

A Survey of Research on EFL Writing in Japan, Part 2 : Principle Findings

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A Survey of Research on EFL Writing in Japan, Part 2

Principle Findings

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1. Introduction

This is the second of a two-part paper which provides an extensive review of EFL writing research that has been conducted with Japanese subjects in Japan and, to a lesser extent, abroad. As was pointed out in part one (Clements, 2009), reviews of research on L2 writing in English (for example, Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008) have tended to concentrate on ESL writing in North America. This review, therefore, addresses a need for focused syntheses of research on particular linguistic and cultural contexts, in this case that of native Japanese-speaking (hereafter NJ) subjects writing in English. As such, it aims to offer a critical account of the questions that researchers have investigated, thus supporting practitioners who work with NJ students as well as complicating our more general understanding of the nature of L2 writing as it is learned in EFL classrooms. The review is extensive (though not exhaustive) in that it synthesizes a range of studies according to their characteristics and principle findings. The first part examined the characteristics of the studies, including areas of focus and research design; this second part summarizes principle findings.

Selection criteria for the studies included here are provided in part one. To the initial sample of 64 studies, five studies have been added which became available to the author since the completion of part one. Thus, the following review is based on a sample of 69 studies published between 1984 and 2010. Findings are discussed according to the areas of focus identified in part one: writer characteristics, composing, written text, instruction, feedback, and assessment.

2. Writer Characteristics

A small number of studies investigated the characteristics that account for NJ students' writing in English, focusing mainly on those factors that distinguish more- and less-skilled writers, as determined by various measures of quality. Most of these studies employ methodology similar to Hirose and Sasaki (1994), and so can be seen as confirming and extending their findings. These studies found that proficiency in the L2 (English) and writing ability in the L1 (Japanese) were correlated with writing quality (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Ito, 2004; Nakanishi, 2006; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996), though findings differ as to which factor is more important. Hirose and Sasaki's initial study found that both L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency accounted for a large portion of variance in L2 writing scores. However, Sasaki and Hirose found that L2 proficiency explained the largest portion of variance, while Ito and Nakanishi both found that L1 writing was a more powerful predictor of L2 writing quality. It bears pointing out that in spite of similarities in methodology, these studies did not employ similar writing tasks and measures of quality. Further, it was found that more-skilled L2 writers had instruction and experience in both L1 and L2 writing (Nakanishi, 2006); that they reported more self-initiated writing experiences (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994) and greater confidence in their writing (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996); that they wrote more fluently in both L1 and L2, and had regularly completed writing tasks longer than one paragraph

in high school (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996). Two of these studies also measured students' metaknowledge of L2 expository writing, but with contradictory findings. Hirose and Sasaki found that metaknowledge was not significantly correlated with L2 writing quality, while Sasaki and Hirose found that it made a small, but still significant, contribution. Finally, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) found that oral skills were more related to writing quality when subjects wrote directly in the L2 without translating.

Two studies in this area investigated more specific writer characteristics. Taking a similar approach to the studies cited above, Baba (2009) investigated the influence of lexical proficiency on the quality of NJ writers' summary writing, finding that while lexical proficiency as a whole did not have a distinct effect separate from other language abilities (L2 proficiency, reading comprehension, fluency), productive lexical abilities such as word definition ability and lexical diversity made unique contributions to summary writing performance. Spack's (1997) three-year case study of a female NJ student at a North American university investigated the academic literacy practices that the student acquired in response to the demands of her coursework. Spack found that her subject developed as a reader and writer through constant practice and interaction with course instructors, and that she actively employed a variety of strategies to successfully complete her courses. Specifically, she gradually learned to distinguish summary from argumentative writing, to use sources to support her own ideas and to shape the ideas of other writers into a coherent argument. Spack's subject's theory of academic literacy acquisition also evolved to a view of reading and writing as knowledge construction.

3. Composing

Studies of composing are related to studies of writer characteristics in that they have typically investigated the processes that specific NJ writers go through as they create text. Several of these studies investigated differences in the processes, especially the strategy use, of more- and less-skilled writers, again as determined by measures of quality. These studies have found that more-skilled writers paid attention to content and organization as they wrote (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Miyake, 2007; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996), and that they planned organization on a separate sheet of paper and took the reader into account (Nakanishi, 2006). In contrast, less-skilled writers employed fewer strategies overall, and paid no special attention to content, or to mechanics and grammar (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). Sasaki (2000) found that differences between novice and expert L2 writers' strategy use was explained by L2 proficiency, with the novices stopping to translate more often, while experts stopped to refine word choice. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) found that L2 proficiency was strongly correlated with writers' ability to make intersentential revisions. Looking specifically at translation, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) found that less-skilled writers appeared to benefit more from translating from L1 into L2, while more-skilled writers made more errors when they translated from L1 to L2 than when they just wrote in English.

