Explanatory Variables for EFL Students' Expository Writing

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This study investigated factors that might influence Japanese university students' expository writing in English. We examined 70 students of low- to high-intermediate English proficiency along a variety of dimensions, namely, second language (L2) proficiency, first language (L1) writing ability, writing strategies in L1 and L2, metaknowledge of L2 expository writing, past writing experiences, and instructional background. We considered these multiple factors as possible explanatory variables for L2 writing.

Quantitative analysis revealed that (a) students' L2 proficiency, L1 writing ability, and metaknowledge were all significant in explaining the L2 writing ability variance; (b) among these 3 independent variables, L2 proficiency explained the largest portion (52%) of the L2 writing ability variance, L1 writing ability the second largest (18%), and metaknowledge the smallest (11%); and (c)
there were significant correlations among these independent variables. Qualitative analysis indicated that good writers were significantly different from weak writers in that good writers (a) paid more attention to overall organization while writing in L1 and L2; (b) wrote more fluently in L1 and L2; (c) exhibited greater confidence in L2 writing for academic purposes; and (d) had regularly written more than one English paragraph while in high school. There was no significant difference between good and weak writers for other writing strategies and experiences. On the basis of these results, we propose an explanatory model for EFL writing ability.

Many researchers have investigated factors that could explain second language (L2) learners' writing products. These factors include learners' writing strategies, first language (L1) writing ability, L2 proficiency, knowledge of L2 writing, and instructional background. First, several studies have found that learners' writing strategies relate to the quality of L2 composition (but see Pennington & So, 1993, for contradictory results). Some of the reported strategies of skilled writers are planning (e.g., Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Lay, 1982), revision (e.g., Hall, 1990), focus on content (e.g., Zamel, 1983), and the use of L1 (Friedlander, 1990; Lay, 1982; but see Chelala, 1981, for contradictory findings). Because these strategies are used when students are writing in both L1 and L2 (e.g., Cumming, 1989; Pennington & So, 1993; but see Raimes, 1987, on differences between L1 and L2 writers' strategies), some researchers have hypothesized the existence of a "composing competence" that transcends L1 and L2 differences (see Krapels, 1990).

If such a composing competence exists, it should be evoked when learners write in both L1 and L2, and there should be a high correlation between the quality of L1 and L2 writing. Thus, a second variable, L1 writing ability, has been investigated in relation to L2 writing products. However, the results of recent studies are mixed. Cumming (1989) reported that participants with professional-level "writing expertise" (p. 87) in L1 (French)
wrote significantly better in L2 (English) than those with no such expertise. The effect of this writing expertise was consistent over the quality of three different types of writing (i.e., letter, argument, and summary). In contrast, Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuehn (1990) found no correlation between the quality of L1 and L2 compositions written by 48 Chinese students, and only a weak positive correlation (0.23) for compositions written by 57 Japanese students. Similarly, Pennington and So (1993) did not find a clear relationship between L1 and L2 writing products in their investigation of six Singaporean university students’ writing behavior.

Investigation of a third factor, L2 proficiency, has also yielded mixed results. Several studies have reported that learners’ writing did not seem to be influenced by their L2 linguistic proficiency (e.g., Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1982). These studies found that some students wrote well and some did not, regardless of their L2 proficiency. Because the L2 skilled writers appeared to have special writing strategies/behaviors, these researchers have maintained that the determining factor of L2 writing quality is not the learners’ linguistic competence, but their composing competence. Other studies, however, have suggested that L2 proficiency is one of the explanatory factors for L2 writing products, including two recent studies, Cumming (1989) and Pennington and So (1993). In his statistical analysis of 23 Francophone students’ English L2 compositions, Cumming found that L2 proficiency was a distinct factor that influenced the quality of L2 writing; Pennington and So found that students’ L2 proficiency was in fact the only factor, among several investigated, that distinguished good from weak writers.

A fourth factor is knowledge of L2 writing. The knowledge of what is expected in a given writing task seems to help L2 writers (e.g., Raimes, 1985; Reid, 1984). Reid (1990) speculated that successful writers might know “what is socially and culturally appropriate in terms of the writer roles, audience expectations, rhetorical and stylistic conventions, and situational or contextual features of written text” (p. 201) in the target language. This
might be especially true when learners' L1 has different writing
connventions from those of the L2 (see Hinds, 1983; Kaplan, 1988).

Related to the above factors is the learners' instructional
background. Some studies have reported that teaching emphasis
on a particular aspect of writing could affect the end products of
the learners' writing (e.g., Mohan & Lo, 1985). If some writing
strategies and knowledge of the target language writing are
teachable (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Fathman & Whalley,
1990; Spack, 1984), learners' experience with L2 composition
instruction should be counted as a potential explanatory factor for
L2 writing quality.

Although all these previous studies provided insight into the
factors contributing to L2 writing ability, their designs were not
without limitations. For example, most lacked control for such
intervening variables as learners' L1 and educational/cultural
background (see Krapels, 1990). In addition, they seldom con-
trolled for the effects of other explanatory factors (cf. Cumming,
1989). As a result, it is not clear whether focal factors had true
effects or "spurious" effects caused by other factors (Bohrstedt &
Knoke, 1988, p. 352). Furthermore, most participants were
learning the L2 in L2 environments (e.g., Arndt, 1987; Carson et
al., 1990; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1982).1 Possibly, explanatory
variables for L2 writing differ if the participants learn the L2
mainly through formal instruction.

With these methodological limitations in mind, we con-
ducted a precursor of the present study as a pilot study (Hirose &
Sasaki, 1994). It examined Japanese university students learn-
ing English as a foreign language (EFL), with appropriate con-
trols for educational and cultural background. It included as
many factors as possible that seemed relevant to explaining the
quality of the participants' L2 writing. However, the pilot study
was exploratory; its results needed to be confirmed with a larger
sample.
Hypotheses

The present study replicates the general design of the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), investigating factors that might influence the quality of L2 writing products. These factors include the students' L1 writing ability, L2 proficiency, writing strategies in L1 and L2 (e.g., planning, revising), metaknowledge of L2 writing, past writing experience, and instructional background.

The present study tests the following six hypotheses formulated as a result of the pilot study:

1. Japanese EFL students' L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency both influence the quality of their L2 writing.
2. Japanese EFL students' metaknowledge of L2 expository writing is inadequate to explain the quality of their L2 writing.
3. Japanese EFL students' L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency are not independent of each other.
4. The good Japanese EFL writers use the "good writers' strategies" reported in previous research.
5. The good Japanese EFL writers can write fluently with little pausing or mental translation.
6. The good Japanese EFL writers are characterized by their previous L2 writing experience and confidence in writing in both L1 and L2.

Hypotheses 1 to 3 are tested in the quantitative analysis, whereas Hypotheses 4 to 6 are tested in the qualitative analysis.

