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**Author:** Brown, J.D.

**Title:** Using Rhetorical Structure Theory for contrastive analysis at the micro and macro levels of discourse: An investigation of Japanese EFL learners' and native-English speakers' writing

**Issue Date:** 2019-03-12
Chapter 2 | Literature Review

Introduction
In this chapter, I examine the existing literature related to contrastive rhetoric. I begin with a discussion of contrastive rhetoric by examining its origin and addressing its criticisms. This is followed by a discussion of its contributions to the fields of L2 writing and rhetoric. I then move on to argue that, when considered in tandem with Clark’s (1985) Common Ground (CG) theory, the cogency of viewing contrastive rhetoric as an approach concerned with communication becomes evident. More importantly, however, I see the juxtaposition of contrastive rhetoric with the theoretical framework of CG as the best way to ensure its full effectiveness.

Following the synopsis of contrastive rhetoric, I proceed to look at contrastive rhetorical studies from over the years that followed Kaplan's original study. According to Silva (1993), “L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways” (p. 669), and, as a result, contrastive rhetorical studies have attempted to investigate all of these differences (see, for example, Beare & Bourdages, 2007; Bitchener & Bastukman, 2006; Crossley & McNamara, 2009; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Kormos, 2011; Yang, Lu, & Weigle, 2015). A number of studies have shown clearly that the quality of L2 writing is assessed on, among other things, discourse structure and organization (Hinkel, 2002). As these studies make up an insurmountable portion of the literature, I maintain my focus on the studies that are most relevant to my particular study—contrastive studies between Japanese and English. Even this portion of the literature, however, is quite large and covers a wide spectrum of issues, including the composing process (see Brooks, 1985; Cumming, 1989; Raimes, 1987; Victori, 1999; Wang & Wen, 2002), feedback (see Ferris, 2002, 2003; Reid, 1994; Saito, 1994), instruction (see Baroudy, 2008; Chen, 2005; Hirose, 2014), and writer characteristics (see Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Sasaki, 2000; Victori, 1999). A large majority of contrastive studies between the languages of Japanese and English, however, has maintained its focus on the written text. As this particular study concerns itself solely with the written text and no other area, the literature discussed is limited to those with this primary focus.
After the examination of existing literature, I go on to discuss the findings and the contributions these studies have made to our understanding of the fields of Japanese discourse and L2 writing, which I believe to be nearly the entire body of literature on contrastive studies of Japanese and English written texts conducted to date. It should be noted that there are seemingly few recent studies conducted in this area. As will be shown, the majority are from the 1980s and 90s, with only a handful conducted within the last decade or so. This fact alone shows the need for more up-to-date research in this field.

Studies of Japanese writers' written texts have employed a variety of analytical techniques to investigate both linguistic and rhetorical features in their attempts to explain why Japanese English writing is often not as coherent as texts written by L1 English speakers (see Connor, 2005; Harder & Harder, 1982; Hinds, 1976; Nishihara, 1990; Rear, 2008; Yamashita, 2015). Several studies conducted have been more objective in nature by applying quantitative approaches, such as error analysis at the micro-level, i.e., linguistic features to identify linguistic phenomena that differ from that of L1 English speakers. Other studies, however, have applied more subjective approaches that have focused on rhetorical and organizational patterns.

Despite the substantial knowledge these studies have provided, they have also generated many more questions due to their suggestive and often times difficult-to-interpret results. Several issues plague the body of work done in this area. Faulty interpretation of results has sometimes led the researchers to baseless and even false assumptions. There have also been a great number of inconsistencies across the literature in terms of both design and findings. This is likely due to the fact that many studies have focused on either linguistic features or rhetorical ones. Rarely have the two been explored in tandem other than in the case of cohesion, which is not unexpected as cohesion and coherence are often regarded as a pair. However, this goes back to the issue of a faulty premise, as much research has shown the two can function independently (see Carrell, 1982; Widdowson, 1978) and even, at times, in spite of the other (see Kolln, 1999). Finally, there is the issue of rigor. Many contrastive studies conducted between Japanese and English writing simply are lacking in design. Some studies lack sufficient tertium comparationis, as termed by Connor and Moreno (2005), and thus compare data that is not comparable, e.g., texts across genres. Some results are based on simple comparisons of percentages without consideration for varying lengths of the data in corpora let alone rigid statistical analyses; still others are short on data that indicates statistically significant conclusions. In short, there are numerous discrepancies across Japanese
and English contrastive studies, which have made it difficult to effectively come to any satisfactory conclusions regarding the specific English conventions with which Japanese L2 learners struggle.

**Contrastive Rhetoric: Origin, Criticisms, & Contributions**

Contrastive rhetoric was first posited by Kaplan (1966) in his seminal work *Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education* in which he analyzed close to 600 essays and concluded that L1 English speakers write in a linear pattern (represented by a straight line) and support their theses with specific details. He contrasted this description of English rhetoric to that of rhetorical patterns found in four other “cultural thought patterns,” namely, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian. According to Kaplan, learners from each of these cultural groups produced patterns unique to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, he claimed that learners of Semitic background (e.g., Arabic) utilize a series of complex and diverse parallel structures, both positive and negative, in their paragraph development. “Oriental” learners (Kaplan’s generalized term for Chinese and Korean learners) displayed a somewhat illogical structure, circling around the topic without ever directly addressing it. Romance learners often drifted away from the main ideas of their writing and provided seemingly irrelevant descriptions. Based on these findings, Kaplan postulated that culture plays a significant role in how discourse is constructed and attributed cultural differences to the occurrence of apparent divergences between non-native English speakers’ writing, particularly speakers of languages with rhetorical traditions other than Anglo-American, and native English speakers’ writing.

Kaplan’s (1966) study in contrastive rhetoric was one of the first to explore the issue of L1 cultural identity in writing and how it may interfere with and influence L2 English writing. In his study, Kaplan describes how English native-speakers often find L2 English writing illogical, ambiguous, and sometimes incomprehensible and points to the transfer of the learner’s L1 thought patterns as the culprit. With such a contentious theory, it is no wonder then that since its introduction over half a century ago, the field of contrastive rhetoric has been bombarded with waves of dissent in academic discourse. Opponents of contrastive rhetoric claim its oversimplification of languages and cultures and overemphasis of cognitive factors at the expense of sociocultural factors is a serious point of contention (Connor, 1996; Connor & Johns, 1990; Kubota, 1997; Matsuda, 2001). Much of this criticism is due to its association with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which has, for the most part, been dismissed by scholars.
Origin of Contrastive Rhetoric

The basic foundation or premise of contrastive rhetoric can be traced back to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Connor, 1996, 1997; Kubota & Lehner, 2004), also known as the Whorfian hypothesis, which puts forth two main theses: 1) structural differences between languages are paralleled by nonlinguistic cognitive differences; and 2) language “is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but is itself a shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s meaningful activity . . . ” (Whorf, 1956, p. 212). In other words, language is not simply a discursive construction of the world and its perceptions but in fact shapes those perceptions.

Linguistic determinism

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis thus makes two assertions—one of linguistic determinism and one of linguistic relativity (sometimes referred to as the “strong” and “weak” versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). As mentioned earlier, over the years this “strong” version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (i.e., language dictates thought) has come to be viewed as erroneous (see Clark & Clark, 1979; Connor, 1996; Devitt & Sterelny, 1987; Pinker, 1994). One of the strongest opponents of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Pinker (1994), for example, points to a range of evidence against linguistic determinism, such as the misrepresentation of the language used to support the hypothesis in the first place (the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was largely based on Whorf’s findings that Hopi does not have any words for time, which was later to be found inaccurate), the translatability of languages, i.e., a language can be translated into a whole other separate, non-related language, and thought is possible without language (e.g., babies think before acquiring language; animals show evidence of thoughtful behavior), and language often is an inadequate mode for expressing thought (e.g., lack of words to articulate exactly what one is thinking). Clark (1996) echoes many of Pinker’s objections and sums up nicely why Whorf’s premise is so misleading: “Whorf took for granted that language is primarily an instrument of thought” (p. 325). It is not the other way around, i.e., thought is not an instrument of language. Connor (1996) further argues that linguistic determinism suggests L2 fluency is unattainable as it assumes that one’s L1 governs his/her thought, which would consequently form cultural and/or linguistic bias within the learner from which he/she would be unable to escape, resulting in the obstruction of acquiring fluency in the L2. As this is clearly not the case (many people become entirely fluent in a second language), and for the previous reasons listed, linguistic determinism has been largely rejected by scholars, and, due to its association to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, contrastive rhetoric is often charged with the same offense, i.e., determinism, and repudiated as well (see Zamel, 1983).
Linguistic relativity
As Clark (1996), argues, it is one thing to say that language encodes different points of view; it is another to say speakers are “forced” to think in ways dictated by these differences. And, like Clark, there have been those who have rejected the notion of linguistic determinism yet support a “weaker” version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (often referred to as linguistic relativity) that suggests that though language may not determine thought, it does appear to influence it (Gumperz & Levinson, 1996), and it is to this assumption, that is, linguistic relativity, to which contrastive rhetoric adheres.

It is important to distinguish between linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity because the former has essentially been snubbed while the latter has garnered significant support from research over the past two decades or so (see Boroditsky, 2001; Casasanto, 2008; Hunt & Agnoli, 1991; Lucy, 1997; Lupyan, 2012; Pederson, 1995; Slobin, 1996; Wolff & Holmes, 2011; Zlatev & Blomberg, 2015). These studies offer findings in direct conflict with one of Pinker’s main criticisms of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, i.e., the translatability of language, by pointing to the notion that though all languages may be translatable there is often times something lost in translation due to the fact that a concept that is easily and naturally expressed in one language is difficult to convey if not entirely insignificant and/or unacknowledged in another, e.g., the linguistically expressed concern for fit over location of an item in Korean (Choi & Bowerman, 1991), the lack of counterfactuals in Chinese (Hunt & Agnoli, 1991), the definite eyewitness tense and inferential hearsay past tense of Turkish (Aksu-Koc & Slobin, 1986).

Because linguistic relativity is the cornerstone on which Kaplan constructed his notion of contrastive rhetoric, it is important to recognize that though empirical evidence has yet to entirely settle the matter on the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Zlatev & Blomberg, 2015), these studies and others do appear to point to the possibility of the influence of language on thought and thereby offer a reason to give credence to linguistic relativity, and thereby lend plausibility to Kaplan’s contrastive rhetoric. But contrastive rhetoric has received plenty of criticism for reasons beyond its connection to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

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3 There is some debate over whether or not contrastive rhetoric is actually rooted in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see Ying, 2000; 2001), but the majority of scholars seem to agree that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was an important antecedent to Kaplan’s view.
Criticisms of Contrastive Rhetoric
Contrastive rhetoric emerged from the idea that each language and culture has rhetorical conventions unique to itself. Taking notice of how L2 English learners of different L1s write in different patterns, Kaplan theorized that there is a link between logic/thought patterns and writing structure. There are those who have criticized contrastive rhetoric and its underlying theory for what it has resulted in: product-centered teaching in the L2 writing classroom. They have argued that due to contrastive rhetoric’s focus on the written text, there is a trend among language teachers to overemphasize the end product (see Leki, 1991; Silva, 1990, 1993).

The fact of the matter is, however, that contrastive rhetoric’s purpose—to seek out and identify written features with which L2 learners struggle—can only be achieved by investigating the texts themselves. But contrastive rhetoric’s focus on the written product is not intended to suggest the text should be emphasized over all other writing characteristics. Rather, contrastive rhetoric is claiming that by exploring the text itself, teachers can pinpoint the specific, problematic areas that could account for why L2 learners’ writing is perceived as illogical and ambiguous relative to that of L1 speakers’ writing. By helping learners to be aware of what is expected in the end product, teachers can help them in other dimensions of writing as well.

The entire concept of contrastive rhetoric is then based on a two-step approach: 1) Discerning the differences and patterns of L2 idiosyncratic rhetorical forms in comparison to those of the target language, followed by 2) teaching L2 learners how to meet the conventions and rhetorical expectations of the target language based on those discernments. Contrastive rhetoric is therefore meant to inform teaching practice but not shape it. It is, in a way, like a crystal ball that foresees the pitfalls that await in the learners’ end products if they are not addressed early on in the classroom. What teachers do with this clairvoyant insight is then left up to them.