Another group of studies examined composing processes of more- and less-experienced L2 writers. Comparing novice (undergraduate) with expert writers who regularly wrote academic papers in the L2, Sasaki (2000) found that experts spent more time initially on global organization and less time pausing while composing. Matsumoto's (1995) case study of four expert academic writers further revealed that they used strategies similar to skilled native English-speaking (hereafter NE) writers, including revising multiple times, focusing on content while writing, writing with a specific audience in mind, writing using a word processor supplemented by handwriting, composing solely in the L2, and using similar composing processes in both L1 and L2. Matsumoto's subjects also viewed writing as a dynamic, recursive, nonlinear process, and learning to write as a process of skill-building. Takagaki (2001, 2003), on the other hand, found that his

three case study participants engaged in similar revision behaviors regardless of amount of experience or language of composition, including re-reading parts of previous drafts and focusing on both higher-level concerns (content, organization) and lower-level concerns (grammar, word choice) in first revisions but mainly focusing on lower-level concerns in second revisions. Takagaki (2001) also found, though, that the less experienced writers relied more on lexical knowledge and translation while revising. Finally, two studies have observed correlations between writing experience, including instruction, and writing processes. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) found that the ability to make essay-level revisions was correlated with amount of writing experience, and that instruction played an active role in students' essay-level revisions and use of correction strategies. Sasaki (2000) as well found that novice writers began to use expert L2 writing strategies following instruction.

In two longitudinal studies, Sasaki (2004; 2007) investigated the influence of study abroad on the writing processes of NJ university students. Both studies found that students who studied abroad (SA) and those who stayed "at home" (AH) improved in L2 proficiency, that neither group improved in the direction of expert writers, but that SA students became more motivated. Sasaki (2007) further found that SA students made more local plans (that is, planning what to write next rather than planning with the whole text in mind), and that studying abroad did not affect students' use of translation. Contrastingly, Sasaki (2004) found that both groups improved in writing quality, fluency, and confidence, while Sasaki (2007) found that only SA students improved in quality and fluency. Sasaki (2007) suggested that these differing results were caused by differences in the amount of writing instruction that her subjects had received before the study-abroad period.

Two studies specifically investigated NJ doctoral candidates writing research papers and dissertations in English. Reporting on interviews with 16 students in applied physics, chemistry and cell biology, Gosden (1996) found that these writers had little formal training in academic writing, but that they also consulted books about scientific writing; that they either wrote an entire paper in the L1 then translated it into L2, or translated phrase by phrase; that they tended to view revision as mechanical editing; and that they were unable to think about audience when writing. In a case study of three students writing dissertations employing qualitative research methods, Casanave (2010) found that all three wrote dissertations that generally followed the conventions of social-scientific writing, but that they also employed non-conventional forms, including narrative and literary elements, such as the use of first-person perspective, unconventional section titles, and deliberate positioning of the writer as an active agent within the text.

A number of studies have looked at NJ writers' use of specific composing strategies, namely translation, revision, and dictionary use. Regarding translation, as has already been pointed out, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) found that lower proficiency writers benefited more from translation, while higher proficiency writers made more errors when they translated. Kobayashi and Rinnert also found that syntactic complexity was greater in translations than in compositions written directly in L2. Similarly, Uzawa (1996) found that NJ writers completing a translation task translated sentence-by-sentence without reading the whole text first, that they paid more attention to language use and less attention to metacognitive issues, and that they achieved higher scores for language use than on their direct compositions in both L1 and L2. Regarding revision, Takagaki (2003) found that all three of his case-study participants produced many more revisions in compositions written in L1 than those written in L2. As mentioned above, Kobayashi and Rinnert (2001) found that intersentential revisions in the L2 were correlated with L2 proficiency and essay-level revisions were correlated with writing experience, and that instruction played an active role in students' essay-level revisions

and use of correction strategies. Suzuki (2008), on the other hand, compared NJ writers' self revisions and peer revisions, and found qualitative differences between the two, specifically that peer revision was associated with more negotiation and metatalk, and that self revision was associated with more changes to text. Finally, one study (Christianson, 1997) examined NJ university writers' dictionary use, finding that subjects used words looked up in a dictionary incorrectly 42% of the time; that more successful dictionary users employed a variety of look-up strategies regardless of level of proficiency, in particular making use of the grammatical information contained in example sentences.

