

Changes in Japanese university students' metacognitive knowledge of writing skills and awareness as writers

Eri Fukuda

Lecturer, Department of English Communication, Chugoku Junior College

Keywords: First and second language writing, first and second language reading, metacognitive knowledge, social networking website

Abstract

In this qualitative research, Japanese university students' metacognitive knowledge of Japanese and English writing skills was examined through a questionnaire. In an English course for engineering students, a social networking site, Facebook, was introduced as an online learning platform. The participants were assigned to read news articles in both Japanese and English on the same topic and write summaries in either language over a semester. All the students were first-year students enrolled in academic courses, and some students were also taking a Japanese composition class. In the English class, writing skills were not explicitly taught while writing instruction was provided in Japanese classes. This article discusses the results of questionnaire research which indicate learners' development as writers and reveal gaps in students' metacognitive knowledge of English writing

skills.

Introduction

Considering the current move to internationalize tertiary education in Japan, academic writing skills courses in English are increasingly necessary for students at all levels of English language proficiency. In many cases, Japanese university students are not equipped with essential writing skills in English (Takamatsu, 2006). English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses include academic writing skills; however, these courses often target students with intermediate or higher English language (L2) proficiency. Due to the increasing demand for high Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) scores from businesses, freshmen are often required to take TOEIC preparation courses. In addition to the TOEIC test preparation, freshmen should be encouraged to learn academic English as well. Freshmen possess enormous potential to achieve

success as language learners and should be provided with ample opportunities to explore possibilities for growth for both careers and studying overseas. Therefore, more chances to read and write academic texts should also be offered to lower-level L2 learners. The current research utilized a social networking site (SNS), Facebook, to facilitate reading and writing activities and observed how students' metacognitive knowledge changed.

Review of Literature

Krashen (1984) argued that novice L1 writers are categorized into two types: blocked and remedial. Blocked writers have developed knowledge on how language should be written to make it comprehensible to the reader. This knowledge can be gained through pleasure reading; however, blocked writers cannot utilize this knowledge because of a lack of organization skills in writing. Remedial writers do not possess either knowledge or skills. The deterioration of the overall level of Japanese students' L1 literacy skills has recently been seen as a serious problem (Takamatsu, 2006), which suggests learners have been receiving less L1 knowledge and skills to transfer to L2 writing based on the schema theory (Fung, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2003).

When Krashen's (1984) theory is applied to second language writing, many beginner level Japanese university students could be classified as remedial writers who have not absorbed adequate linguistic input to verbalize ideas nor become proficient in writing skills fostered by instruction given in L1. The Japanese and English writing instruction students receive is often limited in both secondary and tertiary education (Okabe, 2004), and the L2 input

they have been exposed to is primarily from textbooks and preparatory materials for university entrance exams. Therefore, along with English writing instruction, Japanese learners may benefit from more varied L2 sources to improve their L2 writing skills.

L2 language input required for students varies depending on their fields of study (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). For example, science and technology students need to read the latest articles to keep up on current advances in their fields. However, field-specific L2 reading would be too demanding for learners at the beginner level. Thus, L1 texts may be able to provide learners with background information so that students may better understand their L2 equivalents, as Cook (2001) claimed the use of L1 helps learners obtain knowledge shared across languages.

For English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, Marco and Pueyo (2006) suggested the use of the Internet in instruction because the Internet allows learners to access authentic and updated information at the same time as it provides a platform for learners to publish their work. In addition, the creation of audience of the writing (Godwin-Jones, 2003) and an increase in the learner's awareness of an audience of the writing (Dippold, 2009) were often highlighted.

Magnifico (2010) claimed that learner awareness of the audience could connect the sociocultural and cognitive perspectives of writing. The roles of the audience are twofold: to elicit background knowledge from the writer to accommodate readers' interest, and to provide feedback which helps writers to see whether their meaning is being communicated to the audience and if they are conforming to the writing norms in their community. In con-

trast to an individualistic view of writing where writers go through the writing process by themselves, through an online community, writers structure their thoughts based on their perceptions of readers' preference, and attempt to gain membership in the community by following the writing practices shared in the group.

