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Teaching Japanese L2 Writing Inside and Outside Japan: Implications for Global Approaches in L2 Writing

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Introduction and Overview

This chapter explores second language (L2) writing instruction of the Japanese language in higher education both inside and outside Japan. Japanese continues to be one of the most commonly taught languages in the world, drawing hundreds of thousands of international students into Japanese universities. However, there is a significant gap in L2 writing research regarding the teaching of Japanese writing in L2 learning contexts. Most studies of teaching Japanese writing focus on simple kanji recognition levels (i.e. *jōyō kanji*: a list of 2136 regular-use characters issued in 2010 by the Japanese education ministry). At levels of writing that explore rhetorical approaches and writer identity, the focus has been on the problems Japanese students face when learning English (e.g. Kubota, 1998, 1999; McKinley, 2006) or on the controversial notion of Japanese-to-English contrastive rhetoric (Hinds, 1983; Kaplan, 1966; Kubota, 1998; McKinley, 2013). Writing at this level can and has been taken into consideration as regards English speakers learning Japanese (e.g. Kubota, 1997), but it is a context that is severely under-researched by comparison, with very few exceptions such as Chikamatsu's (2003) study of the impact of computer use on learning Japanese L2 (JSL) writing, and some studies on assessing JSL writing published in Japanese and reported by Kondo-Brown (2016). Thus, the study outlined in this chapter aims to explore the L2 writing instruction of Japanese in order to explore issues surrounding rhetorical approaches. The study involved four instructors of the Japanese language serving as case studies, two teaching in Japan and two teaching in an English-speaking country. Data were collected through analysis of program and course descriptions as well as interviews.

This study was built on an earlier study (McKinley, 2014) in which I explored the impact of Western criticisms of Japanese rhetorical approaches by first language (L1) Japanese writers of English on learners of JSL writing, based on the cultural dichotomization of West versus East, raised by Kubota (1999). The earlier study concluded that university instructors of Japanese should address the Western criticisms (such as 'problematic' inductive writing, or 'indirect' writing) when clarifying the specific genres and uses of particular rhetorical approaches in written Japanese, and put more emphasis on the differences between written and spoken Japanese. While this outcome was pragmatic, it raised further questions about the content within JSL writing course curricula, in terms of how they align with L2 writing theory. It further highlighted a need for a comparative investigation of university-level courses inside and outside Japan. Given the different writing needs between the two contexts, such a study could also

evaluate the arguments surrounding Japanese–English contrastive rhetoric. Therefore, the central research question for the current study is:

- What are JSL writing courses in universities inside and outside Japan comprised of?

In addition to this research question, the study also builds on the results of my 2014 study in responding to the question:

- What are the approaches taught in advanced Japanese language writing classes?

In the analysis of the data, I investigate whether the observed approaches concur with current L2 theory on contrastive and intercultural rhetoric, which I have argued previously to be unrepresentative of academic writing in Japanese (McKinley, 2014). The data are also used to discuss whether current L2 writing research of Japanese–English contrastive rhetoric is biased due to being underpinned by research that explores the unidirectional process of JSL learners learning English, as opposed to English L2 learners learning Japanese.

The chapter includes a discussion of the implications of these findings for other foreign language writing besides Japanese. The discussion also explains which ideas are only suitable for JSL writing instruction (versus other foreign languages) and why. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further studies, which could improve our understanding of rhetorical approaches in L2 writing in languages other than English.

Overview of L2 Writing Research on the Teaching of Japanese L2 Writing

Dwarfed by the abundant research on English L2 writing, research on the teaching of Japanese writing in L2 learning contexts has been neglected. This section examines the influence of the existing literature on the teaching of JSL writing. Taking into consideration the lack of available literature on teaching JSL writing, this section includes an analysis of the relevant literature regarding the binary logic problem that positions writing in Japanese as ‘Eastern’ as contrasting writing in English as ‘Western’.