Several of the studies already mentioned compared NJ writers' composing processes in both L1 and L2. These studies mainly report similarities between L1 and L2 processes, specifically that more-skilled writers paid more attention to overall organization while writing and wrote more fluently in both languages (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996), and that they made an organizational plan on a separate sheet of paper before writing (Nakanishi, 2006). Takagaki further found that reading was the most frequently employed revision behavior (2001) and that writers demonstrated similar revising intentions across languages (2003). However, as pointed out earlier, Takagaki (2003) also found that NJ writers made many more revisions in L1 than L2. Another contrast was reported by Miyake (2007), who found differing strategies between L1 and L2 writing: paying attention to verb forms in L1 writing and simplifying ideas in L2. Finally, Uzawa found that in both L1 and L2 writing tasks NJ writers generated ideas but did not organize them, paid more attention to metacognitive issues and less attention to language use, and achieved similar scores for language use.

4. Written Text

Studies of NJ writers' written texts have employed a variety of analytical techniques to investigate linguistic and rhetorical features. These techniques run along a continuum from more objective measurements, which usually focus on sentence-level features, to more interpretive analyses, which tend to concentrate on discourse-level characteristics. Among studies of sentence-level features, Bryant (1984) analyzed the errors made by NJ writers studying in the US, and found that most errors were intralingual (though no frequency data are presented), including verb tense errors and incorrect use of "s" to signal genitive case. Interlingual errors, which are more serious because they impede communication, included faulty omission of articles and locative prepositions, errors in the use of singular and plural, verbal aspect, impersonal "it," and subjective complements, as well as unnecessary emphasis, unidiomatic reversal of negative clauses, and inappropriate use of judgemental clauses (for example, "I think that..."). Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) analyzed the writing of first-year students in Japan after a year of instruction, finding that students wrote longer compositions, including more words per sentence and paragraph; that they varied less in the number of sentences per paragraph; that they used a wider variety of transitions and fewer unnecessary transitions; and that their writing converged with academic prose on a number of stylistic features. In a study of eleven NJ students in the US, Miyake (2007) found that lower-level students' English compositions were more influenced by the L1 in preferring inanimate subjects, incorporating longer sentences, and omitting or simplifying complex ideas; that upper level students changed abstract ideas in L1 into more concrete expressions for L2 essays; and that in L2 essays in general verbs were simplified. Finally, one study (Oi, 1986) compared the sentence-level features of NES' English writing with that of NJ speakers' writing in English and Japanese. Oi found that NE writing used fewer conjunctions than NJ writing in L1 or L2, and that NJ writing in both languages tended to repeat lexical items while NE writing used synonyms. Moreover,

NE writers used more hyperbolic expressions while NJ writers used more hedges.

Two studies employed T-unit and clause analysis to measure NJ students' writing over time. In a study of journal writing, Casanave (1994) found that students wrote longer T-units, more error-free T-units (EFTs) and longer EFTs. Casanave further found that the writers' accuracy and complexity decreased, but that their use of coordination remained stable, with seven out of ten students showing fewer instances of sentences which began with a coordinating conjunction. More generally, students' writing looked less like speech. Ishikawa (1995) had low-proficiency subjects complete a narrative task in which one group was forced to use a holistic approach while the other used a discrete approach (completing the task by responding to questions). Ishikawa found that the holistic group demonstrated the most development, including significant changes in T-units per composition, error-free clauses per sentence, error-free clauses per T-unit, total words in T-units, the ratio of error-free clauses to total clauses, total number of words in error-free clauses, and the ratio of words in error-free clauses to the total number of words in clauses. The discrete group, on the other hand, showed significant changes in clauses per sentence and error-free clauses per sentence. The most reliable measures were found to be the total number of words in error-free clauses and error-free clauses per composition. Similar to these studies is Ishikawa's (2005) study of the correlation between language proficiency and indices of structural complexity (for example, S-nodes per T-unit). Ishikawa found that these correlations were stronger for the more complex of the two tasks that writers completed.

