— Research Report —

The Relationship between L2 Proficiency and Lexical and Grammatical Features in Japanese EFL Writing

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted which focus on interlanguage features in second language (L2) development of EFL learners. Although contribution of the first language (L1) to L2 development is considered to be such a feature, research into how an EFL learner's L2 proficiency moderates L1 influence on written features is limited. In order to probe the relationship between Japanese EFL learners' L2 proficiency and the degree of L1 influence on their products in second language (L2) writing, the present study analyzes the lexical and grammatical features of L2 argumentative writing texts produced by Japanese college students and compares the results to those of native speaker college students. Corpus-based analyses focusing on 27 lexical and grammatical features that are adapted from Hinkel (2002a) show that L1 influence in proficient L2 learners products remains as factors in the moderation of over/underuse in a researched feature. The study also includes pedagogical suggestions addressing how Japanese L2 learners might lessen L1 influence.

Introduction

In the field of EFL/ESL writing, many studies have researched relationships between written outcomes and L1 related features of an L2 learner, for example, NNS (non-native speakers) transfer of knowledge about writing concepts from L1 to L2 (e.g., Carlson, 1988; Hinkel, 1994). Many studies can be found regarding "spoilers" of L2 writing such as insufficient lexical variation (Raimes, 1985; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Read, 2000); limited discourse (Cook, 1988; Johnson & Roen, 1989); the use of L1 and L2 switches sometimes disturbing fluent production of text (Lay, 1982); incomplete understanding of sociocultural background (Al-Khatib, 2001); and overuse of mitigating devices (hedges, downtoners, and exemplifying connectives) due to L1 rhetorical interference on L2 usage (Hinkel, 2003). These L1 influences on L2 interlanguage are responsible for unnatural lexical and grammatical usage, i.e., repeated pragmatic errors.

In contrast, there are a limited number of previous studies which focus on the L2 proficiency of L2 learners. Regarding L2 proficiency contribution to better writing in Japanese EFL learners of English, qualitative research into expository writing of Japanese university students by Sasaki and Hirose (1996) revealed that L2 proficiency explained 52% of L2 writing ability variance. Cumming (1989) also supported the proposition that L2 proficiency was one of the factors related to L2 writing products. Kubota (1998, p. 88) argued that English proficiency and experience in L2 composition seemed to be related to the quality of ESL (English for Second Language) essays. She stated that writers' lack of experience in composing and insufficient ability to control lexis and

syntax in English made a writer careless with regard to effective connectives usage.

Takano (1993, p. 44) shed light on the negative side of L1 transfer in "conflict caused by cross-cultural discrepancies" in Japanese and Chinese EFL students, noting that his subjects, deemed to be upper-intermediate, did not the control rhetorical difference between Japanese and English. He implied that the degree of rhetorical interference in writing would change according to the proficiency level of EFL students.

Cumming (1989) stated that L2 proficiency, lexical and grammatical features as produced features and L1 rhetorical effect are interrelated. For L2 learner corpus construction, Granger (1998, p. 539), who described task and learner variables, identified proficiency level and mother tongue as "internal" features that are concerned with international corpora. From the viewpoint of transference between L1 and L2, Krapel (1990, p. 49) proposes the following research findings:

(1) Composing process and skillfulness in L2 are similar to those in L1
(2) Using L1 in L2 writing is related to lexical concern and steers learners into the same composing process as for L1
(3) Certain tasks in L2 writing on culture-related topics are clearly influenced by L1

L2 proficiency and L1 influence are thus deeply interrelated, and learner's proficiency can be defined as one of the factors relevant to rhetorical properties under the influence of first language thought patterns and L1 transfer to L2 writing. In the present study, focusing on keywords in functional over/underuse as well as featured elements in Hinkel (2002a), classroom-focused pedagogical implications are proposed and assessed.

Background

Contrastive Rhetoric and EFL/ESL Asian Students

Insight into cultural background and rhetorical influence of L1 on L2 production started with Kaplan (1966). Kaplan validly clarified the textual and linguistic features of EFL/ESL learners and indicated that each ESL/EFL learner group showed a general textual pattern that was common to all genre types. He showed that a text written by students from East Asian countries could be exemplified as a spiral, while native speakers' texts were linear. Until the 1970s, the main interest in EFL/ESL written text was on "contrastive error analysis on an assumption that many L2 errors are an outcome of L1 to L2 transfer of syntactic and lexical regularities and language properties" (Hinkel, 2005, p. 615). Since the 1980s, text development features in L2 writing have been spotlighted and contrasted according to stylistic and lexico-grammatical properties. Although the main findings in various L2 conditions were complex constructive features, they identified indirect cohesiveness in logical flow of essays, and narrative personal stances produced by L2 learners (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hinkel, 1997, 1999; Kaplan, 2000).

