

## *The Impact of Weekly Correction and Feedback in a French Composition Class*

Bernard Montoneri, Tamkang University, Taiwan

The European Conference on Language Learning 2017  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

The study reported here explored the quantitative and qualitative learning performance of a class of composition in L2 French (junior students) in Taiwan through the application of statistic tools such as SPSS and Excel. The participants were students of a French department following a course of writing during the academic year 2015-2016. The data collected includes students' scores, class attendance, students' composition assignments (almost one per week during two consecutive semesters), and several questionnaires. The results of numerical analysis were used to clarify whether our designed teaching methods can improve students' writing skill. Through discussing the effect of teamwork, the indicators selected to evaluate students' writing level, and the impact of writing topics, we tried to figure out a flexible teaching/learning method suitable for different levels of students. The key evaluating indicators contributing to students' good or poor writing ability were also discussed. Using mechanical error correction method can notably help teachers identify students' most common and recurrent mistakes. It also appeared that students who are not native speakers prefer their instructor not only to systematically highlight their errors, but also to correct their French. The proposed learning improvement mechanism presented in this study may also be applied to other fields or other languages in future studies.

Keywords: French as a Foreign Language (FLE); learning performance; mechanical error correction; writing skill; Taiwan.

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## **Introduction**

This study focused on a required course of French composition in a French Department at a private university in Taipei, Taiwan. It analyzed data for students who took the class during the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016 (that is, February to June 2016). The data is based on information collected during the class, such as students' assignments (10 texts corrected by the instructor using various error correction strategies), scores, attendance, and a questionnaire completed by students at the end of the second semester (in June 2016). The instructor not only corrected students' compositions as often and as regularly as possible, but also gave an oral explanation during the class after the test. To make sure students were aware of the type of mistakes they made, the teacher also made a list of their most common and recurrent mistakes. Students were expected not only to improve their writing skill, but to increase their knowledge of French culture. It appears that they benefited from the teacher's feedback, written and verbal, as well as from team work and peer-review during the class.

## **Literature Review**

### Error correction strategies

Mechanical error correction or direct correction means that the instructor underlines, highlights, and gives explicit answers to the incorrect words, sentences, or violations of the general grammar rules. This is in contrast to meaning error correction where the instructor may place a question mark, insert an arrow, or underline places with errors/mistakes, but not provide the answers immediately (Hendrickson, 1978; Lin et al., 2015).

Lin et al. (2015) asked 162 aboriginal students aged between 18 and 23 at a nursing college in southern Taiwan to complete two versions of compositions. The objective was to implement a multiple-revision strategy, that is, to give indirect feedback on the first draft, and direct feedback on the second draft. It notably gave students the opportunity to correct their work before the final submission.

The most frequently used pedagogical intervention in the English-L2 writing literature was teacher feedback. Of the collected data, 18 studies used some form of teacher feedback as an intervention. The feedback types included error corrections (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005), tutoring (Williams, 2004), and revision talk (Young & Miller, 2004). Most of these studies found that teacher feedback exerted a positive influence on certain aspects of students' writing development. For instance, Yang, Badger, and Yu (2006) examined revision with or by teachers compared to revision with peers, finding teacher feedback to be superior in improving writing accuracy and organization.

Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) found that teacher feedback alone did not improve accuracy of writing. Based on this observation, they argued that confounding factors are likely to exist in the relation between teacher feedback and L2 students'

writing products. According to the findings from Bitchener et al., the type of teacher feedback (written or oral) made a difference in enhancement of students' writing quality: a combination of written comments and verbal feedback was effective in enhancing students' writing performance. In a similar vein, Bitchener (2008) revealed that students' writing was influenced differently by different types of teacher feedback. According to this finding, the teacher's written metalinguistic explanation was more effective than traditional corrective feedback or an oral metalinguistic explanation. That is, students who received metalinguistic written and oral feedback with direct comments on the incorrect sentences from the teacher outperformed those who received teacher's specific direct revision to the student's writing. For example, when the students' writing was directly corrected by the teachers with written and oral explanation of why the sentences were not correct, the students subsequently produced more accurate writing than when they only received error corrections on their writing or when they received only metalinguistic explanations from teachers. However, the findings in this study were not clear in explaining the relative merits of teachers' written feedback versus oral feedback.

A comparison between peer feedback and teacher feedback was found in Yang, Badger, and Yu's (2006) study. In this study using 20- to 21-year-old 12 Chinese students in an English-L2 academic writing class, Yang et al. found peer feedback to be less effective for the students' writing quality than teacher feedback, but more effective for greater autonomy in writing. The students who received teacher feedback produced better writing quality, but their writing procedure tended to rely on the teacher's guidelines rather than writing procedures they independently employed by themselves. In contrast, the students getting peer feedback (or peer-collaboration) tended to write based on their independent writing procedures, which were sometimes different from the teacher's guidelines. Peer feedback thus facilitated the students' independent planning, writing, and revising, but their actual writing competence was not significantly improved.

