of incorporating oral feedback into the process was pointed out as a significant drawback of the anonymous mode. More recently, Kim (2019, 2023) examined L2 students' perspectives on face-to-face and anonymous peer review, also in the Japanese EFL setting. Contradicting the previously held views that learners from Asian backgrounds are predisposed to be reluctant peer reviewers, it was shown that the participants preferred the face-to-face mode, mostly for its communicative collaboration component. The findings also suggested that Japanese L2 students'

preference for a certain review mode interacts with a number of factors, such as self-assessed L2 competence and learning style.

The studies outlined above have provided meaningful observations on how L2 students from Asian cultural backgrounds perceive peer review and whether anonymizing the process helps them overcome their alleged unwillingness to provide negative feedback. However, L2 students' actual performance in the process remains severely under-researched, particularly with respect to the politeness strategies L2 students adopt when engaged in the potentially face-threatening act of providing written feedback that calls for criticism or identification of weaknesses. The concept of politeness, or "awareness of another person's face" (Yule, 1996, p. 60), is crucial in understanding L2 learners' peer review process given that face is closely connected to all social interactions.

Under the assumption that Asian L2 students' observed unwillingness to participate in peer interactions might pertain to their L2 pragmatic competence with respect to mitigating their disagreement or requests, this study analyzed peer feedback comments produced by Japanese L2 students in the face-to-face and anonymous modes to address the following research questions (RQs):

1. What types of feedback comments do Japanese L2 students provide in the face-to-face and anonymous modes?
2. Is there a difference in the level of negativity in critical comments provided in L1 and L2?
3. Is there a difference in the level of negativity in critical comments provided in the face-to-face and anonymous modes?
4. What strategies are used to mitigate negativity in critical comments?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and setting

Nineteen Japanese L2 students participated in the study. They were from two parallel sections of a first-year writing class offered in the second semester of the school year in a Japanese university. This class was an introductory academic writing course that emphasized introducing the important elements of academic writing as well as building a strong foundation of English grammar skills. The class met once a week for 100 minutes over 14 weeks. The participants were international studies majors, and the ratio of male to female students was approximately 1:1.5. The background questionnaire administered at the beginning of the semester confirmed that English was a foreign language for all of the participants. Before

starting university, the participants had received 12 years of formal education—elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education—exclusively in Japan, and none had lived outside Japan for more than two months.

Drawing on the observations that learners' prior experience of group work (Hansen & Liu, 2005), training in peer response (Berg, 1999; Bui & Kong, 2019), and teachers' feedback practices (Yu & Lee, 2014) influence L2 students' peer review performance, the students who had taken the prerequisite course in the previous semester taught by the same instructor were chosen as the participants. In the prerequisite writing course, they engaged in peer feedback activities and received teacher feedback on their assignments. The teacher provided both corrective feedback and feedback comments that can be broadly defined as "in-text comments [provided] in the form of annotations on students' work" (Derham et al., 2022, p. 896), performing functions of praise, suggestion, or criticism (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). The students were encouraged to do likewise when providing peer feedback. Instruction on mitigation strategies was not part of the curriculum in either class.

2.2 Procedure

During the semester, the students were given two major assignments that involved writing a stand-alone paragraph between 200 and 250 words. They were asked to suggest topics for their assignments in the online classroom forum, and those with the largest number of votes were chosen—"how technology has affected our daily lives" and "how to save money as a college student." When the first drafts were due, the students engaged in peer review in class—once in the face-to-face mode and again in the anonymous mode. One class section engaged in the face-to-face peer review first and the anonymous peer review next, and the reverse order was used for the other class section.

The students prepared two copies of their assignments for each task. For the face-to-face peer review, the instructor randomly divided the students into groups of three. The group members exchanged their assignments and provided written feedback on the two essays for 30 minutes each. For the anonymous peer review, each student used a pseudonym as his or her writer/reviewer identity. After collecting the pseudonymized assignments, the instructor distributed half of them to the class, and those who received the same copy sat together. They reviewed the assigned essay individually for 30 minutes. When they were finished, the instructor distributed the remaining assignments, and the peer-review dyads repeated the procedure for the second essay.

The students were encouraged to use the L2 during the peer review process but were not prohibited from switching to their L1 when necessary. Regardless of the peer review mode, all students received feedback from two peer reviewers. The only difference was whether the reviewers could communicate directly with the

writers. When the two rounds of peer review activities were complete, a total of 76 peer-reviewed drafts—38 from the face-to-face mode and another 38 from the anonymous mode—were collected.

2.3 Analysis

The written feedback added directly to the 76 peer-reviewed drafts formed the data source for the study. It was first classified as "corrective feedback" or "feedback comment" to exclude corrective feedback, which was provided merely in the form of direct correction, from the analysis. Indication of errors by means of a question mark—which performs the same function as criticism in the interrogative form "what do you mean?"—was categorized as feedback comment (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). When data reduction was completed after multiple readings of the data, the handwritten comments were manually typed on a computer for analysis.

A hybrid coding approach was adopted, and the data were initially coded according to their types (RQ1). Assigning a set of pre-established codes that were drawn up based on the research questions (Smagorinsky, 2008) revealed that three comments did not match any of Hyland and Hyland's (2001) three broad feedback types of praise, suggestion, and criticism. For these, the classification scheme was revised to include an additional type—"self-reflection or encouragement."

To answer RQ2, the language choices made in providing comments were inspected. Examination of the data showed that the use of both L1 and L2 was employed exclusively at the intrasentential level in such a way that L2 words or phrases were embedded in an L1 sentence to reference part of the text that needed revision, to illustrate examples for revision, to use terms learned in the writing classes in English (e.g., *topic sentence*, *paraphrase*), or to romanize English loanwords commonly used in the Japanese language (e.g., *perfect*, *OK*). For this reason, the comments written in this manner were classified in the L1 category.

To answer RQ3, the level of negativity in the critical comments left in the face-to-face and anonymous modes was comparatively analyzed. Negative comments that contain exclusively disagreement components were classified as "bluntly negative." Questions and question marks were classified as mitigated criticism asking for clarification. Following Kreutel (2007), suggestions were also classified as mitigated criticism. For the comments in which negativity was "mitigated," the mitigation strategies implemented (RQ4) were coded deductively using the feedback comment classification scheme devised for this study (Figure 1). Since the features of both spoken and written discourse appeared in the data, the codes in the scheme were established on the basis of previous research that examined mitigation strategies in written feedback commentaries (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Patchan et al., 2009) and speech acts of agreement and disagreement (e.g., Kreutel, 2007; Maíz-Arévalo, 2014).