Additionally, many empirical studies have questioned the “conventional wisdom” of contrastive rhetoric (see Kubota, 1998a, 1998b, 2014; Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Shi & Kubota, 2007). Recent contrastive rhetorical studies have, for example, criticized Kaplan’s oversimplification of languages and cultures and overemphasis of cognitive factors at the expense of sociocultural factors as preferred rhetoric (Connor, 1996; Kubota, 1997; Matsuda, 2001; Spack, 1997). Spack (1997), for instance, argues that contrastive rhetoric ignores the writer’s unique individual identity in favor of a generalized large cultural identity. Criticisms such as these have given attention to genre and the role it plays in unifying the nature of written discourse patterns across languages (see Bazerman, 1985, 1988; Hyland, 2004; Lopez, 1982; Moreno, 1997; Najjar, 1990; Reid, 1988; Swales, 1990). Such studies have indicated
that writing is much more complex than contrastive rhetoric gives it credit for and involves a multiplicity of rhetorical forms and dynamic styles, yet still functions within purposeful rhetorical conventions, education policies, and politics, all of which are being influenced by an ever-globalizing society (Kubota, 2014).

It should be noted, however, that over the years Kaplan has addressed much of these criticisms and has since modified his position (see 1987). Kaplan now accepts that all cultural thought patterns exist in all languages, including English. Therefore, as Kaplan (1987) himself has claimed, rhetorical variation across cultures is not necessarily a reflection of culturally-defined thought patterns, but he still has not backed down on the pedagogical usefulness of contrastive rhetoric:

In fact, it is now my opinion that all of the various rhetorical modes identified . . . are possible in any language . . . The issue is that each language has certain clear preferences, so that while all forms are possible, all forms do not occur with equal frequency or in parallel distribution. (p. 10)

Intercultural rhetoric
Due to such criticisms, Connor (1996, 2008, 2011) has proposed an alternative to contrastive rhetoric that she has termed “intercultural rhetoric,⁴” which gives greater consideration for sociocultural factors by viewing conventions of English academic discourse as “socially produced in particular communities” (Hyland & Salager-Meyer, 2008, p. 297). Connor contends that rhetoric must be investigated without oversimplified generalizations and static descriptions and, accordingly, argues for the importance of considering language and writing as a social interaction within particular contexts (much like Fairclough, 1992; Hyland, 2004; Moreno, 1997). Connor, however, elaborates further than others who have made similar claims. She suggests that because there is an “accommodation” that occurs between the L2 English learner and the L1 English speaker during an interaction, it is clear that intercultural communication is “not one of assimilation by non-native English speakers” (2011, p. 7). According to Connor, these two notions, that is, a) the study of rhetoric must take into consideration both the social and cultural contexts, and b) communication across cultures does not demand that one speaker assimilates into the language and expectations of the other, distinguish intercultural rhetoric from contrastive rhetoric and make it the better option of the two.

⁴ Enkvist (1997) suggested that contrastive rhetoric and intercultural rhetoric are interchangeable terms. For Connor, however, it is important to distinguish between the two.
Critical contrastive rhetoric
Beyond its supposed tendency to reduce language and culture to static constructs, contrastive rhetoric has also faced more serious (and, perhaps, hyperbolic) accusations of stereotyping, Othering, and linguistic imperialism (see Kubota, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2014; Pennycook, 1998). Kubota and Lehner (2004) claim that contrastive rhetoric is a byproduct of “the neocolonial expansion of American economic and political power that attracted a great number of international and immigrant English learners” (p. 18). Pennycook (1998) takes it one step further, suggesting that Kaplan’s view presents L2 English learners as primitive beings in need of enlightenment. According to Pennycook (1998), contrastive rhetoric “reproduces . . . the Other as deviant and . . . as locked in ancient and unchanging modes of thought and action” (p. 189).

Due to such criticisms, some scholars have called for alternative conceptual frameworks that take into account these various issues of politics and power. Critical contrastive rhetoric, proposed by Kubota and Lehner (2004), is one such framework (Connor’s previously discussed intercultural rhetoric is another). Echoing Pennycook (1998), Kubota and Lehner find fault with Kaplan’s contrastive rhetoric as they feel its “assimilation and adherence to a perceived, monolithic, hegemonic English written rhetoric” (p. 22) acts as a “colonial construction of cultural dichotomies” (p. 7). Critical contrastive rhetoric, on the other hand, reconceptualizes cultural difference in rhetoric and provides for the variety of language and culture as well as for the uniqueness of individual identity.

Orientalism
Most of the points of contention made that have demanded and brought about reimagined forms of contrastive rhetoric are based in ideological and theoretical notions much like those made by Edward Said (1978) in his now classic work Orientalism, (Atkinson, 2012; Li, 2014, Walker, 2010) in which he described Western scholars of Asian Studies as Napoleon-like conquerors seeking conquest of the Orient by liberating it from its antiquated ways and revitalizing it through what they saw as Europeans’ superior intellect. These scholars promoted the spread of Oriental societies throughout the Anglo-Saxon sphere and the establishment of Oriental Studies departments in “every major European university” (Said, 1978, p. 211)—all supposed evidence of the Westerners’ profound knowledge and grasp of everything “Oriental.” But Said unashamedly pointed out the blatant ethnocentric bias and the essentialization of the exotic Other that was principle to these activities, forcing scholars to reexamine the stereotypes and ethnocentric biases they projected in attempts to describe and teach Asian cultures.
Much like Said’s accusations of these Western scholars, contrastive rhetoric’s critics consider it and its proponents guilty of continuing colonial expansionism, but not by way of ships, oceans, and settlements, rather through the English classroom and what they see as the reducing of L2 learners’ cultural and individual identities to that of simply non-English. Additionally, it would not be too far a stretch to say that Kaplan’s lumping together of Chinese and Korean writing into a single group that he unfortunately characterized as “Oriental” contributed to these “Orientalism” accusations.

Theory, ideology, & pedagogy
When these various criticisms, which have called for new alternatives and the renaming of contrastive rhetoric, are carefully assessed, however, it is clear, as Walker (2010) asserts, that they can be attributed to mistrust, or, at the very least, apprehension of contrastive rhetoric’s motives rather than true Orientalist-type exploitation and colonialism. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that some of the arguments that opponents of contrastive rhetoric make are theoretically sound. Many studies, for example, have clearly pointed to the fact that cultural and social practices and preferences shape writing, and, now, due to these insights, writing is generally accepted as a social action within particular contexts (Fairclough, 1992). I am not contesting this. However, critics such as Connor, Kubota, Kubota and Lehner, Pennycook and others appear to be assuming much about the motives of Kaplan and other supporters of contrastive rhetoric and fail to realize or choose to ignore that the purpose of contrastive rhetoric was and always has been pedagogical (Li, 2008). Nothing more.

Therefore, contrastive rhetoric is an attempt to help L2 writers, not to disparage other languages or inflate the English language. Péry-Woodley (1990) goes even further, not only stating that contrastive rhetoric does not promote such ideologies but arguing that it in fact is the “best antidote” (p. 143) to overcoming them and ridding research and teachers of ethno/lingocentricism altogether.

Position & power
Finally, it is important to recognize that much of the aforementioned criticisms, such as the Orientalist-type essentialization of the non-Western Other, can be traced back to its traditional approach that was only concerned with other languages (often lumping distinctly different language groups, such as Chinese and Korean, together) compared to English. Critics were quick to point fingers at this approach, aversely claiming that in doing so contrastive rhetoric positions English as the pinnacle of writing to which all other languages should be compared. One
such criticism comes from Kowal (1998) who asserts that Kaplan’s view presents the English language as superior to other languages and thereby insinuates that L2 English learners are second-rate to native English speakers: “Kaplan puts the ‘native reader’—and the English teacher, by proxy—in the position of authority, and of power” (p. 136).

It should be noted, however, that though the context in which contrastive rhetoric was generated was that of EFL/ESL (again, for pedagogical purposes), there is no reason that it cannot be applied to non-English situations nor that Kaplan ever indicated or implied that it should not. This is because if we are to strip contrastive rhetoric down to its nuts and bolts we will be able to clearly see that it is about understanding and identifying the differences that exist between learners’ L1s and L2s and has never suggested that one language, culture, or thought pattern is preferred above another (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Contributions of Contrastive Rhetoric
Since Kaplan put forth his initial hypothesis, there has been a great increase in awareness of and interest in rhetorical frameworks outside of Western cultures and languages as evidenced by the impetus of succeeding studies conducted on non-English rhetoric. For example, one of the better known of these studies comes from Robert T. Oliver (1971). In Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China, Oliver explored Chinese and Indian communication and culture in relation to philosophy and social customs based on the premise that even though “rhetoric may be universal in the sense that philosophy or religion are universals,” (p. 7) rhetoric is unique to the culture in which it arises, just as philosophical systems and religions are. In a similar fashion, Smith (1971) sought to develop an African concept of rhetoric separate and distinct from that of the Western rhetorical tradition by drawing from traditional African philosophy.

There have also been contrastive rhetorical studies conducted that gave no consideration to the English language or English rhetoric whatsoever, such as Abbott (1993) who investigated ancient Mayans’ rhetoric in comparison with classical Spanish rhetorical theory. Other studies have looked to non-Western rhetorical patterns in an effort to better understand rhetoric as a whole. Hatim (1990), for example, investigated Arabic rhetoric and its models of argumentation in hopes of bringing insight toward a “theory of text types” (p. 47) that would be useful for and applicable to a non-language and non-culture specific rhetoric.
More recently, writing pedagogy research has sought to utilize non-English rhetorical approaches in the English composition classroom. In his 2011 study, Cole implemented a Native American rhetorical device into the English composition classroom and found that students' writing and thinking skills improved. Furthermore, Cole claimed that studying non-Western rhetorical strategies helps to reposition Western rhetoric “as an object of analysis and critique itself” (p. 122), which would effectively aid researchers in breaking free from the pitfalls of ethnocentricity. This is clearly in accord with Péry-Woodley’s (1990) “antidote” praise of contrastive rhetoric.

Therefore, regardless of the allegations of determinism, essentialism, linguistic imperialism and the like, contrastive rhetoric has survived. Not in spite of its faults but ironically and largely because of them. Owing to contrastive rhetoric, it is now understood that writing requires not only awareness of but also recognition that there is a set of rules that govern how ideas are presented, supported, explained, and more, and that this set of rules extends far beyond grammatical structures (although exactly from where these set of rules are derived is still up for debate). It is a social interaction that is far more complex than ever could have been realized without contrastive rhetoric shedding light on its intricacies.

Furthermore, Kaplan’s first observation has since had an immeasurable impact on L2 writing pedagogy—its initial purpose (Hinkel, 2002). In his humble and admittedly, at times, flawed attempt to understand rhetoric and its patterns beyond the English language, Kaplan has provided a great deal of insight into L2 writing and has contributed immensely to L2 writing pedagogy as is evidenced by a more discipline-oriented approach that is most common in textbooks and classrooms today (Silva, 1990). For this alone Kaplan should be commended. However, contrastive rhetoric has done much more for the field than this. It has both brought forth and contributed to the argument, and this assent and dissent in scientific discussion is the stuff of which knowledge is made (Harris, 2002).

Kaplan and his hypothesis are what brought us to where we are now, which is recognition of L2 writers’ struggles and plausible postulations for why it is so difficult for them to master the complex conventions of writing beyond the linguistic ones. There are multiplicities of factors clashing about in the learner’s psyche both obstructing and contributing to his/her writing that include but are not limited to linguistic, cultural, sociocultural, cognitive, stylistic, political, and contextual factors. Contrastive rhetoric has helped us get to the point where we are now at least aware of these factors and has brought with it a newfound concern
for rhetorical traditions and languages outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere. Therefore, when carefully contemplated, Kubota and Lehner’s (2004) “critical contrastive rhetoric” and Connor’s (1996) “intercultural rhetoric” do not really offer anything more than what contrastive rhetoric has already given us. In fact, it seems such terms are essentially arguing semantics, as even Connor began the focus of her argument with the name: “intercultural rhetoric is the more appropriate name for this field of study” (p. 1).

Over the years, it is clear that contrastive rhetoric has learned much from its criticisms and, like a good wine, has become more refined with age. No matter what one labels it, contrastive rhetoric is now not only an acceptable approach to understanding differences in languages, which makes it useful for helping L2 learners become more proficient in the target language; it is, as Péry-Woodley (1990) and Cole (2011) claim, the “antidote” for ethno/lingocentricity. This antidote comes in the form of an awareness and appreciation for non-English rhetorical patterns and conventions that contrastive rhetoric has encouraged, which, in turn, help teachers, students, and researchers alike to reflect on their understanding and assumptions of their own languages and cultures and move on to being sincerely concerned with others, not necessarily in comparison to their own but for what those languages on their own have to offer.

Contrastive Rhetoric & Common Ground
Clearly, contrastive rhetoric brings a lot to the proverbial table; however, contrastive rhetoric remains legitimate and relevant even beyond its pedagogical purposes and contributions to the field. This is made particularly evident when it is juxtaposed with Clark’s (1985) Common Ground (CG) theory. Interpreting contrastive rhetoric within the theoretical framework of CG dismantles the criticisms that have apotheosized it to a collection of complex ideologies by affixing it to something much more universal and heterogeneous—communication. In doing so, the attacks that have claimed contrastive rhetoric to be rooted in stereotypes and bias and even redolent of English superiority over other languages and cultures dissipate into a thin vapor of little consequence.