Some scholars have focused on the effect of different contexts and types of collaborative writing. For instance, Bloch (2007) examined peer collaboration in a blog space but he failed to find a significant effect of the blog collaboration. In his case study of a student who migrated from Somalia to the U.S. when he was a middle-school student, Bloch reported there was no clear effect from peer collaboration in blog space to foster the student's writing development. There was also an interesting study that found that doing peer review is more effective than receiving it in L2 writing development (Lundstrom & Baker, 2008). From analyzing 91 students' pre- and post- intervention written texts in nine L2 academic writing classes at a university, Lundstrom and Baker concluded that the student group solely reviewing other groups' writing developed more in writing ability than the group receiving peer reviews.

Other researchers concentrated their efforts on figuring out specific peer dialogue patterns during L2 writing activities. Study of peer dialogues showed that peers were frequently involved in talking about mechanics and organization rather than about the ideas and topics of their writing (Watanabe & Swain, 2007). Yet, the changes the student writers made to their own writing were different than what was discussed. Suzuki (2008) argued that peer revision produced more changes in number of episodes (a unit of

frequency measurement of dialogues about corresponding topics in their discussion), and meta-talk rather than text-specific changes such as grammar and words. It appears that there is a gap between the most targeted dialogue topics (language related topics) and the targeted end result (global changes) in collaborative L2 writing.

Overall, collaborating peers outperformed those who worked alone, but not those who received teacher feedback, in producing better quality writing. But the superiority of peer feedback should be interpreted carefully, because the quality of collaboration can also be affected by various contexts. For example, the point was made that high-proficiency learners may not benefit from paired collaboration with a lower level peer, because high-low pairs performed worse than high-high pairs (Leeser, 2004). How students are combined into peer groups is clearly important. It was also found that participants tended to change their overall ideas rather than address specific mechanical problems, although they discussed grammatical changes with peers more than the overall ideas. This gap between discussion topics and behaviors necessitates further investigation for particular behavioral or verbal patterns which may hinder effective discussion within pairs (or between peers), and factors that might encourage or discourage effective peer discussion.

The types of technology use varied from electronic dictionary use (Yoon & Hirvela, 2004) to blogs (Bloch, 2007). Seven articles in the identified literature highlighted how technology-use can affect L2 writing development. In the remaining three articles, technology-based environments were merely the class setting for other focal factors. The latter articles employed very descriptive analysis including listing often-visited websites (Stapleton, 2005) or reporting students' perception about technology-use (Yoon & Hirvela, 2004), rather than relational analysis. A number of researchers found that technology was positively related to students' emotional, motivational, and global changes as opposed to specific language-related changes. For instance, Yoon and Hirvela (2004) documented that use of corpus was associated with students' positive motivation (self-efficacy). Matsumura and Hann (2004) reported that giving a choice of computer use resulted in good writing performance for students with either high or low computer-related anxiety. In the study by Ellis and Yuan (2004), students' planning was associated with better writing products than no planning. Several studies revealed that a technology-rich environment is beneficial to student's L2 writing quality. Based on a 42-item survey instrument regarding corpus use and follow-up interviews, Yoon and Hirvela (2004) reported 22 ESL students' own assessment of advantage and difficulties of corpus use. They concluded that corpus use is beneficial to L2 writing development and contributes to increased confidence toward L2 writing.

Brine and Franken (2006) examined the effect of a teacher's guiding questions in a web conferencing environment (Web Crossing). An online environment with teacher's guidance was found to be effective in enhancing L2 writing skills. Teachers played an important role in fostering the students' writing performance. In sum, the studies in this category showed that technology can be beneficial to L2 students because it interests and comforts the students and fosters good effects of teaching. The studies, however, did not clearly reveal similar benefits for language-specific writing development such as grammar and writing structure. Technology was instead tied more to overall L2 writing

quality and students' motivation and identity rather than mechanical correctness of their writing. Also, in combining technology-use with classical instruction, it is still questionable whether technology would work for the students at all proficiency levels or only for the students at a specific level.

Peer-feedback interventions are more effective for global changes (organization and structure) than for local changes (accuracy and grammar). This is not surprising in that peers, being language learners themselves, are unlikely to be experts in grammar. Technology use, the least emergent issue in the reviewed literature, was found to be more effective when it was accompanied by appropriate guidance from teachers than when it was implemented as a stand-alone intervention. Typically, the studies in the literature revealed that technology use was effective in promoting emotional, motivational, and structural and topic changes than grammatical and linguistic changes. Technology use was accompanied with teacher feedback or peer feedback as interventions in many studies. This trend seems natural that technology is still a new intervention in writing pedagogy and needs more understanding in comparison with other traditional interventions.

