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**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

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While the raw frequency rates presented in Chapter 3 revealed statistical differences between the JEFL and NES corpora, there was an issue with the difference in sizes between the two corpora. To make sure like was being compared to like (Connor & Moreno, 2005; James, 1980), it was necessary to normalize the texts. This was done at two levels: per 1000 words and per 1000 segments, i.e., EDUs. At the word level, it was indicated that, when comparing all 32 RST relations, the frequency rate for JEFL was significantly higher than NES; however, as was reiterated throughout Chapter 3, rhetorical relations are formed between segments, not between words. Thus, there was concern that normalization at the word level would not provide a valid statistical basis on which to reliably compare the frequency rates of rhetorical relations. Accordingly, the data was also normalized per 1000 segments, i.e., EDUs—the level at which rhetorical relations occur. It is the results from this normalized data to which I will be restricting the following discussion.

In this chapter, I discuss the quantitative findings presented in Chapter 3. I begin with the larger subcategory, Subject Matter (SM), since a statistical difference was only found here—the SM relation category was found to occur less frequently in the JEFL corpus than in the NES corpus. Accordingly, I confine my discussion of the quantitative data to SM relations and how the JEFLs’ use of this sort of relation may reflect problems with the coherence in their texts. As will be shown, it cannot be assumed that a lower rate of SM relations automatically leads to a text of lower quality. The NES texts judged as “well written” had a tendency towards fewer SM relations than those judged as “less well written,” suggesting that frequency rate alone cannot account for differences in text quality.

Next to the underrepresentation of the category of SM relations, there are also a few individual relations (including SM relations) that are, as identified by Yule’s difference coefficient, overrepresented in the JEFL data. I found the overrepresented relations to be of particular interest, as the data in this study offered some interesting anomalies that may be related to the coherence and apparent quality of texts. Accordingly, I will further expand on some of these relations, in particular. The interpretation of the quantitative data is lastly accompanied by qualitative observations made as a result of that data.
I begin my qualitative discussion with a closer look at what a lower rate of SM relations in the JEFL texts could indicate. This will be followed by an examination of the content found within the segments of various overrepresented relations in the JEFL corpus that may be negatively affecting coherence. I then proceed to investigate the occurrences of two interesting phenomena in particular: 1) instances of dangling units and 2) the occurrence of mismatched content and nuclei function across segments, which I will term “artificial nuclei.” I would like to preface the following by stating that the qualitative observations to be discussed concern only a few cases in the corpus and thus should not be regarded as definitive, generalizable evidence. But, together with the quantitative data, they do provide some deeper insight and present intriguing conjectures that are worthy of further consideration.

In fact, it is important to note that the quantitative and qualitative discussions should be considered in tandem with one another because linguistic categories and distinctions are fuzzy, making it difficult to quantify them, as is the case with much data on human behavior. This is perhaps why so many contrastive rhetorical studies in the past have struggled to provide precise conclusions, i.e., it is difficult to successfully quantify meaningful language use, and it always involves qualitative decisions on what is being counted. Looking at the quantitative data through a qualitative lens is thus an important and even necessary enterprise to help bring about a better understanding of what the data means within its context.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative research has long been advocated in the social and human sciences (see, for example, Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1989, 2012; Jick, 1979; Mathison, 1988; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2009). As Olsen (2004), explains, the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods “is not aimed merely at validation but at deepening and widening one’s understanding” (p. 103). Accordingly, the examination of quantitative data in tandem with qualitative observations can assist in bringing about insights into human behavior as illustrated in various studies (e.g., Jacobs, 1996; Ruark & Fielding-Miller, 2016), and which also applies to the study of language. What follows, therefore, should be seen as a “sequential chaining,” as Hartley and Chesworth (2000, p. 15) put it, of quantitative data and qualitative observations of the phenomena involved.

Interpretations of the Quantitative Data
The Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated no statistically significant difference in the frequency rates between the two corpora in all but one category: SM relations. Specifically, there were significantly fewer SM relations found in the JEFL corpus than in the NES corpus (p = 0.047). Since the quality of English texts written by
Japanese (and L2 writers in general) is usually regarded as poorer to texts written by NESs (see Connor, 2005; Hinkel, 2002; Kaplan, 1966; Silva, 1993; Tillema, 2012; Yamashita, 2015), a reasonable hypothesis here would be that there is a direct link between the frequency of SM relations and text quality, namely, fewer SM relations leads to an overall lower quality text. To test this hypothesis the proportion of SM relations in the NES texts was compared to the results of the intuitive assessments made by NESs of their overall quality. The results are displayed in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1](image)

**Figure 4.1.** Scatter chart showing the correlation between the percentage of SM relations in NES texts and the assessment of those texts

As we can see, this simple hypothesis is not corroborated. If anything, the regression line suggests a tendency for well-written NES texts to have fewer SM relations. Though these results are not significant ($p = 0.058$), it still cannot be argued, based on the data from this study, that a lower rate of SM relations definitively leads to a lower quality text. Rather, what this does suggest is that there is something more complicated going on than the frequency rate of relations that is causing issues in the quality of JEFL texts.
Vagueness/Ambiguity
Considering that SM relations are the more ideational and informational of the two relation subgroups, it would seem to follow that a lower number of such relations in a text would indicate that ideas and information within the text are inadequate and this, in turn, would cause the text to be experienced as vague and less coherent. This would be due to the simple fact that an insufficient amount of information prevents the reader from being able to effectively identify the point of the text, or, at the very least, fully comprehend the ideas being presented. As Hobbs (1979, p. 74) notes: “When a sentence is insufficiently informative . . . the reader or listener looks for an Elaboration next, and [in coherent discourse] frequently finds it.” If such a segment is not found, then the text is less coherent, due to insufficient information. This phenomenon could (partially) explain how the lower rate of SM relations in the JEFL texts reflects less coherence as well as the vagueness and ambiguity that has been observed in Japanese English writing in past studies (e.g., Connor, 2005; Harder & Harder, 1982; Nishihara, 1990; Oi & Kamimura, 1998)—if a reader expects to find a certain segment with a particular relation and does not find it, he/she would, understandably, be left confused by the lack of information and coherence. Viewed in this way, the lower rate of SM relations is not the cause of the lower text quality of the JEFL texts but rather a symptom of a deeper problem.

Accordingly, it seems possible to account for the lower rate of SM relations as reflecting the vagueness/ambiguity of Japanese English writing in a plausible, natural way. This implies that it cannot be assumed that vague and ambiguous writing is the result of cultural differences or even unique to the English writing of Japanese L2 writers. Indeed, the inability to effectively develop ideas and generate content is not specific to Japanese learners, but is, in fact, a common area with which both L2 writers in general as well as novice writers struggle (Liu, 2009; Silva, 1993; Weigle, 2002). In the remainder of this chapter, I will first elaborate this further, on the basis of results of other research, and then relate it to a qualitative discussion of two other phenomena that can be observed in the data: a) some individual relations that are precisely overrepresented in the JEFL corpus, and b) dangling units and cross dependencies. Both may also be linked to issues of text quality in relation to coherence, in a way that is compatible with the diagnosis of the lower rate of SM relations.

As to the first of these topics, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated no statistically significant difference in the frequency rate of all 32 relations between the NES and JEFL corpora (and the results of Yule’s difference coefficient also support those findings overall), but if we focus on individual relations, a tendency
for certain relations to be overrepresented in the JEFL corpus in comparison to their frequency in the NES corpus can be noticed (see Figure 4.2). It is worthwhile to investigate these differences more closely, not only because of their interest as such, but also to see if they may ultimately be diagnosed in the same way as the underrepresented category of SM relations. I will therefore limit the present study to the overrepresented relations that I found to be most interesting and seemingly most influential on coherence, leaving the other relations for future research.

![Bar graph showing the overrepresented relations in the JEFL corpus compared to the NES corpus](image)

**Figure 4.2.** Bar graph showing the overrepresented relations in the JEFL corpus compared to the NES corpus

Among those in the Presentational relations category, the Antithesis was used over 30% more frequently by the JEFL writers; the Justify relation more than 80%. The value of the difference coefficient for each of these relations was -0.14 and -0.28 respectively, confirming overrepresentation of these relations in the JEFL corpus when compared to their use in the NES corpus. Two relations from the SM category\textsuperscript{15} were also used quite a bit more among the JEFL writers. The Solutionhood relation occurred 30% more frequently in the JEFL corpus, with a difference coefficient

\textsuperscript{15} The individual rates of Solutionhood and NV Cause relations, though more frequent in the JEFL texts, were, used relatively infrequently on the whole and the total rate of SM relations remains greater in the NES texts.
value of -0.18. It is also interesting to note that the Non-volitional (NV) Cause appeared nearly twice as often in the JEFL corpus as it did in the NES corpus; its coefficient value was -0.32. Three types of Multinuclear relations were used more in the JEFL corpus than in the NES corpus: Conjunction (nearly 15% more frequent; difference coefficient = -0.07); Contrast, which appeared just under 40% more often than in the NES corpus with a difference coefficient value of -0.16; and the Joint relation, identified at a frequency rate of almost four times that of its usage by NES writers (difference coefficient = -0.59). The question then is how the overuse of these relations could reflect typical weaknesses of Japanese English writing identified in the past, namely, illogical, ambiguous, and incoherent. This requires a closer investigation of the individual relations and their occurrences within the texts in a qualitative perspective.

Now, turning to topic b, one reason for RST’s suitability for contrastive purposes is its ability to reveal obstructions in coherence, particularly cross dependencies\textsuperscript{16} (a unit or span of units that does not abide by RST’s adjacency constraint by connecting to another set of units across a different unit) and dangling units (a unit of text that appears to ‘dangle’ in the text, as it is not connected to the rest of the text and hence has no position within the hierarchy of the text); in practice, the two may in fact be treated as a single phenomenon.

In total, there were 14 instances of this phenomenon, with 13 occurring in the JEFL corpus and one in the NES corpus. When normalized at the segment level (since dangling units are themselves units, there was no need to normalize at the word level), this became 11.08 instances in the JEFL corpus and 1.49 instances in the NES corpus. The statistical analysis results indicated that dangling units occurred at a significantly higher rate in the JEFL corpus (p < 0.02) than in the NES corpus with an effect size of 0.35, suggesting a medium effect size (Arstein & Poesio, 2008; Cohen, 1988).