Applied linguistics research on argumentation in East Asian culture including Japanese has traditionally been held in polar opposition to Western culture, particularly in the English language (see McKinley, 2005, 2013, 2017). While the East is viewed as homogeneous, traditional and group oriented, the West instead emphasizes individualism and critical thinking (Kubota, 1999). This cultural dichotomization is manifested in studies in contrastive rhetoric. These studies characterize Japanese written rhetoric as ‘indirect, implicit, and inductive’, while English written rhetoric is described as ‘direct and deductive’ (Kubota, 1999: 12). This kind of cultural determinism has been reflected in descriptions of Japanese language education. Kubota (1999: 12) points to Carson’s (1992) exploratory work to critique such ideas as: ‘teaching methods in a Japanese language class in Japan emphasize traditional techniques such as memorization, repetition, and drilling rather than creativity and innovation’.

From the initial development of contrastive rhetoric studies with Kaplan (1966), and continuing with Hinds (e.g. 1983), writing in Japanese was considered starkly different from writing in English, with key points positioning Japanese writing as inductive, indirect and

occasionally off- topic. While Kaplan (1987) revisited these points, they continued to persevere. These points served to establish the 'East versus West' dichotomy that was increasingly disputed. Notably, Kubota (1999) strongly challenged this dichotomization to support cultural pluralism and promote a more multicultural and more critical perspective in understanding cultural differences in language acquisition. While this was done in reference to acquiring English, it could equally be applied to learning JSL.

A major point of contention regarding Western criticisms of Japanese writing is that of the writing *genre* (McKinley, 2014), that is, the format and style of writing, with notable differences between, for example, academic essays or reports and personal responses or reflections, as well as business correspondence, business reports and letter writing. Many of the perspectives that maintained a cultural dichotomization were referring to more expressive genres of writing including essay writing, known in Japanese as *sakubun* [essay writing] (Kubota, 1997, 1999). This type of essay writing differs from more global approaches to academic writing as it is not intended to serve the same function. Historically, instruction in Japanese L1 writing concentrated on personal expression, requiring students to write about their feelings and personal experiences. Along this line, students also practiced *kansobun*, in which writers describe their impressions of assigned readings (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). In Dyer and Friederich's (2002: 278) study on teaching autobiography in Japan, they cite Arai (2000: 6), a Japanese professor of English in Tokyo, who in a criticism of the L1 writing process stated that 'in Japanese writing instruction, the emphasis is placed on two elements, *jiyu* [freedom] and *jibun no iken* [one's own opinion]: "Students are encouraged to write down their ideas spontaneously, without worrying about such irrelevancies as organization, clarity, or logic"'. This understanding of non-linear logic or random quality in Japanese essay writing is based on the history of expressive, not academic, essay writing. Indeed, the Japanese word for essay, *zuihitsu*, is translated as 'writing at random' (Dyer & Friederich, 2002).

The idea that Japanese writing uses non-linear logic has prevailed in related publications over the decades. In Fox's (1994: 8) book *Listening to the World*, she quoted a student in Japan on the vagueness of Japanese writing compared to English: "Japanese is more vague than English", she [a Japanese student] tells me. "It's supposed to be that way. You don't say what you mean right away. You don't criticize directly". However, this debate on non-linear logic in Japanese essay writing is concerned more with personal writing than with expository writing. According to Dyer and Friederich (2002), Japanese personal writing is not all that different from English personal writing.

Japanese writing is inherently inductive. The Japanese 'habit' of writing inductively (Kubota, 1997) can also be attributed to the principle of *kenkyo*, which is literally defined as 'modesty' (Davies & Ikeno, 2002). Davies and Ikeno (2002: 143) explain that *kenkyo* is important in Japanese culture because, 'Self assertiveness is more or less discouraged, while consideration for others is encouraged'. This idea manifests itself in Japanese speech as well. While addressing an individual of a higher rank or social status than themselves, Japanese speakers will add softeners to their speech or let their sentences trail off to avoid being perceived as overly assertive (McKinley, 2013). However, the effectiveness of the communication works in the visual, spoken form, but not necessarily in the written form. As Japanese has been described as more visual than verbal (see Rose, 1996), academic writing in Japanese is expected to be more direct.