## **Methodology**

### **The Data Source**

The study case is a private university in Taipei. The data includes students' scores, class attendance, students' composition assignments (10 for the second semesters), and a questionnaire. Participants were studying French composition as a 2 hour/week required course in the French Department. The characteristics of the data source and research object are as follows:

1. French composition II is a course followed by junior students, but also open to all the students of the university.
2. The instructor used French and Chinese to teach during the class because students had learned French only for two years.
3. 21 students took the class during the two consecutive semesters.
4. Students wrote 10 texts during the second semester, all corrected by the instructor.
5. The course was divided into two periods: during the first hour, the teacher gave students teaching material in French (with Chinese translation). We studied one topic per week, such as interview for a job, sport, writing a biography, travels, making wishes, etc. The material included dialogues, vocabulary, and grammar (see appendix 1). During the second hour, students had to write a composition in relation with the topic presented by the teacher during the first hour (including using the vocabulary studied and grammatical points), sometimes as part of a small team, sometimes on their own.
6. The score for each composition is broken into five parts: S. for syntax; V. for vocabulary; L. for logic; G. for grammar; C. for content. Taiwanese students are graded on 100. Therefore, each part counts 20% of the total. The minimum passing score is 60/100.

7. Students could use their smartphone and the teaching material provided by the teacher. Of course, the instructor made it clear they had to use their imagination and write an original story. We talked numerous times about the issue of plagiarism.
8. Mechanical error correction strategy or direct correction was used to correct each one of the papers written by student, individually and in group. Moreover, the week following the exercise, the instructor provided oral explanation regarding grammar and recurrent grammatical and syntactical errors notably highlighting most common mistakes made by students.
9. All names have been removed for the sake of privacy. This study is anonymous.

## Empirical Study

It would be difficult to comment upon all the various mistakes made by students in such a short article; therefore, this study will only list some of the most common errors and then provide two in-depth examples of important mistakes made by Taiwanese students who wrote compositions in French (see appendices).

1. The influence of English, that is, the mixture of the French (français) and English (anglais) languages and the errors due to the influence of English syntactical and grammatical rules. The most notable would be:
  - a. The place of the adjective in a sentence: *a blue sky* becomes *un bleu ciel* instead of *un ciel bleu*.
  - b. The place of the adverb: *he often goes to Paris* becomes *il souvent va à Paris* instead of *il va souvent à Paris*.
  - c. Professions in English and in French: *I am a professor* becomes *je suis un professor* instead of *je suis professeur*.
  - d. The use of to be in English / to have in French: *I am 20 years old* becomes *je suis 20 ans* instead of *j'ai 20 ans*.
  - e. The use of I can in English / je sais in French: *I can speak English* becomes *je peux parler français* instead of *je sais parler français*.

2. Punctuation, capitalization, and accents.

Students generally respect the rules of punctuation. One of the most common errors is placing a comma before *et*, like in English: *il aime le café, le lait, et le thé* instead of *il aime le café, le lait et le thé* (*he likes coffee, milk, and tea*).

Most students struggle to use the apostrophe correctly. One could say that sometimes, they just don't pay attention, are too tired and have a problem of focus, because they know the rules. L'élision (an elision or deletion: omission of one or more sounds, such as a vowel, a consonant, or a whole syllable in a word or phrase):

*je* ∼ *jusque* ∼ *le* ∼ *la* ∼ *me* ∼ *ne* ∼ *que* ∼ *se* ∼ *te* ∼ *de* + vowel : *je* + *ai* + *j'ai* ; *la* + *université* = *l'université* ; *ce* + *est* = *c'est* ; *le* + *éléphant* = *l'éléphant*.

French capitalization rules might be disturbing for Anglo-Saxon students, and even more for Chinese students. Here are a few rules:

First person singular subject pronoun (*je*), unless it's at the beginning of the sentence (*Je*).

Days of the week, months of the year are not capitalized in French (*lundi* for *Monday*).

Geographical words: *Mont Blanc* in English is *le mont Blanc* in French.

Languages: *I speak French* is *je parle français*, not *je parle Français* (very common mistake in students' compositions).

French adjectives that refer to nationalities are not capitalized, but proper nouns are: *I saw a Canadian* is *j'ai vu un Canadien*. But *I'm American* is *je suis américain*.

Students make relatively few mistakes regarding the French accents. Their biggest problem would be the use of the passé composé: *il a abandonner* instead of *il a abandonné* (he abandoned).

### 3. Les faux amis (false cognates)

Many French words look like English words, but the meaning is sometimes different.

Table 1: Examples of false cognates

une caméra	a movie camera
un appareil photo	a camera
un chat	a cat
une conversation	a chat
car (parce que)	because
une voiture	a car
le caractère	character, temperament
a character	un personnage
une pièce de monnaie	a coin
un coin	a corner

The instructor needs not only to correct students' compositions as often and as regularly as possible, but also to give an oral explanation during the class after the test. To make sure students are aware of the type of mistakes they make, the teacher should also make a list of their most common mistakes. In the second part of this study, we are going to analyze and comment on the results. Did students make more progress because the teacher gave them assignments very regularly, with a correction of the paper and an oral correction after the text? Did they have better scores when working individually or in group?