Two studies specifically looked at the apparent effects of time spent abroad on NJ writers' texts. Kohro (2001) examined essays written by a group of NJ university students both before and after a six-month period of study overseas in the US in comparison with an AH control group. Students in the SA group made no significant improvement in writing quality but wrote significantly longer T-units than the AH group. Sugiura's (2000) case study of an NJ female who lived abroad for four years employed thematic analysis to examine language development in the subject's journal entries. Sugiura found four patterns of diversification of linguistic theme: the use of textual and interpersonal theme besides topical theme, linear and split-theme patterns, the use of dependent clauses, and more embedded or rank-shifted clauses as subjects.

A number of studies have looked at features extending beyond sentence boundaries (as did Sugiura, 2000, mentioned above). Miyasako (2000) performed a topic structure analysis of writing by Japanese high school students, finding that more proficient students preferred extended parallel progression, while less proficient students preferred parallel progression. Miyasako also found that extended parallel progression correlated positively with quality scores. In a pair of studies, Kamimura (1996) and Kamimura and Oi (2001) examined the narrative writing of NJ writers. Kamimura found that narrative composing in both L1 and L2 are correlated beyond a threshold level of L2 proficiency. Kamimura and Oi manipulated their narrative task by having their subjects write from the first- and third-person perspectives. They found that the compositions of writers who first wrote in the first-person and then the third-person declined in quality for low proficiency writers, but not for high proficiency writers. On the other hand, writing first in the third-person and then the first-person resulted in an increase in quality regardless of proficiency level.

The majority of studies of written text have focused on rhetorical patterns in NJ writers' texts, including comparisons of L1 and L2 writing, and comparisons with native speakers' English writing. First, studies comparing NJ subjects' L1 and L2 writing have yielded results which are suggestive, if difficult to interpret. Achiba and Kuromiya (1983) found that in their L2 compositions, NJ university students studying in the US tended to prefer linear organization slightly more than circular organization. However, their L1 compositions clearly preferred circular (46%) over linear organization. L2

compositions showed evidence of transfer from L1 in the use of an inductive approach, inclusion of a didactic remark at the end, frequent use of *as you know* and *I think*, and in adverbial clauses beginning with *because*, *although*, and *when*. Additionally, the small number of subjects who wrote both in L1 and L2 used the same pattern in both languages. H. Kobayashi (1984) found that NJ subjects writing in L1 and L2 in Japan tended to use inductive patterns of organization (a finding also reported by Oi, 1986), that they were more likely to omit a thesis statement, and tended to use thesis statements which revealed personal values, beliefs or experiences. On the other hand, NJ subjects writing in L2 in the US (as well as NEs writing in English) tended to use deductive organization and thesis statements which summarized or generalized the content of the writing. Miyake (2007), who investigated the narrative writing of NJ subjects in the US found that both L1 and L2 organization were both influenced by English writing instruction, with narratives organized either analytically or as “pure” narrative. Thus, these studies suggest that the linguistic and cultural environment in which texts are composed may be a factor. Further, Kubota’s (1998) investigation of transfer from L1 to L2 writing found that culturally unique patterns did not negatively transfer, that the subjects (who were writing in Japan) used similar organizational patterns in both L1 and L2 about half the time, and that L1 and L2 writing scores were positively correlated. Second, studies comparing the writing of NJ students (in both L1 and L2) with that of native speakers (in L1) have tended to connect differences in the way texts are organized with the language of composition. Both H. Kobayashi (1984) and Oi (1986) found that NE and NJ students writing in English preferred deductive patterns of organization.

Two studies specifically examined rhetorical differences in particular written genres. Oi and Sato (1990) compared letters of refusal and application Japanese university students (in English and Japanese) with those written by NE instructors (in English). They found that in refusal letters, NJ writers were more likely to use the semantic formulas of apology and excuse, while NJ writers writing in English were more likely to explicitly state a refusal. On the other hand, NE writers were less likely to use linguistic competence as an excuse in their refusals, and never used positive response following a refusal. In application letters, NJ writers were more likely to use social talk, disqualification, petition and promise as rhetorical strategies, while NE writers were more likely to use qualification and personal appeal. NJ writers tended to use emotional rhetorical strategies and to identify themselves before stating the application message, while NE writers used rational persuasion. In both genres, NE writers showed no instances of a mixture of semantic formulas. Kamimura and Oi (1997) further examined application letters, comparing the English writing of NJ and NE subjects. They found that NJ writers with high L2 proficiency and high cultural awareness wrote letters closest in style to NE speakers, while NJ writers with low L2 proficiency and low cultural awareness wrote letters closest in style application letters written in Japanese. Further, NJ writers with high L2 proficiency and low cultural awareness wrote letters with inappropriate content but acceptable organization, while NJ writers with low L2 proficiency and high cultural awareness wrote letters with appropriate content but problematic organization.

