An Examination of Written Genres in English Language Textbooks in Japan

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Drawing on a systemic functional linguistics genre paradigm, this article examines model writing texts in two types of English teaching and learning materials for high school students in Japan: public and commercial textbooks. A corpus of 73 texts was created. This article aims to identify what genres are provided as model texts to teach and learn English writing in these textbooks. It further aims to identify the schematic structures of the genres identified. It was found that, in the commercial textbooks, only a limited range of genres was provided while, in the public textbooks, a variety of genres such as Information reports, Everyday procedures and Sequential explanations was included. In relation to text structures, different ways of constructing the Argument stage in argumentative genre texts were found in the two types of textbooks. Pedagogical implications for English writing instruction in Japanese high schools are suggested.

Keywords: systemic functional linguistics, genre, schematic structure, intercultural rhetoric, high school textbooks, second language writing.

Introduction

The notion of genre has been playing an important role in the teaching and learning of English writing. Since Jim Martin and his colleagues (see e.g., Martin, 1980; Martin & Rothery, 1981; Rothery, 1980) investigated genres of texts for students in kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools in Australia from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (see e.g., Halliday, 1994), many researchers have explored genres in academic settings (e.g., Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Humphrey et al., 2012; Martin & Rose, 2008; Woodward-Kron, 2002). Many previous studies show that the synergy of genre and L2 writing instruction contributes to an improvement in the English writing proficiency of L2 learners (see e.g., Bunch & Willett, de Oliveira & Lan, Emilia & Hamied, Harman, 2013). In the Japanese context, for example, Yasuda (2011) reports that a genre-based writing course in a Japanese university enhanced the learners’ awareness of genre variations and improved their English writing proficiency. The studies listed above focused on the effectiveness of a genre-based pedagogy or the products of writing by L2 learners.

In Japan, university entrance examinations provide an enormous motivation for students to learn English (see e.g., Doyon, 2001; Tachibana et al., 1996; Taguchi et al., 2009). Textbooks which are used to prepare for these examinations play an important role for English language learners and teachers in Japan. Shizuka (1996) argues that the choice of model texts presented to Japanese high school students is influenced by the content of those examinations. In this article, the model texts in textbooks are examined
using the notion of genre developed by Martin (1984). In Japanese high school English classes, the materials that are used to teach English writing are textbooks, which must be approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and commercial English writing textbooks. The latter are frequently used in classrooms specifically to teach the English writing skills required for university entrance examinations. While much research on Japanese learners’ English texts (see e.g., Fathman & Kobayashi, 1984; Hinds, 1984; 1990; Hirose, 2003; Kubota, 1998) bring insights into their writing styles from the perspective of intercultural rhetoric, research needs to be conducted to reveal expectations of how learners should construct texts from a teaching perspective.

L2 writing instruction in Japanese high schools

In Japan, university entrance examinations have strongly influenced the teaching and learning of English (see e.g., Doyon, 2001; Tachibana et al., 1996; Taguchi et al., 2009). Both MEXT-approved and commercial textbooks are also considered to have a strong effect on the way that English writing is taught. To investigate what kinds of writing tasks are set in the examinations, Watanabe (2016) examined the writing tasks that had been previously set in these examinations. He found that just four genres were included in the examinations (see the following section for an explanation of genre). This study also revealed that one of those genres, Expositions, in which writers need to persuade readers to think or act in a certain way, amounted to nearly half of the tasks. While this study identifies the writing genres that students taking these examinations should study, it does not provide an insight into the teaching and the learning of English writing which actually takes place in the classroom in Japanese high schools. To find more about this question, it is important to examine the model texts in the English writing textbooks used by high school students and teachers.

Genre and L2 Writing Instruction

The Notion of Genre

For this article, genre in SFL, which refers to “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity” (Martin, 1984, p. 25) shared by particular communities is adopted. Genre is staged since there are usually several steps involved in making meanings, goal-oriented as the steps are organised to attain something, and social because genre is built via an interaction among people (Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). Martin (2014) argues that genre in SFL is modelled on meaning-making systems across modalities and linguistic domains, such as the sentence level and the discourse level. SFL focuses on functional aspects of texts and demonstrates the layers of a meaning-making system in language. In SFL, for example, functional labels are used to analyse texts in relation to facets of language such as textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions. These analyses run across the configurations of meaning such as phonology/graphology, grammar, and discourse (Halliday, 1994). Martin (2014) also argues that, with these features of SFL, the notion of genre in SFL distinguish genres (e.g., discussions) from macro-genres (e.g., journal article).

