

L1 Writing Experiences and L2 Writing Instruction: University Entrance Exams in Japan

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Abstract

This paper examines an L1 learning experience shared by many EFL students in Japan: writing an essay in Japanese on university entrance exams. The main purpose is to identify the features of the experience that L2 writing teachers need to address in their classrooms. The major issues that are investigated are 1) what kind of writing students are expected to do on the exams, 2) what the purpose of the essay question is, and 3) what kind of training students receive to improve their writing skills. Following this investigation is a discussion of how the experience of writing the entrance exam essay compares with the approach to writing found in mainstream ESL/EFL writing classes. It is hoped that comparing students' previous writing experiences with the approach to writing they are likely to encounter in the L2 writing classroom will help contribute to more effective writing pedagogy.

Introduction

Among many other things, teaching L2 writing effectively involves becoming familiar with the previous writing experiences that learners have had both in their L1 and L2. In earlier studies, I have investigated *kansōbun*, a genre of L1 writing commonly taught through the secondary level of the Japanese school system, and the English essay question found on many university entrance exams (Ross 2002 and 2003). This paper continues the exploration of university entrance exams, focusing this time on the writing of essays in the L1. Specifically, I am interested in answering the following three questions: What kind of writing are students expected to do on the exams? What is the purpose of the essay question? What kind of training are students given to improve their writing skills? The answers to these questions form the basis for a discussion of how the experience of writing the entrance exam essay compares with how writing is taught in the ESL/EFL writing classroom. It is hoped that finding out more about our students' previous writing experiences and comparing those experiences with the approach to writing they are likely to encounter in the L2 classroom will contribute to more effective writing pedagogy.

Before beginning, some comments on the methods used in this study are in order. To answer the questions posed above, I have examined nine guidebooks, all published by major cram schools, that attempt to prepare students to write university entrance exam essays in the L1 (Andoh et. al. 1999, Deguchi 2002, Fujita 1980, Hibino 2001, Higuchi 1996, Ishii 2002, Kanatani 2003, Kitaoka 1999, and Kususaki and Mino 2001). Most of the observations made focus on features that the guidebooks share in common, and reference to individual works has been kept to a minimum. Furthermore, readers should note that the paper does not address the question of how writing is taught in the Japanese school system or in cram school classrooms, which are issues that need to be investigated to provide a more detailed account of students' writing experiences.¹⁾ It should also be kept in mind that one cannot assume that all university students have used the books cited in this paper, or that all students are required to write an essay in order to enter university. Essay requirements vary according to university, department, and which admissions track students follow (e.g. students admitted on a sports scholarship may not have to write an essay), so it is impossible to make predications about which students have written the entrance exam essay.

For these reasons, readers need to be cautious about assuming that the following discussion applies to all their learners. Still, it is hoped that this paper can provide writing teachers with a more detailed understanding of one important (potential) writing experience that their learners may bring with them into the classroom.

1. The entrance exam essay: Genre and writing tasks

Recently, the number of universities that include an essay question on their entrance exam is increasing, with the increase reflecting an attempt to break the hold that multiple choice questions have traditionally had on the exams, and to give students more opportunity for self expression (Deguchi 2002). The essay allows universities to measure qualities such as original and critical thinking that multiple choice questions are not intended, or able, to measure (Hibino 2001). Essays vary in length from 300-1,200 characters, or between slightly less than one to four pages of the manuscript form known in Japanese as *genkō yōshi*. Most tasks, however, require a response of between 600-800 characters. Students are generally given between sixty to ninety minutes to complete the essay, although more time may be allotted if the writing task is based on more than one reading passage.

The genre of L1 writing that students are expected to produce is a type of persuasive essay. That is, the exams ask students to write essays in which they express an opinion on an issue and present reasons for their opinion in such a way that convinces readers of the soundness of the stance they have taken. The essay question falls into

two basic types of writing task, the most common of which is a passage-based task that asks students to summarize the arguments found in a passage and present their reactions to those arguments. The passages are most often opinion pieces similar to newspaper editorials, although occasionally students may also be expected to interpret data presented in the form of charts, graphs, or statistics.