It should be noted, however, that a statistical test on such a small data set does not necessarily produce reliable results. In fact, of the 13 instances of dangling units observed in the JEFL corpus, eight of them occurred in a single text, suggesting that this phenomenon may be more of an anomaly than a pattern, and thus these statistical results should not be regarded as hard evidence but simply as traces of

\textsuperscript{16} Sanders and van Wijk (1996) reported on “discontinuities,” which occur in text organization “when the connection between two segments runs through those of intermediate ones” (p.104).
something that could be pointing towards a difference between the two corpora. Without question, however, a 13:1 ratio certainly does elicit notice. Accordingly, dangling units will also be covered in greater detail in a qualitative discussion.

Looking Through a Qualitative Lens
In this chapter, we have thus far attempted to interpret the significant quantitative result presented in Chapter 3. As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the integration of quantitative data with qualitative observations is necessary for a deeper and wider understanding of linguistic phenomena. The following sections will therefore look closely at the texts themselves and the implementation of a variety of relations within those texts in an effort to better understand why the English writing of Japanese may be regarded as less coherent and more illogical to that of NESs.

Since, as we have seen, the lower frequency rate of SM relations in the JEFL texts cannot account for lower text quality on its own but does allow for a natural interpretation as a symptom of textual problems in the ideational domain, it is worthwhile to venture into other avenues to see what can be revealed about the texts and to what extent this can be interpreted along parallel lines. Accordingly, problematic properties of the JEFL texts (beyond relation use) will be presented. After discussing the observable problems, the mechanisms most likely causing those problems will be posited. Finally, the relations identified as overrepresented in the JEFL corpus and the phenomena of dangling units and artificial nuclei will be discussed at length.

Observable Problems in the Texts
The quantitative data has shown that the JEFL writers in general use one subgroup of relations, i.e., SM relations, significantly less than the NES writers do. Though it is possible to provide an explanation for this as an indication for the reason why the JEFL texts are often regarded as vague and ambiguous, this cannot explain why there was a tendency for the NES texts with no more or even fewer such relations to be evaluated as “well-written” (see beginning of this chapter). Accordingly, this difference (fewer SM relations in JEFL) seems to be only one symptom among many of the vagueness and ambiguity that often characterizes JEFLLs’ English texts. In fact, a closer look at the JEFL texts reveals other problematic areas that, in combination with the quantitative data, offer insight into the JEFL writers’ texts that help to plausibly explain why they struggle to produce coherent English writing beyond idiomatic and grammatical reasons.
Uniform Information Density

A text can only be regarded as coherent when the reader (subconsciously) anticipates a certain coherence relation and finds it in the order and position in which he/she expects to find it (Hobbs, 1979; Mann & Thompson, 1987). Thus, for one’s ideas to be developed and presented coherently, it is important that the writer provides the appropriate amount of details in the text and structures them in such a way that the intended meaning is successfully conveyed. This concept can be subsumed under Uniform Information Density\textsuperscript{17} (UID; Frank & Jaeger, 2008; Levy & Jaeger, 2007), which states that speakers (or, in the case of texts, writers) “structure their language to avoid peaks and troughs in rate of information transmission” (p. 944). In other words, a writer has to decide at what point to provide less information and at what point to provide more, based on consideration given to the reader. Less UID results in texts being experienced as less coherent and logical. This problem can be observed in a number of JFL texts.

For example, in the following excerpt (see Example 4.1), the author leaves out important information while also including unnecessary details.

Example 4.1

In Example 4.1, the author makes two claims: a) part-time jobs teach the importance of money and work, and b) college does not teach the importance of money and work. When the writer declares, “But in college, students can not learn such things” in [Span 4], the reader expects some elaboration/explanation on this claim and this expectation is further fanned by the “for example” connecter at the beginning of the sentence that follows. However, as the reader quickly realizes, this sentence

\textsuperscript{17}Grice’s (1975) maxims of quantity also echoes this notion, claiming that one’s contribution to a communicative interaction should be “as informative as is required (for the purposes of the exchange)” and should not be “more informative than is required (for the purposes of the exchange)” (p. 45).
does not give an example of or explanation for the claim made in [Span 4]. A subsequent clause like “because focus is placed on study over real-life skills like these” would have sufficed and easily prepared the reader for what comes next: the author’s personal experience as evidence for how a part-time job can teach “the importance of moneys and working.” It is thus clear that vital information that would have helped move the text along more coherently was left out by the writer.

Continuing through the text, we once again come across a violation of UID but this time in the form of too much information. At this point, the author appears to deviate from the evidence to discuss what his/her part-time job is and what he/she does. While it may be of some significance to provide the reader with a bit of information regarding the author’s job, most of the details here are simply not necessary and only serve to draw the reader away from the point at hand, similar to the digressive element and coherence breaks observed in Japanese English writing in past studies (see, for example, Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Oi, 1986; Yamashita, 2015).

Thus, what we see in this example are instances of where the author causes a “trough” in information immediately followed by a “peak,” resulting in an unclear, or, more accurately, incoherent text. In order to create coherence and flow in a text it is vital to provide enough information while not going overboard and over explaining and/or including details that the reader simply does not need. Knowing how much information to offer, however, is a skill that comes with experience and practice in writing. This will be discussed momentarily.

Redundancy & repetition
Another area that is somewhat related to the above issue, i.e., UID, but is not necessarily identifiable through frequency counts (of relations, in any case) is one of the most common sins of writing: redundancy. Because this was observed in both the NES lower-rated texts as well as the JEFL texts, it is worthwhile investigating.

Redundancy and its impact on text quality
Redundancy clearly affects the quality of a text as Example 4.2 shows (it was taken from the lowest assessed NES text). In this text, the author repeats on multiple occasions the idea that he/she is “too busy” with schoolwork to get a part-time job (see [Unit 1], [Unit 2], [Unit 3], [Unit 4], and [Unit 7]).
"I wish that I had enough time to have a part-time job, but I am way too busy with my schoolwork to even think about getting started in something that would only drain my time and detract from the intense focus which is required of my studies. I am an MCDB major, so I think I have a lot more homework than other kids on campus. A lot of my friends have part-time jobs and they seem to enjoy them quite a lot, and it really makes me feel bad that I have so much work that I cannot even have just a few hours per week to make a little bit of money and have a little bit of fun."

Example 4.2

If, however, this repetition is removed, it becomes clear how the text can be improved upon (see Example 4.3).

"As a MCDB major, I simply do not have time to have a part-time job, though I wish I did, since my friends seem to enjoy theirs quite a lot. It would also be nice to earn a bit of extra money."

Example 4.3

In Example 4.2, the reader struggles to identify the point of the text, but the point is made immediately clear in Example 4.3 where the redundant information has been removed. It is thus clear from these examples that excessive repetition negatively impacts the coherence of a text. Furthermore, since Example 4.2 was pulled from the lowest assessed NES text, redundancy may indeed be a contributing factor to a text’s quality, something that the lower rate of SM relations cannot (and need not) completely account for. Therefore, it warrants a more thorough discussion.

**Redundancy in the JEFL texts**

Repetition as a weakness of Japanese English writing has been observed in past studies (see Nishigaki, Chuyo, Leishman, & Hasegawa, 2007; Oi, 1986; Yamashita, 2015), but these studies were generally concerned with vocabulary usage and concluded that such errors were made in an attempt to create coherence, a
preferred strategy among L2 writers (Liu & Zhang, 2012). The texts from the JEFL corpus, however, suggest that something much more ominous is occurring. The issue extends beyond the ability to use synonyms correctly or even an overreliance on repetition to construct coherence. In their efforts to expand upon their ideas and move their texts forward, the JEFL writers ended up unknowingly repeating their ideas. This particular observation is a good example as to why quantitative data does not always tell the whole story. If this study had relied solely on the frequency of RST relations as tagged in the corpus, issues in repetition would not have been unearthed as the occurrences of repetition in the JEFL texts were not recognizably intentioned as rhetorical relations in the coding phase of my investigation and therefore did not warrant a Restatement relation tag. It is thus worthwhile to further elaborate on this issue.

In Example 4.4, [Unit 22] and [Unit 23] attempt to expand upon why “talking with many people is quite meaningful” as stated in [Unit 21]. However, neither [Unit 22] nor [Unit 23] provide clear, specific, and adequate detail so that the reader can receive “the full persuasive impact” (Wyrick, 2016, p. 206) intended by the writer; that persuasive impact being, in the case of this particular text, an attempt to convince the reader that talking to many people is, in fact, meaningful.

| [21] Talking with many people is quite meaningful for college students. | [22] They can get very important things from it. | [23] Also, it will be useful for them in the future. |

Example 4.4

Clearly, the JEFL writer intended to elaborate more on the idea of [Unit 21] but was unable to do so successfully. The lack of detail in [Unit 22] resulted in [Unit 23] which also failed to provide sufficient detail. This causes the text to feel as if its progression has reached an impasse, leaving the reader feeling he/she is trapped on a loop that leads to nowhere. In the end, all [Unit 22] and [Unit 23] achieve is in repeating [Unit 21]. Neither [Unit 22] nor [Unit 23], however, fulfilled the Restatement relation as this does not appear to be the intention of the writer nor would it be likely that the reader would easily “recognize the satellite as a restatement of the nucleus” (Mann, Matthiessen, & Thompson, 1989, p. 56). Rather the most plausible rhetorical intention of the writer was an attempt to use these units together (joined by a List relation) to justify why the author believed it meaningful to talk to many people.
It is clear that the JEFL writers struggle with how to present and distribute information effectively within and across a text. This is seen in the lower rate of SM relations as identified by the quantitative analysis as well as in other ways. The dropping of information when in fact more is needed and the inclusion of unnecessary information is without a doubt a problem observed in the JEFL texts. Further, unintentional repetition and redundant ideas/information can clearly have a detrimental effect on the quality of a text with which the JEFLs seem to particularly have issue. At this point it is worth noting that redundancy/repetitiveness aligns itself closely with UID and in many ways these two overlap. For this reason and in an effort to simplify matters, these problems will be regarded as a single, larger issue, namely, “Violations of UID.”