Common ground
A concept proposed by Clark (1985), CG theory refers to the shared knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions that are believed to be essential for successful communicative interaction. Clark argues that without mutuality it is not possible for two individuals to understand one another or have a meaningful interaction. This stance is further supported by Duranti (1997) who argues that even “simple”
exchanges, such as greetings, are arranged within specific and complex prior contexts and experiences, situational contexts, as well as cultural models and are dependent on the participants’ shared knowledge on which each bases his/her assumptions. These assumptions affect the choices the participants make in their interaction with one another as they look toward 1) precedents that help to inform them of appropriate choices in specific contexts and then 2) conventions that the participants have acquired by being a part of and interacting within that discourse community over a period of time. These “coordination devices,” as Clark calls them, help each participant involved in a communicative interaction to coordinate the communication in such a way that he/she has “good reason to believe,” that is, assume, the other can, with ease, accurately interpret the intended meaning of his/her utterance.

Since precedent and convention play such important roles in communication, it is safe to conclude that understanding is much easier to achieve when the participants come from similar backgrounds (Gumperz, 1982; Kecskes, 2014; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Tannen, 2005), that is, understanding is more likely to be achieved between those who share similar prior experiences and cultural contexts since there is a much greater likelihood that these participants will share a wider range of knowledge that overlap to create the participants’ common ground. This process or “coordination” cannot be achieved without establishing commonalities (Clark, 1996), and these “commonalities” rely heavily on assumptions based on precedent and conventions. This is where the problem arises for L2 learners.

Unlike L1 speakers who have shared prior experience, i.e., “precedent,” in the language to be able to effectively identify and apply conventions to meet the expectations of other L1 speakers, the L2 learner lacks this ability, not because he/she is inept or even negatively influenced by his/her native language, but simply due to the fact that the “sum of [the L2 learner’s and L1 speaker’s] mutual knowledge, beliefs and suppositions” (Clark, 1996, p. 327) do not add up to an equal equation, or, in other words, do not meet to converge and establish a broad enough common ground on which the L2 learner can coordinate an effective communicative outcome with the L1 speaker. And, since success of a communicative outcome is dependent on the participants’ mutual understanding of the circumstances surrounding the perceived context (Clark, 1996; Stalnaker 2002), there is very little chance the L2 learner and L1 speaker will generate understanding between one another without negotiating a common ground, often referred to as emergent common ground (Kecskes, 2014).
While it may be possible for a common ground to emerge through conversation, the same cannot be said in the writing context. Accordingly, it is of the utmost importance that L2 learners are provided with the knowledge they need to establish commonalities with speakers of the target language so that coordination in language use can be achieved and common ground established. If we are to carefully examine contrastive rhetoric and Kaplan’s intention behind it in tandem with CG’s stance on communication, it becomes clear that contrastive rhetoric is essentially a valid theory of communication that had the regrettable fortune of being branded as some kind of pedagogical approach entrenched in ideologies its architect Kaplan never claimed and the theory itself never attested to. Accordingly, errors made by L2 writers should be understood as not simply manifested “deviations from native-speaker norms” (Kusuyama, 2006, p. 41) but more as a hindrance to fundamental communication.

In direct opposition to its criticisms, contrastive rhetoric seeks not to purport the superiority of English and neither does it attempt to revive Western imperial expansionism nor has it ever attempted to do so. It may be said that the original notion behind contrastive rhetoric, i.e., culture influences thought patterns, and therefore can account for differences of rhetorical patterns used by L2 English learners, is overreaching in its endeavor to explain why L2 learners fail to produce coherent and logical texts. However, the crux of contrastive rhetoric is really just about helping L2 learners become more effective writers in the target language by bringing “precedent” to the forefront and identifying the conventions shared amongst L1 speakers. In doing so, contrastive rhetoric shows how the choices/assumptions the L2 writer makes do not mesh with the expectations and assumptions of L1 speakers, which results in a coordination problem, or a perceived illogical text by the L1 speaker. This is exactly what Clark (1996) discusses in his assessment of what constitutes communication: “Communication is built on commonalities of thought between people and taken for granted in the communities in which each language is used” (p. 325).

When looking back at Kaplan and his original notion of contrastive rhetoric, it seems he and his theory were both and always have been concerned with the “commonalities of thought.” These commonalities, which are indeed “taken for granted” is what causes the most trouble for L2 writers, as Li (2014), explains: “. . . what [is] hardest for an outsider [are] . . . those hidden, unarticulated values about good writing” (p. 105). It is those “hidden, unarticulated values about good writing” that are the commonalities taken for granted which result in the “outsider,” or in contrastive rhetoric’s case, the L2 English writer, being unable to
meet the assumptions and expectations of the L1 speaker. The pedagogical purpose of contrastive rhetoric is thus to expose the commonalities of thoughts and help the teacher to recognize the differences between those commonalities that the L2 writer brings with him/her when writing in English and those commonalities of the L1 speaker which often do not meet to establish a common ground between the two. In fact, this appears to be what Kaplan (1966) was trying to initially convey in his hypothesis, as he himself stated:

This discussion is not intended to offer any criticism of other existing paragraph developments; rather it is intended only to demonstrate that paragraph developments other than those normally regarded as desirable in English do exist . . . the teacher must be himself aware of these differences, and he must make these differences overtly apparent to his students.” (p. 14)

Thus, contrastive rhetoric is simply about the investigation of commonalities across varying cultural contexts in an effort to help writers find common ground with their readers. Kaplan had it right when he postulated that culture creates differences, but he aggrandized culture by implying that it is the sole cause of these differences. The reasons for these differences extend far beyond Kaplan’s simplistic construct of culture to encompass the act of communication not only across cultures but within cultures, subcultures, discourse communities, and even between two individuals in a specific context and situation (Kubota, 1997). The main criticism of contrastive rhetoric has been that it has not taken these dimensions into consideration. Others have attempted to rectify this, such as Connor’s (1996) intercultural rhetoric and Kubota’s and Lehner’s (2004) critical contrastive rhetoric as discussed earlier, but, in the end, a much more practical approach than a reimagined and/or renamed contrastive rhetoric is to simply take it for what it is at its roots: an approach to help L2 learners reach a common ground with L1 speakers.

Veritably, Kaplan overstepped with his initial notion, and, much like his antecedent Whorf, “took for granted that language is primarily an instrument of thought” (Clark, 1996, p. 325). But, as has been shown, his premise is still very much rooted in basic communication. Thus, when contrastive rhetoric is examined in close proximity with Clark’s CG theory, the need to redefine or reimagine it becomes unnecessary, because in one fell swoop CG takes into account all of the concerns contrastive rhetoric’s critics have expressed and essentially makes each one of them a moot point. Thus, despite some of the questionable assumptions associated with
contrastive rhetoric and the studies that have been based on those assumptions, especially in its formative years, contrastive rhetoric, in the name of CG, can confidently deny the majority of the sins of which it has been accused.

Contrastive Studies Between Japanese & English
Since Kaplan’s work, contrastive studies between the languages of English and Japanese have attempted to understand why, in general, English texts written by Japanese are often times experienced as less coherent by L1 speakers of English (see Connor, 2005; Harder & Harder, 1982; Hinds, 1976; Nishihara, 1990; Rear, 2008; Yamashita, 2015). As coherence can be established through the effective employment of both rhetorical and linguistic features working together (Carrell, 1982; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Reid, 1988), contrastive studies between English and Japanese have sought weaknesses of and errors in Japanese L2 learners’ English writing that focus on these features within the texts.

Like Kaplan, the majority of studies has looked at the L1, i.e., Japanese, as the possible origin of observed errors in Japanese English writing and have employed a variety of analytical techniques that run along a continuum from the more objective and quantifiable measures concerned with grammatical and idiomatic errors at the sentence level to the more subjective and interpretive patterns of rhetorical and organizational features. The next section will begin with a look at studies that have defined and described the common rhetorical and organizational patterns of Japanese L1 and L2 English writing. Traditional and contemporary views of Japanese rhetoric derived from these studies will also be discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the sentence-level and other textual features that have been identified in the literature over the years.

Organization of Written Discourse
Past studies in contrastive rhetoric have found that, in general, L2 writers organize and structure their texts differently than NESs (Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Mauranen, 1992; Ostler, 1987; Silva, 1993; Staples & Reppen, 2016). Many of these studies suggest L1 influence/interference brings about the distinct rhetorical, organizational/structural differences in the L2 writers’ texts when compared to texts written by NESs. Other studies, however, have focused more on the linguistic proficiency of the L2 learners in an attempt to explain such differences and the obstacles they face writing in the L2. Tillema (2012), for example, argued that the linguistic challenges posed to L2 writers impacts their cognitive functions, stating that writing in the L2 can “constrict working memory resources, leaving fewer resources for conceptual and regulatory activities” (p. 3). Among other things, these activities include structuring of a text.
Thus, the literature in this field generally views errors in organization and structure as either a result of the L1 and/or cultural background of the L2 writer or of limitations in linguistic proficiency, which affects not only the text itself but also the process in which it is produced. With regard to Japanese L2 writers (as stated a moment ago), much of the literature has tended to lean towards L1/cultural influence in an effort to explain anomalies in English texts written by Japanese.

Rhetorical & structural patterns
One of the earlier and perhaps most notable scholars in the field of contrastive rhetoric is John Hinds who analyzed discourse organization and features of several Asian languages, greatly contributing to our understanding of Japanese rhetoric in particular. Hinds’ assumptions about Japanese rhetoric have remained prevalent fixtures in the literature and have been adopted by a number of researchers in an effort to understand and explain why English texts written by Japanese L2 learners often appear, to the English-speaking reader, intuitive (see Atkinson, 1997; Ballard & Clanchy, 1984; Clyne, 1994; Doi, 1986; Harder, 1983), ambiguous/vague/indirect (Davies, 1998; Kunihiro, 1976; Harder, 1984; Harder & Harder, 1982; Nishihara, 1990; Rear, 2008; Reischauer, 1988), illogical (Connor, 2005; Doi, 1986; McVeigh, 2002; Oi & Kamimura, 1998), and loosely organized (Harder, 1983; Shimozaki, 1988). More specifically, Hinds’ theories have been used to justify conclusions of intralingual errors identified within the rhetorical and organizational patterns of English texts written by Japanese. Thus, no discussion of contrastive studies between Japanese and English would be complete without first introducing Hinds’ contributions.

Traditional views of Japanese rhetoric
Hinds (1976, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1987, 1990) concluded that the Japanese language has a number of rhetorical/organizational patterns that differ from those found in English. In one of his most influential studies, after investigating a seven-paragraph piece translated from Japanese from the 天声人語 (Tensei Jingo) column of a reputable national Japanese newspaper called 朝日新聞 (Asahi Shimbun), Hinds (1983a, 1983b) identified the 転 (ten) of 起承転結 (ki-shō-ten-ketsu)\(^5\) as an “intrusion” and an “unexpected element” in what he described as an “otherwise normal progression of ideas” (p. 188). Hinds concluded that Japanese writing demonstrates a digressive element in its structure and claimed this type of rhetorical structure to be commonplace in Japanese.

\(^5\) The term used to describe the traditional structure and development of Japanese prose adopted from the Chinese qi cheng zhuang he and first introduced into Japanese literature by the Japanese poet Rai Sanyo (Nishioka & Wada, 1995).
Hinds further characterized Japanese writing as inductive and reader-responsible and argued that such differences are related to expectations concerning the extent of reader involvement. He proposed that English language cultures place the burden of clarity chiefly on the writer, while Japanese requires a more active reader role. As a result, Japanese writing appears to be vague and indirect. This belief of Japanese rhetoric has in fact enjoyed strong support by numerous others in the field (see McClure, 2000; Yamada, 1997; Akasu & Asao 1993; Day, 1996; Doi 1996; Gudykunst & Nishida 1993; Okabe, 1983) and has been linked to traditional Japanese values, such as the importance of preserving harmony (wa) and group orientation (Nakane, 1970; Morita & Ishihara, 1989) and to the highly contextualized nature of Japanese communication (Arima, 1989; Ikegami, 1989). The perceptions of Japanese rhetoric as inductive, digressive, and reader-responsible (vague/indirect) have since appeared, sometimes explicitly and other times implicitly, throughout contrastive studies concerned with Japanese and English.

In one of the more influential contrastive studies between English and Japanese, Oi (1986) looked at both linguistic and rhetorical/organizational features in Japanese writing and Japanese English writing. Oi found that the Japanese writing went from the specific to the general, i.e., followed an inductive reasoning pattern, and finished the argument in a “different direction,” substantiating Hinds’ earlier observations.