Using the classification scheme, the data were coded by the researcher. To increase the rigor of the analysis, the coding process was repeated four times (excluding the initial coding) at intervals of approximately two weeks. Percentage agreements with previous coding ranged between 98.1 and 100.0, indicating excellent intrarater reliability.

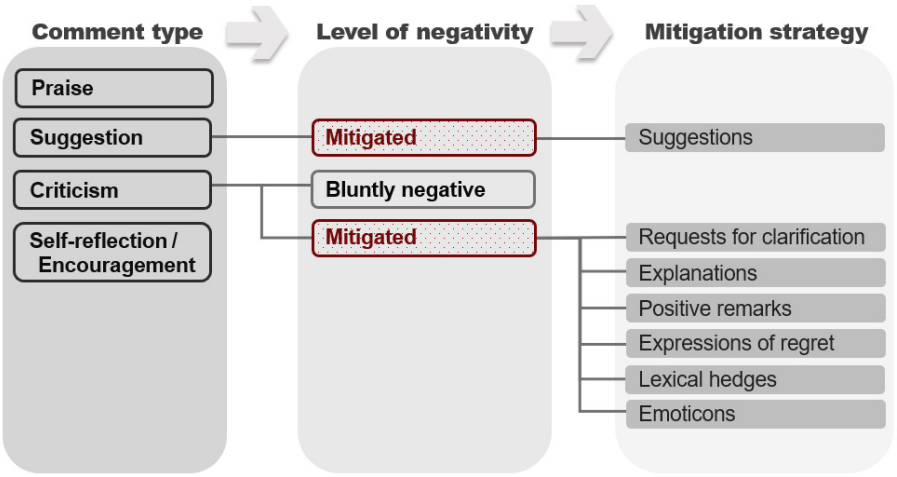

Figure 1. Feedback comment classification scheme

In the following section, the participants are referred to as 01 to 19 in random order, with "M" for male and "F" for female appended. The comments left in the face-to-face mode are marked with "FF," and those left in the anonymous mode with "AN." Extracts from the peer-reviewed drafts are set in italics, and the problematic parts referred to by the reviewer are marked in boldface. Lexical hedges employed within discourse-level mitigation devices are underlined (and numbered in superscript when multiple hedges are used). The comments are presented verbatim.

3. Findings

3.1 Types of feedback comments

The analysis showed that a total of 270 (100%) feedback comments were made in the 76 peer-reviewed drafts. Praise comprised 25% ($n = 68$), suggestion 29% ($n = 79$), criticism 45% ($n = 120$), and self-reflection or encouragement (S-r/E) 1% ($n = 3$). Among the three comments falling in the last category, one was self-reflective in nature, and the remaining two were messages of encouragement, such as "ファイティン！" (/faitin/, a Japanese expression based on the English word "fighting" used to cheer someone on).

Of the 270 feedback comments, 102 were provided in the face-to-face mode and 168 in the anonymous mode. The types of feedback comments provided in each mode and the language used are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of feedback comments

	Praise		Suggestion		Criticism			S-r/E		Total		
	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	Sym-bol	L1	L2	L1	L2	Sym-bol
Face-to-face	10 (10%)	29 (28%)	11 (11%)	17 (17%)	10 (10%)	24 (24%)	-	-	1 (1%)	31 (30%)	71 (70%)	-
Anony-mous	9 (5%)	20 (12%)	38 (23%)	13 (8%)	38 (23%)	40 (24%)	8 (5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	86 (51%)	74 (44%)	8 (5%)

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

The analysis of the 102 (100%) feedback comments left in the face-to-face mode (henceforth "face-to-face comments") showed that praise accounted for 38%, suggestion 27%, criticism 33%, and self-reflection 1%. Of the 168 (100%) feedback comments offered in the anonymous mode (henceforth "anonymous comments"), 17% were praise, 30% suggestion, 51% criticism, and 1% encouragement. The fact that approximately 65% more comments were provided in the anonymous mode corroborates Kim (2019), who reported L2 student interviewees' complaint that "it was burdensome to have to write down every single word [during the anonymous peer review]" (p. 301). The comments left in the anonymous mode tended to be more detailed than those left in the face-to-face mode.

Of all the face-to-face comments, 70% were provided in L2 and the remaining 30% were provided in L1. In the case of the anonymous comments, 44% were written in L2, 51% in L1, and the remaining 5% as a question mark. During the face-to-face peer review, two participants (16F and 17F) used L1 exclusively; during the anonymous peer review, three participants did (08F, 11M, and 16F). That is, except for 16F (an intermediate to upper-intermediate learner of English), the participants left both L1 and L2 comments.

The following examples show how the reviewers left positive comments (praise). As shown in (1), a few Japanese students erroneously used "sentence(s)" to mean "writing/essay," presumably because the word "文" (/bun/) in their L1 is used to mean both.

1. It's very very well English sentences [essay]. (FF04M)
2. This essay was almost perfect! It was easy to understand what you want to say. There were some good way to save money which I couldn't find. Thank you ! (AN18M)

3. とても読みやすくてミスもなかったです。すばらしい assignment でした！！ (AN19F)
   (This essay was very easy to read, and there was no mistake. It was an excellent assignment!!)
4. DIY をしてお金を抑えるっていうアイデアは、思いつかなかったのでなるほど！！ て思いました。 (AN17F)
   (I didn't come up with the idea of using DIY to save money, so I thought "what a brilliant idea!!")

In conducting the analysis, it was found that not only negative but also positive comments were hedged to a great extent with lexical modality. For instance, of the positive face-to-face and anonymous comments, 38% and 31%, respectively, were either prefaced or followed by the introductory verb "to think" or its Japanese equivalent "思う" (/omou/). This indicates reviewers' desire to not impose, to remain noncommittal, and to appear humble in accordance with Japanese cultural norms of politeness (Itakura, 2013) regardless of the review mode.

