

Coherence features of published research articles by Japanese authors: Culture-specific features and their acceptability

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Abstract

Previous studies have demonstrated that research articles by non-native English-speaking researchers often contain features that are not in accordance with rhetorical conventions of English academic writing. It has also been pointed out that creation of such non-standard features may be related to the influence of the writers' first language writing culture. Some have argued that these cultural rhetorical features ought to be viewed as acceptable because they are part of published content. Others have reported findings suggesting that these cultural yet non-standard features constitute potential writing problems. To further explore this topic, the present study examines coherence features of the discussion section of research articles (RAS) produced in English and Japanese by Japanese-speaking authors. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is used for the analysis of the selected texts in terms of coherence conventions of English expository or argumentative prose. The results are then compared with findings of previous research on coherence breaks created by student writers. The analysis reveals that English and Japanese RAS contain similar features that are not in accordance with English coherence conventions described by RST, suggesting that these features derive from the influence of Japanese writing culture. Close examinations show that these L1-related features in RAS are also analogous to those of coherence breaks in students' writings reported by previous studies.

Keywords: intercultural rhetoric, L1 interference, coherence relations, research articles, Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST).

Resumen

La coherencia en los artículos de investigación de autores japoneses: características culturales específicas y su aceptabilidad

En estudios anteriores se ha demostrado que los artículos de investigación de autores cuya lengua materna no es el inglés suelen presentar características ajenas a las convenciones retóricas de la escritura académica en inglés. También se ha señalado que la aparición de estas particularidades puede estar influida por la cultura de escritura en la lengua materna de los autores. Algunos investigadores argumentan que estas características retóricas culturales deberían considerarse aceptables porque forman parte del contenido publicado. Otros ofrecen resultados que sugieren que estas características culturales alejadas del estándar de la escritura académica en inglés pueden resultar problemáticas. Para explorar con más detalle este tema, el presente estudio examina diferentes aspectos relacionados con la coherencia en la sección de discusión de los artículos de investigación producidos en inglés y en japonés por autores de habla japonesa. Se ha recurrido a la Teoría de la Estructura Retórica (RST: Rhetorical Structure Theory) para el análisis de los textos seleccionados respecto a las convenciones de coherencia de la prosa expositiva o argumentativa en inglés. Posteriormente, los resultados se han comparado con los hallazgos de investigaciones anteriores sobre rupturas de coherencia en producciones de estudiantes noveles. El análisis revela que los artículos de investigación en inglés y en japonés contienen características similares que no se corresponden con las convenciones de coherencia descritas para el inglés desde la Teoría de la Estructura Retórica, lo cual sugiere que estas características se derivan de la influencia de la cultura de escritura en japonés. Un examen más detallado de los resultados obtenidos evidencia que estas características relacionadas con la L1 en los artículos de investigación también son análogas a las rupturas de coherencia que se producen en los escritos de los estudiantes que se han identificado en estudios anteriores.

Palabras clave: retórica intercultural, interferencia de la L1, relaciones de coherencia, artículos de investigación, Teoría de la Estructura Retórica.

1. Introduction

Previous cross-cultural studies of academic genres have shown that writers from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds may adopt similar or different rhetorical strategies (e.g., Connor et al., 2008). Fløttum et al. (2006) compared research articles (RAS) produced in English, French, and Norwegian and discovered that English and Norwegian writers used such items as first person pronouns and metatext significantly more than French

writers, whereas English and French writers used much less negations and adversative conjunctions. Feng (2008) compared grant proposals by Chinese-speaking and English-speaking writers and reported that Chinese writers “are no less contentious than English scholars” when “indicating the limitations of the previous research” to claim the worthiness of their research (p. 75). Moreno (2022) examined how English and Spanish RA writers describe limitations of their studies in discussions and/or conclusions. She discovered that English RA writers tended to present limitation statements along with research-related implications to draw readers’ attention away from weaknesses of their studies. In contrast, Spanish RA writers tended to elaborate the limitations due to their “desire to offer an image of expertise” (p. 121).

