

Japanese Rhetoric I: The Problem in its Setting

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1. Introduction

With the number of students learning English as a second or foreign language continuing to increase rapidly worldwide, “there is a growing awareness that learners need to develop proficiency not only in the more frequently emphasized skills of speaking, listening, and reading, but in *writing* in English as well” (Jacobs et al., 1981, p. v). Yet for Japanese students of English¹ today, writing is certainly the most problematic and neglected of the four language skills. Reading ability in English has long been stressed in Japan and most students who go on to specialize in English in post-secondary education are generally competent in this area.² Much has been written about the communicative shortcomings of Japanese EL2³ students in terms of their speaking and listening abilities and there are now measures being instituted, albeit belatedly, to remedy this situation.⁴ Writing, however, remains an area of serious neglect in EL2 education in Japan, and a lack of ability in written English beyond the basic sentence level is a significant academic obstacle for many Japanese today. This includes not only EL2 learners studying at Japanese universities, but also unprecedented numbers of Japanese students enrolled at universities overseas at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels⁵ for whom academic writing skills in English will be of crucial importance in achieving their academic goals, as well as increasing numbers of Japanese scholars, scientists, and business professionals in many fields who will need to publish in English in order to communicate their research findings to the international community.

These claims can be expressed as a set of introductory assertions which motivate the present study. They can be summarized as follows: (1) substantial numbers of Japanese EL2 students studying at the tertiary level are unable to write academic English at a proficiency level commensurate with prevailing international norms and standards; (2) such writing deficiencies can create significant barriers for these students in achieving academic and professional success in the modern world; and (3) the teaching of these writing skills in

Japan continues to be an area of considerable neglect, one that needs to be addressed and investigated.

These contentions will be substantiated and elaborated upon in a series of four successive articles which focus on the subject of Japanese rhetoric from the perspective of the academic writing skills of Japanese students of English. This approach to Japanese rhetoric is based on the following underlying premise: If rhetorical transfer from Japanese can be considered one the primary reasons for students' writing difficulties in English, then it is essential to have a rigorous accounting of Japanese rhetorical conventions, including the cultural and historical traditions from which they arise. As a point of departure for this investigation, a preliminary profile of student writing will be presented in order to establish baseline parameters of infelicity in their written work and to identify the principal features that characterize such writing. Based on contemporary research paradigms in contrastive rhetoric, the reasons for students' writing difficulties will then be explored in an in-depth survey of current research designed to contribute to a comprehensive definition of Japanese rhetoric. Finally, in an original study which defines the cultural context in which written text is produced in Japan, a theoretical construct of Japanese culture derived from conceptual models used in cultural anthropology will be introduced, permitting correlations to be drawn between formative elements of Japanese culture and key attributes of Japanese rhetoric.

2. A preliminary profile of student writing

Although Japanese EL2 writing has been a particular focus of attention in much of recent L2 composition research in the West, perhaps more than any other foreign language group according to Leki (1992, p. 97), in contrast to the written work of accomplished writers, student writing has not been well documented. As a result, an objective and systematic assessment of the writing skills of Japanese EL2 students, which would provide the basis for an accurate and comprehensive portrayal of their capabilities, is probably not possible at the present time—the blunt fact is that requisite baseline statistical data are simply not available in sufficient measure to warrant definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, as the following survey of the literature makes clear, certain recurrent themes or patterns are evident which will serve as a useful starting point for an analysis of students' writing skills.

Of concern in any literature review is the selection of a classificatory system for organizing and presenting research findings. This undertaking can be approached in a number of different ways, and a variety of error taxonomies containing greater or lesser degrees of complexity and specificity are available (see, for example, James, 1998). Since this survey is prefatory in nature, however, deficiencies in student writing will simply be enumerated below under a series of broad provisional headings, moving from the domain of discourse⁶ to the level of the sentence as a unit. The findings of researchers have been grouped into roughly analogous sets of basic assertions, but no attempt has been made at this time to analyze their perspectives, nor to evaluate their conclusions. Where possible, the

reasons for students' written shortcomings will be suggested, but because the underlying causes of their deficiencies are often complex and not easily articulated in abbreviated form—they originate in the deepest traditions of culture and learning in Japan, as well as in longstanding Japanese attitudes towards writing and rhetoric, both historical and modern—detailed explanations will have to await the consolidation of further groundwork in upcoming articles in this series.

2.1 Organizational and structural difficulties

Surprisingly, especially in light of the fact that sentence-level, grammar-translation instruction still dominates English L2 writing pedagogy in Japan (see Davies, 1999a), the vast majority of critiques on the EL2 writing skills of Japanese students tend to target organizational and structural infelicities that lie beyond the sentence and at the level of discourse. Shimozaki (1988, p. 137), for example, argues that “writing [is] one of the most difficult skills to attain for Japanese learners of English..., particularly...when it involves not just a single sentence but an extended discourse.” Most research findings would seem to concur with this assessment, but explanations proffered to account for discourse-level shortcomings in student writing encompass a wide range of linguistic and sociocultural factors.

One frequently-cited reason for deficiencies at this level is often attributed to differing patterns of discourse organization between Japanese and English. In the literature, the concept “discourse organization” is labeled in a variety of ways, including expressions such as the following: discourse structures, discourse superstructures, rhetorical organization, patterns of rhetorical organization, rhetorical structures, rhetorical patterning, macrostructures, schemata, frames, the organization and structuring of ideas, etc.:

[The] poor quality of writing by learners may at least partially be attributable to the differences of rhetorical patterning in languages. (Shimozaki, *ibid.*, p. 138)

[E]xpository essays written in English by Japanese students are often misunderstood by non-Japanese readers [due to] problematic discourse structures.... (Harder, 1983, p. 25)

[D]ifferences in the way discourse is organized are one of the most important causes of the writing problem.... (Shimozaki, *op. cit.*, p. 141)

Researchers have also identified a number of specific structural features of written English at the level of discourse organization which seem to be particularly troublesome for Japanese students of English. These include difficulties with the formulation of the thesis statement, signposting (also called transitions, transition expressions, transition statements, linking expressions, and landmarks), and conclusions.