In their investigation of 130 essays written by Japanese university students in the United States (ESL context), Achiba and Kuromiya (1983) found that while the learners writing in Japanese adopted the traditional inductive approach, there was a tendency to apply a deductive approach in their English writing. They accounted for this by pointing towards the high contextualization of Japanese, arguing that when Japanese learners write in English, they try to write explicitly because the readers are not familiar with the way Japanese think, which leads to a deductive approach. Achiba and Kuromiya went on to explain that, in contrast, when Japanese write in Japanese, they expect the readers to take more responsibility and to infer the meaning of a text; this leads to a more inductive approach. These explanations for the phenomenon Achiba and Kuromiya observed in their study undeniably reiterate some of the traditional views of Japanese rhetoric, namely, Japanese is a highly contextualized language and its writing is reader responsible.

Kobayashi (1984) analyzed the writing of 226 Japanese university students in the United States (ESL context) and Japan (EFL context). She found the Japanese L1 and L2 writing in Japan tended to adopt inductive patterns of organization. In
their study of 30 EFL Japanese learners’ English writing, Kamimura and Oi (1998) discovered that the majority of Japanese writers employed an inductive pattern as well. O’Riordan (1999) reported on the extent of rhetorical transfer in the writing of four Japanese college students studying in the United States and found that the inductive approach was the norm in their English writing. Most recently, Yamashita (2015) identified a proclivity for irrelevant ideas, which she referred to as “coherence breaks,” in English texts written by Japanese speakers. As the term implies, these digressions resulted in what the reader experienced as breaks in the coherence of the ideas within the texts, closely resembling the digressive element of which Hinds spoke.

Kobayashi (1984), Kamimura and Oi (1998), and Yamashita (2015) have all based their final conclusions on the idea that the rhetorical and organizational anomalies detected in the English texts written by Japanese could be accounted for by the conventions and characteristics of Japanese rhetoric, which have largely been based on Hinds’ descriptions.

**Issues with the traditional view**

There is a problem, however, with many of the perceptions of Japanese rhetoric that have played influential roles in these contrastive studies’ designs. As Day (1996) argued, there are certain forms of Japanese discourse that “do not fall neatly into Western categories” (p. 3) and thus attempting to explain them in terms of English categories will result in misleading and inaccurate descriptions. Wierzbicka (1997) who has sought to understand cultures through their keywords has also argued that “one cannot clarify culture-laden words of one language in terms of culture-laden words of another” (p. 236).

Hinds himself acknowledged this shortcoming of his initial notions of Japanese rhetoric (though he never retracted his views on ki-shô-ten-ketsu pattern or the reader-responsible characteristic of Japanese writing) and attempted to rectify them by reinterpreting the inductive pattern to something he referred to as a “delayed introduction of purpose” (Hinds, 1990, p. 98), or what has become known as quasi-inductive. He acknowledged that in an attempt to describe non-English rhetorical patterns, English speakers classify these patterns according to English rhetorical concepts, e.g., general-to-specific and specific-to-general. As Hinds (1990) argued, however, such a categorization prevents English speakers from fully understanding the differences between English and other languages:
Each of the examples has a superficial rhetorical structure that approximates the
general inductive style familiar to composition teachers and students in the West.
This is a fallacious familiarity. I maintain that when English-speaking readers
recognize that a composition is not organized deductively, they categorize the
composition as inductive, thus preventing them from understanding the true
differences between competent English writing and competent writing in other
languages. I claim that the dichotomy between inductive and deductive writing is
not a valid parameter for evaluating texts across languages. (pp. 89-90)

Despite Hinds’ clarification of the inductive nature of Japanese writing, protests
against Hinds’ original descriptions of Japanese writing have persisted. Kubota
(1997), for example, pointed out that Hinds did not take into consideration genre
in his analysis and generalized the structure of newspaper articles, i.e., ki-shō-
ten-ketsu, as the typical structure in Japanese writing. Kubota argued that in
Japanese newspaper and magazine articles it is common for the writer to begin
with a “metaphoric episode instead of with the main topic” (p. 465). This could then
account for the quasi-inductive properties of the texts Hinds noticed in his study
but should not be, as Kubota cautioned, regarded as a “fixed structural principle”
(p. 465). In other words, non-deductive patterns may be typical in Japanese
journalistic writing but are not necessarily the norm across genres. Kubota also
argued that the ten Hinds identified is not necessarily a “sequential element” (p.
465) in Japanese writing but rather a rhetorical device that can be utilized in some
cases in order to involve the reader. In fact, many scholars disagree with the use of
ki-shō-ten-ketsu all together in any forms of writing other than journalistic (see

Kubota’s argument appears to hold some weight when considering the results of
several different studies in the field. Despite Achiba and Kuromiya’s (1983) conclusion
of rhetorical and cultural influences in writing, there was still clearly a mixture of
linear and circular organizational patterns in the English writing of the Japanese
learners in the United States (ESL context), which was equally true of their Japanese
writing, for which they could not account. Similarly, Kobayashi (1984) noticed that,
in the writing produced by Japanese in the United States (ESL context), both the
Japanese and English writing were deductive in nature. Other studies by Matsunaga
(1999) and Miyake (2007) have also pointed towards similar anomalies.

In his study, Matsunaga indicated that though the inductive pattern was frequently
used in English essays written by Japanese in Japan, the Japanese international
students in the United States appeared to adopt the deductive pattern. Likewise,
Miyake observed that while Japanese ESL learners writing in English in the United States may use a deductive organizational pattern and incorporate thesis statements, there was a tendency to drop these features when writing in Japanese, even in the ESL context.

Assorted results such as these have suggested that, at least to some extent, Kubota’s arguments are valid. Nevertheless, evidence remains that corroborates Hinds’ original perceptions of Japanese rhetoric.

Easton’s (1982) longitudinal case study of Japanese English academic writing found that the earlier drafts of the participant’s writing resembled the ki-shō-ten-ketsu pattern. A reason given for this was that the participant had been thinking in Japanese while formulating the first draft of the essay. This pattern changed over revisions, however, as the participant was exposed to the rhetorical expectations of English. Though, admittedly, it is impossible to attain generalizable results from a single case study (Campbell & Stanley, 1966), it can provide concrete instances of a phenomenon (Duff, 2012) and thus suggests that assertions of ki-shō-ten-ketsu as a pattern unique to the journalistic genre may not be entirely substantiated as critics have claimed.

Furthermore, looking to traditional Japanese Buddhist texts, i.e., non-journalistic writing, Maynard (1998) identified a digressive element in Japanese rhetoric similar to that of the ki-shō-ten-ketsu pattern: 起受針添結 (okori-uke-hari-soe-musubi). Though this particular pattern is made up of five parts, according to Maynard, it resembles ki-shō-ten-ketsu in that much in the same way the ten interrupts the progression of ki-shō-ten-ketsu, the fourth component of okori-uke-hari-soe-musubi, i.e., soe, acts as a “supplement” or an attachment that does not neatly align itself within the rest of the structure. Thus, at least when describing traditional Japanese rhetoric, it appears the digressive element is certainly not uncommon, and there have been others who have suggested digression may not necessarily be characteristic of only traditional Japanese rhetoric.

In Haenouchi and Ichinose’s (2010) comparison of lower-scoring and higher-scoring English essays written by Japanese L2 learners, it was discovered that the two groups varied in the way that the different types of Themes6 (adopted from

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6 Adopted from Halliday’s (1994) Theme-Rheme structure, patterns of idea development are categorized under six types of thematic progression: 1) Constant, 2) Extended Constant, 3) Linear, 4) Extended Linear, 4) Constant+Linear, 5) Derived, and 6) Independent.
Halliday’s, 1994, Theme-Rheme structure) were distributed across the different sections of the essay. In particular, the authors found that the higher-scoring essays used Linear Themes at a similar rate throughout the text while the lower-rated essays used Linear Themes inconsistently. This would seem to suggest a ki-shō-ten-ketsu or okoru-uke-hari-soe-musubi-type structure in that these texts appeared to follow a linear pattern only to divert from that pattern, much like the ten or soe of more traditional Japanese rhetoric.

In a recent study, Rinnert, Kobayashi, and Katayama (2015) offered findings that have caused further disparities across the literature. According to Rinnert, Kobayashi, and Katayama, there has been a change in the reported rhetorical features of Japanese and English over the years. They found that though traditional Japanese features resembled those described by Hinds over three decades ago, modern Japanese tends to reflect rhetorical features that are similar to those identified in English. This claim seems to be substantiated when looking at other studies in the field. Kubota (1998a) investigated the transfer from L1 to L2 writing and found that Japanese used similar organizational patterns in both Japanese and English, even when composing in the EFL context.

Though not directly concerned with writing, Stapleton’s (2001) attitude survey of 70 Japanese college students regarding how they express their opinions also revealed a shift from the “traditional” assumptions of Japanese communication, e.g., it is intuitive, indirect, and illogical (see Atkinson, 1997; Doi, 1986; Harder & Harder, 1982; Oi & Kamimura, 1998). Stapleton found that contrary to the way in which Japanese discourse has often been portrayed in the literature, Japanese hesitated little in voicing their opinions and felt it important to express themselves directly, and a 2003 study conducted by Hirose would seem to substantiate these results.

In an investigation and comparison of the organizational patterns of JEFL writers’ L1 and L2 texts, Hirose found that these writers employed deductive organizational patterns in both languages and thus concluded that the common view of Japanese writing as inductive may, in fact, be a misconception. She further pointed to the fact that the JEFL writers themselves considered the L1 and L2 texts to be similar in structure/organization, which suggests the JEFL writers did not consider there to be a difference between Japanese and English patterns. While Hirose did acknowledge that the assignment itself (an opinion letter) may have naturally lent itself to the deductive pattern, i.e., the writers felt obligated to take a position at the beginning, this would seem to substantiate Stapleton’s (2001) earlier findings that Japanese find it important to voice one’s opinion clearly and state it directly, contradicting
the commonly held belief that Japanese discourse is ambiguous and indirect. Still, other evidence continues to suggest that remnants of traditional Japanese rhetoric remain but simply do not transfer when Japanese are writing in English.

Oi (1986) found that while Japanese L2 English learners’ writing in Japanese avoided confronting an argument directly and displayed inductive patterns with digressive tendencies, these features did not appear to be transferred when writing in English. Rather, in their English writing, they clearly indicated their position, followed more of a deductive pattern, and maintained the same argument throughout. Though Oi does not attempt to account for such an anomaly, clearly L1 rhetorical patterns were not transferred (Oi, however, does hold L1 transfer responsible for the errors observed at the sentence level, to be discussed momentarily).

Sasaki and Hirose (1996), however, had no qualms pointing to L2 proficiency as the cause of errors observed in their study. In an investigation of 70 Japanese L2 English learners of low-to-high-intermediate proficiency along a variety of dimensions, including L2 proficiency, L1 writing ability, writing strategies, metaknowledge, past writing experience, and instructional background, the authors found L2 proficiency explained the largest portion of the L2 writing ability variance observed. Sasaki and Hirose thus concluded that L1 might not be as influential on L2 writing when the two languages have different rhetorical conventions, as is the case with Japanese and English.

Studies such as the ones discussed above clearly have serious implications for both research and pedagogy, as they suggest that not only may it not be necessary to emphasize or even consider cultural differences but that by doing so in the classroom teachers could inadvertently impede the development of their students’ writing skills, thereby negatively affecting the outcome of their texts.

Kubota (1998b), however, pointed out that though “. . . Japanese and English may exhibit rhetorical differences in overall frequency, they may also share characteristics of good writing” (p. 475). Kobayashi and Rinnert (2012, 2013) added that experienced writers develop a repertoire of non-language-specific writing knowledge, so they do not transfer writing knowledge associated with one language when writing in another.

An investigation of the correlation between text quality and L1/L2 organization by Hirose (2003) found that the use of deductive patterns over inductive ones in Japanese did not automatically result in a lower assessment in the Japanese
texts and use of deductive patterns rather than inductive ones did not lead to a higher assessment in the English texts. In other words, the use of knowledge about organization in the L1 did not negatively affect the quality of L2 texts and vice versa, which would appear to contradict the well-established belief that the organizational/rhetorical patterns of L2 writers harm text quality (see Silva, 1993; Tillema, 2012). In fact, Hirose concluded that writing experience in the L1 may benefit L2 writing, and writing experience in the L2 may be beneficial to L1 writing, supporting the notion that Japanese and English do indeed share characteristics of good writing (see Kubota, 1998b).

Leveraging the knowledge from the L1 could certainly be considered an effective way for L2 writers to free up working memory resources (see Tillema, 2012) and, thereby, produce better quality texts. Yet, there is a plethora of evidence that continues to confirm that, for whatever reasons, the organization of English texts written by Japanese does not always meet the rhetorical expectations of L1 English readers, which would indicate that this particular L1 knowledge may be too different to aid Japanese L2 learners in their English writing and, as a consequence, have detrimental effects.

