

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ASSESSMENT RESEARCH GROUP

**INVESTIGATING VALID CONSTRUCTS FOR
WRITING TASKS IN EAP TESTS FOR USE IN
JAPANESE UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS**

AR-A/2015/4

Yumiko Moore

ABSTRACT

This study investigated what would constitute a valid English writing task for Japanese university admission purposes. It was based on an online survey, interviews and documentation. The results showed that a valid English writing test should consist of direct writing tasks such as impromptu writing in argumentative or expository discourse mode or summary with single text or multiple texts.

Drawing on the socio-cognitive frameworks for validating academic literacy tests (Shaw and Weir, 2007 and Chan, 2013), this study attempted to: 1) investigate the writing constructs measured in 136 English writing test papers in Japanese university entrance examinations and then to evaluate the context validity and the cognitive validity in terms of the contextual and cognitive parameters proforma (adapted from Chan, 2013); and 2) identify the underlying construct of English academic writing for first-year students in Japanese universities.

A mixed methods approach was chosen for this study because a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of research matters than either approach alone (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Both quantitative and qualitative data, consisting of an online survey, interviews and English exam papers were gathered from Japanese universities.

This study found that word reordering is the most commonly used response format in the writing tests, followed by translation. The most common writing response formats used by national/public universities were translation and impromptu writing, whereas word reordering and lexical gap-filling were commonly in use at private universities. However, the results of the online survey identified that a valid writing test for Japanese students should cover direct writing tasks such as essay writing in argumentative or expository discourse mode or summary with single text or multiple texts. A candidate's writing should be assessed in terms of content and organisation, grammar and vocabulary. Because word reordering, lexical gap-filling and translation tasks can assess very limited English grammatical and lexical writing skills, there is no conclusive proof that the task can assess the writing skills needed by the Japanese universities to write cohesive and coherent texts in English. Despite a number of limitations being acknowledged, the present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests some improvement that could be made to writing assessment in Japanese university entrance examinations.

Author

Yumiko Moore is an MPhil candidate in the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) at the University of Bedfordshire. She is also an Associate Lecturer in the Foreign Language Centre at the University of Exeter, UK. She received her MA degree in English Language Teaching from the University of Reading in 2008 after a seven-year career as an English language teacher in Japan. Yumiko currently carries out research which examines the validity of English writing tests in Japanese contexts. Her research interests include English language acquisition, English writing assessment and English for academic purposes (EAP).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the British Council for supporting this study. My sincere thanks also go to the lecturers in Japanese universities for their participation in this study. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors at the University of Bedfordshire, Professor Cyril Weir and Dr Fumiyo Nakatsuhara, for their patience, generous support and advice.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	5
2.1 English education policy in senior high schools in Japan	5
2.2 Reform of the Course of Study English for senior high school	6
2.3 Reform of English tests of Japanese university entrance examinations	6
2.4 Theoretical framework	7
2.4.1 Conceptual frameworks for test validation	7
2.4.2 Argument-based approach to validation	7
2.4.3 Evidence-based approach: socio-cognitive framework to validation	8
2.4.4 Context validity	8
2.4.5 Cognitive validity	9
2.5 Research questions	10
3. RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	10
3.1 General approach	10
3.2 Participants	11
3.3 Instruments	11
3.3.1 Online writing task survey	11
3.3.2 Interviews with lecturers	12
3.3.3 Contextual and cognitive parameters proforma	12
3.4 Data collection	12
3.4.1 The predominant writing activities in Japanese universities	12
3.4.2 The predominant writing assessment for 2014 Japanese university entry	13
3.5 Data analysis	14
3.5.1 Online survey and interviews	14
3.5.2 English test papers for 2014 Japanese university admission	14
4. RESULTS	15
4.1 The predominant writing activities in Japanese universities	15
4.2 The predominant writing assessment for 2014 Japanese university entry	24
4.2.1 The contextual features of the impromptu writing tasks	25
4.2.2 The cognitive processing required by the impromptu writing tasks	28
5. DISCUSSION	30
5.1 Appropriateness of writing constructs tested in university entrance examinations	30
5.2 The role of writing tests of Japanese university entrance examinations	34
5.3 The role of English language in Japanese universities	36
6. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS	38
REFERENCES	39
APPENDIX 1: A framework for conceptualising writing test performance	43
APPENDIX 2: Online writing task survey	44
APPENDIX 3: Contextual cognitive parameter proforma	51

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Cognitive parameters for the analysis of cognitive validity in writing (adapted from Chan, 2013)	9
Table 2: Summary of data collected	10
Table 3: Question items of online writing tasks survey	11
Table 4: Details on lecturers who completed the survey	13
Table 5: Percentage of departments of the lecturers who completed the survey	13
Table 6: The number of Japanese universities and English test papers	13
Table 7: The percentage of lecturers who use English writing tasks for students in Japanese universities	16
Table 8: Topic domains of writing tasks used in Japanese universities	17
Table 9: Language functions to demonstrate in the writing	18
Table 10: Use of verbal input assigned to students for writing	20
Table 11: Use of non-verbal input assigned to students for writing	21
Table 12: Discourse mode used in writing classes	21
Table 13: Marking criteria of the writing	22
Table 14: Response formats of writing in English tests for 2014 Japanese university entry	24
Table 15: Discourse mode of the tasks	25
Table 16: Clarity of the purpose of the tasks	26
Table 17: Topic domains of impromptu writing tasks	26
Table 18: Language functions to demonstrate in the writing	27
Table 19: Clarity of intended reader of the tasks	27
Table 20: Knowledge of criteria of the tasks	28
Table 21: Cognitive demands of the real-life tasks	28
Table 22: Cognitive processes required during the impromptu writing tasks	29
Figure 1: Mean comparisons of language functions to be performed in an EAP class and subject class	19

1. INTRODUCTION

English language tests are one of the key motivating factors for Japanese students to learn English. Throughout their education, Japanese students must sit English tests, with arguably the most important being the university entrance examinations taken by Japanese senior high school students. Since a student's future career can depend heavily on the quality and reputation of the university they attend, this creates a strong incentive for all stakeholders (schools, students, teachers, parents and test designers etc.) to facilitate test preparation. Due to the considerable social impact of the tests as high-stakes examinations, the issue of the appropriateness of the English tests has been discussed for decades in academic contexts.

A major criticism from many non-Japanese academic researchers (e.g., Brown, 1996; Murphy, 2001) is that the English tests rely heavily on objectively-marked literacy skills and lexico-grammatical skills. When it comes to current writing assessment, the National Centre Test for University Admissions (NCT), the only national standardised test in Japan, does not have a direct extended writing task; instead, word reordering tasks are provided. As a result, a question arises about whether the English tests of NCT actually test students' writing skills in a valid way. Most studies on the appropriateness of English tests in Japan (e.g., Brown and Yamashita, 1995; Kikuchi, 2006; Ichige, 2006; Guest, 2008; Underwood, 2010) have only focused on reading components. To date, there has been little discussion of English writing assessment in Japanese university entrance examinations (e.g., Kowata, 2009).

2. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 English education policy in senior high schools in Japan

The Course of Study is the official national curriculum of primary and secondary schools in Japan, which has been in place since 1947. Accordingly, English education curricula of senior high schools are legitimated by the Course of Study, which provides the goals, guidelines and general principles for teaching each English course. The Course is determined by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), which also authorises textbooks in accordance with the objectives and contents to be taught in the Course. The main limitation of the Course of Study, which has a legal enforcement as an instructional framework applied at the national level, is that systematic reference to instruction is not included (Gorsuch, 2000). Schools or teachers have the freedom to adopt any pedagogical practices, as well as designing their own English classes, within the objectives of English courses framed by the Course of Study. Their pedagogical practices, therefore, might vary depending on students' academic achievement, and graduates' educational and career goals.

Senior high schools in Japan consist of academic and vocational schools comprised of public (national and local) and private institutions. Broadly speaking, academic institutions focus on preparing students for entrance to universities, whereas vocational institutions aim to prepare students for workplace or vocational colleges. Academic senior high schools, for example, may focus on teaching only English components that will be assessed in English tests of university entrance examinations, rather than the components required to be taught mentioned in the Course of Study. In this regard, there may be some inconsistency between what students are supposed to learn and how they should learn them, and what students actually learn and how they learn them.

2.2 Reform of the Course of Study English for senior high school

English education policy has had successive reforms including the acceptance of the methods of Communicative Language Teaching instead of Grammar Translation methods (*yakudoku* – word-by-word translation of written English into Japanese, as well as explicit grammatical explanation in Japanese). The 1999 version (implemented in 2003) and a new proposal of an Action Plan aim to cultivate English communicative abilities in Japanese people. In the proposal, MEXT recommended that individual university entrance examinations attempt to reflect this aim in response formats and content (Guest, 2008).

Furthermore, the Course of Study 2009 strongly emphasises acquisition of all four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly, it is crucial to not only have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use the knowledge in a real setting. Therefore, the Course of Study does not recommend the use of instruction mainly based on grammar and translation or teacher-centred classes; rather it entails the use of English language for teaching instruction as well as integrating all the four skills in English activities. The reform of the English curriculum and pedagogical practices at secondary schools appears to be operated through a top-down policy from MEXT.

2.3 Reform of English tests of Japanese university entrance examinations

In accordance with the aim of English education in secondary school, the need for dynamic revolution in the English tests components of Japanese university entrance examinations recently arose, with MEXT undertaking a political initiative to improve university admission policy. The National Centre Test for University Admissions (NCT), the only national standardised test for university admission, is intended to “measure the basic achievement of secondary school students by reliable and valid test” (NCUEE, 1993, cited in Gorsuch, 2000, p. 676). The content of the examination should follow what the students are supposed to learn based on the Course of Study (Watanabe, 1997; Guest, 2008).

However, a number of politicians and business leaders are urging that TOEFL iBT, which is primarily intended for North American university admissions, should replace the current English tests. In 2013, MEXT announced it would consider this. In contrast to the business leaders and politicians who are in favour of TOEFL iBT, educators feel that TOEFL iBT is inappropriate for Japanese university entrance purposes because the test is not localised for the Japanese context. They have instead proposed newly locally-developed English tests for Japanese university admissions, such as the Test of English for Academic Purposes (TEAP), locally designed to test Japanese senior high school students for university entry by its main developers – Sophia University and the Eiken Foundation of Japan assisted by the University of Bedfordshire. This has provoked a heated discussion about the English tests between MEXT and English educational professional associations in Japan (e.g., LET; JASELE; JACET, 2013, Kyoto Appeal). Despite the significant impact of the English tests on a student’s future, there is little discussion over the validity of these tests.

2.4 Theoretical framework

2.4.1 Conceptual frameworks for test validation

The evaluation of language tests is strongly associated with test validity issues. The current dominant view of validity is “the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests” (AERA, 1999, p. 9). The concept of validation of writing tests has been the centre of intense language assessment research (Kunnan, 1998). The importance of justifying a particular inference or interpretation of a test score to be used as a basis for university entry or employment decisions highlights the need to ensure that the test score is valid.

Messick’s (1989) progressive matrix framework for validation was underpinned by two interconnected facets: 1) the source of justification of testing, which is based on appraisal of either evidence or consequence; and 2) the function or outcome of the testing, being either interpretation or use. The Messick framework has been widely utilised in test validation practices (e.g., Buck, 1992; Brown and Iwashita, 1998), and has been considered indispensable for today’s validation exercises.

2.4.2 Argument-based approach to validation

The argument-based approach articulated by Kane (1992; 2013) follows from Messick’s framework (1989) but provides a simpler approach to validation (Chapelle *et al.*, 2010). Instead of placing construct validity as a unifying feature of validity theory, Kane (1992; 2013) provides a unified view of validity by locating interpretative and validity arguments at its centre. Kane (2013) argues that historical validation processes involve collecting many different kinds of evidence and analysis, which results in a very complicated discussion of validity. Therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary complexity in validation, this approach sees validity as an argument constructed by an analysis of theoretical and empirical evidence, instead of a collection of separately qualitative or quantitative evidence (Bachman, 1990; Chapelle, 1999; Chapelle *et al.*, 2010).

However, there are some drawbacks to the argument-based approach, even though we acknowledge the importance of the interpretive argument for organising a wide variety of validity evidence. First, as this approach only provides a very general method, the specific techniques employed are undetermined; the argument-based approach is not prescriptive (Schilling, 2004 cited in Schilling and Heather, 2007; Davies, 2011). Secondly, in attempting to present a single unified theory of validity, there is no consideration of important distinctions among different types of tests, evidence, and stages of the validation process (Schilling, 2004 cited in Schilling and Heather, 2007).

Despite the significant contribution of the argument-based approach to the conceptualisation of the broad nature of an interpretive argument, “at the heart of any validity argument must be the evidence” (Taylor, 2011, p. 295). Evidence is still required to develop a transparent and coherent validity argument as the process of validation can involve a number of highly complex factors such as tests, individuals or society. On its own, the argument-based approach is a necessary – but not sufficient – approach to test validation.