Many authors have noted, for example, that in the essays of Japanese EL2 students the thesis statement is often ambiguous, seemingly misplaced, or entirely absent:

Western readers expect a thesis statement, a statement of the central idea in an essay, to control the selection and development of the content, but the thesis statement is often omitted in a Japanese essay. It may appear in the last sentence as a conclusion, but then its relationship to the content is vague, since it usually grows directly out of the content and does not necessarily relate to everything that has been discussed. ...[Thus a] central but unsupported statement comes [at the end] of the essay where the usual reader of an English essay does not expect anything new to occur. Even when the student has a sense of stating the main thought at the outset of the essay, the statement remains open and vague. (Harder, 1983, p. 27)

[L]ong, indirect introductions are standard. The writer attempts to approach the main topic at an angle, without referring to it directly—the...thesis is usually not stated at all in this section, and one must often wait until the conclusion to determine its true nature. General statements tend to be avoided and individual feelings or observations and personal involvement with the subject matter are often emphasized. (Davies, 1998, p. 33)

The central idea is usually very vague or only loosely connected with most of the topics in the essay; if it is stated at all, it usually appears at the last sentence, more often as an afterthought than a result of the previous discussion. (Harder & Harder, 1982, p. 23)

Thus, as Harder (op. cit., p. 29) points out, in the EL2 writing of many Japanese students “the thesis does not control the linear argument; instead the ideas are developed through a logic of association among seemingly unrelated points.”

In addition, according to some experts, the ideas themselves are often inadequately linked by connective devices or transition elements:

Japanese students are generally not aware of the function of connectives and...this [is] a main reason for the incohesion often found in their compositions. ...Additive connectives tend to be overused possibly because of the influence of oral discourse. In contrast, adversative connectives tend to be omitted.... (Kanno, 1989, p. 41 & 51)

[E]nglish readers...expect and require landmarks along the way. Transition statements are very important. It is the writer's task to provide appropriate transition statements so that the reader can piece together the thread of the writer's logic.... In Japanese...[these] landmarks may be absent or attenuated.... (Hinds, 1987, p. 146)

The development stage...also differs...as ideas are often simply laid out one after another in a string with few connecting devices or transition expressions to link them together. (Davies, 1998, p. 35)

Finally, a number of authors suggest that conclusions can be an intractable source of difficulty for many Japanese students writing in English:

Conclusions often end up with a weak question or simply ‘drop off’ without concluding in any real sense of the word. Other strategies that students [utilize] include adding personal impressions, appealing to the reader, and using moral statements, aphorisms, or didactic remarks

in such a way that objective statements and personal comments intermingle. [W]riters usually try to share their feelings with the reader and finish in a harmonious atmosphere—strong assertions or judgments are avoided as these will appear arrogant. (Davies, *ibid.*, p. 36)

[Compositions written by Japanese students often reflect ‘an approach by indirection’.] The sentences circle around the topic, often defining something in terms of what it is not, and avoid any explicit judgement or conclusions. [Ballard & Clancy, 1984, p. 15]

Conclusions...are seldom articulated, and...expression tends to be fragmentary and unsystematic. (Harder, 1984, p. 124)

The form of the essay was also different, as it lacked any conclusion which might have summarized the main points made in the body of the essay. [In addition], in Japan, the student explained, he would not be expected to put forward his own...evaluation of a controversy. ...It would not be correct, he had been taught, to write a conclusion which tells the reader what he should think... (Ballard & Clancy, *op. cit.*, p. 10)

Of course, none of the above techniques are advisable in writing conclusions in academic English, where one generally attempts to encapsulate the main ideas discussed in the body before providing a final evaluation or judgment as decisively as possible. However, as Harder (*op. cit.*, p. 122) observes, Japanese students often have difficulty adapting to this approach to writing conclusions:

Japanese writers [of English] frequently resist the advice that they should argue their ideas and support them more forcefully instead of just suggesting possibilities. This problem is not merely a result of their inability to argue but also a difference in cultural assumptions about what is rhetorically agreeable.

2.2 Stylistic deficiencies

In addition to discourse organization, culturally-determined differences in what we will provisionally call “style” are often claimed to be a further cause of difficulty for Japanese EL 2 writers. These include a tendency towards “subjectivity,” also labeled as “a personal orientation toward writing”; a focus on “feelings or emotional content” instead of objective facts and details; a general fondness for “ambiguity, nuance, and indirection”; etc.:

Japanese essays in English often focus on the writer instead of the topic because Japanese writers intuitively object to expressing an idea impersonally. (Harder, 1983, p. 28)

[There are problems with]...the subjectivity of the focus.... (*ibid.*, p. 25)

Often the writers’ personality, instead of an explanation and support, dominates the content. (Harder & Harder, 1982, p. 23)

[J]apanese students...complain that giving the impression of objective truth in their essays makes

them feel too arrogant and exposed. (ibid., p. 22)

These attitudes include a basic distrust of language and a low esteem for the articulation of thoughts. The feelings of others are at least as important as the content, and listeners and readers are expected to fill in gaps in the message. (Harder, 1984, p. 124; after Kunihiro, 1976)

Suzuki claims that Japanese authors do not like to give clarifications or full explanations of their views. They like to give dark hints and to leave them behind nuances. Moreover, ...it is exactly this type of prose which gets the highest praise from readers. He states that Japanese readers 'anticipate with pleasure the opportunities that such writing offers them to savor this kind of mystification of language'. (Hinds, 1987, p. 145)

Japanese EL2 writers employ a number of specific strategies to achieve their stylistic preferences, including extensive use of the first-person, especially in expressions such as "I think...", "I feel...", "I want...", "I believe...", "I know...", etc., which are often followed by statements in which personal opinions are emphasized and intermingle with objective facts (Davies & Ide, 1997, p. 42; Davies, 1998, p. 38). In addition, there is a predilection for lexical hedging and redundant phrases such as the following: "It is not too much to say...", "As you know...", "It can be said...", "It is thought to be...", etc. Such expressions are generally considered unnecessary and distracting in English academic writing, but they act as a kind of lubricating oil in Japanese written discourse where it is considered polite not to be too direct in stating one's point of view (Harder, 1984, p. 121; Davies, 1998, p. 39).

