A Contrastive Study in Rhetoric: An Analysis of the Organization of Paragraphs by Japanese EFL College Students

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1. Introduction

With the development of science and technology, the global tendency for a rapidly rowing need for English as oral communication has greatly influenced Japanese people's attitudes towards learning English. In recent years we have easy access to English from a wide range of sources including various authentic materials such as audio visual or satellite broadcasting resources. These help enhance mutual understanding among people with different cultural backgrounds. The number of Japanese EFL learners who have some contact with native speakers of English has certainly increased these days. However, learners began to realize that knowledge of English is not sufficient to comprehend English-speaking thought patterns and behaviors. The research of contrastive rhetoric, which was initiated by Robert Kaplan in 1966, has become an important area in order to understand, and appreciate people with different cultural backgrounds. Many empirical experiments in the field of Applied Linguistics have been conducted on contrastive rhetoric by identifying problems in composition by second language writers through referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language.

Before proceeding to the historical development of contrastive rhetoric, a general overview of organizational patterns in English and Japanese expository prose is described below for the better understanding of the investigation.

The paragraph is a very important unit of discourse for expressing a writer's integrated ideas of information in English writing. Paragraphs are connected hierarchically around a topic with succeeding sentences offering supporting statements to the topic. A topic sentence is usually put in an initial position. Miller (1974: 14ff) offers, "Paragraphs frequently begin with the topic sentence and follow it with supporting details which elaborate on the controlling idea in the topic sentence." This style is related to a writer-responsible language. On the other hand, however, the same concept of a "paragraph" did not exist in the Japanese language. Instead, "danraku", derived from old Chinese grammar books, was used to divide segments of sentences. In the Meiji Era, the word "paragraph" was introduced through Western rhetoric books and translated in Japanese as "danraku." Japanese writers would often create paragraphs subjectively, directed by their feelings. In addition, the initial line of each paragraph was not always indented, which can sometimes be seen in modern Japanese literature even now. This style is related to a reader-responsible Japanese language, leaving the interpretation of the text to the readers' imagination. Semantic strands in each paragraph are complicatedly crossed and mingled with each other. They are not organized in hierarchical fashion like English paragraphs. Hinds
(1981) maintains that while there are clear syntactic manifestations among units of discourse in English, the primary organizing principles of Japanese paragraphs appear to be thematic. Japanese expository essays generally have three parts: introduction, main body, and conclusion; the introduction starts the writer's argument, the argument is developed at a main body and finally leads to the conclusion. The main body has sometimes other developmental styles called "ten." These are introductions to subthemes that, while having some connection with the major theme, are not directly connected with it. (This organizational form is called "ki-sho-ten-ketsu.") There are contrastive conclusion patterns between English and Japanese writing. According to McCrimmon (1976: 106-7), a conclusion in English expository prose emphasizes the main points of the exposition in summary, and either draws a conclusion based on the information presented in the preceding paragraphs or evaluates what has been presented. In the Japanese case, as Takemata (1976: 26-7) states, the conclusion indicates a doubt or asks a question without giving a final decision. The difference in organizational patterns between English and Japanese paragraphs stem from different modes of cognitive perception and logic.

This paper presents an investigation into how EFL learners can reconstruct the original discourse in English and Japanese through the process of reading comprehension, rearranging the paragraphs given a random order.

2. Historical Development of Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive rhetoric started from pedagogical efforts of improving interference in error analysis. However, it has neither reached the level of interlanguage analysis nor has it developed the comparison of acquisition of linguistic and rhetorical structures. In 1966 the American linguist Robert Kaplan identified five types of paragraphs development for five groups: English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance and Russian. He described English cultural thought patterns as direct and linear, while Oriental counterparts as indirect and non-linear. He maintained that cultural-specific patterns in a first language are negatively transferred to English. His article has been criticized for privileging the writing of native English speakers (Matalene 1985), for dismissing linguistic and cultural differences in writing among related languages such as Chinese, Thai, and Korean speakers in one "Oriental" group (Hinds 1983a), and for considering transfer from the first language a negative influence on second language writing (Raines 1991a). Contrastive rhetoric moved to compare discourse structures across culture. Hinds contrasted Japanese organizational patterns with English patterns, citing mainly from a column "Tenseijingo" in the Asahi Newspaper ("Vox Populi, Vox Dei" in English version). He defined typical Japanese organizational patterns as ki (introduction of a writer's argument), sho (development), ten, and ketsu (conclusion). The "Ten" part, which causes Japanese expository essays to be difficult to understand, has some connections with the major theme but does not have a direct explicit connection with it. The organizational pattern of ki-sho-ten-ketsu is derived from classical Chinese poems.
He also maintains that Oriental writing style has a quasi-inductive style which involves delayed introduction of purpose, with the topic implied, not stated (Hinds 1980). While there has been some critics of his conclusions, saying that his research is only limited to Japanese newspapers, his extensive research has contributed greatly to Japanese-English contrast of rhetorical organizational patterns.