Possible Mechanisms Causing Violations of UID
In view of the literature, there are two major types of possible interpretations of the apparent tendency for JEFL writers to violate UID in their English texts. In what follows I will discuss these, and why one in particular is the more plausible of the two in light of the data presented here.

A mismatch of genres?
Past studies of Japanese L2 learners have implied that because Japanese have been trained in conventions that differ from English, when they attempt to generate ideas within those conventions and transfer them over to English, their English texts end up reflecting the conventions of Japanese, resulting in incoherent, illogical, vague texts (see, for example, Doi, 1996; Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Kobayashi, 1984; Nishihara, 1990; Oi, 1986; Oi & Kamimura, 1998; Okabe, 1983; Ostler, 1987). In other words, the conventions for Japanese and English writing presumably differ so much that when one is applied to another they can negatively impact the texts, but the JEFL writers are not aware of this. This interpretation is interesting in view of Tardy’s (2012) claim that L1 writing and L2 writing are two distinct genres.

Writing is now generally accepted as a social act (Flairclough, 1992; Hyland, 2004; Moreno, 1997) and genres as different social practices with their own sets of expectations, or, to borrow Clark’s (1985) terminology, “conventions” and “precedents,” i.e., “coordination devices.” From this perspective then, writing in another language is, in effect, writing in a different genre, which, accordingly, has its own set of coordination devices. Just as a writer cannot assume that the coordination devices of a business letter can be effectively and appropriately applied to an academic term paper, a L2 writer cannot apply a set of coordination devices from the L1 context because the precedent and conventions are not applicable to
their new social setting. A widespread claim of Japanese English writing is that the observed incoherent structure is a result of the Japanese applying L1 conventions to the L2, which simply do not “match” (see, for example, Doi, 1996; Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Kobayashi, 1984; Nishihara, 1990; Oi, 1986; Oi & Kamimura, 1998; Okabe, 1983; Ostler, 1987).

Therefore, from this position it could be argued that if ideas for an English text are generated within the JEFL’s L1, i.e., Japanese, those ideas may end up adopting coordination devices that are only applicable to the context in which they were originally generated for. So, when the JEFL writer attempts to bring the generated ideas into the English text they may end up violating or, at the very least, not meeting the expectations of their new social setting within the L2. Such an interpretation would in many ways seem to suggest that there is some cultural interference at play, which is a common assumption made of Japanese English writing in the literature (see, for example, Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Kaplan, 1966; Lee, 2011; Oi, 1986). But there are a number of issues with this interpretation.

First, this interpretation would directly conflict with other studies that have found L2 writers benefit from utilizing their L1 writing knowledge and experience and that there is a correlation between a learner’s L2 writing ability and L1 writing ability (e.g., Carson & Kuehn, 1992; Kubota, 1998b; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012; 2013; Ma & Wen, 1999). Second, if indeed the JEFLs were applying L1 genre conventions to the L2, we would expect to see fewer SM relations in the L1, but this was not the case. In fact, the majority of the relations in the Japanese texts were SM (to be discussed later on in this chapter). Finally, it is important to note that if the JEFL writers are indeed “mismatching” genres, this would necessarily require that they have knowledge of at least one of the two genres in the first place, namely, Japanese. Yet, as will be discussed, Japanese generally lack training and experience in both L1 and L2 writing, which would imply that they also lack the knowledge of the conventions in both of these genres.

It is discrepancies like these that offer further evidence as to why interpretations of our data should not be based on concepts of culture. And it is for this very reason that I have attempted to avoid jumping to such speculations in my interpretations of any observed phenomena by affixing to more fundamental communication principles, specifically, CG theory. From this position then, the “mismatch of genres” interpretation becomes less convincing. Thus, for a more plausible interpretation, we must turn our attention towards the writers themselves.
**Limited cognitive resources**

A lower rate of SM relations in the JEFL texts could be indicative of a cognitive struggle occurring within the JEFL writers. Due to the limitation of cognitive resources while composing, the Japanese writers were forced to allocate resources to structural and linguistic components of the writing task rather than to the development of subject matter and content. According to Liu (2009, p. 64), the task of writing for L2 writers “consumes too much cognitive energy and produces too much mental load” to allow them to effectively manage all of its demands. This would seem to suggest that a L2 writer’s cognitive capacity is finite and its expenditure in one area of a task, such as grammar, syntactic structure, or other similar local issues, would inevitably result in deficiencies elsewhere in that task. In other words, an over focus at the micro level would make it difficult, if not impossible, for a L2 writer to simultaneously manage macro-level elements of written discourse, such as consideration for what information has been given and what information needs to be given, i.e., UID. An overfocus like this at the micro level that is potentially negatively impacting the macro level can certainly be observed among the texts in the JEFL corpus, which may provide further evidence of a cognitive struggle occurring among these L2 writers.

For every 100 words in the JEFLs’ texts, there were nearly 10 EDUs. In the NESs’ texts, however, there were only seven EDUs per 100 words. In general, EDUs in the JEFL corpus were shorter and less complex than those in the NES corpus. This could account for the rather choppy and “loosely organized” feeling of the JEFL writing and indicates that the JEFL writers approached the writing task at the sentence level (constructing a coherent sentence was a task in and of itself), while the NES writers regarded the essay more as a single whole and approached it as such, resulting in a more coherent piece of writing.

Accordingly, it can be seen here how variances in structure can be reasonably explained for reasons beyond L1 rhetorical/cultural influence (or even genre conventions), which has often been viewed as the source of such issues in L2 writers in previous studies, as mentioned above. More specifically, if the Japanese L2 writers were allocating too much of their resources to the micro-level structure of their texts, this would not only account for issues in coherence at the macro level and the “loosely organized” structure of Japanese English texts but would also provide insight into why past studies have observed a tendency among Japanese to create “explicit linkage” at the micro level when writing in English (see Narita, Sato, & Sugiura, 2004).
Narita, Sato, and Sugiura (2004) claimed “explicit linkage” to be a deliberate decision made by the Japanese L2 writers in an effort to make meaning clearer for themselves, which I have argued is unlikely due to their limited cognitive capacity but did not offer an alternative explanation for their occurrences (see Chapter 2). The interpretation presented here, however, would suggest that “explicit linkage” was perhaps an unintentional consequence of the focus on micro-level structure (though this would need to be tested in future studies that investigate explicit connectors along with structure through RST or another similar analytical framework), effectively accounting for both the occurrences themselves as well as the fact that L2 writers’ limited cognitive resources most likely would prevent them from making such purposeful decisions in their writing.

It is clear then that the additional cognitive demands allocated to the simple linguistic construction of ideas, such as syntax and lexical retrieval, may be taking the JEFL writers’ attention away from effectively developing their ideas beyond the sentence level. As a result, the JEFL writers are unable to ground their ideas in a detailed and coherent description of the subject matter within their texts. We interpreted the lower rate of SM relations in the JEFL texts in this light, and it can also be seen reflected in the phenomena of less UID and in issues of redundancy. As we shall see, the same is true for phenomena to be discussed later on in this chapter, e.g., overuse of Justify relations and instances of Joints and dangling units.

This description also demonstrates that JEFL writers indeed seem to be wrestling with their limited cognitive resources due to their linguistic proficiency, or lack thereof, and this could account, at least in part, for observed issues of coherence in their English writing. But the limited cognitive resources cannot be attributed entirely to the JEFLs’ linguistic proficiency in the L2. It is also very probable that JEFLs’ struggles with writing in English extend beyond the language itself to include their abilities as writers, which is likely exacerbating these cognitive struggles.

Knowledge telling & knowledge transforming
A writer’s skill level can be evaluated based on his/her ability to effectively manage the two domain problems of writing: the content domain and the rhetorical domain (Renkema, 2004). This is reflected in Bereiter and Scardamalia’s (1987) models of writing development: “knowledge telling” and “knowledge transforming.”
Knowledge telling essentially describes the writing ability of the beginner or novice writer—the ability to deal with the content domain problem but not yet capable of simultaneously managing the rhetorical domain problem. Writers who fall within this model are most concerned with generating content, and their main goal is simply to answer the question: “What should I write?” Once they are able to answer this question, they then attempt to “tell” the reader what they know about the topic at hand (Chuy, Scardamalia, & Bereiter, 2011; Renkema, 2004). Accordingly, English composition classes generally place emphasis on “the development of ideas and the soundness of the writer’s logic” (Weigle, 2002, p. 5) to help beginner writers acquire the skills needed to generate ideas and then articulate them through writing.

Knowledge transforming involves a multidimensional skill set: the writer not only must consider the question, “What should I write?” but also questions like, “How do I present this to my reader?”, “Am I being convincing enough?”, “Am I making sense?”, as well as numerous others (Chuy, Scardamalia, & Bereiter, 2011; Renkema, 2004). In other words, writers with knowledge transforming skills can manage both the content and rhetorical domain problems of writing (Renkema, 2004). It is unclear how or when a writer moves from knowledge telling to the more advanced knowledge transforming, but it would seem that one does not ever move out of knowledge telling but in fact extends beyond it to also encompass knowledge transforming, as implied by Renkema’s (2004) cyclical description: “When writers ask themselves whether or not a certain concept is clear enough to the reader (rhetorical domain), then this question can lead to the concepts being more clearly defined (content domain) . . . ”, which then leads to efforts to more clearly defining the concept (rhetorical domain) and so forth (p. 223). Accordingly, the control over idea development, i.e., content domain, opens up a writer’s cognitive resources so that he/she is then able to also deal with the rhetorical domain. Yet to gain control over the content domain, a writer must have some background and/or training in writing, but this does not appear to be the case for many Japanese writers (as will be discussed momentarily). Thus, JEFL writers are further limited at the cognitive level so much so that all they appear to be able to accomplish is a surface-level structure (see Example 4.5).
it is important for college students to have a part-time job.

I have 3 reasons to support this opinion.

Firstly, for students to learn how to manage money.

College students do not have much money but they have lots of time so they tend to use it too much, they’re not good at control it.

If they work, they’ll recognize the importance and value of money.

And they’re going to get responsibility against money.

So they will never waste it.

Example 4.5

In the above example, the JEFL writer clearly demonstrates an understanding of basic global structure. The thesis is put forth in the beginning and then the promise of three “reasons” to support the author’s position is given. The reader then expects to see the first reason, which the writer provides: a part-time job will help “students to learn how to manage money.” Up to this point, the JEFL writer has effectively handled both the content and rhetorical domains of writing, but the problem occurs as we proceed deeper into the discourse.

