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How Oral, Peer, and Teacher-Based Reflection Strengthen JFL Students' Sakubun Writing

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Abstract

Writing is an essential component of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) learning, yet many learners experience difficulties due to the complexity of Japanese writing systems and rhetorical conventions in sakubun. This study examines reflective writing as a pedagogical approach to support university students' writing development and metacognitive awareness in JFL context. The research aims to investigate how three forms of reflection, namely oral reflection through classroom discussions, collaborative reflection through peer review and peer dialogue, and teacher-based reflection through structured feedback and reflective portfolios, support students' writing development. This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine the implementation of reflective writing in JFL instruction. Data were collected from 38 undergraduate JFL learners via classroom observations, written portfolios, and reflective notes. The findings indicate that reflective practices contributed to improvements in students' sakubun writing performance and enhanced their awareness of the writing process. Students showed clearer sentence structures, more developed ideas, and greater grammatical accuracy in their revised texts. Reflective discussions and peer feedback also encouraged collaborative problem-solving during the revision process. These findings suggest that reflective writing can support the development of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning in JFL writing classrooms. The study also offers pedagogical insights for integrating reflection-oriented activities into sakubun instruction. Overall, the study concludes that multimodal reflective practices can function as an effective pedagogical strategy for supporting writing development in JFL context. In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the study contributes to SDGs 4 (Quality Education) by promoting reflective and student-centred learning practices, and to SDGs 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by supporting more inclusive learning opportunities through collaborative and participatory classroom interaction.

Keywords: Japanese as a foreign language, reflective writing, sakubun, writing performance

SDGs: Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

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INTRODUCTION

The development of writing skills in a second or foreign language has long been considered one of the most demanding areas of language learning (Alharbi, 2023). Writing is widely recognized as a central component of second language (L2) learning because it requires learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, rhetorical awareness, and communicative competence. In foreign language education, writing activities not only support language development (Gemilang & Kristanto, 2021) but also encourage learners to organize

ideas, evaluate their own understanding, and engage in deeper cognitive processing (Koyama, 2022). For learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL), the challenge is even more pronounced due to the complex writing system, the need to master kanji characters, and the culturally specific conventions of composition.

Unlike oral communication, which often prioritizes fluency and interaction, writing requires precision, organization, and awareness of audience expectations. Learners must simultaneously manage linguistic accuracy, coherence, and appropriate rhetorical style. This combination which is said by Koyama (2022) and Oi (2023) often leads to anxiety and difficulties among JFL students when producing written texts such as *sakubun* (Japanese essays). In recent years, the emphasis in language education has shifted from purely product-oriented instruction to approaches that consider the writing process and learners' reflective engagement with their own learning (Sato, 2013).

Process-oriented pedagogy highlights stages such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing, while reflection provides learners with the opportunity to critically analyze these stages and identify areas for improvement (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022). Reflection has been defined as "a deliberate attempt to think about one's experiences in order to learn from them" (Mazzei & Aibo, 2022) and later conceptualized as an essential element of professional and academic development (Evans, 2024). Within the context of language learning, reflection not only promotes metacognitive awareness but also helps students take greater responsibility for their progress. Reflective writing, specifically, is an instructional practice in which learners articulate their thoughts, evaluate challenges, and propose strategies for overcoming difficulties.

Research in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts has demonstrated the value of reflective writing in enhancing linguistic competence, critical thinking, and learner autonomy (Amini & Kruger, 2022; Sener & Mede, 2023; Yanyan & Saadat, 2024). For instance, reflective journals have been used as tools to help students monitor their development, while peer-review reflections have been shown to deepen understanding of writing processes and promote collaborative learning (Sudirman, Gemilang & Kristanto, 2021; Ramadhanti & Yanda, 2024). Despite such evidence, the integration of reflective writing in JFL pedagogy remains underexplored, and empirical research on its effectiveness is scarce. Previous studies in JFL pedagogy have therefore emphasized the development of grammatical competence, kanji literacy, and sentence-level accuracy. While these aspects are essential, they often place less attention on learners' reflective engagement with the writing process itself. As a result, writing instruction may become product-oriented, focusing primarily on correctness rather than on learners' awareness of how they construct and revise texts.