Less common is the topic-based task, which asks students to write their opinions about an issue of current social or personal interest, but which does not include a reading passage. Naturally, the topic-based task is considered the simpler of the two since it does not include reading or summary writing. The core features of presenting an opinion and supporting that opinion with sufficient evidence are essential for both types of writing tasks, and the test preparation guidebooks focus on training students to answer the passage-based question.

2. Purpose(s) of the essay question

The purpose of the essay question is to assess the following areas:

1. reading ability (for passage-based tasks)
2. general knowledge/depth of thinking
3. clarity of expression
4. command of rhetorical and mechanical writing conventions

The most comprehensive coverage in the guidebooks is devoted to the area of reading. The ability to identify a writer's main points and supporting arguments is given special emphasis since these skills are viewed as being crucial to students' performance on an important aspect of the essay question: writing an accurate summary of a reading passage. A large number of reading passages are provided in the guidebooks, and students are frequently reminded that they must read extensively in order to develop the background knowledge needed to display familiarity with the essay topic and to explain their position convincingly. In terms of those skills more closely associated with writing, the guidebooks place special emphasis on clarity of expression, which includes taking a clear stance on a given issue, explaining that stance coherently (i.e. sticking to the topic), and developing ideas and arguments logically (i.e. fully supporting positions by using logical relations such as cause and effect). Finally, the guidebooks explain that students are expected to demonstrate command of both formal and rhetorical writing conventions, including grammatical accuracy, the mechanics of spacing and punctuation, the avoidance of redundancy, and adherence to typical essay organizational patterns (see Section 3.3).

3. Training students to become writers

In the previous section on the purpose of the entrance exam essay question, brief mention was made of some of the advice that the test preparation guidebooks provide for improving the writing skills of students. This section examines the advice in more detail, and the findings will provide the basis for the discussion in the following section about similarities and differences in L1 and L2 approaches to writing.

3.1 Become familiar with common essay topics

As mentioned in Section 2, a major aim of the test preparation guidebooks is to familiarize students with the topics and issues that frequently appear on university entrance exams. Kususaki and Mino's (2001) claim that students cannot expect to be able to write an essay without first undertaking extensive reading on common essay topics is representative of the strong emphasis found in all of the guidebooks on acquiring a sufficient amount of background knowledge. The following are examples of the topics that are thought to be likely to appear on the exams:

<i>The IT Society</i>	<i>Rationalism</i>	<i>Globalization</i>
<i>Science</i>	<i>Politics</i>	<i>Freedom/Democracy</i>
<i>Economics</i>	<i>The self/others</i>	<i>The environment</i>
<i>Social welfare</i>	<i>Japanese society</i>	<i>Ethnic groups/culture/language</i>
<i>Medicine</i>	<i>Education</i>	

(translated and adapted from Kususaki and Mino 2001)

It should be kept in mind that when writing about any of these topics, students are expected to take a pro or con stance on a narrower issue that is associated with them. Put another way, the actual writing task is both more specific and predictable than it may first appear to be. As an illustration, here are three of the topics listed above with the pro-con position associated with them and a more detailed summary of the specific issue students are expected to discuss:

- **Medicine** (Advances in medical science vs. quality of life): There have been a number of dramatic advances in medical science in recent years, but have they truly improved the quality of our lives?
- **Education** (Personal growth vs. the common good): Should the purpose of education be to promote individual personal growth or to encourage social cohesiveness and order?

- **Economics** (The free market vs. the safety net): Should the economy be based on the competitive principles of the ‘free market’ or should it provide a safety net for the less fortunate or those who are unable to compete?