What follows “reason” should be the evidence for this reason—this is what a NES reader would expect, and it appears this is what the writer attempts but fails to accomplish. [Spans 5–12] is offered as evidence for the [Span 4] proposition, but the ideas offered are not grounded in anything tangible that the reader can grasp onto as support for [Span 4]. All the reader sees is a description of a typical college student’s circumstance and the implicit causal relationship (i.e., they do not have a lot of money but they have a lot of time, so they end up spending more money than they should because of their free time) that may or may not be recognized, followed up with a condition on how a college student’s view of money might change if he/she were to get a part-time job, which does not provide “evidence” for why a part-time job would help a “student to learn how to manage money.” For the writer, this structure may make perfect sense: it seems to follow the rhetorical expectations (at the surface) of English writing. But the ‘detail’ of actually ensuring that the evidence provided support for the claim was overlooked, demonstrating a somewhat superficial understanding of the rhetorical domain and a general lack of control of the content domain.
It could very well be that the writer was coming from the assumption/belief that if a person’s attitude toward money changes, it will change how that person uses it, e.g., an irresponsible person who comes to understand the value of money will learn how to better manage it. But this notion is not grounded anywhere within the subject matter of the text and cannot be easily inferred, thus the writer cannot reasonably assume the reader would be able to grasp it. This may be due to the fact that the writer does not possess the cognitive capacity to consider the reader (to be discussed shortly), let alone what the reader needs in order to infer meaning from the text.

This example shows how the writer has a superficial understanding of structure but is unable (and most likely unaware of how) to create coherence at a deeper level. The “superficial” or “surface-level” structure of JEFL writers is an observation made elsewhere in this study (e.g., artificial nuclei) and a tendency to “impose surface logicality where no deep logicality exists” (Crewe, 1990, p. 320) has been recognized of other L2 writers as well (see, for example, Hinkel, 2002). This could reasonably explain the apparent incoherence and illogicality of JEFL writers and also suggests it is not a phenomenon unique to Japanese.

This superficial approach to writing of the JEFL writers thus could be accounted for by considering that these writers have a facile understanding of the rhetorical expectations of English writing, perhaps due to the “cart-before-the-horse” approach that is typical in the L2 writing classroom (i.e., emphasis on rhetorical modes and global structure, as was discussed in Chapter I). Clearly what JEFL writers (and perhaps L2 writers in general) need is to first acquire control over the content domain in order to expand their cognitive resources so that they are capable of managing the rhetorical domain.

Japanese as inexperienced writers
To better understand the constraints of the JEFL writers’ cognitive resources, it is important to understand a little more about their experience as writers, since this plays a big part in determining not only the extent of the cognitive effort needed to complete a writing task but also the limits of that effort (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987; Halliday, 1975; Kellogg, 2001).

In Japan, very little emphasis is placed on writing in the English classrooms, as Hirose
Regarding L2 English writing, Japanese students’ experience is practically non-existent. L2 writing instruction in high school is oriented toward translation from L1 to L2 at the sentence level. Because writing is the least emphasized skill in English language education at every level including university, it is possible for a Japanese non-English major university graduates [sic] not to have taken any English writing courses or not to have had any English writing experience.

This lack of writing instruction in the L2 classroom may be a reflection of the values of Japanese education, as it has also been noted that, in general, there is very little writing instruction in the L1. Reflecting upon her own L1 writing experience, Hirose (2003) states, “as a Japanese who was born and received education up to graduate school level in Japan, I have not taken a single L1 writing course, and other Japanese bilingual academics share this background” (p. 184). Other Japanese scholars have also made similar claims (see Yoshimura, 2002). This lack of experience in writing in the L1 may very likely affect how Japanese L2 learners write in English.

Japanese writers are not only wrestling with acquiring a new language and all that entails, including linguistic and cultural differences, but are also crafting their yet-to-be-developed writing skills, i.e., learning to manage both the content and rhetorical domain problems of writing. Such learners are clearly at a disadvantage as they are expected to undertake the daunting task of dealing with these issues in the L2 in which they are not yet sufficiently proficient. Therefore, to deal with their linguistic deficiencies and to help them develop their ideas, i.e., address the content domain problem, before writing them out in English, Japanese L2 writers may attempt to fall back on their L1 (Gosden, 1996; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Liu, 2009; van Weijen, van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2008). But such a strategy would only prove effective if the Japanese have some writing experience in their L1, which it appears many do not. Consequently, an inefficient development of ideas in Japanese English texts may be attributed to the lack of experience in the L1, and the ineffective development of ideas may be seen as a result of the lack of experience dealing with this new “genre,” i.e., the L2. The JFLs’ inexperience further complicates matters since this means they do not have the cognitive capacity to even consider for whom they are developing their ideas; that is, they are unable to consider the absent reality—their reader.
Considering the reader, more commonly referred to as “audience awareness,” is an important step in the cognitive development of writing and occurs when the “physical task of writing becomes automatic” (Carvalho, 2002, p. 271). Unlike spoken discourse, a writer does not have the benefit of immediate feedback (Kecskes, 2014). As Weigle (2002) explains, the lack of an addressee is a serious problem with which a writer must contend. Without the immediate feedback from the addressee that is afforded to speakers, the writer must consider “information about the writing topic,” (i.e., UID) “information about acceptable forms of written texts” (i.e., genre), and “information about the audience” all simultaneously (Weigle, 2002, p. 18), echoing Bierieter and Scardamalia’s (1987) “knowledge transforming” model. For L2 writers, this task is particularly straining on their cognitive resources (Tillema, 2012). According to Weigle, it is the “inability to anticipate the audience and shape a message appropriately in the absence of a conversation partner that distinguishes expert from inexpert writers” (p. 120). In other words, audience awareness comes with experience in writing, which, as has been discussed, many Japanese lack in both the L1 and L2.

Cognitive overload and its effects
We have seen how the JEFL writers’ cognitive resources are limited due to a combination of their linguistic proficiency, their writing skills, and their (lack of) experience as writers. What is important to note here is the fact that the inexperience of JEFL writers and their limited cognitive resources should not be considered in isolation from one another. In fact, these mechanisms cannot be fully explained or understood without giving consideration to the other.

The lack of writing experience among the JEFL writers makes it necessary for the learners to recruit more cognitive resources, which are already restricted due to the cognitively demanding task of producing a text in the L2. But these resources are further overloaded since the JEFL writers cannot turn to their L1 to lighten the cognitive load, and so they must allocate resources to stages of writing that for the more experienced writer are more or less automatic. So, what has been described here is, in principal, a single mechanism: the JEFL writers overload their cognitive resources in their attempts to write in English, which results in poorly or underdeveloped ideas since they are unable to allot enough of their resources to the development of ideas and all that entails, e.g., syntactic structure, lexical retrieval, audience awareness.
This cognitive overload may result in the omission of anticipated/expected relations, since the writer is incapable of recognizing when “... a sentence [is] insufficiently informative ...” and thus fails to include the appropriate relation, e.g., Elaboration, for the reader to find (Hobbs, 1979, p. 74). Accordingly, the most plausible cause for the lower rate of SM relations is the limited cognitive resources of the JEFL writers, as not only does it explain the lower rate but also issues of vagueness and ambiguity in general. This proposition is further supported by other features that have been made visible through the qualitative analysis, namely, less UID (digressions, too many irrelevant details, and unintentional repetition).

Overrepresented Relations: A Closer Look
We are now in a position to connect this discussion on mechanisms and the way they are reflected in the texts to a qualitative discussion of a number of relations that are overrepresented in the JEFL corpus when compared to their frequency rate in the NES corpus (see the end of the section on quantitative data at the beginning of this chapter). What follows is a more detailed examination of five of those relations (Antithesis, Justify, Solutionhood, Contrast, and Joint) that are most likely to be negatively related to the coherence of the JEFL texts (see Table 4.1 in Appendix A). Each of these relations and their use will be analyzed in their context in order to present reasonable explanations as to why and/or how JEFL writers are producing English texts that are less coherent relative to texts written by NESs.

Antithesis
The Antithesis relation is defined as a subtype of Contrast as the situations in the nucleus and satellite are in contrast. As Mann and Thompson (1988) explain, “one cannot have positive regard for both the situations presented in N [nucleus] and S [satellite]; comprehending S [satellite] and the incompatibility between the situations presented in N and S increases R's [reader's] positive regard for the situation presented in N” (p. 253). In other words, a contrast occurs in positive regard for the nucleus. This is the core of the Antithesis relation. Like all RST definitions, interpreting a relation as Antithesis implies assumptions about the state of mind of the writer (Renkema, 2009), specifically that the writer has a positive attitude towards the idea presented in the nucleus. Issues in coherence may arise when this positive regard is not particularly apparent, which may be caused in a couple of ways.

First, if the satellite of the Antithesis makes up a large portion of the overall text, it may weaken the nucleus causing the author’s position to appear uncertain. This can be observed in the lowest-assessed NES text (see Figure 4.3).
Of the fourteen spans that make up the entirety of the text, half are contained within the Antithesis satellite. Dedicating half of a text essentially contradicting one's self would seem to be counterproductive and certainly could lead to issues in coherence and logicality, leaving the reader to ask: “Does the writer think college students should have a part-time job or not?” This awkward use of the Antithesis could mean that specific types of relations do not necessarily dictate a text’s quality but rather their effective/appropriate use does. This is further exemplified through the JEFL texts.

In the JEFL corpus, the Antithesis would sometimes appear in the middle or towards the end of the text and then go on for nearly an equal length as the initial thesis and its supporting ideas. One instance of such an occurrence can be found in the following excerpt (see Example 4.6), which occurs when the author has clearly indicated the first 12 segments of the text that college students should not be taking part-time jobs:

```
On the contrary, having a part-time job itself can teach something important to us. For example, through a part-time job we can realize the value of money, or realize our parents’ effort to raise us, know how we can give better service to the customers, or encounter many people and enhance our knowledge. Those are the good aspects of having a part-time job, and we cannot do those things by just reading our textbook or something like that.
```

Example 4.6
After explaining the “bad aspect” of having a part-time job as a college student in [Span 1-12], the author here introduces a number of “good aspects.” It is as if the author changed his position or, at the very least, softened it only to conclude that it is still better for college students to have a part-time job. The issue here is that the contrast that occurred did not create positive regard for the nucleus but for the satellite. As a result, the author’s stance is diminished, and the reader is left wondering for which position the author was in favor. This certainly creates a feeling of illogicality and ambiguity. Thus, it is perhaps not so much the frequency of the Antithesis relation as it is how well the content of the segments being related fit and support the relation within the text.

