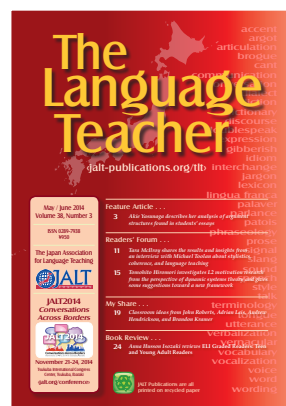# JALT Publications • Online Journals

The Language Teacher

The Language Teacher (*TLT*) is the bimonthly publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). It publishes articles and other material related to language teaching, particularly in an Asian context. *TLT* also serves the important role of publicizing information about the organization and its many events.. As a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting excellence in language learning, teaching, and research, JALT has a rich tradition of publishing relevant material in its many publications.

Links

- JALT Publications: http://jalt-publications.org
- *The Language Teacher*: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt
- *JALT Journal*: http://jalt-publications.org/jj
- *Conference Proceedings*: http://jalt-publications.org/proceedings

- JALT National: http://jalt.org
- Membership: http://jalt.org/main/membership

Analysis of argument structures: Inquiries into effective writing

Akie Yasunaga

Tokyo Keizai University

In this paper the structural features of argumentative texts (12 essays) generated by Japanese university students attending an English presentation course are analyzed. Toulmin's model of argument (1958) was used as a measure for analysis of micro-structures (i.e., *claim*, *data*, *warrants*, *backings*, and *rebuttals*). The aim of the study is twofold: to identify common substructures used in the arguments; and, based on the results, to investigate implications for teaching argumentative writing. The study reveals that the predominant structure was justificatory argumentation presenting data and data-backings in support of the claim. Only a few students employed warrants and rebuttals in the substructures; three cases and eight cases respectively out of a total of 96 cases. The results indicate that L2 linguistic knowledge and subject-related knowledge play an important role in shaping argument. Two implications for teaching also emerged: firstly, learning and practicing both macro- and micro-structures of argument are necessary, and secondly, reader-oriented activities that help the students to understand wider reader opinions would help improve argumentative writing.

本論では英語プレゼンテーションコースで学んだ日本人大学生の論証文（12編）の分析を行った。分析指標として、トゥールミンの論証モデルを使用し、主張、理由、根拠、証拠、反駁等の論証の下位構造を調査した。研究の目的は次の2点である。(a)共通してみられる論証の下位構造を認め；(b)論証文指導についての示唆を考察する。研究の結果、ほぼ全ての学生が相互に関連のある理由と証拠を提示して弁証した。ごく僅かな学生のみが、根拠（3件）及び反駁（8件）を使用した。研究結果はライティングを学習するコンテクストと学習者がライティングを学んだ学習経験が論証文構成に大きな影響を与えることが認められた。ライティング指導においては、論証の下位構造を明示的に指導し、それらを練習することが不可欠だと推測され、さらに、社会の多様な意見を論証に組み入れるリーダー中心のアクティビティが有用であると推論された

Expressing one's opinion through convincing arguments is important from the perspective of effective communication. Mastering effective argumentative writing can empower students, as it entails producing "professional, ethical, and political discourse" (Crammond, 1997, p. 230). It helps a writer persuade and convince readers effectively by deploying a writer's beliefs, values, learning experience, and socio-cultural norms in their opinions—as such this type of writing is at the heart of communication. Therefore, investigating how a writer generates arguments and speculating on how to help students enhance this writing skill should have a significant impact on second language writing pedagogy.

Swales (1990) described the relationship between discourse features and communicative functions in the theory of "the discourse community." According to Swales, the discourse community is comprised of members who have "a broadly agreed set of common public goals"(p. 24), has regular inner group communication, and, importantly, makes use of agreed genres to accomplish communication. Examples of discourse communities are those who read and contribute to scholarly journals, magazines, newspaper editorials, and so forth. We can identify prototypical discourse structures, that is genre-specific features, in the texts produced by these communities. Because of their specific function in achieving communication, the prototypical discourse structures entail a set of schematic features that comprise the beginning, middle, and ending of the whole text—in this way, recipes, news

editorials, and academic papers all have distinctively different structures. Thus, the knowledge of these prototypical discourse features would likely benefit Japanese students in developing communicative efficacy.