Genre analysis enables researchers to investigate the ways that discourse and linguistic features are related to functions in certain contexts (Rose, 2012). One of the discourse features typically examined is the schematic structure of texts, which refers to the set of stages in a text that are adopted to achieve the communicative purpose of a text (Eggins, 2004; Martin, 1992). Genre researchers in SFL have developed types of genres and their schematic structures. For example, Humphrey et al. (2012) present four groups of genres for the teaching of writing in Australian primary and secondary schools: Chronicling, Reporting, Explaining, and Persuading. To explain the Exposition genre, one of the genres in the Persuading group, they present its schematic structure (Position, Arguments, and Reinforcement of position), the grammatical features typical of this genre such as verbs to explain the identification of issues and the
presentation of causes and effects, and nominalisation to describe events or activities. Martin and Rose (2008) demonstrate in more detail which genres students are required to write in Australian primary schools, namely Recounts, Exemplums and Narratives, Expositions, Discussions and Challenges, Descriptive reports, Sequential explanations, Consequential explanations, Everyday procedures, Specialised technical notes and Protocols. The notion of genre in SFL has been applied to an L1 literacy education environment (see e.g., Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). As Martin (2009) argues, however, applications of the notion of genre to L2 English writing instruction can also make a contribution to L2 language learning.

Previous Genre Studies into L2 Writing Instruction

The effectiveness of a genre-based pedagogy to L2 writing in both EFL and ESL contexts has been reported. In studies into genre-based pedagogy in US elementary and middle school classrooms, Harman (2013) and Bunch and Willet (2013) claim that writing instruction which focused on Narrative and Exposition genres improved L2 students’ writing proficiency in those genres. Similarly, de Oliveira and Lan (2014) found that the subject of their case study, an L2 learner in an American elementary school, improved his lexical and rhetorical proficiency in Procedural recount writing. In an EFL context, Lee (2012) observed that the adoption of genre-based writing instructions during the teaching of the writing of Recounts to L2 secondary school learners in Hong Kong was positively accepted by the learners. It is reported that those learners thought that they improved their English writing of Recounts on account of these instructions (Lee, 2012). Furthermore, Emilia and Hamied (2015) investigated how university students in Indonesia benefited from genre-based teaching; their study focused on Expositions. Their instruction on the schematic structure, and lexical and grammatical resources of Expositions, contributed to the development of their students’ Exposition writing. In response to a questionnaire after the teaching, the students reported that they thought the genre-based teaching was effective in their development of English Exposition writing.

Methods

In order to identify which genres are offered in textbooks for the teaching of English writing in Japanese high schools, this article adopted genre analysis developed within SFL as its methodological approach (see above). To identify the genres of the texts, the schematic structures of the texts were examined, as Martin and Rose (2008) argue, through functions conveyed in the texts. These functions are often constructed not at the sentence level, but at the discourse level.

Materials

This article examines model texts used to teach English writing in two types of textbooks: MEXT-approved and commercial textbooks which can be further classified into practice books and guidebooks. The latter are publications designed for the entrance examinations of a specific university. Considering how these textbooks for English writing in Japanese high schools are used (see above), both types of textbooks seem to play an important role in the activities of learning and teaching English writing in Japanese high schools. In this study, the three most frequently used writing textbooks were chosen out of twenty-three MEXT-approved textbooks. Four practice books were chosen as there were few other choices, and no data could be found regarding the relative popularity of those practice books. Guidebooks for three universities were chosen as these universities have an outstanding reputation and may be targeted by many examinees. In total, seventy-three model texts, thirty-six texts from the MEXT-approved high school English writing textbooks and thirty-seven texts from the commercial English writing textbooks, were collected from these textbooks.
MEXT-approved High School English Writing Textbooks

While Japanese high schools are obliged to use a MEXT-approved textbook, each school can choose which MEXT-approved textbooks to use. Three textbooks account for 29.2% of the writing textbooks used by high school students in Japan (this information was received personally from MEXT by the author). The textbooks are Crown (Shimozaki et al., 2008), Element (Toyoda et al., 2008), and Pro-vision (Ogino et al., 2008). Eleven, seven, and eighteen model texts respectively were found and collected from these textbooks.