Although the term *style* is a notoriously difficult concept to define (see Davies, 1999c), it seems to be governed by an underlying matrix of sociocultural factors, determined by the members of a particular linguistic community. Style is actualized in writing and finds form and substance in written expression within specific discourse features:

Perhaps...the open Japanese style that moves towards an assertion through a series of loosely related statements is part of a deep need to allow readers to derive their own interpretations. ... This relationship between intuitive communication and syntactic gaps can also be linked to Japanese discourse structures. The Japanese sentence that moves through a number of loosely connected clauses to a clearer focus at the end also appears to be the structural basis of the essay. (Harder, 1983, p. 28)

When Japanese writers do express their own ideas, the Japanese models they think of, such as the *zuihitsu* 'literary essay', are too impressionistic and subjective for serious intellectual discussion.... When students attempt to write an essay that includes their own thoughts on the subject, the result is often a seemingly loose series of observations with weak connections between the evidence and the interpretations. Japanese writers can learn to express their thoughts directly and forcefully, but the adjustment involves their cultural values as well as knowledge about how to organize the essay. (Harder & Harder, 1982, p. 23)

This relationship between Japanese cultural values and stylistic preferences embodied in written expression has perhaps been best described by Edwin Reischauer (1988, p. 200):

The Japanese have always seemed to lean more toward intuition than reason, to subtlety and sensitivity in expression rather than to clarity of analysis, to pragmatism rather than to theory, and to organizational skills rather than to great intellectual concepts. They have never set much store by clarity of verbal analysis and originality of thought. They put great trust in nonverbal understanding and look on oral or written skills and on sharp and clever reasoning as essentially shallow and possibly misleading. They value in their literature not clear analysis, but artistic suggestiveness and emotional feeling. The French ideal of simplicity and absolute clarity in writing leaves them unsatisfied. They prefer complexity and indirection as coming closer to the truth...

2.3 Problems in logical argumentation

A further source of difficulty at the discourse level for Japanese EL2 students, which was also identified by Reischauer in the above extract, is often described by researchers as a problem in logical argumentation (also known as logical development, logical reasoning, the logical construction of an argument, etc.). These logic-related issues are generally analyzed within a frame of reference that includes both organizational structures and stylistic preferences, and many authors cite underlying sociocultural factors as playing a prominent role. Arguments in the literature usually focus on the notion of *logic* itself, especially as it varies across cultures, although the concept remains equivocal and is seldom precisely defined:

[Japanese logic] tends to be anecdotal, non-dualistic, disconnected, and dependent on feelings rather than concrete evidence. ...Instead of dividing topics into discrete categories and treating them sequentially, they value the skill of assimilating intrinsically dissimilar entities. (Harder, 1984, p. 124; after Kunihiro, 1976)

The linear logic and analytical development of the expository essay in English [causes problems for] Japanese students, who tend to spiral around the topic and include whatever seems related. (Harder, 1983, p. 28)

Discussions on this subject often link logic as a cultural attribute to the development of argumentation or reasoning within student writing samples. As illustrated below, many authors have had a good deal to say on this issue, and as a rule, the development of logical argumentation in the compositions of Japanese EL2 writers is characterized by terms such as “intuitive,” “lacking,” “illogical,” “loose,” “vague,” “bi-directional,” etc.:

[There are problems with]...the intuitive logical argumentation. (Harder, *ibid.*, p. 25)

[I]n Japanese culture [and education] the emphasis on training seems to be on intuition rather than logical construction of argument. (Ballard & Clancy, 1984, p. 13)

[The style of English used by the Japanese is hard to comprehend because] logical development is lacking... (Nozaki; cited in Kubota, 1992, pp. 137-138)

The essay seems disorganized and illogical, filled with nonrelevant material, developed incoherently with statements that remain unsupported. (Harder & Harder, 1982, p. 23)

[The Japanese] prefer in their writing as well as their talk a loose structure of argument, rather than careful logical reasoning, and suggestion or illustration, rather than sharp, clear statements. But there is nothing about the Japanese language which prevents concise, clear, and logical presentation, if that is what one wishes to make. (Reischauer, 1988, p. 386)

Even when Japanese argue they will be vague about the point at issue and preferably focus on trivial points to establish a sense of agreement about issues before mentioning major topics. The rhetorical style used in confronting authority, arguing about opinions, and polarization over an issue in Japan take forms...different from those in the European tradition.... (Harder, 1984, p. 123; after Kunihiro, 1976)

[J]apanese students use bi-directional argumentation. That is to say, they try to incorporate both sides of an argument, with their positions sometimes fluctuating during the course of an essay. It is also often the case that what they state at the outset is not directly related to the argument at issue and that their final comments differ from what they proposed initially. These kinds of tendencies [are perceived by] native speakers of English...as 'disorganized' and 'illogical'. (Oi & Kamimura, 1997, p. 67)

Closely associated with the concept of logical argumentation in the literature is the issue of critical thinking. Investigators have claimed, for example, that Japanese EL2 students will often require extensive training in the conventions of critical thinking in English as part of their academic writing instruction:

[Japanese students studying in the West will sometimes be dismissed by professors as unpromising because there are no signs in their essays] that they can do more than summarize information—no sign, in short, of critical thinking. (Ballard & Clancy, 1984, p. 10)

[I]t became clear that the [Japanese] student had very deliberately organized his thinking and writing according to the way he had been trained to write essays in Japan. His aim in writing... was not to point out...strengths and weaknesses [i.e., critical analysis]. Rather, his purpose was to create for the reader a harmonious understanding of the reasons why two eminent [scholars] could reach conflicting judgements on [the subject in question]. By describing the difference in their backgrounds, he was implicitly explaining how these conflicting viewpoints developed. (ibid.)

There is...frequently a willingness to tolerate ambiguity, even contradictions, to allow them to sit easily in tension within the same piece of writing. The Japanese student who, when writing an essay involving comparison and contrast, directs his efforts towards justifying the bases of the differing interpretations from his source materials but makes no attempt to test or evaluate them, is working in a fundamentally different tradition from the Western academic who expects all roads to lead to evaluation. (ibid., 1991, p. 33)

A 'report' in a Japanese sense suggests an objective summary of the text instead of an essay which has a theme that the writer intends to argue and support by facts.... Japanese students who attend classes in English suffer greatly for not being able to understand the difference

between an essay and an objective summary. ...This emphasis on summarizing accurately and not on drawing conclusions creates problems.... (Harder, 1983, p. 27)

2.4 Verb-form errors

Infelicities in the EL2 writing of Japanese students at the sentence level encompass a wide variety of features, which are most often classified under the headings "grammar," "usage," "vocabulary," etc. Perhaps the most noteworthy attribute of research at this level of analysis, however, is its scarcity. As noted previously, although the sentence-level, grammar-translation approach continues to dominate EL2 instruction in Japan, surprisingly little published material is available in English on students' written shortcomings at this level. Nevertheless, a number of problem areas can be highlighted, perhaps the most significant of which are verb-form errors.