5. **I think** your writing is very interesting! Especially the last idea of saving money. If I don't have money at all, I [will] visit the temple like you. Good job Haruto! (FF05F)
6. This is good concluding sentence **I think**！ (AN01M)
7. こんなにも分かりやすく、上手く文が構成されていてすごいなと**思いました**。 (FF02F)
   (**I thought** it was amazing that the essay was so easy to understand and well structured.)
8. わかりやすくてパーフェクトな文だと**思いました**。さすがっす！！ (FF17F)
   (**I thought** that your essay is an easy-to-understand, perfect essay. Exactly as I expected!!)

As illustrated in (2), (4), and (5), complimentary remarks often contained reflective statements providing a specific response to what was written in the text. Inconsistent with Davies' (2006) finding that "the students tended to provide positive support for the holistic rather than the specific nature of an essay" (p. 81), positively phrased comments were observed at the global and specific levels at a similar frequency.

Overall, the percentages of comments of a negative nature—i.e., suggestion and criticism—were greater in the anonymous mode than in the face-to-face mode. The fact that the percentage of the comments of these two types combined increased by over 20% (from 61% to 82%) in the anonymous mode seems, at least on the surface, to support the study hypothesis that anonymity would facilitate the provision of criticism.

3.2 Level of negativity in the critical feedback

The face-to-face and anonymous comments with a negative orientation were examined comparatively according to the language used (RQ2) and whether or not negativity was expressed directly (RQ3). The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Level of negativity in the critical feedback

	Face-to-face (n = 62)		Anonymous (n = 137)	
	Bluntly negative	Mitigated	Bluntly negative	Mitigated
L1	1 (2%)	20 (32%)	3 (2%)	73 (53%)
L2	2 (3%)	39 (63%)	4 (3%)	49 (36%)
Symbol	-	-	-	8 (6%)
Total	3 (5%)	59 (95%)	7 (5%)	130 (95%)

Of the negative comments, bluntly negative comments accounted for a scant 5% in both modes. The participants mitigated their criticism regardless of not only the peer review mode but also the language used. As exemplified in (9) to (12) below, bluntly negative comments contain exclusively disagreement components (Pomerantz, 1984) and are not accompanied by digression or reformulations.

9. There is no concluding sentence. (FF10F)
10. This sentence is strange. I don't understand. (AN14M)
11. この文がわからなかったです。(AN09M)
    (I could not understand this sentence.)
12. [In response to the concluding sentence]
    Not paraphrase
    topic と同じ keyword が使われていない、そして内容も一致していない。
    (AN19F)
    ([This conclusion sentence does] Not paraphrase [the topic sentence]
    The same keyword as that in the topic [sentence] is not used, and the
    content does not match.)

Initially, the present study indented to analyze whether there is a difference in the level of negativity in critical comments provided in L1 and L2 (RQ2). However, this unexpected result rendered it unfeasible to compare the level of negativity in critical comments provided in L1 vs. L2; thus, the research question had to be abandoned. Reflecting that Japanese L2 students hedge their criticism "almost instinctively" (Kim, 2023, p. 328), the remaining 95% were mitigated in one way or another. Mitigation strategies implemented in these comments are detailed in the following section.

3.3 Mitigation strategies adopted by Japanese L2 students

As a way to reduce the force of their critical feedback, the participants adopted a wide variety of mitigation strategies at the discourse, syntactic, lexical, and paralinguistic levels. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mitigation strategies adopted by Japanese L2 peer reviewers

Level	Strategy	Face-to-face (n = 59)			Anonymous (n = 130)			
		L1	L2	Total	L1	L2	Symbol	Total
Discourse	Suggestions	11 (19%)	17 (29%)	28 (47%)	38 (29%)	13 (10%)	-	51 (39%)
	Requests for clarification	5 (8%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)	10 (8%)	24 (18%)	8 (6%)	42 (32%)
	Explanations	3 (5%)	5 (8%)	8 (14%)	8 (6%)	6 (5%)	-	14 (11%)
	Positive remarks	-	6 (10%)	6 (10%)	6 (5%)	2 (2%)	-	8 (6%)
	Expressions of regret	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	-	1 (1%)	-	1 (1%)
Lexical	Lexical hedges	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	4 (7%)	11 (8%)	3 (2%)	-	14 (11%)

An examination of the mitigated comments revealed that Japanese L2 students often employ multiple mitigation strategies within a single comment. The most frequent pattern was embedding lexical hedges within suggestive comments. Syntactic features such as a "tag question" and "use of the declarative form in place of the imperative" also appeared in suggestions. Because such comments are classified according to the taxonomic hierarchy of large to small units, syntactic- and paralinguistic-level strategies—which were not used exclusively as mitigation devices—are not included in Table 3. Instead, they are discussed in the discourse categories in which they are used.

Suggestions

As a way to mitigate negativity, the provision of critical comments in the form of a suggestion—which contains commentary for improvement, not criticism—was by far the most common. This strategy accounted for 47% of the mitigated face-to-face comments and 39% of the mitigated anonymous comments. Although offering a suggestion itself is a form of mitigation, these comments can be divided into two types according to their level of directness (Lee, 2010). The first type, "hedged suggestions," typically begins with *It is better if* or its Japanese counterpart "方が良い" (/hōga ī/) or its conjugated forms.

13. *Finally, we don't do pachinko. . . . If we want to earn some money,* ***we should do part time job instead of enjoying gambling.***
I think[1] **it is better**[2] to write separately from gambling sentence and part time job sentence. However this is just[3] my opinion. (AN15F)

14. *First, they have to bring a lunch box and drink.*
I think[1] you **can**[2] add "to school (everyday)" [at the end of this sentence] but you don't have to [a smiley face drawn here] (FF01M)

15. *If I* ***don't conscious*** *myself, I cannot save money.*
conscious は形容詞だから don't ではなく "am not"を使った**方が良い**[1]と思う[2]！(AN02F)
(Because *conscious* is an adjective, I think[2] **it'd be better**[1] to use *am not*, not *don't*.)

16. 全体の意見的に、良い影響を書いているので、悪い影響のことは書かない**方が良い**[1]と思います[2]。 統一をした**方がより良くなる**[3]と思います[4]。
(AN13M)
(Because you are writing about positive effects [of technology], I think[2] **it'd be better**[1] not to write about its negative effects. I think[4] **it'd make this essay much better**[3] to unify the contents.)