Method

Participants

Quantitative analysis. A total of 70 Japanese first-year university students (26 men and 44 women) majoring in British and American Studies participated in the present study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21 years, with an average age of 18.3 years. They had studied English for an average of 6.5 years, mainly through highly controlled formal education in Japan. Their
## Table 1

**Good and Weak Group Characteristics: Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total Possible</th>
<th>Good (n=20)</th>
<th>Weak (n=23)</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Composition</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>154.25 11.33</td>
<td>110.78 8.51</td>
<td>-14.34***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of English Words</td>
<td>166.85 35.99</td>
<td>84.35 35.53</td>
<td>-7.55***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELT Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>201.15 27.40</td>
<td>145.91 26.99</td>
<td>-6.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL Total</td>
<td>479.20 38.51</td>
<td>420.44 35.76</td>
<td>-5.19***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Composition</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>140.98 32.65</td>
<td>106.61 27.69</td>
<td>-3.74***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Japanese Characters</td>
<td>521.50 122.18</td>
<td>393.04 140.20</td>
<td>-3.18**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18.35 0.59</td>
<td>18.26 0.45</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of English Instruction</td>
<td>6.60 0.65</td>
<td>6.41 0.72</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaknowledge</td>
<td>4.40 1.70</td>
<td>3.17 1.56</td>
<td>-2.47*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months Spent Abroad</td>
<td>1.31 3.67</td>
<td>0.09 3.67</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The TOEFL scores give a general idea of the participants' proficiency level.

df=41. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.
English proficiency level varied from low- to high-intermediate (see Tables 1 and 2), the majority belonging to the intermediate level.3

**Qualitative analysis.** Out of the 70 participants, we chose the writers we judged to be “good” (20 students: 6 men and 14 women) and “weak” (23 students: 7 men and 16 women) for the qualitative analysis. We selected them on the basis of their English composition scores: “good” writers had scores more than 0.5 standard deviations above the mean, whereas “weak” writers were 0.5 standard deviations or more below the mean. The results of t-tests showed that the good writers obtained significantly better scores in both L1 and L2 compositions, in an English proficiency test, and in a metaknowledge test than did the weak writers (see Table 1). However, the good and weak writer groups were similar in age, time spent in an English-speaking country, and instructional background. The two groups were homogeneous in that they were typical Japanese first-year university students who had studied English through formal instruction in an EFL environment.

**Instruments**

The instruments consisted of a standardized English proficiency test, expository writing tasks in both L1 and L2, questionnaires eliciting the participants' instructional/personal writing backgrounds and their retrospective self-reports of L1/L2 writing processes, and a test of metaknowledge on English expository writing.4 The questionnaires had been revised according to the results of the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), using several means of improving reliability and validity (e.g., an analysis of the pilot participants' response patterns and experts' judgments; see Converse & Presser, 1986; Lee, Forthofer, & Lorimor, 1989).

**Comprehensive English Language Test for Learners of English (CELT).** The participants took the structure (75 items), listening (50 items) and vocabulary (75 items) sections of CELT (Form A; see Harris & Palmer, 1986), with a maximum possible score of 300 points (100 per section).
Students' writing background survey. The participants filled out a four-page questionnaire in L1 asking for information on previous writing experience, attitude toward writing, and self-evaluation of writing ability in both L1 and L2 (Appendix A).  

Writing tasks. The following prompt was given in L1:

There has been a heated discussion about the issue of "women and work" in the readers' column in a newspaper. Some people think that women should continue to work even after they get married, whereas others believe they should stay at home and take care of their family after marriage. Now the editor of the newspaper is calling for the readers' opinions. Suppose you are writing for the readers' opinion column. Take one of the positions described above, and write your opinion.

We used the same prompt for both L1 and L2 writing except for changing "a newspaper" to "an English newspaper" for L2 writing. We chose the same topic in L1 and L2 because different topics might affect both quality and quantity of writing (see Carlson, Bridgeman, Camp, & Waanders, 1985; Hamp-Lyons, 1990; Reid, 1990). We selected a topic on women's roles because a similar topic had been used in a number of previous studies (e.g., Cumming, 1989; Jones & Tetroe, 1987), and also because a similar topic was the most popular among Japanese first-year university students who had discussed 10 different topics in English (Hirose & Kobayashi, 1991). We counterbalanced L1 and L2 tasks in order to avoid a possible order effect. Forty-eight participants from two classes first wrote in L2, and then in L1, after a one-week delay, and the remaining 22 from one class wrote in the opposite order (L1—>L2). For both tasks, we did not inform the participants beforehand what topic they were going to write on. They had 30 minutes to complete each task, and were not allowed to use a dictionary.

Postwriting questionnaire on writing processes. Both the L1 and L2 writing tasks were immediately followed by a questionnaire designed to examine how participants reached the final products (Appendix B). It asked (a) whether they did any prewriting
activities, and if they did, what kind of things they did; (b) how they managed to keep writing, and whether they used translation, or what they did when they had a problem while writing; (c) how much attention they paid to grammar, spelling, content, or overall organization while writing (measured by a 5-point Likert scale); and (d) what kind of things they did after writing. The only difference between the questionnaires for L1 and L2 was that for L2 there was also a question about the use of L1.

Test of metaknowledge on English expository writing. We tested knowledge of such notions as topic sentence, unity, coherence, and the organization of English expository writing a week after the students had finished the writing tasks. The test was criterion-referenced, its content based on the course objectives of English expository writing classes where the data were collected. It consisted of 12 items under three sections: (a) explaining five terms such as coherence and unity; (b) reading several statements concerning the concepts of topic sentence, coherence, and conclusion, and choosing the most appropriate one for English expository writing; and (c) selecting the best organized paragraph from among five alternatives, and justifying the choice (Appendix C).

We collected all data over a three-week period in three English composition classes at two universities in the 1993 academic year. We eliminated data from four students who were absent for one or more of the data-collecting sessions and one student who had spent six years in an English-speaking country; we obtained complete sets of data from 70 students for the final analyses.

Data

We analyzed the scores for CELT, the English and Japanese compositions, and the metaknowledge test in the quantitative analysis. Two English L2 writing specialists scored the English compositions, according to H. Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey's (1981) ESL Composition Profile. They assigned ratings for five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, lan-
guage use, and mechanics. Each participant’s score was the sum of the two raters’ scores, with a possible range of 68 to 200 points. Similarly, two Japanese L1 writing specialists rated the Japanese compositions, using a rating scale for Japanese L1 expository writing we developed through multiple stages of needs analysis (Appendix D). The newly developed rating scale had six criteria: clarity of the theme, persuasiveness (for the readers), grammatical expression, organization, formal linguistic knowledge, and social awareness. Each participant’s Japanese composition score, like the English composition score, was the sum of the two raters’ scores, with a possible range of 50 to 200 points. As in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), most subscores of the CELT and the L1 composition were highly correlated among each other (significant at \( p < .01 \)). Because they were likely to cause a multicollinearity problem when used as dependent variables in regression analyses, we collapsed them into the CELT total score and the L1 composition total score, respectively (Lewis-Beck, 1980). Thus, we used the following four scores as the variables for the final regression analysis: English composition total score, CELT total score, Japanese composition total score, and metaknowledge test score.