A recent Internet tool used to create a virtual community is SNS. According to Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010), the most widely used SNS in general is Facebook. Also, Shih (2011) stated, "Among... social networking sites [such as MySpace, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter], the features, interface, and popularity of Facebook make it an effective tool" (pp. 830–831).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current research was to observe whether and how Japanese students' metacognitive knowledge would evolve when writing skills were not explicitly taught in an English communication class though frequent reading and writing tasks were assigned with the requirement of sharing the articles and writing on Facebook. The students were concurrently enrolled in other academic courses, including, for some students, Japanese composition classes where they were explicitly taught L1 writing skills; therefore, another purpose of this research was to observe students' overall change in their awareness as writers.

As mentioned earlier, L2 linguistic written input is limited in Japan's English language classrooms, and writing instruction is not emphasized in many institutions in Japan. Accordingly, by employing Facebook to improve students' L2 writing skills, the present re-

search seeks to provide a possible way to improve the metacognitive knowledge of writing skills of second language learners who receive only a narrow range of linguistic input and writing instruction.

Methods

Participants

The study was conducted in a required fifteen-week English course at a private university located in western Tokyo. The focuses of the course were English communication and presentation skills. In this class, writing skills were not explicitly taught, which means the instructor did not provide information such as the writing process, text organization, or writing topic and supporting sentences. The participants were 22 freshmen, 2 females and 20 males, who are majoring in engineering. Their English language proficiency was at the beginner level at the time of the study. Their TOEIC scores are below 280, which correspond to A1 to A2 in the CEFR levels.

Procedure

Questionnaires were administered at the beginning and the end of the spring semester. The students were told that agreeing or disagreeing to participate in the research would not affect their grades, and their responses to the questionnaires would be kept anonymous. The data was collected with the consent of all the participants. The time period to answer the questionnaire was 10 minutes. One participant did not complete the post-assessment; thus, the number of respondents decreased to 21.

Questionnaires

To investigate L2 learners' metacognitive knowledge of writing skills, Kasper's (1997) questionnaire was employed: the combined questionnaire of Writing Autobiography (Appendix A), originally devised by Sandman (1993), and Cognitive Style Questionnaire (Appendix B), originally designed by Devine, Railey, and Boshoff (1993). In addition, three questions were added from Victori (1999) to inquire about essay organization, parts of paragraphs, and learners' revising process (Appendix C). These questionnaires were integrated, consisting of open-ended items and a ranking chart. The combined questionnaire was administered during class time. The responses were coded and analyzed by the comparison of the pre- and post-assessments.

Reading and Writing Activities

As assignments, the students were asked to read one online article written in Japanese and another in English on the same topic of their choice though limited to science-related topics. Since each student was interested in different topics, the freedom of choosing their own topic within their field of academic specialization was allowed to maintain students' motivation. The number of characters was specified to be 1,000 or more in Japanese and the number of words was 400 or more in English. Because the students were assigned to write about both the similarities and differences of two articles, articles needed to contain a certain number of characters or words. Articles with 1,000 characters in Japanese and 400 words in English would provide enough concrete information to compare and contrast the texts. The articles were not to be a translation of one or the other, and the learn-

ers were required to find articles from different websites.

Once the students found their articles, they were asked to post the links of the articles on Facebook. Then they posted two types of texts: a summary of the two articles, which described main points of each, and another summary which pointed out the similarities and differences between them. Since the learners' L2 proficiency was limited, they were allowed to choose the language to write in (Mason & Krashen, 1997). If a summary was written in the L1, the participants had to write more than 150 characters, and if it was in the L2, 50 words or more. The number of characters or words was minimal to avoid demotivating the students. These tasks were assigned six times in a semester, and the students completed them 4.58 times on average. One student wrote a summary in English once and another twice; the rest of the class wrote all summaries in Japanese. The first and last weeks were excluded as they were used for the orientation and final assessment.

The students were instructed on how to search for articles in detail at an orientation held in a CALL classroom, and several websites were suggested, such as the Voice of America, the Japan Times, and National Geographic, Japan edition. A Facebook group was created for the particular course, and the students were invited to the group to share information. On Facebook, there is a function which shows who has clicked a post, and this function was used to monitor whether the students had read the articles their classmates posted. Also, in class, the students had to present their articles and summaries to their partners every time the tasks were assigned, and the partners made comments on them.

Results and Discussion

The Questionnaire on Metacognitive Knowledge of Writing Skills

The questionnaires had 10 items in total, and the responses gained from the pre- and post-assessments were compared.