Table 2: General comparison of different average scores between the texts written individually and those in group

Texts written during the class	Average score of all students & texts	S.	V.	L.	G.	C.
5 texts written by students individually	71.1	13.5	14.4	15.2	13.4	14.6
5 texts written by students in group	75.8	14.2	15.1	16.1	14.3	16.1
Average progress of texts written in-group compare to those individually	6.7%	5.2%	5.0%	6.0%	6.8%	10.3%

Note. S. for syntax; V. for vocabulary; L. for logic; G. for grammar; C. for content.

Table 2 shows the comparison of different average scores for five texts written by students individually and five written in group. The data shows that the average score of texts written in group is higher. Are these rigorous results in all aspects of the texts (such as: syntax, vocabulary, logic, grammar, and content) due to students' teamwork effort, or only because the five texts written in group were written during the second half semester when students had already made progress after 2 months of training? In order to reduce the influence of the latter reason, one of the texts written by students individually was written at the end of semester. That is, among the five texts written by students individually, four were written in the first half of the semester and one at the end of semester. In fact, the average score of the five texts written by students individually remained almost the same at 71.1/100. Because the teacher allowed students to select their five best scores among the ten texts they wrote and they already had enough good scores. The data in Table 2 also reveals that the scores progress about 5% to 6% for the texts written in group compared to those written individually, notably in the aspect of text content, which even reaches 10.3%. That is, when working together, students write more and better, they make less grammatical errors and the content of their composition is much richer, as they discuss during the class and share their knowledge. In fact, this is a form of peer review, as they correct each other "live", during the writing process.



Table 3: Detailed comparison of different average scores between the texts written individually and those in group

Students	Texts written individually						Texts written in group					
	total	S.	V.	L.	G.	C.	total	S.	V.	L.	G.	C.
Students' Average	71.1	13.5	14.4	15.2	13.4	14.6	75.8	14.2	15.1	16.1	14.3	16.1
1	63.4	11.8	13.0	13.8	11.6	13.2	71.3	13.3	14.0	15.3	13.5	15.3
2	68.8	12.6	14.0	15.0	12.8	14.4	76.3	13.8	15.0	16.5	14.5	16.5
3	78.4	14.8	15.8	16.8	14.8	16.2	73.0	13.2	14.4	15.8	13.8	15.8
4	67.8	12.5	14.0	14.5	13.0	13.8	73.0	13.2	14.4	15.8	13.8	15.8
5	52.5	10.0	11.0	11.5	9.0	11.0	78.0	15.0	15.0	16.5	15.0	16.5
6	83.0	16.3	16.8	17.3	15.8	17.0	84.8	16.2	17.2	17.6	16.0	17.8
7	83.6	16.4	17.0	17.4	16.0	16.8	84.8	16.2	17.2	17.6	16.0	17.8
8	82.8	16.2	16.6	17.2	16.0	16.8	84.8	16.2	17.2	17.6	16.0	17.8
9	54.0	10.3	10.7	12.3	9.7	11.0	78.7	15.0	15.3	16.7	15.0	16.7
10	86.8	17.2	17.8	17.8	16.8	17.2	84.8	16.2	17.2	17.6	16.0	17.8
11	73.4	13.8	15.2	15.8	13.6	15.0	67.0	12.4	13.4	14.4	12.4	14.4
12	66.4	12.6	12.8	14.2	13.0	13.8	67.0	12.4	13.4	14.4	12.4	14.4
13	69.4	13.0	14.2	14.8	13.0	14.4	67.0	12.4	13.4	14.4	12.4	14.4
14	75.6	14.6	15.0	15.8	14.6	15.6	84.8	16.2	17.2	17.6	16.0	17.8
15	60.2	11.2	12.4	13.4	10.8	12.4	72.4	13.4	14.4	15.6	13.6	15.4
16	74.8	14.0	15.4	16.0	14.0	15.4	79.0	15.0	15.8	16.8	14.8	16.6
17	80.6	15.4	16.2	17.2	15.4	16.4	79.0	15.0	15.8	16.8	14.8	16.6
18	71.6	13.6	14.8	15.4	13.2	14.6	79.3	15.0	15.8	16.8	15.0	16.8
19	63.2	11.6	12.6	13.6	11.8	13.6	67.0	12.4	13.4	14.4	12.4	14.4
20	69.8	13.4	14.0	15.2	12.8	14.4	72.7	13.7	14.3	15.7	13.7	15.3
21	67.0	12.8	13.5	14.5	12.8	13.5	68.3	12.7	14.0	15.0	12.3	14.3

Note. S. for syntax; V. for vocabulary; L. for logic; G. for grammar; C. for content.

Table 4: Average progress of texts written in group.