It is worth examining text features of arguments formed by Japanese students by contrasting them with those formulated by members of the discourse community where English is spoken. By identifying contrasting text structures it may be possible to explore what elements of argumentation Japanese students should further learn in order to enhance communicative efficacy. Toulmin's model has been applied to writing pedagogy for native English speakers for a number of years and significant numbers of textbooks on writing and argumentation employ this model (see Connor, 1996, p. 68). In this paper, Japanese students' argument structures in opinion essays—specifically micro-structures of the argument—are examined. The analytical measure used was adopted from Toulmin's model of argumentation (Toulmin, 1958).

Background

In the past, Japanese writers' styles of argumentation have been researched extensively. Some research found the Japanese style of argumentation to be indirect or inductive. For example, Hazen (as cited in Conner, 1996) claimed that the Japanese style of argumentation stated a claim indirectly, and little evidence for argument was explained explicitly. Connor (as cited in Connor, 1996, p. 140) also analyzed written correspondence—47 documents, including letters, faxes, and electronic mails—between a Japanese manager in marketing and an American counterpart and found that the Japanese manager expressed rejection indirectly. Connor also conducted in-depth analysis of a report written by the Japanese manager and confirmed that the manager did not state claims explicitly or argue directly about concerns.

However, in another study, Gilbert (2004) analyzed the coursework of eight Japanese students attending tertiary education in an Australian university, using Toulmin's model of argument. She found that both Australian and Japanese students preferred to present facts and logical explanations in support of their claims, which is inconsistent with Hazen's aforementioned study. Gilbert claimed that although Australian and Japanese students showed some differences in argument structures in terms of shaping the central argument, both groups shared "a significant number of similarities, especially with respect to the modes of implementation of successful argument macrostructures and the types of preferred argument substructures" (p. 72). Gilbert concluded that although the data were not representative of all Australian and Japanese students, the context of the writing played a prominent role in shaping argument structures.

In the past few decades, other kinds of rhetorical analysis differing from the aforementioned contrastive rhetoric have emerged. For example, from the perspective of multi-lingual writing expertise, the bidirectional features of writing knowledge between the first language (L1) and second language (L2) have been actively researched (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2007; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2012). According to Kobayashi and Rinnert (2012), the rhetorical decisions L2 writers make are influenced by their "repertoire of writing knowledge," which is "a cognitive construct comprising the entire inventory of knowledge about L1 and L2 writing acquired by the writer to date" (p. 106). Such repertoires of writing knowledge include L1/L2 writing conventions (e.g., discourse markers), L1/L2 rhetorical features (e.g., organizational structures), meta-knowledge about concerns such as reader expectations, and L1/L2 linguistic knowledge. From the perspective of writing expertise, the writer's repertoire of writing knowledge is not static, rather it continues to develop, transform, and evolve on the basis of the writer's experience of writing in both L1 and L2.

Rinnert and Kobyashi (2007) examined the structural moves in argumentative essays among four groups of university students, aged 19 and 20 years old, divided into groups according to their previous high-school intensive writing training as follows: (a) both L1 and L2; (b) L1 only; (c) L2 only; and (d) little or none in either. They identified significant differences in structural decisions across the groups, including overall text structures, the use of meta-discourse markers, and the degree of elaborateness of the supporting points. One important finding was the pluralistic nature of writing knowledge acquired through L1 and L2 writing experience. According to Rinnert and Kobyashi, the effect of combined intensive writing experience in both L1 and L2 is far-reaching: those students in group (a) with intensive L1/L2 training allocated more pre-writing planning time, generated more points and more elaborate supporting details, and used more discourse markers. Secondly, the

students in group (b), who received intensive L1 writing instruction, shared common structures with group (a), for example they clearly structured paragraphs in three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion—a structure which seemed to have been acquired during L1 writing instruction in opinion essay writing for university entrance exams. However, they often failed to elaborate on their points, probably due to a lack of L2 knowledge and little experience of practicing in the L2. Thirdly, the students in group (c) seemed to possess some knowledge about writing paragraphs: They stated their position and included supporting reasons; however, they occasionally arranged paragraphs arbitrarily and preferred to express personal thoughts rather than objective views. Finally, the majority of the students in group (d), with no writing instruction in either L1 or L2, used personal narratives in support of their position, employed inductive style of claim, and allotted minimal pre-writing planning. Thus they concluded, apart from L2 linguistic knowledge, the writer's experience of writing instruction significantly influences the structuring of the argument.