Cross-cultural studies further demonstrated that academic writers who use English as an additional language (EAL) often adopt rhetorical features derived from the influence of their first language (L1) writing culture. Studies in the field of English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) have corroborated that even experienced EAL writers like published researchers could use such L1 rhetorical features. Povolná (2018) compared English conference abstracts by English- and Czech-speaking scholars. She reported that unlike English scholars who employed three moves in the abstracts, Czech scholars tended to adopt only two moves because of the influence of “a relatively lengthy style often associated with L1 academic texts” (p. 168). Burgess (2002) used Swales’ (1990) Creating-A-Research-Space (CARS) model to compare the rhetorical structure of introductions of RAS by L1 English writers, L1 Spanish writers and Spanish-speaking EAL writers. She discovered that almost 90 percent of L1 English writers realised a rhetorical move called “establishing a niche” (Move 2) in which proposed research was justified in relation to previous studies (Swales, 1990). In contrast, as for the RAS by Spanish-speaking writers, this move was not realised “in over a quarter of the texts written in English and in almost half of the [...] texts written in Spanish” (Burgess, 2002, p. 206). Burgess thus noted that omission of this move was a preferred rhetorical feature of Spanish academic communities. Adopting the similar comparative scheme, Sheldon (2011) also reported that around 30 percent of introductions of English RAS by Spanish-speaking EAL writers she analysed did not contain Move 2.

Previous studies have also reported findings suggesting that L1 cultural rhetorical features of EAL writers, especially those not in accordance with English conventions, may constitute potential writing problems. Pérez-

Llantada (2014) compared linguistic bundles in RAs produced by L1 English and Spanish writers and Spanish-speaking EAL writers. It was revealed that compared to L1 English writers, EAL and L1 Spanish writers used fewer bundles conveying writers' stance including hedges, despite the importance in English research genres. Pérez-Llantada indicated L1 transfer as a likely reason for this and noted such "deviant use of L1 English pragmatic norms [...] hinders L2 writers' success in journal publication" (p. 92). Dontcheva-Navratilova (2018) examined citation practice in English RAs by English- and Czech-speaking writers. She found that Czech writers tended to use citations when they present summaries of previous studies, whereas English writers tended to incorporate citations as part of their arguments. She attributed this feature of Czech writers to their "tendency towards [...] convincing the reader through the presentation of disciplinary knowledge" (p. 32). She concluded that Czech writers' preference of non-rhetorical approach may result in a lack of persuasiveness to international audience familiar with conventions of English academic writing. In addition, as mentioned earlier in this section, it has been reported that Move 2 of the CARS model (Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 2012) is often not realised in the introductions of English RAs by Spanish writers. In other words, writers of these RAs often do not justify their studies by explicitly indicating how their studies are to extend previous knowledge. However, according to the CARS model, this move is a mandatory element of RA introductions. Swales and Feak (2012, p. 348) indeed noted that this is "a key move" in the introduction that "establishes the motivation for the study" by connecting "what has been done" to "what the present research is about". In fact, a number of researchers including Tardy (2005) and Paltridge and Starfield (2019) have indicated failure in establishing a link between the proposed research and previous studies in the introduction section is a typical rhetorical problem of novice research writers. Thus, there is a good possibility that lack of Move 2 in RA introductions may still be identified as a writing problem.

Writing researchers adopting the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (e.g., Seidlhofer, 2011; Mauranen, 2012), however, have started to claim that L1 rhetorical features of EAL writers, especially those in published academic journals, need to be viewed as acceptable, as they do not hinder manuscripts from being published. According to this school, we are currently witnessing a dramatic shift from "a view of English as being owned by native speakers whose norms and conventions need to be preserved" to "a view of English as being used and shaped by a global community including academic writers

from different L1s” (Mur-Dueñas & Šinkūnienė, 2018, p. 5). Moreover, as Wu et al. (2020) noted, such L1 features of EAL academic writers have been re-defined as innovative uses in English. This is because they could potentially reshape the rhetorical conventions of the English academic genres which have long been dominated by and thus privilege native English-speaking writers. Thus, Lorés-Sanz (2016) for example wrote that L1 features of EAL writers should be described as examples of “hybridity which may be the result of language contact” (p. 68) rather than as deviations. Furthermore, researchers including Mur-Dueñas (2015) also noted that “the study of the use made of English by its international users in professional and academic contexts should be a goal within EAP” (p. 163).

