

An Examination of Hostility in Peer Feedback

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ピアフィードバックにおける敵意の調査

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Abstract

This study examines evidence of hostility in recent literature that has focused on peer feedback and compares this evidence with the results of a closeness questionnaire that was conducted among university-level Japanese L2 learners. These aims are pursued by analyzing previous cases of hostility in studies on peer feedback, hypothesizing the underlying causes, and comparing these with cases of hostility within four cohorts of peers. The investigations find that hostility is not a noticeable relationship when observing entire cohorts, but is noticeable within distant-hostile ratings. The study suggests that hostility is an important yet overlooked phenomenon in peer feedback that may influence the accuracy of studies that observe phenomenon related to distant relationships.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In situations that involve students directly stating their opinion, there is a possibility of negative experiences. Sato (2013) notes that peer feedback can potentially become hostile if teachers do not take measures to set up a collaborative environment. Yucel et al. (2014) noticed signs of hostility when they found that their students not only reacted negatively, but also took great offense when being reviewed by their peers. Students proceeded to reject the advice given to them and directly criticized the ability of their peers.

A hostile relationship is not a lack of familiarity. Peers who are hostile towards one another are often familiar with one other. However, they interact with each other in a negative manner, and may be intentionally impolite (Culpeper, 2011). This is opposite to the typical tendency to reduce face-threatening acts as described by Brown and Levinson (1987). Hostile behavior was found in several peer feedback studies (Sato, 2013; Topping, 2009; Yucel et al., 2014), showing that it is a factor that cannot be overlooked.

1.2. Research questions

Previous literature has suggested that hostility, which may be the source of negatively during

the peer feedback process, is present within cohorts of peers. However, these studies did not quantitatively analyze this hostility and subsequently did not distinguish between peers who were distant or hostile. The current research was designed to quantify the presence of these types of relationships via the following inquiries:

RQ1: How common is hostility within cohorts of peers in a classroom with no active relationship-enhancing activities?

RQ2: How do the frequencies of distant and hostile peers compare?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants are 97 first- and second-year students who were enrolled at a middle-ranking Japanese university. These students were from four classes: 22 from Class A, 21 from Class B, 31 from Class C, and 23 from Class D. There were a total of 26 females and six males. Participants from Class A, Class B, and Class C were first-year students in the primary education, psychology, and welfare departments. They were enrolled in a compulsory English communication course for all first-year students at the university. The participants from Class C were second-year students in the global communication department who were enrolled in a compulsory writing course for their major. These participants were classmates for nearly two semesters and there were no active relationship-enhancing activities.

2.2. Procedures

2.2.1. Informed consent

Before conducting the study, permission was obtained from the middle-ranking university. During the first class, the study was explained to students who were potential candidates for the study. The students who chose to participate and gave their consent were given the option to withdraw their consent at any time. All potential candidates for this study gave their informed consent.

2.2.2. Measurement of closeness

Immediately after all potential candidates for the study gave their informed consent, a Google Forms-based questionnaire was administered to them. This questionnaire allowed the participants to rate their closeness with their classmates by using six levels of closeness, shown in Figure 1. Closeness levels 1 to 4 included a visualization of the relationship. This scale was adapted from the Inclusion of the Other in the Self (IOS) Scale, which was originally developed by Aron et al. (1992).

The Inclusion of the Other in the Self (IOS) Scale is the most widely used scale in studies that involve that measurement of closeness between individuals (Gächter et al., 2015). This is due to the scale's ability to elicit people's sense of being interconnected with another, while being extremely easy to use, highly replicable, and psychologically meaningful from many perspectives of relationship closeness. These reasons made this scale an optimal method to measure the closeness between peers. Closeness level 1 was regarded as the highest level of closeness;

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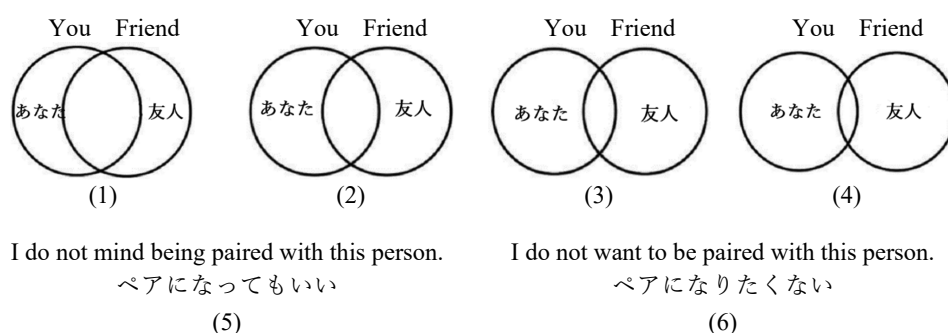


Figure 1. Six Levels of Closeness With English Translations

closeness level 5 was considered as the most distant level of closeness; closeness level 6 indicated a hostile relationship.