Item 1: Previous positive experiences of writing in English

As Table 1 shows, five types of responses were found in the pre-assessment, namely, book reports assigned in secondary school, personal writing, letters, essays, and having no positive writing experience. Essays were perceived positively when the students gained the opportunities to reflect on their ideas and experience. The respondents seemed to like the aspect of writing which helps the writer to structure and synthesize unorganized ideas. One student noted, “With the assignment called “Story, words, and books that changed my life” I was able to reflect on my life, and think about my life’s turning point.” Another reported, “When I write an essay about my thoughts, by writing, my ideas gradually become clearer, and at the end of the essay, I can clearly identify my goal [for writing].”

As the students went through the first semester at university, some changes occurred in their responses between the pre- and post-assessments. Essay writing was the most common positive writing experience in the pre-assessment; however, in the post-assessment, report writing received the most responses. Letter writing and lack of positive writing experiences were not found in the post-assessment. During this first semester, the students were assigned reports in academic courses and some were enrolled in a Japanese writing class. At this research site, compared to their counterparts in other departments, engineering students are assigned a significantly larger number of reports since they have lab reports. The main reason for the favorable response to college report writing was that they had learned how to write reports and saw the improvements in their writing skills as the following comments illustrate: “I write essays in engineering classes every time, and I feel my writing skills have improved since the first class.” “University’s composition class [was a positive experience] because I learned how to write in ways I had never learned before such as using rules [of writing].” A few students reported English writing activities associated

Table 1
Responses from Item 1: Describing previous positive writing experiences

Codes	Pre ($n = 22$)	Post ($n = 21$)
Book report	3	1
Personal writing	3	1
Letters	2	0
Essays	8	5
No positive experience	2	0
Miscellaneous	1	4
No response	3	1
College report	-	6
Non-report assignments	-	3

with writing in the researcher's English class were also positive experiences for them. For example, one student specified that reading Japanese and English articles on the same topic was helpful, and self-introduction and communicative writing assignments were enjoyable for another. The final presentation was rewarding for one student because he unexpectedly found it fun to write about what he was interested in in English.

Item 2: Previous negative writing experiences

Interesting changes were observed in comparing the two assessments (Table 2). Initially, when the participants were asked about their negative writing experiences, the majority described English language tasks. A major obstacle for the students at the beginning of the semester was their limited L2 linguistic knowledge. They described difficulties in verbalizing their thoughts due to inadequate L2 linguistic ability: "Because I don't have a big vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, I cannot write to my satisfaction. I cannot write in English if I am not allowed to use a dictionary." Their insufficient linguistic knowledge frustrated the students and reconfirmed the insecurity they felt regarding their command

of English. In addition to limited L2 linguistic knowledge, four other codes emerged: writing on an uninteresting topic, writing a response to someone's opinion, compulsory writing, and dislike of writing itself. Compulsory writing includes tests, assignments, and penalties. The students reacted negatively when they felt they were being forced to write.

Although the responses in the post-assessment for three categories dropped significantly to almost none, compulsory writing actually slightly increased. All of these responses focused on Japanese writing. Throughout the first semester, they experienced much more involved Japanese writing tasks, and in the post-assessment, many students expressed the negative feelings they had when completing writing assignments in Japanese. Many of the students wrote that they were good at expressing themselves freely, and they did not like having a topic, time limit, or word or character limit imposed on them. A student reported: "I was so frustrated when no explanations were given for why I had to write it and I was forced to write. Without a plausible explanation, I do not want to write." Six out of 21 valid responses referred to the respondents' struggle in

Table 2
Responses from Item 2: Previous negative writing experiences

Codes	Pre (<i>n</i> = 22)	Post (<i>n</i> = 21)
Uninteresting topic	3	0
Inadequate linguistic knowledge	7	1
Responding to opinions of others'	2	2
Compulsory writing	3	0
Dislike of writing	2	4
Miscellaneous	2	3
No response	3	1
Difficulty in verbalizing ideas	-	5
Not knowing how to write	-	2
Task difficulty	-	4

writing college reports. Three other codes emerged: task difficulty, trouble verbalizing ideas, and trouble organizing ideas. One student described his struggle: “For reports, I have to write 2,000 to 3,000 characters. I didn’t know how to write, so I was lost.” Uncertainty or not knowing what is expected seemed to cause frustration. Also, the inability to express ideas students have emerged as this respondent stated: “When writing a college report, I could not make a conclusion as I had planned.”