To sum up, the past research indicates that Japanese writers tend to formulate indirect and inductive ways of argument; however, the kinds of text features are not static, rather, the context (e.g., whether students write in higher education in a particular community), and the writer's experience (e.g., writing instruction they receive) have significant effects on shaping argument structures. These findings led to the current case study, an in-depth analysis of Japanese students' argument substructures.

The study

In this study, Japanese students' opinion essays were analyzed using Toulmin's model of argument. Toulmin (1958) conceptualized argumentative discourse based on Western judicial justificatory practices of law, and he postulated three schematic structures: *claim*, *data*, and *warrant*. Argumentation, first, attempts to establish a claim—a contentious assertion, opinion, or judgment. This claim should be justified by data, that is, reasons for both supporting the claim and protecting it from possible challenges. Data can be drawn from experience, facts, or instances. Next the arguer provides warrants, that is general premises offered by authority, to give credibility to the relationship between claim and data.

Toulmin identified claim, data, and warrant as essential elements for every argument. Further extended structures of elements are *rebuttal*, *qualifier*, and *backing*. According to Toulmin, a rebuttal aims to prevent potential counterarguments from undermining the claim. A qualifier entails probability and presumability of the grounds that credit the causal relations between data and claim; thus, a qualifier often takes the form of a modal qualifier such as "almost certainly," "probably," and "maybe." Backing consists of concrete examples that elaborate on data or eliminate ambiguous inferential aspects of a warrant. Using the argument model, the following structural elements were counted and totaled (adapted from Crammond, 1998):

Claim	A basic assertion presented by the arguer;
Qualifier	Reference to the degree of the probability;
Data	Causal reasons that justify the claim;
Backing	Exemplification of data or warrant;
Warrant	Premises that authorize causal relations of claim and data;
Rebuttal	Denied implication against potential counterargument.

The purpose of the study is therefore to investigate answers for the following research questions:

1. What types of semantic substructures do Japanese students employ in their argumentation?

2. Based on the results, what instruction is needed to improve argumentative writing?

Data collection

The participants, first-year Japanese university students (N=12, four females and eight males) were all 18 or 19 years old. The students' English level was beginner, with around 230 to 395 on the TOEIC equivalent score. In the questionnaire, ten of the students answered that they had received special L1 writing instruction in *shouronbun*—to prepare for opinion essays in Japanese for university entrance exams—at high school.

The data used for the study were the final course assignments in the Presentation Course, which is a required course at Tokyo Keizai University. The class met twice a week for a total of 28 90-minute classes per semester. Over the

course, the students received explicit writing instruction using a textbook to prepare for their presentations. The instruction included teaching the arrangement of writing—introduction; thesis statement; main points supported by facts, data, or personal experience; and conclusion—and logical reasoning. A series of process-oriented activities were conducted such as brainstorming, outlining, and formulating in English. Whole class discussion—generating ideas, or debating over pros and cons of a particular topic—was also conducted in the pre-writing activities. All students consented in writing to the use of their work for the purposes of this study.

The sample text below (Figure 1) was used for a consciousness-raising activity for argument substructures—how to justify claims with concrete examples, facts, or logical explanation.

In my opinion, smoking in a restaurant should not be allowed {claim} for the following three reasons.

Separating a smoking area from non-smoking one is not effective {rebuttal}. Although I sit in a nonsmoking area, it is very difficult to block smoke {data}, because smoke drifts in the air {data-backing}. Thus, separating non-smokers' space from smokers' does not work completely.

Smoking causes secondary smoking to nonsmoking people nearby {data}. According to research, secondary smoke has more serious effect than direct smoke {warrant}, since smoke goes more easily to lungs of nonsmokers. It is reported that secondary smoke causes the risk of having cancer {warrant-backing}. . . .

Figure 1. An excerpt from the model text (adapted from *Barron's Writing for the TOEFL iBT [3rd ed.]*)

In the model text, the first paragraph makes the central argument, which explicitly calls for the banning of smoking in restaurants. The second paragraph refutes the counterargument—the separation of the smokers' space from non-smokers—by presenting data from personal experience, that is, smoke cannot be blocked even when sitting in a non-smoking area. The third paragraph justifies the claim–data relation with a warrant—the report of an increased risk of having cancer.