Commercial English Writing Textbooks for University Entrance Examinations

As discussed above, Japanese university entrance examinations impact the activities of the teaching and learning of English writing. As a result, commercial textbooks for the preparation of writing tasks which appear in the examinations are used for teaching English writing in Japanese high schools in addition to the MEXT-approved textbooks. There are two types of commercial textbooks for English writing. In this article these are named practice books and guidebooks. Practice textbooks are those used to prepare students for university entrance examinations, and do not target specific universities. Four practice books were examined in this study: Jissenhen eisakubun no training [Practical training for English compositions] (Ishigami, 1996), Jiyuu eisakubunhen eisakubun no training [Training for English free compositions] (Hibino & Narita, 2004), Daigaku nyushi jiyuu eisakubun no subete [Everything about English free compositions in university entrance examinations] (Onizuka, 2009), and Daigaku nyuushi hyper training [Hyper training for English composition in university entrance examinations] (Oya, 2009). Eight, two, four, and six model texts respectively were collected from these practice books. On the other hand, guidebooks, which as mentioned above are publications designed for the entrance examinations of a specific university, were chosen from three universities: the University of Tokyo (a national university), Keio Gijuku University (a private university), and Waseda University (a private university). The guidebooks examined in this study are Tokyo daigaku bunkei zenki nittei [Tokyo University for the humanities faculties in the first term] (Sugakusha editorial board, 2013b), Keio Gijuku daigaku keizai gakubu [Keio Gijuku University for the faculty of economics] (Sugakusha editorial board, 2013a), and Waseda daigakuseiji keizai gakubu [Waseda University for the faculties of political science and economics] (Sugakusha editorial board, 2013c). The numbers of model texts collected from these guidebooks were six, five, and six respectively.

Analytical Framework

This article has employed the notion of genre in the Sydney school sense. The analytical framework in this article is based on those developed by SFL-based genre researchers such as Martin and Rose (2008), Christie and Derewianaka (2008) and Humphrey et al. (2012). One genre, Personal reflections, was also added to the analytical framework for this analysis. This genre was found in Watanabe’s (2016) study, which examined the writing tasks which appeared in Japanese university entrance examinations. This genre was added to the framework as the genres developed by the SFL-based genre researchers focus on L1 and L2 learners of English in an ESL context and may not cover all the genres required in EFL contexts such as Japan. Table 1 shows the framework of genres employed in this study. The framework also provides the communicative purposes and schematic structures proposed by the genre researchers.
| Genre                          | Communicative purpose                      | Schematic structure                        |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Recounts (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To document personal records                | Orientation ^ Record ^ Reorientation        |
| Biographical recounts        | To evaluate someone’s importance in relation with a time when he or she lived | Orientation ^ Record ^ (Reorientation)     |
| Historical recounts (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To document public histories              | (not specified in the literature)          |
| Narratives (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To settle problems in stories              | Orientation ^ Complication ^ Evaluation ^ Resolution |
| News stories (Humphrey et al., 2012) | To record noteworthy events                | Headline ^ Lead ^ Lead development ^ Wrap-up |
| Descriptive reports (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To give details of a phenomenon           | Classification ^ Description               |
| Factual descriptions (Humphrey et al., 2012) | To illustrate features of people, things and events | Identification ^ Description               |
| Information reports (Humphrey et al., 2012) | To inform general details of things        | General statement ^ Description            |
| Sequential explanations (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To show a series of events and their reasons | Phenomenon ^ Explanation                  |
| Consequential explanations (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To describe effects caused by one cause    | Phenomenon ^ Explanation                  |
| Expositions (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To persuade a reader to think in a certain way | Thesis ^ Argument ^ Reiteration            |
| Discussions (Humphrey et al., 2012) | To explore an issue from various perspectives | Arguments for ^ Arguments against ^ Conclusion/Recommendation |
| Everyday procedures (Martin & Rose, 2008) | To tell what and how to do for daily tasks (not generalised) | |
To write about their feelings, ideas, or (not generalised) favourite things without attempting to persuade readers.