Research published in English on the teaching of JSL writing has not often addressed writing at advanced levels, concentrating more on learning the complex Japanese writing system including kanji (logographic characters originally borrowed from Chinese), hiragana (phonological symbols used for grammatical structure) and katakana (phonological symbols used to represent words borrowed from other languages, most often English) (see Rose, this volume). However, recently, Kondo-Brown's (2016) entry in the *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* focused on assessing Japanese writing ability, targeting the importance of extended writing tasks such as essay writing over discrete-point testing that is more often used in assessing the memorization of kanji. She makes the claim that writing ability in Japanese can only be done through actual writing, emphasizing the need for Japanese language studies to incorporate more writing at this level. Kondo-Brown highlights four related issues that have received attention in more recent research, namely: cultural influences on rhetorical organization; the conceptualization of 'good' writing in Japanese; assessing both Japanese L1 and L2 academic writing; and validating the essay test in the *Nihon Ryūgaku Shiken* [the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students], introduced in 2002 to serve as a replacement for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), as it integrates several subject tests in addition to testing language proficiency.

Based on the gaps in the available research on L2 Japanese writing education (i.e. insufficient focus on advanced levels of writing in which instructors' backgrounds and sociocultural aspects of writing play a role), this chapter attempts to extend the existing examinations of teaching JSL writing by exploring how teachers in Japan and outside Japan address issues related to writing at advanced levels.

L2 Writing Study

The study examined the L2 writing practices of four instructors of Japanese: two working in a university in Japan and two working in universities outside of Japan. The inclusion of both contexts allowed the researcher to explore both Japanese as an L2 and Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) programs. This section will first provide information about the settings of the study with a brief description of the programs. This is followed by descriptions of the instructor participants and the methods of collecting data from these four cases.

Settings

The L2 Japanese language programs at the universities where all four instructors worked are well established. The two instructors in Japan work within the same university (University A), but on different Japanese language programs; the two instructors outside of Japan work in different universities in an English-speaking country. In the program in Japan, hundreds of international and returnee students are enrolled every year, and the program caters to English-speaking students. The two programs outside Japan are top-ranked Japanese language programs in their country.

In the university in Japan, the program is divided into two tracks (to the dismay of program coordinators, to be discussed later): courses for 'native' Japanese students and 'non-native' Japanese students. Students are permitted to self-identify as native or non-native,

although students identifying as ‘native’ speakers have to meet certain criteria. The rule is if one parent is Japanese, the student can enter the native Japanese track, regardless of where that student grew up. Therefore, these students include many who attended international (English or Japanese) schools and/or lived overseas, spoke only some Japanese at home and/or attended additional Japanese schooling. It is important to note here that native Japanese students who graduated from a Japanese-medium high school in Japan were not required to enroll in the Japanese language program, and could study other languages to complete the language requirement for graduation.

The two prominent Japanese language programs outside of Japan are offered in very different formats. At University B, the fairly traditional language degree program spans four years, with the third year a compulsory year abroad in Japan. This is similar to the university’s offerings for studies in other foreign languages. In University C, quite a different approach is taken to Japanese language education, as it is offered as an optional unit, with classes held in the evening. All students are undergraduates enrolled in degree courses.

Participants

Participants were selected on a volunteer basis, targeting contexts with established Japanese language programs in Japan and outside Japan in an English-speaking country. Two instructors of Japanese at the university in Japan (University A), and one instructor each at the two different non-Japanese universities (Universities B and C) were identified via a volunteer sample to achieve a total of four case studies.

The four participants are given pseudonyms in this chapter: Ms Mayu and Dr Ren (from University A) and Dr Kana and Dr Yuka (from Universities B and C, respectively). All instructors are native Japanese, born and raised in Japan. Both Ms Mayu and Dr Ren are Japanese language program coordinators, one who did training in second language acquisition (SLA) education in Western institutions, and the other in Japanese language education in Japan. Universities B and C’s participants both completed undergraduate degrees in Japan and postgraduate degrees in Western institutions.

Ms Mayu is the coordinator and instructor of the native track at University A, and completed all her education in Japan. Ms Mayu’s academic publications are mostly written in Japanese, as she feels more confident about expressing her ideas in Japanese, and notes that English manuscripts require a ‘native check’ before publishing (see Mauranen *et al.*, 2010 for related discussion).

Dr Ren is the coordinator and instructor in the non-native track at University A, and did all of his higher education in an English-speaking country. While he was never formally taught how to write in academic English, he used his experience having to write his dissertations in English to teach academic writing in both English and Japanese to his students. Dr Ren writes more in Japanese than English, but publishes in both languages.