Japanese writing (*sakubun*) presents unique pedagogical challenges distinct from those in English writing instruction. Shen, Pank, Li and Chen (2024) said that learners must navigate differences in rhetorical structures, such as the Japanese tendency toward inductive organization, as well as cultural expectations for politeness and indirectness in expression. Furthermore, the orthographic system requires mastery of hiragana, katakana, and kanji, with the latter often posing significant hurdles for learners outside Japan (Nishijima & Liu, 2021). These challenges suggest that JFL students may particularly benefit from reflective practices, as reflection encourages them to identify their difficulties, share strategies with peers, and engage more actively with feedback from instructors (Zhang & Hyland, 2023). Reflection has long been recognized as an important component of effective learning because it encourages learners to examine their experiences and evaluate their learning processes.

In educational theory, reflection refers to a process in which learners critically analyze their actions and learning experiences in order to improve future performance (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022). In the context of second language writing, reflective practices have been increasingly integrated into writing pedagogy to promote learners' metacognitive awareness of planning, revising, and evaluating their texts. In the broader field of L2 writing research, reflective learning has been recognized as an important pedagogical approach that can enhance learners' metacognitive awareness and writing development (Chung, Chen & Olson, 2021). Scholars such as Ken Hyland (2019) highlight the importance of feedback, revision, and learner engagement in shaping effective writing pedagogy. Reflection allows learners to examine their own writing strategies, identify linguistic difficulties, and develop greater awareness of audience and purpose. Through reflective practices, students can move beyond surface-level corrections and develop deeper understanding of their writing processes.

Writing scholars such as Hyland (2019) and Matsuda argue that writing development depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on learners' awareness of their writing processes and their engagement with feedback. Reflective writing refers to the practice of articulating thoughts about one's own learning experiences, writing strategies, and challenges encountered during the writing process (Almutawa & Alfahid,

2024; Fajardo Dack, 2023). Through reflective writing, learners can identify linguistic or rhetorical difficulties and evaluate the effectiveness of their writing strategies, which in turn supports the development of metacognitive awareness in writing (Lane & Roberts, 2022). While reflection has been studied in broader L2 writing research, the majority of studies have focused on English contexts.

Specifically, Chung, Chen, & Olson (2021) and Zarestsky, Bigler, Brazile, Lopes & Bangerth (2022) found that reflective tasks improved students' self-regulation in writing, and Lee (2017). Link, Mehzard & Rahimi (2022), and Sun & Wang (2025) highlighted the role of teacher feedback combined with student reflection in improving revision quality. Although reflective writing has been widely examined in EFL and ESL contexts, research focusing on Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) writing remains limited, particularly regarding how multimodal reflective practices can support learners who face language-specific challenges such as kanji acquisition and Japanese rhetorical conventions. Existing research tends to study only one form of reflection- such as journals (Arthurson, 2021; Savicki & Price, 2021; Wassif, 2024), peer review (Watling, Ginsburg & Lingard, 2021; Vayrynen, Lutovac & Kaasila, 2023; Palmer, 2025), or instructor feedback (Hyland, 2019), in isolation, offering limited data on how several modes of reflection may combine to boost writing growth in JFL settings. Moreover, few empirical research has studied classroom-embedded interventions that systematically combine oral, collaborative, and teacher-based comments across a full semester.

However, writing pedagogy increasingly recognizes that reflection can occur through various modes of interaction, including oral discussion, peer collaboration, and teacher-guided feedback. These forms of reflection may function differently but can complement one another in supporting learners' metacognitive development and writing improvement. Previous studies in second language writing have often focused on individual reflective journals, feedback, or teacher feedback as separate instructional practices.

Comparatively less attention has been given to how these reflective modes interact within the same pedagogical framework, particularly in Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) *sakubun* instruction. As a result, the ways in which oral reflection, collaborative reflection, and teacher-guided reflection collectively contribute to students' writing development remain insufficiently understood. This study therefore examines how reflective pedagogical practices are implemented in JFL writing classrooms and explores how different forms of reflection support students' development in *sakubun* writing. By focusing on oral reflection, peer reflection, and teacher-based feedback, the study seeks to provide insights into more reflective-oriented approaches to JFL writing instruction.