In the qualitative analysis, we compared the good and weak writers in terms of their responses to the writing background and process questionnaires. We tested their differences for significance using statistical procedures (i.e., chi-square analysis and \( t \)-test). In addition, we operationally defined “writing fluency” in two ways: lack of pausing while writing and amount of written text. The first aspect we examined through the participants’ responses to the items in the process questionnaire (Appendix B) asking when the writer had a problem, whether s/he stopped writing, or continued writing and later went back to the problem. The second aspect we measured by counting the total number of words/characters per composition (see Reid, 1990; Silva, 1993).
Results

Quantitative Analysis

*Descriptive statistics.* Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the four variables analyzed in the quantitative analysis. Skewness and kurtosis values for these variables indicated relatively normal distributions (see Sasaki, 1991, for the criteria of normality we used).

*Reliability.* Internal consistency estimates based on Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (K-R 20) were generally high for all CELT subtests (0.79 to 0.85). The estimate for the metaknowledge test was relatively low (0.41) because the standard deviation of the test was very small (1.72). In addition, its mean score was low ($M=3.47$ out of 12), which indicates that very few participants had acquired the measured content areas at the point the test was taken (i.e., at the beginning of the composition courses). Although it is not adequate to use an estimate based on the normal distribution theory (e.g., K-R 20) to evaluate such a criterion-referenced test, no other appropriate means was available (Hudson, 1989). This issue is considered when we discuss the results of the quantitative analysis (Discussion section). Finally, the intrarater reliability for the English and Japanese composition total scores was acceptably high (0.88 and 0.90, respectively).

*Correlations among variables.* A Pearson correlation coefficient matrix revealed that the three independent variables for the regression analysis (the CELT total score, the metaknowledge test score, and the Japanese composition total score) had positive significant correlations with the English composition total score, the dependent variable (Table 3). In addition, the three independent variables were relatively highly correlated with each other. Thus, the third hypothesis in the present study, Japanese EFL students’ L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency are not independent of each other, was confirmed.

*Regression analysis.* We regressed the English composition total score against the independent variables of the CELT total
### Table 2
*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Four Variables (N=70)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total Possible</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Reliability Estimates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Composition Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>130.90</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELT Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>167.90</td>
<td>33.77</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaknowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Composition Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>121.64</td>
<td>33.11</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reliability estimates for the composition scores are interrater reliability estimates based on the coefficient alpha formula; that for Metaknowledge is Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (K-R 20) estimate.

*K-R 20 estimates for the CELT subtests ranged from 0.79 to 0.85.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English Composition Total</th>
<th>CELT Total</th>
<th>Japanese Composition Total</th>
<th>Metaknowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Composition Total</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELT Total</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Composition Total</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaknowledge</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05.  **p<.01.
score, the metaknowledge score, and the Japanese composition total score, $F(3, 66)=26.39, p<.001$. The coefficient of determination (henceforth, $R^2$) was 0.545, and significant, so the three independent variables together explained 54.5% (a significant portion) of the total variance of the English composition total score. Because the three independent variables were significantly correlated with each other, we examined both the “total” and “unique” relationships of the independent variables with the dependent variable in a step-by-step manner (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989, p. 151; see also Figure 1). First, we separately regressed the English composition total score against the three independent variables to check whether each of them made a significant contribution in explaining it. The $F$ values for these analyses were all significant, indicating that the CELT total, the Japanese composition total, and the metaknowledge test scores each significantly explained the English composition total score variance ($R^2$ was 0.521, 0.183, and 0.110, respectively). Next, we calculated the squared semipartial correlations between the English composition total score and each of the independent variables to obtain the independent variables’ unique contributions. The obtained values indicate that only the CELT total made a significant unique contribution (32.6%) in explaining the English composition total. The other two independent variables made very little unique contribution (1.5% for the Japanese composition total score, and 0.3% for the metaknowledge test score). This means that a major part of the correlations between the English composition total and the Japanese composition total/metaknowledge each overlapped with the correlation between the English composition total and the CELT total (see Figure 1).

Thus, the first hypothesis in the present study, that Japanese EFL students’ L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency both influence the quality of their L2 writing, was confirmed. However, because the metaknowledge test score also explained a significant portion of the English composition total score variance (11%), the second hypothesis was not confirmed.
Figure 1. Venn diagrams showing correlations among the English Composition Total score, the CELT total score, the Japanese Composition Total score, and the Metaknowledge test score. Figure 1A illustrates that 32.6% of the English Composition Total score variance is uniquely accounted for by CELT Total, 1.5% by Japanese Composition Total, and 0.3% by Metaknowledge. Figure 1B illustrates that CELT Total accounted for 52.1% of the English Composition Total score, Japanese Composition Total for 18.3%, and Metaknowledge for 11.0%. CELT Total, Japanese Composition Total, and Metaknowledge together explained 54.5% of the English Composition Total score variance.
Qualitative Analysis

Writing Processes

The qualitative analysis revealed that the good writers were significantly different from the weak writers in that, in both L1 and L2, the good writers (a) planned organization before writing, (b) paid more attention to overall organization while writing, and (c) wrote more fluently.

First, the postwriting questionnaire asked whether the participants planned before beginning to write, and if they did, what they planned (e.g., content, organization). The results showed no statistical difference between the good and weak writers in planning the content of L2 writing: 50% of the good writers planned what to write, whereas 39% of the weak writers did the same. In contrast, the two groups differed significantly with regard to organizational planning in L2. More specifically, a greater number of good writers (35%) planned the organization than weak writers (4.4%): $\chi^2(1, n=43)=6.64, p=.01$. This also held true in their organizational planning in L1; that is, 30% of the former and 4.4% of the latter group planned the organization: $\chi^2(1, n=43)=5.17, p<.05$.

As to the questionnaire section on what the participants did while writing, the difference between the good and weak writers was significant only for the item “I wrote with overall organization in mind”, while writing in L2—$\chi^2(1, n=43)=9.1, p<.01$, and while writing in L1—$\chi^2(1, n=43)=5.1, p<.01$. In L2 writing, 50% of the good writers reported that they paid attention to overall organization, whereas only 8.7% of the weak writers did so. Similarly, in L1 writing 55% of the former group reported having paid attention to overall organization, whereas 17.4% of the latter did so. Among the other items that did not differentiate good from weak writers, the one for the “translation (L1) use” was nearly significant: $\chi^2(1, n=43)=3.76, p=.052$. A majority of the weak writers (78.3%) reported that they initially generated their ideas in L1 and then translated them into L2, whereas only half of the
good writers resorted to such direct translation. The weak writers were more likely to use L1 while writing in L2 than the good writers.

In their self-ratings of how much attention they paid to various aspects while writing, the good and weak groups were again different in only one item. According to the t-test results, the good writers directed significantly more attention to overall organization than did the weak writers while writing in both L1 and L2. In L2 writing, the good writers rated the organization at an average of 3.05 in the 5-point Likert scale, whereas the weak ones rated it at 2.35 \( t = -2.59, df = 41, p < .05 \). A similar difference was also found in their L1 writing \( t = -2.49, df = 41, p < .05 \). However, the t-tests results for the other aspects in both L1 and L2 showed no significant differences between the two groups.