In an overview of current research into English L2 error hierarchies, constructed to determine which kinds of grammatical errors are judged most negatively by specific groups of individuals, McCretton & Rider (1993, pp. 4-12) ascertained that verb-form errors are heavily stigmatized in English. They correlated the findings of a number of major studies involving native-speaking teachers, non-native-speaking teachers, students, and non-teachers, converted the combined scores into absolute values, and determined that EL2 student writing errors could be ranked on the following descending gravity scale: (1) subject-verb agreement, (2) verb forms, (3) prepositions, (4) word order, (5) negation, (6) spelling, and (7) lexis (*ibid.*, p. 12). Of note here is the fact that in all the studies reviewed, verb-form errors were among the most negatively evaluated. Not surprisingly, this is also an area in which Japanese EL2 writers experience considerable difficulties. As Davies (1998, p. 42) points out, misuses of the perfect, progressive, and simple, and their various combined forms, are often found in the written work of Japanese EL2 students, and numerous examples of verb-form errors such as the following are evidence that they are a pervasive and intractable source of difficulty in student writing (*ibid.*): *I have bought (cf. bought) contact lenses three years ago; *Since the World War II, the Japanese developed (cf. have developed) high economic growth; *I'm coming from Okayama (cf. come from, as in hometown); and *I am studying (cf. have been studying) English for six years now.

Although it is true that learners from many countries experience difficulties with the English verb system, the problem is particularly acute for Japanese EL2 students because of the profound mismatch between the two languages in terms of verbal categories:

There are no true equivalents of the English perfect and progressive in Japanese...and so there are many ways to express them depending on the situation. At a deeper level, however, these differences are...about a wholly different classification of human experience. ...[T]he Japanese verb is rich in special forms which indicate shades of courtesy, respect, and formality, as well as providing many ways to indicate the speaker's relationship to what he or she is saying, such as full credence, doubt, uncertainty, etc. In fact, one of the major features of the Japanese language itself is the extent of incorporation of stylistic information which reflects the circumstances and

social contexts in which the language is used. ...It is not surprising then that the English verb system [with its emphasis on time distinctions not found in Japanese] is a serious obstacle for many Japanese EL2 students. (Davies, *ibid.*; after Martin, 1975, & Backhouse, 1993)

One particular form of the English verb which deserves special attention is the passive, as it is an effective means of expressing connotations of detachment, objectivity, and impersonality in English academic prose (Hodges et al., 1994, p. 274). Harder & Harder (1982, p. 22) suggest that perhaps because “the value of avoiding disagreements is fundamental to the Japanese culture and to the way students write essays, the indirectness of the passive expresses this value better than the active voice does.”⁸ They also state that Japanese EL2 students have a good deal of difficulty in employing the passive construction in their academic writing and provide the following examples from student essays (*ibid.*):

*This open school system have been thought the characteristic of the democratic system of education, so that the move that education should be given equally is caused even in the European countries which have had the closed school system.

*Through cooking, average 25 percent of nutrition is losed, and up to 50 percent of food amount is shrinked and the favourable natural moisture is losed too.

*But suppose somebody in the house is having a long talk with his friend by telephone, the news can't be informed, and it may cause a tragic result.

In a detailed contrastive study of the passive in English and Japanese, Hino & Davies (1998) conclude that the construction is conceived of quite differently in the two languages, and that “in many ways they are fundamentally incommensurable” (p. 97). They also claim that the establishment of a cross-linguistic frame of reference for understanding the passive is not possible at the present time due to the “protean nature” of the Japanese passive itself. Despite extensive research and ongoing debate among scholars in recent times, there is still little consensus as to the scope of passive diversity in Japanese, as the form “conveys an extremely wide range of meanings, many of which are ambiguous, and some of which overlap with other grammatical constructions”; in addition, although linguists have identified a number of different passive types, terminology and taxonomies in Japanese vary greatly, depending on the author and theoretical framework cited (*ibid.*).

It is generally agreed, however, that in contrast to the passive construction in English, Japanese passives can be derived from both transitive or intransitive verbs, are usually, but not always, restricted to animate subjects, and often carry affective connotations of a covert nature such as in the indirect expression of emotional nuances, both adversative and benefactive. In addition, a more recent translational form of the verb, which has come into being in modern times as a result of the influence of certain Western languages (i.e., Dutch and English), is now being employed with increasing frequency in written Japanese

discourse of a scientific and technical nature. The English passive conveys a sense of objectivity and impersonality in these contexts, "but it is not clear from research findings whether these expressive effects occur in the same way in Japanese. If they do, the Japanese passive would contain a spectrum of meanings ranging from the affective on the one hand, to the objective and impersonal on the other" (*ibid.*, p. 98).

Thus, although in most circumstances the passive has distinctly different functions in the two languages, there also seems to be a degree of overlap, coinciding perhaps with the narrower range of meaning associated with the English construction. Nevertheless, according to Harder (1984) very few Japanese EL2 learners are aware of these cross-linguistic differences, and because the Japanese passive remains poorly understood among the Japanese themselves, most students have limited awareness of the wide range of passive functions in their mother tongue. As a result, "there is a tendency for Japanese-speaking English L2 learners to transfer affective notions into English in passive contexts where they do not exist, as well as to form passives from intransitive verbs, and to restrict their usage to animate subjects" (Niyekawa, 1968, & Watabe et al., 1991; cited in Hino & Davies, *ibid.*). Therefore, any analysis of errors in passive use in student writing is likely to reveal not only the misapplication of the transitivity rules in English, but also the possibility that Japanese writers are mistakenly attempting to convey implicit emotional nuances, as they would do in their native language.

2.5 Basic grammatical errors

In a survey of American university professors to determine which kinds of grammatical errors in the compositions of freshmen students they found most "irritating," Kehe & Kehe (1996, p. 109) discovered that certain kinds of mistakes are judged significantly more negatively than others. At the top of this "irritability scale" were mistakes in subject-verb agreement and singular/plural errors with nouns. Many professors also noted that problems with the article system were frequent among foreign students, but were inclined to be more patient in this regard. Spelling errors, however, were almost unanimously condemned as completely inexcusable, as they were seen as reflecting a lack of effort or interest on behalf of the writer, and generally resulted in very negative evaluations of writing assignments. Of interest here is the demonstration by Davies (1998, pp. 41–42) that even Japanese university students specializing in English at advanced levels of study make vast numbers of basic grammatical mistakes in exactly these areas (i.e., subject-verb concord, singular/plural, the article system, and spelling), and that student compositions can become virtually incomprehensible when too many errors of this nature are superimposed upon anomalous organizational patterns.