Nishigaki and Leishman (2001), for example, found that, overall, English texts written by Japanese were more or less a series of “loosely” related paragraphs and often times the relationships between those paragraphs were not abundantly clear to the reader. In Ricento’s (1987) study of reading comprehension it was found that Japanese could understand certain texts that did not follow English rhetorical patterns better than native English speakers. Ricento observed that when reordering the scrambled paragraphs of a text translated from Japanese to English, the Japanese L2 English speakers were often times better able to accomplish the task than the L1 English speakers when those texts did not meet the expectations of English rhetorical patterns. Ricento speculated that this had something to do with the relevant Japanese rhetorical tradition in those texts—a tradition that does not hold for English. Iwamoto (2006) compared the English essays of what she referred to as “experienced” and “inexperienced” students (presumably meaning students who had undergone more instruction with students who had less) and found significant differences between the two groups. According to Iwamoto, this suggested that explicit teaching of English rhetorical patterns brings about better writing in Japanese learners.
These studies would then certainly suggest that, in some way, Japanese rhetorical expectations differ from those of English, as proposed by Hinds and others as well; however, the disparities in the research clearly indicate that Japanese rhetorical and organizational patterns are not as simplistic a concept as Hinds’ theories implied, and it is still unclear whether or not these patterns interfere with Japanese L2 English writing let alone result in “incoherence,” “illogicality,” or “ambiguity,” as is so often claimed about Japanese English writing.

Contemporary views of Japanese rhetoric
The main shortfall of Hinds’ descriptions of Japanese rhetoric is that they attempt to statically define the characteristics within a few basic categories and describe it in terms of English rhetorical concepts. For example, Hinds’ categorization of Japanese writing as “reader-responsible” appears to only be half correct when considering other Japanese communication principles, such as 相手中心 (aite-chushin). As Day (1996) explained, aite-chushin is a Japanese concept of communication that recognizes “the intelligence and interpretive responsibility of those listening” (p. 32) but does not imply that responsibility is solely on the listener, or, in the case of texts, the reader. Rather, according to Day, meaning is symmetrically reciprocated between the speaker/writer and listener/reader in Japanese discourse. This observation may be substantiated by Maynard’s (1998) claim of the writer’s role in Japanese writing.

According to Maynard, the task of the Japanese writer is not to persuade or convince but to get the reader to think about an issue by providing a number of observations and perspectives. It is not entirely up to the writer to support his/her opinion. The writer’s responsibility is to provide all the necessary information for the reader to be able to review and give careful consideration to the topic. The reader then must make an effort to think about and contemplate the ideas the writer is presenting in order to complete the reciprocal interaction. This position clearly demonstrates a responsibility on both the writer and the reader in Japanese rhetoric.

Other evidence that points to the importance of the writer in Japanese rhetoric is the employment of sentential repetition, which is designed to assure understanding in the reader (Maynard, 1998). The Japanese literary theory of 余情 (yojō) also depicts a writer involved with the reader. Yojō refers to the “emotional experience” of the reader by means of the images created in his/her mind through the text (Maynard, 1998, p. 132), which can occur both while and after reading. The underlying assumption here then is that yojō is created through the writer regarding the effects of his/her writing on the reader. In other words, the writer’s role is affective—he/she
is responsible for considering what needs to be said and what needs not to be said in order to elicit an emotional response in the readers. The sole existence of both the sentential repetition linguistic feature and yojō literary notion in Japanese can thus only be explained by the writer having intentional regard for his/her reader and thereby implementing the necessary linguistic and rhetorical features to bring about the desired response.

In Hinds' attempt to define Japanese as a more “reader-responsible” language, he entirely ignored the reciprocal nature of communication, and, as a result, the role the writer plays in Japanese rhetoric. Oversimplifications such as these on which numerous contrastive studies between Japanese and English have been based resulted in the confusing and oftentimes conflicting conclusions that have been discussed thus far. As languages are “fluid” and “dynamic” (Kubota, 1997), it is important we do not allow ourselves to paint with such broad strokes in our effort to depict characteristics of a language. Maynard’s (1997, 1998) description of Japanese discourse is a good answer to this problem as it presented a much more multi-dimensional and flexible design.

According to Maynard (1998), the basic discourse structure of Japanese is the three-part organization: 1) 序論 (joron), 2) 本論 (honron), and 3) 結論 (ketsuron). Though this structure bears a resemblance to the standard introduction-body-conclusion essay structure of English, Maynard argued that Japanese can build upon this basic structure to form a variety of logical threads, many of which do not have any commonalities with English (see Table 2.1 in Appendix A).

As Maynard (1997, 1998) demonstrated, Japanese basic discourse can follow a variety of logical threads. While some of these threads may resemble typical English patterns, many of them are in direct opposition to those patterns. For example, Logical Threads 1, 2 and even 3 are certainly similar to the standard English pattern of thesis, supporting evidence, and restated thesis/summary. However, Logical Threads 4 through 6 are very different than what a L1 English reader would expect to find in an English text. This could partially explain the lack of consistent and corroborated findings in the above studies, as Achiba and Kuromiya (1986) suggested, but is still not sufficient to account for why in some situations Japanese L2 learners wrote in a logical thread that resembled standard English patterns while in others their patterns were considered atypical of English.
The discrepancies of the above studies could be explained, at least in part, on the premise that Japanese rhetoric is a multifaceted construct that has evolved and continues to evolve over time, echoing Kubota's (1997) view on language: “Language is neither historically fixed nor emerged out of a vacuum; it is . . . constituted through the change of social and political conditions both within and between language groups” (p. 464).

Much of Japanese culture can be traced back to China, including philosophical and cultural concepts, literature, and even the writing system, 漢字 (kanji), i.e., Japanese characters. Up until the mid-to-late 19th century (Meiji Period), spoken Japanese and written Japanese were distinctly different. This was due to the fact that written Japanese was based solely on borrowed Chinese rhetorical traditions and vocabulary derived from Chinese, i.e., 漢語 (kango), and the use of vernacular Japanese in literature was largely frowned upon (Miyake, 2007; Tomasi, 2004). This diglossia issue was not addressed until the 言文一致 (genbun itchi) movement, which sought to unify written and spoken Japanese discourse; however, many of those traditional rhetorical forms have remained, such as kango, which is abundantly used in academic discourse to this very day (Maynard, 1998; Miyake, 2007). It could even be argued that the previously discussed concept of aite-chushin is a remnant of ancient Chinese philosophical values (consider, for example, the Confucian principle that saw the listener as equally responsible in discussion, see Mooji, 2014; Oliver, 1971).

Nevertheless, it is clear the Japanese notion of rhetoric has been influenced by the importation of Western literature and scholarly works, which began back in the Meiji Period, and the influence is certainly noticeable in contemporary education. As Maynard (1998) points out, there is now an emphasis placed on “logical sequences” and linear essay structure that reflect those expected in English. Nevertheless, there is still no ignoring the historical and cultural influences, such as, aite-chushin, kango, and, even, ki-shō-ten-ketsu. As such, Japanese rhetoric has become a “product of the dialectical interaction of . . . Eastern legacy and Westernization” (Tomasi, 2004, p. 107).

The disagreement among researchers as how to define Japanese rhetoric is largely due to the fact that the hodgepodge of infinite external and internal influences that have shaped Japanese rhetoric make the endeavor to isolate its specific and definable characteristics one that leads to nowhere (Mok, 1993), particularly for contrastive purposes. This is compounded by the fact that it is ever evolving—heavily influenced by the “change[s] of social and political conditions” (Kubota,
Many researchers have therefore chosen to look at sentence-level and other textual features when investigating rhetorical patterns between languages believing that “the transfer of rhetoric (from L1 to L2) is linguistically measurable” (Oi, 1986, p. 27).

Sentence-level & Textual Features
Cohesion
Cohesion is a linguistic strategy that enhances the conceptual and logical flow of ideas in a text (Louwerse & Graesser, 2007; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Discourse relations, the linking of ideas across sentences, the reasoning behind those links, the choices that led to them, and their effects on the construction of meaning and coherence have been investigated intensely since the seminal study by Hobbs (1979) (also see Sanders, Spooren, & Noordman, 1992; Sanders & Noordman, 2000). Over the years, L2 writing research has come to the conclusion that L2 writers are generally in want of cohesive strategies to some extent and, as a result, rely on weak lexical/semantic ties and theme connections in the development of their texts (Silva, 1993). Therefore, it is this sort of “underdevelopment . . . for creating textual cohesion [that] exhibit[s] only an elementary or emergent texture” in English texts written by L2 learners (Murphy, 2001, p.156). As these patterns are essentially made up of structures formed through the relationships between units within a text that work together conceptually (Silva, 2002), those connective relationships and the features that help to form them have been a central part of the field as is evidenced by the numerous studies that have investigated cohesion (see Crossley, Kyle, & McNamara, 2016; Fitzgerald & Spiegel, 1986; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Hinkel, 2001; Liu & Braine, 2005; Mahlberg, 2006; Morris & Hirst, 2006; Taboada, 2006). Contrastive studies of cohesion have looked at a number of cohesive devices used in Japanese and English writing. Multiple studies have pointed to L1 transfer as the source of incongruence in the Japanese English writing, particularly with regard to transitional signals as these are less determined by fixed grammatical principles.

Transitions
One of the more common cohesive devices used in writing is the transitional signal/logical connector. Connor (1984) compared the frequency of these features used by Japanese ESL writers with those used by L1 English speakers and found that general cohesion density was not a discriminating factor between the L1 speakers’ texts and the English texts written by the Japanese. However, Connor did acknowledge a lack of variety in the transitional signals/logical connectors used by the Japanese.
Oi (1986) analyzed various cohesive devices of English and Japanese texts written by Japanese and compared them to English texts written by L1 speakers of English. Looking at transitional words, Oi found that the Japanese employed a greater number of conjunctions in both their English and Japanese writing than the L1 speakers. According to Oi, this demonstrated a clear transfer of the L1.

Another study conducted by Hinkel (2001), found an excessive use of transitions. She remarked on L2 writers’ heavy reliance on sentence-level transitions to create cohesion and also suggested that their overemphasis in the L2 writing classroom may be cause for this higher rate of transitions when compared to L1 English speakers’ writing. Additionally, Hinkel pointed to the incongruities of the use of transitions and the flow of ideas in the English texts written by Japanese and showed that often the ideas preceding a transition did not seem to coordinate well with the transition used, e.g., using “in addition” when the following idea does not demonstrate additional information for the adjacent sentence.

In Nishigaki and Leishman’s (2001) study, it was found that, on average, Japanese L2 learners showed little variety in these devices as well, which was also observed in an earlier study of theirs (see Nishigaki & Leisman, 1998). The most frequently used transitional signals (and, but, so, and when) accounted for nearly 55% of all the transitions used by the Japanese writers. According to Nishigaki and Leishman, the repeated use of these same signals made the writers’ ideas seem simplistic and often obscured their meaning. The authors, therefore, identified this limited variety of transition signals as one of the weak elements of Japanese student writing in English and considered L1 transfer as the culprit. They proposed that the Japanese EFL learners must have considered these transitions, specifically but, as equivalent to the Japanese conjunction が (ga), which has a wide variety of meanings and functions. According to the authors, this resulted in the Japanese seeing no problems with repeating conjunctions in English, just as they would do when writing in Japanese. However, they also mentioned the possibility that these learners lacked the vocabulary and thus acknowledged L2 proficiency as another likely source of such errors.

Ellipsis
Narita, Sato, and Sugiura (2004) looked specifically at Japanese L2 English learners’ use of logical connectors and compared their use with L1 writers. Though their findings did not really offer any new information (they basically substantiated other studies) the authors offered some interesting explanations for the errors they observed that differ from others. Narita, Sato, and Sugiura attributed the
overuse of logical connectors in the sentence-initial position to a conscious effort on the writers’ parts to show “explicit linkage between the preceding and the subsequent propositions” (p. 118) referring to Rutherford’s (1987) position that L2 learners need “direct grammatical realization” to find meaning. This suggests two things. First, L2 learners struggle with ellipsis, i.e., identifying what information can be dropped and what needs to be included, a position supported by others (see Hinkel, 2001). Secondly, it implies the learners had the cognitive capacity to make a deliberate decision to use explicit connectors to make the meaning clearer, which would contradict the first claim as ellipsis requires rather high metacognitive skills (Fulcher, 1989; Yuill & Oakhill, 1991). Furthermore, this assumption lacks empirical evidence. In fact, other studies have suggested that L2 learners do not possess the metacognitive skills to make such decisions in their writing.