The good and weak writers also differed significantly in terms of writing fluency. The t-test results showed that the good writers produced significantly longer L1 and L2 compositions than did the weak writers (see Table 1). The two groups, however, did not differ in pausing while writing; about 70% of both reported that they stopped writing when they had a problem.

Finally, in their reports of what they did after writing, the good and weak writer groups did not differ significantly from each other in both L1 and L2. In L2, about half of the good (55%) and weak (43.5%) writers reread, and about 10% of each group revised. Furthermore, 45% of the good writers and 52.2% of the weak writers did not do any postwriting activity.

**Writing Background**

The good and weak groups differed significantly in that the former group (a) regularly practiced L2 free composition beyond a paragraph level while in high school; (b) practiced writing summaries or paraphrases of materials read in L1 in high school; and (c) found L2 writing for academic purposes less difficult than the latter group. Except for these differences, the two groups did not differ significantly in the background writing questions. They
were similar, therefore, in terms of L1/L2 instructional background, and in types and amounts of self-initiated L1/L2 writing.

With respect to L2 writing background, the two groups shared more similarities than differences. Both the good (80%) and weak (69.6%) groups had regularly practiced translating from Japanese sentences into English while in high school. Furthermore, 52.2% of the weak writers reported they had not done any self-initiated L2 writing at all, whereas 25% of the good writers had not done any either. Neither group had received much L2 writing instruction. For example, 55% of the good writers had never done any of the activities listed in the questionnaire, such as “organizing a paragraph centered on one main idea”, “developing a paragraph so that the readers can follow it easily”, and “writing term papers”, and neither had the weak writers (34.8%). Therefore, even the good writers could not be called “experienced” writers. However, there was one significant difference between the two groups: 30% of the good writers had experienced writing paragraphs, whereas none of the weak writers had done so—$\chi^2(1, n=43)=8.02, p<.01$.

Regarding L1 writing background, we again found more similarities than differences between the two groups. For example, most of the good as well as the weak writers had written *kansoubun* (personal impressions of materials read) and *shoronbun* (short expository papers) while they were in high school. However, only 39% of the weak writers had written summaries and paraphrases of materials read, whereas 75% of the good writers had done so: $\chi^2(1, n=43)=5.58, p<.05$. This was the only significant difference.

The good and weak writers were also not very different in their attitude toward writing. Most of them rated L1 writing in a similar way. More specifically, 60% of the good writers regarded writing for academic purposes in L1 as “difficult”, and 55% of them regarded writing for personal purposes in L1 as “not very difficult”. Similarly, 52.2% of the weak writers considered the former “difficult”, and 82.6% of them considered the latter “not very difficult”. However, with regard to writing for academic purposes
in L2, there was a significant difference between the two groups: 56.5% of the weak writers rated it as "very difficult", and 43.5% as "difficult", whereas 25% of the good writers considered it "very difficult", 60% "difficult", and 15% "not very difficult": $\chi^2(2, n=43)=6.56, p<.05$. Finally, regarding writing for personal purposes in L2, there was no significant difference: 45% of the good and 47.8% of the weak writers similarly rated it as "difficult".

**Discussion**

*Quantitative Analysis*

The results of the present quantitative analysis disconfirmed one of the relevant hypotheses and confirmed the others. The first hypothesis, that students' L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency both influence their L2 writing ability, was confirmed. However, the strength of the influence was somewhat different from that in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), in which students' L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency accounted for similar portions of L2 writing score variance (60.2% and 56.7%, respectively). In the present study, although the explanatory power of L2 proficiency remained similar (52.1%), that of L1 writing ability became much smaller (18.3%). That L2 proficiency explained a significant part of the L2 writing score variance in both studies concurs with the results of some recent studies (e.g., Cumming, 1989; Pennington & So, 1993), but runs counter to those of other studies (e.g., S. Jacobs, 1982; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1982, 1983). Our present results add more support to the hypothesis that L2 proficiency plays a major role in explaining L2 writing ability.

The other aspect of the present results concerning the first hypothesis (i.e., that the explanatory power of L1 writing ability was reduced to about one-third of that in the pilot study) can be interpreted in several ways. First, the present participants' L2 proficiency level might be related; their average L2 proficiency was lower than that of the pilot participants (CELT total mean for the former was 167.90 as opposed to 182.11 for the latter).
Possibly the former's limited L2 proficiency hindered their L1 writing ability (or composing competence) from transferring to L2 writing. Thus, L1 writing ability might gain greater explanatory power only after students' L2 proficiency has surpassed a certain level. Second, we used different methods to measure students' L1 writing ability in the pilot (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994) and the present study. In the pilot study, we used a translated/adapted version of the H. Jacobs et al.'s (1981) profile system, whereas in the present study we employed a new measure. Because we developed the measure used in the present study through analyzing Japanese L1 experts' responses to several questionnaires, it reflects the particularity of their judgments more. Using the same method for measuring both L1 and L2 writing, ignoring the differences in such factors as readers' expectations between L1 and L2 (see Hinds, 1987), might have inflated the correlations between the evaluation of L1 and L2 writing in the pilot study. In other words, part of its high correlation between the L1 and L2 writing ability factors could be attributed to a method factor rather than to the target trait factor (see Bachman, 1990). The lesser explanatory power of L1 writing ability in the present study suggests that it may not be so powerful in explaining L2 writing ability when the two languages have different rhetorical conventions.

The second hypothesis, that students' metaknowledge is too inadequate to have explanatory power on the quality of their L2 writing, was not confirmed in the present study. Although the standard deviation of the metaknowledge test score was small, the score did explain a significant portion (11.0%) of the English composition score variance. Because of the tests' low internal consistency estimate, this result should be treated with caution, but it still supports previous studies that have emphasized the importance of metaknowledge in L2 writing (e.g., Kaplan, 1988; Reid, 1990). This result also raises the issue of using a criterion-referenced test that may produce very small variance because the test is taken before the target content areas are taught. Using the result of such a test in a study with this kind of "ex post facto"
(Issac & Michael, 1981, p. 42) or cross-sectional design (i.e., regression analysis) can be problematic, because of the possible low test reliability from a classical norm-referenced perspective (see Hudson, 1989, for further discussion). Our present results exhibit the limitations of a cross-sectional design presupposing norm-referenced measurement, and suggests a need for future studies employing a criterion-referenced perspective in a longitudinal design (cf. Brown, 1989).