In addition to the more heavily stigmatized grammatical mistakes noted above, a number of other errors at this level arise with surprising frequency in the writing of Japanese EL2 students (*ibid.*, p. 43). These include singular/plural confusions involving mass and count nouns, errors in adjective sequence, difficulties with anaphoric pronominal

reference, etc.; e.g., *informations, *equipments, *homeworks, etc.; *It is a Japanese, old city (cf. an old, Japanese city); *Soccer and baseball can be enjoyed by everyone. Those sports are played all over the world (cf. these).

Davies, however, argues that many of these kinds of errors may not really be “grammar” problems at all, but are caused by certain cultural attitudes that Japanese EL2 students bring to writing (ibid., p. 43). According to Hinds (1987, p. 145), for example, the writing process is culture-specific: “English-speaking writers go through draft after draft to come up with a final product, Japanese authors frequently compose exactly one draft which becomes the finished product.” Similarly, Japanese EL2 students’ grammatical shortcomings may well arise from a lack of attention to proofreading and editing and they may need to approach the writing process itself with a different set of attitudes (Davies, op. cit.). Thus, as Hinds (op. cit., p. 151) points out, “In addition to teaching students in ESL classes that there are differences in rhetorical styles between English and their native language, it may be necessary to take a further step and teach a new way to conceptualize the writing process.”

2.6 Sentence misconstructions

As Harder & Harder (1982, p. 22) point out, unnecessarily wordy sentences and overly complex structures and phrases occur with some regularity in the writing of Japanese EL2 students; e.g., *So I still have boundless respect for him not only about his academic achievement but his attitude toward the other people because he is doing his best in every day of his life. They state that this “may be the result of a feeling that simple phrases... were indications of an immature style from a Japanese point of view.” Davies (1998, p. 40) claims that overly complex phrasing may also be due to differing attitudes toward paragraph structure in Japanese. As Teele (1983, pp. 23 & 29) observes, the notion of a “sentence” in Japanese is intertwined with those of the “clause” on the one hand and the “phrase” on the other: “[A] paragraph of Japanese prose may be seen as one long sentence, an ocean in which the smaller units, waves, rise and fall.”

In contrast, sentences fragments (i.e., incomplete sentences) are another common problem in Japanese EL2 writing. Harder & Harder (1982, p. 22) suggest that this may “result from a tendency not to state the subject clearly.” Davies (1998, p. 39) also notes that sentence fragments beginning with “because” and “for example” are particularly common in student writing. Although such errors may arise because of lack of practice and corrective feedback (see Davies, 1999a, for details), transfer from Japanese also appears to provide a feasible explanation because sentences such as the following are grammatically correct in Japanese (ibid.): *The Japanese are not used to people from other countries. *Because Japan is an island country surrounded by the sea. (cf. *Nihonjin wa gaikokujin ni narete imasen. Nazenara nihon wa shimaguni dakara desu.*)

2.7 Inappropriate language use

There are also certain kinds of writing problems that frequently arise in the compositions of Japanese students of English involving language which is not so much grammatically or structurally incorrect as inappropriate. Ethnocentric language is one such issue. When writing academic English, it is advisable for Japanese EL2 students to avoid presenting an ethnocentric worldview in which Japan is opposed to all the other countries of the world (Davies, 1998, p. 37); e.g., *wareware nihonjin* vs *anatatachi gaikokujin* (literally, “we Japanese” vs “you foreigners”). Rather than “*we* Japanese,” “*the* Japanese” can be used; similarly, instead of repeatedly referring to people who are not Japanese as “foreigners,” which occurs with great frequency in student writing, other more internationally appropriate expressions can be used, such as “non-Japanese,” “people from other countries,” or simply “British,” “French,” “Chinese,” etc. Synonyms of the word “foreign” found in dictionaries include the terms “alien,” “strange,” and “not natural”; other connotations are “inappropriate,” “nonessential,” and “irrelevant” (see Spack, 1997, p. 776), none of which are particularly endearing labels. Furthermore, not all non-Japanese are Americans. There are a variety of countries beyond Japan’s borders and student writing should reflect this. In addition, expressions such as “unique Japanese customs” and “brilliant Japanese culture” should also be avoided. The constant reference to all things Japanese as “unique” is both incorrect and inappropriate; moreover, understatement conveys notions such as “brilliant culture” more effectively.

Proverbs are another controversial issue in the academic writing of Japanese EL2 students; e.g., The early bird gets the worm; cf. The nail that sticks up gets hammered down (*Deru kugi wa utareru*). Most learners are not cognizant of the fact that it is considered inappropriate to use native language proverbs in written academic English, although proverbs from other languages can be used judiciously on occasion. In Japanese writing, proverbs and aphorisms are used with considerable frequency in conjunction with moral statements and didactic remarks, especially in the concluding sections of compositions (Davies & Ide, 1997, p. 42; Davies, 1998, p. 36). As Scollon & Scollon (1995, p. 107) point out, however, one of the most important characteristics of written discourse in English is that it be *individualistic*: “[W]riters should avoid set phrases, metaphors, proverbs, and clichés, and strive to make their statements fresh and original...by producing original phrasings and statements.”

It may be that above injunction to be “fresh and original” in one’s writing is also responsible for another commonly followed axiom that it is preferable to avoid repetition of words and phrases within sentences in written English, or even in sentences that are juxtaposed. It may also be that the “immensely diverse vocabulary” of modern English is at least partially responsible for this feature of the language, as “to a greater or lesser extent all modern prose strives to avoid lexical repetition,” and the language provides large numbers of partial synonyms which all good writers attempt to employ (Ball, 1975, p. 197). Harder & Harder (1982, p. 22) provide the following example from an essay written by a

Japanese student which illustrates the negative effects of lexical repetition: "Religion is easy to be connected with political power, because of this character of religion the Communists hate religion. There are few fixed rules in this regard, but providing students with training in the use of a thesaurus can be of value in assisting them in their search for synonyms.

Contractions and colloquial language, which Japanese EL2 students commonly employ in writing letters to pen pals, and in classroom journals, personal diaries, etc., are another aspect of writing which is considered inappropriate in academic contexts. Students will often need to be taught that although these expressions are frequently used in spoken English and informal writing, they are frowned upon when writing academically (Davies, 1998, p. 36).