This study is grounded in a socio-cognitive perspective on writing, which views writing as a process shaped by the interaction between individual cognitive processes and social mediation (Mazzei & Aibo, 2022). Drawing on Barry J. Zimmerman's concept of self-regulated learning, writing development is understood as a cyclical process involving planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's performance. Reflective practices play a central role in this cycle by enabling learners to regulate their writing strategies and assess their progress (Latifi, Noroozi & Talaei, 2021; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013). In addition, the study is informed by Lev Vygotsky's notion of social mediation, which emphasizes the importance of interaction, feedback, and collaborative dialogue in learning.

METHOD

The study involved 38 undergraduate students of third year of a Japanese language education program enrolled in two Japanese writing classes at an Indonesian university. They were taking a *sakubun* (Japanese writing) course during the semester in which the study was conducted. The course focused on developing students' ability to express ideas in written Japanese through structured writing tasks and revision activities. The students had previously completed several foundational Japanese language courses, including grammar, reading, and basic writing. At the time of the study, most participants demonstrated intermediate-level proficiency in Japanese writing. Although students were able to produce short essays, many still encountered challenges related to sentence structure, grammatical accuracy, and the organization of ideas in Japanese. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed about the purpose of the research before the data collection process began. To ensure ethical research practices, all data were anonymized and used solely for research purposes. The class context provided an appropriate setting for examining reflective writing practices because students regularly engaged in drafting, revising, and discussing their writing tasks. This instructional environment allowed the integration of reflective activities such as classroom discussions, peer feedback sessions, and portfolio reflection throughout the writing process.

A mixed-methods classroom-based design was used to examine the impact of multimodal reflective practices on JFL *sakubun* writing. Quantitative data measured changes in writing performance across the semester, while qualitative data explored students' reflective processes through written, oral, and collaborative artifacts. This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed in parallel and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' reflective learning experiences. To illustrate the research design an integration of data collection and analysis procedures, Figure 1 presents the mixed-methods framework employed in this study.

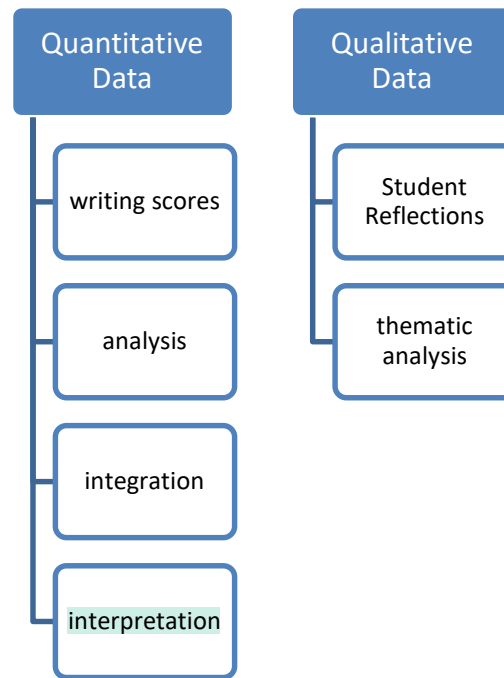


Figure 1. Mixed-Methods Research Design

As shown in Figure 1, the study combined quantitative and qualitative data to examine student' writing development and reflective engagement. The quantitative phase focused on changes in writing scores, while the qualitative phase explored students' reflective experiences through portfolios, peer feedback, and classroom discussions. Writing performance was assessed through four *sakubun* tasks scored using a 5-point analytic rubric covering content, organization, language use, and mechanics. Additional data included reflective notes, peer review records, oral reflection transcripts, and teacher feedback-response documents, all functioning as indicators of metacognitive engagement and learner autonomy. The writing data were evaluated by two independent raters with experience in teaching Japanese as a foreign language. Both raters were familiar with the analytic rubric used in this study and received prior calibration to ensure consistent interpretation of the scoring criteria.

To minimize bias, the scoring process was conducted anonymously, and student identities were not disclosed during evaluation. To ensure the reliability of the qualitative coding process, two independent raters analyzed the reflective data using the same coding framework. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa to assess the consistency between the two raters. The results indicated a high level of agreement ($\kappa = 0.78$), suggesting that the scoring was reliable and consistent across raters. For the qualitative analysis, students' writing improvements were also examined using normalized gain (n-gain) scores to determine the magnitude of learning progress.