In view of this situation, it seems increasingly necessary to provide empirical data based on which we can further explore whether EAL writers’ L1-derived rhetorical features in published English journals, especially those not in accordance with English conventions, should be viewed as potential writing problems or acceptable. To this end, the present research examines coherence features in English and Japanese RAS by Japanese-speaking authors based on Rhetorical Structure Theory or RST (Mann & Thompson, 1988; Mann et al., 1992). The analysis first seeks to identify features in these RAS that are not in accordance with coherence conventions of English expository or argumentative prose described by RST. These features in Japanese and English RAS are then compared based on the assumption that comparability between the two indicate the influence of Japanese writing culture. After identifying L1-related features in RAS in this way, they are analysed in the light of previous studies using RST to examine features of coherence breaks in students’ English writings (O’Brien, 1995; Candlin et al., 1998; Gruber, 2006; Skoufaki, 2020). If L1-related coherence features in RAS are analogous to those of students’ coherence breaks, these features, when realised in English academic writing in different contexts, could be identified as writing problems. However, in the opposite case, the present findings will provide additional evidence to support why L1-derived rhetorical features in published English RAS need to be viewed as acceptable. It should be noted that coherence has been reported to be a problem area of EAL writers even at an advanced stage of academic literacy development (e.g., Gosden, 1992; Flowerdew, 2000; Cho, 2004; Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014). Thus, the findings of the present study will provide useful empirical data by which we can consider how coherence—a crucial element—in EAL writing should be conceptualised.

2. Study

2.1. How to analyse coherence

The present study selected coherence as the focus of the analysis. As has been pointed out, coherence is not “a product of (formally represented) cohesion” (Bublitz, 1999, p. 1), which refers to “textual tightness as manifested by structural means” (Östman, 1999, p. 77). Coherence, instead, is “an aspect of comprehension that is established in the mind of the reader as a result of perception of relatedness among a text’s propositions” (McCagg, 1990, p. 113). In addition to the propositional coherence, the functional aspect of coherence is often indicated. Lautamatti (1990, p. 31) provides the following sequence as an example.

A: That’s the telephone.

B: I’m in the bath.

A: O.K.

The sequence above is coherent although it is evidently lacking surface cohesion. This is because it can be perceived to constitute a “meaningful chain of communicative acts” (Lautamatti, 1990, p. 31). Coherence is thus a relational concept as well as “semantic-functional phenomenon” (Östman, 1999, p. 77). For this, as Redeker (2000) notes, a “widely accepted current paradigm for the description of textual coherence is a group of approaches that describe text organization in terms of coherence relations” (p. 236).

This study uses RST as “a theory of relational structure” (Mann et al., 1992, p. 41), which is the “structure expressing the organization of coherent contiguous text” (Mann et al., 1992, p. 41). RST describes coherence conventions of expository or argumentative prose in English and has been used to analyse coherence relations in various genres in English including academic essays (e.g., O’Brien, 1995; Candlin et al., 1998; Gruber & Muntigl, 2005; Gruber, 2006; Skoufaki, 2020) and published RAS (e.g., Kawase, 2019, 2022, 2024). RST defines types of intentions achievable in coherent texts as coherence relations. Different sets of coherence relations have been identified to construct the taxonomy (e.g., Mann & Thompson, 1988; Mann et al., 1992; Candlin et al., 1998; Mann & Taboada, 2023), where a relation is defined in terms of (1) constraints on nucleus or satellite or both and (2) intended effect upon readers (see Appendix for the definitions of relations referred to in this study). RST also defines the standard structural patterns of

how parts of a coherent text are related to each other, which are called schemas and graphically represented in RST analysis as in Figure 1.

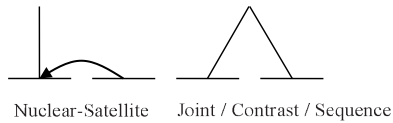


Figure 1. Possible structural patterns of propositional organisation or schemas.

A nuclear-satellite schema is made up of two types of propositions which differ in terms of the saliency of the message; an idea which is “more essential to writer’s purpose” is identified as nucleus, while the other part, satellite, “can gain significance only through its nucleus” (Mann & Thompson, 1988, p. 271). A nucleus is represented by a vertical line and a satellite is represented by an arc. The other three schemas are the multi-nuclear schema in which equally salient ideas (nuclei) are juxtaposed (joint schema), contrasted (contrast schema), or presented in a sequential manner (sequence schema). In addition to schemas, hierarchical structure, too, is a key structural element of coherent texts. RST assumes that parts of a coherent text are “organized such that elementary parts are composed into larger parts, which in turn are composed into yet larger parts up to the scale of the whole text” (Mann et al., 1992, p. 42).

The present study uses RST to detect features in English and Japanese RAS that are not in accordance with English coherence conventions. In particular, it seeks to identify sentences in which authors of these RAS do one of the following: (1) achieving rhetorical intentions not included as a part of coherence relations defined by RST or achieving coherence relations not in the way defined by RST; (2) structuring ideas/sentences not in the way in accordance with schemas defined by RST; or (3) organising ideas in the way that does not construct hierarchical structure. The RST analysis employs Mann and Taboada’s (2023) relation taxonomy (see Appendix for the definitions of relations referred to in this paper), and the RST tool (O’Donnell, 2002) is used to graphically represent coherence structure of given sentences in the selected RAS. After identifying coherence features in these RAS that are not in accordance with English conventions, they are compared with each other to identify features derived from the influence of Japanese writing culture. Finally, to consider the acceptability of these L1-

derived features when used in English academic writing in different contexts, they are compared with those of coherence breaks in students' writings in English reported by previous studies.