All of the hedged suggestions exemplified above are further mitigated by the use of the introductory verb "to think" or its Japanese equivalent "思う" (/omou/). Of the 30 L2 suggestions made in both modes, 23 (78%) were further hedged in this manner; of the 49 L1 suggestions, 16% (n = 8) were further hedged using "思う." This observation conflicts with Nguyen (2008), in which L2 students were shown to underuse lexical modality, possibly due to their lack of "full control over language processing and . . . awareness of the power of modifiers in softening a face threat" (p. 787).

The use of *I think* limits the scope of the reviewers' claim to knowledge, indicating that "they are offering a *personal* opinion, and that this opinion may not be shared by others" (Johnson, 1992, p. 62). However, participant 15F in (13) reaffirms the point by explicitly commenting that *this is just my opinion*. (The use of first-person pronouns or other lexical items to refer to the reviewer [Itakura, 2013], or "personal attribution," is also shown in [45].) Similarly, 01M in (14) softens the content of his suggestion by using expressions of metadiscourse that denote nonimposition—*but you don't have to*—and openly gives the writer an option to ignore it. Both tactics constitute a good example of what Brown and Levinson (1987) call a "negative politeness strategy" by which the addressee (feedback receiver) can retain his or her freedom of action.

More commonly used than "思う" ("to think") in L1 suggestions was the modal verb "かもしれない" (/kamo shirenai/) or its truncated form "かも" (/kamo/), which

roughly translates to "it might be (that)" or "maybe." (Discrepancies in the parts of speech and grammatical structures between Japanese and English will not be discussed in this paper.) This modal verb was incorporated in 39% of the L1 suggestive comments.

17. 順番入れ替えた方が良い[1] **かもしれない**[2] [a smiley face drawn here] (AN16F)
    (**Maybe**[2] it'd be better[1] to change the order [of these two sentences])

18. Topic sentence がないように[1] 見える[2]の で Topic sentence を追加した方が良い[3] **かも**[4] (AN04M)
    (Because it seems[2] like[1] there is no topic sentence, **maybe**[4] it'd be better[3] to add a topic sentence.)

As exemplified above, almost all the suggestions—particularly those provided in L1—were additionally mitigated with lexical hedges. In (18), the reviewer begins the comment by pointing out the apparent error of a missing topic sentence in the essay by using the introductory verb "見える" (/mieru/ "to seem") and further hedges the predicate with "ように" (/yōni/)—a conjugated form of the modal verb "ようだ" (/yōda/ "might" or "to be like"). He then provides the obvious solution in a suggestive form using "方が良い" (/hōga ī/ "it'd be better") and ends with yet another lexical hedge—the modal "かも" (/kamo/ "maybe").

As a way to augment the uncertainty of a statement, the hedged suggestions sometimes assumed the syntactic form of a tag question, which falls "midway between an outright statement and a yes–no question" and is "less assertive than the former, but more confident than the latter" (Lakoff, 1975, p. 15). Of the eight instances identified, only one was written in L2.

19. [In response to an essay in which both positive and negative effects of technology are discussed]
    I think technology has a negative impact. ***I have three reasons.*** *First, . . .*
    This sentence is for a negative impact? If so, Do you mean that you think technology has three negative impacts, **don't you?** (AN05F)

In English, a tag question consists of a declarative (or an imperative) followed by an interrogative fragment, forming a speech act that comprises an assertion paired with a request for confirmation. In Japanese, an interrogative sentence ending with the negative form "ない" (/nai/) or its semantic equivalents performs the same function of asking the listener's agreement, as exemplified below.

20. ***And****, there is a risk of blindness too.*
    In addition とか Additionally とか[1]の方がいい[2]んじゃ**ない**？ (FF05F)
    (**Wouldn't** something like[1] *In addition* or *Additionally* be better[2]?)

21. 逆接ではなくて順接で**いいのでは**？However なしで I can~でいいと思う。(AN08F)
    (**Isn't it okay** to use [an adverb expressing] cause–effect rather than contrast? I think deleting "However" and starting the sentence with "I can~" is okay.)
22. topic と conclusion が少し違い**ませんか**？ (FF06F)
    (**Aren't** the topic and the conclusion a little bit different [in meaning]?)
23. 主語変えるべき［**じゃない**］？ (FF17F)
    (**Shouldn't you** change the subject?)

In (20), the Japanese exemplifying marker "とか" (/toka/) is used twice. While the first *toka* following "In addition" is used to exemplify a set of similar-meaning transitions, the second *toka* following "Additionally" is used as a hedging strategy. It indicates the reviewer's avoidance of specification by introducing transitions "through exemplification as a possible option among others" (Barotto, 2018, p. 29). Because the usage of exemplification attenuates the imposition on the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987), it makes suggestive comments sound less direct and thus politer.

The other type, "directive suggestions," which typically begin with phrases such as *You should* or the like, occurred with less frequency. These obviously sound more imperative and forceful than hedged suggestions. None were made in the directive form in the face-to-face mode. Among the anonymous suggestions, four (provided by two reviewers) were directive in form (one in L1 and three in L2), as illustrated below.

24. [In response to a conclusion sentence that is almost identical to the topic sentence]
    You should use different words. (AN03M)
25. **you should** space a tab [when you start a paragraph]. (AN09M)
26. メインアイデアとは違う言葉（単語）に変える**必要がある**。(AN03M)
    (**You need to** change these words to different words from [those already used in] the main idea.)

There are a number of imperative forms of varying levels of directivity in Japanese, and one of them entails the use of a declarative in place of an imperative (Adachi, 2002). Because the declarative-based construction sounds like an impersonal instruction, it is used in manuals and textbooks, in which case the assumed meaning is "You will do (action)" rather than the imperative "Do (action)." This syntactic form was identified in six L1 suggestive comments (three in each mode).

27. 主語を**入れる**。(FF13M)
([You will] **put in** a subject.)

28. *In order to save money, you have to **become** start something new.*
消す。(AN10F)
([You will] erase [this].)

Requests for clarification

The second most common mitigation device identified was making requests for clarification as a way to convey negative assertion. It accounted for 20% of the mitigated face-to-face comments and 32% of the mitigated anonymous comments. It is noteworthy that the percentage of such instances in the anonymous mode was greater than that in the face-to-face mode by approximately 12%. This observation supports Coomber and Silver (2010), Kim (2019), and Kim and Lan (2021), in all of which L2 learners identified the absence of direct interaction with peer writers as a significant drawback of anonymous peer review.