The intervention spanned 14 weeks and systematically integrated three modes of reflection: 1) Oral reflection: Semi-structured class discussions conducted every 2–3 weeks; 2) Collaborative reflection: Peer review and peer dialogue held three times during the semester; 3) Teacher-based reflection: Written/ oral feedback followed by students' reflective responses and compilation of an end-of-semester reflective portfolio. All reflective artifacts and *sakubun* drafts were collected for analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Prior to inferential analysis, the normality of the score distribution was examined using the Shapiro Wilk test. Since the data met the normality assumption, a paired-sample *t*-test was conducted to compare students' pre- and post-semester writing scores. In addition, effect

size (Cohen's d) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the observed changes in students' writing performance.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis that involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, and theme refinement. Data were triangulated across multiple sources, including reflective notes, peer feedback, oral classroom discussions, and writing portfolios, to enhance the credibility of the findings. The integration of quantitative and qualitative results enabled a more comprehensive interpretation of students' writing development and reflective engagement. The analytic rubric used to evaluate students' writing was adapted from established L2 writing assessment frameworks commonly used in foreign language writing research. The rubric included four criteria: content development, organization, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary use. To ensure content validity, the rubric was reviewed by two experts in Japanese language education. Minor revisions were made based on their feedback before the rubric was used in the study. To illustrate the qualitative coding process, Table 1 presents an example of how students' reflective data were analyzed and categorized into codes and themes.

Table 1. Example of Coding

Data Excerpt	Initial Code	Theme
"I realized my grammar mistakes after discussing with my friends."	Peer discussion awareness	Peer reflection
"Teacher comments helped me understand how to improve my sentences."	Teacher feedback awareness	Teacher-based reflection
"Reflecting on my writing made me more careful in choosing words."	Self-awareness	Metacognitive reflection

As shown in Table 1, students' reflective statements were systematically coded to identify recurring patterns in their writing experiences. The coding process involved grouping similar responses into categories such as awareness of writing strategies, difficulties encountered during revision, and responses to feedback. These categories were then further developed into broader themes that reflect students' engagement in reflective learning. The table demonstrates how raw qualitative data were transformed into meaningful analytical units, supporting the thematic findings presented in this study.

To ensure transparency and trustworthiness in qualitative analysis, an audit trail was maintained throughout the research process. This included documentation of coding decisions, theme development, data categorization, and analytical memos. All stages of analysis were systematically recorded to allow verification of how interpretations were derived from the data. The researcher also served as the course instructor during the implementation of the study. This dual role may introduce potential bias in data interpretation and classroom interaction. To minimize this risk, multiple data sources were used, and the analysis process involved systematic procedures, including the use of an analytic rubric, inter-rater scoring, and triangulation across data sources. These measures were intended to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Results (Score improvement)

Analysis of students' writing scores from the beginning and end of the semester showed notable improvements across all rubric dimensions. These improvements were observed in key aspects of writing, including content development, organization, language use, and mechanics. The overall pattern indicates that students demonstrated more balanced progress across both higher-order and lower-order writing skills. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics summarizing these changes.

Table 2. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Semester Writing Scores (N = 38)

Dimension	Pre-test Mean % (SD)	Post-test Mean % (SD)	N-gain	$t(37)$	p
Content	56 (12)	72 (10)	0.36	6.42	<.001
Organization	54 (14)	70 (12)	0.35	6.11	<.001
Language use	50 (12)	66 (12)	0.32	7.02	<.001
Mechanics	58 (10)	74 (10)	0.38	6.77	<.001
Overall	54 (12)	70 (12)	0.35	6.83	<.001

Note: Scores were based on a 5-point analytic rubric.

Table 2 shows consistent and statistically significant improvement across all dimensions of students' *sakubun* writing. Scores for content, organization, language use, mechanics, and overall performance increased substantially from pre-test to post-test ($p < .001$). Paired-sample *t*-test were conducted to compare pre- and post-semester writing scores. Normality assumptions were assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and were satisfied prior to analysis ($P > .05$). These results indicate that the multimodal reflective practices implemented throughout the semester contributed to balanced gains in both higher-order skills, such as idea development and text organization, and lower-order skills, including linguistic accuracy and mechanics.

The improvements suggest that reflective activities such as oral discussions, peer review, and teacher feedback, supported students' metacognitive awareness and facilitated continuous refinement of their writing. The improvements were further clarified through normalized gain (N-gain) analysis, which indicated moderate gains across all writing dimensions. The results indicate a consistent pattern of improvement across all writing dimensions, suggesting that students benefited from reflective activities in multiple aspects of *sakubun* writing. Improvements were observed not only in linguistic accuracy but also in higher-order writing skills such as idea development and organization, reflecting more balanced writing development throughout the semester.