2.2. Data selection

The present research analyses the following texts as the main data: (1) discussion section of 20 RAS produced in English by Japanese-speaking authors (ET1-ET20) and (2) discussion section of 20 RAS produced in Japanese by Japanese-speaking authors (JT1-JT20). Both English and Japanese RAS were selected from those published in journals concerning English language teaching and learning to be comparable. English RAS were selected from those published in international journals, including *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *System*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *Language Learning*. By analysing RAS published in prestigious journals that generally require manuscripts to be written in “flawless” English, the present analysis could eliminate writers' lack of writing competence as a potential factor for the presence of non-standard features. Japanese RAS were selected from journals, including *JALT [Japan Association for Language Teaching] Journal*, *JACET Kansai [Japan Association of College English Teachers Kansai Chapter] Journal*, and *The Language Teacher*. Although academic journals in the area of English language teaching and learning published in Japan often contain both English and Japanese RAS, they are domestic journals not indexed by international peer-reviewed databases such as Scopus. Both English and Japanese RAS were chosen not from theoretical papers but from those presenting empirical analyses to ensure comparability of the texts, since the content of the papers could significantly influence the rhetorical orientations (Peacock, 2002). The RAS in accordance with the criteria mentioned above and in the following paragraph were selected from those published between year 2009 and 2021. By selecting RAS relatively recently published, the present analyses seek to draw implications useful in contemporary contexts.

The present study decided to focus on the discussion section for analysis. For English RAS, only those with the heading of “Discussion” and its equivalent such as “Summary and Discussion” were selected. As for Japanese RAS, they do not normally have a section that can be literally translated as “discussion” (the most equivalent section is *Kosatsu* whose literal translation is “observations”) and the section is often presented under different names. Thus, identification of the section was based on the

content. In particular, the selection was made in the light of its obligatory elements described by Swales and Feak (2012). Swales and Feak noted that writers of RA discussions need to comment on “key results” by engaging in either of the followings: “making claims, explaining the results, comparing the work with the previous studies, offering alternative explanations” (p. 268). Average length in words, sentences, and paragraphs of the selected RA discussions are summarised in Table 1.

Data	Average word count	Average sentence count	Average paragraph count
English discussions	1326 words	43 sentences	8.3 paragraphs
Japanese discussions	2500 words	32 sentences	8.0 paragraphs

Table 1. Corpus description.

It should be noted that the discussion section has been often classified as a most difficult part of RA writing in English (Swales & Feak, 2012). This is partly because writers of discussions need to realise a crucial component of English RA writing—logically discussing the significance of the study and the findings (Yang & Allison, 2003). That is to say, the writers would pay more explicit attention to the coherence conventions of English academic writing. Thus, provided that L1-derived features were detected in English RA discussions, they could be better identified as aspects of English writing difficult for Japanese writers—even experienced writers like published researchers—to control.

3. Results

3.1 Features in RAs that are not in accordance with English coherence conventions

The RST analysis identified features that are not in accordance with English coherence conventions in 14 out of 20 English RAs and in 10 out of 20 Japanese RAs. The analysis shows that these features are not deviations from schemas or failures in hierarchical construction. Instead, they occur because coherence relations are not realised in the way defined by RST. Types of the features identified are summarised in Table 2.

Features not in accordance with English conventions	English RAS (/20)	Japanese RAS (/20)
Excessive concession	3	2
Implicit construction	3	0
Drawing a claim not explicitly valid or relevant in view of the information presented as a justification ground	8	8

Table 2. Coherence features in RAs that are not in accordance with English conventions.