29. *Third, our eyes and ears condition become bad, and I cannot see the surroundings. Accidents may happen due to the fact that **we are not looking forward**.*
Why you wrote "we are not looking forward" as a supporting sentence? (AN14M)

30. Is this a topic sentence? If so, the concluding sentence is not the same means I think [a smiley face drawn here] (AN01M)

31. *Second, you try to use public transport as much as possible. For example, **it will not cost you always change the place where you are on the train to move by bicycle.***
What do you want to say?? (FF08F)

32. *In addition, I don't think to remember, because I can research it again immediately on my smartphone if I forget **it**.*
it とはなんですか？ (AA11M)
(What is "it"?)

While most of these requests for clarification concerned language-related issues in the face-to-face mode as in (31), those made in the anonymous mode encompassed not only language use as in (32) but also other aspects of writing, such as content and organization as in (29) and (30).

Explanation

The third most common mitigation strategy identified was providing explanations. It accounted for 14% of the mitigated face-to-face comments and 11% of the

mitigated anonymous comments. This strategy was often accompanied by direct correction of errors.

33. I think you should write more supporting sentences in second subtopic because there is only one supporting sentence. (FF12F)

34. *This is **replace** for a dictionary, watch, music player and so on.*
This word is already verb, so I think you don't have to put "is" before it. Other way is change the word to "substitute". (FF18M)

35. ***We** should know how much money **you** spend and how much income we have.*
ここ we だから⟶ ここ we になる！ (FF16F)
(Because you used *we* here, this [*you*] becomes *we*!)

36. Topic sentence は一文なのでつなげるかどちらか消したほうがいいです。 (AN08F)
(Because a topic sentence is one-sentence long, it'd be better to connect this sentence [to the preceding one] or delete it.)

As the examples above illustrate, explanations were also frequently mitigated with lexical hedges. Example (37) below, for instance, begins with a modal adverb (*Perhaps*), which is immediately followed by an introductory phrase (*I think*), and then provides an explanation.

37. [In response to an essay written on a different topic than designated]
Perhaps[1], I think[2] topic is incorrect. Topic is "How technology affected our daily life", but you write "new robots". (FF15F)

In all the feedback data analyzed, there was one occasion in which an explanation accompanying a corrective symbol was offered in an imperative form—*move here*. However, the reviewer mitigated his comment (FF01M) with an emoticon (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006), as illustrated in Figure 2.

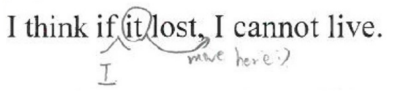

Figure 2. Emoticon used as a mitigation tool

Positive remarks

Positive remarks as a means to mitigate negative feedback (K. Hyland, 2000) composed 10% of the mitigated face-to-face comments and 6% of the mitigated anonymous comments. They were mostly left as overall comments in the bottom margin. Examples are provided below.

38. [An overall comment referring to the following part of the essay]
Finally, we should visit the temple of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune. If we make a wish of saving money toward Seven Gods of Good Fortune, we may get our wish.
I don't understand the story of Seven Gods. It's not realistic but it's interesting. (FF10F)

39. たまに文法のミスがあったが、文の構成は完ペキだった。(AN11M)
(Although there were occasional grammar mistakes, the structure of the essay was perfect.)

Taking one step further from following paired act patterns (Hyland & Hyland, 2001) in which critical remarks are combined with either praise, suggestions, or both, the Japanese L2 students often adopted the sandwich pattern of mitigation (Kreutel, 2007), whereby expressions of disagreement or dissatisfaction are embedded between sentences that include mitigating lexis or syntactic features. For example, the negative feedback is sandwiched between the introductory phrase *I think* and praise in (40), praise and a hedged suggestion in (42), or two positive remarks in (41) and (43).

40. I think your topic sentence and concluding sentences have not same meaning, so you should change topic sentence because your concluding sentence is very good! (AN18M)

41. I think it's so good. But if you check the grammar of this sentence [essay], it'll be better. (FF14M)

42. 読んで情報がたくさんあってよかったけど、情報が混ざって少し[1]読みにくかった。提案だけど、１つの理由に対して良い悪い両方つめこむのではなくどちらかにしたほうが読みやすくなる[2]かもしれない[3]。(AN03M)
(I'm glad I read your essay and obtained a lot of information, but it was a little bit[1] difficult to understand because information was mixed. It is a suggestion but maybe[3] it'd be easier to read[2] [your essay] if you focus on one side, rather than write about both good and bad sides.)

43. 全体的にまとまっている文章で読みやすかった。細かいところをなくせば、もっとよくなると思う。(AN03M)
(This essay is generally well organized so it was easy to understand. If minor mistakes are corrected, I think it will become even better.)

In (42), the reviewer begins his comment with positive remarks followed by the hedged criticism—*a little bit difficult to understand*. Then, he makes a suggestion using expressions of metadiscourse denoting nonimposition—*It is a suggestion*—and further mitigates the suggestion with a set of lexical hedges.

Expression of regret

There were two instances of expressions of regret in the data. They were made by the same participant (once in each mode), and both were written in L2.

44. I'm sorry, I don't understand this sentence. (FF06F)

45. [As an end comment]
I'm sorry. It is difficult for me. I can't understand all sentence.
Sorry, I don't good English. (AN06F)

According to Kreutel (2007), L2 students tend to overuse the clause *I'm sorry* because they use it as "a general means of avoiding confrontation by expressing humbleness and deference" (p. 10), whereas native speakers usually associate it with apologies, whereby the speaker acknowledges his or her own mistake or failure. While the clause in (44) might indicate regret, the second mention of *sorry* in (45)—*Sorry, I don't good English*—sounds apologetic.

In the Japanese context, an apology is less of an admission of one's guilt or indiscretion than "a mature acknowledgement that errors were made" (Pringle, n.d., para. 5). For this reason, it is not uncommon for Japanese people to apologize regardless of who is at fault, just as reviewer 06F apologizes that she cannot review the paper thoroughly. In addition, it is worth noting that personal attribution—*for me*—is used in (45). In this way, the reviewer attributes the responsibility of the message to herself, not the writer, mitigating the universality and generalizability of her evaluation (K. Hyland, 1996; Myers, 1989).