Finally, the third hypothesis, that students’ L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency are not independent, was confirmed. As in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), these two variables had a significantly high correlation ($p < .05$). This finding differs from those of some previous studies that reported L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency were independent of each other (e.g., Cumming, 1989). This discrepancy may have been caused by the fact that our method of measuring L2 proficiency differed from those in the previous studies. Alternatively, it may be because the participants in our studies had developed L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency mainly through formal education. These two abilities might have developed relatively evenly because they were both related to aptitude for academic achievement (cf. Cummins, 1979; Sasaki, 1991). In any case, a significant correlation between L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency was exhibited by our particular sample population.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The qualitative analysis partially confirmed the three hypotheses regarding good Japanese writers’ writing processes and background. First, the good writers’ writing processes were characterized by their concern with overall organization before and while writing in L1/L2. Unlike the case in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), this strategy was singled out from among other good writers’ strategies. For example, such good writers’ strategies as revising at the discourse level were not significantly different between the good and weak writers. Therefore, our
fourth hypothesis, that the good Japanese EFL writers use the good writers' strategies reported in previous research, was only partially supported. The good writers' attention to overall organization while writing appears to concur with the results of Hayes and Flower (1980), who found that writing experts devoted much more thought to organization. That the good writers also paid attention to organization while writing in L1 suggests that some writing strategies could be transferred from L1 to L2 (e.g., Cumming, 1989; Cumming, Rebuffot, & Ledwell, 1989; Jones & Tetroe, 1987). Furthermore, the weak writers' relative lack of concern with organization in L2 can be partly explained by their lack of L2 proficiency. Probably the weak writers were tied up with word- or sentence-level processing (in other words, the "what next strategy" cited in Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), and could not afford to think about overall organization much.

The fifth hypothesis, that the good Japanese EFL writers can write fluently with little pausing or mental translation, was also partially confirmed. The good writers differed from the weak writers in both L1 and L2 in terms of quantity produced and doing less mental translation, but not in pausing. The good writers' tendency to do less mental translation from L1 to L2 probably facilitated their producing a greater quantity of L2 writing. Furthermore, their writing fluency in L1, evidenced by greater writing quantity, suggests that fluency in L1 writing is related to fluency in L2 writing. The good writers' fluency, as well as the weak writers' disfluency, in both languages implies a composing competence that transcends language differences.

Similarly, the sixth hypothesis, that the good Japanese EFL writers are characterized by their previous L2 writing experience and confidence in writing in both L1 and L2, was only partially confirmed. The good writers were characterized by confidence in only one area (L2 academic writing) and only one L2 writing experience (regular writing practice at a discourse level), two characteristics found in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). First, the good writers assessed their L2 academic writing as significantly less difficult than did the weak writers. Such
correspondence between self-assessed difficulty and writing ability has occurred in L1 writing (Cumming et al., 1989; Freedman, 1983). Our finding suggests that self-assessment is also a possible predictor of L2 writing quality. Second, only the good writers practiced writing beyond a paragraph level. This implies that weak writers may become more proficient by doing the same thing. Furthermore, we found that the good writers were characterized by one type of L1 writing experience (summary writing) not found in the pilot study. This finding suggests that L2 writing ability may be related to some types of L1 writing experiences. This, however, requires further investigation.

The four major differences found between the good and weak writers (i.e., good writers' previous writing experiences beyond a paragraph level, their attention to overall organization before/while writing, their fluency in terms of amount of writing, and their confidence in L2 academic writing) are some, but not all, of the characteristics found in the good writers of the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). Aside from one type of L1 writing experience, the present study found a smaller number of differences between the good and weak writers. As mentioned previously, these differences could be due to the greater homogeneity of the present participants. Furthermore, they could also be explained by the fact that we statistically tested the differences for their significance in the present study, unlike those in the pilot study.

Finally, the factors that stood out as characteristic of good writers may be interrelated. The results from the writing background questionnaire indicated that the good writers, like the weak writers, had not received much writing instruction, and had not been taught metaknowledge on English expository writing such as paragraph development (metaknowledge test mean 4.4 out of 12). Despite such paucity of writing instruction, the good writers wrote more fluently, with attention to overall organization. They might have become more conscious of overall organization, and also become more confident in L2 writing, because of their writing experiences. Alternatively, their writing fluency and confidence in L2 writing might have made their regular
writing experience possible. Such background/process factors as experience, confidence (=higher self-assessment), fluency, and attention to organization are so interwoven that it may be difficult to determine causal directions among them.

An Explanatory Model of EFL Writing Ability

On the basis of our quantitative and qualitative results, we hypothesize a path diagram type of model to explain Japanese students' EFL writing ability (Figure 2). In this model, the three explanatory variables—L2 proficiency, L1 writing ability, and L2 metaknowledge—influence L2 writing ability. Composing competence is postulated as a possible higher-order factor affecting both L1 and L2 writing ability. L2 proficiency influences the L2 writing product by means of writing fluency. Although L2 proficiency may also influence L2 writing ability through other process features, writing fluency was the one found in the present study. L1 writing ability (and possibly, the underlying composing competence) manifests itself through the use of a writing strategy (i.e., paying attention to overall organization). As in the case of writing fluency for L2 proficiency, other writing strategies might be related to this path. Furthermore, because the good writers in the present study wrote fluently in both L1 and L2, fluency seems to be related to the paths from composing competence to both L1 and L2 writing abilities.

Finally, the two background characteristics (writing experience in L1/L2 and confidence in L2 writing) are also integrated in the model as potential explanatory factors for L2 writing ability. In our results, the experience factor was represented by summary writing in L1 and discourse-level writing in L2, whereas the confidence factor was represented by reported confidence in L2 academic writing. These two background variables are mutually influential; that is, if students are confident in L2 writing, they will gain more writing experience, and an increasing amount of writing experience will raise their confidence in L2 writing.
Figure 2. Path diagram illustrating an explanatory model of EFL writing. The measured variables are enclosed in squares, and unmeasured latent factors are enclosed in circles. Latent background factors are enclosed in triangles. The unidirectional arrows indicate one-way causal relations. The straight lines in the arrows are based on the results of the present study, and the broken lines are based on speculation. The process features are represented by broken line rectangles (see Sasaki, 1993).
Suggestions for Further Studies

We investigated Japanese university students' English expository writing in relation to both knowledge/ability factors and process/background factors. Based on the results, we proposed an explanatory model for EFL writing ability. Although building such a model is important in applied linguistic research (see Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991), ours is still preliminary, and subject to revision in light of the results of future studies. We have several suggestions for such research. First, the present study should be replicated with samples of different L1, L2, and instructional/personal background. The generalizability of the model will be extended if it is informed by the results of such replication. Second, future studies should add other background/process variables. Such factors as motivation and cognitive style, which have been rarely targeted in past research, could be good candidates for explanatory variables for L2 writing ability. Third, our results suggest a possible “threshold level” for L1 writing ability to transfer to L2 (cf. the threshold level in L2 reading, e.g., Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Bossers, 1991; Cumming et al., 1989). To ascertain whether such a level does exist, future studies could compare different proficiency groups. Finally, further research is necessary to investigate the teachability of the explanatory variables we found. For example, as suggested above, providing discourse-level writing experience may generate writing fluency, and at the same time raise students' confidence in L2 writing. Such longitudinal studies will complement the cross-sectional model proposed here.