In the descriptions about English writing, the participants remained concerned about linguistic issues. Their L2 proficiency level results in insecurity in L2 language use and frustration caused by the inability to express thoughts. One of the five students who mentioned English writing said, “English writing.

When I had to express my thoughts in writing. Fears of making mistakes such as whether my sentences are really correct or word use is correct.”

Item 3: Strengths and weaknesses as a writer

The students’ sense of their inexperience or weaknesses in writing also appeared in this item as indicated in the responses to the pre-assessment in Table 3. Only one code of strength arose and the other four codes are all about weaknesses. Their only strength was their ability to express their thoughts, and the same expression was used by several students: “*omotteiru koto wo kakeru*”, which means, “can write what I am thinking.” While eight respondents specified this ability as their strength in Japanese writing, when it came to weaknesses, limited English language ability was reported by four students.

Table 3
Responses from Item 3: Strengths and weaknesses as a writer

Codes	Pre (n = 22)	Post (n = 21)
Pre-assessment		
Strength		
Able to write what I think (in Japanese)	8	5
Weaknesses		
Influenced by level of interest	2	2
Limited linguistic knowledge	4	4
Limited writing skills	2	2
Unable to think of organization	2	1
Unsure	1	0
Miscellaneous	3	2
No response	3	4
Post-assessment		
Strength		
Able to think of the reader’s perspective	-	3
Good at development of ideas	-	5
Able to organize ideas	-	2
Weakness		
Unable to think of the reader’s perspective	-	2

Although the number of responses indicating limited L2 language ability remained the same in the post-assessment, a significant change seemed to occur in the students' minds. Fifteen out of 18 valid responses included their strengths as writers. Each student mentioned one strength in their responses. Moreover, three more codes for strengths were added. The reader's perspective emerged as a key word for the post-assessment as some participants realized that their strength is the ability to think in someone else's shoes while others noticed that they struggle to do the same. The introduction of Facebook as a learning platform in the current class might have played a role in the increased awareness. On Facebook, the students posted links to news articles as well as their summaries; thus, they were aware that their classmates would read their summaries. They read their classmates' summaries as well. Therefore, as Dippold (2009) maintained, the learners became more conscious of their readers. On the other hand, some still considered their strength as being able to express their thoughts in Japanese, and an equal number mentioned developing their ideas as a new strength.

Item 4: What students have learned about

themselves as writers and how they have improved their writing skills

This question was used only in the post assessment and indicated the participants were greatly influenced by the increased amount of writing assignments at university. There were two notable categories of responses which are key components of academic writing at the tertiary level as Table 4 displays: text organization and the reader's perspective.

Norms of Japanese academic writing to organize their ideas were taught in the students' other classes. Therefore, they may have become aware of the gap between the academic norms and their own organization. A comment from a student was, "[In Japanese writing class,] I think I have acquired a skill to think from another's perspective. I can now think about how I should explain things in order to be understood by others." Another student stated, "I learned how to systematically write what I want to say. I want to improve my writing skills to express exactly what I want to communicate."

In addition, although writing skills were not explicitly taught in this researcher's English class, a large amount of reading in both English and Japanese were assigned. Through the

Table 4
Responses from Item 4: What students have learned about themselves as writers and how they have improved their writing skills

Codes	Post (<i>n</i> = 21)
Areas learned	
Text organization	7
Reader's perspective	7
Miscellaneous	5
Areas students desire to improve	
Ease of understanding	2
Linguistic knowledge	4
Text organization	1
Writing speed	1

news articles, many of the participants should have been exposed to more linguistic input in both languages than they had been before, which would offer them various models of expressions which are understandable not only to the writer but also to the readers.

As mentioned earlier, novice writers are either blocked writers who have not received writing instruction but may have received linguistic input from reading, or remedial writers who lack both factors (Krashen, 1984). As the students were exposed to L1 and L2 linguistic input they might have become blocked writers in both languages. Since some students learned Japanese writing in class, some might no longer be novice writers, but the effects of the Japanese writing instruction is unknown.