Characteristics of Japanese EFL Learner Text

Japanese learners' overuse of *be*-copula has also been pointed out by Oi (1997) and McCrostie (2008). Oi noted that this was responsible for Japanese writers' dependence on the personal and emotional. This can be related to the indication made by Maynard (1997), who performed close analysis of social contexts, thought, and phenomena in the Japanese language that the Japanese language has the syntactic rule that subject or verb are not always required. To form a subject, Japanese learners tend to use the easiest and the most accessible word, *I*. She also stipulated that the Japanese language has a topic-comment structure, and nominalization and nominal predicates. This reasonably leads to the common occurrence of nominalization that demonstrates why Japanese EFL learners lack sensitivity and variation in construction of verbal phrases in L2. The Japanese preference for using the English verbs *be* and *become* seems to be a result of rote translation of the Japanese verbs *aru* and *naru* without an agent (Maynard, 1997). The prior sense of something-stand to that of somebody-act was somewhat related to Ikegami's notion (1981, cited in Maynard, 1997) of Japanese being a "Be / Become-language" and English being a "Have / Do-language".

With respect to rhetorical structures of Japanese learners, a non-existent agent formation results in subjective and emotional description that makes remarks on the existence of something. Oi (1986) found that Japanese EFL Japanese writers produced mixed arguments by supporting both positive and negative ideas, and alternating between two sides, eventually ending in a different direction from the starting argument. She described Japanese rhetoric in argumentative essays as being diffident, and less prone to exaggeration. In argumentative essays, Kamimura and Oi (1998) investigated writing strategies of American and Japanese EFL students with regard to organization patterns, rhetorical appeals, diction, and cultural influences. They found that American students made more logical appeals, while Japanese students made affective appeals (see Burtoff, 1983).

These culture-related findings in regard to L1 influence on L2 output should have been accompanied by an accumulation of empirical evidence from language output. The manner of thinking in a specific culture often reflects lexical and grammatical features in the production of both L1 and L2. Therefore, learner corpus analyses innately include rationale in validating L1 rhetorical, logical pattern found in L2 output features. Corpus analysis, thus, is considered to illustrate lexical and grammatical preference as explicit evidence of L1 influence.

Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) and Hinkel (2002a)

In measuring L1 rhetorical transference of Japanese EFL learners, lexical and grammatical features in two previous studies were employed: Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) and Hinkel (2002a). Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) conducted analysis into linguistic features in Japanese students' writing referring to Biber (1988) and Biber et al. (1999). The elements analyzed in Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) were cited and added to the following table with appropriate reasons for adoption included through reference to Biber (1988).

Table 1. Linguistic Elements Analyzed in Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) (Revised by the Author)

Linguistic Elements	Reason for Adoption
Positive (overuse)	
1 Private verbs	Overt expression of private attitudes, thought, feelings
2 First /Second person pronoun	Conversational, informal style in interactive discourse with an addresser and addressee
3 *Wh*-questions	Conversational, informal style to ask questions to a specific addressee
4 Amplifiers	Boosting force of the verb (Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. & Svartvik, J., 1985)
5 Emphatics	Marking the presence of certainty (Biber, 1988) [1]
6 Contractions	Generalized presentation of information without responsible presenter
7 Pronoun *it*	Generalized pronoun use ranging from animate beings to abstract concepts with a limited amount of information in a typical spoken situation (Biber, 1988; Kroch and Hindle, 1982)
8 Hedges	Less specific markers of probability or uncertainty (Biber, 1988) [2]
9 Possibility modals	Uncertainty and lack of precision
10 *Be* as main verb	With a predicative complement
11 Discourse particles	Discourse connectors to maintain coherence [3]
Negative (underuse)	
12 Nouns	Including nominalization and gerund a large number means great density of information
13 Word length	Longer words convey more specific meaning
14 Prepositional phrases	Integrating high amounts of information into a text
15 Type/Token ratio	Reflecting an elaborate and extensive word usage
16 Attributive adjectives	Information density

Among the 16 linguistic elements that were researched in Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) in Table 1, excluding 6 and 11, fourteen features including the quantitative indices 13 and 15 were common to the researched features used in Hinkel (2002a).

Hinkel (2002a) stated that the conveyance of ideas and concepts to L2 would take place with conventional constructs from L1 cultural knowledge and philosophical background. She identified East Asian countries as Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist societies, stating that in this cultural background, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese writing has similarities in inexplicitness, indirectness and a lack of evidence to support claims (p. 363). Hinkel (1997) made comparative analysis of indirectness devices used in essays written by nationals of 4 Asian countries (China, Korea, Japan, and India). The L2 language proficiency of her subjects was relatively high with a mean TOEFL score of 580, and thus findings of this research into rhetorical devices can be considered to generalize rules in L2 academic writing from various rhetorical contexts. In the course of her research, she found significant overuse of: indirectness devices and markers in rhetorical questions/tags; disclaimers/denials; vagueness/ambiguity; repetition; lexical hedges; possibility hedges; quality hedges; performative hedges; demonstratives; universal negative indefinite pronouns; assertive/nonassertive indefinite pronouns; and the passive (Hinkel, 1997). Also noted was overuse of: *be*-copula as the main verb; predicative adjectives; vague nouns; and public/ private, and expecting/tentative verbs (Hinkel, 2003) among Asian learners. Japanese learners displayed a specific tendency towards overuse of demonstrative pronouns (*this, that*) and phrase conjunctions as properties (Hinkel, 2001). She also characterized these outcomes as

conversational and informal discourse due to structural simplicity: informal vocabulary items such as *a lot, because of,* and *so* increased due to employment of conversational features without developing register differentiation skills (Hinkel, 2003, pp. 279-280).