For example, Yamashita’s (2015) pilot study applied a number of analytical frameworks to an English text written by a Japanese college student and compared it to its L1 English counterpart. Looking at the distribution of transitional markers, she found that while the Japanese writer’s usage of these markers was “appropriate,” the variation was very limited. The author suggested that these markers had an impact on the overall flow of the text and affected how the argument progressed. Thus, according to Yamashita, errors in logical connectors may demonstrate a problem beyond a lack of vocabulary to a gap at the metacognitive level that affects the writing at a much larger scale. This would be contradictory to Narita, Sato, and Sugiura (2004) who suggested the learners made a conscious decision to use certain connectors over others.

Anaphoric reference
Synonyms/Repetition
Studies that have located errors in cohesive devices that are more linguistically dictated but implicit, such as ellipsis and synonym substitution, tend to suggest the learners’ ability in the language plays a major factor in forming those errors. Oi (1986), for example, found Japanese were more likely to repeat the same words throughout their English writing rather than omit words that are superfluous or substitute them for a synonym. Conversely, identical words appeared much less frequently in the L1 writers’ texts as a result of the effective use of synonyms. She accounted for this difference by looking to the learners’ L2 proficiency. Along this line of argument, Terakawa (2013) pressed the need for Japanese learners of English to be explicitly taught reiteration through synonyms and re-expression of ideas using different wording. Though Terakawa’s concern was more about reading comprehension, the relevance is quite clear: Japanese English learners struggle with this particular area of cohesion whether it is in the reading of a text or the production of one.
Nishigaki, Chuyo, Leishman, and Hasegawa (2007) provided much support for the findings of these studies. The authors pointed to a number of weaknesses they found in Japanese writing, which included little variety in transitional signals and the repeated use of the same words. Additionally, they added that a lack of collocation knowledge may be a contributing factor to the Japanese learners’ limited vocabulary. Attributing such errors to L2 proficiency with regard to Japanese learners does appear to be likely as even in Japanese “synonymous repetition is useful for avoiding boring text infested by reiteration while maintaining the effect of clarification and emphasis” (Maynard, 1998, p. 111). This means Japanese are without a doubt familiar with this feature of language but simply do not know how to utilize it in English. Nevertheless, there could still be some L1 transfer at play here as repeated phrases and words is also a common feature of Japanese texts, which is, according to Maynard (1998), used for cohesive effect. Accordingly, assuming all errors at this level are due to the learners’ lack of language skills may be inaccurate.

In Yamashita’s (2015) study, a keyword analysis was conducted in which the theme-setting keywords and argument-setting keywords were investigated. Taking into consideration content schemata that formed the same semantic categories, Yamashita found the Japanese learner’s text lacked focus. According to Yamashita, the inability to use synonyms effectively not only affected the cohesion of the text at the micro-level but also prevented the student from expressing him/herself coherently.

**Definite/Indefinite articles**

The complexity of the article system has long been regarded as one of the more challenging aspects of the English language for L2 learners (Anderson, 1984; Master, 2002), and JEFL learners are no exception (see, for example, Bryant, 1984; Butler, 2002; Yamada & Matsuura, 1982). Unlike explicit pronoun-based anaphors, which are generally more comprehensible to L2 learners but are limited in cohesive capability, definite noun phrases (NPs) are capable of accessing “antecedents across greater text distances” and thus play an important role in forming a text’s overall cohesiveness (Dowse, 2017, p. 281). While, as far as I am aware, no study has specifically investigated the use of articles by Japanese L2 writers for cohesive purposes, there are studies that have looked at whether or not Japanese recognize and/or comprehend the cohesion being formed by means of definite and indefinite articles.

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7 In his 1984 study, Bryant looked at article usage in Japanese L2 writers’ English texts; however, his investigation was more concerned with their grammatical/idiomatic errors rather than errors in cohesion.
Butler (2002), for example, investigated 80 Japanese of lower to upper-intermediate English proficiency (60 of whom were EFL learners) and the metalinguistic knowledge these learners employed to understand the English article system. The results showed that while a higher proficiency in English did result in a higher accuracy, there remained a “large gap” in comprehension when compared to NESs. Butler hypothesized that this “gap” may be the manifestation of “structural, semantic, and pragmatic differences between English and Japanese” (p. 472).

In a recent study, Dowse (2017) looked at the ability of 22 JEFL learners to recognize and comprehend definite NPs in a reading task. In her investigation, participants were asked to read short English passages that contained anaphoric reference marked with definite or indefinite articles and judge their grammaticality. The results were slightly different from Butler’s, as they showed that the participants were able to accurately assess the majority of the texts whether or not the article used in the text was accurate. Based on these results, Dowse concluded that the JEFL learners’ comprehension of a text was not dependent on their discernment of definiteness for one of two reasons: 1) “[Japanese] read . . . articles but are not sensitive to the feature of definiteness,” or 2) “[Japanese] completely ignore . . . articles” (p. 290). While Butler found JEFL learners struggled to comprehend article usage, Dowse’s study demonstrated that erroneous use of articles (e.g., an indefinite article in a definite anaphoric context) did not seem to be noticed by the JEFL learners. Though Dowse did not offer possible reasons as to why this might be the case, she did conclude that native speakers of Japanese who teach English may also be incapable of detecting errors in articles, which could have a negative effect on their students’ writing. This suggests that Dowse regards Japanese as a generalized group that struggles with the English article system, thus aligning herself with past studies that have considered the interference of the L1 as the source of these struggles.

Cultural rhetorical tendencies & idiomatic errors
Achiba and Kuromiya (1983) identified a number of what they regarded as intralingual errors in their study of 130 essays written by Japanese university students studying in the United States (ESL context). One error the authors observed was the inclusion of didactic remarks towards the end of the essays where the Japanese writer would make suggestions like, “you should get a good education and you shouldn’t forget to make efforts towards jobs everyday” (p. 10). Though Achiba and Kuromiya did not explicitly explain why they considered this an intralingual error, looking at other literature shows that it is not unusual to find such didactic comments in Japanese discourse. Borrowed from ancient Buddhist teachings,
instructional remarks became a common rhetorical feature in Japanese literature and oratory performances (Konishi, 1986; Yip, 2016) and remain a popular fixture in Japanese discourse today (Clarence-Smith, 2009; Maynard, 2002).

Achiba and Kuromiya also observed excessive hedging, such as “as you know” and “I think” in the Japanese L2 learners’ English texts, which has been used as linguistic evidence to support the notion of Japanese vagueness and indirectness (see Okabe, 1983; Sasagawa, 1996). As Achiba and Kuromiya explained, hedging (e.g., “as you know”) is very common in Japanese writing and speeches and could thus account for its overuse in Japanese English writing. Prevalence for hedging in Japanese English writing has also been supported by Connor (1996) and Hinkel (1997), for example, who both found a greater use of hedges in English written by Japanese than by L1 English speakers.

In addition to didactic remarks and hedging, Achiba and Kuromiya found a preferential placement of the subordinate clause before the main clause in the Japanese English writing. In Japanese, the subordinate clause is typically placed in front of the main clause, but, in English, the main clause usually comes first. When the order is reversed, however, a comma is needed between the subordinate and main clauses. If not included, the sentence is not only idiomatically awkward but also grammatically incorrect. In contrast, the comma is not necessary in Japanese syntax. The authors found that the Japanese writers tended to reverse the placement of subordinate clauses in their English writing as they would when writing in Japanese. Furthermore, the comma between the subordinate and main clauses was often left out.

Oi (1986), who compared organizational patterns of Japanese English writing with those of Japanese, investigated what she referred to as “cultural rhetorical tendencies” (p. 28) at the textual level, which included hedging (an example of Japanese directness and clearness according to other studies, as mentioned earlier) and revealed a significant use of hedging in Japanese writing. This, however, did not appear to be transferred over into Japanese L2 learners’ English writing, though hedging occurred slightly more frequently in the Japanese English writing than in the L1 English writing. Oi also looked at the use of understatements and overstatements (i.e., superlatives and hyperbolic expressions) between the groups. Like hedging, these phenomena have been used to demonstrate the supposed vague and indirect nature of Japanese (see Bruch, 1989; Okabe, 1983). Oi found that while the use of superlatives and hyperbolic expressions were commonplace in the L1 English writing, they were extremely rare in both the Japanese English
writing and the Japanese writing. Based on her findings, of the various features investigated, Oi concluded that Japanese clearly write differently in English than they do in Japanese, which suggests that they are aware these two languages have different expectations but are not always clear on what those expectations are.

Other scholars, such as Kamimura and Oi (1998) and Lee (2011), have since confirmed many of Oi’s (1986) conclusions on cultural rhetorical tendencies. In their study of 22 L1 English-speaking high school seniors and 30 sophomore Japanese college students’ texts, Kamimura and Oi found the use of emphatic devices and superlatives in the L1 English-speakers’ writing and a high use of hedging in the Japanese English writing. Lee (2011) found a higher number of “boosters” in English writing across genres while such devices were rarely employed in Japanese writing. Lee claimed this to be characteristic of Japanese rhetoric.

Additionally, Kamimura and Oi (1998) remarked on the modes of persuasion used by both groups. They observed a prominent use of rational appeals by the L1 English speakers while the Japanese gravitated more towards affective appeals. The authors accounted for this difference by looking at cultural values. They argued that “empathy” is a Japanese cultural value held in high regard due to the emphasis on group orientation in Japanese culture, while Western cultures admire logic. These are distinctions between Japanese and Western rhetoric that are commonly made by others (see Day, 1996; Gao, 2005; Maynard, 1998; Rose, 1996), and there is certainly reason to believe that empathy plays an important part in Japanese rhetoric when considering the previously mentioned Japanese literary notion yojō.

Though not exclusively concerned with Japanese writing, Hinkel (2002) compares English texts written by Japanese L2 English learners with those written by native speakers of English. Her comprehensive study included learners from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (corpus size approximately 435,000 words), and compared the uses of 68 linguistic and rhetorical features in L2 texts written by advanced L2 learners of English to those in the essays of L1 English speakers. Like many contrastive studies, Hinkel too alluded to L1 transfer as the principal culprit of the majority of errors observed in the L2 writers’ English texts.

In the case of English texts written by Japanese, Hinkel (2002) found significant differences in the use of second- and third-person pronouns compared to English written by L1 speakers. Overall, the Japanese English texts had a higher frequency rate of second- and third-person pronouns, which could reasonably point to L1 transfer, as Hinkel suggested. Maynard (1997) stressed that Japanese writers do
not focus on themselves but rather on people, things, and events external to the current discourse, and thus second and third-person pronouns are frequent in Japanese writing. Accordingly, Hinkel argued that the use of second- and third-person pronouns was a manifestation of Japanese rhetoric, which seeks to involve the reader and establish solidarity between the writer and the reader.

Hinkel (2002) also noticed significantly more use of vague nouns (i.e., generic nouns that lack homogenous meaning and are dependent on context) in the English texts written by Japanese than in those written by L1 speakers. One possibility of this could be due to the tendency for vagueness and ambiguity in Japanese discourse as identified by others (see Okabe, 1983; Sasagawa, 1996); however, Hinkel acknowledged that, in this case, the more likely explanation for the high rates of vague nouns is “L2 writers lack more advanced and sophisticated vocabulary to be able to choose more appropriate, varied, and complex lexis to express their ideas” (p. 83), and thus attributed this particular error to L2 proficiency or, more accurately, lack thereof.

Grammatical errors
Bryant (1984) analyzed grammatical errors of Japanese writers in the ESL context and concluded that L1 transfer was largely responsible for the errors identified. For example, Bryant detected the incorrect use of “s” to signal the genitive case with inanimate objects whereas, generally speaking, “English restricts the “s-genitive” to animate objects” (p. 16). In Japanese, however, there is no distinction made and the genitive for both animate and inanimate objects is marked with the same particle “の” (no). Other examples of intralingual errors observed by Bryant included the omission of articles and locative prepositions, errors in the use of singular and plural, and the unidiomatic reversal of negative clauses. Bryant argues that because many of these features are non-existent in Japanese (e.g., there are no definite and indefinite articles and no singular/plural differentiation in Japanese), these types of errors frequently occur in Japanese L2 learners’ English writing. This position has been taken by many others, in particular with reference to the use of articles by Japanese English learners (see Bertekua, 1974; Cohen, 1998; Luk & Shirai, 2009; Master, 1987).