While studies of rhetorical pattern have generally focused on expository styles of writing, a number of studies have looked specifically at argumentative writing. As with the studies mentioned above, these studies have tended to note differences between texts written in English and Japanese, though with some contrastive findings. Oi (1986), who compared the writing of NJ students in Japan with that of NE students in the US, found that NJ students used mixed patterns of argumentation when writing in their L1, while NE students writing in English tended to use linear patterns of argumentation. Kamimura and Oi (1998) compared English essays written by Japanese university students in Japan and NE high school students in the US. They found that the NJ writers used reservation

as an organizational unit significantly more often, and that they tended to use affective, emotionally oriented appeals. In contrast, American writers used rational, logically oriented appeals. Further, NE writers preferred emphatic devices to the softening devices employed by NJ writers, and the two groups of writers tended to use different cultural tokens (for example, biblical references and empathy). Oi (1999) used the Toulmin model of argumentation to analyze essays written by university students (NJ students in Japan and NE students in the US), finding that significantly fewer NJ writers made a clear claim; that the use of warrants varied between NJ and NE writers; and that the lack of a clear claim in NJ essays stemmed from indecisive, inconsistent, and undeveloped arguments. In contrast to these findings, two studies by Hirose (2001, 2003) examined the argumentative writing in English and Japanese of NJ university students in Japan. Both studies found that deductive organization was used in essays regardless of language or proficiency level (though Hirose, 2001, suggested that this was for varying reasons). Hirose (2001) also found that similar strategies were used to write in both English and Japanese, and that higher proficiency students were more likely to employ different rhetorical patterns. Hirose (2003) found that organization and quality in both English and Japanese were not significantly correlated, but that English quality and organization scores differed significantly from those of Japanese. It bears pointing out that studies which have compared NE and NJ writers (usually writing in the US and Japan respectively) have tended to find differences between texts written in each language; on the other hand, within-subject comparisons (such as Hirose, 2001, 2003; Kubota, 1998) were more likely to find similarities. This suggests that the linguistic and cultural environment in which texts are composed may be an important factor.

Two studies looked specifically at the apparent effects of education on rhetorical patterns in NJ writers' texts. In their needs analysis, Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) found that after a year of instruction, students' choice of topic became more specific, and that they preferred canonical essay organization. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2008) examined how NJ university students' responses to an open-ended essay question (that is, one that did not presume a particular organizational pattern) differed according to whether and what kind of intensive essay-exam training they had had in high school (L1 training, L2 training, both, or none). They found that students who had received either L1 training or both were less likely to change organizational pattern (for example, from argumentative to expository) from L1 to L2, while students who received only L2 training were more likely to do so. Moreover, essays written by students with L1 training and those with L1 and L2 training were more explicitly structured (containing for example, a clear introduction, body, and conclusion), and tended to contain more meta-discourse markers to signal the internal structure of the essay.

5. Instruction

Studies of instruction have most typically looked at the apparent effects of instruction, usually by observing performance before and after an intervention. Studies of this type have focused on a variety of issues and have turned up inconsistent results. Two studies focused on writing paragraphs. Kohro's (1995) study found no significant difference between a treatment group, which received instruction and participated in peer correction, and a control group on the final writing. However, there were significant within-group differences in organization, content, quantity, and overall impression for the treatment group in paragraphs collected over the treatment period. Hirose (1998) found that teaching paragraph writing had little effect on organization, and that writers tried to apply knowledge gained from teaching to their writing but were unable to do so satisfactorily. However, Hirose also found that weak writers improved more as a result of instruction.