After calculation of median frequency rates for multiple comparisons of the 68 top features, Hinkel (2002a) chose 27 primary common properties to exhibit EFL writing differences and conducted cross prompt comparisons for clearly over/under-used properties. The present study employed and partially modified the adapted 27 properties from her criteria (Appendix A).

While taking previous studies into consideration, this study explores the overall tendencies of how Japanese EFL learners produce lexical and grammatical features that seem to reflect on L1 influence and how far L2 proficiency contributes to moderating over/underuse.

Method

In constructing a learner corpus for the present study, a week was given for a writing assignment at home in order to encourage learners to create English without time and peer pressure, although previous studies allowed students to spend 30-60 minutes completing works (e.g., Silva, 1993, p. 660). In timed writing without a dictionary, unskillful learners were frequently obstructed by insufficient lexical, syntactic, collocational, and organizational knowledge to express ideas. Untimed writing allows learners (especially incompetent learners) to be released from the anxiety of being unable to write productively and gives them more chances to restart brainstorming and revise drafts repeatedly. Writing at home also makes writers more relaxed, and most advantageously, allows free usage of dictionaries.

A learner corpora was compiled using argumentative essays for students in a national college of technology (aged 15-18) and a four-year college (aged 19-22), adding up to 225 participants. The written topic type was chosen from the field of argumentative affairs: debative matters, solutions to problems, personal opinion, and proposals that are addressed in a logical context containing purpose, cause, effect, examples, statistics or disciplinary statements.

Among the numerous corpora available for contrastive research, LOCNESS (the Louvain Corpus of Native Essays: LOC hereafter) was chosen as a corpus of native speaker output to permit comparison with the output of Japanese EFL learners. LOC contained consistent properties with the LC used in this study. These were the ages of the writers, the academic milieu (senior high and college students), topic type (argumentative), and the amateur status of writers. Its corpus size (324,157 tokens in total) is large enough to be compared with the corpus in this study (31,969 tokens in total). LOC has been used in previous research as a comparative data source to a learner corpus in investigation into usage of adverbial connectors (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998) and passives (Granger, 1997).

To identify participant L2 proficiency, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) was employed. It is an authorized test employed to measure the English proficiency of non-native English speakers. The TOEIC scores of students in the learner corpus averaged 353. 9, ranging from 180 to 885. The following table shows the number of overall

participants and TOEIC level segment that are determined by the author.

Table 2. TOEIC Segments

TOEIC Segment	0-299	300-399	400-499	500-599	600-990	Total
Number	86	82	31	10	16	225

Research into lexical and grammatical features of the LC was conducted with the help of the computer applications Wordsmith ver. 4 and Wmatrix. In tagging syntactic features of LC and LOC, the on-line tagging service of Wmatrix was used in the initial trial and then manual correction of tagging result was made if the first tagging had errors. Wmatrix is a web-based corpus processing system provided by UCREL in Lancaster University and maintains more than 96% accuracy (CLAWS4 interface value) in POS (part of speech) tagging. In estimating rank orders in the case of more than 1,000 frequency counts in LOC, key features in context randomly chosen in approximately 5 to 10 percent (depending on statistical random sampling size) of all the cases appearing on the wordlist of Wordsmith Tools or/and Wmatrix frequency list of POS were counted and then re-estimated on a 100 percent scale.

Results of Analyses

Correlation of Learners' Proficiency to Features of Hinkel (2002a)

In order to shed light on L2 proficiency contribution to moderating over/underuse, the functioning of L2 proficiency (as an accelerator or a moderator) in lexical and grammatical features is displayed in Table 3 through comparison to frequency rates for native speakers. Comparison to LOC in rank orders (over/underuse) was estimated using nonparametric statistical comparisons. This is because, for example, one learner uses first-person singular and plural pronouns in 18% of total text, while another uses 0% in his total text. Median in rank order, therefore, is used to compare the relative position of a lexical feature to another through reference to two different corpora (LC and LOC in Appendix B.).

The participant's individual rank order of researched features and L2 proficiency (TOEIC score) ranking for all 225 participants were compared by means of Spearman's rank correlations coefficient. Table 3 illustrates the correlation coefficient accompanied with a probability value of plus (no mark) and minus (-). The table illustrates a significant correlation coefficient of learners' proficiency to the lexical and grammatical features adapted from Hinkel (2002a). Textual features in upper rows (Plus) show overuse in more advanced learners and those in lower rows (Minus) show the more proficient in L2 a learner gets, the less frequently usage occurs. Marks in textual features such as (1a), (5b) denote the grammatical/lexical features shown in Appendix A. For example, in (2a) Personal Pronouns, the probability value significant at 0.01 level is -177 (**), which demonstrates that the more L2 proficiency a learner has, the less frequently a learner uses personal pronouns.

