An Instructional Approach to Persuasive Writing

Akie Yasunaga

Tokyo Keizai University

Researchers suggest that we understand writing from the perspective of reader–writer interactions (Hyland, 2002). However, many textbooks for writing courses in Japanese universities do not satisfactorily deal with readers' expectations. Furthermore, writing persuasive essays is challenging for Japanese students because they have not received systematic instruction in argumentative genres. This study analyzed the results of an instructional unit for Japanese university students on composing persuasive essays to prepare for persuasive presentations. The instructional unit drew on the theory of genre knowledge formulated by Tardy (2009), and the focus of the unit was teaching argumentative genres incorporating reader-oriented writing. Final essays were analyzed in terms of argument structures using Toulmin's (1958) argument model. The results indicated that (a) the students' awareness of audience concerns helped them structure arguments, and (b) the instructor's feedback on overall argument structure and audience expectations seems to have encouraged students to include subcomponents of argument structures.

研究者は、ライティングはライターとリーダーの対話の視点から理解すべきだと提案している（Hyland，2002）。しかし日本の大学のライティング教科書の多くは読む側の期待について十分に対応していない。さらに論証型ジャンルのライティングを系統的に学んでいない日本人大学生にとって説得型エッセーを書くのは極めて難しい。この研究は、説得型スピーチを発表する日本人大学1年生に論証文を書くための指導ユニットを実施し、その結果を論じた。指導ユニットはTardy（2009）が提唱したGenre knowledgeの理論を適用し、ジャンル指導とリーダーを中心に置いたアプローチが採られた。書かれたエッセーをToulmin（1958）のアーギュメントモデルで分析した結果、リーダーの多様な意見を意識することは、学生が論証を構成するのに役立ったことが示され、第2に講師が議論の構成と、リーダーの期待についてフィードバックを与えたことが、多様な議論を構成するのに寄与したと考えられる。

E FFECTIVE PERSUASION is a core skill for succeeding in academic, professional, and political fields. Effective arguments entail establishing persuasion convincingly regarding complex issues using reasons and credible evidence. Making an argument is an act of truth-seeking, influencing the convictions of readers and persuading them of the arguer's views (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2010). As such, argumentation is an essential practice in the judicial system and in the process of political decision making. Mastering effective persuasive writing empowers students because they can acquire facility with professional and political discourse (Crammond, 1998). This suggests that the skill of achieving effective persuasion is important for Japanese students learning English.

Mastering argumentative genres, however, is tremendously challenging for Japanese students. First, they have not received systematic writing instruction in this genre. They typically receive *sakubun* (self-

reflective) writing instruction in *kokugo* (Japanese) class throughout their primary and secondary school years in order to learn various Japanese expressions (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2009). Many high schools offer *shoronbun* (short essay writing) instruction geared toward university entrance exams outside of the regular Japanese classes on a short-term basis, in which students learn to state their opinions using logical argumentation. Therefore, for Japanese university students, who have rarely been trained to compose in argumentative genres systematically, writing persuasive essays is quite challenging because, as Krapels (cited in Connor, 1996) pointed out, composing competence is more important than language competence in ESL writing.

Second, the view that a writers' establishment of an appropriate relationship with readers is key to effective academic persuasion is widely known (Hyland, 2002), but this perspective is often left out of writing instruction in Japan. In Hyland and Tse's (2004) study, postgraduate students in Hong Kong used metadiscourse markers (e.g., hedges, self-mentions) strategically across the discipline in order to meet the expectations of their supervisors for achieving effective persuasion. For example, humanities students used far more self-mentions than biology students (50 versus 5.7 per 10,000 words respectively), because humanities students perceived it important to persuade supervisors of their own voice and personal interpretations using suitable data and evidence. In contrast, biology students considered that their professors would perceive it important to demonstrate effective research practice, so the students avoided using personal voice. This indicates that, as Nystrand (1987) stated, when we view writing as written communication in social contexts, written texts serve as communication only if they are composed carefully and take into account what readers know, what may be assumed, and consequently what information should be supplied and how it should be structured. Therefore, writers' awareness of their readers' views and expectations is important.