Several studies have also attempted to apply contrastive rhetoric to writing instruction. Oi and Kamimura (1997) taught students to use inner-argumentation analysis, finding that it resulted in more sophisticated and highly rated essays, a greater tendency to write in a general-specific and uni-directional argumentative pattern, a greater tendency to connect initial and final argument positions in an essay, and a lesser tendency to change arguments in the middle of an essay. Oi (2005) applied the Toulmin model of argumentation to teaching persuasive writing, and found that students were able to produce richer arguments. Furthermore, while the number of warrants in students' writing did not increase, the number of backings did, which contributed to improvements in writing quality. In one of the studies reported in Miyake (2007), after thirteen weeks of instruction in differences in discursive features between L1 and L2, students reported paying less attention to grammar and more attention to a various issues, including content, word choice, and subjects of sentences. Miyake also reported that more students felt that vocabulary, expression, and grammar were difficult in writing in the L2, and that nearly half of the students did not change their attitude toward the difficulty of writing in L2.

Other effect studies have been even more diffuse in their findings. Moriya (1997) developed a series of writing exercises based on an analysis of students' errors and reported improvements in word choice, use of enumerators, modal auxiliaries, and specific grammatical structures (though frequency data are not provided). A study reported in Nakanishi (2006) found that students who used pre-writing worksheets scored higher in content and organization, wrote more words, and finished writing in a shorter time than those who did not. In a study of noticing, Hanaoka (2006) found that textual models written by native speakers allowed L2 writers to notice solutions to covert problems in their texts, and that noticing lead writers to incorporate solutions in subsequent output. More generally, Miyake (2007) found that L1 and L2 organization were influenced by English writing instruction, and that writing quality increased with length of instruction.

Another group of studies looked at the features of writing instruction in Japan. A pair of studies by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2002; 2008) investigated the L1 and L2 literacy instruction that Japanese high school students received in preparation for university entrance exams, which typically include essay questions. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2002) found that Japanese high schools often provide intensive L1 writing practice outside of regular classes to prepare students for university entrance exams. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2008) investigated such intensive training in both L1 and L2, finding that L1 writing instruction emphasized clarity and originality, while L2 writing instruction emphasized taking a clear position (as demonstrated in a thesis statement). They further found that L1 plus L2 training reinforced students' ability to use metaknowledge, thus suggesting that their study provides evidence of transfer of writing competence across languages. Gates (2003), on the other hand, investigated the fit between guidelines released by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) for teaching L2 writing in junior high school, and actual teaching practices as seen in entrance exams, textbooks, and teachers' reports. Gates found that MEXT guidelines were unclear and deemphasized writing, that writing items on entrance exams and writing exercises in textbooks failed to comply with the guidelines, and that the guidelines were not reflected in classroom teaching.

A final pair of studies examined students' responses or performance within a single course. Mineishi's (2002) study of a portfolio-based reading and writing course found that skilled learners understood the objectives of portfolios and made conscious plans to develop their portfolios, while less-skilled learners failed to incorporate portfolio development into their learning. Asaoka and Usui (2003) investigated students' perceptions of their difficulties in an academic writing course in comparison with their

performance, finding that students had a variety of problems (including surface-level, macro-level, and external) in composing, that they were more conscious of macro-level issues, and that metaknowledge did not improve L2 writing performance.

6. Feedback

Although feedback on students' writing has elsewhere been treated as an aspect of assessment (see for example Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008), studies conducted with NJ subjects have generally focused on feedback as an instructional practice. Most of these investigated the effects of feedback on various aspects of students' written products. In a year-long study, Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) used a number of objective measures and one holistic measure to capture the effects of different types of feedback on surface errors (direct correction, coded and uncoded markings, marginal checks), finding that direct correction was no more effective than less direct methods in decreasing surface errors. Three studies investigated feedback on form (including sentence-level issues of grammar and lexis) versus feedback on content (including idea development and organization) with mixed results. Oi, Kamimura, Kumamoto, and Matsumoto (2000) compared two groups, one receiving content feedback and the other receiving grammar-based feedback for the duration of a university term, finding that only the group which received content feedback improved statistically in holistic scores, that form-focused feedback had a positive though not significant effect on students' accuracy, and that both types of feedback in isolation seemed to have negative effects. Ashwell (2000) more specifically investigated the ordering of feedback within multi-draft assignments (for example, content followed by form feedback), finding that order had no apparent effect on the quality and accuracy of subsequent drafts. Ashwell further found that providing only content feedback led to a deterioration in formal accuracy, that gains in formal accuracy are sensitive to the amount of feedback provided, that content improves regardless of the type of feedback provided, but that it improves most with both content and form feedback. Duppenhaler's (2004) study of feedback on high school students' L2 in-class and journal writing over one year, on the other hand, found that content feedback was more effective in improving writing quality over time, that there were no significant effects of feedback type on the quality of in-class writing, that journals have a positive effect on motivation regardless of feedback type (though positive comments only may lack face validity in the eyes of students).