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Table 3. Spearman's Rank Correlations Coefficient of L2 Proficiency and Textual Features

Textual Features	1a**	1b**	1c*	1e*	1g*	4a**	5b*	6*	7**	8b**	10d**	11a*
Correlation Coefficient *(Plus)*	.231	.196	.140	.133	.137	.222	.310	.133	.177	.382	.261	.180
Textual Features	11c*	14*	15b**	16a**	17b*	17d**	19**	20d**	21e*	22*	24	27
Correlation Coefficient *(Plus)*	.165	.160	.178	.174	.152	.232	.186	.226	.176	.159	.157	.159
Textual Features	2a*	10e*	13**	16b*	17a**	17c*	21a**	20b**	21d**			
Correlation Coefficient *(Minus)*	-.177	-.157	-.251	-.137	-.235	-.169	-.195	-.266	-.190			

N=225　(**p < 0. 01, *p < 0. 05)

In terms of verbal features, decreasing use of copula *be* as a main verb (13) contributes to the usage of more lexical verbs. This reasonably causes growing awareness of the relationship between a subject and an object in using a transitive verb. This also means accessing English logic without L1 translation of *aru* or *naru*, both of which are commonly found in Japanese predicatives. The positive correlation (8b) to L2 proficiency suggests increase of usage of present tense (8b) by proficient learners. Increased usage of present tense suggests that contexts should include more abstract and argumentative issues concerned with habitual actions and events (Quirk et al., 1985) and philosophical rules instead of concrete examples based upon past incidents (Quirk et al., 1989). This makes written context clearer in distinguishing opinions from facts or examples. In addition, a related factor to verbal features includes increasing modal verb usage (11a) which shows learner competence of verbal intensity control and decreasing expecting/tentative verb usage (10e) which shows wider verbal variety.

The decrease of cause clauses (20b) seems somewhat contradictory to logical development of text typically employed in an argumentative essay, but considering that most cause clauses employ *because*, this means learner awareness of proper lexical usage in a written style steers learners to change lexical choice from a conversational (Biber et al., 1999) to an academic type. In phrase level coordinating and additive conjunctions (*and, but, also*) (21a, 21d), a similar trend can be found.

Adverb clauses (20a, 20d) increase complex sentence structure with more information in a sentence. The use of *if* (as observed in a logical context) can be deemed as showing an indirect cause and effect relationship in a temporary situation. Frequency and amplifier adverbs (17b, 17d) indicate the ability to control verbal intensity.

These insights into overuse and underuse concerning learner L2 proficiency are deemed insufficient when aiming for moderating over/underused lexical or grammatical features. It is likely that a more proficient learner will tend to accelerate either overused or underused features if s/he isn't aware of lexical appropriateness for word usage in a distinctive textual type, e.g., (27). In other words, frequency reflected by L2 proficiency without learner awareness of native-like usage can cause both increase and decrease in researched lexical or grammatical features. The next section, thus, offers more detailed investigation into the categories focused on L2 proficiency and its contribution to frequency rate of researched features, namely mitigating overuse, accelerating overuse, moderating underuse, and accelerating underuse as well as no contribution to overuse and no contribution to underuse.

L2 Proficiency Contribution to Over/Underuse of Researched Features

Contribution to moderating over/underuse could be inferred, given that L2 proficiency minimized differences in frequency of lexical and grammatical features between NNS and native speakers, or positioned those features closer to LOC ranking. Otherwise, no contribution to moderation of over/underuse, or worsening seemingly caused by L2 proficiency could be plausible. The LC median in rank order of each feature was compared with that of LOC (Appendix B). Each researched feature is sorted into the seven categories listed in Table 4.

If the rank order of LC in a researched feature is located in a higher position than that of LOC and L2 proficiency functions as a moderator of overuse, the feature is marked in the "Mitigating Overuse" row. On the other hand, in the case of the rank order of LC being located in a lower position than that of LOC and L2 proficiency functions as a moderator of underuse, the feature is located in the "Moderating Underuse" row. When L2 proficiency is found to make no contribution to the moderation of over/underuse, the researched feature is located in the "No Contribution to Overuse or Underuse" row. Henceforth, the following 7 patterns can be demonstrated in the relationship between over/underuse and L2 proficiency contribution: LC>LOC--(decreasing), LC>LOC++(increasing), LC<LOC++(increasing), LC<LOC--(decreasing), LC>LOC++(not applicable), LC<LOC--(not applicable), and other cases that show no significance. For example, "LC>LOC-- (mitigating)" means that the rank order of LC is higher than that of LOC and L2 proficiency functions toward lessening usage. "LC>LOC++(not applicable)" means that LC is ranked in higher position than LOC but L2 proficiency doesn't function significantly in either increasing or decreasing lexical and grammatical usage.