(translated and adapted from Kususaki and Mino 2001)

In fact, the test preparation guidebooks place considerably more emphasis on familiarizing students with the topics they are likely to encounter on the entrance exams than on explicit advice about the task of writing itself. It should be noted that the books provide a large number of reading passages that explore a given issue from various angles, and they avoid advocating specific positions on any of the issues they cover. Students are advised only that whatever position they decide to take in their writing must be backed up by logically reasoned and convincing arguments.²⁾

3.2 Writing as a process: Reading – Thinking – Planning – Writing

The test preparation guidebooks emphasize that writing is a four-step process that involves reading the passage(s) provided, identifying the writer’s arguments and one’s own reaction to them, planning a response, and finally writing up the essay. The conception of writing as a process will no doubt be familiar to anyone trained in ESL/EFL writing pedagogy, but readers will also have noticed the lack of any mention of revision, the step that typically receives more attention than any other. This and other issues related to the writing process will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.

3.3 Essay organization: Introduction – Body – Conclusion

The guidebooks also explicitly promote another familiar concept in ESL/EFL writing pedagogy: an essay should follow the basic pattern of an introduction, body, and conclusion. This similarity between L1 and L2 approaches to writing is especially worth noting because it calls into question the claim by some researchers that Japanese expository writing follows an entirely different four-part organizational style based on a rhetorical pattern originating in Chinese.³⁾ Given that several of the guidebooks warn explicitly against organizing essays according to the four-part style, it seems safe to say that it is, at the very least, a strongly dis-preferred organizational pattern for university entrance exam essays (see Hibino 2001 for an especially strong argument against relying on this pattern).

3.4 Demonstrate proficiency in all categories that the essay question attempts to assess

Not surprisingly, the test preparation guidebooks regularly remind students of the need to demonstrate proficiency in the four areas that the essay question attempts to

measure: reading ability, general knowledge/depth of thinking, clarity of expression, and the command of rhetorical and mechanical writing conventions (see Section 2). As already noted, an emphasis on extensive background reading and practice with identifying a writer's main and supporting points is meant to prepare students to demonstrate their general knowledge and depth of thinking. More specifically, the guidebooks suggest that students can display these features in three ways. One is to refute or show weaknesses in arguments found in the reading passage, another is to further develop arguments found in the passage by bringing up supporting details not mentioned by the writer, and the third is to approach the topic from a different angle by mentioning arguments that the writer did not consider.

In the areas of clarity of expression and displaying command of rhetorical and mechanical writing conventions, the guidebooks offer a mixture of explicit formal instruction and model essays. They also provide a large amount of 'negative evidence' in the form of poorly organized or argued essays and samples of grammatical and mechanical errors commonly made by students. Detailed explanation of the errors made in an essay and corrected versions of them are frequently included.

4. Comparing approaches: L1 writing and ELT writing pedagogy

Many of the examples in the preceding description of how test preparation guidebooks teach students to write an essay in Japanese are likely to strike readers with a background in ESL/EFL writing as familiar. Given that much of the work in English-Japanese contrastive rhetoric stresses the differences between the writing traditions (Atkinson 2003), the degree of similarity may come as a surprise to many. This section will take a more detailed look at how the approach to writing L1 essays on Japanese university exams compares to mainstream ESL/EFL writing pedagogy, and it will focus on clarifying the areas of similarity and difference between them.

4.1 Approaches to writing in the L1 and L2: Similar or different?

The discussion in the first three sections of this paper suggests that the L1 and L2 writing experiences of Japanese students share a great deal in common. Many university students will come into the L2 writing classroom with previous experience writing summaries and persuasive essays, and they will also have an understanding of the need to provide sufficient support for any arguments they make. Many learners will also have an appreciation of writing as a multi-step process and an understanding of the basic three-part organizational pattern of an essay. These previous experiences have immediate practical implications for the L2 writing classroom, not the least of which being the need for teachers to reassess exactly what it is that we teach that students

experience as new and unfamiliar, and what will merely reinforce what they have previously been taught.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to let apparent similarities blind us to those areas in the L1 and L2 writing traditions that do indeed differ. As should be clear shortly, a closer look at surface-level similarities reveals a number of important differences.