A related concern in student writing has to do with the avoidance of so-called sexist language. The human race is, after all, composed of equal proportions of males and females and Japanese EL2 writers will need to know that expressions such as "men" should be written as "people" when referring to all human beings, while "he" should be replaced with "he or she" in similar situations (*ibid.*, p. 38). It should also be pointed out, however, that there is continuing debate on this issue in the academic world and students will need to be made aware that these strategies can result in a serious syntactic difficulties on occasion, in which case a shift to plural "they" can be a practical alternative.

2.8 Mistakes in mechanics and basic manuscript conventions

According to Davies (*ibid.*, p. 28), one of the most striking features in the writing of Japanese students of English, even at advanced levels of study, is the surprising lack of mastery of the fundamental manuscript conventions of written English. This aspect of writing is normally subsumed under the heading "mechanics," and according to Jacobs et al. (1981, p. 96), includes elements such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing (*i.e.*, indenting), and handwriting.

A review of the literature has furnished very few sources which even mention this component of the writing of Japanese EL2 students. Davies (*op. cit.*), however, reports on a number of problem areas at this level which frequently occur in students' compositions, and claims that most Japanese university students will require "entry-level instruction" on such basic elements as the placement of names and titles, the amount of space that should be left at the margins for instructors' comments, the double spacing of written work, rules for the capitalization and punctuation of titles, the indentation of new paragraphs rather than simply starting a new line, and the hyphenation of words at the end of lines at syllable breaks rather than arbitrarily (*ibid.*, pp. 28-29). Other issues that often arise include the use of italics to indicate words and expressions from other languages, standards for writing numbers either as words or numerals, and confusion between British and American conventions in such areas as spelling and the listing of words in a series (*ibid.*). According to Davies, punctuation is also a major source of difficulty for many students, especially with regard to the use colons and semi-colons, the position of quotation marks in relation to other punctuation marks, the punctuation necessary to set off introductory elements and

embedded relative clauses in a sentence, and the punctuation required with sentence connectors (*ibid.*, pp. 29–30).

It should also be noted that there is a marked disparity between handwriting and keyboard skills among Japanese university students. Even today, handwriting is of great importance in Japanese life and handwritten communication is still considered the norm for business and government. People in all walks of life are critically judged on the basis of their writing (i.e., calligraphic) skills: letters for job applications, for example, *must* be written by hand. Calligraphy is a highly esteemed art form in Japan and is regularly practiced at all levels of schooling, with advanced courses even offered in universities. In addition, students have to master four different scripts in learning to write the Japanese language, and do so in the time-honored tradition of rigorous and exhaustive rote practice. As a result, many Japanese students are able to write in a surprisingly elegant and graceful script in English. However, computer literacy and keyboard skills remain largely undeveloped at the present time, and large numbers of students, even at later stages of university life, will require practice in typing compositions (*ibid.*, pp. 30–31).

3. Sample compositions

Although extracted samples of students' written work are sometimes furnished in the literature, integral and unabridged versions of the academic writing of Japanese EL2 students beyond the basic sentence level, as originally drafted in the classroom, are rare (for an exception, see Kubota, 1992). As a result, the reader is often left with only a vague idea of what these learners can and cannot accomplish in their written work, and as Eskey (1981, p. 318) points out, "in attempting to determine what our students need most, one look at a set of real student papers...is...worth a year's study of research reports..." In order to redress this shortcoming, the following sample compositions are presented as a means of providing an introductory, macro-level picture of student writing, one in which many of the infelicities described above should be readily discernible.

These writing samples are pre-instruction essays written by third-year Japanese university students enrolled in entry-level English composition courses (see Davies, 1998). All the writers were specializing in English in some form and can be considered representative of this level of study in Japan. It should be noted, however, that the terms "third-year university students" and "entry-level composition course" do not constitute an oxymoron in this case. Many EL2 students in Japan will graduate from university without ever having taken a single English composition course, others will attend purported classes in English composition and end up doing little more than grammar-translation exercises. In almost all cases, the third-year students in this study were receiving genuine instruction in English composition for the first time in their academic careers (see Davies, 1999b).

The following essays were written during the first class of a three-month course in academic writing skills, and the prompt used was "English Education in Japan," a topic of

ongoing public debate throughout the country at the present time, and one which the students had extensive prior knowledge of and interest in. No specific guidance was

English Education in Japan

From junior high school and high school, I've only read so many English sentences at school. News papers, essays and novels written in English. But I haven't learned how to speak English and how to write my ideas in English. So I'm very scared when I talk to English with foreigners.

I think English education in Japan is very difficult. Because we Japanese don't use English in our life. And we don't have any opportunity to talk with foreigners.

"Know about English"

I heard that "It's different 'know English' and 'know about English'". I've learned English since junior high school and what I've learned is 'know English'. But now I guess I want to learn about English. When I think about English I have to think culture where English is used. If I read books or watch movies which Americans wrote or made, I can understand surface. But is it "know about English"? I guess no. In order to know about English more, I think I read more English papers or talk with Americans. Moreover I need to learn about Japan and Japanese. It's important to compare with English and Japanese. I believe if I do so, I'll get some answer about "know about English".

I can't write anymore.
I don't know what I wanted to say...

English Education in Japan

In Japan almost of university students can't speak English even though they have studied it for 6 years since they entered junior high school. Before I went to America to study English, I was one of them, too.

I think this problem is causing by the Japanese English education system. When I was a junior high school student, I was taught only how to read ^{English} and basic grammar. English classes were given only for entering good high school. In high school I experienced same type of English education, too.

When I attended English classes in America, I was really given shock by European students because they spoke English very well. Of course their grammar skills were not so good as their speaking skills.

I examine that in European education system, they place importance on how to communicate in English. I don't think we can use European education system in Japan because we have university entering examination, but I really think now is the time we have to change Japanese education system. So that we can educate more student who can work in International stages.

provided on any aspect of their writing, and after a short period of collective brainstorming for ideas, students were given 80 minutes to complete their assignments during which time they were allowed to freely consult their dictionaries:

The inadequacies of the above compositions are readily apparent and will not be commented on at this time, except to state that many of the shortcomings they exhibit clearly fall within the categories of error production discussed in the profile above. It must also be stressed that writing of this quality is by no means the exception—rather it would seem to be the norm for this level of study in Japan.