Unlike the previously discussed studies about JEFL learners’ understanding of English articles, Bryant did not consider the role articles play in creating (or inhibiting) cohesion and how Japanese perceive them but rather looked more at their grammatical/idiomatic usage by Japanese writers of English.
Bryant (1984) also suggests that, in the case of other errors, English language learners may be applying grammatical rules of their L1 to the L2. For example, while it is entirely permissible to drop prepositions in Japanese without impacting meaning, the same is not true of English. In the Japanese sentence 東京に行きます (Tokyo ni ikimasu)\textsuperscript{9} the preposition “に” (ni) can be omitted: 東京行きます (Tokyo ikimasu). In doing so, the utterance does not lose its meaning and remains wholly comprehensible. The same could not be said of English, however, as prepositions in English can significantly influence the meaning of an utterance and omitting them would cause meaning to be very ambiguous. Bryant pointed to negative clause structure to further illustrate how Japanese L2 English learners apply Japanese grammar to English. Bryant explained that while in English the mental predicate is regularly negated, in Japanese it is the reported thought that is negated, which, he claimed, resulted in Japanese writers producing English sentences like I think it won’t rain tomorrow as opposed to the (equally or) more idiomatic I don’t think it will rain tomorrow (known in the linguistic literature as “NEG-raising”).

Bryant’s diagnosis is supported by a small survey among three Japanese language teachers and linguists, who were asked to judge the following sentences as “preferred,” “awkward,” or “never preferred.”

1) 明日は雨が降らないと思います。
(Ashita wa ame ga furanai to omoimasu.)\textsuperscript{10}

2) 明日は雨が降ると思いません。
(Ashita wa ame ga furu to omoimasen.)\textsuperscript{11}

The participants unanimously stated that sentence one is “preferred,” while sentence two is “awkward.” One participant explained that in certain situations where argument and opposition is warranted and expected, such as a courtroom, it is permissible to negate the predicate, i.e., 思いません (omoimasen), but in social interactions it is never acceptable. An important point here is that due to Japanese word order constraints (“SOV”), the mental predicate always follows the reported thought. While it may be true that in English this order does not allow NEG-raising

\textsuperscript{9} [I’m] go(ing) to Tokyo.
\textsuperscript{10} [I] think it won’t rain tomorrow.
\textsuperscript{11} [I] don’t think it will rain tomorrow.
either (“It is going to rain, I don’t think,” cannot mean “It is going to rain, I think”), it is also true that because of this the NEG-raising phenomenon is not at all present in Japanese. Thus, there are indeed differences in linguistic experience of NEG-raising between English and Japanese speakers, which may plausibly be invoked as an explanation for its non-use in Japanese writers’ English texts.

Looking at the frequency rate of adjectives and adverbs, Hinkel (2002) observed that the rate of attributive adjectives in the Japanese English texts was significantly higher than in the texts written by L1 speakers. This was, according to Hinkel, due to the function of Japanese adjectives: “[I]n Japanese, adjectives can also perform the function of nouns and are used in different contexts than attributive descriptions in English” (Hinkel, 2002, p. 173). She concluded that this could account for why Japanese tended to use attributive adjectives in other forms that are regarded as grammatically incorrect in English while considered perfectly acceptable when done in Japanese. Hinkel also found differences in adverb placement between the two groups. Once again referring back to the L1, Hinkel explained that Japanese adverbs modify whole clauses, but stative verbs and verb phrases can also be modified by adverbs. She implied the differences in the function of adverbs in Japanese compared to English could possibly account for why errors in adverb placement are prevalent in Japanese English writing.

Issues of Contrastive Studies of Sentence-level & Textual Features
Inaccurate generalizations
Though the findings of these studies have presented some insight into generalizable errors of Japanese English writing, they have in many ways raised more questions, and, at times, concerns, than provided answers. For example, many have pointed to hedging as a linguistic feature that characterizes Japanese rhetorical values. This implies that the use of hedges in discourse is more of the norm in Japanese than it is in English; however, hedges are used extensively in English writing by L1 speakers (Swales, 1990; Myers, 1989) and can be used for a wide range of rhetorical purposes (Hyland, 1996). In fact, Hyland argued that hedging is a convention of academic writing and that it plays a “critical role” (p. 26) in English. Thus, while hedging may very well indeed be a common characteristic in Japanese discourse, it is clear that it serves an important role in English discourse as well. The appropriateness of its use, however, seems to depend on a number of factors, such as genre, individualistic style, and context (Swales 1990; Hyland, 1996). Accordingly, simply comparing frequency rates does not point to any reliable phenomena and can therefore not be considered a valid method for measuring the extent of or even for identifying
LI transfer. This is further evidenced by the fact that other studies have found no significant difference between the rate of hedges used in English texts written by Japanese and those written by LI speakers (see, for example, Hinkel, 2002).

Bias/Stereotypes

Many of these studies are also plagued by bias and stereotypes that often end up distorting the authors’ interpretations of their results. Unlike past contrastive studies that have been accused of promoting the superiority of English (as discussed earlier), studies between Japanese and English could be charged with propagating the central claim of 日本人論 (nihonjinron), which essentially positions the Japanese language and culture as unique constructs and contributes to the Japanese “Us” against the non-Japanese “Them” dichotomy imbedded deeply in the Japanese psyche (Dale, 1986). A popular essentialist theory (Sugimoto, 1999), nihonjinron is, unsurprisingly, fiercely debated and often criticized as at best a “myth” and at worst an excuse for nationalistic and racist political and social ideologies (see Befu, 1992, 2001; Dale, 1986; Stronach, 1995). Kamimura and Oi’s (1998) assertion that empathy is unique to Japanese culture strongly aligns itself with the tenants of nihonjinron and would suggest that people of other cultures are not as empathetic as Japanese. But, even if we are not to go into the essentialist position of such a claim, an empathic appeal is certainly not exclusive to Japanese rhetoric. Western rhetoric, for example, has acknowledged the role emotion plays in affecting an audience since the days of the Greeks.

Aristotle presented three modes of persuasion: 1) logos, an appeal to logic, 2) ethos, an appeal to authority, and 3) pathos, an appeal to emotion, which can, according to Aristotle, be accomplished in a number of ways, including by eliciting a compassionate or empathetic response. Admittedly, Aristotle saw pathos (and ethos) as being insufficient on its own to prove an argument (Gross & Dascal, 2001), and he cautioned against its overuse to the point of manipulating the audience; he rejected the use of logical fallacies, such as ad hominem, which seek to discredit through personal attacks. Accordingly, Aristotle believed that rhetorical arguments should follow logic, or logos, with pathos and ethos acting as complements. Nonetheless, Aristotle recognized the contributions pathos can make in a persuasion when utilized ethically (Dow, 2007). Thus, to imply that empathy is somehow specific to Japanese rhetoric is an erroneous premise on which Kamimura and Oi (1998) based their conclusion. Perhaps the views on what constitute the ethical use of empathy may differ between Japanese and Western rhetoric, however, Kamimura and Oi
did not touch upon this subject and it is far too complex for this study to explore. Clearly, however, claiming “empathy” as a uniquely Japanese value is a precarious slope that leads to all sorts of essentialist and biased perceptions.

LI transfer
Finally, most of these studies have looked back to the learners’ L1, i.e., Japanese, as the origin for many of the observed errors. And, while in some cases the L1 could possibly be the cause of certain errors, such as negative clause structure, it cannot always account for all of the errors identified by the authors despite their insistence on such a claim because “many syntactic and lexical features of English do not exist in other languages,” such as Japanese (Hinkel, 2002; p. 64). Bryant (1984) and others, however, have used the nonexistence of certain features in the L1 to explain a number of types of errors found in L2 writers’ texts. The omission of definite and indefinite articles by Japanese, for example, has often been blamed on the fact that the Japanese language lacks such a lexical feature. However, if we are to return, for a moment, to the belief that ideas in one culture cannot be accurately articulated in another culture using the same terms (Day, 1996; Wierzbicka, 1997), we can see how reducing Japanese to a language that lacks articles implies they lack the capacity to linguistically distinguish between the specific and nonspecific, which is, of course, not the case.

While the Japanese language may not have a Japanese equivalent to the English “the” or “a/an,” the concepts these articles portray can be linguistically expressed in Japanese as well. The particles “が” (ga) and “は” (wa) are used for marking the distinction between what is mentioned for the first time and what is mentioned the second time (Maynard, 1998). For example, much in the same way the article “a” refers to a nonspecific notion within a discourse, the Japanese “ga,” though admittedly not overtly parallel to the English article, functions in a comparable matter to convey a somewhat similar feeling of non-specificity. This demonstrates the Japanese are, in fact, familiar with linguistically expressing the differences of something that is specific and not specific in discourse.

Another issue with attributing errors to LI transfer is the fact that often times the hypothesis simply does not hold. Hinkel (2002), for example, explained the cause for why the Japanese writers overemploying second- and third-person pronouns in her study by means of LI transfer, or, more specifically, the overuse of “we” as a reflection of the Japanese cultural value of group orientation, and overuse of “you” as a way to “promote group solidarity between the writer and reader” (Hinkel, 2002, p. 83). However, such an explanation cannot easily account for why the Japanese
also used first-person pronouns at a much higher rate than their L1 counterparts. This is because, according to Maynard’s (1997) assessment of Japanese discourse, Japanese writers generally do not focus on themselves. If this is in fact the case, there should have been a significantly smaller number of first-person pronouns when compared to L1 speakers’ writing, especially if we are to suggest that the overuse of second- and third-person pronouns was a result of the Japanese writer employing common features of his/her L1 to the L2. Hinkel’s findings, however, did not present these results. On the contrary, she found that the Japanese writers used first-person pronouns nearly 40% more frequently than L1 English speakers but offered no explanation for these unexpected results nor attempted to address this contradiction in any sort of fashion.

Shortfalls such as these show that sentence-level and textual errors in Japanese English texts simply cannot consistently or reliably identify areas in which Japanese L2 English learners struggle in their writing, and any attempt to account for these characteristics has brought about reductive, and, at times, inaccurate, descriptions of both Japanese and English discourse.

Cohesion vs. coherence
Most of the contrastive studies that have looked at Japanese and English have, at the very least, implied that cohesion at the micro-level helps in the formation of coherence at the macro-level (see Nishigaki, Chuyo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Yamashita, 2015). Halliday and Hasan (1976) most famously made this postulation. Likewise, Hoey (1991) claimed that lexical relations are a major characteristic of coherent discourse. Though such claims would appear to be common sense, there is evidence to suggest otherwise.

In an experimental study conducted by Crewe, Wright, and Leung (1985), for example, two groups of students were presented with two versions of the same text—one group was given a version with its original conjunctions/connectors and the other group a version with the conjunctions/connectors omitted. Members of each group read their assigned text and answered the same set of comprehension questions. The results showed no statistical difference in the level of comprehension between the two groups. The researchers thus concluded that these sorts of cohesive devices are not necessary for linking ideas and forming/maintaining the coherence of a text. And several others have further substantiated this belief.
Carrell (1982), one of the earliest scholars to shed light on this issue, argued that cohesion is not solely a product of grammatical and lexical connectives but the result of outside schema that contribute to connecting ideas within a text (in some ways resembling CG theory). Widdowson (1978), for example, demonstrated how schema works to create coherence in discourse:

A: That's the telephone.
B: I'm in the bath.
A: Okay.

In this illustration, the exchange is entirely coherent, yet it does not contain a single overt cohesive device. According to Maynard (1998), this type of implicit cohesion requires broad cultural knowledge, which could account for why L2 learners feel the need to explicitly connect sentences, as they lack such knowledge. It is certainly true that in many structures understanding necessitates a shared cultural knowledge. Biblical and literary references, for example, demand that the listener/reader be familiar with the sources. Television shows and movies are filled with such references. One such instance can be found in the popular television series *The Flash* where a character remarks on the Flash's ability to walk on water: “You can walk on water. Puts you in pretty interesting company” (Down, 2014). Without the biblical background it would be impossible to understand the “interesting company” is referring to Jesus Christ. For most L1 English speakers, even those without a religious background, the intended meaning is perfectly clear. Likewise, simply uttering the words, “Sour grapes” elicits an immediate understanding of the action of reducing the significance or importance of something after finding one cannot have it. Originating from Aesop’s Fable *The Fox and the Grapes*, the term “sour grapes” is regularly used in English-speaking cultures. Though not all L1 speakers may be familiar with its origin, it would not be too far of a leap to state that most understand the reference. In these examples, coherence clearly demands “broad cultural knowledge,” so, Maynard’s (1998) assertion can be accepted, but only partly.

“Broad cultural knowledge” is not always necessary. Inside jokes, for example, require a shared experience between the participants in a communicative interaction but not necessarily “cultural knowledge.” Understanding in such a situation is rooted in mutuality. The commonalities between the speaker/writer and listener/reader help to create meaning in addition to the linguistic output, demonstrating, once again, the applicability of CG theory to contrastive rhetoric studies. Claiming that coherence requires broad cultural knowledge is precarious, as it overemphasizes cultural factors in favor of other influences occurring—a
common criticism of contrastive rhetoric (see Connor, 1996; Kubota, 1997; Matsuda, 2001). Considering that coherence, however, is established through CG turns us away from a culturally reliant notion to a less biased and more inclusive viewpoint of how a writer creates meaning in a text.