The two instructors of Japanese outside Japan came about their positions through quite different paths. In the degree program at University B, Dr Kana completed her undergraduate and master’s degrees in English language and linguistics at a university in Japan, focusing on English grammar, and submitting the thesis for each degree in English. She then moved to an English-speaking country for her PhD, and shifted her focus to Japanese language and

linguistics, submitting her doctoral thesis in English. While her first two degrees were in Japan, nearly all of her academic writing experiences were in English. As a result, Dr Kana publishes almost exclusively in English (the last publication in Japanese was a collaborative effort several years ago), and explains that she feels unfamiliar with writing articles in Japanese regarding terminology and nuance, having never had to explain her ideas at that level in Japanese. Also, as a scholar at an English-speaking university, she is expected to publish in English. Despite all this experience with academic writing in English, Dr Kana explains that she still has all her work proofread, and is regularly asked by editors to have her work 'native checked', even in collaborations with native users of English.

Dr Yuka is a Japanese instructor in University C, which offers the Japanese language as an optional unit. Dr Yuka grew up in Japan and completed her undergraduate degree in Japan and her postgraduate degrees in a non-linguistic-related field in an English-speaking country. She also holds a Japanese language teaching certificate. Dr Yuka writes exclusively in English, but she did publish one article in a small academic journal in Japanese. When submitting her work in English, Dr Yuka usually asks a non-native English-speaking friend who is an experienced English teacher to proofread it.

Methodology

Data collected for the study included course descriptions (collected directly from the instructors at the university in Japan, and downloaded from the university websites for the programs outside Japan) and two interviews each with the instructors. Initial semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect basic data such as the instructors' educational backgrounds, thoughts about the practice of teaching JSL writing, and languages used for their own academic publication. Questions on their thoughts about teaching JSL writing focused on advanced writing practices, including whether or not they aim to get their students to 'sound Japanese' in their writing, i.e. a consideration of a Japanese writer identity. Other questions targeted any influences and innovations regarding their teaching (see Appendix for all interview questions).

The data collected from the initial interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis to identify emerging themes used to then develop questions for a follow-up, semi-structured interview with each instructor. Analysis was interpretive, in a qualitative tradition, as it was important to identify subtle nuances in how key concepts were discussed in the interviews. This subtlety required an interpretive rather than a positivist approach to the analysis, which was better achieved via 'qualitative text analysis', sometimes referred to as 'qualitative content analysis' or 'thematic qualitative text analysis' (Kuckartz, 2014).

Findings of the Study

Teaching Japanese in Japan (University A)

The typical profile of those studying the Japanese language in a Japanese university is an exchange student who is either on a semester or year of study abroad. However, as described earlier, the university where the study was conducted holds Japanese language classes for an

increasingly significant number of Japanese students who did not graduate from Japanese-medium universities, and may have attended international (English or Japanese) schools and/or lived overseas, spoke only some Japanese at home and/or attended additional Japanese schooling. The motivation to study the language is very different depending on the student's intentions after graduation.

Teaching Japanese writing in the 'native track'

The students in the native track included a wide range of back-grounds, many who would questionably be considered native speakers by global standards. Most students in this track were returnee students who lived at least part of their teen years overseas and attended either local or international (English or Japanese) high schools. These students spoke at least some if not only Japanese at home, and may have attended additional Japanese schooling (commonly referred to as 'Saturday School'). Ms Mayu describes the students as 'not truly bilingual'. She says there is 'something missing', giving an indication with non-verbal clues that the students did not have the insider awareness of what it means to use the Japanese language as an L1. Ms Mayu asserts that much of the students' linguistic proficiency depends on the parents' attitude toward reading and writing in Japanese and toward their child's future. There are three levels in the native track, each with its own objectives regarding writing. Essay writing (including both argumentative and research essays) starts from Level 1. Each level spans one semester. Therefore, students are expected to already have a basic ability to construct at least simple sentences in written Japanese. The expectations of each level, provided in Ms Mayu's own words in the interview, are as follows:

Level 1: Paragraph writing, argument essays based on experience, short research paper.

Level 2: Argument essays based on experience, writing in various genres.

Level 3: Focus on reading, many have done Japanese essay writing in the past; they can, for example, learn the correct understanding of problems and politics in the world.