There is ample evidence to suggest, however, that if these students are provided with effective composition instruction, many them will make significant progress in their academic

writing skills. The following post-instruction sample, which was submitted by the first student above in the final class of a three-month composition course, offers some initial testimony in support of this claim:

The Influences of Western Culture on Modern Japanese Life.

The Japanese people have been receptive to Western culture since the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji Government carried out the plans for adopting Western culture for the purpose of enhancing the wealth and military strength of Japan. As a result, Western culture has spread through the whole Japanese life, particularly in the areas of education, transportation, and communication.

First of all, Western culture had a great influence on Japanese education. Because the Meiji Government thought that education was the most important factor to reach the cultural level of Europe, it established the new education system "Gakusei" in 1872.

Furthermore, the government built a lot of elementary schools and Universities in various areas of country, and engaged Westerners as teachers in each schools.

In addition to education system, people in Meiji period introduced several kinds of vehicles to their life. Trains, for example, were imported from England in the early Meiji period. The first railroad service was started between Shinbashi and Yokohama in Tokyo. The engineers from Europe taught the Japanese drivers how to operate railroad trains. Similarly, cars and bicycles became very popular among the Japanese people.

These means of transportation are indispensable to even modern Japanese life.

Finally, people from Western countries brought the useful systems of communication: telegraph and the telephone. These two systems, which were invented by Americans, have been adopted so quickly to Japanese society. Especially with regard to the telephone, the Meiji Government started its service as the national enterprise to meet the great demands for telephones.

To summarize, Western culture has contributed to Japanese life from the viewpoint of education, means of transport, and systems of communication. The Japanese people cannot describe the whole aspects of their culture without reference to the influences of Western countries.

4. Conclusion

As stated previously, the main goal of this paper has been to develop a preliminary profile of the writing of Japanese students of English in order to establish baseline parameters of infelicity in their written work. By definition, a profile is not designed to be exhaustive—it is a portrayal of the most important features of a subject, the exemplification of a topic in outline (Webster's, 1990, p. 939). Although many other minor features of the writing of Japanese EL2 students could be referred to, doing so at this time would not significantly advance our cause, since the main components of this profile are now in place. In brief, (1) it has been demonstrated that there is clearly something amiss in the academic writing of Japanese EL2 students; (2) representative samples of written work produced by these students have been furnished to illustrate this assertion; (3) the ways in which their writing can be considered deficient has been explicated on several different levels and with the testimony of established authorities; (4) a number of key features which characterize such writing have been identified; (5) where possible, the reasons underlying these shortcomings have been alluded to; and (6) evidence has been presented demonstrating that these students are capable of making dramatic improvements in their writing when provided with appropriate instruction.

This survey also reveals a number of problems inherent in the research carried out to date. Firstly, because many of the descriptions of the writing of Japanese EL2 students are impressionistic and anecdotal in nature, unsubstantiated generalizations are commonplace in the literature and systematic statistical evidence in support of allegations is rare. Secondly, terminological confusions and ambiguities are widespread in current research: many of the characterizations of Japanese EL2 writing simply enumerate lists of qualities in which seemingly unrelated items are randomly juxtaposed, while the issues themselves are seldom defined or elaborated upon, as exemplified below:

[T]he problems which Japanese...college students have in terms of content and organization of compositions [include the following]: lack of focus, wandering from the main point, lack of logical development, no clear thesis statement, statement of emotional opinion rather than reasoned thought, etc. (Teele, 1983, p. 16)

[There seems to be] a certain indistinctiveness, an unwillingness to define exactly one's position, [which, to the native English speaker, is perceived as] an intolerable lack of unity, clarity, and coherence. (Claiborne, 1993, p. 76)

[There are] problems with focus, logic, statement of the thesis, classification and coherence. (Harder, 1984, p. 126)

Such statements make it clear that there are indeed some serious issues to be addressed, but what, one may ask, do "focus," "logic," "statement of thesis," "classification," and "coherence" have in common? Why are such disparate terminological hierarchies intermingled in this way? And what precisely do the authors mean by labels such as "focus," "clarity," and "unity?" Thirdly, although descriptions in the cited literature provide partial explanations to account for students' writing difficulties, solutions to their problems in the form of strategies for pedagogical intervention and remediation are almost non-existent. Finally, although purely descriptive, taxonomic approaches to the analysis of written discourse, such as the profile of student writing presented above, are often a useful initial heuristic (Givón, 1981), they also have a number of important limits, especially in accommodating cross-language linguistic evidence, and in providing a suitable basis for understanding the origins of students' writing difficulties. Such issues cannot be resolved at this level of analysis and need to be addressed within a framework of applied linguistic theory, which is the goal of the next article in this series.

Notes

1. The term "Japanese students of English," as opposed to "Japanese English majors" for example, is a conscious choice and is not meant to be ambiguous. In Japanese post-secondary institutions, students specializing in English can be found in many different faculties and departments, and their "major" depends on the labels designated by the specific university. In addition, in many cases students from other fields such as psychology, sociology, or even music, will seriously pursue English studies and