In writing classes in Japan, however, reader awareness has not been properly dealt with. For example, in writing courses in Japa-nese universities, instruction often involves teaching structural elements of paragraphs (topic sentence and supporting details), the arrangement of overall essays (introduction, body, and conclusion), and language (phrase and sentence structure) for a particular genre. Furthermore, many textbooks on academic writing commonly adopt process-oriented writing instruction that is structured linearly: brainstorming, prewriting, revising, and editing. Although this cognitive approach helps students understand writers' composing processes, this instruction leaves little room for writers to take account of readers' perspectives because it puts the writer at the center of the writing process. For effective persuasion, however, it is essential that writers organize their writing in accordance with readers' expectations and beliefs so that they can address their claims comprehensively and persuasively.

In this paper, I describe a classroom-based action research project that was designed for 1st-year Japanese university students to learn to write persuasive essays in preparation for their final course assignment—persuasive presentations. An instructional unit created for this project involved writing instruction integrating both teaching argumentative genres and gaining awareness of readers' viewpoints. In the sections that follow, I describe the instructional steps of the unit and present an analysis of argument structures written by the students after its implementation, followed by implications for teaching argumentative writing.

Previous Studies

The Japanese style of writing has often been characterized as inductive. Widely known is Hinds's study (as cited in Connor, 1996) illustrating the rhetorical organization of a Japanese newspaper column. Hinds reported that Japanese writers of such a column state claims in an inductive way, which he later called a *quasi-inductive style*, in which the thesis statement is *implied* in the passage. Japanese writers, Hinds claimed, use this technique to encourage readers to think about the topic and let them make their own conclusions

by observing the phenomenon described. Kubota (2010), however, countered Hinds's view, claiming that the quasi-inductive style does not represent Japanese writing styles. Kubota examined reading materials used in Japanese junior high schools and found that, indeed, diverse rhetorical styles, including deductive styles, were adopted in the materials. Based on her findings, Kubota argued that diverse rhetorical styles (direct, explicit, and sympathetic styles) observed in reading textbooks may reflect political influences—efforts to cope with growing trends of globalization, that is, to promote efficient communication skills in the global community. Critical contrastive rhetoric researchers deny perspectives that essentialize culture in examining rhetorical patterns and suggest that we constantly reflect writing styles within the sociopolitical framework.

Some studies have analyzed components of arguments written by Japanese university students. For example, Kobayashi and Rinnert's study (as presented in Rinnert, 2012) found that Japanese students preferred to employ justification structures. A justification structure refers to an argument in which an arguer presents a position and convincingly supports it with evidence, occasionally including counterarguments (CAs) and refutations against the CAs. This study found that about 85% out of a total of 36 third- and fourth-year Japanese university students employed justification structures in support of their claims. In terms of CAs and refutations alone, low frequencies have been reported. In another study conducted by Kobayashi and Rinnert (as presented in Rinnert, 2012), although 50% of a different group of students employed CAs and refutations when they wrote in their L1, the frequency decreased to 32% when they wrote in their L2. In that study, Kobayashi and Rinnert concluded that the low frequency of CAs and refutations in L2 essays might be an indication of students' limited L2 knowledge and unfamiliarity with these subcomponents. Yasunaga's (2014) study also supported the low frequency of refutations. In Yasunaga's study, although most Japanese university students supported their claims with logical reasons incorporating evidence, frequency of rebuttals was only 33%.

It is often pointed out that English-speaking instructors find the styles of Japanese students' essays different from English writing conventions, and some researchers claim that writers' awareness of various reader expectations influences overall rhetorical organization (Casanave, 2004). For example, McCagg (as cited in Casanave, 2004) argued that Japanese is a more reader-responsible language than English, so a writer of Japanese would expect readers to contribute to comprehending the text. As for argument structures, Crammond (1998) also raised the issue of audience concerns. Crammond compared the arguments in persuasive essays written by novices (sixth- to twelfth-grade English-speaking students) and professional writers and observed that although expert writers employed rebuttals, reservations, and warrants at least once in their arguments, novice writers used fewer rebuttals and warrants. Crammond stated that the intricacy of argument subcomponents such as warrants, rebuttals, and qualifiers was considered to reflect the writers' concern for their *audience*—a strategic decision to get readers to accept their claims.