3. Results

3.1. Frequency of hostility

The study first collected the closeness rating given by the participants and organized them in charts as shown in the example in Table 1. In these charts, the horizontal axis represents the rater, while the vertical axis represents the ratee. The number of each closeness rating was then calculated and organized by class as shown in Table 2. The percentage of each closeness rating in each class was then calculated and presented in Table 3. The vast majority of the closeness ratings exchanged between peers was of the *distant* category, making up more than half of the total ratings collected. When considering all of the ratings given by the participants, the number of hostile ratings is a small portion, making up approximately a tenth of the total ratings.

3.2. Comparing distant and hostile peers

The study proceeded to compare the frequency and percentage of distant and hostile ratings within the two categories. The number of distant and hostile ratings is shown in Table 4. The frequency was used to calculate the percentage of each type of rating as shown in Table 5. Of the distant and hostile ratings, hostile ratings made up nearly a fifth of the total.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim throughout this study has been to determine how common hostility is within cohorts of peers in a classroom with no active relationship-enhancing activities. This study also aimed to compare the frequencies of distant and hostile relationships within these cohorts. The results suggest that while hostility does not stand out when compared to all closeness ratings as a whole, it does make up a noticeable portion of the distant-hostile group, in which hostility is often not distinguished from distance. This is significant, as hostility is not equivalent to a distance relationship. The way peers interact differs greatly between the two. At this stage it is important

Table 1. *Example of Ratings (Class A)*

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	A16	A17	A18	A19	A20	A21	A22
A1	-	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	3	2	5	4	5	5	3	3	5	3	5	3	5	4
A2	4	-	5	3	5	5	5	4	3	2	5	4	5	5	3	4	5	3	5	5	5	4
A3	5	6	-	4	6	5	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	5	4	6	3	1	4	5	1	4
A4	5	4	5	-	5	5	6	3	5	3	1	3	5	5	5	6	5	3	5	5	5	4
A5	5	5	5	4	-	5	6	1	5	3	5	6	5	5	4	3	5	3	5	5	5	4
A6	5	5	5	4	5	-	6	6	6	4	6	6	4	5	5	6	2	1	3	5	1	4
A7	2	5	5	4	5	5	-	1	1	1	5	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	5	5	5	4
A8	2	5	5	4	4	5	3	-	3	1	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	3	5	2	5	4
A9	3	4	5	4	5	5	2	3	-	2	5	3	5	5	2	4	4	3	4	4	5	3
A10	4	5	5	3	3	5	2	1	1	-	3	3	5	5	3	4	5	3	5	5	5	4
A11	4	4	5	1	5	5	5	2	3	1	-	3	5	5	3	4	5	3	5	5	5	4
A12	3	4	5	2	5	5	6	4	3	3	4	-	5	1	3	4	5	2	5	5	5	4
A13	5	6	5	4	6	4	6	6	5	5	6	4	-	5	5	6	3	1	4	5	2	4
A14	3	3	5	4	5	5	6	4	3	3	4	1	5	-	1	4	5	2	5	5	5	3
A15	3	1	2	4	3	5	6	2	1	3	5	4	5	5	-	1	5	3	5	2	5	4
A16	3	3	5	4	3	5	5	3	3	5	5	4	5	5	1	-	5	3	5	2	5	4
A17	5	5	3	4	6	3	6	6	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	6	-	1	2	5	1	2
A18	5	6	3	4	6	4	6	6	6	5	6	6	4	5	5	6	1	-	3	5	5	4
A19	5	6	5	4	6	4	6	6	4	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	1	1	-	5	5	4
A20	2	6	5	4	5	5	6	2	5	5	5	4	5	5	2	4	5	3	5	-	5	1
A21	2	5	5	4	5	5	6	3	4	5	5	4	5	2	4	6	5	3	5	3	-	1
A22	2	5	5	4	5	5	6	4	4	5	5	6	5	5	4	6	5	3	5	2	5	-

Table 2. *Frequency of Each Closeness Rating*

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Total
1 (close)	29	39	66	45	179
2	28	43	45	32	148
3	68	59	40	58	225
4	86	62	48	43	239
5 (distant)	198	164	568	300	1230
6 (hostile)	53	53	133	28	267
Total	462	420	900	506	2288

Table 3. *Percentage of Each Closeness Rating*

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Total
1 (close)	6.28	9.29	7.33	8.89	7.82
2	6.06	10.24	5	6.32	6.47
3	14.72	14.05	4.44	11.46	9.83
4	18.61	14.76	5.33	8.50	10.45
5 (distant)	42.86	39.05	63.11	59.29	53.76
6 (hostile)	11.47	12.62	14.78	5.53	11.67
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4. *Frequency of Distant and Hostile Ratings*

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Total
Distant	198	164	568	300	1230
Hostile	53	53	133	28	267
Total	251	217	701	328	1497

Table 5. *Comparing Distant and Hostile Ratings*

	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Total
Distant	78.88	75.58	81.03	91.46	82.16
Hostile	21.12	24.42	18.97	8.54	17.84
Total	100	100	100	100	100

to highlight that this study did not focus on mutual relationships, in terms of peers seeing their relationship with each other as the same. This is particularly difficult to identify with relationships like hostility, as participants may not want to indicate such a negative opinion, even if the information is not made public. As the presence of face-threatening acts that occur within peer feedback may potentially transform distant relationships into hostile ones, future studies may additionally gauge the closeness between peers after peer feedback has been conducted in order to observe this change.

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