- are often at the top of their classes because of strong personal motivations. Even applicants for positions as English teachers in Japanese public schools do not have to “major” in English in order to get a teacher’s licence or obtain a teaching post.
2. This claim should be viewed with caution, however. Although reading is by far the strongest of the four language skills among Japanese EL2 students at the university level, their competence in this area still leaves much to be desired, particularly in terms of reading speed. Japan has a long tradition of foreign language learning called *yakudoku*, and according to Hino (1988, p. 45), it is the most important methodological antecedent to more modern EL2 teaching methods being used today. It can be considered an essential component of Japan’s indigenous educational tradition, one which is over a thousand years old, but one which has undoubtedly become a serious handicap for Japanese EL2 students in the modern world. *Yaku* means “translation,” and *doku* means “reading.” *Yakudoku* can thus be defined as a technique for reading a foreign language, and it is a process which has three essential stages: translating, reordering, and recoding (p. 46). Hino states that there are two significant aspects to *yakudoku*: “the regressive eye movement resulting from the word-by-word translation, [and] the fact that the meaning is not understood directly in the target language, but only via translation” (ibid.). For many Japanese students, reading English and *yakudoku* are the same thing (i.e., *yomu*, or reading = *yakusu*, or translation): “They are neither aware that it is much more natural to read English in the original word order nor that it is desirable to read directly without recourse to translation” (p. 47). Hino also points out that *yakudoku* has certain important disadvantages (pp. 50–51): (1) it limits the speed at which the student reads (by some estimates reading in English directly is up to three times faster), (2) it reduces the efficiency with which the student is able to comprehend, (3) the meaning of the text obtained via Japanese translation is usually only a poor approximation of the original, and (4) *yakudoku* has detrimental effects on other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing, as students employ similar strategies of translating every word into Japanese and then reordering and recoding (in reverse order for speaking and writing, however). Hino notes that *Mombusho*’s (The Japanese Ministry of Education) Course of Study Guidelines, which define and control the contents of English teaching in secondary schools in Japan, make no mention of the necessity of teaching skills in translating English into Japanese, yet in spite of its obvious disadvantages, *yakudoku* continues to be used extensively in Japanese schools. Two recent nation-wide surveys conducted by the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) showed that approximately 80% of Japanese teachers of English in high schools and universities used the *yakudoku* method, and by some estimates, 70% of Japanese university students today have been taught to read English solely with this method (p. 46).
 3. Throughout this work, EL2 will be used as a generic term to refer to both second and foreign language learning. Many precedents exist for this choice, including Odlin (1989, p. 4), Swales (1990, p. 2), and Cohen (1998, p. 4). As Odlin points out, the difference between ESL and EL2 may be crucial for those developing syllabuses or preparing pedagogical materials, but in studies such as this, the distinction is not important.
 4. In 1994, a new set of *Mombusho* Course of Study Guidelines for English education in Japanese senior high schools came into effect, emphasizing for the first time the development of students’ communicative abilities as the primary goal of instruction: “Students should be encouraged to acquire communicative competence in English and to cultivate basic international understanding with a view to acquiring the indispensable qualities of following international progress and change, and of living in an international society” (*Mombusho*, 1994, p. 6). In order to attain this goal, several new courses were instituted in Japanese high schools, including Oral Communication A (speaking ability), B (listening comprehension), and C (presentations, debates, etc.). At the present time, however, Oral Communication C remains almost non-existent, and most institutions select either A or B. In addition, in order to meet the demands of college entrance examinations, it appears that a great many oral communication classes are used primarily as a means of providing extra grammar instruction for students. In a survey conducted by Brown & Wada (1998), it was reported that approximately 68% of

high school teachers had apparently read the guidelines, and when asked what their most important classroom goal was, most cited the development of students' communicative competence (p. 104). Brown & Wada point out that although this may seem like a very promising set of responses, it is likely that they were answering what they thought they *should* be teaching, and note that a vast body of other studies indicates that "more traditional, translation-oriented methods [e.g., *yakudoku*] still prevail in most Japanese classrooms" (p. 105). They add that when one considers that "the majority of English teachers in Japan receive no formal training," that only 35% of teachers responding to the survey "reported making their own lesson plans," and that "every *Mombusho*-approved textbook comes with a teacher's manual that has detailed lesson plans emphasising translation and drill-focused teaching techniques, it is not surprising that a wide gap exists between the communicative goals of the guidelines and actual classroom practice" (ibid.).

5. Recent statistical evidence underscores this trend. According to a study funded by the United States Information Agency, US academic institutions are the most popular choice for foreign students wishing to study overseas. In the 1996–97 academic year, 457,984 foreign students were enrolled in US colleges and universities, of which 260,743, or 57%, were from Asia. Of the Asian students, the majority were from the following countries: (1) Japan: 46,292; (2) China: 42,503; (3) South Korea: 37,130; (4) India: 30,641; and (5) Taiwan: 30,487. In the 1997–98 academic year, the total number of foreign students in the US rose to 481,280, an increase of 5.1%, led once again by Japan, China, and South Korea. 21% of the foreign students were in business management, 15% in engineering, and 6% in the arts. Many students at the undergraduate level were initially enrolled in "sheltered programs" which are designed to help them improve their academic skills in English before joining mainstream courses. The study also noted that "the US share of students studying abroad has dropped from 40 percent to 30 percent over the last 15 years, mostly because tuition costs have climbed...and other countries have offered attractive alternatives." Britain, Canada, Australia, France, and Germany were cited as the United States' chief competitors in this regard, and the steady decline in the US share of foreign students was reported to be a source of serious concern among American officials (Foreign enrollment in US, 1997; Foreign students in US, 1998).
6. For our present purposes, we will stipulate *discourse* in its most general sense, agreeing with Chafe that "the term...is used in somewhat different ways by different scholars, but underlying the differences is a common concern for *language beyond the boundaries of isolated sentences*" (cited in Widdowson, 1995, p. 162; my italics). In accordance with recent developments in the field, however, this perspective includes not only the analysis of larger, suprasentential units, or texts, but also pragmatic factors related to the way that people use language within specific situational and sociocultural contexts.
7. S. Pit Corder (1967) was influential in suggesting a new way of looking at "errors" and was one of the first to distinguish between errors and mistakes: "Mistakes are deviations due to performance factors such as memory limitations... They are typically random and are readily corrected by the learner when his attention is drawn to them. Errors, on the other hand, are systematic, consistent deviances characteristic of the learner's linguistic system at a given stage of learning" (Sridhar, 1981, p. 224). By the 1980s, however, a heated debate had begun that still continues today as to the importance of traditional attitudes of correctness. James (1983), for example, states that "[r]ecent enthusiasm for Communicative-Functional language teaching has caused great disquiet simply because the new desideratum of communication has led to neglect of the formal conventions of correctness" (p. 26). At the present time, a primary distinction seems to be gaining ground in teaching circles between oral and written language: in the former, communicative fluency and intelligibility are emphasized; in the latter, accuracy is stressed. Nevertheless, as James points out, "we are still struggling with the ERROR/MISTAKE dichotomy" (1994, p. 188). It is important to realize that "errors have social effects, like failing exams, being barred from jobs and clubs or 'gated'...in other ways" (ibid., p. 191). Today, definitions of the term "error" are more cautious, and an error is often simply described as "a form which would 'not be produced by the speaker's native speaker

counterparts” (Lennon, cited in James, 1994, p. 193). Our position here concurs with this latter perspective; however, the need for lexical variety has led to the use of a number of (partial) synonyms throughout this work (e.g., deficiencies, shortcomings, infelicities, drawbacks, errors, mistakes, misconstructions, misuses, etc.). No attempt has been made to draw precise distinctions between these terms as this is not primarily a study in error analysis.

8. Unfortunately, this explanation now appears too simplistic in light of subsequent investigations (see Hino & Davies, 1998).

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