Item 5: Defining good writing

In the pre-assessment, the majority of students (15 out of 22) pointed out that good writing should be easy to understand. However, their definition of ease of understanding is unclear; there are various qualities of lucidity such as language, text organization, difficulty of logic and ideas, and degree of expertise. The most frequently appearing description was that understandable writing is a kind of writing everyone can comprehend. “Simple and easy to understand” was a common answer obtained in the pre-assessment. Here one stu-

dent wrote, “Easy to read, easy to understand, and [a kind of] writing which [the reader] can sympathize with.”

The participants’ concern about lucid writing is considered a reader’s perspective. Presumably, the readers’ perspective was their own perspective as readers of texts written by others. As previously noted, the participants’ awareness of the readers of their writing surfaced for the first time in the post-assessment responses. At that point, they had gained some experience as writers while receiving feedback from instructors and sharing their writing on Facebook: they had readers of their writing.

Text lucidity continued to be the most common response in the post-assessment; however, the importance of text organization appeared again as seen in other questions. This response is surprisingly similar to the previous comment but written by a different student, and it illustrates the change that occurred in students’ awareness: “Easy to read, easy to understand, and [a kind of] writing in which the reader can see how the text is organized.” Admittedly, the description of good writing is still overly general, but six students referred to text organization in the latter assessment, which did not manifest itself before in this questionnaire item.

Item 6: Ways of coping with trouble writing

In contrast to other questions, the change

Table 5
Responses from Item 5: Definitions of good writing

Codes	Pre (<i>n</i> = 22)	Post (<i>n</i> = 21)
Ease of understanding	15	12
Informative	2	0
Miscellaneous	2	3
No response	3	0
Logical	-	1
Good organization	-	6

observed here is not necessarily about the improvement of writing skills. Initially, the respondents mostly agreed that their strategy against writer's block was to brainstorm ideas, as one student said; "I write whatever comes to my mind and then compose in my own way." Others would refer to websites and dictionaries or give up, and only one student mentioned taking a break.

However, in the post-assessment, brainstorming was replaced by taking a break. In fact, none of the respondents mentioned brainstorming. In most cases, writing is a cognitively challenging task, and as mentioned in other question responses, some of the participants are not fond of writing itself, so they may need to withdraw from the task to regain concentration. A common strategy to cope with writing problems was to ask older students and friends for help; this strategy newly appeared at the end of the semester. Another emerging response was to look back and reflect on what was written. A student commented, "I reread what I have written up to that point." Although some progress was seen among students as this comment demonstrates, their metacognitive knowledge of writing skills is still underdeveloped; thus, more awareness

raising about how composing proceeds needs to be included in addition to the writing process.

Question 7: Ranking of writing components

Tables D (Appendix D) and E (Appendix E) show how the students rank elements of writing (clarity, originality, grammar, organization, exploration, fluency, and content) in terms of their own perspectives and their ideas of a teacher's perspective. As the tables indicate, the highest ranked item, which was determined by the mean score, was content in the students' and pseudo-teacher's rankings in both the pre- and post-assessments. Clarity was ranked second in the students and third in pseudo-teacher's rankings in the post-assessment. In a previous question inquiring about the students' definition of good writing, ease of understanding was the most common necessary factor reported by the participants; nevertheless, clarity was not considered the primary issue in the rankings. Clarity is defined as "the quality of being easily understood" in Merriam-Webster, ("Clarity," n.d.) which is comparable to the students' definition of good writing. It is unclear whether this discrepancy was caused by the students differentiating clarity and lucidity or their lack of

Table 6
Responses from Item 6: Ways of coping with trouble writing.

Codes	Pre (n = 22)	Post (n = 21)
Use the Internet	4	4
Use a dictionary	4	3
Give up	2	0
Take a break	1	7
Brainstorm	7	0
Miscellaneous	3	1
No response	2	2
Ask others	-	5
Self-reflection	-	3

awareness of the similarity between the element in the current question and the question asking a definition of good writing.

In open ended questions, some students reported their desire to improve their language skills and this trend is reflected in the students' ranking. In the pre-assessment, grammar was placed the last; whereas, in the post-assessment, grammar moved up to fifth. Also, grammar remained within the fourth most important elements in both pre- and post-pseudo-teacher assessments.

Question 8: Writing organization

When the participants were first asked about L1 essay organization, their responses were general. The most common answer was clarity. A student said, "A report which is easy to understand, simple, and [has a] clear text." Some mentioned *ki-sho-ten-ketsu*, a Japanese-style text organization, which means "beginning", "development", "turn", and "ending". Others wrote "introduction, body, and conclusion".