Results

Genres and their Stage Structures in the MEXT-approved Textbooks

The analysis of genres and their schematic structures in the MEXT-approved writing textbooks for high school students shows that a wide range of genres is provided in these textbooks. Twelve genres were found in these textbooks, namely Information reports, Expositions, Comparisons, Sequential explanations, Biographical recounts, Everyday procedures, Factual descriptions, Historical recounts, Recounts, Consequential explanations, News stories, and Personal reflections. The genre that appears most frequently in the MEXT-approved textbooks is Information reports (24.4%), followed by Expositions (18.9%). Comparison texts, which are not included in classification of genres by the genre researchers (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2008), are the third most frequent genre in the textbooks (10.8%). Three Sequential explanation and three Biographical recount texts (8.1% each) appeared. Everyday procedures, Factual descriptions, and Personal reflections were found twice each (5.4% each), whereas other genres such as Historical recounts, Recounts, Consequential explanations, and News stories occurred only once each across the three textbooks (2.7%) (see table 2).

| Genres                        | MEXT-approved textbooks | Practice books | Guidebooks |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Information reports           | 9 (24.4%)               | Expositions    | Expositions |
| Expositions                   | 7 (18.9%)               | Personal       | Personal reflections |
| Comparisons                   | 4 (10.8%)               | Discussions    | Sequential explanations |
| Sequential explanations       | 3 (8.1%)                |                |            |
| Biographical recounts         | 3 (8.1%)                |                |            |
| Everyday procedures           | 2 (5.4%)                |                |            |
| Factual descriptions          | 2 (5.4%)                |                |            |
| Personal reflections (continued) | 2 (5.4%)               |                |            |
| Historical recounts           | 1 (2.7%)                |                |            |
| Recounts                      | 1 (2.7%)                |                |            |
| Consequential explanations    | 1 (2.7%)                |                |            |
| News stories                  | 1 (2.7%)                |                |            |

The analysis of the schematic structures of these genres shows how these genres were constructed. The
schematic structures of the texts in the MEXT-approved textbooks are presented in Table 3.

### TABLE 3

**Schematic Structures of the Texts in the MEXT Approved Writing Textbooks**

| Genre                | Schematic structure (*^ means followed by*)                              | Number |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Information reports  | General statement ^ Description1 ^ Description2                         | 3      |
|                      | Description1 ^ Description2                                            | 2      |
|                      | Description 1 ^ Description2 ^ Comment                                   | 1      |
|                      | General statement ^ Description1 ^ Description2 ^ Comment                | 1      |
|                      | Introduction of a topic ^ Description                                  | 1      |
|                      | General statement ^ Description1                                        | 1      |
|                      | Description2 ^ Reiteration of general statement                         | 1      |
|                      | Orientation ^ Description                                              | 1      |
| Expositions          | Thesis ^ Argument1(support) ^ Argument2(support) ^ Argument3(support)    | 3      |
|                      | Thesis ^ Argument1(support) ^ Argument2(support) ^ Reiteration of the thesis | 2      |
|                      | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2(support) ^ Reiteration of the thesis | 1      |
|                      | Thesis ^ Argument1(support) ^ Argument2(support)                         | 1      |
| Comparisons          | Introduction of topics ^ Comparison1 ^ Comparison2                      | 2      |
|                      | Orientation ^ Comparison1 ^ Comparison2 ^ Comparison3                   | 1      |
|                      | Comparison3                                                             | 1      |
|                      | Introduction of topics ^ Comparison1 ^ Comparison3 ^ Comment            | 1      |
| Biographical recounts| Orientation ^ Record                                                    | 3      |
| Sequential explanations| Phenomenon ^ Explanation1 ^ Explanation2                                 | 2      |
|                      | Phenomenon ^ Explanation1 ^ Explanation2 ^ Comment                      | 1      |
| Everyday procedures  | Introduction of a topic ^ Instructions                                 | 2      |
| Historical recounts  | Background ^ Record of events ^ Evaluation                              | 1      |
| Recounts             | Orientation ^ Event                                                     | 1      |
| News stories         | Headline ^ Lead ^ Lead development ^ Warp up                             | 1      |
| Personal reflections | Orientation ^ Example                                                   | 1      |
| Comments             | Comment ^ Reason1 ^ Reason2 ^ Reason3                                   | 1      |

