What roles for model texts and reformulations in EFL writing?
Implications from an empirical study

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Abstract

Writing has recently been drawing much attention for its potential to advance L2 learning. Reflecting this awareness, the number of SLA-oriented L2 writing studies has been increasing, addressing in particular the effectiveness of various forms of written feedback. In this presentation, I will report on a study that examined in the context of Japanese EFL writing the differential roles of two types of feedback texts that promote learners' spontaneous attention to form—a native-speaker model of writing and reformulations.

The study addressed the following research questions: 1) What do the participants notice as they compare their original writing to a native-speaker model of writing and a reformulated text, respectively? and 2) What do L2 learners incorporate from each feedback text into their revisions? The participants engaged in a three-stage picture-description task consisting of output (Stage 1), comparison (Stage 2), and rewriting (Stage 3). The important feature of the study was that in Stage 2 the participants were presented with two texts—a model text and a reformulation— for the purpose of comparison.

Results indicated some differential roles for the model text and the reformulations. While the participants were primarily concerned with lexis as they read the two types of texts, they noticed and incorporated a greater number of grammar features from the reformulated writing than from the model text while benefiting more from the latter in terms of content comparison and uptake. Moreover, qualitative analysis suggested a differential role in the lexical domain and the important role of learner agency in the participants' uptake of noticed features. I will discuss these findings and derive implications for classroom use of the two types of input texts as feedback tools.