Students	Average progress of texts written in group (in %)					
	Total	S.	V.	L.	G.	C.
Students' Average	6.7	5.2	5.0	6.0	6.8	10.3
1	12.4	12.3	7.7	10.5	16.4	15.5
2	10.8	9.1	7.1	10.0	13.3	14.6
3	-6.9	-10.8	-8.9	-6.0	-6.8	-2.5
4	7.7	5.6	2.9	9.0	6.2	14.9
5	48.6	50.0	36.4	43.5	66.7	50.0
6	2.2	-0.3	2.7	2.0	1.6	4.7
7	1.4	-1.2	1.2	1.1	0.0	6.0
8	2.4	0.0	3.6	2.3	0.0	6.0
9	45.7	45.2	43.8	35.1	55.2	51.5
10	-2.3	-5.8	-3.4	-1.1	-4.8	3.5
11	-8.7	-10.1	-11.8	-8.9	-8.8	-4.0
12	0.9	-1.6	4.7	1.4	-4.6	4.3
13	-3.5	-4.6	-5.6	-2.7	-4.6	0.0
14	12.2	11.0	14.7	11.4	9.6	14.1
15	20.3	19.6	16.1	16.4	25.9	24.2
16	5.6	7.1	2.6	5.0	5.7	7.8
17	-2.0	-2.6	-2.5	-2.3	-3.9	1.2
18	10.7	10.3	6.4	8.8	13.6	14.7
19	6.0	6.9	6.3	5.9	5.1	5.9
20	4.1	2.0	2.4	3.1	6.8	6.5
21	2.0	-0.7	3.7	3.4	-3.3	6.2

Note. S. for syntax; V. for vocabulary; L. for logic; G. for grammar; C. for content.

Do all students always perform better while doing teamwork? The answer is no. Table 3 and 4 compare each student's average scores of five texts written individually and those in group. We find that student 3, student 10, student 11, student 13 and student 17 have worse performance while writing a French composition text with others. Notably for student 3 and student 11, the average scores in group regress 6.9% and 8.7% respectively; and the average syntax score in group both regresses about 10%. Because student 3's three partners have lower French writing performance compared to him, student 3 seems to have difficulty sharing his knowledge with his partners and maintaining his writing level.

The reason for the score regression concerning student 11 is the same as student 3. This implies that if a student is unable to dominate the whole task, working with partners having higher level can improve his/her writing performance. However, if a student cannot communicate clearly with his/her team members, he/she will lose points. Many factors may influence the outcome: teamwork skill, time management, communication skill, but also fear to show off and to be considered arrogant by the other team members.

Table 3 and 4 also reveal that student 5, student 9, and student 15 who had the lowest scores made enormous progress and they benefited highly from working in a team (48.6%, 45.7% and 20.3% respectively). This proves that choosing partners with higher level can improve performance; or, that the opinions of students with lower writing performance are often ignored in a working group (I would say it is very unlikely, because I observed students during the class, and they all seemed to participate actively). The coefficient of variation (CV) is the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean (average).

Table 5: Variance coefficient (in %) for the 5 indicators

CV	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6	Text 7	Text 8	Text 9	Text 10
Syntax	26.4 %	18.7 %	7.2%	17.6 %	16.7 %	13.1 %	13.0 %	13.5 %	10.6 %	8.7%
Vocabulary	24.2 %	15.6 %	6.2%	15.5 %	14.4 %	11.8 %	11.3 %	12.5 %	10.7 %	7.2%
Logic	19.8 %	17.4 %	5.6%	12.2 %	11.1 %	8.9%	8.8%	13.3 %	9.5%	4.9%
Grammar	27.7 %	17.4 %	6.6%	18.3 %	17.3 %	11.2 %	13.0 %	12.5 %	9.3%	8.7%
Content	24.1 %	13.0 %	4.7%	16.0 %	14.0 %	9.8%	11.4 %	10.9 %	9.5%	4.9%
Total	23.4 %	16.0 %	5.7%	15.4 %	14.2 %	10.6 %	11.3 %	12.4 %	9.7%	6.6%