Table 4. Effect of L2 Proficiency on Lexical and Grammatical Features

Mitigating Overuse	2a, 10e, 13, 17a,
Accelerating Overuse	1c, 1g, 5b, 7, 8b, 15b, 17b, 20d, 27
Moderating Underuse	1a, 1b, 1e, 4a, 6, 10d, 11a, 16a, 17d, 19a, 22, 24
Accelerating Underuse	None
No Contribution to Overuse	4b, 8a, 8c, 9a, 9b, 17c, 20g, 21c, 26
No Contribution to Underuse	10c, 10f, 12, 14, 17f, 18a, 23c
No Significance to L2 Proficiency	1d, 1e, 1f, 2b, 2c, 3, 5a, 10a, 10b, 10g, 10h, 11b, 11c, 15a, 16b, 17e, 18b, 20a, 20b, 20c, 20e, 21f, 21g, 23a, 23b, 23d, 25

Features categorized in "mitigating overuse" include first-person singular and plural (2a) indicated by Oi (1997) and McCrostie (2008), expecting/tentative verbs (10e) (e.g., *want, like, would like to*), copula as a main verb (13) reported by Maynard (1997), and semantic and lexical classes of adverbs concerning time (17a) (e.g., *now, then*). In contrast, in frequency adverbs (17b) (e.g., *sometimes, often*), conditional adverb clauses (20d) (e.g., *if*), present tense (8b), and contrastive replacive markers (27) (e.g., *very, a lot*), L2 proficiency functions as a booster (accelerating overuse).

However, it is questionable whether "overused" features should be mitigated because conditional adverb clauses (20d) contribute to making a sentence longer, and amplifiers (17d) (e.g.,

very much) can be used to enrich verbal phrases. Furthermore, nouns of language activity (1c) (e.g., example, story, talk, sentence) and frequency adverbs (17b) (e.g., sometimes, often, usually) are features that accelerate overuse in proficient learner usage. In addition, vague nouns (1g) (e.g., people, man, world, thing) and assertive indirect pronouns (5b) (e.g., some, someone, something) may decrease levels of precision in explanation and accelerate contextual vagueness and indirectness.

L2 proficiency contributes to moderating underuse in that: (1) attributive adjectives (16a) are considered to signify enriched skills with which learners express objects in detail with increased vocabulary; (2) complexity in contexts can be found in increasing adjectival clauses (19a) and examples (22) (e.g., *as* + noun phrase, *for example*) to distinguish the writer's opinion from concrete facts; (3) in contrast, enumerative nouns (1a) (e.g., *fact, problem, reason*); and advance/retroactive nouns (1b) (e.g., *system, experience*) exist in many variations to serve as lexical affluence. Other noted features include interpretive nouns (1e) (e.g., *cause, influence, opinion, sense*) and logical/semantic relationship verbs (10d) (e.g., *compare, follow, reflect*) that seem to reflect a logical linearity of argumentative context, and nominalizations (6a).

Here, further concerns ought to be focused on lexical and grammatical features listed in the two lines from the bottom in Table 4, because no contribution of L2 proficiency is suggested to moderate over/underuse. Most of the features in overuse can be construed as elicitation of rhetorical interference, for example, the existential *there* (4b), the past tense (8a), place adverbs (17c), and enumerative conjunctions/prepositions (21c) (e.g., *then, first*). Other features include overuse due to a learner being overly conscious of an unfamiliar grammatical structure that L1 language doesn't contain. These include progressive aspect (9a) and perfect aspect (9b). These outcomes are considered to be due to two factors, that is, the direct interference of L1 on L2 production in lexical and grammatical access (unconscious factor) and the learner's raised consciousness of grammatical features that L1 inherently lacks (conscious factor).

In contrast, features in underuse display L2 learner inability to control the extent of verbal intensification and management such as in suasive verbs (10c) (e.g., *insist, propose*), *seem* and *appear* (10f), and other adverbs (17f) (e.g., *also, too*), and the inability to establish a proper subject such as in passive voice usage (12), or to comprehend the usage of infinitives (14). Most of these features are concerned with verbs, verb-related function, and a modifier of a verb. Considering that Japanese language has SOV formation, a pro-drop feature, and topic-oriented structure, language user's attention is directed towards nominals rather than verbs.

Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The present study probes the relationship between EFL learners' L2 proficiency and the degree of L1 influence on their products in second language (L2) writing. In summing up the outcomes of the research in the present study, however, it becomes apparent that some factors in Table 4 showing no contribution to lexical or grammatical over/underuse can rationally be deemed to be main causes. Thus, the following suggestions, suitable for pedagogical consideration, are

aimed at directing output toward English.

First, L1 interference to L2 access can be found in Japanese learners of English using many copulas as main verbs (Maynard, 1997) and frequently making syntactic errors in the practical usage of transitive / intransitive verbs (Kashiwagi, 2005; Milward, 1980). In sentence formation of low-level learners, in particular, common co-occurrence of copula *be* and a subsequent lexical verb in a verb phrase (e.g., Many people are suffered from illness) can be found. It may be that this kind of error stems from insufficient knowledge of verb phrases and L1 interference of *aru* or *naru* (be). Overuse off the existential *there* (4b) is closely related to the interference in collocations of *there is/are* and accordingly hampers the appearance of an activator at the head of a sentence. The existential *there* also leads to an extremely abstract and unclear message when the noun is used as a complement. Along with other copular verbs (*become, get*), the copular verb *be* (13) spoils the dynamic relation between an agent (subject) and a receptor (object) (See DeLancey, 1985; Hinkel, 2002c).