In short, past studies have demonstrated that Japanese writing styles may differ from English writing styles; however, those are not static and, in fact, diverse rhetorical patterns have been observed, which may reflect sociopolitical influences on the educational system. Furthermore, Japanese university students might not be familiar with components of arguments because they have not received systematic instruction in argumentative genres during their primary and secondary school years.

Writing Arguments

Toulmin's (1958) model of argument offered a schematic framework for argument structures. Toulmin analyzed argumentative discourse based on Western judicial practices, in which juries give verdicts based on the arguments between defending and prosecuting lawyers. According to Toulmin, an arguer's claim must be supported by reasons, which is *data*. The reasons, however, might not be convinc-

ing enough to accept the claim, so the arguer provides *warrants*, which establish the authority of the data so as to add credibility. In addition, the data alone may not convince the jury, so the data need *grounds*—evidence for the data. Furthermore, the jury must take into account the opposing arguments (CAs) that may refute the arguer's assertion. Thus, the arguer has to respond to the opposing argument by refuting the proposition, so the arguer *rebuts* the CA. Applying Toulmin's schematic model, in Figure 1, I exemplified a sample argument structure justifying a ban on smoking in restaurants.
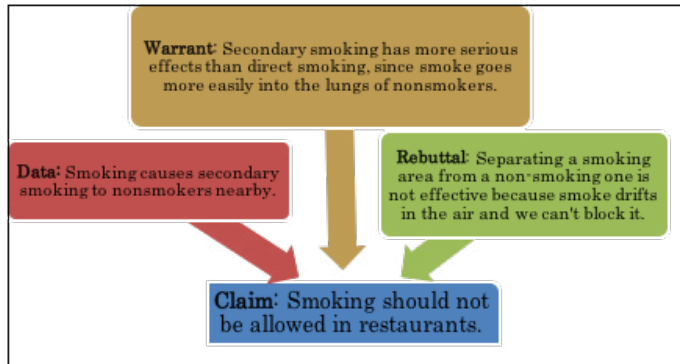

Figure 1. A sample schematic framework of arguments.

In Figure 1, which exemplifies the schematic structure of an argument, the claim is that smoking should be banned in restaurants. The reason supporting the claim is that smoking causes secondary smoking—the data for the claim. In order to justify the data, a credible resource is given: Smoke goes more easily into the lungs of nonsmokers than those of smokers—that is, a warrant. The role of the warrant is to give credibility to the data. Finally, the arguer denies the potential CA—a rebuttal. The CA is to allow smoking by separating smoking from nonsmoking areas so that secondary smoking can be prevented. Each component multi-dimensionally

supports the bannning of smoking in restaurants—the central claim. The components can be defined as follows:

1. Claim: A basic assertion presented by the arguer,
2. Data: Causal reasons that justify the claim,
3. Warrant: General premise that authorizes causal relations between the claim and data,
4. Rebuttal: Denied implication of a potential CA.

Toulmin's model illustrates how practical arguments are structured, and the model helps students with composing them.

The Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of an instructional unit conducted with Japanese university students to develop skills for composing persuasive essays for their course project—making a persuasive presentation. The instructional unit borrowed its framework from the theory of genre knowledge formulated by Tardy (2009), and the results of its implementation were explored in terms of argument structures using Toulmin's argument model. The following research questions were formulated.

1. How does genre-based instruction combined with raising awareness of audience concerns influence students' argument structures?
2. Based on the results, what are implications for teaching persuasive writing?

Participants

The participants were 1st-year Japanese university students (N = 14, one female and 13 male students). All were 18 or 19 years old and taking a course entitled English Presentation. Their English levels ranged from beginner to low intermediate, with TOEIC scores ranging from 280 to 450. The course lasted 14 weeks, for a total of 28

classes (meeting twice weekly). Before implementing the instructional unit, the students learned basic presentation skills, including presenting ideas using physical and visual messages and delivering speeches fluently and confidently. They also received basic writing instruction in order to write their drafts, for example, paragraph structure (topic sentence and supporting details) and overall arrangement of an essay (introduction, body, and conclusion).