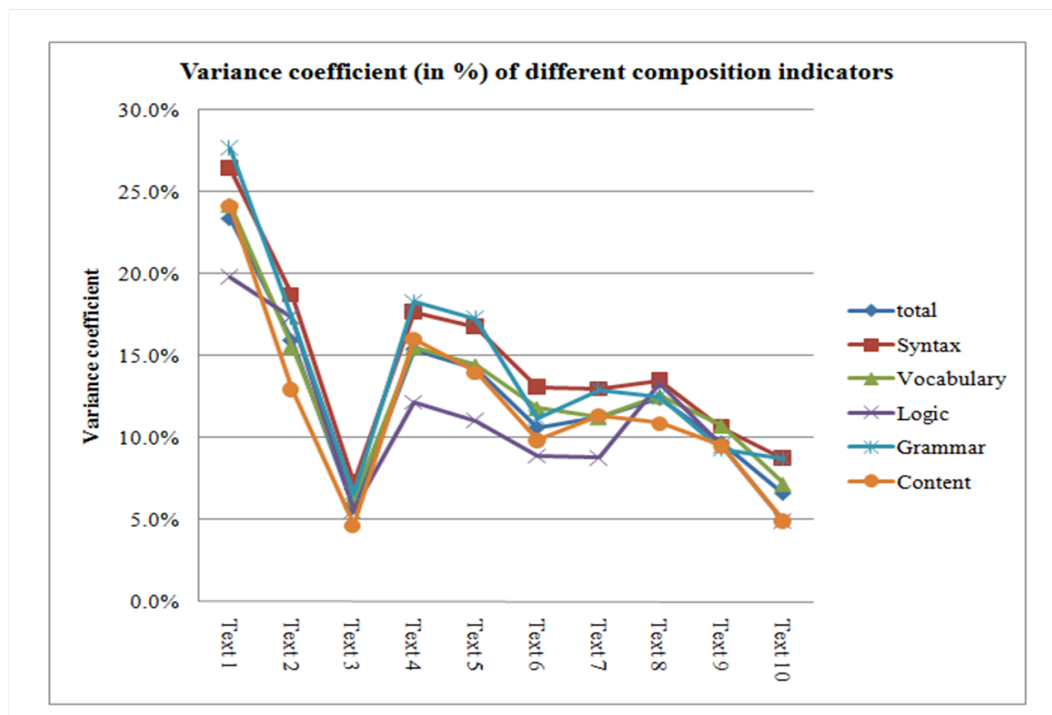


Figure 1: Variance coefficient (in %) of different composition indicators

Text 3 (make wishes) and text 10 (interview for a job) have the lowest variance coefficients (5.7 and 6.6 respectively). Text 1 (writing a biography) and 2 (your favorite novel) have the highest coefficients (23.4 and 16 respectively).

Students' satisfaction with the course

The number of students who were absent during the class was relatively low. They are various reasons why students would miss the class: sick leave, personal reason and family emergency...The teacher allows students to use their smartphone to help them find information and check online dictionaries and grammars. As they must finish the text at the end of the class, they really do not have the luxury to play with their phone. Writing a short text in French is difficult and they cannot afford to waste any time.

Table 6: Number of students absent/10 texts

Texts	Number of students absent
Text 1	4
Text 2	4
Text 3	0
Text 4	2
Text 5	0
Text 6	0
Text 7	3
Text 8	5
Text 9	1
Text 10	3

Answers to the end of semester questionnaire (June 2016) were quite positive. Students were generally satisfied with their score and fairness of grading. They believed the assignments were clearly explained and were happy with teacher's feedback and comments. To the question "The course helped you improve your writing?", almost all the students answered strongly agree or agree.

Interestingly, most students preferred to write on paper than on the computer (which takes more time, especially to type French accents). Most students also answered that their biggest problems are grammar and getting ideas onto the paper.

Concerning teamwork, there was a high number of students who answered that they played a dominant role in the writing process. Others said they wrote part of the text. Teamwork was successful and each student participated in the group. Each member of the team was assigned a role, such as looking for information on the Internet, discussing ideas and the plan of the composition, writing the text, check grammar and syntax, etc.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that most students benefit from writing French composition on a regular basis. Moreover, most of them (but not all) make substantial progress in writing and have higher scores when doing teamwork. Generally, there are 3-4 students in a team. Many of them answered they played a dominant role in the writing process. Doing teamwork was also an opportunity for students to do peer-feedback, that is, to correct each other during the class and to share their knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, culture). Students were allowed to use various types of technology during the class while writing their compositions, such as electronic dictionary, to blogs, teacher's Facebook page dedicated to French Language and culture, languages learning web pages, etc. Of course, it was made clear that students could not copy content and French sentences online and that they were not allowed not play with their smartphone. They found out that time is passing very quickly and that they had no time to waste if they wanted to finish their assignment before the end of the class.

## **Suggestions**

- Correcting almost one composition per week is time-consuming, but worth it. Students appreciate it and can quickly measure their progress in writing. Generally, at least for students who work seriously and regularly, scores get higher.
- Giving feedback orally after the test is particularly useful, especially when pointing out some recurrent and common mistakes that could easily be avoided. Therefore, a combination of written comments and verbal feedback is effective in enhancing students' writing performance.

The instructor also created a Facebook page, but it was open to everybody and it was not a requirement for student to follow the posts. However, most of them followed the teacher's post on the page called "J'aime votre accent". This page was open from September 2015 to June 2016. It shared info, pictures, links and comments on France and French language.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Tamkang University for financially supporting his attendance to The European Conference on Education (ECE2017), held in Brighton, England (June 30–July 02, 2017).