Although four out of 22 respondents referred to an introduction, body, and conclusion in the pre-assessment, the number increased to 10 in the post-assessment. Some responses included explanations. One stated, "At the beginning, I describe my idea first, and then analyze the facts I actually collected. At the end, I discuss

what can be said from the facts." Another said, "I mention the problems and definitions, and I present my ideas by including examples. [Then] I write a summary at the end." A few students also touched upon the reader's perspective at this time; in addition, no student named ease of understanding.

Question 9: Paragraph components

Even though the concept "paragraph" is taught in Japanese in junior high and high school, its components might not be taught explicitly, as Okabe (2004) reported limited writing instruction in Japan's secondary schools. In the pre-assessment, nine students stated that they should write their opinion in the conclusion although the question asks what should be included in each paragraph (Table 8). This comment clearly exemplifies their limited metacognitive knowledge about this question: "There is nothing specific that should be included in a paragraph. Impact and originality etc. in the introduction, and clear sentences in the conclusion."

In the post-assessment, no student detailed paragraph components; nonetheless, the responses show some improvement from the beginning of the semester. Again, the reader's perspective appeared in the responses although the students who mentioned this element did not demonstrate much develop-

Table 7
Responses from Question 8: Writing organization

Codes	Pre (n = 22)	Post (n = 21)
Introduction, body, conclusion	4	10
<i>Ki-sho-ten-ketsu</i>	3	2
State my opinion	2	0
Clarity	6	0
Miscellaneous	3	3
No response	4	3
Reader's perspective	-	3

Table 8
Responses from Question 9: Components of a paragraph.

Codes	Pre (<i>n</i> = 22)	Post (<i>n</i> = 21)
Opinion in the conclusion	9	0
Examples	2	1
Miscellaneous	8	3
No response	3	6
Opinion for individual topics	-	7
Evidence	-	2
Background	-	2
Reader's perspective	-	4

ment in their descriptions. For example, one wrote, "Catch the reader's mind at the beginning." Furthermore, whereas no one mentioned including their idea in the conclusion, new information was added to their responses, which was to present their argument in each paragraph. Moreover, the words "keyword" and "topic" emerged in the responses, and some students stated that an argument should be stated for each topic. The most precise response was as follows:

Divide [a paragraph] into three, and state what you want to say at the beginning. Then explain why you decided to write about it, add details for what you want to say the most, present evidence connected to the argument. Finally, write a summary, what you think, what you think should be done, something like that to briefly summarize.

Question 10: A revising process

In this question, the most common response was the same for the two assessments, as Table 9 shows: students would modify the parts of their writing that "felt awkward." No specific information was provided in the students' comments in both assessments. One additional code mentioned by these students in the post-assessment was proofreading by others. One student said, "I read [my work] several times, and rewrite the parts that seem awkward and strange, and I specifically focus on the areas pointed out by others and rewrite them to make them better."

At the beginning of the semester, three participants reported they would work on text organization when revising; however, the number dropped to zero at the end of the term.

Table 9
Responses from Question 10: A revising process.

Codes	Pre (<i>n</i> = 22)	Post (<i>n</i> = 21)
Reread	1	4
Modify text organization	3	0
Make modifications (No specification of items)	9	5
Do not revise	5	3
Miscellaneous	1	4
No response	3	5
Have others proofread	-	3

Conclusion and Implications

From the pre-assessment to the post-assessment, the students' awareness as writers showed some progress. As mentioned earlier, due to the increased amount of linguistic inputs in two languages, the students could have become L1 and L2 blocked writers. They seemed to be especially influenced by the notions of the reader's perspective and text organization. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that their metacognitive knowledge is still superficial and they might not have developed the actual skills to put the knowledge into practice. Considering that they were first-term freshmen who had just started writing college-level reports in Japanese, more information on writing is necessary to fill the gaps in their knowledge of writing and the rules of academic writing. Metacognitive knowledge is naturally dynamic and students' metacognitive knowledge advanced in one semester. Many students felt fulfilled to learn ways to put their ideas into words by following the structures given in their Japanese composition classes and were eager to learn more efficient ways to communicate their thoughts.