4.2 The reading-writing connection

The importance of reading in enabling students to become successful writers is a good example of just how deceiving apparent similarities can be. Although the reading-writing connection is a core concept in L2 writing pedagogy, it receives even greater emphasis in the test preparation guidebooks. As already mentioned, the guidebooks place far more weight on, and give more detailed coverage to, developing reading skills than they do on those aspects more closely related to writing (e.g. planning, revising, and grammar or mechanics). This might of course be an effect of the medium: guidebooks are self-study manuals and are therefore more naturally suited for an emphasis on the receptive skill of reading. However, the claim made by Deguchi (2002: 5) — and echoed throughout the other guidebooks — that a sufficient amount of background reading on a given topic ‘takes care of eighty per cent of the work involved in writing’ is likely to strike the writing teacher as excessive. Few L2 writing teachers would disagree with the claim that good readers make good writers, but not many would be willing to go quite so far. The different weight placed on the role of reading in the writing process in L1 and L2 composition pedagogy suggests that teachers need to reconsider how their own conception of the place that reading should occupy may conflict with the previous experiences of their students. That is, although it is likely that English L2 writing classes will use reading passages as an introduction to the topic and a way of getting students to focus on their own ideas and opinions, students who have prepared for the university entrance exam essay may have a very different conception of and expectations for the function that reading should have.

4.3 Accuracy/Fluency

As we have seen, the test preparation guidebooks offer explicit instructions on how to avoid errors commonly found in essays written for entrance exams. Given that the books frequently remind students that they will be penalized for grammatical and mechanical errors, it seems safe to say that they develop a high degree of awareness of the importance that accuracy has in writing. On the other hand, it can be argued that mainstream ESL/EFL writing pedagogy, especially at lower levels, tends to value fluency over accuracy (Hinkel 2004). That is, rather than insisting that students demon-

strate a command of surface level grammatical and mechanical features, the primary aims of English L2 writing instruction are to provide students with sufficient opportunities to write, to introduce them to the various steps in the writing process, and to familiarize them with various genres and text types.

The de-emphasis on grammar and mechanics in ESL/EFL writing classrooms is best viewed in the context of communicative approaches to language teaching that consider explicit formal instruction as unnecessary, since the learner's language system will, given enough exposure to the right types of language under the right conditions, eventually approximate L2 norms. Although a focus on form has never completely disappeared from most L2 writing classes, teachers would do well to reevaluate whether de-emphasis on this area is justifiable.⁴⁾

The most compelling reason for this reevaluation is the large amount of research in the 'focus on form' tradition (see Doughty and Williams 1998 for an overview) that has called into question the traditional belief that enough exposure to the right types of language under the right kinds of conditions constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions to foster language acquisition. In regard to writing, Hinkel (2004) is an especially vocal and persuasive proponent of the position that students will never be able to produce anything but the most rudimentary pieces of writing unless they receive explicit training in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Furthermore, research has shown that learners both want and expect explicit instruction regarding formal features of the language system, as well as detailed correction of their L2 writing (Ferris 2004). It has also been pointed out that students who go on to use English in one of the academic disciplines have difficulty adjusting to the fact that their professors show more concern for the accuracy of their writing than their language teachers ever did (Hinkel 2004).

4.4 Reasons for writing: Knowledge display vs. knowledge development

As we have seen, a major purpose of the essay question is to assess students' general knowledge and depth of thinking. Put another way, when writing an essay, students are expected to display what they know and think. On the other hand, students in English L2 writing classes are encouraged to view writing as a means of discovering and developing their ideas and opinions. This distinction of course reflects a major difference between product and process views of writing, and English L2 writing teachers typically focus on writing as a process during which students produce multiple drafts of each writing assignment, with each draft being viewed as a step towards a more complete final version. Writing that shows improvement across drafts not only in the areas of organization, mechanics and grammar, but also in the complexity of ideas expressed, is particularly valued.