Genre Knowledge

Tardy (2009) formulated four distinct but interdependent dimensions of genre knowledge that emerge over the course of L2 writing development, which include the following.

1. Formal knowledge: Knowledge of structural elements of genre such as the prototypical organization of different genres.

2. Process knowledge: All procedural knowledge necessary for composing genres. This includes the ability to organize ideas into paragraphs and to complete essays in line with an intended genre.

3. Subject matter knowledge: Writers' content knowledge, by which they communicate with readers effectively.

4. Rhetorical knowledge: Genre knowledge that includes an understanding of genre's intended purposes and awareness of expectations of various readers in socio-rhetorical context.

The Instructional Unit

The following instructional unit was conducted to prepare for persuasive presentation, which involved a 10-step procedure incorporating Tardy's four dimensions. The goals of the unit included (a) to develop the skill of composing argumentative genres; (b) to raise awareness of audience concerns so as to be able to write in line with readers' expectations; and (c) to make presentations fluently and confidently.

1. Studying Argumentative Genres

The first step was to learn formal structures and structural components of argumentative genres, thereby developing *formal knowledge* of the genre. At this stage, the instruction focused on recognizing the semantic framework of arguments, for example, supporting the claim logically with reasons incorporating evidence. The students read model texts to learn the essential components of arguments such as stating reasons, giving specific evidence, and responding to CAs, and familiarized themselves with the rhetorical patterns of arguments.

2. Developing Logical Thinking Skills

The students practiced formulating reasons related to their claims. The purpose of this step was for the students to develop *process knowledge* of the genre. They discriminated illogical reasons from logical ones taken from sample sentences and explained why they were so. They also worked in groups to list advantages and disadvantages of a particular topic, through which they practiced the presentation of logical reasons.

3. Researching the Topic

The students researched their topics on the Internet to get informed knowledge on current ideas relevant to their topics and understand ongoing debates between concerned parties. The aim was to help students develop *subject matter knowledge* and *rhetorical knowledge* of genre, through which they could gain awareness of various views on the topic and make thoughtful decisions about the positions they took.

4. Learning Essential Phrases

The students reviewed useful constructions for writing their first drafts, which included (a) subordinate clauses that describe causal

reasons such as those with *because, since,* and *therefore*; (b) subjunctive clauses that validate claims in particular circumstances such as ones beginning with *if, provided that,* or *in case*; and (c) expressions of comparison and contrast that describe effectiveness or viability of a solution from two or more standpoints such as *by contrast, similarly, more . . . than.* The students read sample texts several times and identified how those phrases were used in arguments.

5. Drafting

The students reviewed structural aspects of the essay (introduction, body, and conclusion) and formulated their first drafts. They were encouraged to allocate sufficient planning time to how to organize their overall essay.

6. Getting Feedback

The students engaged in peer feedback, reformulated their essays, and then submitted a draft to the instructor. The instructor gave feedback on the following points: (a) coherence of the data and suitability of the grounds (evidence); (b) various readers' viewpoints; (c) mechanical aspects (grammar points and word choice); and (d) overall organization of the essay. The aim of feedback was for the students to understand whether their arguments were acceptable to readers, which promoted rhetorical knowledge of genre.

7. Revising

The students revised and restructured their arguments according to the feedback. Some students further researched the topic depending on the feedback.

8. Creating Visuals

The students made slides for their presentations.

9. Editing and Practicing Speech

The students completed final editing by looking over the mechanics of their writing. After editing, they practiced delivering their speeches using gestures and voice inflection. The aim was to develop spoken fluency. Practicing speeches was postponed to almost the final stage because it was much easier to practice at this stage than during initial stages before they had gone through drafting and revising of their draft.

10. Giving Presentations

Finally, students gave presentations in class using PowerPoint slides.