For the research paper required in Level 1, the expectation is that students will 'borrow' from the reading. Ms Mayu explains that this is acceptable, as long as they do it appropriately; but she elaborates on the description of this task that 'something's missing' about their use of Japanese, that the students 'just don't know which part of their mind' to apply when expressing their ideas in written Japanese. For the writing skills component of the program, Ms Mayu explains that it needs to be specific and grammatical: 'students need to know things very well, otherwise they can't persuade or explain what the reader doesn't know well'. Ms Mayu identified the significant point that reveals these students' lower written proficiency in Japanese as a lack of vocabulary.

Teaching Japanese writing in the 'non-native' track

The students in the non-native track are mostly exchange students, with a few degree students who are either native speakers of English or dominant English language users. Dr Ren explains that some bilingual students choose the non-native track because 'they think it will be

easier, but it's not', indicating that the students were not able to easily meet the requirements of the course. Traditionally, the majority of students in this program have not intended to seek employment or further study in Japanese. Increasingly, this is changing, with students requesting support for academic and business writing in Japanese, and opportunities to participate in internships. While the main focus is currently on speaking and listening, there is an understanding that upcoming development, which is in part a response to the university's participation in the education ministry-funded Top Global Universities Project (see Rose & McKinley, 2018), will introduce new writing classes and internship support.

Because there is a basic sense that the students need to develop an ability to function in Japanese society and get by in daily tasks and requirements, Dr Ren explains, they are basically never asked to write in class. Language classes do include the 'four skills', but are weighted toward spoken communication. Writing tasks are done outside of class. Writing tasks include notes, letters and short compositions; students learn '*genko yoshi*' [vertical writing], i.e. writing that is vertical, not horizontal, like English. At the lower-intermediate level, letter writing is done using models for structure, and corrections are made for inaccuracies or vocabulary misuse. At the lower-advanced level there are five writing assignments in total, including three short compositions of 1000 characters each, one report and one final 2000+ character composition on a topic of their own choice, using data provided in the textbook or from their own research. Some business Japanese is taught at the lower-advanced level, including form writing, business mail and business reports.

Teaching Japanese in an English-speaking country

For students learning Japanese outside Japan, the strongest factor impacting their studies is whether or not they came into the program with any previous experience having studied Japanese. Typically, students in this context will have studied at least one European language, while Japanese is in addition, but Japanese may be used to fulfill the language requirement. The students have two options for studying Japanese at the university level outside Japan, either as a degree subject or as optional units. Either way, the students are reported to hold an interest in studying Japanese because of curiosity about Japanese culture, often the result of an interest in Japanese pop culture including manga, anime and video games.

Teaching Japanese writing in a degree program (University B)

University B is a public university in an English-speaking country, offering an undergraduate degree program in Japanese language. The most decisive factor reported for the students coming into the program is whether or not they had studied Japanese before entering the program. Around 30%–40% of students had done so. There is a sense that students who have no previous experience studying Japanese should be able to catch up within about six weeks of intensive grammar training.

The students in the program were described as in love with Japanese culture, and not just pop culture such as manga and anime, but sometimes architecture and other aspects. They were also described as a little afraid of the workload, seeming to want to take on more content without taking into consideration the practical aspects of what is required to acquire and

sustain the language. For example, when learning kanji, students wanted all the compounds (i.e. collocations and other word associations), which Dr Kana explained is impossible. The students tended to think that it was necessary 'to have all of the compounds' to progress, but did not understand the impracticality of actually learning all of them, and expected their teachers to somehow 'make it happen'. Dr Kana believed this may be because they had studied at least one European language – in which knowing compounds was an indication of higher proficiency and learning compounds may have seemed easier because of the linguistic alignment many European languages have with English – before they started in the Japanese language program.

The writing requirements in the Japanese language classes targeted kanji development as well as extended writing tasks. For kanji, students are expected to know 350 kanji in Year 1, and 750 in Year 2. Year 3 is a compulsory year abroad. For their final year, students are expected to be able to work without any kanji tuition, that is, they are expected to have *jōyō kanji* (2136 regular-use characters), or at least be able to look up *jōyō kanji* and, as Dr Kana explained in her interview, 'follow classes without delay'. Students in their first two years are also required to complete a number of Japanese to English translations, usually one a week, as well as a basic essay in Japanese. In the past, the senior thesis was also a translation, but now fourth-year students are required to write an 8000-character, research-led essay in Japanese on societal or cultural issues.