On the contrary, and for obvious reasons, writing an essay on a university entrance exam is a prototypical example of writing as a product, and students are evaluated solely on the single version of the text they produce. Although the test preparation guidebooks pay some attention to the steps involved in the process of writing (see Section 3.2), the concept of the development and improvement of a piece of writing across multiple drafts is absent.

Students whose primary L1 writing experience has been displaying their knowledge in a single essay may find it difficult to adjust to an English L2 writing classroom that views the production of multiple drafts as the key to developing writing skills. Teachers therefore need to be explicit about the rationale behind the multi-draft approach, while also keeping in mind that in the academic world outside of the ESL/EFL classroom, students are often evaluated on the written product, not on the process of writing. Clearly, students are best served by an approach that balances the weight given to both process and product.⁵⁾

4.5 More on the writing process: Planning and revising

To complete this section on the comparison of L1 and L2 writing approaches, further explanation of some of the points made briefly above in other sections are in order. As already discussed, the test preparation guidebooks view the writing process for the essay question as consisting of four steps: Read — Think — Plan — Write. Coverage of the planning stage, which typically receives a great deal of attention in L2 writing, tends to be brief and vague, with advice often limited to encouraging students to make notes about what they plan to write and to review those notes and make any necessary changes before actually beginning to write. Coverage of such common L2 writing practices as brainstorming or outlining are lacking, and the message the guidebooks give students — either explicitly or implicitly — is that the bulk of planning goes on inside the head of the writer, and that a set of brief notes provides all the pre-writing that is necessary. Suggestions on the amount of time to spend on the planning stage are rare, except to remind students that the time constraints of the task don't leave much time for it. Similarly, recommendations about how to write notes are typically limited to advice on relying on key words and phrases instead of writing out full sentences (see Higuchi 1996, however, for more detailed coverage of this step in the writing process).

Also, as already stated, revision plays only a small part in the writing process as outlined in the test preparation guidebooks. Advice in this area is limited to encouraging students to pay attention to the surface-level features of their writing to be sure that they have avoided mistakes in grammar, mechanics, and formatting. The idea that students might want to make revisions at the level of content or text organization is either

not considered in the guidebooks, or explicitly advised against due to the time constraints of the writing task (Ishii 2002).

This overview of how the stages of planning and revising are viewed in the test preparation guidebooks suggests that L2 writing teachers need to be aware that their students may have very little experience with the two aspects of the writing process that often receive the greatest share of attention in the L2 classroom. Not only may students need to be familiarized with the various techniques associated with both steps, but they are also likely to need an explicit explanation of the reasons for spending so much time and energy on them.

5. Concluding remarks: University entrance exams and L2 writing

The previous section raises some of the issues that English L2 writing teachers need to consider in order to do a more effective job in their classrooms. However, readers are reminded of the limitations to this study that were mentioned at the outset of the paper. Special care should be taken to avoid over-emphasizing the importance of the university entrance exam essay in our students' previous writing experiences. Even if students have had this particular L1 writing experience, they also have had many others. More needs to be known about the totality of their writing experiences before any meaningful generalizations can be made. It was noted in Section 4.5, for example, that the steps of planning and revision receive comparatively little attention in preparing students for writing entrance exam essays, but these steps may receive more attention when other genres and different writing tasks are involved.

It should also be remembered that whatever the particulars of our students' writing histories may be, they are all at the beginning of their writing careers. Given the problems that L1 writers have with grammatical, mechanical, lexical, and organizational features of their writing, it is inappropriate to explain similar problems in L2 writing solely in terms of previous writing experiences or the transfer of linguistic patterns and rhetorical conventions from their L1. Excessive attention to these features can divert attention away from other issues that need to be addressed, such as the similarities between the writing of novice L1 and L2 writers and the influence that the lack of L2 grammatical and lexical sophistication has on L2 writing.