## References

- Bitchener, J. (2008). Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17*(2), 102-118.
- Bitchener, J., Young, S., & Cameron, D. (2005). The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 14*(3), 191-205.
- Bloch, J. (2007). Abdullah's blogging: A generation 1.5 student enters the blogosphere. *Language Learning and Technology, 11*(2), 128-141.
- Brine, J., & Franken, M. (2006). Students' perceptions of a selected aspect of a computer mediated academic writing program: An activity theory analysis. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 22*(1), 21-38.
- Ellis, R., & Yuan, F. (2004). The effects of pre-task planning on fluency, complexity, and accuracy in second language narrative writing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 26*, 59-84.
- Hendrickson, J. (1978). Error correction in foreign language teaching: Recent theory, research, and practice. *The Modern Language Journal, 62*, 387-398.
- Leeser, M. J. (2004). Learner proficiency and focus on form during collaborative dialogue. *Language Teaching Research, 8*, 55-81.
- Lin, C. F. C., Yu, W. C. W., Wang, J., & Ho, M. H. (2015). Learning English Writing via A Web Digital Platform: A case of Taiwanese aboriginal nursing students' participation and learning outcomes. *The Online Journal of Distance Education and e-Learning, 3*(1), 38-56. Retrieved April 15, 2017, from <http://www.tojdel.net/journals/tojdel/articles/v03i01/v03i01-06.pdf>.
- Lundstrom, K., & Baker, W. (2008). 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.
- Matsumura, S., & Hann, G. (2004). Computer anxiety and students' preferred feedback methods in EFL writing. *The Modern Language Journal, 88*(3), 403-415.
- Stapleton, P. (2005). Using the web as a research source: Implications for L2 academic writing. *The Modern Language Journal, 89*(2), 177-189.
- Suzuki, M. (2008). Japanese learners' self revisions and peer revisions of their written compositions in English. *TESOL Quarterly, 42*(2), 209-233.

Watanabe, Y., & Swain, M. (2007). Effects of proficiency differences and patterns of pair interaction on second language learning: Collaborative dialogue between adult ESL learners. *Language Teaching Research*, 11(2), 121-142.

Williams, J. (2004). Tutoring and revision: Second language writers in the writing center. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(3), 173-201.

Yang, M., Badger, R., & Yu, Z. (2006). A comparative study of peer and teacher feedback in a Chinese EFL writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15(3), 179-200.

Yoon, H., & Hirvela, A. (2004). ESL student attitudes toward corpus use in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 257-283.

Yoon, H. (2008). More than a linguistic reference: The influence of corpus technology on L2 academic writing. *Language Learning and Technology*, 12(2), 31-48.

**Contact email:** montoneri@yahoo.com

**Appendix 1.** Topic for the 10 texts written during the second semester

March 09 Texte 1	Ecrire une biographie. Imparfait et passé simple.
March 16 Texte 2	Quel est votre roman préféré. Pourquoi ? Presentez l'écrivain, le récit et les personnages principaux.
March 23 Texte 3	Ecrivez un conte basé sur Aladin. Vous avez un génie et 3 souhaits.
March 30 Texte 4	Faire un résumé. Exemple, le Fantôme de l'Opéra.
April 13 Texte 5	Vous passez un week-end à Monaco avec vos amis ou votre famille.
April 27 Texte 6	Quel est votre sport préféré ? Présenter les sports préférés à Taiwan et en France.
May 04 Texte 7	Faire une comparaison entre Taiwan et la France. Différences et points communs.
May 11 Texte 8	Guide touristique: Présenter un site taiwanais, un monument ou une ville.
May 18 Texte 9	La peinture impressionniste. Présenter un peintre et une de ses oeuvres.
May 25 Texte 10	Interview pour un emploi.



**Appendix 2.** Sample of composition during the second semester: travelling in France by plane

Composition II Texte 5 2016/04/13

S: 15	V: 16	L: 18	G: 14	C: 15
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

序號	學號	姓名	系級	Note
019				78

Pour ces vacances d'été, j'aimerais aller en France avec des amis <sup>de l'université</sup> pendant trois semaines comme notre voyage de graduation. On va aussi ~~se~~ retrouver <sup>là-bas</sup> nos amis qui sont allés en France pour étudier l'année dernière.

Avant de partir, il faut acheter des billets d'avion et faire nos bagages. Si on a assez de temps, on voudrait rester à Paris pendant 5 jours. Et puis, on ira <sup>dans</sup> une ville au sud de France et <sup>on y</sup> restera pendant 5 ou 6 jours. ~~En~~ Enfin, on va aller en Italie jusqu'au dernier jour de notre voyage.

On ne veut pas dépenser trop ~~de~~ <sup>d'un</sup> argent, donc on va acheter des billets <sup>d'une</sup> compagnie aérienne à bas prix. Si on choisit ce genre d'avion, c'est certain qu'on a le transit ou une escale. Aussitôt que nous arriverons à l'aéroport, nos amis vont nous ~~prendre~~ <sup>accueillir</sup> et nous allons aller à l'appartement.

Après <sup>avoir déposé</sup> ~~mettre~~ nos bagages, on va voir la tour Eiffel, le Musée du Louvre, ~~des~~ différents cafés, ~~la~~ Notre-Dame et d'autres endroits <sup>ux</sup> spéciaux.

### Appendix 3. Sample of composition during the second semester: interview for a job

Composition II Texte 10 2016/05/25

S: 14	V: 13	L: 17	G: 13	C: 13
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

la patronne - C  
l'étudiante - F

序號	學號	姓名	系級	Note
				70

C: Bonjour, Quel poste voudriez-vous <sup>choisir</sup> s'inscrire?

F: Bonjour, J'ai envie de <sup>postuler pour l'emploi de</sup> s'inscrire le secrétaire dans le département administratif.

C: OK! D'abord, présentez-vous!