In three English RAS and two Japanese RAS, writers seek to highlight an idea by presenting a concessive statement to it. However, the concessive statement seems so excessive and overpowering that it could undermine the validity of the idea. These writers could thus not achieve a coherence relation like Concession in a standard manner whose intended effect is “R[eaders]’s positive regard for the situation presented in N[ucleus] is increased” (Mann & Taboada, 2023). In three English RAS, writers present a statement whose relation to the rest of the text as well as their intentions remain implicit; an RST relation could not be assigned. As for the most frequently identified features in both English and Japanese RAS (eight English RAS and eight Japanese RAS), they occur due to the ways in which a claim or deduction is related to its grounds. More precisely, in these RAS, writers draw a claim or deduction that does not seem explicitly valid or relevant in the light of the information presented as a justification ground; to put it in different terms, they present information that does not seem explicitly valid or relevant as a ground to justify the corresponding claim or deduction. In line with previous studies of intercultural rhetoric comparing EAL and L1 rhetorical features (e.g., Burgess, 2002; Sheldon, 2011; Pérez-Llantada, 2014), the present research identifies these feature as derived from Japanese rhetorical traditions or writing culture. Some examples will illustrate these L1-derived coherence features in the following section.

3.2. L1-related coherence features in RAS by Japanese authors: Exemplifications

3.2.1. *Making a claim not explicitly valid in view of justification ground*

The analysis identified sentences in five English RAS where writers do not achieve a coherence relation in a standard manner because they draw a claim or deduction that does not seem explicitly valid in the light of the information presented as a justification ground. This can be seen in

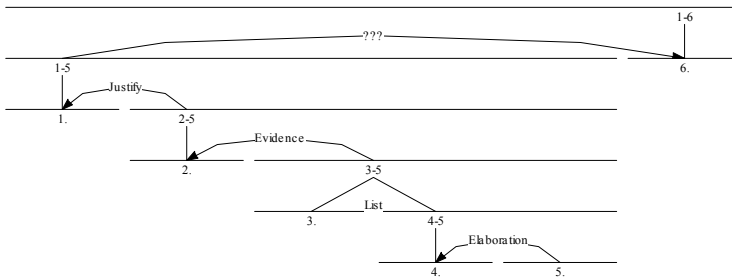
sentences 1-6 of paragraph 4 in the discussion section of ET20 (Table 3), to give an example.

S no.*	Text
1	It may be the function of the amount of in-class contact that caused the gain in processing speed over a short period of time.
2	Several previous studies lend support to this interpretation (Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004).
3	Segalowitz and Freed found that, although Spanish language learners in a second language context gained more oral fluency than learners in a foreign language context, the gain did not reflect greater out-of-class contact or extracurricular use of the second language.
4	One possible explanation for the differences is the number of class hours.
5	The domestic students were enrolled in one Spanish class, but the students in the study abroad group were enrolled in three courses.
6	Thus, it may be the intensive format of instruction that promoted oral fluency, which reflects the speed of processing language information.

*Sentence number

Table 3. Sentences 1-6 of paragraph 4 in the discussion section of ET20.

Relational structure of sentences 1-6 is represented in Figure 2.



Note. In this and the following figures, numbers refer to sentence number; a question mark is added to a relation tag if the relation is not realized in a conventional manner (see Appendix for the definition of coherence relations referred to in section 3.2).

Figure 2. Coherence structure of sentences 1-6 of paragraph 4 in the discussion section of ET20.

The writer of ET20 draws an assumption in sentence 1 that “the amount of in-class contact” may affect students’ improvement of “processing speed” based on findings of previous studies referred to in sentences 2-5 as a justification ground. In sentences 3-5, the writer describes findings of previous studies: that “out-of-class contact or extracurricular use” do not contribute to second language learners’ improvement; and that the number of classes taken by students who improved better was smaller. With sentences 3-5, the writer thus substantiates how “previous studies lend support” (sentence 2) to an assumption presented in sentence 1: “[Smaller]

amount of in-class contact” could result in positive results. However, based on the content of sentences 1-5 as a background, the writer draws another assumption in sentence 6 that students who took smaller number of classes improved more possibly because they received “intensive format of instruction”. It should be noted that this is not part of the findings described in sentences 4-5 but the writer’s own speculation. It is logically possible that this speculation could prove to be correct. Nevertheless, it remains implicit whether these students did receive intensive instruction; even if they did, it remains unclear whether this was the main factor for the improvement. Therefore, sentences 1-5 and sentence 6 could not constitute an RST relation like Justify in a standard manner whose intended effect is that “R[eaders]’ readiness to accept W[riter]’s right to present N[ucleus] is increased” (Man & Taboada, 2023).

Similar cases were observed in four Japanese RAs. See paragraph 10 of the discussion of JT14 (Table 4), to give an example.