In terms of Dr Kana's approaches to teaching writing, her extensive experience with writing in English, she explains, impacts her teaching in Japanese. 'I'm very particular – loose approaches are not acceptable – casual is not acceptable'. Dr Kana clarifies that she expects students to avoid expressions in their writing such as the Japanese equivalents of 'in my opinion, I feel...'. She clarifies, 'I want to know what they critically analyze, so I think I see things differently... I always try to get students to become language users rather than learners, so my teaching is often task-based, and can-do focused'. In response to a question about getting students to 'sound Japanese' in their writing, Dr Kana rationalizes:

This would depend on the year and context. In *keigo*-class [honorific Japanese language], for example, it is very important that students can write in an appropriate style, which would require sounding 'natural', as in using an appropriate level of *keigo* and other lexical choice. On the other hand, if they are writing a short essay as part of grammar or lexical acquisition, the focus of feedback might be more on grammar/vocabulary than nuance. In final year, however, we will try to get students to sound as 'natural' as possible, as the learning outcome of the year is to be the competent language *user* rather than *learner*. They need to be able to conduct social and professional exchange in writing and in person, which require naturalness.

Dr Kana draws on her experience in both English and Japanese linguistics and language education for successful innovations in the teaching of Japanese writing, and in her response draws on the concept of multi-competency, i.e. the understanding that an L2 user makes use of known languages as a connected system, rather than shifting from one language system to another, which happens as an L2 learner (see Cook, 2008).

Teaching Japanese writing in an optional unit program (University C)

University C is also a public university in the same country as University B; however, this university does not offer a degree program in Japanese language. Instead, Japanese is offered as an optional unit in which any matriculated students can enroll. There are two levels of Japanese language classes. One class is for complete beginners. The level of interest in studying Japanese, as reported by Dr Yuka, is mixed, but it is generally high. Usually, the students tend to have an interest in Japan or Japanese culture, especially popular culture such as computer games and anime. The other class is designed for students who have previous experience studying Japanese. The level varies between students, but it is between JLPT levels N5 and N4 (lowest levels). Students' interest in studying Japanese is generally high as they want to continue studying, or at least they want to sustain their current level of proficiency.

For both levels, the students tend to be quiet in the classroom, but they work hard for tasks such as group presentations. Regarding language production, they tend to add more complicated grammar and sentence patterns in an attempt to create a more interesting presentation, reflecting the Japanese attitude of 'challenge', which indicates an enthusiasm for studying Japanese.

Regarding the writing requirements in the program, Dr Yuka explained that there are no official writing requirements in her classes, but for the undergraduate module classes at the highest level, students have to perform two interactive oral presentations in a group of four or five, for which they have to write scripts. These scripts can be regarded as the writing requirements. Dr Yuka claimed that she aims to get her students to 'sound Japanese' in their writing 'because they are at the beginners' level, I want them to have a solid ground'. But she clarified that because she does not really teach Japanese writing, influences on her approaches are more driven by an emotional sensibility of providing supportive feedback on their writing to avoid discouraging her students.

In terms of her own academic writing, Dr Yuka writes exclusively in English. Having received most of her postgraduate education in English-speaking universities using materials written in English, although she still makes small grammatical mistakes, writing academic articles in English is 'more natural' to her.

Pedagogical Implications and Ideas that could be Used in Other Foreign Language Writing besides Japanese

The current study investigated the composition of JSL writing courses, taking into consideration possible influences from the instructors' backgrounds on their teaching of L2 writing, particularly looking at experiences they had in studying, in this case, in Western English-speaking countries, raising a number of implications regarding the teaching of Japanese and other L2 writing. Of the four instructors in the study, only Ms Mayu had no experience in an English-speaking country, and this was reflected in her description of the idea that there was 'something missing' in her students' writing, relying on implicit, non-verbal cues to indicate it was related to a certain unnatural usage of the language. Alternatively, the other three instructors, while in very different teaching contexts and with widely varying expectations of writing, all described explicitly the importance of aiming to get their students to 'sound

Japanese' in their writing, but not in a way that tries to neglect their L1 (i.e. English language) selves (something they each experienced as Japanese L1 users completing higher degrees in English). They each explained that their own educational backgrounds had brought them to this understanding of what was reasonable to expect, and they also mentioned the importance of keeping students motivated and encouraged by providing them with 'insider' perspectives of what it means to be a *user* of the language beyond the learning stages (see Cook, 2008).