2.4.3 Evidence-based approach: socio-cognitive framework to validation

Shaw and Weir's (2007) evidence-based validation framework offers a multifaceted view of validity. The validation framework consists of two aspects: *a priori* evidence collected before the test event and *a posteriori* evidence generated after the test event. Despite each element of validity in the framework appearing to be independent (see Appendix 1), Shaw and Weir (2007) point out that the framework regards validity as a unified concept where there are interactions between/within context, cognitive and scoring validity. In other words, the evidence collected for validation of different validities is linked; hence, context validity, for example, will affect cognitive validity in the way that decisions made based on parameters of task context will impact on the cognitive processing while the task is being completed.

The main strength of the evidence-based framework is as follows: 1) the framework is grounded in applied linguistics theory and research; and 2) it appeals to a socio-cognitive approach in that the abilities to be tested are demonstrated by mental processing of the candidate (the cognitive dimension); equally, the use of language in performing tasks is viewed as social rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon (Shaw and Weir, 2007, p. 3). The latter is especially relevant for English writing tests in Japanese university contexts where the focus appears to be placed more on linguistic elements for English tests. This paper highlights the aspect of prior evidence (*context validity* and *cognitive validity*) in the framework to attempt to describe the link between the two different types of validity and address the relevant issues relating to the testing of L2 writing.

2.4.4 Context validity

Context validity is concerned with two elements: 1) linguistic and content demands that must be met for successful task completion; and 2) the features of the task setting that thoroughly describe the performance required as described in Appendix 1 (Shaw and Weir, 2007). This is based on the premise that tests should reflect the conditions of the authentic real-life context as far as possible, and every effort should be made to consider real-life conditions when designing tests.

The choice of response format will critically impact the cognitive processing that the task will elicit (Weir, 2005). Measures of writing ability are broadly divided into two categories: indirect tests, such as multiple-choice tests, and direct tests, such as constructed writing samples. Needless to say, the two different types of writing tests will elicit different cognitive processing during the task completion. Multiple-choice tests of writing, for example, require test-takers to choose appropriate phrasing based on decisions related to grammar, usage, diction and idiom (Benton and Kiewra, 1986), which could be irrelevant to the generally accepted components of the real-life writing process. Despite multiple-choice writing tests being considered as highly reliable, the test format has been criticised by linguists and educators (e.g., Weir, 1990; Hughes, 2003) for being too narrowly focused so that test-takers are not required to plan, generate or edit the text, which can result in a lack of validity.

On the other hand, researchers commonly accept direct (or performance) tests because these tests are strongly associated with situational and interactional authenticity. However, some drawbacks are identified with direct tests of writing (Lloyd-Jones, 1982). One of the criticisms is in the inconsistency in the marking, which can be caused by various effects such as variation in marker judgement as to whether an answer meets the required standards for the context. Writing topics can also affect individuals' score as a result of topic familiarity. In order to solve these problems with direct tests, it is important to introduce multiple writing samples, as well as marker training.

2.4.5 Cognitive validity

The issue of cognitive validity of writing tests is about how closely the test represents the cognitive processing involved in authentic writing contexts, i.e., in performing the task in real life (Shaw and Weir, 2007). An important issue for language testing is which processes are relevant for test development in order to establish cognitive validity in the tests. Influenced by Field's (2004) model, Shaw and Weir (2007) developed a socio-cognitive framework for validating writing tests from Weir's (2005) socio-cognitive framework, which was in part based on Grabe and Kaplan's (1996) model of writing, which is more precise than Hayes' (1996) model. From a cognitive perspective, a valid writing test would involve encouraging test-takers to use all the six processing components (macro-planning, organisation, micro-planning, translation, monitoring and revising) appropriate to the level of proficiency being assessed (Shaw and Weir, 2007).

This current study also draws on recent research by Chan (2013), building on a body of literature, including Flower and Hayes (1980), Field (2004), and Shaw and Weir (2007), to investigate cognitive processing among L2 students in writing tasks in a real-life academic context. The parts of Chan's study related to academic writing are a valuable baseline with which cognitive processes in English writing tests of Japanese university examinations can be investigated. In broad terms, these are the parameters Chan (2013) investigated as illustrated in Table 1.

Cognitive phases	Cognitive processes
Conceptualisation	Task representation
	Macro-planning
Meaning and discourse construction	Connecting and generating ideas
Organising	Organising
Low-level monitoring and revising	Low-level monitoring and revising
High-level monitoring and revising	High-level monitoring and revising

Table 1: Cognitive parameters for the analysis of cognitive validity in writing (adapted from Chan, 2013)

In detail, Chan's research investigated L2 students' writing in genuine academic settings, and as a result identified 11 cognitive processes which in her view should be at the heart of an academic writing test, namely:

1. task representation and macro-planning
2. revising macro plan
3. connecting and generating ideas
4. selecting relevant ideas
5. careful global reading
6. organising ideas in relation to input texts
7. organising ideas in relation to one's own text
8. low-level editing during writing
9. low-level editing after writing
10. high-level editing during writing
11. high-level editing after writing.

2.5 Research questions

Drawing on the socio-cognitive frameworks for validating academic literacy tests (Shaw and Weir, 2007 and Chan 2013), this study will investigate the writing construct required in Japanese universities, and evaluate writing constructs measured in the English writing tasks for 2014 Japanese university entry. This preliminary study addresses the following two research questions.

RQ1: What is the underlying construct of English academic writing for first-year students in Japanese universities?

RQ2: How do the current writing tests in Japanese university entrance examinations reflect the contextual and cognitive attributes of academic writing activities for first-year students in Japanese universities?

3. RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 General approach

To address these questions, this project uses a mixed-methods approach as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of research matters than either approach alone (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Research methods used include document analysis, interviews and a questionnaire as shown in Table 2.

Focus	Data collection	Data analysis
RQ1: To identify the underlying construct of English academic writing for first-year students in English in Japanese universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administered an online writing survey (n=92 lecturers in 49 universities) Conducted open-ended interviews (n=eight lecturers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items of the online survey Thematic analysis of open-ended questions in the survey and interview data, which first transcribed the interviews and then divided the transcripts into identified themes
RQ2: To investigate to what extent the current writing tests in Japanese university entrance examinations reflect the contextual and cognitive attributes of academic writing activities for students in Japanese universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysed the English tests (n=136) and then writing tasks most commonly used by the contextual and cognitive parameter proforma (adapted from Chan, 2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistics of the features of the writing tasks

Table 2: Summary of data collected

3.2 Participants

The participants in the online writing task survey, as well as in the interviews with the researcher, were lecturers in Japanese universities who assigned academic writing tasks to their students. They taught either English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or subject courses.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Online writing task survey

The online writing task survey was based on the Contextual Parameter Proforma (Chan, 2013), scoring rubrics (The EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency, TOEFL iBT, IELTS) and the Course of Study (MEXT, 1999). It aims to provide a general picture of what writing tasks are commonly required in Japanese universities. The survey consists of 20 items (12 close-ended and eight open-ended) as summarised in Table 3 below (also see Appendix 2).

Part 1: Background Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academic institution 2. Name of the institution 3. Faculty/College 4. Position
Part 2: Common academic writing tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The year of the students you teach which involves "Academic Writing in English" 6. The nature of the academic writing* 7. Types of task 8. Additional comments on types of task* 9. The use of verbal input 10. Additional comments on the use of verbal input* 11. The use of non-verbal input 12. Additional comments on the use of non-verbal input * 13. Topic areas 14. Additional comments on topic areas* 15. Discourse mode 16. Language functions 17. Additional comments on language functions * 18. Assessment criteria 19. Additional comments on assessment criteria* 20. Additional comments on Japanese students' English academic writing skills or pedagogical practices in Japanese universities*

*open-ended questions

Table 3: Question items of online writing tasks survey

The questionnaire was trialled by four Japanese lecturers as a pilot to make sure the wording would be easy to understand, particularly for those lecturers in the target group who were not familiar with academic terminology.

3.3.2 Interviews with lecturers

Open-ended interviews were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the English writing construct required in Japanese universities in December 2014. Eight lecturers (five EAP lecturers and three subject lecturers) who participated in the online survey provided some issues related to their English writing classes and their students' level of writing proficiency in English. The interviews were conducted in English or Japanese depending on the participants' first language. The interviews were audio-recorded. The recording was transcribed by the researcher who had interviewed the lecturers. The transcripts in Japanese were translated into English and then coded for analysis.

3.3.3 Contextual and cognitive parameters proforma

A contextual and cognitive parameters proforma was adapted from Chan's (2013) study to analyse the contextual and cognitive parameters of the writing tasks collected in the study (see Appendix 3).

The proforma has two sections: contextual parameters and cognitive parameters. The first section contains seven items. They address the contextual features of the task in terms of purpose, topic domain, genre, cognitive demands and language functions performed, clarity of intended reader, and knowledge of criteria.

The second section contains six items. They address the cognitive processing required to complete the task in terms of task representation and macro-planning, connecting different ideas and generating new ideas, translating and micro-planning, organising ideas, low-level monitoring and revising, and high-level monitoring and revising.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 The predominant writing activities in Japanese universities

To identify the predominant writing activities in Japanese universities, an online survey was conducted. The questionnaire was set up online in November 2014. Seventy-five lecturers who either assigned their students' academic essays in English or taught academic writing in English in Japanese universities were approached. The target universities were as follows:

1. universities which administered entrance writing examinations
2. universities which have been promoting pedagogical practices in English writing.

The lecturers were asked to forward an invitation for participation in the survey to their colleagues. In addition, an invitation was sent to academics in Japan via mailing lists of professional associations.

The number of questionnaire responses was 129. However, 37 lecturers withdrew after finishing Part 1 (background information) of the questionnaire. It could be assumed that the content of the questions about the English academic writing skills of Japanese university students were not appropriate to their modules. As a result, a total of 92 lecturers from 49 universities provided responses to the survey.

Table 4 shows that, among the 92 participants who completed the questionnaire, 72 teach English for academic purposes and 20 teach subject courses such as Natural Science (26%), English/Foreign Language Centre (21%), Social Science (21%), Business (16%), Computer and Engineering (5%), Arts and Humanities (5%), and Education (5%) in various academic institutions (Table 5). This may be because most of the modules in Japanese universities are taught in Japanese and most of the lecturers require their students to write essays/reports in Japanese (*The Japan Times*, 2013).

Academic institution	Lecturers who teach EAP (n=72)		Lecturers who teach subject courses (n=20)	
	Response	Response %	Response	Response %
National university	11	15%	8	40%
Public university	18	25%	5	25%
Private university	43	60%	7	35%

Table 4: Details on lecturers who completed the survey

Department/Faculty	EAP lecturers response percent	Subject lecturers response percent
English/Foreign Language Centre	64.1%	21.1%
Arts and humanities	14.1%	5.3%
Education	4.7%	5.3%
Social science	4.7%	21.1%
Natural science	1.6%	26.3%
Business	4.7%	15.8%
Computer and engineering	6.3%	5.3%

Table 5: Percentage of departments of the lecturers who completed the survey

3.4.2 The predominant writing assessment for 2014 Japanese university entry

Japan has 181 national/public universities and 597 private universities (MEXT, 2010). English test papers for 2014 entry (n=135) were collected from 51 universities (7% of the total), as shown in Table 6. The English test of National Centre Test for University Admissions (NCT) (n=1) was also collected, providing 136 English test papers in total.

Japanese universities (n as of 2010)	Number of the target universities	Number of collected English test papers
National/Public (181)	39 (22%)	39
Private (597)	12 (2%)	96
Total (778)	51 (7%)	135

Note: Some English tests in the private universities are designed by each faculty. Therefore, the number of past papers designed by private universities does not match that of the number of private universities.

Table 6: The number of Japanese universities and English test papers

These past tests are available in two guidebooks that are published annually and readily available to the public. In addition, many past English papers from the most prestigious universities, as well as the NCT, are accessible online from the databases of several cram schools for exam preparations. The past papers analysed in this study were collected from the two guidebooks (Obunsha, 2014a and 2014b) and Toshin cram school (see <http://www.toshin.com/center/>). The 51 universities are the most prestigious private and national/public universities and they provide a good geographical spread. This partially follows Brown and Yamashita's (1995) study. The collection of test papers includes all 13 members of the "Global 30 Project" in which the best universities in Japan were selected by the Japanese Government in 2009 to offer degree programs in English and build lasting international bonds that will propel students into the international scene.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 Online survey and interviews

The data collected from the online survey was analysed descriptively to reveal the general writing construct across Japanese universities. For the classification categories, results of the percentage of each option are presented. For the rating categories, the mean and standard deviation on the four-point Likert scale are presented. Data from eight open-ended questionnaires' responses on the online survey, as well as interviews with lecturers, were coded and then key themes identified.

3.5.2 English test papers for 2014 Japanese university admission

First, this study analysed the response formats of English tests for 2014 university entry to identify the writing construct measured, which will lead to interpretation of the cognitive processes required by the response formats. This is because the response formats used for testing language ability will critically affect the candidates' scores (Alderson *et al.*, 1995), as well as the cognitive processing that the task will elicit (Weir, 2005).