In the Information report texts, all the texts had Description stages. While five texts started with General statement stages, three texts had Description stages at the beginning. The other two texts began with an Orientation stage or an Introduction of the topic stage. All Exposition texts started with a Thesis stage followed by an Argument stage, which supported the Thesis stage. The Argument stage did not
include concessions or discussions irrelevant to the Thesis stage. This is exemplified in Text 1 below. No Reiteration of the thesis stage was found in four texts out of the seven. In Comparison texts, several points were compared after topics were introduced. One Comparison text had a Comment stage as the last stage of the schematic structure. Each of the three Biographical recount texts followed a typical sequence of Orientation and Record stages. The Sequential explanation texts had Phenomenon and Explanation stages. However, one of the two texts also included a Comment stage. Both Everyday procedure and Historical recount texts followed the typical structure for these genres, which are an Introduction of the topic and Instructions, for the former text type, and Background, Record of events and Evaluation for the latter. Factual description texts were comprised of Orientation and Description stages. Other genres which appeared in the MEXT-approved textbooks also followed the typical stages described in the literature: Recounts (an Orientation stage followed by an Event stage), Consequential explanations (a Phenomenon stage followed by an Explanation stage, and then another Explanation stage), News stories (a Headline stage, followed by a Lead stage, then by a Lead development stage and finally by a Wrap up stage), Personal reflections (an Orientation stage and an Example stage, and Comment, Reason 1, Reason 2 and Reason 3 stages).

TEXT 1

| Title: We must try to recover the balance of nature |
|--------------------------------------------------|
| Human beings have played a major role in upsetting the fragile balance of nature. It’s time we fully recognized how essential it is to coexist with other living things. |
| Our earth is a large ecological system consisting of the atmosphere, the oceans and the earth’s surface. In each environment, all living things are linked in the food chain. For example, plants get the energy they need by photosynthesis, using light, water, carbon dioxide and minerals in the soil. These plants are then eaten by animals and will decompose to become nourishment for the soil. |
| Over millions of years, nature has kept this environmental balance. However, human beings have caused sudden changes in the ecosystem of the earth by polluting the air, water and land. |
| In order to protect the earth’s ecosystem, we must try to recover the balance of nature. |

(Extracted from the book, Provision (Ogino et al., 2008, p. 118))

Genres and their Schematic Structures in the Practice Books

In this section, the results of the analysis of genres as well as the structures of stages in the practice books are presented. Only three genres appeared in the practice books: Expositions (60%), Personal reflections (35%), and Discussions (5%). The Expositions and Personal reflections genres accounted for 95% of all the genres that occurred in the practice books.

While there were a limited variety of genres in these textbooks, the schematic structures of the genres that did appear demonstrated variation. Table 4 shows the schematic structures of the texts in the practice books.
TABLE 4
Schematic Structures of the Texts in the Practice Books

| Genre             | Schematic structure                                      | Number |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Expositions       | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Reiteration               | 3      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument (concession) ^ Argument (support) ^ Reiteration | 2      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2 (support) ^ Reiteration | 2      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument (concession) ^ Argument(support) ^ Reiteration | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument (concession) ^ Argument (support)      | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2 (support)       | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (situation) ^ Argument2 (support) ^ Reiteration | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2 (support) ^     |        |
|                   | Argument3 (support) ^ Reiteration                        | 1      |
| Personal reflections | Example ^ Description                                    | 1      |
|                   | Phenomenon ^ Reason1 ^ Reason2                           | 1      |
|                   | Topic introduction ^ Reason ^ Method                     | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2 (support)       | 1      |
|                   | Topic introduction ^ Reason1 ^ Reason2 ^ Topic introduction ^ Reason1 ^ Consolidation ^ Wish | 1      |
|                   | Thesis ^ Argument1 (support) ^ Argument2 (support)       | 1      |
| Discussions       | Topic introduction ^ Argument for ^ Argument against ^ Reiteration of the topic | 2      |

This is especially noticeable in the Exposition genre. All the Exposition texts begin with a Thesis stage. The sequences in the Argument stages, however, showed two types of argument construction. In seven texts, the Argument stages consisted of only supporting arguments while the other five texts begin their Argument stages with a Concession stage (four texts) or a Situation stage (one text). These two types of the argument stages are exemplified in Text 2 and 3 respectively. After the Argument stages, seven texts concluded with a Reiteration stage while five texts lacked this stage.