Furthermore, the placement of the Antithesis in the text seems to affect the coherence. The three Antithesis relations found in the NES corpus all occurred towards the beginning of the text. In contrast, the Antithesis was found in the middle or towards the end of the JEFL texts. Intuitively, it seems natural that an Antithesis towards the end would produce a perceived weakening of the author’s ultimate position, while the effect of one at the beginning is only to set possible objections aside before presenting all the supporting arguments, resulting in the perception of a strong and well-supported, ultimate position (though this is less true if it occupies too much of the overall text, as seen in the lowest-assessed NES text). It is also interesting to note that none of the NES texts that were regarded as well-written contained Antithesis relations, while this relation occurred in two of the five less well-written texts.

The Antithesis relation is clearly a less common rhetorical relation to occur as its frequency, on average, was among the lowest of relations to occur amongst the texts in both corpora. A closer investigation suggests that when the relation does not successfully create a positive regard for the nucleus, it may contribute to ambiguity in the writing. Additionally, its placement within the hierarchy of the text may play a role in producing or inhibiting coherent structure.

Justify
Looking at the quantitative data, it can be seen that the average occurrence of the Justify relation among all 22 JEFL texts was nearly three relations for each text. In the NES texts, however, the Justify relation occurred less than once in each text. This might suggest that frequency of the relation within a single text could have something to do with quality; if this were the case, it would only logically follow that the relation would occur more frequently in the less well-written NES texts and less frequently in the well-written ones. However, the Justify relation appeared
nine times among the six well-written NES texts (3:2 ratio) and five times among
the five less well-written texts (1:1 ratio). Accordingly, the frequency rate cannot
account for any differences in quality between the two corpora. Observations of
this relation and its position may shed some light on the issue.

The Justify relation is one half of the subgroup Evidence and Justify. While Evidence
increases the reader’s belief in the nucleus, the intention of the Justify relation
satellite is to “increase the reader’s readiness to accept the writer’s right to present”
the nucleus (Mann & Thompson, 1987, p. 9). In other words, the writer is trying to
convince the reader that he/she has good reason to present the proposition in the
nucleus, but the Justify relation does not provide any content for the proposition
itself and does not move the argumentation forward. It simply relates two units
of text on the basis that “one of them is deemed likely to increase the reader’s
acceptance of the other” (Mann & Thompson, 1987, p. 17). It is essentially a relation
that occurs within its own span but does not extend beyond that span content
wise other than to support the nucleus that plays a connective role within the
hierarchy of the text. This can be effective when the Justify relation occurs within a
supporting detail for the overall main idea of the text, as seen in the following (see
Example 4.7):

```
1 College is a transitional time from dependence to independence for most people in modern society.
2 I think it is important for college students to have a part-time job,
3 and I shall support my claim with three points.
```

Example 4.7

In Example 4.7, [Span 1–3] is formed through the satellite, [Span 1], being
connected to the nucleus, [Span 2–3], by the Justify relation. The author presents
the idea that “college is a transitional time from dependence to independence”
so that the reader will be inclined to accept the writer’s right to claim that part-
time jobs are important for college students. The coherence of this span is further
improved by the content that follows this span. The “three points” can all be traced
back to the notion of college as a time for young people to transition from being
dependent on their parents and others to being independent and self-sufficient.
Furthermore, the order of these spans seems to be conventional.
According to Mann and Thompson (1987), the satellite before the nucleus is the canonical order of spans for the Justify relation\(^{18}\). Of the Justify relations that occurred among the well-written NES texts, eight occurred before the nucleus. In contrast, four of the five occurrences among the less well-written NES texts appeared after the nucleus. Though the frequency rate is too low to make any statistical claims, there does appear to be a pattern that suggests that the Justify relation following the nucleus is the preferred order, as Mann and Thompson (1987) first argued. This, however, was not the tendency among the JEFL English texts. Thirty-five of the 62 Justify relations that appeared in the JEFL corpus were positioned in front of the nucleus while 27 of them came after (see Example 4.8).

Example 4.8

In Example 4.9, the author is justifying his/her claim that students will experience many things that they have not done before because work and college differ considerably from one another. As is, however, the posterior satellite feels abrupt and awkwardly placed. Moving the satellite to an anterior position, on the other hand, helps to create a more logical flow of ideas within this span: “There is a big difference between company and college. When they enter a company, they experience many things that they will not have done.” Of course, this text would benefit cohesively with the use of a logical connector and/or revisions to the syntactic structure, but, as is, the ideas in this position appear to relate more coherently than in their original position. One plausible explanation for the common reversal of the Justify relation position in the JEFL corpus is that the JEFL writer is trying to create an Evidence relation, which is plausible considering the typical function and position of Evidence relations.

Evidence relations may assist at not only building upon ideas but moving them forward within a text (Mann & Thompson, 1987) and can thus effectively drive content forward. Accordingly, the satellite in an Evidence relation is typically observed in successive order to the nucleus, as was the case in the highest-assessed NES text (see Figure 4.4).

\(^{18}\) Non-canonical span order is entirely possible and occurs frequently in natural texts. According to Mann and Thompson (1987), however, converting “instances of non-canonical span order to canonical order . . . often improves [text quality]” (pp. 16-17).
The text in Example 4.9 appears to be replicating the canonical order of an Evidence relation, by placing the satellite after the nucleus, but the content of the relation in fact aligns itself more with Justify (see Example 4.9).

"It is because I think being a college student means to take a step forward into a social life as an adult." ["Our parents may pay our schools expenses."] ["Yet we are already old enough to earn our own allowances."]

Example 4.9

Figure 4.4. RST tree representing the occurrence of multiple dangling units in a JEFL text.

What the writer appears to be trying to convey in this text is: “Even though our parents may still be paying for expensive things, such as college tuition, as college students we are now old enough to take care of ourselves in some small ways like adults.” [Span 4–5] is attempting to increase the belief in the reader that college is a step towards adulthood by using age as evidence of this claim, that claim being: “In college we are now old enough to take care of ourselves in some ways.” However, the content does not seem to hold for this function. As such, it serves more to justify the initial claim. This placement, however, causes an awkward rhetorical relation that negatively impacts the logical flow of these spans. Therefore, it appears that not only does placement affect a text’s quality but the writer’s intended function of the satellite versus the content of the satellite can dictate placement and, in turn, a text’s quality, i.e., coherence. Structure versus function will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but, for now, these observations point to possible reasons as to why the JEFL texts differ from the NES texts and could thus be considered less coherent, more illogical, etc.
Solutionhood

The Solutionhood relation was not a particularly common relation in either of the corpora (a frequency of 2.97 PNS among the NES texts and of 4.26 PNS among the JEFL texts). However, as it occurred 30% more frequently in the JEFL texts than in the NES texts, a closer investigation is warranted, especially when looking at the effect these sorts of relations have on the coherence of the texts.

A Solutionhood relation occurs when the nucleus presents a solution to a problem stated in the satellite (see Example 4.10).

\[
\text{"I major in engineering, and for me, it will be almost impossible to get a good job when I finish my degree if I do not have some previous work experience." For other students with technical majors, I think the case is similar, and they should find some way to incorporate part-time work into their curriculum.}\
\]

Example 4.10

In Example 4.10, the writer presents a problem in the satellite [Span 7] (“the case is similar” refers to the difficulty of getting a good job) and offers a solution to that problem in the nucleus [Span 8], namely, a part-time job will help students with technical degrees get good jobs when they graduate. This problem relates to the issue at hand within the text, that is, should college students work part time or not? In this case the Solutionhood relation plays a connective role within the hierarchy of the text and does not seem to break the coherent theme; however, if the problem and solution do not appear to relate to the overall idea of the text, this may cause problems in coherence (see Example 4.11).

\[
\text{"Now in Japan, the economic situation is not good. And the companies hire less people than usual. So they’re in trouble because of lack of staff. If companies hire general people, they have to pay much money. But for students, the pay is only 800 yen per hour. Companies must want to hire students more than general people".}\
\]

Example 4.11
The structure of \textit{[Span 28–34]} holds both content and function wise within its own span; however, when looking at the role it plays in the hierarchy of the text, its coherence is less obvious due to the content. The writer of this text claims that it is important for a college student to have a part-time job because 1) it teaches him/her how to manage money, 2) to work and function in society, and 3) helps companies save money. The first two points seem to support the thesis; however, the third point, i.e., part-time jobs help companies save money, is a bit out of place. It, in fact, has nothing to do with college students, at least not in a positive way (companies wanting to hire college students as cheap labor would appear to be a negative point for a college student). However, any attempt to understand why the writer of this text regarded this point as positive rather than negative would be purely speculative\textsuperscript{19}. Nonetheless, it is clear that the logic and reasoning of this particular writer does not meet the expectations of the reader and could easily be regarded as fallacious. Thus, once again, the content of these relations as opposed to the relations themselves and their frequencies may affect coherence in writing.

\textsuperscript{19}An argument could be made for the Japanese cultural tendency to be more socially oriented and concerned for the greater good of society, like supporting important businesses, over the wellbeing of the individual.

Example 4.12

There are cases, however, where both content and the function of the relation hold but still cause issues in coherence. In Example 4.12 above, the issue is not with the relation formed between these spans, as the content appears to hold; however, \textit{[Span 19–22]} is one span of three that makes up a Joint. This Joint is floating in the rest of the text since the content in each span does not effectively connect to the thesis and its main ideas. In this case, the content within the span works to create a coherent unit within itself, but this coherence does not extend beyond the span into the hierarchy of the text. In the previous Example 4.11, coherence is broken because the logic does not follow despite the attempts of the writer to construct the text as a coherent whole. In Example 4.12, however, the Solutionhood relation is itself not a problem but it makes up a Joint that is not part of the coherence within the hierarchy of the text.
Again, due to the low frequency of this relation, it is difficult to make any definite conclusions regarding its role in text quality; however, the few instances of the Solutionhood relation observed among the JEFL texts show that these writers struggled with incorporating this rhetorical relation into a coherent whole. This may be why the relation occurred infrequently, especially among the NES texts. Another possible explanation is that the prompt simply did not lend itself to this type of rhetorical relation, and therefore its appearance caused the observed issues in coherence.