Another group of studies investigated the apparent effects of feedback according to its source and its form. Two of the studies reported in Nakanishi (2006) examined self-feedback (provided by the writers themselves through questionnaires, worksheets, and so on). Nakanishi's first study investigated self-feedback alone, finding that training students in self-feedback had a significant positive influence on metaknowledge and overall writing quality, that grammar improved most as a result of training, while vocabulary improved least, and that trained students felt that they had gained self-assessment strategies. However, this study also found that the effects of training were not consistent across writing tasks. Nakanishi's second study compared self-feedback with peer and teacher feedback, finding no significant differences in the effects of these different kinds of feedback, though scores of writing quality were higher following peer and teacher feedback; further, peer and teacher feedback were perceived as most useful, and concrete comments seemed to be the most useful in revising and editing. Similar to Nakanishi, Suzuki (2008) investigated the changes that NJ students made to their compositions when they revised by themselves or based on peer feedback. Suzuki found that self-revision was associated with more text changes. Kohro's (1995) previously-mentioned study of peer correction as a technique for teaching paragraph writing found no significant differences between a treatment group (who received

instruction and participated in peer correction) and a control group on the final writing, but significant within-group differences in organization, content, quantity, and overall impression. Kohro also found that learners had a positive impression of peer feedback, and suggested that there are several potential problems with its implementation such as the tendency of students to join groups of similar ability and focus on grammatical errors. Finally, Sugita (2006) investigated the effects of comments according to their linguistic form, finding that imperative comments (that is, directive commands) were more influential than questions or statements in encouraging revision. It bears pointing out that all of these effect studies, though experimental in design, made use of in-tact classes, and that many of them lacked a true control group (a group of students who received no feedback of any kind). This further underscores the difficulty of drawing firm conclusions from the results summarized above.

Two questionnaire studies investigated students' and teachers' perceptions and preferences regarding feedback. Nicosia and Stein (1996) investigated students' understandings of teachers' and students' roles in writing tutorials. They found that NJ students viewed tutorials as helping with the writing process and with writing accurate academic English, but sometimes saw L2 ability as impeding this helpfulness. These students saw the teacher's role as reading the student's writing ahead of time, giving advice, showing examples and weak points, speaking slowly and clearly, and listening to the student, and they saw the student's role as preparing questions ahead of time, taking an active role during the tutorial, listening, communicating in the L2, and revising their writing after the tutorial. Students also viewed the tutorial as a chance to practice communicative interaction in the L2 and were concerned with affective matters (such as the teacher's friendliness and respect for students' individual personalities). Kumamoto, Matsumoto, Kamimura, and Oi (2004) surveyed both teachers and students, finding that students wanted feedback on both content and form, with a preference for form feedback; however, teachers preferred to give content feedback.

7. Assessment

Studies of assessment have all looked at the ways in which different readers (most typically NJ and NE speakers) evaluate compositions produced by NJ writers. Several of these are large-scale studies, involving over a hundred subjects and sample compositions which have been manipulated to represent specific aspects of NJ writing in English. The earliest of these (T. Kobayashi, 1992) compared the evaluations of NJ and NE university undergraduate students, graduate students, and professors. This study found that grammar evaluation was negatively correlated with error correction and detection, that for NE speakers higher status was associated with more positive evaluation, and that NJ undergraduates were more positive in their evaluations than NE undergraduates. Moreover, NE speakers were more strict about grammaticality judgements, made more corrections and were more likely to correct unambiguous errors, were more variable in providing alternative vocabulary, and were more likely to correct complex grammatical issues, sometimes resulting in miscorrections. Two studies (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001) made use of manipulated essays to investigate reactions to differing rhetorical patterns that have been found in NJ university students' L1 and L2 writing. In comparing the evaluations of NJ university students, NJ teachers and NE teachers (all in Japan) Kobayashi and Rinnert found that there were no significant differences in overall assessment of L1 and L2 patterns, but that topic had an effect: specifically, for a comparison/contrast topic, paragraph-level coherence problems overrode rhetorical pattern in influencing writing quality scores. This study also found that students who were relatively inexperienced in writing in the L1 preferred L1 rhetorical patterns, that NE teachers preferred L2 patterns, and

that more-experienced students and NJ teachers valued features of both patterns. Further, both NJ and NE teachers were much stricter than students in evaluating essays with language use errors and did not differ significantly in their judgements. Using a similar approach, Rinnert and Kobayashi further found that inexperienced student writers placed more value on content in evaluating essays, while experienced writers and NE teachers valued logical connection. Moreover, both NE and NJ teachers valued clarity of writing and were more influenced by language errors. Finally, inexperienced writers showed the most influence of L1 rhetorical features, followed by experienced writers.