Revised version accepted 14 August 1995

Notes

1Pennington and So (1993) is one of the few exceptions that examined foreign language learners. However, their participants had stayed in the target language environment (i.e., Japan) in addition to having studied Japanese as a foreign language at a university outside Japan.

2In the present study, we use quantitative for the analyses based on
performance scores (composition and test scores), and qualitative for those based on self-reports of the writing process, background, and experience. Although these data are all in "quantity" form in some sense, we employ the terms quantitative versus qualitative for differentiating between the "product-oriented" versus "process/background-oriented" nature of the data. (See Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, for varying and often overlapping definitions of the terms quantitative and qualitative.) This distinction is also consistent with the one in our pilot study.

3These participants were more representative of Japanese university students than the 19 participants in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994) in terms of age and instructional background. Some of the pilot study participants were older than average Japanese university students, and some had studied abroad more than a year.

4We originally developed the questionnaires and the metaknowledge test for the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994).

5Although we did not include students' previous L1 writing experience in the hypotheses for the present study, we investigated it for comparative purposes.

6We revised the prompt from the original version used in the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994) because the latter did not include descriptions of the intended audience and purpose of writing.

7Some might argue that the 30-minute writing time was not sufficient to complete all of the activities questioned in our postwriting questionnaire. However, the results of the pilot study revealed that a sufficient number of students had time to do several postwriting activities such as revising even under the 20-minute time limit (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). We extended the writing time to 30 minutes in the present study, so that presumably all students could afford to complete the whole writing procedure. Further extension of the time limit was impossible because of the course schedule.

8We based the designs of test items (a) and (b) on English composition textbooks (e.g., Auerbach & Snyder, 1983; Bander, 1983; Jimbo & Murto, 1990) and studies on characteristics of Japanese students' English composition (Hinds, 1990; Kobayashi, 1984), whereas test item (c) was from Bachman and Palmer's (1982) communicative language test.

9The class met once a week for 90 minutes. We collected all data before the students started to study the course content (i.e., at the beginning of the academic year).

10The pilot study used a Japanese counterpart of H. Jacobs et al.'s (1981) Profile, which had the five criteria with the same weighting as that in the Profile (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). The newly developed scale for the present study was differentially weighted based on the results of a three-stage study on development of a rating scale for Japanese L1 writing. In all, 210 Japanese L1 language teachers participated in the study (Sasaki & Hirose, 1995).

11Unlike the pilot study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994), the present sample size was large enough to apply statistical procedures.
In the present study, writing without pausing is considered contributory to fluent writing. This characteristic, together with the amount of the written texts, was one of those that distinguished the good from the weak writers in the pilot study. More specifically, when they had problems, the good writers tended to continue writing without pausing, whereas the weak writers showed more frequent pausing while writing. The finding accords with those of previous studies. For example, Hall (1990) and Zamel (1983) reported that skilled L2 writers continued writing even when they had problems, and returned to them later, whereas unskilled writers were stopped by local problems.

In a subsequent study (Hirose & Sasaki, 1995), the items in the revised version of this metaknowledge test turned out to have relatively high "difference index" values (ranging from 0.3 to 0.6), one of the reliability/validity indicators for this kind of criterion-referenced items (Brown, 1989; Hudson & Lynch, 1984).

A similar phenomenon has been reported in studies of ESL reading (e.g., Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Bossers, 1991; Cumming et al., 1989). For example, Cumming (1989) measured the participants’ L2 proficiency through their oral proficiency, whereas we measured it through the sum of the three subscores of listening, structure, and vocabulary tests.

References


**Appendix A**

*Writing Background Survey (Excerpt)*

I. About Studying English
   1. So far how long have you studied English at school?
   2. Have you studied in an English-speaking country (even for a short time)? If so, when, where, and for how long?

II. About Writing in Japanese**

III. About Writing in English
   1. Which of the following activities did you do regularly in high school and for preparation for entrance exams? (Check as many apply.)
      a. translating individual Japanese sentences into English
      b. writing English sentences to practice grammar and/or vocabulary
      c. combining short sentences into one longer (complex/compound) sentence
      d. writing more than one paragraph
      e. other (Please specify)
   2. Which of the following kinds of writing did you do in high school? (Check as many as apply.)
      a. journal

---

*The original version of the survey was written in Japanese.  
**The questions on the students' writing experiences in Japanese are omitted because they are similar to the ones presented here.*
b. *kansoubun* (personal impressions of materials read)
c. literary work (stories, poems, etc.)
d. summaries or paraphrases of materials read
e. *shoronbun* (short expository papers)
f. letters
g. other (Please specify)

3. Please estimate the amount of required writing (not translation into English) that you did while in high school? (Check only one.)
a. more than ten pages per term
b. 5–10 pages per term
c. 2–5 pages per term
d. about a page per term
e. none

4. Which of the following kinds of writing did you do on your own (not connected to school work) before coming to the university? (Check as many as apply.)
a. journal
b. *kansoubun* (personal impressions of materials read)
c. literary work (stories, poems, etc.)
d. summaries or paraphrases of materials read
e. *shoronbun* (short expository papers)
f. letters
g. other (Please specify)
h. none

5. Please estimate the amount of self-initiated writing that you did before you entered the university? (Check only one.)
a. more than ten pages per term
b. 5–10 pages per term
c. 2–5 pages per term
d. about a page per term
e. none

6. How difficult is it for you to write for academic purposes (such as writing a term paper)? (Check only one.)
a. very difficult
b. difficult
c. not very difficult
d. not at all difficult

7. How difficult is it for you to write for personal purposes (such as writing a personal letter)? (Check only one.)
a. very difficult
b. difficult
c. not very difficult  
d. not at all difficult

8. Which of the following activities did you do in the English classes you took before coming to the university? (Check as many as apply.)
   a. summarizing  
   b. outlining before writing  
   c. discussing the topic of writing in class  
   d. developing a paragraph so that the readers can follow it easily  
   e. organizing a paragraph centered on one main idea  
   f. revising after writing  
   g. writing term papers  
   h. none of the above

Appendix B

Postwriting Questionnaire for the English Composition*

I. Before Writing
   1. Did you start writing right away?   Yes   No  
   2. If your answer to Q1 is “No”, what did you do? Write the kind of things you did (e.g., I wrote down the outline. I thought what I was going to write about).

II. In Writing
   1. How did you keep on writing? In retrospect, circle as many as apply. If you did other than given below, please specify.
      a. I generated ideas in Japanese first, then translated them into English.  
      b. I directly wrote in English.  
      c. I wrote with overall organization in mind.  
      d. I tried to write so that the sentences would flow smoothly.  
      e. When I had a problem, I stopped and thought for a while.  
      f. When I had a problem, I continued writing, and later went back to the problem.  
      g. other (Please specify)
   2. When you were writing, how much attention did you pay to the following items?

*The original version was written in Japanese.
III. After Writing
What did you do after writing? In retrospect, specify what you did after writing (e.g., I did nothing once I finished writing; I reread to check whether the organization was appropriate or not, and revised; I added to the first version where insufficient).