These findings suggest that teaching JSL writing is defined not only by the curriculum of the Japanese language program, but also most certainly by the instructor's educational background and academic writing experiences in both Japanese and English. These considerations are significant in deliberating on the pedagogical implications when working within a prescribed curriculum. The instructors and program coordinators will inevitably be influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences.

Regarding their own academic writing practices, the instructors in Japan were writing for publication mainly in Japanese, while the instructors outside Japan were writing almost exclusively in English. This also influenced their teaching in different ways. For both Ms Mayu and Dr Ren, their own understanding of academic writing in Japanese is current and evolving. As they continue to publish themselves in Japanese, they recognize how their writing is being received, and can transfer that understanding to their teaching (whether it is writing or speaking). For the two instructors outside Japan, their understanding of Japanese writing was described as limited, directly related to the fact that they just do not write advanced academic Japanese. Dr Kana confessed that she feels unfamiliar with academic writing in Japanese particularly with terminology and nuance, as she has never had to explain her ideas at that level in Japanese, having completed her higher degrees in English. Both Dr Kana and Dr Yuka expressed a personal connection to the English-speaking culture in which they have spent their lives as a major contributor to their academic writing output, that while they may be asked to have their writing checked by a 'native speaker' or have their writing drastically revised, they feel confident about writing in English in a way that they have never felt writing in Japanese. It is important to note here that this feeling will weigh on the teaching of L2 writing in Japanese, a morphographic writing system, in a way that is very different from other languages, particularly those that use the Roman alphabet. While communicating in spoken Japanese might advance to levels reaching native-like fluency in Japanese, writing will commonly remain at rudimentary levels (see Rose, this volume).

In the post-process era, it is important to maintain an understanding that, as Trimbur (1994) pointed out more than two decades ago, composition is a cultural activity. This has significant pedagogical implications not only for JSL writing but for the teaching of L2 writing in other languages as well. Three of these four Japanese language instructors have been influenced by their own educational and pedagogical experiences in Japan and abroad, their approaches have taken on an inevitable 'global' perspective. They share the understanding that L2 writing is a cultural activity, and target students' linguistic development toward that understanding. However, more than a decade ago such a global perspective was challenged: Ferris (2004) drew our attention to the 'grammar correction debate in L2 writing' and highlighted studies from traditional perspectives favoring accuracy over fluency. She drew on our progressive desire to downplay error-correction in order to place more value on the sociocultural aspects of L2 writing. This is the kind of desire I found to be so strong with the

instructor who received all of her education in Japan, in contrast to the three instructors who received their higher degrees in English-speaking countries. The focus in the Western-educated instructors' teaching of writing was much more on communicating, rather than adopting a Japanese writer identity. This was precisely what Ms Mayu was concerned about – that while the students were able to produce extended written texts, there was still 'something missing' that, as I interpreted, indicated they were not fully, socioculturally competent in the written language. Ms Mayu's teaching approaches may be viewed as countering progressive beliefs about L2 writing education, but it was evident that the sociocultural aspects of the students' writing were in fact even more significant for her. In teaching any L2 writing, particularly by teachers who are maintaining more local rather than global perspectives, the sociocultural aspects of student writing seem to be the most significant factor.

Research Implications: Influenced, Impacted or Integrated? Western Approaches to L2 Writing Education

Some efforts have been made in research on how L2 writing education in languages other than English (LOTE), particularly languages of an Eastern cultural origin, has been influenced and impacted by Western approaches, namely, English L2 writing education. More than two decades ago, Silva *et al.* (1997) pointed out how the marginalizing of L2 writing (English and other languages) was detrimental to mainstream composition studies. They raised the issue in no uncertain terms that by drawing on L2 writing scholarship, a more global understanding of writing would provide a much needed opening up of otherwise limited studies. More recently, Horner *et al.* (2011) drew our attention to the idea that English L2 writing research has developed and contributed to providing a more global perspective on composition studies, but that research in LOTE L2 writing continues to be neglected. They challenged the limitations caused by English L2 writing research by arguing for 'adopting a translingual approach to languages, disciplines, localities, and research traditions in our scholarship, and propose ways individuals, journals, conferences, and graduate programs might advance composition scholarship toward a translingual norm' (Horner *et al.*, 2011: 269).