While the above caveats suggest reasons why it may be impossible to draw any hard and fast conclusions from the present study, several issues that have important implications for university English L2 writing teachers have been addressed. By way of conclusion, some of the observations already made will be briefly addressed again, and other related points not yet mentioned will also be made.

5.1 Striking a balance: Contrasts and similarities between the L1 and L2

As mentioned in Section 4, any comparative investigation into L1 and L2 writing practices needs to strike a balance between a sole focus on areas of ‘contrast’ between the L1 and L2 on the one hand and an overemphasis on areas of apparent similarity on the other. I have tried to strike such a balance in Section 4.5, for example, in the discussion of how surface-level similarities hide important differences in conceptions of the reading-writing connection and the writing process. It is important for both writing teachers and contrastive rhetoric researchers to remain aware of the tendency to overemphasize either points of similarity or difference between L1 and L2 writing traditions.

5.2 Critical thinking

It has been claimed that Japanese students are not trained to think critically (for a recent consideration of this issue, see Stapleton 2002). However, this study suggests that learners who have prepared to write entrance exam essays are introduced to many of the basic features associated with critical thinking (see Section 2.2). Teachers would do well to consider that any perceived weakness in critical thinking skills may be the result of students’ relative inexperience in applying them, not in their lack of exposure to them.

At the same time, and keeping in mind the suggestion made immediately above in Section 5.1, the possibility that different conceptions of what ‘critical thinking’ means must be acknowledged and investigated. For example, the test preparation guidebooks mention the importance of providing ample support for all the claims that are made or opinions that are stated in an essay. However, there is reason to believe that what counts as supporting evidence is conceived of differently in the L1 and L2. Research has shown that while reference to personal experience may be considered as acceptable in Japanese L1 writing (see Kobayashi and Rinnert 2002 and Ross 2002), students may be expected to avoid the use of such evidence in university-level L2 writing classes. This issue is investigated in more detail immediately below.

5.3 The use of supporting evidence in the L1 and L2

Just what it is that counts as supporting evidence in an essay is a complicated issue in both L1 and L2 writing contexts, and answers vary according to genre and writing task. A review of the test preparation guidebooks shows that while some encourage students to refer to their own personal experiences, others explicitly urge them to avoid mentioning them. Similarly, personalization is often encouraged in ESL/EFL writing assignments, especially at the lower levels of proficiency when many writing assignments focus on writing about personal experiences and opinions; however, as

students progress to more academic writing assignments, personalization is no longer regarded as appropriate (Hinkel 2004).

To enable students to supply the appropriate kinds of supporting evidence in their writing, teachers must explicitly explain that referring to personal experiences is considered to be inappropriate in certain written genres. It is unlikely that explanation alone will be enough, however, and teachers must also provide examples of both appropriate and inappropriate use of supporting details. Supplying negative evidence (i.e. examples of the inappropriate use of supporting details) is essential, since positive evidence alone — no matter how much — does not rule out the possibility of the acceptability of other types of support. In short, only explicit instruction and the provision of both positive and negative examples will give students a clear sense of what is considered to be appropriate and inappropriate in a given genre.⁶⁾

5.4 Learning lessons from the contrastive rhetoric approach

The field of contrastive rhetoric is based on the idea that learners' previous L1 writing experiences do not necessarily serve them well when writing in the L2, where different rules and expectations about text production and reception often apply. Building on the same argument, L2 language teachers need to consider whether the experiences they provide their students with serve them well in environments outside of the ESL/EFL classroom.

English L2 learners have expressed frustration that the approach to writing and the expectations their ESL/EFL teachers have of their written work can be radically different when they go on to pursue their academic careers in one of the disciplines (Hinkel 2004). Outside of the ESL/EFL context, for example, teachers are not likely to incorporate such L2 writing staples as asking to see multiple drafts of a student's essay, incorporating peer evaluation in writing assignments, or asking students to hand in a writing portfolio at the end of the semester. On the other hand, they are very likely to expect students to conform to the discourse conventions of their disciplines and to demonstrate a high degree of grammatical and mechanical accuracy (Hinkel 2004).