This study adapted the task item analyses used by Kowata (2009) and Kobayakawa (2011). In Kowata's (2009) study, English writing tasks of Japanese university entrance examinations were classified as word reordering, translation, summary, free writing essay and guided writing essay, but did not consider Q&A tasks, which Kobayakawa (2011) included. Due to the nature of the Q&A tasks, (the candidates answered the questions in one sentence in English after reading several paragraphs), this study regarded Q&A as reading comprehension tasks rather than writing tasks. A quantitative comparative study (Kobayakawa, 2011) categorised writing tasks in textbooks of *English I, II*, and *Writing* into four categories: controlled writing, guided writing, translation, and free writing; and 14 subcategories which included lexical gap-filling without translation. Kobayakawa (2011) defined translation as both direct-translation-of-a-whole-sentence and fill-in-the-blank with translation, which this study adapted.

One of the limitations of Kowata's (2009) study is to the failure to consider the number of words in essay writing tasks, despite the statement that direct writing tests should ask test-takers to write more than 100 words (Hamp-Lyons, 1991, cited in Kowata, 2009). Hence, this study attempted to take into account the number of words for essay writing tasks. However, because some prompts did not mention either the length of the essay or the length of time, this study could not discriminate free essays in terms of the length of words, either. During the analysis of the past papers, some tasks that were not mentioned in Kowata (2009) were found: writing with verbal/non-verbal input (e.g., chart/graph) and replying to an email. Therefore, these tasks were included as categories in this study.

Then, content analysis of the most commonly used writing tasks identified by the analysis on response formats was conducted to identify the construct of writing in 2014 Japanese university entrance examinations. The direct writing tasks (n=14) were analysed using the contextual and cognitive parameters proforma on seven contextual categories, i.e., purpose, topic domain, genre, cognitive demands, language functions performed, clarity of intended reader and knowledge of criteria; and six cognitive categories, i.e., task representation and macro-planning, connecting different ideas and generating new ideas, translating and micro-planning, organising ideas, low-level monitoring and revising, and high-level monitoring and revising. Because the other prominent writing tasks (translation tasks, word reordering tasks and lexical gap-filling) do not require the candidates to construct a piece of writing from their own ideas, only impromptu writing tasks were analysed in order to identify the contextual features of the tasks.

For the classification categories, results of the percentage of each option are presented. For the rating categories, the mean and standard deviation on the five-point Likert scale are presented. These analyses were done by the researcher and then checked by a Japanese doctoral student in TESOL in a UK university in the presence of the researcher to reach agreement on the analysis.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the data from the survey, as well as 136 English tests for 2014 university entrance, provided a number of interesting insights on both the underlying writing constructs required of university students for their courses and those measured for target university admission purposes. These results will be illustrated with each research question.

4.1 The predominant writing activities in Japanese universities

To answer the first research question below, the results from the analysis of the English writing activities in Japanese university entries are presented here. The results of the online survey are shown: 92 lecturers (72 EAP lecturers and 20 subject lecturers) from 49 universities responded.

Research Question 1: What is the underlying construct of English academic writing for first-year students in Japanese universities?

English writing tasks commonly used in Japanese universities

Table 7 shows the percentage of lecturers who commonly use English writing tasks for students in EAP classes and subject classes in Japanese universities.

The most commonly used writing tasks in an EAP class for Year 1 and Year 2 students include essays (61% and 60% respectively), followed by summary from a single text (43% and 31% respectively) and reports (35% and 36% respectively), summary with multiple texts (19% and 22% respectively), and explanation of graphs/pie charts (21% and 18% respectively).

The least common writing task is the case study (only 3% and 6% respectively). However, in comparison to Year 1 and Year 2 students, the percentage of EAP lecturers who assign essay tasks in Year 3 and Year 4 dramatically decreases to 19% and 17%, respectively. Likewise, the other tasks (reports, summaries, explanation of graphs/pie charts) are assigned to Year 3 and Year 4 students less often. However, the case study tasks assigned to Year 3 and Year 4 slightly increases. This may be because English language classes are generally compulsory for Year 1 and Year 2 students in Japanese universities, while Year 3 students take their subject modules and Year 4 students write undergraduate dissertations either in Japanese or English.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)				Other subject lecturers (n=20)			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Essay	61%	60%	19%	17%	35%	30%	30%	11%
Report	35%	36%	22%	14%	26%	32%	32%	21%
Summary (single text)	43%	31%	14%	7%	26%	21%	21%	21%
Summary (multiple texts)	19%	22%	14%	8%	16%	21%	16%	21%
Explanation of graphs/pie chart	21%	18%	10%	6%	11%	11%	16%	11%
Case study	3%	6%	8%	7%	11%	11%	5%	5%

Table 7: The percentage of lecturers who use English writing tasks for students in Japanese universities

On the other hand, not many subject lecturers assign English writing tasks to undergraduate students compared to EAP lecturers. The writing tasks used in subject classes for Year 1 and Year 2 students are essays (35% and 30% respectively), reports (26% and 32% respectively) and summaries from a single text (26% and 21% respectively). Explanation of graphs/pie charts and case studies are the least used (11%). The writing tasks in subject classes for Year 3 students follow a similar trend to those for Year 1 and Year 2. For Year 4 students, essay tasks are assigned by 11% of subject lecturers in comparison to the 30–35% in Years 1, 2 and 3.

Responses to an open-ended question suggest that the lecturers would prefer to teach graduate students to write reports, summaries or explanations of charts. It could be difficult for Year 1 students, who are taught in Japanese in secondary education, to then learn subject modules in English. Data from the interview with a subject lecturer also provides further information about subject modules for Year 1 students, as seen below:

“I have got two main module classes at undergraduate level. One is politics and economics in EU and the other one is politics and economics in globalisation. Those classes are open to everyone from the 1–4 years, but primarily, I get Year 3 and Year 4 students mixed with international students. Year 1 students may need a certain English proficiency, as all the classes are taught in English.” (Interview with a subject lecturer)

The subject lecturer allows Year 1 students to take his subject modules taught in English; however, he also recognises Japanese students’ difficulties taking them in English due to their lack of language proficiency.

Qualitative data from the survey and interviews indicate another writing task commonly used – paraphrasing – results from concern about plagiarism. Examples about the concerns from the lectures are presented as follows:

“Year 2 students who finally decided their major for study have more opportunities to write abstracts or essays in English. However, as they do not know how to cite information from source texts, they tend to copy and paste it without paraphrasing. Therefore, it is important to teach Year 1 students paraphrasing.” (Interview with an EAP lecturer)

“There is a risk of plagiarism as a short cut as panic sets in close to deadlines.”
(Lecturer in a national university)

These results indicate that Year 1 Japanese students are expected to construct a range of academic writing tasks, including essays, summaries, reports and explanations of non-verbal input, paraphrasing and, to a lesser extent, case studies in EAP and subject classes. Depending on their students' writing proficiency in English, a number of lecturers reportedly expect their Year 1 students to write a short essay. However, fewer subject lecturers provide academic writing tasks in English with Year 1 students than EAP lecturers.

Topic domains

Table 8 shows the results of the analysis on topic domains, such as personal (i.e. information about them or their life), social (i.e. information in a society), academic (i.e. information about a particular subject) and professional (i.e. information related to business or careers), of the impromptu writing tasks.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)				Other subject lecturers (n=20)			
	Personal	Social	Academic	Professional	Personal	Social	Academic	Professional
Essay	66.7%	66.7%	61.1%	16.7%	30%	40%	60%	20%
Report	16.7%	26.4%	34.7%	8.3%	20%	25%	70%	20%
Summary (single text)	18.1%	23.6%	34.7%	6.9%	10%	25%	40%	10%
Summary (multiple texts)	6.9%	11.1%	20.8%	5.6%	5%	15%	30%	10%
Explanation of graphs/pie chart	12.5%	19.4%	23.6%	5.6%	0%	10%	30%	5%
Case study	4.2%	15.3%	9.7%	1.4%	5%	15%	20%	20%

Table 8: Topic domains of writing tasks used in Japanese universities

In general, the writing tasks in EAP classes are mostly on academic topics followed by topics in the social domain. In contrast, professional topics are the least assigned. Similarly, the academic topic domain is mostly used in subject classes, followed by social topic domains. This may be because the Japanese universities where the respondents are employed have been promoting pedagogical practices in academic English writing, where the lecturers are encouraged to assign writing tasks of academic and social topics more than professional topics to their students.

An interesting result is that over 60% of EAP lecturers reported that essay tasks cover the personal, social and academic topic domains, while only 17% of them use the professional topic domain. This may be because writing tasks of personal topics could become a first step for unskilled writers to write essays about their personal matters. Although 60% of subject lecturers reported using the academic topic domain for essays, like EAP lecturers, the other topic domains (personal, social and professional) are used for essays by 20% to 40% of subject lecturers. Another interesting finding is that 70% of subject lecturers reported using the academic topic domain in report tasks compared to EAP lecturers (35%).

There is a similar pattern of use of different topic domains in other response formats: report, summary (single text), summary (multiple texts) and explanation of graphs/pie charts. The most common topic domain is academic, which accounted for just below 50% of the tasks, followed by the social topics in around 30%, whereas professional and personal domains were assigned in just over 10% of tasks.

As for case study tasks, personal and professional topic domains were used in a similar way as in the other response formats. Personal and professional topics were the least commonly used, being in around 10% of the tasks. However, most case study tasks were assigned in the social topic domain, followed closely by the academic topic domain.

Language functions

The respondents were then asked to rate the importance of different language functions expected of their students in writing. They would rate 4 if a particular function was “of great importance” and 1 if it was “of no importance”. The mean and standard deviations of each option are presented in Table 9.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)		Other subject lecturers (n=20)	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Organising	3.7324	.53339	3.4706	.71743
Describing	3.4789	.67314	3.2222	.64676
Summarising	3.4571	.71598	3.6000	.50709
Persuading	3.4493	.67598	3.2667	.70373
Expressing personal views	3.3824	.77324	3.0556	.99836
Comparison	3.3380	.69578	3.4118	.78382
Citing sources	3.3188	.88272	3.5556	.77754
Reasoning	3.3143	.80834	3.3889	.79521
Synthesising	3.2174	.83788	3.4118	.61570
Evaluating	3.1857	.74781	3.4444	.70479
Defining	3.1429	.70784	3.4444	.64676
Classifying	2.9848	.93632	3.2353	.66421
Recommending	2.7353	.76525	2.7059	.77174
Predicting	2.5797	.73576	2.5625	.81394

Table 9: Language functions to demonstrate in the writing

The most important language functions in EAP classes are *organising* (the average rating is 3.73 out of 4 (*SD*: .53)), followed by *describing*, *summarising* and *persuading*. Other important language functions include *expressing personal views*, *comparisons*, *citing sources*, *reasoning*, *synthesising*, *evaluating*, and *defining*. The functions of *classifying*, *recommending*, and *predicting* are considered less important than the others, and their average ratings are 2.7 out of 4 (*SD*: .77) and 2.6 out of 4 (*SD*: .74) respectively.

On the other hand, the most important language function in subject classes is *summarising*, with an average rating of 3.6 out of 4 (*SD*: .51), followed by *citing sources*, *organising*, *defining*, *evaluating*, *synthesising*, and *comparison*. The less important language functions are *recommending* and *predicting*, with average ratings of 2.7 out of 4 (*SD*: .77) and 2.6 out of 4 (*SD*: .81) respectively.