As briefly mentioned earlier, there was one comment that was self-reflective in nature. It is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Megumi's feedback comment

The comment was provided by Megumi (07F, pseudonym), one of the weakest participants, in the face-to-face mode. Failing to provide any constructive feedback, she left the comment at the bottom margin of Honoka's essay ("ほのちゃん" /honochan/ written around the smiley face is an intimate, affectionate way of addressing Honoka). Her comment adds support to the presupposition that the second *sorry* in (45) might also be an apology. In addition, it is noted that an explanation immediately follows it—*I don't good English*—one of the major strategies that make up the apology speech act (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014).

Lexical hedges

As consistently reported in previous studies (e.g., Johnson, 1992), lexical hedges used to express uncertainty, possibility, and imprecision were employed in the majority of the comments regardless of the peer review mode. The introductory verb "to think," for instance, was used in 38 of the 145 L2 comments; that is, over a quarter were framed with *I think* regardless of their orientation. This observation supports Maíz-Arévalo's (2014) claim that since the verb is introduced in the early stages of the L2 learning process, it is far more frequently adopted by L2 learners than other hedges, such as modal verbs, whose appropriate usage is relatively unfamiliar or (more) challenging.

As amply shown in the previous subsections, lexical hedges were adopted mostly in combination with discourse-level mitigation devices. Only a small number of negative comments were hedged exclusively by lexical hedges, as exemplified in (46).

46. This sentence is not correct, **I think**. (AN01M)

The introductory phrase "気がする" (/kiga suru/ "I feel" or "It feels") or its abbreviated form "気が" (/kiga/) was employed in seven L1 comments, the use of which is considered to be more assertive than I think (Preisler, 1986). Examples are provided below.

47. *I think* ***three good things influence that make my life very comfortable***.
なんか[1] 少し[2] ちがう**気が**[3]… (AN08F)
(**It feels**[3] somewhat[1] a little bit[2] wrong. . .)

48. [In response to an essay that is not fully developed]
全体的に文章の量が少ないせいか[1] どんなふうに私たちの生活に影響を与えているのか伝わりきってない[2] **気がする**[3] からもう少し[4] 頑張ろう[5]！！ (AN12F)
(Possibly because of[1] the small amount of writing, **it feels**[3] that I do not fully[2] understand how it [technology] affects our lives, so let's[5] work a little bit[4] harder!!)

In (47), three lexical hedges mitigate the criticism—"ちがう" ("wrong"). Likewise, the comment in (48) consists of one prepositional phrase and three clauses, and all these units are lexically hedged. Among them, the last clause—"頑張ろう" ("let's work harder")—is one of the two encouraging messages identified in this study. The reviewer employs the politeness tactic of using an in-group identity marker *us* (Myers, 1989), showing solidarity with the anonymous writer taking the same class. (An in-group identity marker is also used in [5], in which the reviewer mentions the

name of the writer—Haruto—demonstrating that the two have a friendly peer relationship.) Another example in which *us* is used in the imperative including the speaker himself or herself is provided below.

49. *There are emails and **online**, so we can communicate . . .*
これは形容詞
名詞を使**おう**！例：LINE,SNS (AN02F)
(This is an adjective [so] **let's** use a noun! example: LINE, SNS)

As a way to sound less assertive, the use of downtoners that usually scale downward "from an assumed norm" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 445), such as *a little bit* and *somewhat*—or their Japanese equivalents "少し" (/sukoshi/) and "なんか" (/nanka/)—was common (see [47], [48], and [50]). Adverbs of frequency (e.g., *sometimes*) and politeness markers (e.g., *please*) were also used with some frequency to reduce the force of criticism or requests.

50. **A little bit** hard to understand . . . (FF09M)

51. [In response to an essay in which necessary commas are omitted most of the time]
You **sometimes** forgot ", " (AN15F)

52. **Please** don't change the paragraph. (FF18M)

Other lexical hedges identified include the epistemic modality marker "かな" (/kana/ "I wonder if"), which expresses the reviewer's lack of commitment to the truth of the proposition. In (53), the downtoner "少し" (/sukoshi/ "a little bit") is further hedging the suggestive comment, whose force has already been reduced with the "かな" ending.

53. First のところもう少し[1]役に立っている理由があるといい**かな**[2]〜 (AN10F)
(**I wonder if**[2] it is good to have a little bit[1] more helpful reasons to [support] the first subtopic.)

Although Kasper and Rose (2002) suggested that L2 learners' proficiency is a possible factor that facilitates the pragmatic competence of using politeness strategies in disagreement, a noticeable correlation was not found in this study. Almost all participants used modality markers in their L2 comments either in isolation or in combination with other discourse-level mitigation, although the use of such devices was far more diverse and tactful in L1 comments on the whole.

Emoticon

Emoticons frequently accompanied both positive and negative feedback as a proxy of language and emotions. They were used mostly by female students, and only one male student used a smiley face (see Figure 2). Figure 4 presents examples.

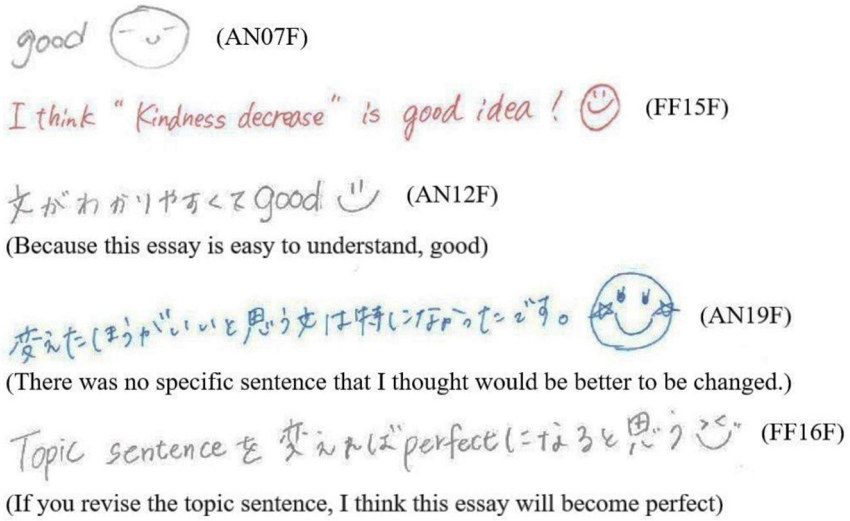

Figure 4. Emoticons drawn in the peer-reviewed drafts

As indicated in empirical studies on the pragmatic features of emoticons in text communication (e.g., Amaghlobeli, 2012; Yallop et al., 2021), they were frequently used to complement peer feedback comments, expressing friendliness or reinforcing the semantic content of the messages. There was no case in which an emoticon was used exclusively as a mitigation device.