Although the mean gain appears consistent across dimensions, this pattern may reflect the use of an analytic rubric with a limited scoring scale, where gradual improvements across multiple criteria tend to produce relatively similar numerical changes. Rather than indicating uniform scoring bias, the findings suggest that students experienced balanced development in several aspects of *sakubun* writing, including organization, language use, and mechanics. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that reflective writing and portfolio-based learning often facilitate simultaneous improvement across multiple writing dimensions through continuous revision and metacognitive engagement (Farahian, 2021; Lam, 2018; Gemilang & Kristanto, 2021).

The findings also support earlier research emphasizing the importance of reflection and feedback in second language writing development. For instance, Zhang and Hyland (2023) found that reflective engagement with peer feedback encouraged deeper revision practices among L2 writers, while Tahmasbi (2022) reported that reflective journal writing contributed to learners' grammatical development and reflective thinking. Similarly, the present study indicates that oral discussion, peer interaction, and teacher-guided reflection collectively supported students' awareness of writing problems and revision strategies. These patterns align with studies highlighting how collaborative reflection and feedback processes can strengthen learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness in language learning contexts (Şener & Mede, 2023; Yu & Lee, 2016).

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, several procedures were employed, including the use of an analytic rubric, inter-rater scoring, and triangulation across multiple qualitative data sources such as reflective notes, peer discussions, and writing portfolios. These strategies are widely recommended in reflective and mixed-methods research to enhance research credibility and analytical rigor (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Savicki & Price, 2021).

The quantitative analysis examined the development of students' *sakubun* writing performance across the implementation of reflective practices. Writing assignments were evaluated using an analytic rubric that assessed four components: content development, organization, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary use. The results indicate a noticeable improvement in students' overall writing scores after the implementation of reflective learning activities. The average writing score increased from 72.4 in the initial assignment to 84.1 in the final assignment, suggesting that the integration of reflective practices contributed positively to students' writing development. In particular, improvements were observed in the areas of grammatical accuracy and content elaboration. Students demonstrated greater control of verb forms, sentence structure, and the use of descriptive expressions. These improvements suggest that reflective activities may have helped students become more aware of linguistic errors and strategies for improving their writing, which is consistent with previous studies highlighting the role of reflective writing in enhancing metacognitive awareness and writing performance (Chung et al., 2021; Farahian, 2021; Yeh et al., 2023).

The findings of this study support previous research emphasizing the role of reflection in second language writing development. Reflective activities enable learners to examine their writing processes, identify weaknesses in their texts, and develop strategies for improvement (Gemilang & Kristanto, 2021; Zarestky et al., 2022). In particular, peer reflection allows learners to exchange perspectives, negotiate meaning, and become more aware of audience expectations in writing tasks, supporting earlier findings on the pedagogical value of peer feedback and collaborative writing in L2 contexts (Banister, 2023; Liu & Wu, 2019; Yu & Lee, 2016). Teacher feedback also functions as an important trigger for reflective learning. Rather than serving only

as corrective input, feedback can guide learners to reconsider their linguistic choices, organizational structures, and ideas. This finding aligns with Lee (2017) and Zhang and Hyland (2023), who emphasize that feedback becomes more effective when learners actively engage in reflective revision practices.

Portfolio-based reflection further supports writing development by allowing students to review multiple drafts and observe their progress over time. By examining their own revisions and reflective comments, learners can identify patterns in their writing strengths and weaknesses, which contributes to greater metacognitive awareness. Similar findings have been reported by Lam (2018) and Tsao (2025), who argue that reflective portfolios encourage students to monitor their learning development and strengthen learner autonomy through continuous self-evaluation.