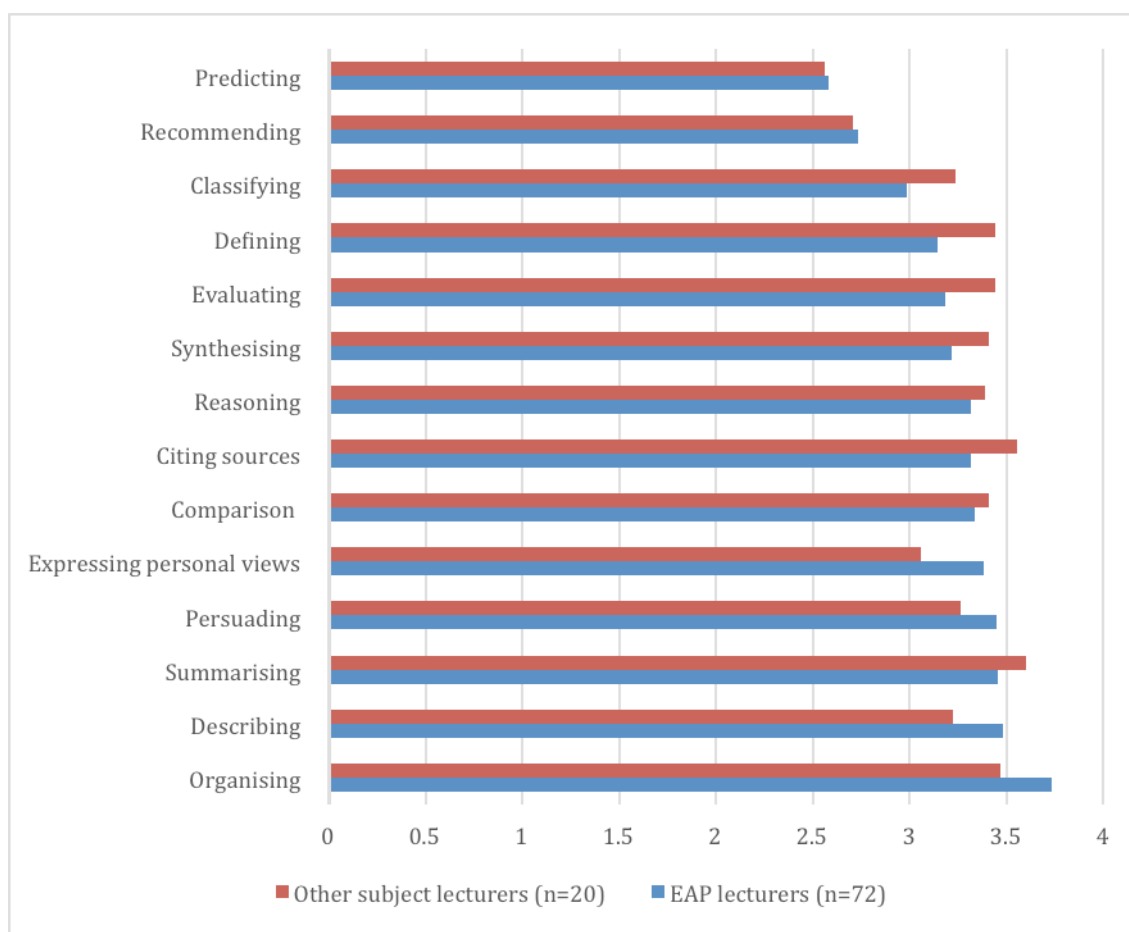


Figure 1: Mean comparisons of language functions to be performed in an EAP class and subject class

In comparing the EAP classes and subject classes (see Figure 1), *summarising* and *organising* are reported as the most highly important language functions, while *recommending* and *predicting* are reported as the least important by both EAP and subject lecturers. Interestingly, *citing sources*, *defining*, *evaluating* and *synthesising* were found to be much more important in subject classes than EAP classes. In contrast, *describing*, *persuading* and *expressing personal viewpoints* are reportedly more much more important in EAP classes than in subject classes.

This result shows that Japanese university students are expected to perform an extensive range of language functions in writing. They are expected to not only express their views on a given topic but also to organise, summarise, compare or persuade information in EAP classes, while they are then expected to synthesise or cite information from reading input materials in their subject classes.

The use of verbal input

The respondents were then asked to rate the frequency of the use of verbal input texts assigned to students in writing. They would rate 4 if a particular verbal input was “often” assigned and 1 if “never”. The mean and standard deviation of each option is presented in Table 10.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)		Other subject lecturers (n=20)	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Book chapter	2.3030	1.28865	2.8824	1.11144
Journal article	2.3000	1.09478	3.0000	1.18818
News/magazine article	2.7794	1.06288	2.8667	1.12546
Proposal	1.3846	.82018	1.4000	.91026
Report	2.0169	1.18163	2.2353	1.20049
Review	1.7241	1.00513	1.8462	.98710

Table 10: Use of verbal input assigned to students for writing

News/magazine articles are the most commonly used in EAP classes, with an average rating of 2.77 out of 4 (*SD*: 1.06). In contrast, proposals (e.g. documents necessary for each individual research or official websites such as government websites) and reviews (e.g. Internet texts such as blogs or commentaries) are used the least, with their average ratings being 1.38 out of 4 (*SD*: .82) and 1.72 out of 4 (*SD*: 1.00) respectively.

In contrast, the most commonly used input texts in subject classes are journal articles (average rating: 3.00 out of 4 (*SD*: 1.19)), while proposals and reviews are the least used (1.40 out of 4 (*SD*: .91) and 1.85 out of 4 (*SD*: .99), respectively).

Book chapters, journals and reports are sometimes used in EAP classes, and their average ratings are 2.30, 2.30 and 2.01 respectively. This may be because news/magazine articles can be good reading materials for summary tasks, which are one of the most common writing tests. In addition, according to the data from an open-ended question, a number of lecturers who provided further details on the verbal input, offered students model essays due to their unfamiliarity with English writing. These verbal-input materials are used more often in subject classes. This means that subject lecturers ask their students to integrate information from material sources in their writing, resulting in the performance of language functions such as *citing sources*, *defining*, *evaluating* and *synthesising*.

The use of non-verbal input

The respondents were also asked to rate the frequency of use of non-verbal input texts assigned to students in writing. They would rate 4 if a particular non-verbal input was “often” assigned and 1 if “never”. The mean and standard deviation of each option are presented in Table 11.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)		Other subject lecturers (n=20)	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Table	2.1571	1.03049	2.5556	1.09664
Graph/pie chart	2.1429	1.02555	2.4444	1.14903
Diagram	2.2714	1.00609	2.6667	1.13759
Picture	2.3188	1.06402	2.6471	1.11474

Table 11: Use of non-verbal input assigned to students for writing

In general, the use of non-verbal inputs in writing tasks in EAP classes is not frequent, and the average ratings of *table* and *graph/pie chart* are slightly over 2.00 out of 4. The most common non-verbal input assigned to students is *picture*, followed by *diagram*. The average rating of *picture* is 2.31 (*SD*: 1.06), while *diagram* is 2.27 (*SD*: 1.00). Compared to EAP lecturers, subject lecturers assign these non-verbal materials slightly more regularly. The most prominent materials used by subject lecturers are *diagram* and *picture*, with average ratings of 2.67 (*SD*: 1.13) and 2.65 (*SD*: 1.11) respectively. The result that non-verbal inputs are not regularly used in writing tasks supports one of the results presented in Table 7, explaining that graph/pie chart tasks are not commonly assigned to students in the Japanese context.

Discourse mode

The respondents were asked to report whether the following discourse modes of *narrative*, *descriptive*, *expository* and *argumentative* were expected in students' writing. As shown in Table 12, Japanese students are expected to perform two discourse modes (*argumentative* and *expository*) which are assigned by the majority of both EAP and subject lecturers, followed by *descriptive* (assigned by around 60% of both). In contrast, the least frequent discourse mode is *narrative*, which is assigned by only 50% of EAP lecturers and 25% of subject lecturers. This may be because many of the universities that participated in the survey have started to provide home students (as well as international students) with courses taught in English, requiring them to write academic essays in that language.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)	Other subject lecturers (n=20)
Argumentative	90.3%	85%
Expository	87.5%	80%
Descriptive	66.7%	60%
Narrative	54.2%	25%

Table 12: Discourse mode used in writing classes

Marking criteria of the writing

The respondents were then asked to rate the importance of a particular writing aspect in students' writing: *content*, *organisation*, *audience awareness*, *word choice*, *grammar* and *mechanics*. They would rate 4 if a particular function was "of great importance" and 1 if it was "of no importance". The mean and standard deviation of each option are presented in Table 13.

	EAP lecturers (n=72)		Other subject lecturers (n=20)	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
Grammar	3.1806	.63526	2.7895	.63060
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation etc.)	3.1250	.67003	2.7895	.71328
Word choice	3.3056	.54744	2.8947	.73747
Content (relevance clarity, logic etc.)	3.9306	.25599	3.7895	.41885
Organisation	3.9155	.28013	3.6316	.49559
Audience awareness	3.2500	.68690	3.3333	.59409

Table 13: Marking criteria of the writing

According to the results in Table 13, *content* and *organisation* are the most important aspects in the students' writing in the EAP and subject classes, as the average ratings reported by EAP lecturers were 3.93 (*SD*: 0.26) and 3.91 (*SD*: 0.28) respectively, while those reported by subject lecturers were 3.79 (*SD*: 0.42) and 3.63 (*SD*: 0.50). These are similarly found to be the most important criteria in Weir's (1983) survey of over 1000 academic staff in the UK. The other writing components, *audience awareness*, *word choice*, *grammar* and *mechanics*, were rated "of some importance" in EAP classes. *Word choice*, *grammar* and *mechanics* were found to be slightly less important in subject classes, while audience awareness was slightly more important than in EAP classes. The results imply that the Japanese students are expected to demonstrate writing quality in all these aspects.

Data from the open-ended question about marking criteria of the writing, along with the lecturer interviews, give us an in-depth perspective of their marking criteria. For example, an EAP lecturer stated:

"In Freshman English, grammatical accuracy (as well as organisational ability) is emphasised; whereas, in Sophomore English and the CLIL courses, a broader range of criteria is applied, such as expression, content knowledge, and appropriateness of language, style and so forth."

The EAP lecturer pays more attention to the grammatical accuracy of Year 1 students' writing and more on the content of Year 2 students' writing. This is perhaps because Year 1 students are still unable to use their grammatical knowledge in their writing correctly. There are several comments about Year 1 students' grammatical problems from EAP lecturers below:

"The majority of the students have not produced an English essay before and they have done some paragraph writing practices (100–200 words long). Some don't understand the difference between sentences and clauses and most of their sentences have rather simple structures. They cannot use conjunctions (discourse markers) effectively and subject–verb agreement is one of the weaknesses in their essays."

"Beginner students can't write even one sentence correctly. They quite often use 'be' verbs (not other normal, appropriate verbs) for just connecting a subject with something. Advanced students can write a long essay, but they still make a lot of grammar mistakes. However, they can develop their own ideas."

A subject lecturer also talked about students' grammatical problems:

"In assessing students, I have largely given up on grammar – firstly, because it is not my training; secondly, because most grammar in assignments is so poor that it would take far too long to assess."

However, as seen in data from the interviews with lecturers, the content or structure of their students' writing is strongly considered, although they acknowledge students' grammatical inaccuracy in the writing:

"I don't focus any attention on grammar, but more on the content. If I cannot understand what they write, that is enough for me from my point of view. I don't know English grammar well enough to explain it to them. Sometimes my students say, "Teacher, what should the appropriate grammatical formation be?" I can tell you how that should feel, but I don't know every grammatical detail." (Interview with subject lecturer in Politics and Economics)

"I strongly believe that my students have enough ability to write essays in English if they are asked to do so. Therefore, I push them to write as long an essay as they can without considering perfect grammatical accuracy. Rather, I strongly emphasise the rule of writing academic essays using the APA style, which I learnt in a US university when I was a postgraduate." (Interview with an EAP lecturer)

Because the EAP lecturer acknowledges the importance of academic writing style/organisation based on his experiences publishing his articles, his belief in teaching academic writing is based around the importance of making their essays understood by the intended-readers.

A subject lecturer expresses the need for support with students in becoming good writers:

"Japanese students need a lot of support when writing essays. They are usually not familiar with essay structures and need multiple practice sessions leading from the topic sentence and paragraph structure all the way up to creating an appropriate thesis statement." (Interview with a subject lecturer)

In short, the online survey shows the construct of writing expected of Japanese students across universities in terms of genre, topic domains, language functions, and the use of verbal input, the use of non-verbal input, discourse mode and assessment criteria. The results show that a valid writing test for Japanese students should cover direct writing tasks, such as essay writing in the argumentative or expository discourse mode or summary with single text or multiple texts. Their writing should be assessed in terms of content and organisation, grammar and vocabulary.

However, an in-depth investigation of the qualitative data from the questionnaire and the interviews reveals some serious issues concerning the students' writing ability and writing pedagogical practices, both at the secondary school and university level, despite the results presented in the quantitative data analysis.

4.2 The predominant writing assessment for 2014 Japanese university entry

To answer research question 2 below, the results from the analysis of the English writing tasks used for 2014 Japanese university entry are presented here.

Research Question 2: How do the current writing tests in Japanese university entrance examinations reflect the contextual and cognitive attributes of academic writing activities for the first-year students in Japanese universities?

To gain an in-depth understanding of the English writing constructs measured in Japanese university entrance examinations, response formats in the past English tests for 2014 entry (n=136) were analysed in Table 14.

	39 State/Local universities (n=39)	12 Private universities (n=96)	National Centre Test (n=1)	Total (n=136)
Word reordering	2 (5%)	25 (34%)	1 (100%)	28 (24%)
Translation	16 (37%)	10 (14%)	0	26 (22%)
Lexical gap-filling (one word)	0	20 (27%)	0	20 (17%)
Impromptu writing	11 (26%)	3 (4%)	0	14 (12%)
Error correction	1 (2%)	12 (16%)	0	13 (11%)
Writing with non-verbal	5 (12%)	1 (1%)	0	6 (5%)
Writing with verbal input	3 (7%)	1 (1%)	0	4 (3%)
Summary	2 (5%)	2 (3%)	0	4 (3%)
Summary with listening input	1 (2%)	0	0	1 (1%)
Writing with listening input	1(2%)	0	0	1 (1%)
Email	1 (2%)	0	0	1 (1%)
Total	43 (100%)	74 (100%)	1 (100%)	118(100%)
No writing tasks	2 (5%)	31 (32%)	N/A	33 (24%)

Table 14: Response formats of writing in English tests for 2014 Japanese university entry

In the analysis, word reordering is the most commonly used skill in the writing tests, and accounts for 24% of the total, followed by translation at 22%. The most common writing response format used by the state universities is translation followed by impromptu writing tasks, whereas word reordering is commonly in use at private universities and in the National Centre Test. In addition, the lexical gap-filling task is commonly used at private universities, accounting for 27%. This finding supports Kowata's (2009) findings. This result implies that writing tasks of English tests for university admission, especially for private universities, have not changed much, which supports a statement that most examinations tend to follow the previous year's format (Watanabe, 1996).