TEXT 2

I am totally in favour of this idea. In large cities where public transportation is easily available, I don’t think we need our own cars. As matters stand now, we get involved in daily traffic jams and have a hard time finding a place to park. A total ban on private cars would greatly help reduce the traffic jams, parking violations and air pollution.

(Extracted from the book, Jissenhen eisakubun no training [Practical training for English compositions] (Ishigami, 1996, p. 208))
I don’t think supermarkets should give their customers free plastic shopping bags, because they are not sustainable. Of course, they are convenient: suppose you have to bring your shopping bag every time you go to a supermarket. It would be a bother. However, plastic shopping bags are bad for the environment: they are made from petroleum, and they produce harmful chemicals when they are burned as garbage. We should try to sacrifice a bit of convenience to protect the environment. (Extracted from the book, Daigaku nyuushi hyper training [Hyper training for English composition in university entrance examinations] (Oya, 2009, p. 69))

Only one Discussion text was found in the four practice books. The text was constructed by sandwiching two perspectives towards a given issue stages between a Topic introduction stage and a Reiteration of the topic stage.

The schematic structures of the Personal reflection genres were varied. In two texts of this genre, the structure was that of a Topic introduction stage followed by an Example stage. In the other three texts, the Phenomenon or Topic introduction stages were followed by a Reason stage.

Genres and their Schematic Structures in the Guidebooks

The guidebooks exhibited only three genres. The Expositions genre is the most frequent in the guidebooks. It amounted to 70.6% of all the genres which appeared in the guidebooks. Twelve texts among seventeen texts were classified as Expositions. Four Personal reflection texts (17.6%) were found while only two Sequential explanation genre texts appeared (11.8%). Table 5 shows the types of schematic structures which appeared in the guidebooks.

In the analysis of the schematic structures of the Exposition genres, two types of structures were found. The most common type has one or more Argument stages which support the thesis stage between Thesis and Reiteration stages. Nine texts were found to be this type (see Text 4).
### TABLE 5

*Schematic Structures of the Texts in the Guidebooks*

| Genre               | Schematic structure                                                                 | Number |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Expositions         | Thesis ^ Argument1(support) ^ Argument2 ^ (support) ^ Reiteration of the thesis      | 7      |
| (Continued)         | Thesis ^ Argument1(concession) ^ Argument2(support) ^ Reiteration of the thesis      | 2      |
| Personal reflections| Topic introduction ^ Explanation ^ Comment                                            | 2      |
| Sequential explanations | Thesis ^ Cause ^ Effect                                                              | 1      |

#### TEXT 4

There is no doubt that the Internet will change our society in ten years. Among other things, I believe it will speed up society. For example, the Internet will enable us to get any “book” within a few seconds whenever we want to read it. As broadband networking becomes widespread, we will be able to download various content directly from any publisher around the world and store it in our laptop computer or electric book.

As another example, our opinions will be reflected quickly in government policy by using the Internet. When the electronic decision-making processes as soon as a national issue arises.

As these examples suggest, I believe the Internet will speed up our society.

(Extracted from Jiyuu eisakubunhen eisakubun no training [Training for English free compositions] (Hibino & Narita, 2004, p. 191))

On the other hand, the Argument stages of three of the texts had a Concession stage followed by a Support stage, while the argument of one text was found to be comprised of a Support stage followed by a Concession stage. This is exemplified in Text 5. The schematic structures of the Personal reflections genre were found to be of two types: Topic introduction, Explanation, and Comment stages on the one hand, and Topic introduction, Aspect1, Aspect2, and Aspect3 on the other. The Sequential explanation texts were comprised of Thesis, Cause and Effect stages.
TEXT 5

We should not treat biological resources as property. In his 2009 article “Saving Nature by Owning It”, I.O. Gnit writes, “Property rights are important for human development.” Although I think it is a rational argument to some extent, I disagree with it as far as biodiversity is concerned. What we should do in order to save nature is not to own it as property, but to leave it alone. In this respect, I support E. Kozelot’s opinion. Technological progress has given humans a sense of superiority, which does not justify our ownership of biological resources.