Clearly, coherence does not depend on cohesive devices. Likewise, it has also been shown that the occurrence of cohesion does not automatically result in coherence. Kolln (1999) demonstrated this in the following: My computer is on my desk. My desk is made of oak. Tall oaks grow from little acorns. In this example, we can see how Kolln incorporated lexical repetition, i.e., “my desk” and “oak,” to give the illusion of coherence; however, clearly the ideas in each sentence are not connected, despite the cohesive device used.

Examples such as these demonstrate how cohesion and coherence are not necessarily codependent. They can, in fact, act exclusively from one another. This is due to the fact of not only cultural knowledge, but of general commonalities, often times culturally exclusive, between the participants of an interaction working to create meaning and understanding rather than linguistic elements alone. As Maynard (1998) indicated, cohesive devices do not really “connect” sentences; rather, they simply signal the writer’s decision of expressing it linguistically. Additionally, a lack of cohesive links does not automatically result in an incoherent sequence. A text may still be coherent without them (Crewe, Wright, & Leung, 1985). As Brown and Yule (1983) noted, although a discourse structure may have “no formal linguistic links connecting contiguous linguistic strings, the fact of their contiguity leads us to interpret them as connected” (p. 224). As a result, relying on the analysis of cohesive devices may in fact not be the best approach to understanding the structure, let alone the coherence, of a text. In fact, they cannot even reliably describe how a text is structured.

To illustrate, consider the following sentence: Because he failed the exam, he cannot go to university. In this statement, the causal clause is positioned at the beginning. In doing so, emphasis is placed on the cause of the result. However, if the clauses are reversed like so, He cannot go to university because he failed the exam, the result is now stressed over the cause. Accordingly, these two sentences have a different rhetorical effect and convey meaning in an ever-so-slightly different manner. Therefore, if we were to just consider the frequency of conjunction usage, very little would be understood of the structure, and even looking at the position of the conjunction, as Narita, Sato, and Sugiura (2004) did, does not really tell us much about the intended rhetorical effect.
Granted, cohesion and coherence may appear to overlap, and, in fact, the literature often has assumed that they may coincide (see Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Hoey, 1991; Nishigaki, Chuyo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Yamashita, 2015). But while cohesion is, for the most part, a tangible and discernable phenomenon, coherence is less so and is thus more difficult to define. One thing is for sure, however: coherence and cohesion are necessary elements for any text to have in order to be recognized as “good” writing (Tillema, 2012). Yet, it is also clear that investigating one will not automatically lead into an investigation of the other. In their attempt to understand why Japanese English writing appears to be less coherent than that of texts written by NESs, the above studies have tended to focus on sentence-level (mostly explicit) cohesion. Even the investigations into more implicit cohesion (e.g., anaphoric reference) that could play a larger role in the overall structure and coherence of a text were more focused on the degree to which JEFL learners were aware of and/or comprehended those features. In other words, they looked at whether or not and/or how L2 learners perceived cohesion rather than how the learners did or did not utilize such devices to create cohesion.

Additional issues
In addition to the number of issues discussed regarding past studies between Japanese and English writing, one final shortfall must be noted: how the research was carried out. For example, sample sizes of many of these studies are rather small. Miyake’s (2007) study was limited to 11 essays; Sasaki (2000) only examined 12 texts (four in each corpus); Yamashita’s (2015) study was, as she admitted, preliminary and only compared one English text written by a Japanese L2 writer with another written by an L1 English speaker. O’Riordan’s (1999) study only compared four texts. In other studies, the corpora to be compared did not have appropriate tertia comparationis (Connor & Moreno, 2005). These studies did not take into account a number of variables, such as genre, topic, and writers’ proficiency levels, in their designs (see Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Kamimura & Oi, 1998; Kobayshi, 1984; Lee, 2011; Rinnert, Kobayashi, & Katayama, 2015; Sasaki, 2000; Yamashita, 2015) and thus the corpora were not in fact comparable, according to Connor and Moreno (2005). Many studies in this field relied on convenience sampling, such as Stapleton (2001) and Haenouchi and Ichinose (2010) who collected texts from participants all within the same institution, and, in some cases the participants all came from the same department (e.g., Iwamoto, 2006). These studies attempted to make generalizations but convenience sampling makes it difficult to generalize results.
On the other hand, other studies (see Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Hinkel, 2002; Nishigaki, Chujo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007) were quite comprehensive and their extensiveness was perhaps their limitation. Hinkel (2002), for example, compared English texts written by native speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian, and Arabic with those written by native speakers of English. Assumedly, Hinkel does not have a background in all, if any, of these languages, thus she regularly fell back on literature and assumptions in her analyses.

Another limitation of contrastive studies between Japanese and English writing is that they are not exploratory—they use a set of predetermined features that had been identified by previous literature and that had long been recognized as problem areas for L2 English learners (see Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Hinkel, 2002; Miyake, 2007; Nishigaki, Chujo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996). While this is not in and of itself a bad approach, sometimes it is not so much about specific locations on a map but more about exploring and charting locations that have yet to be discovered. This is even more so the case when the map is dated and does not include alternative routes and newly discovered regions.

Finally, many of the studies conducted in this field simply lack rigor. For example, some of the quantitative results offered only simple comparisons of percentages and did not apply statistically rigorous tests (e.g., Nishigaki & Leishman, 2001; Lee, 2011) while others were purely qualitative and based entirely on the authors’ subjective observations (see Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Matsuda, 2001; Rinnert, Kobayashi, & Katayama, 2015; Stapleton, 2001). Furthermore, measures that are fairly standard in research to ensure reliable results were sometimes ignored, or at the very least, not mentioned, such as normalizing the data (e.g., Bryant, 1984; Kamimura & Oi, 1998; Nishigaki, Chujo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Sasaki, 2000) and testing for inter-rater reliability (see Haenouchi & Ichinose, 2010; Iwamoto, 2006; Kobayashi, 1984; Matsuda, 2001; Miyake, 2007; Miyasato, 2000; Oi, 1986; O’Riordan, 1999; Rinnert, Kobayashi, & Katayama, 2015).

Summary
There is no doubt that contrastive studies between Japanese and English have contributed significantly to our understanding of both languages. But the complexities and fluidity of language have made it rather difficult to pinpoint the specific features with which Japanese struggle when writing in English. Nevertheless, it has been made abundantly clear that Japanese English writing is

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12 The L2 texts were tested for inter-rater reliability but the L1 texts were not.
consistently perceived as “illogical” and “ambiguous” or perhaps more accurately, incoherent, relative to that of NESs’ writing (see Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Atkinson, 1997; Connor, 2005; Davies, 1998; Easton, 1982; Harder & Harder, 1982; Hinds, 1976, 1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1987, 1990; Kunihiro, 1976; Nishigaki & Leishman, 2001; Nishihara, 1990; Oi, 1986; Oi & Kamimura, 1998; O’Riordan, 1999), but no study thus far has been extensive enough to offer more than suggestive reasons as to why this might be the case.

The majority of these studies have relied heavily on discourse analysis, often not adopting precautions in research design to assure the replicability of the study, such as inter-rater reliability. The lack of rigor has resulted in discrepancies across the literature, with some studies suggesting that Japanese L2 learners apply traditional Japanese organizational patterns (e.g., ki-shō-ten-ketsu) and inductive approaches to their English writing (see Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Easton, 1982; Haenouchi & Ichinose, 2010; Iwamoto, 2006; Nishigaki & Leishman, 2001), which they claim could account for the apparent incoherence of Japanese English writing. Others, however, have found that such patterns are not typical of Japanese writing and that standard conventions and rhetorical/organizational patterns of English can also be commonplace in Japanese, particularly in academic writing (see Kobayashi, 1984; Kubota, 1997; Matsunaga, 1999; Miyake, 2007) or even that rhetorical/organizational patterns are not as influential in determining the assessment of a text as much as other factors are (see Hirose, 2003). Findings such as these then make it difficult to generalize Japanese writing as “illogical,” “inductive,” “circular,” etc. and would therefore not reliably account for why their English writing does not satisfy the conventions and rhetorical expectations of English.

Other studies have focused their investigations at the micro-level and have looked at cohesive devices in an attempt to quantify differences between Japanese English writing and L1 English speakers’ writing (see Butler, 2002; Connor, 1984; Dowse, 2017; Hinkel, 2001; Narita, Sato, & Sugiura, 2004; Nishigaki & Leishman, 1998, 2001; Nishigaki, Chujo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Oi, 1986; Yamashita, 2015). Though many of these studies have shown a tendency for over-explicit linkage between adjacent sentences with the use of connectors, lack of variety in transition usage, and weaknesses in ellipsis and synonym substitution and even incognizance of definite/indefinite article reference among JEFL learners, they still have not adequately identified exactly what is causing Japanese English writing to feel less coherent than the writing of that done by L1 English speakers. One reason for this deficit is the fact that many of these studies did not expand beyond the explicit cohesion formed at the micro-level (see Hinkel, 2001; Nishigaki & Leishman, 1998,
2001; Oi, 1986). However, those studies that have been based on the idea that cohesion at the micro-level may help in the formation of coherence at the macro-level (see Nishigaki, Chujo, McGoldrick-Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Yamashita, 2015) are rooted in an erroneous premise. This is because though cohesive devices may linguistically signal a writer’s decision of expressing a connection between two ideas, they do not necessarily connect them (Carrell, 1982; Maynard, 1998). Other studies entertained notions of cohesion that tend to be more implicit, such as ellipsis, repetition, and article usage. While cohesive ties created with these types of devices are more likely to affect coherence, the studies that investigated such cohesion stopped just short of looking beyond their local occurrences, that is, they remained at the micro-level. Thus, the focus was placed on the cohesive devices themselves rather than on how the cohesion and structure of a text work to bring about an overall coherent piece of writing. As a result, these studies have not been able to accurately account for why Japanese English writing is regarded as less coherent than that of L1 speakers’ writing.

Finally, in their efforts to seek out and identify origins of the errors observed in Japanese English writing, most of these studies, from those focused on rhetorical/organizational patterns to those concerned more with micro-level errors, such as idiomatic, grammatical, and cohesion, have been guilty of reducing Japanese L2 writers’ errors to L1 transfer and cultural difference. This has led numerous studies down a dangerous path littered with bias and subjectivity. It certainly appears that scholars in this field have overly concerned themselves with the origins of errors, which have yet to be empirically identified, bringing about inaccurate and contradictory interpretations of the results of these studies. These inaccuracies and contradictions in the literature have just led to more confusion and frustration, which has resulted in the field slowly dwindling, as is evidenced by the significant decrease in contrastive studies between Japanese and English over recent years.

To address these critical shortcomings, it is necessary to design a study that can accomplish two things. First, since overgeneralizations of languages and cultures appears to be a common pitfall of contrastive studies, the only way out is to take a step back and approach the issue in more fundamental terms. Rather than looking at cultural and linguistic influences, what needs to be done is a study designed on basic communication principles. As has been shown, CG theory is exceedingly suitable for the contrastive context. Therefore, I construct this contrastive study within this theoretical framework, i.e., CG, in order to avoid the precarious territory of cultural and linguistic transfer and thereby offer results that are less concerned with stereotyping large cultures and attributing errors to overgeneralizations.
of Japanese rhetoric and culture and more so with the basic act of meaningful communicative interaction between two individuals or, in the case of my study, two groups (i.e., Japanese L2 writers and L1 English-speaking readers), as it is the outcome of this interaction that dictates whether or not a text will be perceived as coherent.

Second, it is clear that an investigation that does not take into account both micro- and macro-level features will likely be unable to effectively identify the anomalies that could plausibly account for incoherence in the JEFL writers’ texts. Thus, features at the micro- and macro-levels of discourse must be investigated, not as separate or independent entities, but as symmetrically reliant features that work throughout a text to effectively unite lexical, grammatical, and structural features with the ideas and knowledge of both the reader and writer into a single, mutually comprehensible whole (see McCarthy, 1991; van Dijk, 1973, 1977). By adopting RST as its analytical framework, it is my hope that this study will be able to more effectively explore features beyond general organizational/rhetorical patterns, grammatical correctness, or even idiomaticity of Japanese English writing. Accordingly, I believe this type of analysis will be better adept at identifying plausible reasons as to why the English texts of Japanese writers often times do not meet the rhetorical expectations of English and are in fact regularly seen as “illogical,” “ambiguous,” and “incoherent” when compared to that of NESs’ writing.

By embarking from the theoretical position of CG and adopting RST as its analytical framework, I hope to better understand what conventions and unarticulated values of English discourse are slipping past notice; these need to be better explicated to the Japanese L2 writer in the English writing classroom, not necessarily because they are Japanese and their language/culture is interfering with their English, but because they simply do not share enough common ground with NESs to effectively communicate with them in written form. It is therefore necessary to provide both instructors and Japanese language learners the tools to help them unearth common ground with L1 speakers of English in order to become more effective writers in the target language.