The other surprising result is that as many as 31 out of 96 private university papers (32%) contained no writing tasks at all, while only two state universities did not provide writing tasks for their candidates, as shown in Table 13. The English writing skills of their prospective students appear less necessary in private universities than English reading skills, despite the fact that the test-takers may need to demonstrate their English writing skills to write essays/reports in their target university.

The results of the analysis of the English writing tasks for the 2014 university entry provide a general idea of the writing construct measured by Japanese universities. The next step is to analyse the impromptu writing task, which is one of the most commonly used direct writing tasks.

4.2.1 The contextual features of the impromptu writing tasks

Fourteen impromptu writing tasks were analysed in terms of purpose of the task, topic domain, genre, cognitive demands, language functions performed, clarity of intended reader, and clarity of criteria.

Discourse mode

The 14 impromptu writing tasks were analysed in terms of discourse mode: *narrative*, *descriptive*, *expository* and *argumentative*, as shown in Table 15.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
Argumentative	36%
Descriptive	29%
Expository	29%
Narrative	7%

*Percentage is not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 15: Discourse mode of the tasks

Japanese students are asked to perform *argumentative* discourse modes (36%) the most, followed by *descriptive* and *expository* (29%). In contrast, only 7% of the tasks required the *narrative* discourse mode.

Purpose of the task

The clarity of purpose of the 14 impromptu writing tasks was analysed according to a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = unclear and 5 = clear (see Table 16). Results show that 21% of the tasks were rated 1 (unclear) out of 5 (clear); 79% were rated 3.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
1. unclear	21%
2.	0%
3.	79%
4.	0%
5. clear	0%

Table 16: Clarity of the purpose of the tasks

The average rating of clarity of the purpose of the tasks is 2.57 out of 5 ($SD: .85$). It was found that the purpose of these impromptu writing tasks used in the Japanese entrance examinations is slightly unclear. This may be because none of the tasks provide the candidates with a test rubric containing clear and precise information regarding the purposes for completing the tasks in terms of communicative purpose and intended readers. The candidates need to identify the purpose from only the task prompts.

Topic domains

The 14 impromptu writing tasks were analysed in terms of the topic domain (i.e., personal, social, academic or professional) (see Table 17 below).

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
Social	71%
Personal	29%
Academic	0%
Professional	0%

Table 17: Topic domains of impromptu writing tasks

Based on the judgements, 71% of the tasks were in the social domain (such as education and social behaviours), and 29% of the tasks were in the personal domain (such as writing about a holiday destination where they would like to go, or one person who has greatly influenced them).

None of the tasks collected in this study was in the academic and professional domain. This is probably because topic domains for the language activities mentioned in the Course of Study (MEXT, 1999) are mostly personal or social topic domains (e.g., travelling, home life and community activity) for Japanese senior high school students.

Language functions

The language functions required in the impromptu writing tasks were evaluated (see Table 18). Three major language functions – *describing*, *reasoning* and *expressing personal viewpoints* – are predominantly required in all of the impromptu writing tasks collected in the study. *Evaluation* is required in only two of the tasks and *persuading* is in only one of them. None of the other language functions is required, i.e. *classifying*, *citing sources*, *defining*, *predicting*, *recommending*, *summarising*, *synthesising* and *illustrating visuals*.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
Describing	100%
Reasoning	100%
Expressing personal views	100%
Evaluating	21%
Persuading	7%
Predicting	0%
Classifying	0%
Citing sources	0%
Defining	0%
Recommending	0%
Summarising	0%
Synthesising	0%
Illustrating visuals	0%

Table 18: Language functions to demonstrate in the writing

Clarity of intended reader

The impromptu writing tasks were then analysed in terms of the clarity of intended reader. As shown in Table 19, we considered that the intended reader of these real-life tasks is generally unclear. The average rating of clarity of intended reader of the tasks is 1.14 out of 5 ($SD = .535$). One task mentioned the target reader, however, no others clearly provided information about intended readers in the tasks.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
1: unclear	93%
2.	0%
3.	7%
4.	0%
5.: clear	0%

Table 19: Clarity of intended reader of the tasks

Marking criteria of the writing tasks

The researcher attempted to determine the clarity of marking criteria of the impromptu writing tasks based on the prompts, as illustrated in Table 20. It was found that the marking criteria of the impromptu writing tasks were unclear. The average rating is 1.00 out of 5 ($SD = .00$).

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
1. unclear	100%
2.	0%
3.	0%
4.	0%
5. clear	0%

Table 20: Knowledge of criteria of the tasks

This may be because the writing tasks did not provide the candidates with any marking criteria, and only provided a total mark for the impromptu writing part of the whole English tests. Nor did the instructions suggest the length of time that candidates were supposed to spend on the tasks.

Accordingly, a crucial question is whether these writing tasks most commonly used for Japanese university entry can assess students' English writing skills unless they actually write a paragraph in English. The following section will discuss relationships in the contextual and cognitive attributes between writing tests most commonly used for 2014 university entry and academic writing activities for first-year students in Japanese universities.

4.2.2 The cognitive processing required by the impromptu writing tasks

Cognitive demands

The level of the general cognitive demands which the impromptu writing tasks place on the candidates was determined. Table 21 shows that these impromptu writing tasks required students to tell personal experience or viewpoints about given writing prompts. This may be because all the 14 impromptu writing tasks required candidates to produce a piece of writing about their ideas on a given topic without any input materials.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
Telling personal experience or viewpoints	100%
Summarising or organising given ideas	0%
Transforming given ideas into new representations	0%

Table 21: Cognitive demands of the real-life tasks

The cognitive processing during the tasks

The detailed cognitive processes required by the 14 impromptu writing tasks were analysed based on the features of the tasks. The results are presented in Table 22.

	Impromptu writing (n=14)
1. Task representation and macro-planning	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	21%
3. Required	79%
2. Connecting different ideas and generating new ideas	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	43%
3. Required	57%
3. Translating and micro-planning	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	0%
3. Required	100%
4. Organising ideas	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	21%
3. Required	79%
5. Low-level monitoring and revising	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	0%
3. Required	100%
6. High-level monitoring and revising	
1. Not required	0%
2. Required to a lesser extent	43%
3. Required	57%

Table 22: Cognitive processes required during the Impromptu writing tasks

In general, all the impromptu writing tasks could be required to follow all the cognitive processes to some degree in order to complete the tasks. As some prompts did not give a clear purpose for the tasks, candidates may have had difficulties planning how to complete them. It was found that some tasks required the candidate to *connect different ideas and generate new ideas*, *organise ideas*, and undertake *high-level monitoring and revising* to a lesser extent. This may be because the number of words to be written is extremely small (e.g., 60 words) or the topic is simply descriptive (e.g., what you talk about at dinner with your family). However, due to unclear further information/test instructions other than the task prompts, it could be possible to perform the tasks differently depending on the candidates.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Appropriateness of writing constructs tested in university entrance examinations

Word reordering

Word reordering is still the most commonly used testing method of indirect measures in writing tests, especially in Japanese private universities. Although the task can test discrete grammatical knowledge, the context of the task is limited by very simple performance, which is neither interactive nor purposeful as a writing assessment. However, many researchers (e.g. Berman, 1984; Urquhart and Weir, 1998; Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996) support the importance of grammatical knowledge. For example, from the point of view of reading, Alderson (2000) showed that the ability to understand particular syntactic structures and parse sentences in their correct syntactic structure seems to be of great importance in understanding text.

Likewise, the importance of understanding English syntax can be found in L2 writing. Word reordering tasks are intended to represent a writing construct based on the assumption that an understanding of correct word order is a fundamental skill required for writing. For example, Benton and Kiewra (1986) claimed that word reordering tasks can identify students' ability to detect clause boundaries and generate sentences, and these in turn, represent a measure of organisational ability. However, this ability is only at the level of propositional strategies that operate on words, clause and sentences. Because novice writers need to build vocabulary and then scaffold writing development (Hyland, 2003), perhaps word reordering tasks are beneficial, particularly for less proficient students, for expanding grammatical accuracy as well as the awareness of linguistics before they actually start to write texts or paragraphs in English.

However, there are some concerns about the appropriateness of using word reordering tasks to assess the writing skills of Japanese high school students for university admission purposes for the following reasons. Firstly, there are doubts about their English proficiency. MEXT has publicly recommended two levels of English proficiency as goals for high school graduates: the EIKEN Grade 2 and Pre-2 levels (MEXT, 2002; MEXT, 2003). These levels of proficiency can be considered relevant to the B1 and A2 levels of the CEFR respectively (see www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/en/research/). Because the tasks may not be suitable for discriminating those who are at B1 or above, the usefulness of word reordering tasks for writing assessment is questionable.

The other concern is in the contextual attributes in writing classes of Japanese universities, at least according to the results of the survey. In real life, Year 1 students of Japanese universities need to demonstrate their writing skills by writing essays, summaries or reports in English, which involve an extensive writing construct associated with topic domains and discourse types or language functions. Then their writing should be assessed in terms of content and organisation, grammar and vocabulary. In this respect, it is unlikely that indirect writing tasks are able to predict the writing constructs which the candidates have obtained at a certain level.

This is exemplified in the study by the analysis of the English tests, the survey and the interviews. The lecturers in one of the private universities where word reordering tasks were used for university admission provided their first-year students with tasks requiring essay writing and summary in English. Despite the lecturers' efforts to help their students become good writers, it seems that they found difficulties in developing their skills:

"The construct tested in mainstream Japanese education is not a reliable predictor of communicative competence in English at all, let alone academic English."

(Interview with an EAP lecturer)

"The level of the students' English has a strong effect on what is possible. For example, we have little time to devote to citations when bigger considerations, such as organisation, need so much attention." (Comment from a lecturer in a private university)

Furthermore, numerous lecturers pointed out the discrepancy between what was tested in the writing tests of the Japanese university entrance examinations and what Japanese students are required to perform in university studies:

"Because the English tests assessed the candidates' grammatical or lexical knowledge in multiple choice formats, they did not test their actual writing skills. My students are struggling to write even a paragraph." (Comment from a lecturer at a private university)

"I've come to the conclusion that there is a wide cultural gap between what Westerners think assessment is for, and what assessment is for in Japan. Here, there seems to be some conflation between assessments, specifically arbitrary tests. The construct tested in mainstream Japanese education is not a reliable predictor of communicative competence in English at all, let alone academic English." (Comment from a lecturer in a private university)

"Despite the fact that students' grammatical knowledge is tested before entering the university, they are not able to apply their grammatical knowledge to their actual writing correctly. This could be partially because the university entrance examinations assessed their knowledge of English grammar or English vocabulary but did not let them construct a piece of writing. This is something like a person who was not asked to play the piano that answered some questions about classical music and then won a piano contest."

(Interview with an EAP lecturer)

Despite the fact that word reordering tasks could partially assess their candidates' grammatical and lexical knowledge, they may not have assessed other crucial writing skills, such as organisation, which the lecturers expect their first-year students to obtain before entering university.

Regarding cognitive validity, word reordering tasks entail a very limited cognitive process as they are only associated with *translating and micro-planning* and *lower-level monitoring and revising* (Table 1). The processes of *micro-planning* and *lower-level monitoring* are merely to impose the correct ordering on the words from his/her syntactic knowledge – an important but partial test of writing ability.

It can hardly be said that indirect tasks, such as word reordering that involves only the *micro-planning* process, are representative samples of relevant potential writing tasks in real life where the prospective students would be expected to construct a piece of writing in the discourse modes (*argumentative, expository or descriptive*) (Table 12) before being assessed in terms of all the criteria (*content, organisation, audience awareness, word choice, grammar and mechanics*) (Table 13).

Because word reordering, which lacks several crucial cognitive processes of writing (*macro-planning, organisation, monitoring and revising*), can affect students' writing learning to the extent that they cannot perform English writing beyond the lexical and grammatical levels, most of the lecturers who participated in the survey claimed that their first-year students were poor at organising and expressing personal views in their writing as they had not been instructed how to write paragraphs in English at secondary school. It could be said that the English writing indirect tasks used in the 2014 university entrance examinations did not completely predict their candidates' readiness to enter in the context of the EAP courses or subject courses in the universities.