Contrast
Contrast relations occurred nearly 40% more frequently in the JEFL corpus than it did in the NES corpus. However, this frequency rate does not tell us much about the differences between the two corpora, as the general category of Contrast subsumes a number of rather different subtypes: within the RST framework, these are Antithesis (already discussed to some extent above), Concession, and the Multinuclear (MN) Contrast, the first two of which comprise one prominent element (the nucleus), the latter comprising several units equal in terms of its importance within the span as well as their connection to the rest of the text. On top of that, numerous types of contrast are distinguished in the literature (Spenader & Lobanova, 2009) such as “denial of expectation” (see Wolf & Gibson, 2005), “semantic opposition” (see Lakoff, 1971), and “contrast proper.” Therefore, it may be more insightful to look at the content of the contrast in our corpus data to see if qualitative differences exist there.

In the JEFL texts, Contrast usually occurred when the writer was comparing college with work, such as Example 4.13.

Example 4.13

In a college, it is difficult to find so many kinds of friends because ages and departments are limited. However, if we work, we can meet any kinds of people regardless of ages or spatiality.

This comparison between work and college seems to be a way the JEFL writers presented their arguments, that is, presenting the pros versus the cons. In other words, the Contrast relation was explicitly used only at the level of the overall main idea of the text, giving the text a somewhat ‘flat,’ list-like character.
NES writers used the relation also but in a less superficial way; in other words, their texts displayed more hierarchy. For example, the Contrast relation was used more to compare students who worked part time versus students who do not, either in a general sense (see Example 4.14), or more specifically with the writer using him/herself as an example (see Example 4.15).

Example 4.14

`Many college students enjoy having a part-time job, but many college students also feel that they have enough work in their classes that they will not be able to balance the demands upon their time that having a part-time job would impose."

Example 4.15

`Before I came to college, I had no work experience, but now that I’ve been a college for a while, I have gained enough experience to consider myself ready to enter the business world when I graduate from school next year."

In example 4.14, it would appear that [Unit 1] and [Unit 2] are connected to one another by a Concession; however, the thesis of this text is that a part-time job is dependent on the student’s situation. These units present two situations, namely, students who enjoy part-time work and students who feel overwhelmed with part-time work. As such, each unit is of equal importance, i.e., they are both nuclei. The writer in Example 4.15 uses him/herself as evidence for why a part-time job is important for college students. In both of these examples, the content of the Contrast is much more insightful than the Contrast relations that occur among the JEFL texts. This may be one reason why this relation occurred less frequently among the NES texts. The Contrast relation occurrences in the JEFL corpus though more frequent were less in depth. They floated on the surface of the text (once again demonstrating the JEFLs’ “surface-level” understanding of structure) so that their connections to the rest of the text were explicitly made.
Many of the JEFL writers appeared to adopt the compare/contrast rhetorical mode for the whole of the essay, one of the most common modes taught early in the composition classroom. In contrast, the NES writers did not rely on the Contrast relation alone for organizational purposes but rather embedded it within the hierarchy of the text so that it did not dictate the organization of the essay nor was its appearance overly conspicuous. Accordingly, it is not necessarily the number of times the relation occurred but the capacity it was used in, that may correlate with the quality of a text.

**Joint**

A Joint relation occurs when two units do not hold any rhetorical relation between themselves or within the hierarchy of the text (see Example 4.16).

```
17I think that a part-time job tells us many important things, 18and I think that it can make us a good person, too.
```

Example 4.16

In Example 4.16, the two units relate to one another in no specific way. Though they are syntactically connected via the conjunction “and,” it is unclear how “important things” and “good person” are related. Furthermore, both the prior and subsequent texts to this span have nothing to do with the ideas discussed in either of these units. When using RST relations in a search for errors in coherence, the Joint is perhaps the most blatant identifier of such errors. It is no surprise then that Joints occur more frequently in less coherent texts than in coherent ones. And, since the point of this study is to find possible explanations for the fact that the texts written by JEFL writers are perceived as less coherent than the texts written by NES writers, the fact that Joint relations occurred much more often in the JEFL corpus was to be expected.

Nevertheless, there were still occurrences of Joints among the NES texts. Oddly enough, however, they alone did not necessarily point to a less well-written text. In fact, none of the five texts regarded as “less well-written” contained a Joint. Even more surprising is that one of the NES texts considered to be “well-written” contained a Joint. In this case, however, the Joint occurred between the main body of the text [Span 1–14] and the concluding sentence [Span 15] (see Example 4.17). [Span 1–14] was cohesive and followed a logical structure. It was not until the final sentence that this coherence was interrupted. This could be why the text
was still regarded as “well-written,” as the Joint that occurs floats at the end of the text. A single unit at the end of the text that does not hold any specific rhetorical relation with the rest of the text may not have been so detectable to the NES readers, especially considering the majority of the text prior to the Joint was all related.

Example 4.17

When a Joint occurs in the middle of a text or makes up a large portion of a text, however, it may be much more noticeable. In Example 4.18, [Span 24–27] make up a coherent whole but interrupts the flow of ideas between [Span 23] and [Span 28].
Getting a part time job is one of the choices students can choose. Of course students can select another choice, for example circle-activity, volunteer, getting license etc. Those are important and meaningful, but we can not get money through those things. A part time job is a valuable choice that we can get money, experiment, and friends.

Example 4.18
What I suspect has happened here is that the writer was attempting to incorporate a counter-argument and rebuttal into his/her essay. These elements are commonly taught in the writing classroom as an effective strategy in argumentative writing. In the preceding text, the writer’s position was that part-time jobs help students 1) get used to working, 2) help them get “know-how,” and 3) help them make friends. Perhaps the writer felt that his/her reader would consider other “choices” that could result in those three things. His/her rebuttal to that was that none of those other activities can help one earn money. However, money was not discussed prior to this, so it felt digressive even though it is likely the writer had a rationale for this unit and its placement, such as a counter-argument and rebuttal.

Many of the Joint relations that occurred in the JEFL texts appeared to occur due to the inability of the writer to effectively help the reader recognize the connection between each unit. In Example 4.19 (see below), it would appear that [Unit 13] and [Units 14–16] are connected in the writer’s mind, but that connection is not made clear to the reader.

Example 4.19
It seems the writer felt that being aware that one is no longer a child is related in some way to being “graceful” to one’s parents (presumably meaning “grateful”). This relation, however, is not clear to the reader. It could be argued that relations like this exemplify the “reader-responsible” characteristic of Japanese writing as first proposed by Hinds (1983a; 1983b) and thus display an influence of the L1 and culture on the English writing. However, it is also just as likely that the writer lacked
the linguistic capacity to create a coherent structure within this span. It could also be possible that the writer was simply inexperienced and lacked writing skills as has been seen and discussed throughout this chapter. Both explanations thus suggesting issues at the cognitive level. In any case, it is impossible to know the cause for such errors without investigating the writer him/herself. But for the purposes of this study the reason for this incoherence is not of as much importance as the fact that the incoherent structure occurred, which points to another plausible reason as to why Japanese English writing may be regarded as less coherent and more illogical when compared to NESs’ writing, namely, connections between ideas are not made clear to the reader.

Dangling Units/Cross Dependencies
Though the quantitative data suggests the occurrence of dangling units/cross dependencies in the JEFL corpus is significantly higher, the small data set makes it difficult to rely on these quantitative results but does bring attention to the issue and thus warrants a deeper investigation.

Several of the observed dangling units were found towards the beginning of the text and appear as if the JEFL writer was attempting to create an “introduction” for his/her text. In Example 4.21, the writer opens with a question; this type of “hook” is commonly taught in L2 writing classes and frequently used by L2 writers. The span then concludes with the author’s position, that is, a thesis. It would then naturally follow for the writer to support this position, that is, why does he think that a job is “good guidance to working in the world?” However, rather than elaborating on his/her original position, the author starts the text all over again with what reads like a completely different introduction (see [Span 8–12] in Example 4.20).

Example 4.20
Figure 4.5. RST tree representing the occurrence of multiple dangling units in a JEFL text.
The diagnosis that [Span 8–12] acts as a second introduction is further supported by the fact that the text that follows aligns itself, or attempts to align itself, with the pattern described in [Span 8–12] just as an introduction lays out the body of the essay for a reader. The initial unit of text, that is [Span 1–12], could be entirely cut without any detrimental effect to the hierarchy of the text. Thus, [Span 1–7] and [Span 8–12] each “dangle” on their own, do not interact with one another nor with the rest of the text, and seem to serve no purpose beyond its own unit.

In another example, multiple dangling units occur within the same text (see Figure 4.5). If dangling units are symptoms of incoherence, it is not surprising then that the more of them occur in a particular text, the poorer the text is to be evaluated. In fact, as mentioned previously, 8 of the 13 dangling units in the JEFL corpus occurred in a single text alone (the one of which Example 4.20 is taken). As can be seen from Figure 4.5, [Span 1], [Span 2–6], [Span 7–17], [Span 18–23], [Span 24–27], [Span 28–29], and [Span 30–32], lack any rhetorical relation to their adjacent spans. They “dangle” within the text and seem to simply function as lone units of text, contributing nothing to developing a cohesive whole. Additionally, [Span 30–32] crosses over three sets of spans to connect to [Span 7–17], breaking the adjacency constraint of RST and resulting in a cross dependency.

It should also be mentioned that the text from which Figure 4.5 is derived is full of incomprehensible content. This is a strong indication of the writer’s limited linguistic competence, which is often the cause of dangling units (Skoufaki, 2009). Thus, the occurrence of dangling units is not necessarily due to a writer’s lack of ability to create a cohesive text. Nevertheless, whatever the cause is (it is, after all, the point of this study to simply pinpoint errors, not to understand from where those errors were derived), the relatively high occurrence of dangling units in the JEFL corpus contributes to their relatively lower quality from an L1 point of view.