(Extracted from the book, Keio Gijuku daigaku keizai gakubu [Keio Gijuku University for the faculty of economics] (Sugakusha editorial board, 2013a, p. 69))

Discussion

Genres in the MEXT-approved Textbooks, the Practice Books, and the Guidebooks

The genres which appeared in the textbooks for English writing examined in this article are here discussed in relation to the findings of previous studies. The analysis of the MEXT-approved textbooks revealed that there were various genres covering three main groups which are utilised for the genre-based pedagogy in L1 English education in countries such as Australia: stories, factual texts, and arguments (see e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012). It seems that the MEXT-approved textbooks may attempt to cover various genres without narrowing their focus on genres which appear in university entrance examinations. While one of the argumentative genres, Expositions, was the second most frequent genre in these textbooks, no Discussion text appeared. Discussion texts, however, provide learners with opportunities to present their perspectives or opinions. In an ESL context, for example, undergraduate L1 students employ either Exposition or Discussion texts to discuss their stances (see e.g., Woodward-Korn, 2002, for an Australian case and Liu & Furneaux, 2015, for an English case). The variety of genres that occurred in the MEXT-approved textbooks seems to echo the objectives of English language teaching set in the course guidelines established by MEXT (1999). In these guidelines, it is argued that high school students should be taught to write many types of texts in various contexts. Two genres in the MEXT-approved textbooks, Comparison and Personal reflections, are not included in the set of genres proposed by genre-based educators in an ESL setting. These genres may be considered to be more casual and non-academic and to be mainly used in daily life settings rather than in educational contexts in ESL settings. In an EFL context such as Japan, however, these genres may need to be taught in order for high school students to be successful in writing them since high school students in Japan are usually only exposed to English texts in the language classroom. Being able to write these genres may be necessary for them not in educational settings, but in institutional or public settings.

Only three text genres appeared in each of the two types of commercial textbooks published for the preparation of university entrance examinations in Japan. The practice books were found to provide text genres that frequently appear in the examinations while the guidebooks seem to follow genres each of the three universities prepared in the examinations in previous years. As discussed above, these examinations have a significant influence on the activities of teaching and learning in Japanese high schools. For example, in writing instruction in Japanese high schools, Shizuka (1996) claims that high school students expect the teaching of English writing to prepare them to meet the requirements of these examinations. In this situation, both language teachers and students may prioritise textbooks which are beneficial to the preparation of the examinations over the MEXT-approved textbooks. There is a possibility that Japanese
high school teachers spend more time teaching genres that appear in the examinations than teaching with MEXT-approved textbooks. This situation may be problematic, as it may place undue emphasis on learning one of the genres in the commercial textbooks, Personal reflections, which was found to be the second most frequent genres in the practice books. Watanabe (2016) argues that this genre is less likely to contribute to the development of learners’ writing proficiency as, in this genre, writers can write their opinions without trying to be persuasive. This genre is very similar to the Comments genre, which Martin and Rothery (1981) found in Australian primary schools when they were developing a genre-based pedagogy and trying to identify what genres were taught in the schools at that time. They argue that this genre did not lead the students to be successful in other genres such as Explanations and Expositions as writers could construct their texts in any way they wanted to without having to explain issues or persuade readers (Martin & Rothery, 1981).

The MEXT-approved textbooks provide a wide range of genres that may help Japanese high school students to be successful in English writing. The commercial texts for the teaching and the learning of English writing for university entrance examinations, however, included a very limited range of genres, which may hinder the improvement of students’ English writing skills.

**Varieties of Constructing Argument Stages of Exposition Texts**

The analysis of the English texts in the textbooks revealed three types of schematic structures. First, there are texts with schematic structures that concur with those developed in the genre-based pedagogy. These texts were especially noticeable in the MEXT-approved textbooks. Second, the genres which appeared in those textbooks but were not found in the set of educational genres developed by SFL-based genre researchers consisted of unpatterned schematic structures. This was exemplified in the schematic structures of Personal reflections. Third, the Exposition texts were found to exhibit two types of schematic structures. The first of these consisted of Argument stages that support the Thesis stage. The second type contained Argument stages of Support and Concession. This type concurs with the schematic structure developed in SFL research.