Translation tasks

Translation skills are the other most common writing constructs tested by university entrance examinations. Many studies (e.g., Husain, 1994; Kern, 1994; Uzawa, 1996) suggest a positive and facilitative role of translation in pedagogical practices, raising the awareness of lexical and syntactical differences, which is important in L2 writing. For example, Uzawa's (1996) comparative study investigated the writing processes of L1 writing, L2 writing and the translation from L1 into L2 of 22 Japanese students. That study showed that attention to language use in the translation tasks was significantly higher than in the L1 and L2 writing tasks. Its interviewees also found that the translation task forced the students to use words and expressions that were slightly beyond their levels, which is consistent with Swain's (1985) "pushed" output hypothesis and Schmidt's (1993) conscious attention learning. An interview with a subject lecturer who is not Japanese yielded this quote:

"I sometime use translation tasks by using articles from Japanese newspapers in Economic class so that my students can build up a more subject related vocabulary."
(Interview with a subject lecturer)

However, there are several disadvantages of translation tasks related to the organisation of writing. The way of presenting ideas in Japanese is not totally the same as in English (Hinds, 1987). A number of lecturers criticised translation tasks in university entrance examinations, as seen below:

"University entrance exams, for example, often test how 詳しい (detail) the learners are with regards to translating particular kanji into obscure English words that occur very rarely, even in academic English, and aren't really worth knowing."
(Comment from a lecturer in a private university)

Due to the difference of lexis or sentence presentation between Japanese and English, the translation tasks require the students to use skills or strategies other than writing skills to digest the meaning behind each Japanese lexis/sentence to meaningfully translate them into English. This can undermine the test validity, as the language tests include skills that are irrelevant to what is supposed to be assessed. This is a concept known as construct-irrelevant variance (Messick, 1995).

Another interesting result from the survey comes from one of the top national universities that has been selected as a member of the Global 30. English tests designed by the university utilised translation tasks (from Japanese to English). One of the lecturers in the university who participated in the survey stated:

"One key aspect that is poorly taught in Japan (flowing from the high school system onwards) is how to structure an essay or report appropriately – thus many of the students fail to get across the key messages of their work, and the 'story' of the scientific report is lost."
(Comment from a lecturer in a private university)

As translation tasks make few demands on a candidate's content and organisational knowledge, which is provided by the text then retrieved from memory, and then translated into English word forms, following retrieval of English in the translation stage, certain processes may not be activated, i.e. *task representation and macro-planning, connecting different ideas and generating new ideas, organising ideas, and high-level monitoring and revising*. However, the awareness of grammatical and lexical correctness exhibited in the writing (translation) is a feature of the *translating and micro-planning* and the *lower-level monitoring and revising* stages.

Important aspects of the writing process involve *macro-planning* and *organisation*. Writers with different proficiency levels tend to use different strategies. Studies have highlighted the difference between the writing strategies and behaviours of skilled and unskilled L2 writers (e.g., Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1985). Skilled writers, compared to unskilled, spend more time on planning and are more flexible in changing their plans as new ideas arise. However, translation tasks never require writers to plan or organise; they fail to assess the writer's task representation and *macro-planning*, *connecting different ideas and generating new ideas*, *organising ideas* and *high-level monitoring and revising* skills. In an interview in this study, an EAP lecturer mentioned drawbacks in the translation tasks of English tests:

"The students in my university translated passages between Japanese and English well; however, they don't know how to construct a piece of their own writing. I think English tests of Japanese university entrance exams could affect their English learning in a way that they had a plenty of practice in translating, but not expressing their views in their writing."
(Interview with an EAP lecturer)

Although translation tasks require their candidates to actually write (translate) paragraphs in English based on Japanese passages given, one of the writing activities in this process – thinking of their own views – is missing. This could result in discouraging them from learning how to structure an essay/report at secondary school, let alone having their own ideas, which a lecturer expects their students to obtain. Due to the very limited cognitive processes which translation tasks require, it would seem that they could hardly reflect the cognitive constructs required in writing tasks assigned in EAP classes or subject courses in Japanese universities.

Impromptu writing

There are only a few universities that test their candidates' writing skills in impromptu writing tasks in argumentative, descriptive or expository discourse modes. The impromptu writing tasks can be to assess the candidates' organisation skills, lexical knowledge and syntactical knowledge to produce a piece of writing other than indirect writing tasks.

However, there are several drawbacks to the impromptu writing tasks of Japanese university entrance examinations. Firstly, clear time constraints are not given for the test-takers. Unlike external English proficiency tests (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL iBT), most of the impromptu writing tasks contain a reading section, grammar and vocabulary section, and sometimes even a listening test. This means that the test-takers themselves decide the length of time available to write the essay. Some students are not good time-keepers and spend too much time on the reading tasks or grammar/vocabulary tasks, then have to produce a piece of writing in a very short space of time. Hirose's (2003) study implies that other factors, not only writer-related factors, influence Japanese students' choices of essay organisation in English. The lack of clear time restrictions given in impromptu writing tasks could have a serious potential impact on their writing performance.

The other issue lies in the unclear instruction provided to the candidates. Clear information on what they are expected to do in the tasks, as well as how they will be marked, should be given to candidates (Weir, 2005). Many writing prompts in Japanese university entrance examinations do not provide the test-takers with the length of the essay to be written, unlike the example above, which mentioned 120 to 150 words to the candidates. It is uncertain how the test-takers would determine it; perhaps the length of time they had left during the English tests can be influential. Here, fundamental contextual problems will be experienced in terms of scoring validity due to the candidates' lack of knowledge of criteria, which affects their writing performance.

Lastly, one of the most common direct writing tasks is impromptu writing. Writing essays involves cognitive activities that not only combine grammatical and lexical knowledge to form sentences (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Weigle, 2002), but further require the ability to combine sentence units into a cohesive and coherent larger structure. Therefore, a piece of writing will contain appropriate discourse organisation, which is more than the collected meanings of the individual sentences. Being able to write according to academic conventions is frequently regarded as key to entering into the academic discourse community (Spack, 1988). In this respect, the 14 impromptu writing tasks collected in this study can be acknowledged as requiring all the cognitive processes: *task representation and macro-planning, connecting different ideas and generating new ideas, translating and micro-planning, organising ideas, lower-level monitoring and revising and high-level monitoring and revising*, to some degree. However, as the 14 tasks did not present any clear writing test rubric, which provides the candidates with crucial information in order to complete the tasks (e.g. the purpose of the tasks, the clarity of intended reader, or the clarity of marking criteria), the lack of a clear purpose of the tasks may not facilitate planning and monitoring.

In summary, the word reordering and translation tasks, which are most commonly used in the current writing tests in Japanese university entrance examinations, hardly reflect the cognitive attributes of academic writing activities in Japanese universities. These writing tasks encourage the students to develop only lexical and grammatical awareness. Compared to word reordering and translation tasks, impromptu writing tasks can be more valid in terms of cognitive processes attributed to real-life tasks in Japanese university contexts. However, because providing the test-takers with a clear and acceptable communicative purpose is considered to enhance their performance (Weir, 2005), the impromptu writing tasks have the critical issue of not showing the candidates a clear instruction of how they are supposed to complete the tasks.

5.2 The role of writing tests of Japanese university entrance examinations

As discussed earlier, the most important finding is that the writing constructs measured by a number of the Japanese universities do not match those expected to be performed or even the objectives of the Course of Study (1999). Japanese students are expected to write essays or reports summarising information from written texts in real life and in the Course of Study (1999, 2009), while Japanese secondary students are supposed to learn English writing derived from a target language use (TLU) domain: a “set of specific language use tasks that the test-taker is likely to encounter outside of the test itself, and to which we want our inferences about language ability to generalise” (Bachman and Palmer, 1996, p. 44). In this regard, it is difficult to say that most of the writing tests for Japanese university admission purposes are actually intended to function as predictors of future performance, as they seem to function more simply as gatekeeping exercises.

In contrast, the current trend of the assessment of second/foreign language writing has been shifting from indirect writing tests to direct writing tests. For example, despite the fact that indirect writing tasks were mainly used for 2014 Japanese university admission purposes, some direct writing assessments are still taken by Japanese senior high school students (e.g. GETC CBT¹ and TEAP). Also, Eiken recently announced that Grade 2 (equivalent to CEFR B1) tests include a direct writing test to be administered in 2016 (Eiken, 2015). This may be because the benefits of direct writing tests which place the same requirements on test-takers as those required in non-test real life situations (Shaw and Weir, 2007) are obvious. A number of the university lecturers acknowledge that English tests of university entrance examinations do not successfully assess such writing constructs as they expected, and so, it is crucial to improve the assessment of the candidates’ writing ability. For this, it is necessary to discuss several issues that emerged from the qualitative data to address the Japanese context.

¹ GETC CBT is locally designed by Benesse Corporation to measure the four skills of the English language and to provide definitive proof to a university's entrance examination board of a test-taker's ability.

Japanese students' writing skills in English

First, there is an issue about the English writing proficiency level of Japanese university students. The results of qualitative data analysis indicate that there appears to be a gap in the English writing construct of students between the level of the writing skills the lecturers expected at university level and that of the writing skills, which were assessed for university entry, their students actually obtained. Many lecturers in the survey acknowledged that their students lacked the writing skills or ability to express themselves in English, or even in Japanese:

"A teacher needs to be patient to help them recognise the difference between Japanese writing and English writing." (Lecturer in a private university)

"Most first-year students lack even basic skills in writing ability and do not know how to construct a paragraph, let alone an essay." (Lecturer in a private university)

"The amount of writing requirements in the university is quite small."
(Lecturer in a private university)

These statements are supported by the result of English proficiency tests administered by MEXT (2015a), where a majority of the final year senior high school students (i.e. more than 70% for listening and speaking and more than 85% for speaking and writing) scored at or below EIKEN Grade 3 (the equivalent to CEFR A1). The results largely fell short of the government targets for Japanese students' English proficiency (MEXT, 2015b²). The results also indicated that the students had more difficulties in speaking and writing than the other two receptive skills. However, without assessing these productive skills in appropriate ways (e.g., asking candidates to construct a piece of writing), the English tests of university entrance examinations cannot discriminate those who can hardly write a paragraph or even a sentence.

Despite the efforts that university lecturers make to teach English academic writing to their students, they need to teach English grammar again, which the students have already been taught at secondary school within the Course of Study (1999). This strongly emphasises the need to not only have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use the knowledge in a real-world setting. Some lecturers doubt their students' writing skills even in Japanese, as it seems difficult for some students to express their views on writing topics in their native language.

Another factor in Japanese students' poor writing proficiency may be in pedagogical practices of English writing at secondary schools. One of the EAP lecturers pointed out the subject knowledge on writing by Japanese teachers of English at secondary schools:

"The current English textbooks for senior high school students have less translation tasks compared to the past; the main tasks in the textbooks are to write from a sentence level to a paragraph level. However, I have a concern on how the teachers teach writing, as I suspect they themselves have experiences of writing academic essays. Their students appear to learn to construct paragraphs in the Japanese composition style, which is different from English academic writing." (Interview with an EAP lecturer)

Several lecturers also cited inappropriate pedagogical practices in English classes of secondary schools, as presented in these extracts:

"As the students in my university appear to study English in a secondary school to learn English test strategies for university entrance examinations, Year 1 students are not able to write a paragraph in English, not even an essay." (Interview with an EAP lecturer)

² The MEXT in Japan has publicly recommended two levels of English proficiency as goals for high school graduates, which are the EIKEN Grade 2 (the B1 level of the CEFR) and Pre-2 (the A2 level of the CEFR) levels as appropriate benchmarks (MEXT, 2002, http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/020/sesaku/020702.htm)

“It might be ideal if they can start learning some basic writing skills in secondary school.”
(Comment from a lecturer in a private university)

“One key aspect that is poorly taught in Japan (flowing from the high school system onwards) is how to structure an essay or report appropriately.”
(Comment from a lecturer in a national university)

This blaming of Japanese students' poor writing performance in English and pedagogical practices of English writing at secondary schools may partially result from a negative washback from inappropriate writing assessments of Japanese university examinations, as high-stakes tests or Japanese context writing assessments seem to be considered as less important compared to reading and listening skills. As an example, of TOEIC³ scores traditionally used by Japanese companies for recruitment purposes, 78.5% of the companies only consider the candidates' reading scores when making recruitment decisions, while 36.6% only consider the candidates' writing scores (ETS, 2013). This phenomenon is apparently not helping with the continuing concern about the poor productive language skills of Japanese students in English.

5.3 The role of English language in Japanese universities

In general, English language education in Japanese universities is provided mainly to Year 1 and Year 2 students. According to the survey and interviews, EAP lecturers provide various writing tasks, including essays, reports or summaries for the students. The qualitative data from the survey and interviews highlight several issues which the EAP lecturers and subject lecturers face.