Second, in regard to verbal tense and modality function when using a modal auxiliary, even proficient Japanese learners seem to be unaware of the difference between their usage and native speaker usage (8a, 8b, 23c in Table 4). Instruction in functions of verb tense can be, therefore, expected to raise learner awareness to recognize the difference in basic concepts concerning time. Infinitives (14) address non-realized events with verbs indicating endeavor, command, or requirement, and will steer the learner's consciousness from past to future and add awareness of the purpose and goal of the agent's action. Instruction in the usage of modal verbs, which indicate imperfect, uncertain matters, helps learners to identify semantic aspects, e.g., possibility and permission in usage of *may*, prediction and volition in usage of *will*, and obligation in usage of *must* (ability in usage of *can* proved to be overused). Included is the controlling of the degree of verbal affirmation, intensification and management, e.g., *is, must be, will be, can be, may be, might be,* and *seem to.*

Here, overuse of (10e) (e.g., *want, like, would like to*) shows that Japanese EFL learners depend on personal desire rather than expected obligation (e.g., *ought to, need to*) in noting future behavior. Instruction in *to*-infinitive usage with a subject pattern (S+V+O+*to do*) (i.e., *let, ask, tell, believe, expect*) encourages learners to understand the relationship between an agent and expected action functionally and to understand ideas of request, order, and intention in verbal structures semantically. In argumentative essays, more enforcing and obligatory semantic patterns (e.g. *make, force, warn*) and causative variations (e.g., *enable, drive, allow*) could be effective in constructing logical contexts. Other overused grammatical features are progressive aspect (9a) and perfect aspect (9b). Progressive aspect is usually used in describing current action that starts with animated subject and often displays a conversational tone. The perfect aspect may belong to the features that are influenced by L1, because the Japanese language has so many complex verbs making perfect tense meaning such as *-iru*, as is often added at the end of a verb, e.g., *katte-iru, motte-iru,* and *shitte-iru.*

Conclusion

When considering the contribution of L2 proficiency to moderation of lexical and grammatical over/underuse, L2 proficiency itself cannot resolve problems in L1 transfer or steer learners to produce more native-like English. As indicated in Cobb (2003), in written products of EFL/ESL learners, even advanced level students could not overcome rhetorical convention. Therefore, more participants with a high L2 proficiency level are required in order to confirm the result and determine where L2 proficiency is equivalent to the threshold level of producing native-like English.

Summarizing the findings stated above, several pedagogical implications may be proposed for the teaching of writing to Japanese EFL learners. First, verbal choice in SVO formation can be shifted from static to active. This will encourage learners to use more transitive verbs along with an inanimate subject, and accordingly more past participles in passives by changing an agent. Second, affirmative sentences should be recommended rather than negation or contraction. This would make unclear texts more straightforward and logical. Thirdly, modal verbs of obligation and necessity (*should, must*) along with infinitives are a necessary focus of instruction. Native speakers' preference for imperatives suggests possibility and obligation in incomplete action and direction for future tense. These three foci in writing instruction for Japanese EFL learners will, it is hoped, efficiently lead learner output towards native speaker output.

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Appendix A
Textual Features Analyzed in the Study (Based on Hinkel, 2002a)

I. Linguistic features
1. Semantic and lexical classes of nouns
   a. Enumerative (*advantage, aspect, class, circumstance, consequence, course, deal, element, fact, factor, form, period, plan, problem, reason, stage, terms, type*)
   b. Advance / retroactive (*approach, method, accident, advance, affair, approach, behavior, challenge, change, characteristic, difficulty, device, disaster, event, evidence, exercise, experience, issue, manner, news, policy, practice, program, purpose, step, system, subject, technique, tendency, topic, truth*)
   c. Language activity (*account, contrast, defense, example, instance, language, proof, reference, sentence, story, talk, theme*)
   d. Illocutionary (*advice, answer, appeal, charge, claim, complaint, denial, excuse, point, proposal, remark, report, response*)
   e. Interpretive (*attitude, belief, cause, doubt, excess, failure, idea, influence, in terms of, knowledge, mistake, opinion, picture, philosophy, quality, sense, source, success, theory, thought, view*)
   f. Resultative (*effect, end, result*)
   g. Vague (*human being, boy, human, girl, whatever, whoever, man, people, person, society, thing, way, woman, world*)
2. Personal Pronouns
   a. First-person singular and plural
   b. Second-person singular and plural
   c. Third-person singular and plural
3. Direct Questions (*when, where, who, what, which, how, why, whose...?*)
4. Slot fillers
   a. Nonreferential *it* in the clause subject position (e.g., *It was easy to see what he was thinking*)
   b. Existential *there* in the clause subject position (e.g., *There is always a problem with teenagers in this country*)
5. Indirect pronouns
   a. Universal and negative (e.g., *everyone, everybody, everything, every, none, no one, nothing*)
   b. Assertive (*anybody, anyone, anything, somebody, someone, something, some*)
6. Nominalizations (abstract generic nouns) (*-ion, -ment, -ness, -ity* suffixation)
7. Gerunds (*-ing* pronominals with noun functions)
8. Verb tenses
   a. The past tense
   b. The present tense
   c. The future tense
9. Verb aspects
   a. Progressive
   b. Perfect
10. Semantic and lexical classes of verbs
    a. Public (*add, admit, agree, complain, confirm, contend, convey, deny, explain, insist, maintain, object, offer, protest, repeat, say, show, speak, suggest, talk, tell, warn, write*)
    b. Private (*accept, assume, believe, check, consider, decide, demonstrate, discover, doubt, establish, expect, fear, feel, find, forget, guess, hear, hold, hope, imagine, judge, know, learn, mean, notice, observe, prove, realize, recognize, reflect, remember, see, suppose, suspect, study, think, understand, worry*)
    c. Suasive (*allow, ask, demand, grant, insist, intend, pray, prefer, propose, require, urge*)
    d. Logical/semantic relationships (*apply, cause, combine, compare, contrast, distinguish, follow, lead, occur, produce, prove, replace, reflect, result*)
    e. Expecting/tentative (*desire, expect, like, try, want, want to, wonder, would like to*)
    f. *seem* and *appear*
    g. Predicator (*know, see, decide, want, try, like, start, stop, keep, begin*)
    h. *To*-infinitive clause (going, have, be, used, seem + *to*-infinitive)

