Examining the Changes in Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in Japanese L2 Writing Over an Academic Semester

Authors : Robert Long

Abstract : The results of a one-year study on the evolution of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) in the compositions of Japanese L2 university students throughout a semester are presented in this study. One goal was to determine if any improvement in writing abilities over this academic term had occurred, while another was to examine methods of editing. Participants had 30 minutes to write each essay with an additional 10 minutes allotted for editing. As for editing, participants were divided into two groups, one of which utilized an online grammar checker, while the other half self-edited their initial manuscripts. From the three different institutions, there was a total of 159 students. Research questions focused on determining if the CAF had evolved over the previous year, identifying potential variations in editing techniques, and describing the connections between the CAF dimensions. According to the findings, there was some improvement in accuracy (fewer errors) in all three of the measures), whereas there was a marked decline in complexity and fluency. As for the second research aim relating to the interaction among the three dimensions (CAF) and of possible increases in fluency being offset by decreases in grammatical accuracy, results showed (there is a logical high correlation with clauses and word counts, and mean length of T-unit (MLT) and (coordinate phrase of T-unit (CP/T) as well as MLT and clause per T-unit (C/T); furthermore, word counts and error/100 ratio correlated highly with error-free clause totals (EFCT). Issues of syntactical complexity had a negative correlation with EFCT, indicating that more syntactical complexity relates to decreased accuracy. Concerning a difference in error correction between those who self-edited and those who used an online grammar correction tool, results indicated that the variable of errors-free clause ratios (EFCR) had the greatest difference regarding accuracy, with fewer errors noted with writers using an online grammar checker. As for possible differences between the first and second (edited) drafts regarding CAF, results indicated there were positive changes in accuracy, the most significant change seen in complexity (CP/T and MLT), while there were relatively insignificant changes in fluency. Results also indicated significant differences among the three institutions, with Fujian University of Technology having the most fluency and accuracy. These findings suggest that to raise students' awareness of their overall writing development, teachers should support them in developing more complex syntactic structures, improving their fluency, and making more effective use of online grammar checkers.

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