Appendix C

Test of Metaknowledge on English Expository Writing (Excerpt)*

I. Explain the following terms concerning English expository writing.
   a. topic sentence
   b. thesis statement
   c. coherence
   d. unity

II. Read the following statements concerning English expository writing and choose the most appropriate one.
   1. (about the topic of an English paragraph)
      a. An English paragraph usually has one sentence which summarizes the whole paragraph, but the writer can write other things which are not expressed in that sentence if they are related to the main topic.
      b. An English paragraph has one sentence which summarizes the whole paragraph, and the writer has to write only what is related to the main idea.
      c. An English paragraph does not usually have one sentence which summarizes the whole paragraph, and the writer can write whatever s/he likes.
      d. I do not know any of the above.

*The original version was written in Japanese, and contained 12 items.
2. (about the organization of an English paragraph)
   a. An English paragraph has an organizational framework similar to the Japanese one called *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*.† At the *ten* phase, the writer usually makes an abrupt transition to surprise the readers.
   b. The first part of an English paragraph is the introduction, where the writer begins with a general topic related to the main theme, and gradually moves on to the main topic in the later part.
   c. An English paragraph usually has a summarization of the main point in the first part, followed by an explanation and/or exemplification in the later part.
   d. An English paragraph does not have a fixed pattern.
   e. I do not know any of the above.

5. (about English paragraphs stating for or against a certain opinion)
   a. Writers tend to state both positions (for and against the opinion) without specifying their own position.
   b. Writers tend to specify their position and support it.
   c. Writers tend to state their position in the end, but are unlikely to support it.
   d. I do not know any of the above.

Appendix D

*Rating Scale for Japanese L1 Expository Writing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score (4 × weighting**)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of the Theme</strong></td>
<td>4 very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Japanese students are familiar with the traditional Japanese writing pattern called *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*. According to this pattern, first the writer introduces the topic in *ki*; develops the topic in *shoo*; makes an abrupt transition in *ten*; and finally concludes the topic in *ketsu*.

*The original version was written in Japanese.

**The weight of each score is based on a regression analysis of 106 Japanese L1 teachers’ responses to several different writing samples using these five criteria (Sasaki & Hirose, 1995).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score (4 x weighting)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some facts and reasons to support the theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 fair</td>
<td>Theme is not so clear. Provides few facts and reasons to support the theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 poor</td>
<td>Theme is not clear at all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Persuasiveness       | 4 very good | Provides concrete and convincing reasons and facts. Very appealing to the reader. |
|                      | 3 good      | Provides somewhat concrete and convincing reasons and facts. Appealing to the reader. |
|                      | 2 fair      | Provides a few concrete and convincing reasons and facts. Not so appealing to the reader. |
|                      | 1 poor      | Provides few concrete and convincing reasons and facts. Not appealing to the reader. |

| Grammatical Expression | 4 very good | All sentences are consistently structured and adequately connected. |
|                       | 3 good      | All sentences are consistently structured, but some sentences are inadequately connected. |
|                       | 2 fair      | Not all sentences are consistently structured, and many sentences are inadequately connected. |
|                       | 1 poor      | Sentences are inconsistently structured and are inadequately connected. |

<p>| Organization          | 4 very good | All paragraphs are logically connected, and easy to follow. |
|                       | 3 good      | All paragraphs are somewhat logically connected, and not hard to follow. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score (4 × weighting)</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 fair</td>
<td>Paragraphs are not logically connected, and difficult to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 poor</td>
<td>All paragraphs are not logically connected at all, and impossible to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \times 5 = )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Linguistic Knowledge</td>
<td>4 very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \times 4 = )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>4 very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \times 5 = )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>Full Score/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Review


Consider this: the German conveyed in textbooks is not real German. Nor is the German prescribed in grammar manuals real—at least not in the sense that Stevenson understands and uses the word real in creating a framework for this volume of 14 sociolinguistic essays on German in contemporary German society:

The choice of the term “real language” to suit my purposes here was neither accidental nor original: I (Stevenson) deliberately borrowed it from (linguist) Eugenio Coseriu . . . who says “daß in der wirklichen Sprache das Systematische, das Kulturelle, das Soziale und das Geschichtliche zusammenfallen (that in real language the systematic, the cultural, the social and the historical coincide). (p. 17–18)

Thus, Stevenson succeeds in finding the connective thread that enables him to piece together a cohesive, quilt-like collection of diverse linguistic studies and approaches to viewing language in German society.

The appearance of this collection is timely; for one, it comes at a point when the appeal for social unity in a diverse and
multicultural German society is urgent and strong. Second, it updates us on important, immediate issues affecting German language and society—ones that have arisen recently, quickly, and/or prominently, so that their impact on German language and society has been equally as sudden and or significant. Third, since Michael Clyne’s *Language and Society in the German Speaking Countries* (1984) and Barbour and Stevenson’s *Variation in German: A Critical Introduction to German Sociolinguistics* (1990), no other comparably comprehensive work on German sociolinguistics has appeared in English.

Stevenson has organized the works of several prominent linguists from German-speaking academe and has made it possible for them to go beyond language borders by presenting their treatises in English. Any German quotes remaining in the text are simultaneously translated. So while this work will be appreciated most by those focusing on sociolinguistics in the German-speaking context, those searching for comparative sociolinguistic material will find it a valuable source as well.

Following the usual summarizing preface, Stevenson provides a brief professional synopsis of each contributor and then begins the book with his own chapter, aptly entitled “The Study of Real Language: Observing the Observers”. In it he discusses the general development of German sociolinguistics in the universal linguistic framework (with particular regard to the anglophone context), and also the “homegrown” aspects influencing the discipline before and certainly after the *Wende*—the turning point brought about by the unification of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Stevenson looks at German as a viable, multidimensional organism, describing it as having shape and form, showing constant change, dynamism, vitality, and “cultural plasticity” (p.18).

Ulrich Ammon describes aspects that make German an international language. He cites factors that strengthen a language (e.g., numerical, economic, political, and the number of learners studying it) and outlines typical usage arenas that support an international language (trade, science, diplomacy).
Ammon points out that German is no longer the language of
science that it formerly was (a [mis]perception that foreign lan-
guage students still carry in the back of their minds as they claim
that German is “harder” than Spanish or French). With regard to
contemporary European social developments, Ammon notes that
German is a politically disadvantaged international language in
the European Union—lagging behind English and French—but
that it nonetheless maintains its strength through economics and
through the number of German speakers and learners on Euro-
pean soil.

Florian Coulmas addresses the existential query of what
constitutes “Germanness” in his investigation of German as a
national language. His historical overview covers the develop-
ment of the language in connection with the development of
Germany as a nation. Coulmas confronts Germanness and the
notion of “we are what we speak”, starting with the period when
Germany coalesced from several states into one nation-state,
through the infamous period when Germany threatened to be-
come a supernation, and finally in its period of “unnatural”
coexistence as two states of one nation or as one nation divided
into two polities (p. 55). Coulmas makes one of his most interest-
ing and surprising points in his section on the linguistic national-
ism of Nazi Germany: despite the prominence of propaganda and
the special semantics that evolved during this era, the ideology
ironically assigned only a secondary role to language.