Thematic analysis of students' reflective notes, peer review records, and oral discussions revealed three overarching themes: (1) heightened awareness of challenges, (2) strategy development through collaboration, and (3) growth in learner autonomy. In the Heightened Awareness of Writing Challenges, students consistently reported that reflective discussions helped them identify specific difficulties in writing, such as kanji recall, sentence organization, and expressing ideas in culturally appropriate ways. Oral reflection sessions provided a safe space to acknowledge these challenges. For example, one student noted, *"I realized that my biggest problem is connecting sentences smoothly. Hearing others share similar struggles made me feel less alone."*

In the Strategy Development through Collaboration, collaborative reflection, especially peer review, played a central role in strategy development. Students reported that reviewing peers' work helped them notice problems in their own writing. Reflective notes following peer review showed increased awareness of cohesion, grammar accuracy, and stylistic appropriateness. Small-group discussions also encouraged students to exchange concrete strategies, such as mnemonic techniques for kanji or templates for organizing *sakubun*.

In the Growth in Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulation, Teacher-based reflection activities, particularly feedback responses and portfolio writing, promoted learner autonomy. Students demonstrated increased responsibility for their learning by articulating action plans in their reflective responses. Portfolios further enabled them to trace their progress and recognize long-term improvement. One portfolio entry stated, *"Looking at my first and last essay, I can see my sentences are longer, my kanji are more accurate, and I know how to revise without waiting for the teacher."*

The qualitative analysis focused on students' reflections collected through reflection sheets and classroom discussions. Thematic analysis identified three major themes: metacognitive awareness, peer-supported learning, and teacher-guided revision. The first theme, metacognitive awareness, reflects students' increasing ability to evaluate their own writing processes. Many students reported becoming more conscious of grammatical mistakes and sentence structures after engaging in reflection activities. One student commented: *"When I reread my writing and discussed it with my classmates, I realized that my sentences were too simple and sometimes grammatically incorrect."*

The second theme, peer-supported learning, highlights the role of peer interaction in helping students identify weaknesses in their writing. Several students reported that peer feedback supported their writing development. For example, one student noted, *"I realized my sentence patterns were repetitive after reading my friend's feedback."* Another student commented, *"Discussing my writing with peers helped me see alternative ways to express my ideas."* Through peer discussions, students exchanged ideas and suggestions for improving vocabulary, sentence structure, and organization. Another student also explained: *"After hearing my friend's suggestion, I tried to add more details to my paragraph so that the story became clearer."*

The third theme, teacher-guided revision, emphasizes the importance of teacher feedback in helping students refine their writing. Students reported that teacher comments helped them better understand grammatical corrections and appropriate expressions in Japanese writing. One participant noted: *"Teacher feedback helped me understand why my sentence was incorrect and how I should revise it."*

However, not all students experienced reflection as immediately beneficial. One student expressed difficulty in engaging with peer feedback, stating, *"Sometimes I was confused by my friends' comments and did not know which suggestions to follow."* This suggests that reflective practices may require guidance to be fully effective. These findings indicate that while reflection facilitated learning, students also experienced challenges in interpreting feedback and applying it to their revisions. This tension highlights the complexity of developing metacognitive awareness in writing. Over time, students' reflections became more specific and analytical. Early reflections tended to focus on surface-level issues, such as vocabulary or grammar, whereas later reflections demonstrated greater awareness of organization and idea development. This progression suggests a shift from surface-level to deeper reflective engagement over the course of the semester.

To further illustrate how reflective practices influenced students' writing development, excerpts from students' drafts and revised texts were examined. The following example demonstrates how reflection and feedback contributed to improvements in writing quality.

Initial Draft: "Watashi wa senshū tomodachi to Kyoto ni ikimasu. Kyoto wa totemo kirei desu. Watashi tanoshii desu."

Revised Version: "Watashi wa senshū tomodachi to issho ni Kyoto ni ikimashita. Kyoto wa rekishi ga takusan aru totemo utsukushii machi desu. Ryokō wa totemo tanoshikatta desu."

The revised version shows improvements in verb tense accuracy, sentence structure, and descriptive detail following the implementation of reflective activities. These changes were influenced by peer discussion and teacher feedback, as indicated in the student's reflection:

"After discussing my paragraph with my classmates, I realized that my sentences were too short and the verb tense was wrong."

This example demonstrates how reflective activities supported students in identifying linguistic issues and improving their writing. To integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings, Table 3 presents a triangulation of results, illustrating how statistical improvements in writing performance correspond with students' reflective experiences and observed learning processes.