Lack of consensus about academic writing constructs taught within universities

Another important issue emerges about disagreement of academic writing constructs that university lecturers teach and their pedagogical practices relevant to module syllabi among lecturers within the same university or faculty:

“Numerous EAP lecturers, sometimes more than 100, teach compulsory English modules to Year 1 students. There is a common syllabus of the modules, but they are allowed to design their own class as they wish. Therefore, depending on the lecturers, what writing skills they teach varies. There is little consistency of what they teach within the same university.”
(Interview from an EAP lecturer)

“I teach writing at two public universities, both of which require students to take academic writing classes. Neither school has any clear objectives for the classes, nor even an explanation of what they mean by ‘academic English’ or ‘essay’. Students change teachers and class groups each semester. Different teachers use different textbooks and seem to have completely different ideas about what ‘essay’ means, so in the second semester, you have to start from scratch and explain everything again. These two schools are two of the better schools in the region, but their writing programs are incoherent messes. The schools know it, but the English programs are really just for show, so nobody at the faculty level wants to do anything to fix it.”
(Comment from an EAP lecturer in a national university)

³ The TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) test is an English proficiency test for the speakers of English as a second or foreign language developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

Although EAP modules are provided to Year 1 students, the objectives of the modules are not clear or consistent among EAP lecturers within the same university. Furthermore, qualitative data reveal that there is little communication about the English academic writing curriculum between EAP lecturers who teach Year 1 and Year 2 students and subject lecturers who teach Year 3:

“Year 1 and Year 2 students take English modules, and for example, in Science, Year 3 and Year 4 students do not take English modules anymore and then some subject lecturers ask them to read academic essays or others ask them to teach oral English. I cannot see coherent curriculum even within the faculty.” (Interview with an EAP lecturer)

Although university lecturers have the same objectives in curriculum and course syllabi, the writing activities in class appear to vary depending on the lecturer’s understanding of academic writing.

In the situation where not many Japanese universities have provided undergraduate students with English medium instruction, the purposes of studying English in Japanese universities can vary; for example, the aim of getting a job at an international company or studying overseas. The demand for English academic writing in Japanese universities is much less than those of English medium universities, including the UK or USA. For example, a case study of a Japanese university (Moore and Chan, in preparation) found that the majority of the university modules for its undergraduate students assess their academic performance via examinations or writing assignments in Japanese.

However, interviews with an EAP lecturer and a subject lecturer address Japanese university students’ perspectives about studying the English language. Below is an example of the subject lecturer’s recent experience of his students’ attitude to English medium instruction:

“I have a class for Year 1 featuring a more general introduction on politics and economics related to social issues in preparation for them going abroad in their Year 2. This was created because many of our students in the past came back saying that, when they were in seminar, they always were asked about what was happening in their country and they did not have a depth of understanding of politics and knowledge on social things because they were economic students.” (Interview from a subject lecturer)

Also, the subject lecturer talked about the change in the university:

“To be honest, my university is a small rural national one. It is quite progressive in that 10 years ago they advertised a job, which I eventually got, for somebody who could teach EU-related studies in English, and just three or four years later this became a bit more popular.” (Interview from a subject lecturer)

The EAP lecturer who teaches EAP for undergraduates in Commerce also pointed out his students’ motivations to study overseas:

“As the majority of my students are strongly keen on the one-year studying abroad, their motivation about writing and speaking in English is much stronger compared to the past. Therefore, I teach them academic writing based on APA style, as well as TOEFL writing tasks and presentation skills in English.”

Also, many Japanese universities, such as the member of the Global 30, recently have been designing modules or courses taught in English. For example, interviews with EAP lecturers in a national university and in a private university stated:

“One-third of the modules for Year 1 and Year 2 students will be taught in English in 10 years.” (Interview with an EAP lecturer in a national university)

“The number of international students in my university has been increasing. Japanese students have more opportunities to use English language to communicate with them. The university is getting international.” (Interview with an EAP lecturer in a private university)

Many Japanese universities have been changing their education system such that the number of modules or courses taught in English increases. In this regard, the role of the English language in Japanese universities may change from a simply academic subject to a medium language required for Japanese students to perform academically when writing essays or reports. Given that, alternative tests to function as predictors of future performance need to impact positively on the learning and teaching of writing at a senior school level, as well as at the higher education level, which means that the context and cognitive validity of the tests should be demonstrated. Most applicants for Japanese universities are provided with at least six years of formal English education following the Course of Study. Therefore, the tests also need to reflect the writing skills identified by the Course of Study as needing to be taught.

6. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study was designed to identify the underlying English writing constructs measured in English tests for 2014 Japanese university entry, as well as establishing English academic writing constructs that need to be mastered by first-year university students in Japanese universities. Then the study investigated the context validity and the cognitive validity in the writing tasks collected in this study. The survey identified the underlying constructs of English academic writing for the first year students in Japanese universities. The result showed that a valid writing test for Japanese students should consist of direct writing tasks, such as essay writing in argumentative, expository or descriptive discourse, and it should be assessed regarding content, organisation, audience awareness, word choice, grammar and mechanics.

However, the results of the analysis on English writing tests used in Japanese university entrance examinations showed that discrete grammatical and lexical knowledge were most commonly assessed in writing tasks designed by private universities, while translation from Japanese to English skills and impromptu writing were tested by national/public universities. Due to the very limited cognitive processing required by these tasks (apart from the impromptu writing tasks), it is doubtful whether the tasks are able to test the writing abilities of the candidates appropriately as required in real life. Also, the first-year university students needed to write essays/reports in English, demonstrating a variety of language function and knowledge on discourse types. Apart from the impromptu writing tasks, the other common writing tasks – word reordering, lexical gap-filling and translation tasks – could hardly test these writing constructs required in real life beyond grammatical and lexical knowledge. Although the impromptu writing tasks are more valid to test the candidates' writing construct, several limitations were found (e.g., lack of information on the purpose of the tasks, clarity of marking criteria, time constraint and the length of the essay, which should be clearly presented).

Finally, several important limitations of the study need to be noted. Due to the small study sample from English tests as well as the survey, the findings cannot be generalised to Japanese university situations that were not represented in the study. Some universities had only one participant in the survey. Therefore, further in-depth qualitative research about certain Japanese universities should be undertaken to examine contextual and cognitive attributes in university classes.

Despite these limitations, the study confirms previous findings (Kowata, 2009) and contributes additional evidence that suggests the need for some improvement of writing assessment in Japanese university entrance examinations. Further studies of the English tests, however, need to be conducted at various Japanese universities with differing academic standards to identify the underlying writing constructs required. In addition, if MEXT introduces external English proficiency tests into Japanese university admission purposes, then further studies on validation of these tests need to be carried out, so that the English writing skills of all the candidates can be assessed fairly.

REFERENCES

- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alderson, J. C. & Urquhart, A. H. (1985). The effect of students' academic discipline on their performance on ESP reading tests, *Language Testing*, 2, pp. 192–204.
- American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), & National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (1999). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L. F. & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benton, S. L. & Kiewra, K. A. (1986). Measuring the organisational aspects of writing ability, *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 23, 4, pp. 377–386.
- Berman, R. A. (1984). Syntactic components of the foreign language reading process. In J. C. Alderson & A. H. Urquhart (Eds), *Reading in a Foreign Language*, pp. 13–159. Harlow, Longman.
- Brown, A. & Iwashita, N. (1998). The role of language background in the validation of a computer-adaptive test. In A. J. Kunnan (Ed), *Validation in Language Assessment*, pp. 195–208, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Brown, J. D. (1996). *Testing in Language Programs*. NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brown, J. D. & Yamashita, S. O. (1995). English language entrance examinations at Japanese Universities: What do we know about them? *JALT Journal* 17, 1, pp. 7–30.
- Buck, G. (1992). Translation as a language testing procedure: Does it work? *Language Testing*, 9, pp. 123–148.
- Chapelle, C. A. (1999). Validity in language assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 19, pp. 254–272.
- Chapelle, C. A., Enright, M. K. & Jamieson, J. (2010). Does an argument-based approach to validity make a difference? *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 29, pp. 3–13.
- Chan, S. H. C. (2013). *Establishing the validity of reading-into-writing test tasks for the UK academic context*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bedfordshire.
- Davies, A. (2011). Kane, validity and soundness. *Language Testing*, 29(1), pp 37–42.
- EIKEN. (2015). *Notice about Grad 2 tests*. Retrieved on 15 July 2015 from https://www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/info/2015/pdf/20150715_pressrelease_writing2.pdf
- ETS. (2013). TOEIC User Guide – Listening and Reading. Retrieved on 31 March 2015 from https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/Test_of_English_for_International_Communication/TOEIC_User_Gd.pdf
- Field, J. (2004). *Psycholinguistics: the Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.
- Flower, L. & Hayes, J. R. (1980). The dynamic of composing: Making plans and juggling constraints. In L. W. Gregg and E. R. Steinberg, (Eds), *Cognitive Processes in Writing: an Interdisciplinary Approach*, pp. 31–50. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.
- Gorsuch, G. J. (2000). EFL educational policies and educational cultures: Influences on teachers' approval of communicative activities, *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, 4, pp. 675–710.

- Grabe, W. & Kaplan, R. B. (1996). *Theory and Practice of Writing: an Applied Linguistic Perspective*. London: Longman.
- Guest, M. (2008). A comparative analysis of the Japanese university entrance Senta Shiken based on a 25-year gap, *JALT Journal*, 30, 1, pp. 85–104.
- Hayes, R. J. (1996). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In M. C. Levy and S. Ransdell (Eds), *The Science of Writing: Theories, Methods, Individual Differences and Applications*, pp. 1–27. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: A new typology. In U. Connor and R. B. Kaplan (Eds), *Writing across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*, pp. 141–152. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hirose, K. (2003). Comparing L1 and L2 organizational patterns in the argumentative writing of Japanese EFL students, *Journal of second language writing*, 12, pp. 181–209.
- Hughes, A. (2003). *Language Testing for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Husain, K. (1994). Translation in the ESL classroom: Emerging trends. *International Journal of Translation*, 1, 2, pp. 115–130.
- Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ichige, Y. (2006). Validity of centre examinations for assessment of communication ability, *On Cue*, 14, 2, pp. 13–22.
- Johnson, R. B. & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: a paradigm whose time has come, *Educational Researcher*, 33, 7, pp. 14–26.
- Kane, M. T. (1992). An argument-based approach to validity. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, pp. 527–535.
- Kane, M. T. (2013). The argument-based approach to validation. *School Psychology Review*, 42(4), pp. 448–457.
- Kern, R. G. (1994). The role of mental translation in second language reading, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 16, pp. 441–61.
- Kikuchi, K. (2006). Revisiting English entrance examinations at Japanese universities after a decade, *JALT Journal*, 28, 1, pp. 77–96.
- Kobayakawa, M. (2011). Analyzing Writing Tasks in Japanese High School English Textbooks: English I, II, and Writing, *JALT Journal*, 33, 1.
- Kowata, T. (2009). The Possibility of Washback Effect in the Context of Japanese University Entrance Examinations: Focusing on the Analysis of Writing Tests [in Japanese], *Language, Area and Culture Studies*, 15, pp. 81–93.
- Kunnan, A. J. (1998). *Validation in Language Assessment: Selected Papers from the 17th Language Testing Research Colloquium*, Long Beach. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lloyd-Jones, R. (1982). Scepticism about test scores. In K. L. Greenberg, H. S. Wiener, and R. A. Donovan (Eds), *Notes from the National Testing Network in Writing*, pp. 3–30.
- Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In R. Linn, (Ed) *Educational Measurement*, pp. 13–103. New York: Macmillan.
- Messick, S. (1995). Validity of psychological assessment validation of inferences from persons' responses and performances as scientific inquiry into score meaning, *American Psychologist*, 50, 9, pp. 741–749.
- MEXT. (1999). *The Course of Study for Japanese Upper Secondary School English*, Retrieved on 15 July 2014 from <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/efl/2ndsc/CourseStudyUpper.html>
- MEXT. (2002). *Japanese government policies in education, culture, sports, science, and technology*. Retrieved from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpac200201/hpac200201_2_015.html
- MEXT. (2003). *Action plan for cultivating Japanese with English abilities*, Retrieved from http://warp.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/286794/www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/15/03/03033101/001.pdf

- MEXT. (2010). *Promotion of private school*. Retrieved on 2 February 2015 from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/shinkou/main5_a3.htm
- MEXT. (2015a). English proficiency survey in cooperation with external test organizations. Retrieved on 8 April from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/098/shiryo/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/10/09/1340062_6.pdf
- MEXT. (2015b). A report on the results of third year senior high school students of English proficiency test. Retrieved on 8 April 2015 from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/1351125.htm
- Moore, Y. & Chan, S. H. C. (in preparation). Investigating the Cognitive Constructs Measured by Aptis Writing Test in the Japanese Context: a Case Study.
- Murphy, T. (2001). Non-meritorious features of the entrance exam system in Japan, *The Language Teacher*, 25, 10, pp. 37–39.
- Obunsha. (2014a). *For examination in 2015 Japanese university entrance examination English* (national /public universities), Obunsha.
- Obunsha. (2014b). *For examination in 2015 Japanese university entrance examination English* (private universities), Obunsha
- Raimes, A. (1985). What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, pp. 229–258.
- Schilling, S. G. & Heather C. H. (2007). Assessing measures of mathematical knowledge for teaching: A validity argument approach. *Measurement: Interdisciplinary research and Perspectives*, 5 (2–3), pp. 70–80.
- Schmidt, R. (1993). Awareness and second language acquisition, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, pp. 206–226.
- Shaw, S. & Weir C. (2007). *Examining Writing: Research and Practice in Assessing Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spack, R. F. (1988). Initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community: How far should we go? *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 1, pp. 29–52.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Class and C. Madden, (Eds), *Input in Second Language Acquisition*, pp. 235–253. Cambridge: Newbury House.
- Taylor, L. (2011). *Examining speaking: Research and practice in assessing second language speaking*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Japan Association for Language Education & Technology (LET), Japan Society of English Language Education (JASELE) and Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET). (2013). *Kyoto appeal*, Retrieved on 1 April 2014, <http://www.j-let.org/news/%8B%9E%93s%83A%83s%81%5B%83%8B.pdf>
- The Japan Times. (2013). *Plan to introduce TOEFL to universities has its merits*, Retrieved on 10 April 2015 from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2013/05/06/language/plan-to-introduce-toefl-to-universities-has-its-merits/#.VSjRYEpwYdU>
- The Japan Times. (2015). *High school students struggle with speaking, writing English*, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/17/national/high-school-students-struggle-with-speaking-writing-english/#.VQgHY01FAdU>
- Toshin.com. *Japanese university examination papers database*, Retrieved on 1 April 2014 from <http://220.213.237.148/univsrch/ex/menu/index.html>
- Underwood, P. (2010). A comparative analysis of MEXT English reading textbooks and Japan's National Centre Test, *RELC Journal*, 41, 2, pp. 165–182.
- Urquhart, A. H. & Weir, C. J. (1998). *Reading in a Second Language: Process, Product, and Practice*. New York: Longman.