S no. *	Original text	English translation
1	教師自身の能力評価では、文法の知識を高く評価していることと、CLTの指導に関係する能力を英語力（聞く、読む、書く）や生徒管理能力をより低く評価していることが特徴としてあげられる。	As notable features, it is possible to indicate that teachers [who are reluctant to CLT] evaluate their grammar knowledge better than their abilities related to instructions in CLT (listening, reading, and writing) and student management.
2	CLTの指導に自信のない教師は、授業に取り入れるのに躊躇するだろう。	Teachers who are not confident with CLT instructions will be hesitant to incorporate it [CLT] into a class.
3	しかし、自信がないので使わない、使わないから自信がもてない、この繰り返しでは発展がない。	However, not using it [CLT] due to lack of confidence, not using it resulting in lack of confidence, repetition like this makes no progress.
4	悪循環を断ち切る手立てが必要である。	It is necessary to break the vicious cycle.

* = Sentence number

Table 4. Paragraph 10 of the discussion section of JT14.

Relational structure of sentences 1-4 is represented in Figure 3.

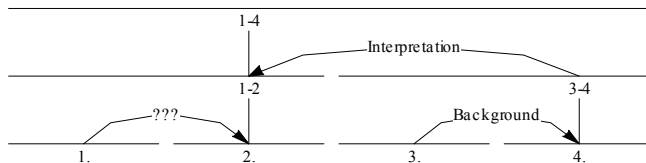


Figure 3. Coherence structure of paragraph 10 of the discussion section of JT14.

In sentence 1, the writer reports an important finding that Japanese teachers who are reluctant to CLT [communicative language teaching] tended to

evaluate their grammar-related knowledge better than their abilities related to CLT instructions. Based on which, the writer draws a claim in sentence 2 that teachers who are not confident with CLT instructions will be hesitant to introduce CLT into a class, followed by a suggestion to these unconfident teachers elaborated in sentences 3-4. However, the finding elaborated in sentence 1 (i.e., teachers reluctant to introduce CLT evaluated their grammar-related knowledge better) could not fully substantiate the writer's claim made in sentence 2 (i.e., these teachers are lacking confidence with CLT). Clearly, issues related to confidence would need to be investigated as a separate factor. In the end, sentence1 could not serve to constitute an RST relation such as Evidence in a standard manner whose effect is to increase “R[eader]’s belief of N[ucleus]” (Mann & Taboada, 2023).

3.2.2 Making a claim not explicitly relevant in view of the justification ground

The analysis further identified cases (three English RAS and four Japanese RAS) in which writers draw a claim or deduction that does not seem explicitly relevant in the light of the information presented as a justification ground. This can be seen in paragraph 7 of the discussion section of ET4 (Table 5), to give an English example.

S no.*	Text
1	It should be noted in this connection that writing has some important advantages over speaking in advancing L2 development.
2	As Williams (2012) points out, with more time available for output formulation and the enduring record left of its outcome, learners can better consult their explicit knowledge and develop a focused awareness of their capabilities and problems in the process of writing.
3	This may serve as a springboard for the next stage of learning, that is, noticing the form and/or the gap during the comparison stage.
4	While, in speaking, many of the problems, even if noticed during speech formulation, may go unchallenged in the rapid course of turn-taking in conversation (e.g., Shehadeh, 2002), writing, by virtue of their unique characteristics, may permit greater chance of addressing more problems.
5	The results of our study indicated that L2 learners can and do take advantage of such favorable conditions of writing for L2 learning, as indicated by a series of their performance in the given three-stage writing task.

*=Sentence number

Table 5. Coherence structure of paragraph 7 of the discussion section of ET4.

Relational structure of sentences 1-5 is represented in Figure 4.

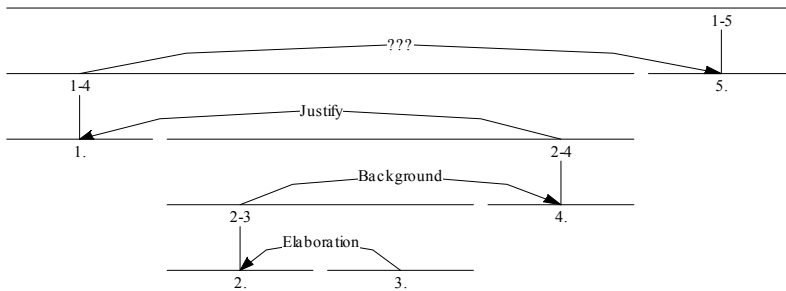


Figure 4. Coherence structure of paragraph 7 of the discussion section of ET4.