F: Bonjour, Je m'appelle Flora et je suis étudiante à l'université de Tamkang.

Maintenant, j'apprends le <sup>depuis</sup> français <sup>pour</sup> 4 années. Ensuite, je <sup>sais bien</sup> ~~peux~~ parler

l'anglais <sup>bien</sup>, J'ai déjà ~~passé~~ le TOEIC. En outre, j'ai le certificat de

Office pour arranger les documents. Par exemple, ~~EXCEL~~ <sup>de</sup> word et ~~Outlook~~.

Et, je <sup>sais</sup> ~~peux~~ parler le français. J'ai passé le DELF. Je souhaite pouvoir travailler dans votre boîte.

C: Pourquoi vous <sup>avez</sup> ~~êtes~~ quitté <sup>votre</sup> le travail ~~dernier~~ <sup>précédant</sup>?

F: Parce que je veux travailler près de chez moi.

C: Okay, Qu'est-ce que vous connaissez <sup>de</sup> notre boîte?

F: Oui, bien sûr. Le <sup>le</sup> plus inédit parfum est No.5. Le 5 ou le chiffre fétiche que gabrielle ~~channel~~ attribua à son premier parfum.

C: Bien, Pourquoi vous choisissez notre boîte?

F: Parce que j'aime ~~le~~ channel beaucoup. Après, votre mise en opération est mon désir.

**Appendix 4.** Questionnaire (anonymous, composition class, June 2016)

1. The course helped you improve your writing  
1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) No opinion 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree
2. Writing a composition and having a correction and feedback every week helped you progress  
1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) No opinion 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree
3. I prefer to write my compositions  
1) Alone  
2) Teamwork, with 1 or more classmates  
3) Sometime alone, sometime with 1 or more classmates
4. If you do teamwork, with how many persons in a group?  
1) 2 persons 2) 3 persons 3) 4 persons 4) more than 4 persons
5. Compare to writing a composition alone, do you progress more doing teamwork?  
1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) No opinion 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree
6. What is your general role in teamwork?  
1) Dominant (main writer) 2) Write a part of the text 3) Check for information online
7. Do you follow teacher's Facebook French group ("J'aime votre accent")?  
1) A lot 2) Sometimes 3) Seldom 4) Never
8. Do you refer to your previous 5 indicators scores and/or written comments in the composition exercises?  
1) A lot 2) Sometimes 3) Seldom 4) Never
9. Is it important to you that teacher gives separately 5 indicators' scores in each composition exercise? (Vocabulary, syntax, logic, grammar, content)  
1) Very important 2) Important 3) No opinion 4) Less important 5) Not important
10. Do you prefer to write compositions during the class or as an assignment after the class?  
1) during the class 2) after the class 3) no difference
11. What is your final score of Composition II at the end of previous semester?  
1)  $>90$  2)  $85 \leq x < 90$  3)  $80 \leq x < 85$  4)  $75 \leq x < 80$   
5)  $70 \leq x < 75$  6)  $65 \leq x < 70$  7)  $60 \leq x < 65$  8)  $x < 60$  9) I didn't follow the course.
12. Do you think this score is fair?  
1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) No opinion 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree  
6) I didn't follow the course.
13. Writing assignments in this course were clearly explained.

- 1) Strongly Agree   2) Agree   3) No opinion   4) Disagree   5) Strongly Disagree
14. You consider yourself a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ writer.  
1) excellent   2) good   3) average   4) poor
15. You like to write \_\_\_\_\_.  
(multiple choices)  
1) letters   2) in a diary/journal   3) stories   4) poetry   5) essays   6) nothing  
7) other: \_\_\_\_\_
16. You have trouble with \_\_\_\_\_ when you are writing. (multiple choices)  
1) organization   2) punctuation   3) thinking of things to write about   4) getting ideas out of my head and onto the paper   5) grammar   6) vocabulary   7) syntax   8) other: \_\_\_\_\_
17. The teacher tried to cover as many topics as possible (music, sport, cinema, family, travel...). What kinds of topics do you prefer? (Multiple choices)
- 1) Vous avez mangé dans un restaurant à Paris. Racontez votre experience  
2) Présentez la culture chinoise et taiwanaise à un Français  
3) Faire une description physique  
4) Faire son CV en français  
5) Se présenter  
6) Un alibi. Un crime a été commis  
7) Un accident de la circulation, aller à l'hôpital  
8) Fonder un groupe de musique et jouer en public  
9) La santé et le corps. Vous avez un ami qui est malade  
10) Votre chambre est trop bruyante. Vous voulez déménager
18. The instructor generally followed the syllabus and announced changes from it in class.  
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly   Disagree
19. My instructor consistently made useful oral and/or written comments on my papers.  
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly   Disagree
20. Writing assignments in the course were always clearly related to the objectives of the course.  
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly   Disagree
21. This course is helping me in my writing for other classes.  
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly   Disagree
22. I prefer to write \_\_\_\_\_.  
☐ on a computer  
☐ on paper  
☐ on a typewriter  
☐ with a crayon