The findings in the previous studies into English writing of Japanese students show their writing style is either inductive (e.g., Fathman & Kobayashi, 1984; Hinds, 1990) or deductive (e.g., Kubota, 1998; Hirose, 2003). The examination into the textbooks in this article revealed that the texts in those textbooks were identical in that they were deductive, always starting with a Thesis stage. They differed, however, in how they constructed the Argument stages. In the Expositions developed in an ESL context by SFL researchers, Argument stages only need to have Supporting stages (see e.g., Martin & Rose, 2008). It may weaken an argument to include a Concession stage in this context. The reason the commercial textbooks for English writing in Japan have Supporting and Concession stages in the Argument stages of Expositions may be related to Japanese writing culture. Sano (2008) conducted a study into the structures of editorial texts in Japanese newspapers from an SFL genre perspective and found that Japanese editorials usually start with an Inducement stage. He explains this as happening because an argument may offend readers’ feelings if explicit positions are conveyed at the beginning in Japanese culture where commonality is appreciated. The inclusion of a concession stage may have resulted from the fusion of the two different cultures: Japanese and Western.

This cross-cultural issue echoes findings in research on argumentative texts in other EFL contexts. For example, Horverak (2016) investigated what type of English argumentative writing was taught in Norwegian high schools. She found that the model schematic structures introduced by school teachers often included a Counterargument stage following Argument stages, which can be considered as the influence of an argument style from their native language. The findings in the current article and Horverak (2016) may suggest that the teaching of argumentative writing is influenced by that of L1 writing. This is supported by one of the research findings by Liu and Furneaux (2015). They found that Chinese EFL learners tended to write Hortatory expositions which asserted appropriate actions for an issue while native English-speaking writers were likely to employ Analytical expositions, which aims to
persuade readers to think in a certain way. They argue that this tendency of the Chinese writers may have resulted from the writing instruction they received in China (Liu & Furneaux, 2015). Li (1996) found that writing instruction in China emphasises the importance of embedding moral messages in writing.

As can be seen from the previous studies in the EFL contexts discussed above, English texts written by L2 writers can be influenced by their L1 writing skills. In this study, this phenomenon was observed in the construction of the Argument stages in Exposition writing. This seems to echo partly what Hinds (1984; 1990) and Fathman and Kobayashi (1984) found in their studies into English writing by L2 English language learners in Japan in that indirect arguments are constructed in Japanese writers’ English texts.

Pedagogical Implications

The notion of genre provides English language teachers with insights into the text types beneficial to their students. Teachers’ perceptions of what genres appear or are lacking in the textbooks they use to teach English writing may ensure a balanced coverage of their teaching of genres. In terms of schematic structures in argumentative genres such as Expositions, it may be culturally specific how the Argument stages are constructed. Previous studies into this issue support the findings of the current article (see e.g., Horverak, 2016 in the previous section for a Norwegian case). This suggests that language learners need to be taught to compose English texts considering contextual factors that may affect their English writing. The genre-based pedagogy to English writing should include this factor related to contextual awareness (see e.g., Hyland, 2003; Reichelt et al., 2012). For example, Paltridge (2001) argues that an awareness of the audience of a text has a crucial impact on the types of texts writers should produce and how these texts should be composed. To enhance learners’ awareness of the audience of their texts, textbooks for English writing should describe the audience of texts that they include. For example, it may be more suitable to write an Exposition text which includes a Counterargument stage for Norwegian speaking readers than to employ the typical Argument stages developed in SFL research which are comprised of only supporting Argument stages (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2008; Humphrey et al., 2012).

Conclusion

This article examined model texts taken from textbooks for English writing used in Japanese high schools. The genre framework developed within SFL revealed that a variety of genres in these textbooks were not well-balanced. The commercial textbooks focused on a few genres such as Expositions and Personal reflections while the MEXT-approved textbooks provided various genres from everyday genre to academic genre. Considering the fact that university entrance examinations have a great impact on English language teaching, the limited variety of genres offered in the textbooks for the examinations may hinder Japanese learners’ development of English writing. In terms of the schematic structures of these genres, two patterns to construct Argument stages in the Exposition model texts appeared. In previous studies into writing by Japanese students, it was questioned whether the writing is inductive or deductive. This study, however, showed that the differences among the model texts lie in the construction of the Argument stages, as all the texts were found to be deductive and began with a clear Thesis stage.

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