To develop students' potential as writers, specific constituents of a paragraph, such as topic and supporting sentences should be explicitly taught. Further, revising and editing should be differentiated, as the former deals with the holistic modification of logic, content, and organization; whereas the latter focuses on mechanics and language use (Krashen, 1984).

For future research, since writing skills were not explicitly taught in the researcher's English class, data should also be collected

from English classes where these skills are actually taught. Also, the content of Japanese writing courses should be investigated in order to examine its influence on L2 writing skills.

References

- Clarity [Def.1]. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clarity>
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des langues vivantes*, 57(3), 402-423.
- Devine, J., Railey, K., & Boshoff, P. (1993). The implications of cognitive models in L1 and L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 2, 203-225.
- Dippold, D. (2009). Peer feedback through blogs: Student and teacher perceptions in an advanced German class. *ReCALL*, 21(1), 18-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S095834400900010X>
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fung, I. Y. Y., Wilkinson, I. A. G., & Moore, W. D. (2003). L1-assisted reciprocal teaching to improve ESL students' comprehension of English expository text. *Learning and Instruction*, 13, 1-31. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752\(01\)00033-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(01)00033-0)
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2003). Blogs and wikis: Environments for on-line collaboration. *Language Learning and Technology*, 7(2), 12-16.
- Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010). Facebook: An online environment for learning of English in institutions of higher

education?. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(4), 179-187.

Kasper, F. L. (1997). Assessing the metacognitive growth of ESL student writers. *TESL-EJ*, 3(1), 1-20.

Krashen, S. (1984). *Writing: Research, theory and applications*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Institute of English.

Magnifico, A. M. (2010). Writing for whom? Cognition, motivation, and a writer's audience. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(3), 167-184. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2010.493470>

Marco, M. J. L., & Pueyo, M. I. G. (2006). Using the Internet to promote autonomous learning in ESP. In E. A. Macià, A. S. Cervera, & C. R. Ramos (Eds.), *Information technology in Languages for Specific Purposes: Issues and prospects* (pp. 177-190).

Mason, B., & Krashen, S. (1997). Extensive reading in English as a foreign language. *System*, 25(1), 91-102. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(96\)00063-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(96)00063-2)

Mitchell, K. (2012). A social tool: Why and how ESOL students use Facebook. *CALICO Journal*, 29(3), 471-493. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11139/cj.29.3.471-493>

Okabe, J. (2004). The nature of L2 writing by Japanese learners of English. In V. Makarova, & T. Rodgers (Eds.), *English language teaching: The case of Japan* (pp. 181-201). Munich, Germany: Lincom Europa.

Sandman, J. (1993). Self-evaluation exist essays in freshman composition: "Now I have new weaknesses." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 20, 275-278.

Shih, R. C. (2011). Can Web 2.0 technology assist college students in learning English writing?

Integrating Facebook and peer assessment

with blended learning. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 27(5), 829-845.

Takamatsu, M. (2006). Towards linguistic innovations for the intellectual training of Japanese undergraduates. *Bulletin of Takasaki City University of Economics*, 48(3), 213-222.

Victori, M. (1999). An analysis of writing knowledge in EFL composing: A case study of two effective and two less effective writers. *System*, 27(4), 537-555. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(99\)00049-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00049-4)

Appendix A Writing Autobiography

Item 1. Think of a particular time in your life when writing was a positive (good) experience. Describe that time in as much detail as you can. What was the task, the assignment, the circumstance? What are some of the factors that make writing a positive experience for you?

文章を書くことが良い経験であったときのことを考えて下さい。そして、できるだけ詳しくそのときのことについて説明してください。どの様な課題や宿題でしたか? また、どの様な状況でしたか? どの様な要因によって文章を書くことがあなたにとって好意的なものとなりますか?

Item 2. Describe one negative (bad) writing experience you have had. Think of a time when writing was difficult, frustrating, unsatisfying. Again, please be as specific as you can. What are some of the conditions that make writing difficult for you?

今度は、文章を書いた経験で嫌だったものを説明してください。文章を書くことが難しかったり、イライラしたり、満足できなかったときなどを考えてみてください。また、1番と同じように、できるだけ詳し

く書いてください。どのような条件によって、あなたにとって文章を書くことが難しくなりますか？

Item 3. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer? What experiences have led you to believe that you have these strengths and weaknesses?