Essay prompts were provided including both open-ended questions, in which they take one side from two choices (e.g., "Should students should live alone or with their families?") and closed-ended questions, in which they claim a

particular proposition should be accepted or rejected (e.g., "Japan's consumption tax should be raised"). The sample questions are listed in Appendix A. The lengths of the final papers ranged from 125 to 326 words. During the editing phase, ungrammatical phrases and sentences were corrected by the teacher.

Originally, 16 students were assigned to the class; however, three students did not complete the final paper, so 13 papers were examined in terms of argument structures and topic choice. After careful examination, 12 essays were selected in order to balance between the two prompts—six open-ended essays and six closed-ended essays. The 12 essays provided a representative sample of the students' texts, so one open-ended essay was excluded from the analysis. Pseudonyms are used to protect the privacy of the students.

Results

All the students wrote five-paragraph essays, and the predominant argument substructure used was justifying the central claim with three main data and data-backings. Some students employed warrants and rebuttals; however, the number of the cases of these micro-structures was significantly small. Table 1 shows the total cases appearing in the two types of essays.

Table 1. The total cases of micro-structures employed in the arguments

Micro-structures	Open-ended essays (N= 6)	Closed-ended essays (N= 6)
Claims	6	7
Data	18	19
Data backings	15	13
Warrants	2	1
Rebuttals	5	3
Qualifiers	0	3
Total	46	46

The central feature of the argument was justification substructures. Through pre-writing activities, the students brainstormed relevant ideas, decided a position to take, and formulated points with supporting details. The types of backings varied depending on the topics. Most students preferred to present facts or examples, and a few students used statistics from external

sources such as newspaper. Two students made extensive use of the first person singular *I*—that is, they expressed personal thoughts by reflecting on their own life and experiences—and others (10 students) used the second person *you* or the first person plural *we*—that is, they wrote more objectively with specific examples.

The occurrences of warrants and rebuttals were very few, only three cases and eight cases respectively out of a total of 92 cases. The function of warrants is to give credibility to the causal relations: as such, warrants often entail a particular authority, for example citing research or findings from educational psychology. A lack of warrants may be a manifestation of students not researching relevant evidential support from experts. It seems that the students brainstormed the idea in the class but did not consult experts or research outside sources for further evidence.

An excerpt from an open-ended essay, which compared the Internet to TV is shown in Figure 2.

From which do you get information, TV or the net?

. . . Comparing the Internet from TV, I think getting information from the Internet is more convenient than TV {claim} by three reasons.

First, you can get information immediately {data}. For example, suggested that you must search for something immediately, it is easy to get information if there is a computer nearby. Not only with a PC, but if you have a cell phone, you are able to get the same information from your phone. Furthermore, you need not to wait until the news broadcast programs are shown {rebuttal}. As such, the Internet is more convenient than TV.

Second, you will be able to get much more information from the websites if you use the Internet {data}. While the number of websites on the Internet was only 18,000 in 1995, in 2006, the number of websites surpassed 700 million in 2006 {data-backing}. By contrast, there are only seven local broadcasting on TV in Japan {rebuttal}. As you can see from this, you are able to have a lot of information from the websites. The Internet is very useful.

Third, you can use and process information easily {data} if we search the site from your mobile phone and write a report while using the site {data-backing}. If you watch TV news report, however, you should write a note, and you need rely on your own memory {rebuttal}. Therefore, I think it would be more convenient to use the net.

In conclusion, the Internet is convenient than TV by three reasons. . .

By Tohru

Figure 2. Argument structure from an open-ended essay

In this essay, Tohru framed his argument chain by presenting the relative superiority of the Internet over TV. He framed the substructure in terms of the immediacy, the amount, and the processability of information. In his second supporting point, Tohru inserted evidential statistics—the number of websites on the Internet—from an external source as supporting details, but the first and third supporting points were explained from his personal experience of using the Internet.

Next, from the closed-ended essays, an excerpt from Atsushi's argument is presented in Figure 3.

Tax should be increased

.. . . Recently, a movement to increase taxes is a hot issue such as allowance of consumption tax increase bill. In my opinion, tax should be raised {claim} . . . Here are three reasons that support my opinion . . .

First, Japan adopts lower tax rates than those of other countries {data}. You know, today's consumption tax of Japan is 5%. This is lower than other countries, so Japan's major parties attempts to raise consumption tax from 5% to 10% {data-backing}.

Secondary, Japan must increase tax, because it has lots of red {data}. For example, Japanese government's budget is supported by borrowings every year {data-backing}, yet it is not allowed in the Constitution of Japan {rebuttal}. Every year, Japan modifies the Constitution to issue a great amount of government bonds {data-backing}. Therefore, tax should be increased to change the current situation.