Wolfgang Sauer and Helmut Glück focus on orthographical
issues concerning German. First they trace the development of
the language’s standardized spelling system, then they highlight
the most current issues of orthographical reform: hyphenation
rules, the orthographical adoption/adaptation of foreign words,
the relations between sounds and spelling, and creative capitali-
ization in neologisms—especially new compound words. They
make interesting observations about institutional standardiza-
tion vis-à-vis democratic thinking (“A democratic state, it ap-
ppears, does not dare undertake orthographical reforms” p. 86) as
they speak about changes originating from above versus changes
coming from below. In the end they call for creative, “cheerful
anarchy” in a resistance to “attempts to achieve absolute stan-
dardization” and a “greater degree of tolerance towards errors” (p.
91–92). In a second chapter, the same authors “depict certain
linguistic changes which indicate trends away from the acceptable
grammatical conventions” (p. 95–96). Although these anomalies
tend to defy prescriptive grammars and lexicons, their persistent
and consistent appearance indicate noteworthy linguistic changes.

In a collaborative article about linguistic variation in the
once-divided speech community of Berlin, Helmut Schönfeld and
Peter Schlobinski describe the status of Berlinisch (the distinct
vernacular of Berlin), the words that have replaced former East
German words, and the “linguistic wall” that remained intact
after the destruction of the infamous Berlin Wall.

Norbert Dittmar writes a most informative and comprehen-
sive chapter on the development of German sociolinguistics,
contrastively viewing the discipline's emergence in dichotomies
(e.g., east/west, empirical/theoretical, subversive/authoritarian,
German/American & British). Unfortunately several of his “sweep-
ing” and unnecessary statements about American sociolinguists
and sociolinguistics detract from this work. For example, Dittmar
maintains that the “unorthodox” West German methodological
research in sociolinguistics “is so fruitful because unlike Ameri-
can sociolinguistics it was not organized in orthodox schools (see
the dominant and authoritarian roles of Labov and Fishman, who
run their schools like a business)” (p. 144). And though Dittmar
claims that “in the (former) West Germany there were (and still
are) no strictly organized schools of sociolinguistics” (p. 144), it is
obvious which school of political thought has influenced his
linguistic theories, as he seems quite stuck on the terms (social)
“class” and “social inequality”. Most disappointing is his conclu-
sion, in which he asserts that money spent on “limited”, “low-
level” Western sociolinguistic research would be a total waste did
it not financially support “urgently need(ed) East German knowl-
edge on the effectiveness of communicative norms and the prin-
ciples of language culture” (p. 164).
On a less critical note, Martina Rost-Roth cites several researcher's studies dealing with the problems of intercultural communication experienced in the new, multicultural German setting. The first part of her chapter investigates intercultural problems confronting the true foreigner, or in her words "people living in Germany today (who) speak a language other than German and consider themselves members of another culture" (p. 169). This includes *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), *Aussiedler* (Eastern European immigrants of German descent) and *Asylsuchende* (asylum seekers). Their intercultural difficulties are exemplified in various "institutional" (read: bureaucratic) encounters. The second part centers on the intercultural contrasts between East and West German speakers, and the resulting problems due to misperceptions in rhetorical tone, fundamental differences in semantics, in fluency, and in varying intentions of speech acts.

Ruth Wodak's research also explores institutional communication, though it illustrates "the approach developed by the Vienna Applied Language Studies research group (referred to as discourse sociolinguistics" (p. 205)—a holistic analysis of linguistic context and interaction. Wodak narrows her institutional encounters to the medical world and doctor-patient discourse.

The next two chapters involve aspects of language and politics. Siegfried Jäger analyzes the political discourse of the Right and Left in Germany, using examples from the press. Because conservatives are nowadays politically strong and hence deliver the most material for investigation, the major portion of his investigation deals with the racist language of right-wingers; Jäger states that "there is no (strong) movement of the left in Germany today" (p. 231) and that "leftist ideas and ideologies survive only in the niches of little groups and circles" (p. 231). The second part of his discourse analysis also underscores how during the Gulf War the Right used the Left's own linguistic weaponry against them by charging that their antiwar, pacifist rhetoric was anti-Semitic.

In contrast to language in politics, Sylvia Moosmüller evalu-
ates the language of Austrian politicians and looks at the reactions it precipitates from their constituents. She summarizes that “dialect is not only evaluated negatively, it is associated with aggressiveness, brutality, low social status and lack of education” (p. 273) and that people probably “feel personally offended by the speaker’s language choice [as] it seems to be an indication that they are not being taken seriously” (p. 273).

In her study on gender and language, Marlis Hellinger concentrates on four main points: differences in the use of German by males and females, various gender categories characteristic of German, expressing sex referents in the language, and the changes in German after the women’s movement. The latter three topics are particularly interesting in light of the fact that:

the risk of linguistic discrimination is higher in a language such as German, where the well-established morphosyntactic markers of grammatical gender naturally lead to sex-specification. This means that the development of non-sexual alternatives . . . require(s) considerably more effort in German than in English. (p. 292)

Hellinger frequently uses anglophone studies for contrast and comparison. In the section on women and men speaking, she cites several definitive American studies on genderlects and gender differences in speech, however, leaving large gaps (Coates, 1986; Coates & Cameron, 1988; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1975). Furthermore, she has overlooked some important contemporary American work (e.g., Tannen, 1990).

Problems in defining Jugendsprache—is it really a language?—are addressed by Peter Schlobinski, who has carried out many studies and written much on the subject. He provides several examples from his investigations, but probably his most valuable point underlines that Jugendsprachen—note the plural, as there are several social subgroups who use variations of the speech styles—manifest themselves as a speech style or sociolect with recognizable, stylistic characteristics and structural attributes “based on shared sets of norms and values and therefore on shared expectations, but (which) may vary according to situ-
ational and interactive factors such as intention, choice of topic, audience and context" (p. 325).

Last but not least, Werner Holly looks at the impact of television on language and how language surfaces in television. In his historical overview of how German television has evolved—modeled on and much influenced by the American media—Holly points out the prevalent styles of "infotainment" and "confrontainment" in which "the linguistic arrangement of such texts is dominated by glamour, gags, one-liners and anecdotes, gossip and gentle provocations, the curious, the spectacular, the sensational. Programmes cut up into shorter pieces become a kind of kaleidoscope, a mosaic and thus resemble a discontinuity of other oral forms of communication more than written ones" (p. 348). Holly also mentions how television popularizes the standard while it conversely reinforces spoken norms, and how it also increases the recipients' passive knowledge of other linguistic varieties, including dialect, neologisms, and subject-specific registers.

All in all, Stevenson has organized an interesting and useful volume for Germanophile sociolinguists and for those generally interested in a multidimensional real German. The hard cover edition is a bit pricey, but such an investment would constitute money well spent.

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