The occurrence of dangling units in the NES corpus illustrates that though cohesion may be established superficially through connectors and syntactic structures, RST is capable of unearthing units that affect cohesion of a text (see Example 4.21) even if its intrusion is less than obvious on the surface.
Another benefit is that if someone makes the wrong decision, they always have the choice of undoing that decision since part-time jobs in college are not that serious.

Example 4.21

The NES writer uses the connector “another” implying that previous benefits have been discussed, but prior to this unit no “benefits” of part-time work had been discussed. In fact, the main idea of this text was that a part-time job is beneficial depending on the individual student’s situation. As such, this span is “dangling” as it really serves no purpose in the hierarchy of the text and in fact intrudes upon its cohesion despite the author’s attempt to use lexicon to connect it to the rest of the whole. Thus, though the author has the linguistic aptitude to create cohesion, cohesion does not in fact occur, which suggests that advanced language skills do not necessarily equip a writer to be capable of creating a coherent text.

One last important point to mention is that due to the nature of how RST is defined, there is always the possibility of multiple interpretations of a text (Mann, Matthiessen, & Thompson, 1989). Accordingly, there may also be multiple diagnoses of problems in a text, especially if the text is not well structured. An example of this can be seen in Example 4.23, which, unlike the original analysis of the text (see Appendix D), offers an alternative analysis that identifies a dangling unit, or, more specifically, a cross dependency in the placement of the Evidence satellite as a source of its poor structure (see Example 4.22).

Firstly, a part-time job is an important chance to experience the society. Because a college is the place to prepare before going to the real society. Part-time job is very necessary to know how severe working is or how we can enjoy it.

Example 4.22

The rhetorical structure for this text can be represented as follows (see Figure 4.6), which indicates that [Span 4-5] intrudes upon the rhetorical relationship between [Unit 3] and [Unit 6].
In this interpretation, the actual content of the argument, that is, the evidence for the position stated in [Unit 3], could be seen as occurring in [Unit 6], with the intervening [Span 4-5] implying that one should especially take advantage of part-time work and its benefits in college. It is thus the intrusion of [Span 4-5] and its implicitness that creates incoherence in the text. A more coherent version of this text could be written as shown in Example 4.23.

### Example 4.23

A part-time job is an important chance to experience society, because it is necessary to know how severe work is; and one should take this chance when in college because college is the time to prepare for society.

Though the lack of quantitative data here makes it difficult to make a claim with any degree of certainty, the occurrence of dangling units/cross dependencies at a much higher frequency rate in the JEFL corpus does suggest that texts written by JEFL writers tend to suffer from errors in coherence more often than texts written by NES writers. This phenomenon could also be one possible reason why past studies have identified English texts written by Japanese writers as ambiguous, illogical, and loosely organized (see, for example, Connor, 2005; Harder, 1983; Nishihara, 1990; Okabe, 1983; Shimozaki, 1988).

### Artificial Nucleus

While investigating the frequency of relations and the types of relations used in each corpus, a commonly occurring anomaly in the JEFL corpus was observed. There were multiple instances where the structure of a span appeared to follow but, when carefully scrutinized, it became clear the content did not hold the intended structure. This was observed in how JEFL writers employed a number of different types of relations. This was the result of what I am terming “artificial nuclei” or nuclei that structurally appear to function but their content does not hold their
intended function as nuclei. For example, in one text, the author begins by stating that he/she has three reasons for believing students should have a part-time job (see Example 4.24).

I agree with this statement, and I think that college students should have a part-time job. I have three reasons for this.

Example 4.24

As the text continues, the author creates three spans that act as Elaboration satellites on the nucleus [Unit 3]. Those Elaboration spans are made of three separate spans: [Span 4-15], which presents the first reason, [Span 16-19], which presents the second reason, followed by [Span 20-26], which gives the third and final reason for the author’s position. Together these three separate spans and [Unit 3] form [Span 3-26], which together act as an Evidence satellite for the MN statement [Span 1-2]. While the first span [Span 4-15] and the third span [Span 20-26] follow an expected structure and the content of each of those spans complement the author’s intended structure, the second span [Span 16-19] appears to deviate from what the author intends and what the structure and the content actually perform. While the author’s intention is to present [Unit 16] as the second reason for why college students should have a part-time job, the content of that unit does not hold that function (see Example 4.26).

Second, having a part-time job gives them a lot of information about the occupation. Then if they have a several kinds of jobs in their university days, they can know what kind of jobs they really want to do in the future. I mean that having a part-time job brings happy lives for college students.

Example 4.25
As written, this span’s rhetorical structure is as follows:

![RST tree](image)

**Figure 4.7.** RST tree representing the rhetorical structure of Example 4.25.

It is clear that the author of this text intended for [Span 16–18] to act as the second reason with [Unit 16] being that reason or the nucleus and [Unit 17], [Unit 18], and [Unit 19] acting as satellites resulting in the above rhetorical structure; however, [Unit 16] does not in fact provide the reader with a reason as to why college students should have a part-time job. Rather, it is [Unit 17], [Unit 18], and [Unit 19] that actually present the reason while [Unit 16] elaborates on the reason. Accordingly, the structure of this span reflects the intention of the author but the content of each unit does not effectively produce the structure the author intended. In other words, the structure is forced upon the content instead of the content lending to the structure. As such, the span reads clumsily and as a result affects the natural coherence within the span and thereby within the text as a whole. So, while the author did effectively form the rhetorical structure in the way he/she connected and related ideas, that structure is only at the surface level, as what is being said does not effectively maintain it. This type of surface-level structure was also observed in the appearance of redundancy and attributed to a lack of control of the content domain and oversimplified understanding of the rhetorical domain of English writing, i.e, inexperience in writing. Rather, the following text illustrates a better match between structure and content.

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20 The “artificial nucleus” differs from previous observations made in that the content does not lend to the structure—they are at odds—, while in related issues of surface-level structure discussed earlier in this chapter found that the content was weak, ineffective, and even abstruse, but not particularly in disagreement with the writer’s intended structure.
Second, having a part-time job can help students know what kind of job they really want to do in the future. If they have several kinds of jobs in their university days, they can get a lot of information on what jobs make them happy.

In this rewrite, the length of the span is shortened since [Unit 19] is combined with [Unit 18] to create one single unit; however, what the author originally stated remains the same. The difference in this version is that the rhetorical structure of the span has been altered to better match the author's intention, i.e., presenting the reason first and then elaborating on that reason, thereby bringing about greater coherence (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8. RST tree representing the rhetorical structure of Example 4.26.

Here is another occurrence of an artificial nucleus in a JEFL text:

Firstly, it is because it is good chance for college students to take part in job until they graduates from college and have a full-time job. This is useful to find their full-time job.
In Example 4.27, [Unit 3], though structured as the nucleus, cannot effectively perform that function as its content provides the reader with no reason as to why college students should have a part-time job. In fact, the reason does not appear until [Unit 5]. Essentially then, [Unit 5] performs the function of the nucleus content wise but the way in which the span is organized indicates the author intends for [Unit 3] to act as the nucleus (see Figure 4.9). In other words, [Unit 3] is an artificial nucleus, acting as a nucleus only at the structural level. The structure, however, becomes less established when the content of the nucleus is scrutinized making it “artificial” in the sense that it does not uphold the structure the author is attempting to create.

Figure 4.9. RST tree representing the rhetorical structure of Example 4.27.

Rewriting the text as follows (see Example 4.29), however, corrects the structure by removing the artificially marked nucleus and restructuring it so that [Unit 5] in the original text becomes the true nucleus, now [Unit 3], in the rewritten text of the span, which, in turn, establishes a more coherent text.

```
#\'Firstly, a part-time job can help prepare college students for full-time work after they graduate.\'#\'Part-time jobs are a good chance to get experience working\'#\'until it is time for them to get a full-time job.\'#
```

Example 4.28

In this new version, it also becomes apparent that the satellites of the original text were in fact providing very little information to the reader. In this rewritten text, the satellite [Span 4–5] is simply restating the nucleus (see Figure 4.10), so we
once again see the problem of redundancy that has now become apparent due to its restructuring. It is clear in its new form that [Span 4–5] is restating [Span 3]. So in this structure a Restatement relation is an appropriate tag, unlike in the original structure in which the JEFL writer did not appear to be making a conscious decision to restate the nucleus. Rather he/she simply lacked the ability to build upon the idea in the nucleus through his/her writing. This is evident by the fact that if the JEFL writer had indeed intended a Restatement relation, he/she would have structured the text in a way similar to its now revised structure as shown in Figure 4.9. Still, it is apparent that the JEFL writer was aware of what was expected of him/her as he/she attempted to structure the text in a way that would meet the rhetorical expectations of NESs, but that structure fails to develop due to the lack of development of ideas.

Figure 4.10. RST tree representing the rhetorical structure of Example 4.28.

These kinds of phenomena as seen in Examples 4.25 and 4.27 were, although infrequent, observed only in the texts of the JEFL corpus (none were observed in the NES corpus). What appears to be happening is that the JEFL writer has an awareness of the rhetorical expectations of NESs and attempts to structure his/her text according to what the JEFL believes is those expectations. On the surface then it appears that the JEFL writer has met those expectations, but to the NES something about the text remains unnatural. The above analysis suggests that this is due to the “artificial nucleus.” The position of the unit creates the illusion of coherent structure, but, when carefully examined, oftentimes the function the unit is expected to perform is not achieved, as the nucleus does not align with the content of that unit.
A Good Japanese Text

Before discussing the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings of this study, I would like to take a moment to look at some of the characteristics observed in a Japanese text that was regarded as well written by native Japanese speakers (NJSs). As was discussed in Chapter 2, attempting to account for errors and differences in a L2 writer’s text by pointing to his/her L1 is precarious territory, as the act of writing involves multifaceted factors with culture and language playing only a small part. Logistically, however, it was not possible to take into account every factor that may have played a role in influencing the outcome of the texts in the corpora used in this study. Admittedly, looking at only the written text limits the investigation to the text itself and consequently sociocultural factors, individual writer characteristics, etc., cannot be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, as this study is concerned with getting Japanese EFL writers to where they need to be by better understanding the conventions of English writing with which Japanese L2 writers struggle beyond the grammatical and idiomatic, it is worthwhile to explore a case in which the conventions of Japanese writing may differ from English writing. In doing so, plausible postulations for why a mismatch of common ground occurs between JEFLs and NESs that result in JEFL writing being seemingly less coherent may become evident.