In sentences 1-4, the authors of ET4 explain why L2 learners have better chances to improve the quality of their output in writing than speaking. Based on which, in sentence 5, the authors claim the significance of a finding that L2 learners can benefit from this feature of writing. It should be noted however that such comparison between writing and speaking is not explored in the study or included as part of the analytical foci. This can be seen from the fact that except for this paragraph, the word “speaking” is referred to only once throughout the entire article; it is not included as a part of research questions, either. As a result, readers could not explicitly understand why significance of the finding needs to be discussed in relation to the nature of speaking. Sentences 1-4 and sentence 5 could thus not constitute an RST relation like Justify in a standard manner whose constraints include that “R[eaders]’s readiness to accept W[riter]’s right to present N[ucleus] is increased” (Mann & Taboada, 2023).

Similar cases were also observed in four Japanese RAs; see paragraphs 1-2 of JT20 (Table 6), to give an example.

dominance of native-English speaking countries over countries where English is used not as the first but as the official language. Based on which as a justification ground, the writer argues in sentences 4-9 that more English textbooks need to incorporate materials about non-English speaking countries because of the larger number of tourists from there. However, as can be found from the main findings, this argument clearly seems to move away from the focus of the research. Although the findings indicating the dominance of English-speaking countries could support the claim that more materials concerning non-English speaking countries should be selected, these findings could not explicitly justify the use of the number of inbound tourists as a selection criterion. Thus sentences 1-3 and sentences 4-9 could not constitute an RST relation like Justify relation in a standard manner whose intended effect is that “R[eaders]’ readiness to accept W[riter]’s right to present N[ucleus] is increased” (Mann & Taboada, 2023).

3.3. Comparison to coherence breaks in students’ English writings

This section goes on to analyse L1-related coherence features in RAS by Japanese authors in the light of previous studies using RST to examine features of coherence breaks in students’ English writings (O’Brien, 1995; Candlin et al., 1998; Gruber, 2006; Skoufaki, 2020). The present research identifies that these L1-related features are analogous to those of coherence breaks reported by O’Brien (1995) and Skoufaki (2020).

O’Brien (1995) examined coherence structure of an essay composed by an English-speaking student at a British university. She reported that coherence breaks identified were caused by the student’s “inability to maintain links” between ideas or “poor grasp of the interdependence [of ideas]” (p. 466). An example of such cases presented by O’Brien is shown in Table 7.

S No.*	Text
1	However, Buck (1977) says that none of the recent studies purporting to support the facial feedback hypothesis [People who are emotionally expressive give greater facial feedbacks than others / People give greater feedbacks if he is emotionally expressive than if he is not] used a between-subject paradigm.
2	Buck (1977) and Lanzetta and Kleck (1970) found subjects who are facially unexpressive obtained larger skin conductance and heart rate responses than people who are not.
3	Buck et al (1974) found negative intersubject correlations between rated expressiveness measures and skin conductance responses (consistent with within subjects paradigm), so a person who has a larger skin conductance response when he is emotionally expressive than when he is not, has a smaller skin conductance response if he is naturally expressive than if he is not.

*=Sentence number

Table 7. A case of coherence break presented in O’Brien (1995).

According to O'Brien, sentence 1 and sentences 2-3 constitute a coherence break. This is because findings of the studies described in sentences 2-3 do not provide adequate or sufficient evidence to exemplify Buck's statement presented in sentence 1 (i.e., no studies supporting the hypothesis conducted inter-subjective analyses). It would seem that sentences 2-3 might constitute negative evidence for a claim stated in sentence 1 (i.e., that studies having conducted intersubjective analyses are only against the hypothesis). However, it is clear that for this purpose, the writer should instead have referred to studies that support the hypothesis but do not conduct intersubjective analyses.

Skoufaki (2020) examined EAL students' writings and discovered that among 20 instances of coherence breaks identified, 17 of them occurred because of the insertion of irrelevant ideas that "seemed unexpected given the writing topic of a text" (p. 113). See Table 8 for an example of such cases illustrated by Skoufaki (2020, p. 115).

S No.*	Text
1	No one can deny that our heart will be filled with a great deal of happiness when we give somebody a hand.
2	We not only assist others but also get pleasure.
3	I convinced that everybody approves of such great saying and wants to follow it.
4	We also desire for others' help when in trouble, so try to stand in others' shoes and do your best to help who need help.
5	I have helped a classmate when she got hurt.
6	She felt thankful for me and we became [sic] very good friends.
7	So I regard help for others as a great thing.
8	We can get much by doing the kind thing.

*=sentence number

Table 8. A case of coherence break presented in Skoufaki (2020).

According to Skoufaki, this is an excerpt from an essay assigned for students whose topic is "whether they agree that helping others is a source of happiness and explain why/why not" (p. 115). Skoufaki noted that sentence 4 is considered irrelevant because "urging the reader to do something [...] is not expected given the writing topic" (p. 115).