あなたの文章の書き手としての強みと弱みはなんですか？どの様な経験によってこの様な強みや弱みを持っていると思いましたか？

Item 4. What have you learned this semester about your ability as a writer? How, specifically, do you think your writing has improved? What areas of your writing do you think still need work?

今学期、自身の文章の書き手としての能力について何を学びましたか？具体的に、どの様に自身の文章能力が向上したと思いますか？文章能力に関して、どの部分をもっと伸ばす必要があると思いますか？

Appendix B Cognitive Style Questionnaire

Item 5. Define good writing.

よい文章とは何か定義してください。

Item 6. What do you do when you have trouble writing?

文章を書くことが難しいときあなたは何をしますか？

Item 7. Rank the following in order of importance--in the first column rank their importance to you, personally; in the other column, rank their importance to the teachers who grade your papers. Use #1 for most important through #7 for least important.

次の項目を重要度によってランク付けしてください。一行目にはあなた個人の立場から各項目の順

位を書き、その隣の行には、あなたに成績をつける教員の立場に立って順位を書いて下さい。

Importance to: You Teachers

1. Clarity 明瞭さ
2. Originality 独創性
3. Grammar 文法
4. Organization 構成
5. Exploration 内容発展
6. Fluency 表現力の流暢さ
7. Content 内容

Appendix C Questions adapted from Victori (1999)

Item 8. How do you think a text (report) should be organized?

文章(レポートなど)はどの様に構成されるべきだと思いますか？

Item 9. What should each paragraph have? and the introduction? and the conclusion ?

それぞれの段落は何を含むべきだと思いますか。

導入と結論部分には何を含めるべきですか？

Item 10. How do you usually revise your essays?

いつもどの様に文章を書き直しますか？

Appendix D

Table D

Response from Item 7: Ranking of writing components

Pre-Assessment	Percentage of responses ranking from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest)							Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Student's perspective (<i>n</i> = 21)								
Clarity	.19	.05	.29	.19	.00	.19	.10	4.29
Originality	.24	.14	.00	.00	.19	.10	.33	3.62
Grammar	.14	.10	.14	.14	.0	.05	.43	3.38
Organization	.10	.24	.10	.14	.19	.19	.05	4.14
Exploration	.05	.00	.14	.43	.14	.24	.00	3.67
Fluency	.00	.24	.19	.05	.29	.14	.10	3.81
Content	.29	.24	.14	.05	.19	.10	.00	5.1
Pseudo-teacher's perspective (<i>n</i> = 20)								
Clarity	.05	.15	.15	.15	.1	.25	.15	3.55
Originality	.1	.1	.1	.1	.15	.15	.3	3.25
Grammar	.2	.1	.2	.15	.1	.1	.15	4.25
Organization	.1	.4	.15	.2	.0	.15	.0	4.95
Exploration	.0	.1	.15	.1	.35	.15	.15	3.25
Fluency	.05	.05	.2	.15	.25	.15	.15	3.45
Content	.5	.1	.05	.15	.05	.05	.10	5.3

Appendix E

Table E

Response from Item 7: Ranking of components of writing

Post-Assessment	Percentage of responses ranking from 1 (highest) to 7 (lowest)							Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Student's perspective (<i>n</i> = 18)								
Clarity	.33	.0	.17	.22	.17	.06	.06	4.72
Originality	.22	.11	.11	.06	.28	.11	.11	4.17
Grammar	.06	.17	.17	.17	.06	.17	.22	3.61
Organization	.11	.28	.22	.11	.06	.22	.0	4.61
Exploration	.0	.11	.17	.11	.17	.22	.22	3.11
Fluency	.06	.0	.11	.17	.11	.22	.33	2.72
Content	.22	.33	.06	.17	.17	.0	.06	5.06
Pseudo-teacher's perspective (<i>n</i> = 18)								
Clarity	.06	.22	.22	.33	.11	.06	.0	4.61
Originality	.17	.06	.11	.11	.11	.17	.28	3.44
Grammar	.27	.06	.17	.06	.17	.17	.11	4.28
Organization	.11	.44	.17	.17	.11	.0	.0	5.28
Exploration	.06	.0	.17	.11	.28	.28	.11	3.17
Fluency	.0	.0	.0	.06	.11	.33	.50	1.72
Content	.33	.22	.17	.17	.11	.0	.0	5.5