Analysis

Fourteen essays were analyzed in terms of the components of their arguments. Nine essays of these were close-ended essays, in which writers claim a particular proposition should be accepted or rejected, for example, "Japan's consumption tax should be raised." Five were open-ended essays, in which the writer takes one of two sides, for example, "Students should live alone or with their families." A list of topics chosen by the students is presented in the Appendix. The lengths of the essays varied, but most were 300-350 words.

Regarding argument structure, nine essays (64%) employed justificatory structures, in which the writer asserts a claim and justifies the claim with three points of evidence. The remaining five were recommendation essays, in which the writer identifies an issue, discusses advantages and disadvantages of a position, and suggests a viable solution.

Next, the subcomponents of the argument structure were analyzed drawing on Toulmin's model. The analysis did not involve systematic procedures such as a computer program or assessment by raters other than the author of the study. The sentences were classified into semantic components of arguments, and the occur-

rence of data, warrants, and rebuttals was examined. The following definitions were applied for classification:

1. Data: A statement that explains reasons why the claim should be accepted,
2. Warrant: A general statement that justifies the data from our social value or from authority, and
3. Rebuttal: A statement that challenges alternative views such as a CA.

The results showed that all the students employed data (reasons) to support their claims and almost all provided specific evidence. Regarding warrants and rebuttals, frequencies are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Occurrence of Warrants and Rebuttals in Student Essays ($N = 14$)

Both warrants and rebuttals	Warrants	Rebuttals	Neither
3	4	4	3

Three essays presented justifiable data and refuted CA, eight essays employed either warrants or rebuttals, but three essays incorporated neither. An excerpt from one essay that focused on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is shown below. No grammatical errors are corrected and the argument subcomponents have been added in brackets.

> I agree to the TPP [thesis statement]. . . . Second, by the abolition of trade barriers, the trade in the company promotes efficiency . . . and profit increases [data]. From this, the major products of company go a lot into the world and the company develops [data-backing]. Cheap farm products flow in by the abolition of the duty from the United States and gives heavy damage for Japanese agriculture [CA]. However, the Japanese agriculture form will change if Japanese Government gives a fund to agriculture a guarantee [rebuttal]. . . . It is estimated that GDP rises 2,700 billion yen in 10 years [warrant-backing] by letting Japan escape from a national seclusion state, and globalization accelerate [warrant].

To examine the argument substructures, Table 2 provides a comparison between the frequencies of warrants and rebuttals that occurred in the current study and those found in a previous study (Yasunaga, 2012). In the previous study, students received basic writing instruction in argumentative genres, engaged in logical thinking activities, and then participated in group discussion; however, they did not research topics in detail but rather engaged in process-oriented writing. The results of this study compare favorably with those obtained in the previous study.

Table 2. Frequencies of Subcomponents in Arguments

Study	Warrants	Rebuttals
1. Genre-based instruction combined with process-based writing (Yasunaga, 2014)	25%	33%
2. Genre-based instruction combined with reader-oriented writing (current study)	50%	50%

Discussion

We return to the first research question of how the students wrote essays after the instructional unit. The most commonly used components of argument structure were claim, data, and data-backing complex. Three essays out of fourteen employed both warrants and rebuttals, and eight essays employed either warrants or rebuttals.

Throughout the instruction, students were encouraged to identify different viewpoints because this allowed them to provide informative reasons, occasionally incorporating their responses to different viewpoints. An excerpt of one such essay is shown below (no errors are corrected). The student acknowledged different standpoints and refuted them so that readers could make an informed decision as to whether to accept the claim or not.

> Nowadays, more and more college students are living alone. . . . Many people might answer that "I want to live with my family." Why? Because, living with family make you very easy and relaxing. Certainly, your family cooks, and does housework for you, so you are free from those house chores and get some free time. . . . You can use this time for studying, or for your hobby [CA]. . . . However, in my opinion, I think we should live alone and learn to do house chores [thesis]. . . . Second, deciding all things makes you grow [warrant]. This is so hard, but if you learn housework, you can cook, and learn how to use time and money efficiently [data]. Sometimes, you might fail in cooking, or doing something under certain situations [CA]. However you can learn something from your failure [rebuttal]. In this way, you can improve your life skill.