Finally, tax is important capital resources of the country {data}. The latest Japan's budget is about 80 trillion yen. In order to suffice this very large amount of money, to-day's tax rate is not enough {rebuttal}. The government collects both direct taxes such as income and corporate taxes and indirect taxes for liquor and cigarettes. According to the Shoup's recommendations, direct taxes reduce motivation of business people {warrant}. I think we should raise indirect tax.

From these three reasons, . . . I think tax should be increased.

By Atsushi

Figure 3. An argument structure from a closed-ended essay

In this essay, Atsushi supported an increase in the consumption tax in terms of three points: the tax rate, violation of the Constitution, and the government budget. Compared to Tohru's

essay, Atsushi developed his argument from broad points in society. As Atsushi commented in his introduction, the topic was hot in Japan at the time, with the media broadcasting the debate repeatedly, and viewers sharing their views on the pros and cons of the issue. It seems the topic knowledge—the points at issue—provided a basis for shaping substructures of Atsushi's argument. In fact, Atsushi employed the most cases of semantic elements (i.e., claim, data, warrant, and backing), accounting for 10 cases in total, while the average total employment of the semantic elements was around 7.6 cases.

It should be noted that through observation over the course, many students seemed to have difficulty in elaborating details for their points. One reason might be due to a limitation of L2 knowledge, and another reason seems to be little experience of formulating paragraphs in the L2. In fact, a few students commented that they felt confused when they were asked to elaborate and give examples of a specific reason in the body. Three students did not elaborate the points fully although they were instructed to explain: for example, only one point was elaborated, but the other two points were not elaborated or explained somewhat incoherently. It seemed that they gave up explaining further due to limited L2 knowledge. Furthermore, topic knowledge and familiarity influenced the structuring of the argument as most students did not research the topic widely. Thus, factors that might affect composing processes seemed to be insufficient L2 and topic-relevant knowledge, and unfamiliarity of formulation processes—that is how to structure argument and organize paragraphs.

Discussion

For the first research question, the results indicate that the students structure argument with reasons for supporting the claim, and they prefer employing facts and examples over personal experience to elaborate the points. The predominant structural elements employed were claim, data, and data-backings. The students formulated arguments based on ideas generated in in-class discussion during pre-writing activities, or from personal views on the topic. Only a few students researched the topic further from external sources (e.g., newspapers or the Internet).

The characteristic of relying on data and data-backing complex is found to be similar to novice writers of English L1 in Crammond's (1998)

study. Crammond compared the argument structures of novice student writers (6th, 8th, and 10th grades) and expert writers (professional writers) of English L1, and found the students in the 6th and 8th grades relied on backings for elaborating on data—scarcely using warrants or rebuttals in the substructures. By contrast, expert writers employed more warrants and rebuttals than backings—warrants and rebuttals were employed at least once in their argument substructures—and the number of times these semantic elements were employed increased with the age of the author. Thus, the argument structures found in this study have similar characteristics to those substructures used by novice L1 English writers.

Secondly, topic effects were observed. To some degree, the credibility of a claim depends on the depth of semantic substructures—data, warrants, and backings. It seems comprehensiveness is likely one factor in determining the depth of an argument. Argumentation that drew on various views in society in support of the claim outperformed that which structured arguments from personal judgment (e.g., the amount of support, the credibility of data, and the strengths of the evidence). For example, Atsushi's argument, an increase of the tax, incorporated well-developed in-depth debates from wide-ranging perspectives in society. By contrast, essays on uncontroversial but rather personal issues, such as living alone or with family, cooking at home or dining out, tended to formulate substructures from subjective views. It appears that controversial issues or hot topics likely intrigue the students into incorporating broader opinions from society.

Next, as for the second research question, implications of improved argumentative writing, firstly, it seems learning and practicing genre-specific macro- and micro-structures of argumentation is a necessary condition. Although the students learned integral structural elements (data, warrants, and rebuttals) through the model text (see Figure 1), most students failed to employ warrant and rebuttal in their substructures—only three cases of warrant and eight cases of rebuttal were employed. Warrants and rebuttals empower argument structures because a warrant builds strong justifiable grounds by presenting rules or principles from credible authority, while a rebuttal acts upon potential challenges that might defeat an argument (Toulmin, 1958). Knowledge of these substructures would expand students' repertoires of argument structures and likely help them in structuring more powerful

arguments. Furthermore, the employment of warrants and rebuttals likely increases as writers advance their writing skills (Crammond, 1998). Thus, through the processes of developing the range of argument structures, including macro- and micro-structures of argument, L2 writers will likely enhance their argumentative writing.