11. Modal verbs
  a. Possibility and ability (*can, may, might, could*)
  b. Obligation and necessity (*must, have to, should, ought to*)
  c. Predicative (*would*)
12. The passive voice (with or without the *by*-phrase)
13. Copula *be* as the main verb
14. Infinitives
15. Participles as adjectival or adverbial pre- and postpositional forms
  a. Present participles (e.g., *an amusing story, a student studying for the test*)
  b. Past participles (e.g., *a trained musician, the book published last year*)
16. Adjectives
  a. Attributive (e.g., *a famous singer*)
  b. Predicative (e.g., *most people in my country are poor*)
17. Semantic and lexical classes of adverbs
  a. Time (*today, yesterday, at last, already, finally, from now, just, immediately, now, since..., soon, then, today, last..., next...,... month, ...year, after, at, during, in, on, till*)
  b. Frequency (*usually, sometimes, often*)
  c. Place (*here, there*, and prepositional phrases, e.g, *in the park, at the bus stop*)
  d. Amplifiers (*absolutely, completely, quite, very much*)
  e. Downtoners (*at all, a bit, a great deal, almost, at least, enough, (a) few, hardly, just, only, quite, rather, really, truly*)
  f. Other adverbs (*clearly, quietly, also, else, instead, rather, too, quickly, truly, fast*)
II. Features of Subordinate Clauses
  18. Noun clauses
  a. Noun (nominal) clauses in the subject or object position, with explicit or omitted subordinators (e.g., *What he said hurt my feelings* or *I think that it will rain tomorrow*)
  19. Adjective clauses
  a. Full adjective clauses with or without subordinators, including pied-piping adjective clauses (e.g. *The family that moved in next door had six children* or *I applied to the colleges in which they had my major*)
  b. Reduced adjective clauses in postnominal positions, postpositional adjectives, and appositives (e.g., *Parents trying to do the best for their children* or *I want to achieve something important in my life*)
  20. Adverb clauses
  a. Full adverb clauses
  b. Cause (*because, since, as*)
  c. Concession (*although, though, while*)
  d. Condition (*if, in case, so long as, unless, provided that*)
  e. Purpose (*so, so that*)
  f. Other adverb clauses (*when, before, after, since, till, while*)
  g. Reduced adverb clauses (e.g., *While watching these pianists practice, I learned a lot*)
III. Rhetorical features
  21. Coordinating and logical conjunctions / prepositions
  a. Phrase-level coordinating conjunctions (*and, both...and, but, yet, also, not only...but also*)
  b. Sentence-level coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, yet, also, either...or, neither...not, not only...but also*)
  c. Enumerative (*to begin with, first, second, third, next, then, in conclusion, finally, last(-ly), at last*)
  d. Additive (*above all, again, once again, in addition, furthermore, moreover, too, also, and, but, besides, then, still, yet, nevertheless, or, then*)
  e. Summative (*therefore, thus*)
  f. Resultative (*accordingly, as a, consequently, now, and so*)
  g. Concessive (*after all, at any rate, besides, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, though*)
  h. Logical / semantic conjunctions and prepositions (*as well, because of, besides, except, for that reason, in contrast, in spite of, instead of, like, too, in addition, not only...but, thanks to*)