Accordingly, what follows is a qualitative analysis of the quantitative data from a Japanese text that has been regarded as “well-written” by NJSs with the hope that the rhetorical structure of this particular text may shed a bit of light on the differences between rhetorical expectations in Japanese writing and English writing, at least to the point where certain elements clearly had a negative effect on coherence in English yet could occur in a Japanese text that is regarded as “well-written.” Of course, a single text does not constitute strong empirical evidence. I approach the next section cautiously, not claiming any of the following observations to be generalizable or significant but as still suggestive of the reasons for some of the dissonance occurring between Japanese English writing and English rhetorical expectations, in view of the fact that a number of Japanese native speakers converged in their assessment of its quality. The relations that appeared in the Japanese text and their frequencies are listed in Table 4.2 in Appendix A.

Of the 23 relations that occurred in the Japanese text, the majority of them (N = 14) were SM relations, suggesting a preference for such relations by Japanese, or at least no aversion of them. This is of particular interest, of course, when considering the fact that the English texts written by the JEFLs exhibited a significantly reduced rate of SM relations. This observation thus adds to the objections against the notion
of L1 or cultural influence as the source of this reduced rate. Moreover, we have seen that for every 10 EDUs in the NES corpus, six different RST relations occur; in contrast, for every 10 EDUs in the JEFL corpus less than five RST relations occur. In this Japanese text, however, 14 different RST relations appeared between its 26 EDUs, which would be roughly five different relations per every 10 EDUs, so a ratio very close to the NES texts.

Lastly, looking at the text holistically, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that this text was regarded as “well-written” by NJSs, two separate instances of dangling units occurred. In the first instance, [Span 5-6] interrupts the flow of thought between [Span 2-4] and [Unit 7] as follows:

Example 4.29

As can be seen, the text would be much more coherent (in English) if it were not for the interruption of [Span 5-6] (see underlined section above). In another instance, two units intrude on what otherwise appears to be a logical sequence of thought (see Example 4.30)

Example 4.30
The text prior to this span discussed the different expenses of college and the fact that scholarships cannot be used and allowance from one’s parents is not enough to cover these expenses. The text that follows this span then claims that a part-time job can help cover these expenses. However, seems to unexpectedly appear in the progression of ideas in the text with no clear relation to the ideas in that progression. Despite the intrusions that impact the coherence of the text as shown in Example 4.29 and Example 4.30, NJSs still regarded this particular text as well written. This illustrates one of two possibilities: either the concept of what constitutes a coherent text differs in Japanese and English (as has been claimed by Hinds, 1983a, 1983b; Day, 1996; McClure, 2000; Yamada, 1997; Okabe, 1983; and many others), or coherence or lack thereof does not necessarily equate with “well written” in the Japanese context. That is, a text does not necessarily have to be coherent in order to be regarded as well written. Whether there is a difference between what Japanese and English speakers view as coherent or the value of coherence differs between these two languages, is unclear. Regardless, divergence appears to exist between the rhetorical expectations of Japanese and of English; whether or not this divergence is a convention or a random phenomenon, however, would require more data. Nonetheless, this finding does suggest that as far as Japanese is concerned it is possible for a text to be less coherent (at least from an NES’s perspective), yet still be regarded as well written while such a scenario is much less likely in English, as was previously discussed.

Methodological, Theoretical, & Pedagogical Implications
One significant contribution this study has made is methodological—it has shown that while a simple comparison of relations and their frequency counts does little to reveal much about a text, the investigation of such relations does help to point to anomalies that could plausibly account for why a text may be considered more or less coherent and logical. In doing so, the quantitative analysis helps to shed light on particular structures and rhetorical differences while the qualitative observations excavate those anomalies and puts them in context. Therefore, this study has shown that Rhetorical Structure Theory may be useful for contrastive purposes, but only if the content and structure of tagged relations are analyzed beyond their frequency. This is particularly true with the occurrence of such phenomena as redundancy/unintentional repetition, dangling units/cross dependencies, and artificial nuclei, which would otherwise be overlooked should an analysis rely solely on the frequency of relations.
In addition, this study has demonstrated that the claims of language and culture transfer/interference in Japanese L2 writers’ English writing of past studies cannot be substantiated. That being said, the results do seem to point to the conclusion that the rhetorical expectations of Japanese and English may differ, but any differences between these languages do not seem to have a negative impact on coherence, logic, or any of the other common complaints made of Japanese English writing. Rather, most of the mistakes and errors observed in this study that could explain why the JEFL learners’ English writing may be regarded as incoherent and less logical than NESs’ writing are more likely attributed to limited cognitive resources as a result of novice writing skills and/or L2 linguistic proficiency rather than L1 interference or cultural influence. While language ability may certainly play some role, errors in rhetorical and organizational patterns generally reflect more that of a novice or inexperienced writer but are often times masked in linguistic errors, which has caused past researchers to misdiagnose the anomalies identified in Japanese English writing. Numerous researchers have warned against such bias and overemphasis of cognitive factors that seem to be rather prevalent in contrastive rhetorical studies (e.g., Connor, 1996; Connor & Johns, 1990; Kubota, 1997; Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Matsuda, 2001; Pennycook, 1998; Spack, 1997).

This study, however, has shown how conceptualizing contrastive rhetoric within the framework of CG theory helps to prevent the researcher, his data, and analyses from becoming marooned in the unnavigable waters of social and cultural identities and influences and anchor the researcher and his study in the safer and more accessible waters of basic communication principles. As such, this study lends support to the voices that have called out contrastive rhetoric and the presumptuous findings of past studies due to unfounded and oftentimes biased beliefs about a language and culture. At the same time, however, it has also demonstrated that contrastive rhetoric can indeed produce impartial and less divisive conclusions without leaning on impracticable ideologies and intangible theories that have only resulted in impediments to the field. And while there are still shortcomings to contrastive research that limits its source of data solely to the text, a careful and impartial theoretical framework can reveal a great deal about the needs of a specific group of writers, especially when a study compares groups and data of adequate tertium comparationis, avoids overgeneralizations, and does not suggest that the product itself is more important than the writer. On the contrary, the purpose behind investigating the product is to assist the writer, and, thus, writers’ communicative goals and needs are always central to contrastive rhetorical studies, whether or not they are directly part of that investigation.
Perhaps one of the more important contributions this study has made, however, is that it has shown that JEFL writers’ struggle with negotiating the intended rhetorical structure with the content of that structure. A tendency to structure a text in the canonical order while being unable to support that structure content-wise suggests that JEFL writers are aware of and familiar with the rhetorical expectations of English with regard to how they manifest themselves structurally, but unaware of how content lends to forming structure, i.e., deeper-level coherence. Though it remains unclear whether or not this is unique to JEFL writers, this issue was most common among the JEFL texts, suggesting that it is an area in which L2 writers may struggle. Accordingly, L2 writing instructors should be wary of overemphasizing structure. Rather, they need to demonstrate how to shape a text at the content level. For example, instead of belaboring topic sentence–supporting sentences–concluding sentence paragraph structure, teachers should emphasize how a topic sentence establishes the topic of a paragraph, how supporting sentences support and build upon that topic, and how a concluding sentence completes the paragraph and demonstrate how the elements all work together cohesively to form a coherent whole.

Finally, it should be noted that this study used only first drafts of writing examples from both JEFL learners and NESs. This was done for two reasons. First, it was assumed that in investigating rhetorical variations between two groups of different cultural backgrounds first drafts would reveal the authors’ naturally occurring rhetorical preferences, which have not been altered by conscious revisions nor external feedback. The fact of the matter is, however, that writing is a cognitively demanding task that requires planning, drafting, and revising before a text can ultimately be judged as well written, no matter the linguistic/cultural background of the writer (Zinsser, 2006). As a result, many of the NESs’ texts were not necessarily examples of good writing either. So while the raw writing of both of these groups offered comparable data, the end results of this study suggest that giving the two groups time to make conscious revisions and deliberate rhetorical decisions might reveal more about each groups’ rhetorical preferences than first-draft writing does, since unintentional errors are often present in early drafts and do not necessarily reflect a writer’s true understanding of how to structure a text. What this investigation suggests then is that contrastive rhetorical studies that compare the final drafts of writing may make the contrast between two groups more evident. This insight also leads to a pedagogical implication.
If unplanned, unrevised writing produces lower quality texts even among NES
writers, it seems that using such assignments (e.g., in-class, timed writing) as
assessment tools, or, perhaps more specifically, using such assignments solely to
assess students’ writing in a composition course would be unreasonable. Rather,
teachers need to consider writing as a process and assess their students based on
that process by helping and guiding them to make the necessary revisions so that
their texts meet the rhetorical expectations of their readers. The principal form
of assessment should thus be based on those decisions and not those made in
earlier, subsequent drafts. Along this same line of argument, while L2 speakers may
have certain linguistic needs that differ from NESs, automatically assuming that
their L1 and/or culture is negatively affecting their writing may cause instructors
to misidentify the areas in which students struggle and reduce their errors to a
byproduct of their L1 and/or culture that cannot be easily remedied. If, however,
instructors can remove the L2 label and see their students as emerging writers who
make mistakes just as any novice writer does, the EFL/ESL writing classroom may be
able to successfully move away from stereotyping and marginalizing students’ native
rhetoric. This may be especially helpful to L2 speakers who already have a handle on
the English language but see themselves as poor writers due to the prevalent view
that they are imprisoned by the constraints imposed upon themselves by their L1
and/or cultures. Reimagining the L2 writer in this way may give a greater freedom
to these learners and help them to not overly concern themselves with how they are
different from English speakers, thereby freeing up some much-needed cognitive
resources.

Summary
This chapter has discussed the quantitative findings of Chapter 3 and provided
qualitative analysis of those findings. Additionally, the findings of a “well-written”
Japanese text were presented and discussed in light of the results from the Japanese
English writing. After the findings of the JEFL and NES corpora were discussed, the
methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical implications of this study were addressed.
The following and final chapter will offer a brief summary of this dissertation and its
main findings and conclusions. Following the summary, limitations of this study and
suggestions for possible future research will be put forward.