Table 3. Triangulation of Findings

Data Sources	Key Findings	Evidence
Writing scores	Improvement in writing performance	Average score increased from 72.4 to 84.1
Student reflections	Increased metacognitive awareness	Students reported recognizing grammatical errors and improving sentence structure
Peer discussions	Collaborative learning supported revisions	Students exchanged suggestions about vocabulary and content
Teacher feedback	Guided revision process	Teacher comments helped clarify grammatical errors

As shown in Table 3, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that students' writing development was closely associated with increased reflective engagement throughout the learning process. The findings suggest that reflective activities not only supported improvements in linguistic accuracy and text organization but also encouraged students to become more aware of their writing strategies and revision practices. In addition, collaborative interaction and teacher-guided feedback appeared to play complementary roles in facilitating students' metacognitive development and sustained participation in the revision process.

In addition to statistical significance, the magnitude of the observed changes was examined using effect size (Cohen's *d*), which indicated large effects across all writing dimensions. This suggests that the improvements were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful in the context of students' *sakubun* development. Confidence intervals were also considered to provide a more robust interpretation of the results, indicating consistent improvement patterns across participants. To further illustrate these changes, a line graph was used to visualize the progression of students' pre- and post-semester writing scores across all dimensions. The visual trend demonstrates a consistent upward pattern, supporting the quantitative findings.

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating reflective practices into Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) writing instruction can significantly enhance students' writing performance while simultaneously fostering metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy. The quantitative results revealed statistically significant improvements in content, organization, language use, and mechanics of *sakubun*, while the qualitative analysis illuminated how students developed reflective habits that supported their writing development. Taken together, these results confirm the pedagogical potential of reflection as both a cognitive and social process in JFL writing classrooms. One of the most prominent outcomes of this study was the students' heightened awareness of the challenges they faced in writing. This aligns with Rahimi & Fathi (2022) and Banihashem, Kerman, Noroozi, Moon & Drachsler (2024). foundational ideas that reflection begins with the recognition of problematic experiences. Students in this study reported that oral reflections provided a platform for acknowledging difficulties such as kanji recall and sentence organization. These findings support previous research in EFL contexts suggesting that reflection helps learners identify gaps in their competence and clarify learning goals (Farrell, 2016; Chung, Chen, & Olson (2021); and Zarestsky, Bigler, Brazile, Lopes & Bangerth (2022)) The evidence from JFL learners adds to the literature by showing that such awareness is equally critical in languages with complex orthographic and rhetorical systems.

Collaborative practices, particularly peer review and group discussions, were instrumental in enabling students to generate and share strategies. Peer review served not only as a mechanism for receiving feedback but also as a form of metacognitive training, as students learned to evaluate writing against explicit criteria. This finding resonates with meta-analytic evidence showing that peer feedback improves writing quality when accompanied by reflective engagement (Yu & Lee, 2016; Liu & Wu, 2019). In the present study, the impact of collaboration was especially evident in students' reflective notes, where they documented newly acquired strategies such as revising sentence flow, enhancing cohesion, and applying mnemonic techniques for kanji. These results underscore the importance of designing peer review sessions as reflective, dialogic events rather than one-way exchanges of corrections. The role of teacher feedback was strengthened by requiring students to engage in reflective responses and portfolios. This process shifted feedback from a unidirectional corrective mechanism to a dialogic cycle in which students internalized feedback and transformed it into action plans. Portfolios further reinforced autonomy by allowing students to track their progress longitudinally. These outcomes are consistent with research indicating that reflective portfolios enhance self-regulated learning and long-term retention of skills (Lee, 2017; Lam, 2018). Importantly, the present study demonstrates that reflective portfolios are applicable and effective in JFL writing, where gradual mastery of orthography and rhetorical norms demands sustained effort.

A key contribution of this study lies in its integration of oral, collaborative, and teacher-based reflections into a coherent pedagogical framework. While prior research has often examined reflective journals, peer feedback, or portfolios as separate instructional practices, this study highlights the complementary benefits of combining multiple reflective modes within the same learning environment. Previous studies have shown that reflective journals can enhance metacognitive awareness and writing self-monitoring (Farahian, 2021; Gemilang & Kristanto, 2021), while peer feedback and collaborative reflection encourage learners to negotiate meaning and develop revision strategies through interaction (Latifi et al., 2021; Yu & Lee, 2016). In addition, teacher feedback has been widely recognized as an important element in supporting reflective revision and writing improvement (Lee, 2017; Zhang & Hyland, 2023).