4. Discussion

This study examined the feedback comments provided by 19 Japanese L2 peer reviewers in the face-to-face and anonymous modes to determine whether anonymizing the peer review process ameliorates their alleged reluctance to provide negative feedback. The hypothesis was rejected. Although approximately 20% more feedback of a negative nature was provided in the anonymous mode, the fact that the percentage of the bluntly negative feedback remained roughly the same in both modes does not fully support the initial hypothesis that anonymity would facilitate the provision of criticism. Rather, the examination of comment types from each mode indicated that far more requests for clarification were made in the anonymous mode, presumably due to the lack of the verbal discussion component in that mode.

The comparative analysis of the comments showed that the participants provided feedback, tactfully mitigating negativity in their critical comments in both modes. Negative feedback provided in L1, in particular, is attenuated extensively with multiple lexical hedges. (When consulted about such use of hedging in the L1 comments, a Japanese professor colleague specializing in Japanese–English comparative linguistics confirmed that it *seems* not at all excessive and sounds natural *to her*). As Taguchi (2012) noted, conventionalized response patterns require less processing for adult L2 learners if these conventions are shared between L1 and L2. This observation implies that one's use or choice of mitigation devices cannot be fully understood in isolation from social contexts (K. Hyland, 1996).

In Japanese communication, directness is avoided for the most part. Expressions are mitigated for the sake of politeness, and Japanese people are reported as experiencing discomfort in using unhedged expressions, particularly in situations where they need to disagree with others (Niyekawa, 1991). This tendency to avoid directness is evident in the way they say "no" to a question about possibility or acceptance: "それはちょっと. . ." (/sorewa chotto/ "That's a little bit . . ."). These common accounts of Japanese communication style were well attested in the written peer feedback data analyzed in this study, in which the participants were shown to have attempted to enact their L1 politeness strategy in L2 communication, whether face to face or anonymously. The participants' peer review performance might be undoubtedly related to such Japanese sociocultural factors, by which expressing disagreement or disapproval in an unhedged form is strongly discouraged and is regarded as a face-threatening act.

Although not explicitly instructed, the Japanese L2 students widely employed mitigation strategies regardless of their L2 proficiency rather than withdrawing honest comments, as observed in Carson and Nelson (1996), presumably as a result of pragmatic transfer from their L1 (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). This lends support to Matsumura (2003), who similarly found that the effect of L2 proficiency on the development of L2 pragmatic knowledge is "very weak and non-significant" (p. 485). Alternatively, they might simply be related to a common desire to remain free of conflict and maintain friendships (Johnson, 1992), although there were few personal consequences to the reviewer for using highly direct or even impolite language in the anonymous mode.

5. Conclusion

Before conclusions can be made, it needs to be acknowledged that the research design has limitations. First, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, which need to be substantiated by further research on a larger scale. The fact that the participants were intimate in most cases may also have affected the way they interacted with one another in the peer review process. As described earlier,

the participants were selected from first-year college students without prior experience of overseas residence/education in an attempt to control extraneous variables that might affect their peer interactions. However, it should be noted that the participants' prior educational contexts and their ways of communication must have varied to a degree, and the effects of this variance might well have transferred to other courses they attended later. Because the analysis was not complemented by ethnographic methods, such as stimulated recall interviews, why the participants provided peer feedback the way they did can only be speculated about.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the analysis of Japanese L2 students' feedback comments has suggested that the peer review mode hardly affects the way Japanese L2 students communicate their honest opinions. Contrary to expectations, the only noticeable difference was found in the diversity of lexical hedges in L1 vs. L2 comments, although such a finding in itself does not come as a surprise. Rather than withdrawing negative feedback for the sake of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, the participants pursued a wide range of mitigation strategies and worked collaboratively with their peers in a way that ensured that no one lost face in the process.

Although more rigorous research is needed to fully understand sociocultural influences on peer interaction, the findings of this study imply that cultural attributes might not be a major cause of Asian students' reluctance observed in the ESL setting. As discussed previously, the attempt to compare Japanese L2 students' pragmatic competence with respect to mitigating negative feedback provided in L1 vs. L2 had to be thwarted because most of the participants adopted an extremely polite interpersonal rhetorical stance regardless of the language they opted for. In this regard, replication studies need to be conducted in the same Japanese context to validate such results and in other Asian contexts to determine other variants that can "address the robustness or generalizability of a study by the introduction of further variables or contexts" (Porte, 2012, p. 6). Given that L1 use might be a factor affecting L2 students' communicative confidence with their peers, adopting a study design that uses "recourse to L1" as an experimental variable may add meaningfully to the knowledge base of interlanguage pragmatics. The findings would help L2 teachers address the issues that their students are likely to encounter during communicative interactions—a critical component of the L2 learning process.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Chris Anson and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback, which helped greatly in articulating methodological details. This work was supported by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (18K00854, 22K00747) from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

References

Adachi, T. (2002). Meirei, irai no modariti [The modality of commands and requests]. In K. Miyazaki, T. Adachi, H. Noda, & S. Takanashi (Eds.), *Modariti (Shin nihongo bunpou sensho 4)* [Modality (New selected publications on the Japanese language 4)] (pp. 42–77). Kuroshio Shuppan.

Aijmer, K. (2002). *English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus*. John Benjamins.

Amaghlobeli, N. (2012). Linguistic features of typographic emoticons in SMS discourse. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2*(2), 348–354. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.2.348-354

Barotto, A. (2018). The hedging function of exemplification: Evidence from Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics, 123*, 24–37. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.09.007

Beebe, L. M., & Takahashi, T. (1989). Do you have a bag?: Social status and patterned variation in second language acquisition. In S. Gass, C. Madden, D. Preston, D., & L. Selinker (Eds.), *Variation in second language acquisition: Discourse and pragmatics* (pp. 103–128). Multilingual Matters.

Berg, E. C. (1999). The effects of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 8*(3), 215–241. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(99)80115-5

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Bui, G., & Kong, A. (2019). Metacognitive instruction for peer review interaction in L2 writing. *Journal of Writing Research, 11*(2), 357–392. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2019.11.02.05

Carson, J. G., & Nelson, G. L. (1996). Chinese students' perceptions of ESL peer response group interaction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 5*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(96)90012-0

Coomber, M., & Silver, R. (2010). The effect of anonymity in peer review. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2009 conference proceedings* (pp. 621–631). JALT.