It seems that L2 writing research will inevitably be influenced and impacted by the abundance of research on Western approaches to L2 writing education, especially that of English L2 writing education. Particularly at more advanced levels of writing, such as those described in this study, beyond basic phonemic forms of written language, the majority of studies examine English L2 writing. The leading journal in the field, the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, reflects this narrow focus. As English is the main language for academic writing output, this comes as little surprise. But is it necessarily problematic for instructors of L2 writing in a language other than English? Based on the findings of this study, it seems it does not have to be. Rather than looking only at the influence and impact of all the work done in English (and the reality that L2 instructors are also writing almost exclusively in English), it seems we should build on the arguments of Silva *et al.* (1997) and Horner *et al.* (2011) to further explore in what ways LOTE L2 writing instruction is in fact integrating their understanding of writing in English with their understanding of writing in the target language.

Such studies are more common in bilingual education, such as a recent study with young Spanish–English bilingual learners of writing in the USA that emphasizes the importance of

integrating writing as a holistic system, rather than in ‘discrete pieces’ (Soltero-González *et al.*, 2012: 86). Another study also with young learners encourages the use of translanguaging in bilingual academic writing development (Velasco & García, 2014). But outside bilingual studies, looking toward L2 writing education, there is little evidence of such ideas about integrating different perspectives of writing to develop a more global perspective.

The concept of multi-competency is an important one in this vein. To transfer from language *learner* to language *user*, as explained by Cook (2008), describes a phenomenon that is different from bilingualism. It is the idea that a person has added to their linguistic bank, and therefore functions in the multiple perspectives afforded by acquiring knowledge of more than one language. This is potentially invaluable for L2 learners who feel ‘bilingualism’ to be a status too far out of reach. Perhaps LOTE L2 writing education, which does not always carry the same socioeconomic motivation of English L2 writing education, could be successfully promoted this way.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

This chapter has explored cases of university-level JSL writing instruction both in Japan and in an English-speaking country to examine the influences on instructors’ ideas about their teaching, and to draw on some of the concepts that can be applied to taking more global approaches to L2 writing in other languages. Significant findings included Ms Mayu’s localized perspective and concern about ‘something missing’ from her students’ JSL academic writing in the JSL context, and Dr Kana’s feeling of unfamiliarity with writing in academic Japanese potentially limiting her teaching of JSL academic writing in the JFL context, but pressing the importance of her students’ shift from language learner to language user.

On the idea that something may be missing in expressing ideas in L2 writing, this is certainly not an unusual thought in English L2 writing. Where there are socioeconomic consequences for English L2 writers to fully grasp nuances and terminology, in LOTE L2 writing, this is not often the case. In the JFL context, students were described as interested in Japanese through popular culture, not by employment opportunities. In the JSL context, however, there was recognition that students would need to communicate in writing in, for example, business in Japan. This opens up opportunities for further research, to clarify what is that ‘something missing’ that could be preventing JSL writers from succeeding in employment in Japan.

As for the JFL context, Dr Kana’s concern about her own familiarity with writing in academic Japanese does not present a problem, given the goals of the program as well as students’ future needs. But her emphasis on multi-competency is significant, and warrants further research in L2 writing education. While the JSL writing context differs from alphabetic L2 writing contexts, in that the writing level for JSL students is typically significantly lower than their speaking level, the shift from language learner to language user is a valuable concept to allow L2 writing students in LOTE to advance their proficiency in the target language.

The integration of global concepts seems to be key to the advancement of L2 writing education in any language. As L2 writing research advances, we need to take into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of the rhetorical approaches in other languages, not just English, which has dominated the academic writing style. A multi-competence in rhetorical approaches

should be the goal in L2 writing, drawing on perspectives from multiple languages, to achieve a global approach to academic writing.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- . (1) What are the writing requirements in your Japanese language classes?
- . (2) Do you aim to get your students to 'sound Japanese' in their writing? Why or why not?
- . (3) What are the strongest influences on your approaches to teaching Japanese writing?
- . (4) What innovations, if any, do you make in teaching Japanese writing?
- . (5) Do you do academic writing yourself in Japanese? In English? Why or why not?

Follow-up questions

- . (6) What are the students' proficiencies and interests in studying Japanese? (description of students)
- . (7) What is your preferred language when writing for publication (or other)?