The findings of the present study suggest that these reflective modes may function most effectively when implemented in an integrated and mutually supportive manner. Oral discussions appeared to support immediate sense-making and problem clarification during classroom interaction, whereas peer review facilitated collaborative strategy-building and increased awareness of audience expectations. Teacher feedback combined with reflective portfolios further encouraged sustained revision practices and long-term awareness of writing development. Similar findings were reported by Lam (2018) and Tsao (2025), who argue that portfolio-based reflection supports learner autonomy by allowing students to monitor their progress across multiple drafts. Together, the reflective practices implemented in this study created a continuous cycle of reflection connecting immediate classroom experiences with longer-term writing development.

The findings also suggest several pedagogical implications for JFL writing instruction. Reflection should be embedded systematically as an integral component of writing pedagogy rather than treated as an optional or supplementary activity. Structured reflective activities encourage students to engage more actively with their writing processes and support continuous improvement in both linguistic and organizational aspects of writing. In addition, balancing individual and collaborative reflection appears particularly important. While personal reflective notes help learners identify their own challenges and strategies, peer interaction provides opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and perspective-sharing, which are considered essential elements in socially mediated learning processes (Sato, 2013; Şener & Mede, 2023).

Furthermore, reflective portfolios can function as effective developmental tools by documenting multiple drafts, revisions, and reflective comments over time. This process allows learners to observe their own progress and develop a longer-term perspective on writing development. The findings also indicate that teacher feedback becomes more meaningful when combined with reflective responses and revision activities, as students are encouraged to actively interpret and apply feedback rather than passively receiving corrections. This pattern aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of dialogic feedback and reflective engagement in supporting deeper revision practices and learner autonomy (Lee, 2017; Zhang et al., 2025).

Although the findings are encouraging, this study has certain limitations. First, the sample size was limited to 38 students at a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of results. Second, while the mixed-methods design provided a rich dataset, the study relied primarily on classroom-based measures; additional external proficiency tests could strengthen the evidence of writing gains. Finally, the study spanned only one semester; longitudinal studies across multiple academic years are needed to examine the sustainability of reflective practices in JFL writing. Future research could explore the role of digital platforms (e.g., e-portfolios,

online peer review tools) in facilitating reflective practices in JFL contexts. Comparative studies between JFL and EFL learners may also reveal how language-specific challenges mediate the benefits of reflection.

The findings of this study also have implications for broader educational development goals, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities. By integrating practices into JFL writing instruction, this study highlights how pedagogical approaches can support students' active engagement, metacognitive awareness, and continuous learning. These aspects are essential for fostering learner autonomy and improving the quality of higher education. While the study is situated in a specific instructional context, the emphasis on reflective and student-centered learning aligns with global efforts to promote effective and sustainable educational practices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of multimodal reflective practices—oral reflection, peer collaboration, and teacher-guided feedback, significantly enhances Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) learners' sakubun performance, metacognitive engagement, and learner autonomy. By enabling students to identify challenges, articulate strategies, and engage in continuous self-regulated improvement, reflective writing proves to be an effective pedagogical tool that strengthens both linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills. These findings emphasize the value of embedding structured reflection as a core component of JFL writing instruction and highlight its broader contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), particularly in fostering inclusive, student-centered, and skill-oriented learning environments. The study presents practical implications for establishing sustainable, reflection-oriented curricula in language programs and underlines the relevance of reflective pedagogy in fostering equitable and high-quality educational results. Future research may further extend these findings by exploring how multimodal reflective practices can be adapted across different proficiency levels, learning contexts, and technological platforms to deepen their impact on writing development and learner autonomy.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Amelya Septiana: Conceptualization, Resources, dan Writing – Original Draft; **Oktari Hendayanti:** Investigation, dan Writing – Review & Editing. **Ahmad Ardillah Rahman:** Methodology, dan Validation. All authors have read and approved the final version of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the authors upon reasonable request, subject to ethical approval and institutional regulations.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare no known financial conflicts of interest or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript.

DECLARATION OF ETHICS

The authors declare that the research and writing of this manuscript adhere to ethical standards of research and publication, in accordance with scientific principles, and are free from plagiarism.

DECLARATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) and other AI-assisted tools were used prudently, not excessively, during the research and preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, ChatGPT was used for brainstorm ideas and refine the text. All AI-generated material was reviewed and edited for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with ethical and scholarly standards. The authors accept full responsibility for the final content of the manuscript.

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