It must be acknowledged that there are legitimate reasons why writing in the ESL/EFL context may differ from that of the other disciplines. For one thing, in many programs, only a small number of students — if any — is academically bound. It is difficult to justify the claim, then, that all students need to be taught academic writing conventions, and it can be argued that the focus on personal experiences and opinions often found in ESL/EFL writing classes is appropriate. Furthermore, even assuming that all students in a given program are academically bound, the rhetorical conventions of individual disciplines vary, so it may be neither practical nor possible to prepare students to produce discipline-specific discourse.

At the same time, however, there are some academic writing skills, such as summarizing and synthesizing information from a variety of sources, that are so widely found among all the disciplines that it is irresponsible for a university-level writing course to ignore them. Keeping in mind that this study suggests that many university students in Japan have had the experience of summarizing and synthesizing sources for entrance exams, it seems especially odd to not build on this experience in the L2 writing classroom.

The issue of which genres and discourse conventions should get taught in an ESL/EFL program can not be meaningfully debated, much less resolved, without an understanding of the specific context involved. What can be safely said, however, is that in order to be effective, studies in the contrastive rhetoric tradition need to widen the focus from the narrow concern with how students' previous writing experiences are reflected in what they write to consider the wide range of issues that surround the writing process. As suggested throughout this paper, some of those issues include how students' previous experiences may influence what they expect from their L2 writing classes, what L2 writing teachers may reasonably demand of students, and what are the pedagogical goals they decide to set for them. Although the present study remains far from offering any definitive answers to these questions, it is hoped that it has hinted at possibilities and pointed the way towards avenues worthy of further exploration.

Notes

- 1) It has long been claimed that L1 writing is not a part of the high school curriculum in Japan, a claim that finds support in recent work by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2002). Their study also points out, however, that students who are preparing to write an entrance exam essay are often tutored individually by their teachers.
- 2) Note that the option of a 'middle of the road' position on an issue is also left open to students, though they are strongly encouraged to take either a 'pro' or a 'con' stance because doing so will make their writing more forceful and convincing.
- 3) Hinds (1983) is well-known for his research on what is called the *ki-sho-ten-kentsu* pattern in Japanese. For the purposes of this paper it may be enough to remind readers that attention is generally focused on the third part of the pattern (*ten*), which introduces a 'twist' or 'turn' to the argument as developed so far. In Japanese, this is thought to enliven the prose by adding an unexpected element into the discussion, thereby encouraging readers to view the topic from a different angle. However, those unfamiliar with this pattern may view this section as merely being 'irrelevant' or 'off the point'. Note that a number of researchers (e.g. Kubota 1999 and Ross 2002) have questioned the prevalence of this pattern in Japanese expository prose.
- 4) In spite of the emphasis on viewing writing as a process, approaching writing as a product has never entirely disappeared, and the provision of feedback on spelling, punctuation, layout, word use, redundancy, grammar and other areas remains an important part of many L2 writing classrooms.
- 5) If students will never produce written work outside the ESL/EFL classroom, an exclusively process-

based approach can be justified. However, since there is reason to doubt that such an approach adequately equips students to survive outside of the ESL/EFL classroom, justification of a solely process-based approach is more difficult to come by.

- 6) A number of researchers (e.g. Benesch 2000, Kubota and Lehner 2004, and Pennycook 2002) are, to say the least, uncomfortable with the idea of training students to produce what is considered to be 'appropriate' or 'acceptable' academic discourse. While their argument that it is more important to expose, question, and ultimately change the ideological and political interests that typically get represented in this discourse is compelling and worthy of serious consideration, this paper takes the more pragmatic approach advocated by such researchers as Johns (1999), Swales (1991), and Hinkel (2004) in arguing that a teacher's first responsibility is to prepare students to be accepted as members of their chosen discourse community.

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