Crinon, J. (2012). The dynamics of writing and peer review at primary school. *Journal of Writing Research, 4*(2), 121–154. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2012.04.02.2

Davies, P. (2006). Peer assessment: Judging the quality of students' work by comments rather than marks. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 43*(1), 69–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290500467566

Derham, C., Balloo, K., & Winstone, N. (2022). The focus, function and framing of feedback information: Linguistic and content analysis of in-text feedback comments. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47*(6), 896–909. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1969335

Golato, A., & Taleghani-Nikazm, C. (2006). Negotiation of face in web chats. *Multilingua, 25*(3), 293–321. https://doi.org/10.1515/MULTI.2006.017

Guerrero, M. C. M. de, & Villamil, O. S. (2000). Activating the ZPD: Mutual scaffolding in L2 peer revision. *Modern Language Journal, 84*(1), 51–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00052

Hansen, J. G., & Liu, J. (2005). Guiding principles for effective peer response. *ELT Journal, 59*(1), 31–38. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cci004

Hyland, F. (2000). ESL writers and feedback: Giving more autonomy to students. *Language Teaching Research, 4*(1), 33–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/136216880000400103

Hyland, K. (1996). Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles. *Applied Linguistics, 17*(4), 433–454. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/17.4.433

Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. Longman.

Hyland, F., & Hyland, K. (2001). Sugaring the pill: Praise and criticism in written feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(3), 185–212. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(01)00038-8

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2019). Interpersonality and teacher-written feedback. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues* (2nd ed., pp. 165–183). Cambridge University Press.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2014). Describing speech acts: Linking research and pedagogy. In N. Ishihara & A. D. Cohen (Eds.), *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet* (pp. 56–74). Routledge.

Itakura, H. (2013). Hedging praise in English and Japanese book reviews. *Journal of Pragmatics, 45*(1), 131–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.11.003

Johnson, D. M. (1992). Compliments and politeness in peer-review texts. *Applied Linguistics, 13*(1), 51–71. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/13.1.51

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Blackwell.

Kim, S. (2019). Japanese student writers' perspectives on anonymous peer review. *ELT Journal, 73*(3), 296–305. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy061

Kim, S. (2023). 'Who expresses an honest opinion as it stands in Japan?': Cultural issues and Japanese L2 students' experiences of face-to-face and anonymous peer review. *Higher Education Research & Development, 42*(2), 322–335. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2073983

Kim, S., & Chang, C.-H. (2022). Japanese L2 learners' translanguaging practice in written peer feedback. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 25*(4), 1363–1376. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1760201

Kim, S., & Lan, Y. (2021). L2 writers' perspectives on face-to-face and anonymous peer review: Voices from China. *Porta Linguarum, 35*, 149–164. https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.v0i35.13887

Kreutel, K. (2007). "I'm not agree with you." ESL learners' expressions of disagreement. *TESL-EJ, 11*(3), 1–35.

Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.

Lee, N. S. (2010). Written peer feedback by EFL students: Praise, criticism and suggestion. *Komaba Journal of English Education, 1*, 129–139. http://park.itc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/eigo/KJEE/001/129-139.pdf

Lundstrom, K., & Baker, W. (2009). To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 18*(1), 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2008.06.002

Maíz-Arévalo, C. (2014). "I'm sorry I don't agree with you": Can we teach nonnative students pragmatic competence when expressing disagreement? *Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics, 27*(2), 433–453. https://doi.org/10.1075/resla.27.2.09mai

Mangelsdorf, K. (1992). Peer reviews in the ESL composition classroom: What do the students think? *ELT Journal, 46*(3), 274–284. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/46.3.274

Matsumura, S. (2003). Modelling the relationships among interlanguage pragmatic development, L2 proficiency, and exposure to L2. *Applied Linguistics, 24*(4), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/24.4.465

Myers, G. (1989). The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles. *Applied Linguistics, 10*(1), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/10.1.1

Nelson, G. L., & Carson, J. G. (1998). ESL students' perceptions of effectiveness in peer response groups. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 7*(2), 113–131. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(98)90010-8

Nguyen, T. T. M. (2008). Modifying L2 criticisms: How learners do it? *Journal of Pragmatics, 40*(4), 768–791. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.05.008

Nicol, D., Thomson, A., & Breslin, C. (2014). Rethinking feedback practices in higher education: A peer review perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 39*(1), 102–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.795518

Niyekawa, A. M. (1991). *Minimum essential politeness: A guide to the Japanese honorific language*. Kodansha International.

Patchan, M. M., Charney, D., & Schunn, C. D. (2009). A validation study of students' end comments: Comparing comments by students, a writing instructor, and a content

instructor. *Journal of Writing Research, 1*(2), 124–152. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2009.01.02.2

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 57–101). Cambridge University Press.

Porte, G. (2012). Introduction. In G. Porte (Ed.), *Replication research in applied linguistics* (pp. 1–18). Cambridge University Press.

Preisler, B. (1986). *Linguistic sex roles in conversation*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Pringle, P. (n.d.). *Clearing the air—The power of apology in Japan*. Japan Intercultural Consulting. https://japanintercultural.com/free-resources/articles/clearing-the-air-the-power-of-apology-in-japan

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Longman.

Sandstrom, K. H. (2021). Building genre knowledge through peer review: L2 doctoral students' provision of feedback in the natural sciences. *Journal of Writing Research, 13*(2), 257–283. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2021.13.02.03

Smagorinsky, P. (2008). The method section as conceptual epicenter in constructing social science research reports. *Written Communication, 25*(3), 389–411. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088308317815

Taguchi, N. (2012). *Context, individual differences and pragmatic competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Vandergriff, I. (2014). A pragmatic investigation of emoticon use in nonnative/native speaker text chat. *Language@Internet, 11*. https://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2014/vandergriff/

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Yallop, R., Taremaa, P., & Leijen, D. (2021). The affect and effect of asynchronous written feedback comments on the peer feedback process: An ethnographic case-study approach within one L2 English doctorate writing group. *Journal of Writing Research, 12*(3), 531–600. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2021.12.03.02

Yu, S., & Lee, I. (2014). An analysis of Chinese EFL students' use of first and second language in peer feedback of L2 writing. *System, 47*, 28–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.08.007

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.