Secondly, it seems some forms of reader-centered activities are needed for improved argumentative writing, as the current process-based writing instruction, which employs prewriting activities of brainstorming, generating, and mapping ideas, gives little opportunity to raise students' awareness of wider readers' opinions and possible counterarguments. In-class discussions and debates may contribute to noticing different opinions. Through discussion, students can add on new knowledge beyond personal views, thereby helping them recognize wider opinions and potential counterarguments. Through engaging in debate, the students face challenges that could demolish their argument, thereby demonstrating the need to provide justifiable facts drawing on credible sources (e.g., newspaper, research).

Furthermore, understanding broader audience opinions certainly helps formulate more intricate points in argument. Topics that are likely to push students into using deeper substructures are controversial issues and hot topics (e.g., increases in taxes, nuclear power generation), because the students are likely to have been exposed to country-wide debate through the media and thus those topics are easy to research. This kind of subject-related knowledge provides a strong basis for shaping good argumentation. To sum up, for improved argumentative writing, instruction in macro- and micro-structures of argumentation is necessary, and furthermore, some forms of audience-oriented activities, for example discussion or debate, may help the students increase subject knowledge and contribute to structuring effective argumentation.

Conclusion

Cultivating communicative competence is considered to be of primary importance in English education in Japan. In the light of the concept of the discourse community, developing rhetorical knowledge and awareness of genre-specific discourse features would help Japanese students achieve effective communication. In this paper, Japanese university students' argumentative text features were analyzed using Toulmin's (1958)

model of argument. The aim of the study was to identify shared common substructures of the arguments; and to explore options for writing instruction that might help students improve their argumentative writing. Through the study, the most common structures were found to be justificatory argumentation with data and data-backing complex, with little use made of warrants and rebuttals. The range of argument substructures would likely expand as students advance their repertoire of writing skills, and the results imply that writing instruction on macro- and micro-structure of argument is necessary. Some forms of reader-oriented activities that promote understanding broader reader opinions would also likely contribute to improved argumentative writing.

References

Connor, U. (1996) *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crammond, J. (1997). *An Analysis of Argument Structure in Expert and Student Persuasive Writing.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University. Retrieved from <digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=37709&local_base=GEN01-MCG02>

Crammond, J. (1998). The uses and complexity of argument structures in expert and students persuasive writing. *Written Communication, 15,* 230-268.

Gilbert, K. (2004). A comparison of argument structures in L1 and L2 student writing. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 14*, 55-75.

Kobayashi, H., & Rinnert, C. (2002). High school student perceptions of first language literacy instruction: Implications for second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 11(2), 91-116.*

Kobayashi, H., & Rinnert, C. (2012). Understanding L2 writing development from a multi-competence perspective: Dynamic repertoires of knowledge and text construction. In R. M. Manchón (Ed.), *L2 writing development: Multiple perspectives.* Boston: Mouton De Gruyter.

Lougheed, L. (2008). *Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT (3rd ed.).* New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

Rinnert, C., & Kobayashi, H. (2007). L1 and L2 pre-university writing experience: What effects on novice Japanese EFL writers? *Hiroshima Journal of International Studies (Faculty of Inter-*

national Studies Hiroshima City University),13, 65-92.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Toulmin, S. (1958). *The uses of argument.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Acknowledgements

Akie Yasunaga holds an M.S. Ed. (Temple University) and currently teaches as a full-time lecturer at Tokyo Keizai University. Her research interests include discourse analysis and genre pedagogy. She can be contacted at <akie2810@tku.ac.jp>.

Appendix A

List of questions for writing prompts

1. Which medium do you think is better, TV or the Internet?
2. Which do you agree with, university students should live alone or with their families?
3. Which do you think is better, cooking at home or dining out in a restaurant?
4. Which do you think is better, reading from books or from the Internet?
5. Which do you prefer, a bike or a car?
6. Should more Japanese students study abroad?
7. Should the Japanese government raise taxes?
8. Should high school students wear a uniform?
9. Should people not use a cell phone or a smart phone in public space?
10. Should lifetime employment be maintained?