As is noticeable, underlying factors creating these coherence breaks in students' writings seem to be comparable to those of L1-derived coherence features in RAS by Japanese researchers shown in section 3.2. In both cases, writers do not seem to establish an explicit link between a claim or main idea and the information presented as a justification ground. The use of inadequate

or insufficient ideas to support the main idea identified by O'Brien (1995) seems to be comparable to an underlying factor of why L1-derived features in RAS shown in section 3.2.1 prove discordant with English coherence conventions. The writers of these RAS make a claim that does not seem explicitly valid in view of the information presented as a justification ground (e.g., making a claim based on speculations drawn from findings of a previous study, not from the findings themselves). Likewise, the insertion of an irrelevant idea as a source of coherence break in students' writings exemplified by Skoufaki (2020) appears to be analogous to a factor of L1-derived features in RAS shown in section 3.2.2. These RA writers present information that does not seem explicitly relevant as a ground to justify a claim (e.g., claiming the significance of the study based on a topic hardly discussed in the study).

4. Conclusions

The present study used RST to analyse coherence features of the discussion sections of English and Japanese RAS authored by Japanese researchers in the field of English language education. The analysis has shown that L1-derived coherence features most frequently identified in RAS by Japanese researchers are comparable to those of coherence breaks in students' English writings reported by previous studies. This finding could indicate that these L1 coherence features, if used in English academic writing in different contexts, may be identified as writing problems especially by readers familiar with English coherence conventions. Therefore, although it has been claimed that L1 rhetorical features in EAL writing ought to be viewed as acceptable (e.g., Mur-Dueñas, 2015; Lorés-Sanz, 2016), this might not necessarily apply in the case of these coherence features in RAS by Japanese writers identified in the present analyses. As such, the following implications can be drawn for those involved in the education of English academic writing in Japan. Although making a claim or deduction based on the information not explicitly valid or relevant to the claim or deduction may be acceptable in Japanese writing culture, even in academic writing, this might not be so in the case of English academic writing. The use of such L1 features should thus be considered as a potential factor to create non-standard coherence features in English writing that can be identified as writing problems.

Considering the limited data set and scope of the present research, more research needs to be done to explore the acceptability of L1 rhetorical

features in EAL writing. In particular, more attention should be paid to coherence, as it has been indicated as a key element in English academic writing that has a significant impact on the readability of a text but yet as a major problem area of EAL writers (e.g., Basturkmen & von Randow, 2014). It is recommended that future studies adopt approaches by which they can examine how the influence of L1 writing culture manifests itself in coherence features of EAL writing as well as identify which L1-related features constitute acceptable elements or potential writing problems. The findings will provide additional empirical data by which we can further consider how L1-related coherence features of EAL writers should be conceptualised and assessed and how coherence should be taught to EAL writers.

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Appendix

Definitions of relations referred to in this study (Mann & Taboada, 2023)

Nuclear-Satellite relations			
Relation	Constraints on N or S	Constraints on N+S	Intention of W
Background	R won't comprehend N sufficiently before reading text of S	S increases the ability of R to comprehend an element in N	R's ability to comprehend N increases
Concession	W has positive regard for N / W is not claiming that S does not hold;	W acknowledges a potential or apparent incompatibility between N and S; recognizing the compatibility between N and S increases R's positive regard for N	R's positive regard for the situation presented in N is increased
Elaboration	None	S presents additional detail about the situation or some element of subject matter which is presented in N or inferentially accessible in N in one or more of the ways listed below. In the list, if N presents the first member of any pair, then S includes the second: set :: member abstraction :: instance whole :: part process :: step object :: attribute generalization :: specific	R recognizes S as providing additional detail for N. R identifies the element of subject matter for which detail is provided.
Evidence	R might not believe N to a degree satisfactory to W / R believes S or will find it credible	R's comprehending S increases R's belief of N	R's belief in N is increased
Interpretation	None	S relates N to a framework of ideas not involved in N itself and not concerned with W's positive regard	R recognizes that S relates the situation presented in N to a framework of ideas not involved in the knowledge presented in N itself
Justify	None	R's comprehending S increases R's readiness to accept W's right to present	R's readiness to accept W's right to present N is increased

Multinuclear relations		
Relation	Constraints on each pair of N	Intention of W
List	None	R recognizes the comparability of linked items
Sequence	There is a succession relationship between the situations in the nuclei	R recognizes the succession relationships among the nuclei

Note. W=Writer, R=Reader, S=Satellite, N=Nucleus.