Uzawa, K. (1996). Second language learners' processes of L1 writing, L2 writing, and translation from L1 into L2, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5, 3, pp. 271–294.

Watanabe, Y. (1996). Does grammar translation come from the entrance examination? Preliminary finding from classroom-based research, *Language Testing*, 13, 3, pp. 318–333.

Watanabe, Y. (1997). Constructing a classroom observation scheme for the test impact research, *Sophia Linguistica*, 41, pp. 297–313.

Weigle, S. (2002). *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weir, C. J. (1983). *Identifying the language needs of overseas students in tertiary education in the United Kingdom*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London Institution of Education.

Weir, C. J. (1990). *Communicative Language Testing*. New York, London: Prentice Hall.

Weir, C. J. (1992). *Understanding and developing language tests*. Prentice Hall.

Weir, C. J. (2005). *Language Testing and Validation: An Evidence-Based Approach*. Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yamashita, J. (2002). Mutual compensation between L1 reading ability and L2 language proficiency in L2 reading comprehension, *Journal of Research in Reading*, 25, pp. 81–95.

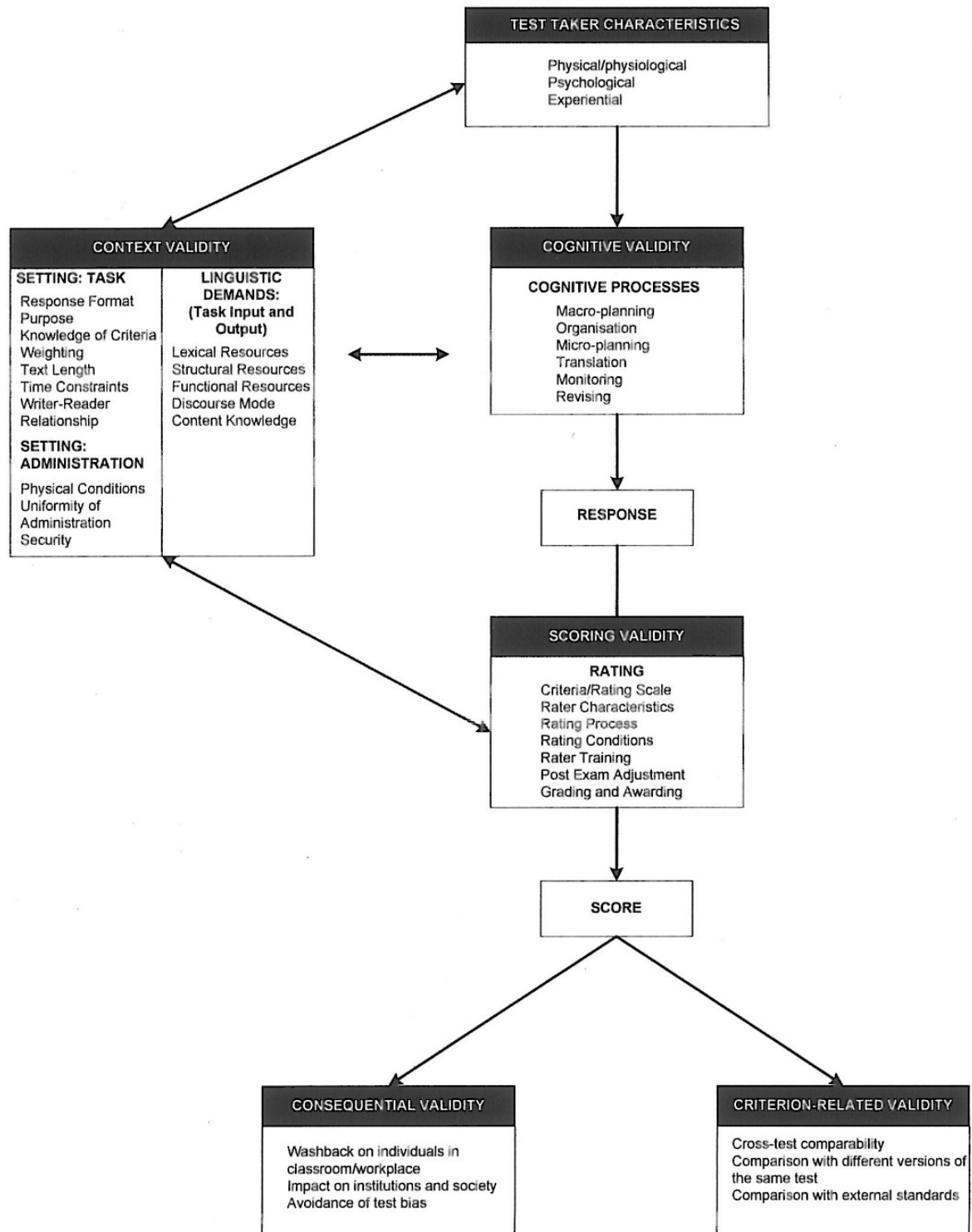
Yamashita, J. (2003). Processes of taking a gap-filling test: comparison of skilled and less skilled EFL readers, *Language Testing*, 20, 3, pp. 267–293.

Zamel, V. (1983). The composing processes of advanced ESL students: Six case studies, *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, pp. 165–187.

APPENDIX 1:

A framework for conceptualising writing test performance

(Shaw and Weir, 2007, p. 4)



APPENDIX 2: Online writing task survey

Part 1 Background

1. Your Academic Institution

☐ State university/college

☐ Prefectural and other public university/college

☐ Private university/college

Other (please specify)

***2. The name of your institution**

3. Your Faculty/College

☐ English/Foreign Language Centre

☐ Arts and Humanities

☐ Education

☐ Social science

☐ Natural science

☐ Business

☐ Computer and Engineering

Other (please specify)

***4. Your Position**

☐ Teacher of English for academic purposes

☐ Teacher of other subject course (i.e., law, business)

Please specify the subject course

Part 2 English Academic Writing Skills of Japanese University Students

* 5. What year of the students do you teach the following courses involving "English Academic Writing"? (Check all that apply)

どの学年で、英語でのアカデミックライティングを含んだ以下の授業をされていらっしゃるでしょうか？（複数回答可）

	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
1. Academic English course (only Writing)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Academic English course (reading and writing)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Subject course (essays/reports in English assigned)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please describe briefly the nature of the academic writing your students produce.

* 6. What types of English academic writing (include paragraph level) do you assign your students to do during the class? (Check all that apply)

学生に書かせる英語課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）の種類についてお答えください（複数回答可）

	1st year students	2nd year students	3rd year students	4th year students
Essay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary (single text)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary (multiple texts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of graphs/ pie chart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

***7. How often do you provide students with the following reading materials to use for their English academic writing tasks (include paragraph level)?**

学生の英語アカデミックライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）のために、どの頻度以下の英語文献資料を学生に使うように指示しますか？

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Book Chapter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Journal article	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News/magazine article	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Report	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Review	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

***8. How often do you provide students with the following non-verbal input to use for their English academic writing tasks (include paragraph level)?**

学生の英語アカデミックライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）のために、どの頻度以下の資料を学生に使うように指導しますか？

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Table	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Graph/pie chart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Picture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

*** 9. Which topic areas do you ask students to write about in the following English academic writing products (include paragraph level)? (Click all that apply)**

どのトピックについて、学生に英語アカデミックライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）を書かせますか？ 複数回答可

	Personal (i.e. information about them or their life)	Social (i.e. information in a society)	Academic (i.e. information about a particular subject)	Professional (i.e. information related to business or careers)	N/A
Essay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary (single text)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary (multiple texts)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of graphs/ pie chart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

*** 10. Which discourse types do you ask the students to produce (include paragraph level)? (Click all that apply)**

英語アカデミックライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）において、以下のどの談話/表現を指導しますか？（複数回答可）

- ☐ Narrative 語り文 (to create a story)
- ☐ Descriptive 描写文 (to describe a particular event)
- ☐ Expository 説明文 (to explain something or provide information about an issue)
- ☐ Argumentative 論証文/意見文 (to persuade someone with a particular idea or to argue a certain point of view)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

*** 11. How important is it for your students to demonstrate the following language functions in their English academic writing (include paragraph level)?**

学生の英語アカデミックライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）において、以下の言語の表現機能が示されていることが、どの程度重要だとお考えですか？

	Of no importance	Of little importance	Of some importance	Of great importance
Classifying 分類	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comparison 比較	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Citing sources 引用	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describing 描写	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Defining 定義	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluating 評価	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Persuading 説得	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Predicting 予測	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommending 推薦	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reasoning 推論	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Summarising 要約	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organising 構成	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Synthesising 複数情報の融合	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expressing personal views 個人の見方	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

***12. How important is the following assessment criteria when marking students'**

English academic writing (include paragraph level)?

学生の英語ライティング課題（パラグラフレベルも含む）を評価する際、以下の項目はどの程度重要だとお考えですか？

	Of no importance	Of little importance	Of some importance	Of great importance
Grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Word choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Content (relevance clarity, logic etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Audience awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

13. Please feel free to leave any comments on English academic writing skills or pedagogical practices in Japanese universities.

日本の大学生の英語ライティングスキルやライティング指導等に関して、ご意見を伺えれば幸いです。

14. Would you like to obtain the result of this survey? If yes, would you please leave your name and email address?

Your name:

Your email address:

15. Would you mind us contacting you if we have further enquiry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

APPENDIX 3:

Contextual cognitive parameter proforma

Overall Task Setting	Task No. ()
1. Purpose: <i>Is the purpose of the task clear?</i>	1 2 3 4 5 Unclear Clear (Any comments)
2. Topic domain: <i>Please circle any topic domains of the task to apply.</i>	1. Personal / 2. Social / 3. Academic / 4. Professional (Any comments)
3. Genre: <i>Please circle the genre of the task.</i>	1. Essay / 2. Email / 3. Report / 4. Case Study / 5. Summary / (Any comments)
4. Cognitive demands: <i>Please circle cognitive demands which the task requires.</i>	(1) Telling personal experience or viewpoints (2) Summarising or organising given ideas (3) Transforming given ideas into new representations (Any comments)
5. Language functions performed: <i>Please circle language functions which the task expects your students to use.</i>	1. Classifying / 2. Citing sources / 3. Describing / 4. Defining / 5. Evaluation / 6. Persuading / 7. Predicting / 8. Recommending / 9. Reasoning / 10. Summarising / 11. Synthesising / 12. Expressing personal views / 13. Illustrating visuals (Any comments)
6. Clarity of intended reader: <i>Is the task clear about intended readers?</i>	1 2 3 4 5 Unclear Clear (Any comments)
7. Knowledge of criteria	1 2 3 4 5 Unclear Clear (Any comments)

(Adapted from Chan, 2013)

Cognitive processing parameters	Not Required	Required to a lesser extent	Required
Task representation and macro-planning			
Connecting and generating ideas			
Translating and micro-planning			
Organising			
Low-level monitoring and revising			
High-level monitoring and revising			

British Council Assessment Research Awards and Grants

If you're involved or work in research into assessment, then the British Council Assessment Research Awards and Grants might interest you.

These awards recognise achievement and innovation within the field of language assessment and form part of the British Council's extensive support of research activities across the world.

INVESTIGATING VALID CONSTRUCTS FOR WRITING TASKS IN EAP TESTS FOR USE IN JAPANESE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

AR-A/2015/4

Yumiko Moore

**ARAGs RESEARCH REPORTS
ONLINE**

ISSN 2057-5203

© British Council 2015

The British Council is the
United Kingdom's international
organisation for cultural relations
and educational opportunities.