Furthermore, after receiving genre-related writing instruction and researching their topics, the students appeared to spend significant amounts of time on planning and overall organization of their essays. It appeared that understanding current discussion helped them to consider rhetorical decisions as to how to deploy evidence strategically. This suggests that incorporation of warrants and rebuttals might be an indication of the students' concern for making their argument acceptable to an audience, including their peers and the instructor.

As for the second research question, first, for teaching argumentative writing, genre-related writing instruction combined with reader-oriented writing is helpful for structuring arguments.

For L2 learners, as proposed by Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, and Gelderen (2009) in their inhibition hypothesis theory, limited language knowledge may impede the composing process. Schoonen et al. hypothesized that L2 writers' cognitive attention allocated to the composing process, for example, issues of content knowledge and genre-related structural aspects of writing, might be inhibited because L2 writers are obliged to engage mostly in L2 text construction. Writing instructors are advised to devote attention to getting students to understand the genre features of argumentative text. Second, as noted earlier, arguments entail persuasion and making claims by establishing an appropriate relationship with readers based on their expectations, beliefs, and viewpoints. An arguer must accept views that differ from the arguer's standpoint, respect other viewpoints, and then contest them rationally and intelligently (Ramage et al., 2010). Therefore, reader-oriented writing practice seems to be important for writing arguments.

Furthermore, it is helpful for students to get effective feedback on their drafts. It might be unrealistic to expect students to allot their attention to both argument structures and outlining of evidential data simultaneously during the drafting stage. Effective revision is dependent on effective feedback, not on language aspects such as grammatical errors (because this can be done later at the editing stage) but on genre-related structures and overall content. Teacher feedback may focus on the following aspects: (a) presenting logical, coherent reasons in support of claims, (b) providing specific evidence; and (c) responding to alternative views. The instructor can approach this by asking questions, for example, asking what other people say about the topic and whether there are alternative solutions or not. Furthermore, this is the only stage in which students can understand readers' responses to their arguments, by which they can reformulate overall contents and rhetorical organization in line with audience expectations.

Conclusion

This classroom-oriented research project examined the results of an instructional unit implemented with Japanese university students to help them compose persuasive essays in preparation for their course assignment of persuasive presentations. The study focused on composing processes of argumentation and the instructional unit focused on developing genre knowledge of argumentative texts and increasing awareness of audience expectations. The analysis of the students' essays indicated that understanding genre features of arguments, developing logical reasoning skills, and recognizing readers' expectations helped students structure arguments effectively. Furthermore, genre knowledge and research on various viewpoints helped students to incorporate subcomponents of the argument structures.

Some limitations of this study include the fact that the author of the study conducted the analysis of the data. Moreover, no holistic assessment in terms of the quality of the essays was included. Lastly, this study included no baseline data of the students' writing before implementing the instructional unit. In future studies, these issues would need to be addressed in order to make more definite conclusions about the results obtained.

To conclude, when we view writing as knowledge creation and written communication of knowledge, persuasive writing must not just state personal thoughts in a confined context like a classroom. Process-oriented writing instruction helps teachers understand writers' cognitive writing processes; however, writer-centered instruction alone cannot build appropriate reader-writer interactions. Making arguments must take into account different standpoints as resources for knowledge construction; understanding socially distributed viewpoints helps students structure arguments in line with audience expectations.

Bio Data

Akie Yasunaga holds an MSEd (Temple University) and currently teaches as a special instructor at Tokyo Keizai University. Her research interests include academic discourse analysis, genre pedagogy, and teaching academic writing.

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Appendix
Topics Chosen by the Students
Close-Ended Essays
- Drinking among young people
- English education in elementary school in Japan
- Ideal time for beginning the school year
- Having a part-time job
- Having a pet
- Nuclear power generation
- Raising the consumption tax
- Tokyo Olympics
- Trans-Pacific Partnership

Open-Ended Essays
- Living alone or living with family
- Long sleepers or short sleepers
- Using a word processor or handwriting
- Using electric dictionaries or paper dictionaries