22. Exemplification (*for example, for instance, such as, like, as+noun phrase, especially, in particular, particularly, mainly, maybe + clause, noun, that is to say*)
23. Hedges
 a Epistemic adjectives and adverbs (*according to, actually, apparent(-ly), clearly, indeed, likely, most,normal(-ly), rare(-ly), the very + adjective*)
 b Lexical (*kind of, about, kind of, maybe, like, more, most*)
 c Possibility (*maybe, perhaps, possible, possibly, understand what I mean, my meaning / say / tell you*)
 d Quality (*from what I hear / see*)
24. Demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, these, those*)
25. Rhetorical adverbs (*particularly, especially*)
26. Emphatics (adjectives and adverbs)(*a lot, great(-ly), surely, certain(-ly), clear(-ly), exact(-ly), extreme(-ly), real(-ly), such a +noun, sure(-ly), very (much), quite*)
27. Contrastive, replacive, temporal markers (*actually, as a matter of fact, by the way, in contrast, in fact, on the contrary*)

Appendix B

Frequency Rate and Rank Order of Lexical and Grammatical Features

		1a	1b	1c	1d	1e	1f	1g	2a	2b	2c	3	4a	4b	5a	5b
LC	Freq. Rate	0.55	0.46	0.26	0.17	0.34	0.13	1.69	4.69	0.85	1.69	0.23	0.19	0.48	0.23	1.68
	Rank Order	30.5	34.5	45.5	54	42	57.5	10.5	1	19	10.5	50.5	52	33	50.5	12
LOC	Freq. Rate	0.56	0.74	0.2	0.14	0.7	0.14	1.44	0.95	0.21	2.91	0.08	0.41	0.25	0.2	0.28
	Rank Order	26	21	50	58.5	22	58.5	11.5	16	47.5	5	66	34.5	44.5	50	41.5

6	7	8a	8b	8c	9a	9b	10a	10b	10c	10d	10e	10f	10g	10h	11a	11b
1.51	0.81	1.93	4.68	0.46	0.45	0.24	0.81	1.72	0.13	0.16	0.62	0.01	0.98	0.18	0.67	0.7
13	21.5	8	2	34.5	37	48.5	21.5	9	57.5	55	28	70	17	53	26.5	25
2.55	0.62	0.54	3.2	0.14	0.16	0.18	0.62	1.46	0.22	0.37	0.38	0.11	0.83	0.27	0.76	0.41
7	24.5	27	4	58.5	55	53	24.5	10	46	37	36	62	19	43	20	34.5

11c	12	13	14	15a	15b	16a	16b	17a	17b	17c	17d	17e	17f	18a	19a	20a
0.08	0.87	4.01	1.33	0.28	0.26	3.47	2.06	1.02	0.12	0.45	0.09	0.37	0.37	0.67	0.55	-
62.5	18	3	14	44	45.5	5	7	15	59.5	37	61	40.5	40.5	26.5	30.5	-
0.46	1.44	2.14	2.71	1.43	0.19	5.5	1.51	0.91	0.09	0.13	0.17	0.42	0.43	1.13	0.94	-
30.5	11.5	8	6	13	52	1	9	18	64.5	61	54	33	32	15	17	-

20b	20c	20d	20e	20f	20g	21a	21b	21c	21d	21e	21f	21g	21h	22	23a	23b
0.78	0.05	0.53	0.02	0.31	0.05	2.71	0.01	0.59	3.67	0.12	0.24	0.25	0.4	0.45	0.15	0.82
23	64.5	32	68	43	64.5	6	70	29	4	59.5	48.5	47	39	37	56	20
0.63	0.15	0.32	0.05	0.46	0.047	3.29	0.002	0.2	4.05	0.14	0.32	0.21	0.28	0.48	0.25	0.35
23	56	39.5	67.5	30.5	69	3	70	50	2	58.5	39.5	47.5	41.5	29	44.5	38

23c	23d	24	25	26	27
0.04	0.03	0.99	0.01	0.72	0.08
66	67	16	70	24	62.5
0.1	0.0001	1.28	0.05	0.53	0.09
63	71	14	67.5	28	64.5

(Freq. Rate: frequency rate = %)

Notes

[1] Nishigaki & Leishman (2001) defined amplifiers and emphatics as follows: "both express heightened feeling and are used for involved discourse, marking high interpersonal interaction or high expression of personal feelings" (p. 63). They illustrated both boosters with "very, extremely (amplifiers)" and "such a, really" (emphatics), most of which (except for "such a") can be translated into the Japanese *totemo* or *hontouni*. As Nishigaki & Leishman pointed out, these function as interaction boosters, although English amplifiers syntactically modify a whole sentence or the verb(s) to which they belong.

[2] Hedges seem intricate and connotative to Japanese learners of English. Instruction in academic situations rarely has the opportunity to cover tone control such as hedges, amplifiers, and modal meaning variation. For example, the distinction of "shall" and "should", or "can" and "could" in downtoning usage has generally been left untouched in junior and senior high schools. Nishigaki & Leishman (2001) proposed the necessity of teaching possibility modals and appropriate usage in academic prose.

[3] The conjunction *ga* should be interpreted as a discourse particle (see Noya, 2003). Noya points out that the Japanese *shikashi* is a conjunction "with which we can break down and escape from unuttered preceding and shared understanding so as to start a new topic" (translated by the author).