A number of smaller scale studies have also compared the evaluations of different readers. Fujita and Sakamoto compared NE and NJ teachers' judgements of four composition types (Japanese or American rhetorical pattern; with or without errors), finding that there were no significant differences between the two groups in their holistic evaluations, that both groups used organization as the main factor, that grammatical errors did not influence evaluations, and that both groups preferred the American English rhetorical pattern. Nakanishi (2006) reports on three studies of NJ and NE university teachers and NJ university students. The first study compared judgements of NJ and NE teachers on four writing samples, finding that although there were no significant differences in ratings between the two groups, NJ teachers used the STEP Test as an evaluation standard, while NE teachers used cultural appropriacy. Further, while the two groups viewed organization differently, both focused most on content in their comments, with NJ teachers also focusing on vocabulary and NE teachers on organization. The second study compared students' and NJ teachers' holistic ratings of three samples, finding that students and teachers ranked the samples in the same order, but that students rated them consistently higher. Further, the teachers' comments were the most useful, followed by the comments of students with higher writing ability, and then students with lower writing ability. Higher and lower ability students also differed significantly in length of comments and the number of categories that they focused on. Finally, all raters focused most on content and gave feedback based on their own knowledge and background. Nakanishi's third study compared NJ students' ratings of two essays when the rating was either anonymous or named, finding that anonymous raters gave lower scores, pointed out places to be improved, and commented more specifically and directly, while named raters gave higher scores, offered more praise, and used more polite language. Finally, one study reported in Miyake (2007) analyzed one NJ teacher's and one NE teacher's evaluations of the L1 and L2 compositions of NJ students studying in the US. This study found that evaluation of both L1 and L2 essays placed weight on organization, that evaluation of L2 essays also placed weight on support, and that evaluation of L1 essays placed weight on appropriacy of topic choice.

8. Conclusion

In the first part of this study, a number of strengths and limitations were noted in the research base as it is represented in the sample. These strengths and limitations are largely borne out by the foregoing discussion of findings. Regarding strengths, it was noted first that research on NJ subjects' English writing has garnered increasing attention from researchers, especially in the past ten years or so. This has most directly benefited the study of written text, which to date has yielded a relatively rich set of findings. The research base has also benefited from several sustained programs. This includes work by Sasaki and colleagues in the areas of writer characteristics (for example, Sasaki & Hirose, 1996) and composing (for example, Sasaki, 2000), work by Kobayashi and Rinnert, whose research overlaps across several areas (for example, 1992, 1996, 2001, 2008), and work by Oi and colleagues in the area of written text (for example, Kamimura & Oi, 1997; Oi & Sato, 1990). These researchers' work will no doubt prove

foundational to future exploration in these areas while also providing teachers with a base of knowledge to inform classroom practice.

On the other hand there are several issues which limit the applicability of this research. Outside of the core areas (composing, written text) research has been diffuse, focusing on isolated issues which have rarely been taken up in subsequent studies. This is especially problematic in the area of instruction, which has ironically provided very little in the way of practical guidelines for the classroom. Related to this is the issue of research design. As noted previously, research on NJ writers' English writing is reflective of the field of second language writing more generally in that it still overwhelmingly favors quantitative, experimental research designs, with qualitative methods usually limited to a supplementary survey. In examining the research, however, it is clear that several areas would likely benefit from more extensive use of qualitative methods. For example, studies of instruction often deal with issues arising out of specific instructional contexts which are not easily captured by a pre-test/intervention/post-test design. Qualitative approaches, whether on their own or in conjunction with quantitative methods, would help research in this area to provide insight into the complexities of classroom practice. Studies of feedback and assessment as well have uniformly taken a product orientation, and so it can be inferred that qualitative methods (such as case studies) might shed further light on their questions and concerns.

In short, research on second language writing by NJ speakers has raised more questions than it has answered. While the studies that have been conducted so far have yielded some intriguing findings, taken as a whole they leave ample room for further exploration, refinement of questions and methods, and experimentation with new approaches.

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