3. Experiment

3.1. Object

The previous article, "Comparison of Organizational Patterns of Paragraphs between Speakers of English and Japanese Learners," presented how English-speakers and Japanese-speakers reacted to the organizational patterns of texts originally written in their own language. (Taki, 1995) Native speakers of English (henceforth referred to as NS) tended to see rhetorical organization written by English-speaking people as linear and direct, and found it easy to follow the logical flow. They found it difficult and confusing to read the English version of typical Japanese organizational patterns of kisho-ten-ketsu because of a return to a baseline with non-linear flowing. It is necessary for learners to take both deductive and inductive approaches in reading two English articles. On the other hand, however, 45 young Japanese EFL learners (henceforth referred to as JL) did not display typical Japanese organizational patterns in reading the two English articles, although some organizational patterns similar to NS were found among high proficient JL. Kaplan's negative transfer from a first language was not testified. As the previous experiment on JL did not demonstrate any significant results so far, this paper is intended to extend my former project, focusing on JL's logical flow in English and Japanese expository prose. (The number of subjects increased to 103 from 45.) If the rhetorical organization of paragraphs of Japanese and English texts are different, it is speculated that interference from Japanese might hinder the JL in organizing English paragraphs. It is also speculated that JL's proficiency level may influence how well English paragraphs are organized. In addition, it is also interesting to try extending the research area to include logical ability in their first language. Are English and Japanese proficiency levels related to each other?

The main objects in the experiments are to investigate the following:

a. Is there any correlation between
---English proficiency and English logical organization?
---English proficiency and Japanese logical organization?
---English logical organization and Japanese logical organization?

b. Does negative transfer from Japanese organizational patterns interfere with English organization of paragraphs? Are there any unique sequential patterns found in JL's paragraph development?
3.2. Subjects

Subjects were 103 Japanese college students in Ehime Prefecture. They were freshmen who were majoring in Business Administration and Economics.

3.3. Materials

Three different kinds of tests were distributed to the subjects.
---An English proficiency test consisting of two sections - grammar and reading, citing a text to "Big Step to Pass STEP Tests-Step's Grade Jun 2 (pre-2nd)" published by Obunsha in 1995.
---"John Harvard and the Three Famous Lies" written by Steven Wardell in Weekly Student Times (the same material as the last experiment).
---"Chikyu to Seimei no Shinka (Evolution of the Earth and Life) in Newton vol. 16, No. 8 written by Hitoshi Takeuchi published by Kyoikusha in 1996.

3.4. Procedures and Scoring

Three kinds of test were administered to three classes in their regular classrooms. The English proficiency test was assigned for forty minutes in order to ascertain their proficiency level. One week later, two tests; one in English and the other in Japanese; were conducted concerning the organization of paragraphs (for forty minutes and twenty minutes respectively). The order of the seven paragraphs of each essay was changed. The subjects were asked to read and organize them into a logical and coherent order. As explanatory notes on English vocabulary were provided at the end of each question, they were not allowed to use dictionaries in the experiments.

Special consideration was given to a scoring method concerning the organization of the seven paragraphs. As the sequence of each paragraph was considered more important than its position, the relation between each paragraph was examined, using a binary scoring method (0 or 1). A correct response was scored 1, while an incorrect response was scored 0. Scores were totaled up in each answer. A correct answer of the initial and the final position of paragraphs were scored 1 respectively. Blank answers were excluded from the results of the experiments. (For example, for the organization of the English essay, the correct answer is 5-7-2-6-1-3-4. If 5-7 was found in a subject's responses, it was counted 1 regardless of the position in the order of the paragraphs. Moreover, one more point is added to the original scores, if 5 was selected as the beginning of the paragraph.)

4. Results

4.1. Correlation between JL's English Proficiency Level and English Logical Organization (material: "Harvard and the three famous Lies")
---English proficiency level (both grammar and reading) and English logical organization
n=103, r=0.3215 (n: the number of subjects r: Pearson's product-moment correlation)
---Grammar and English logical organization
n=103, r=0.2282
---Reading and English logical organization
n=103, r=0.3040

The above figures suggest that there is a slight correlation between the JL's English proficiency and their English logical organization. Moreover, it is worth noticing that synthetic ability of grammar and reading shows a higher correlation than ability in either grammar or reading alone.

4.2. Correlation between English Proficiency Level and Japanese Logical Organization
(material: "Chikyu to Seimei no Shinka")

n=103, r=-0.021

The above figures suggest that there is little correlation between the JL's English proficiency level and their Japanese logical organization.

4.3. Correlation between English logical organization and Japanese organization

n=103, r=-0.089

The above figures suggest that there is little correlation between the JL's English logical organization and their Japanese logical organization.

4.4. Rhetorical Organizational Patterns in English Expository Prose

A correct answer is 5-7-2-6-1-3(or 3-1)-4. Table 1 shows the percentage of correct answers for the first and the last paragraph, including some significant factors concerning paragraph development. The NS's percentage of correct answers is cited from the results of the previously reported experiments.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph No.</th>
<th>JL</th>
<th>NS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The first paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct answer is 5.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The last paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct answer is 4.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The peculiar sequential patterns of JL: 5-1-7-2 (7%), 5-4-7-2 (5%), 5-3-4-6 (4%), 5-3-6-7(4%).

5. Discussion

I would like to develop my analysis of the sequential patterns by JL, referring to the results of English proficiency level. The subjects were divided into three groups according to their synthetic proficiency level of grammar and reading—high-proficiency group A (36 students), intermediate-proficiency group B (33 students) and low-proficiency group C (34 students). Table 2 shows the number and percentage of the subjects in each group who display sequential patterns in the first four paragraphs that are similar to or different from those of NS who took the same test in the previous experiments.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar patterns</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different patterns</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The English expository essay is about Harvard University's three lies. The original paragraphs are organized hierarchically with direct and linear logical flow. As examined before, English proficiency level and scores of English organizational patterns showed low levels of correlation. Synthetic English ability of grammar and reading showed a higher correlation than separate English ability of either grammar or reading. This might signify that English integrated ability is more related to some factors that influence English logic than separate English ability. As shown in Table 2, 30.6% of group A succeeded in finding correct sequential patterns of the first four paragraphs, while 24.2 percent and 5.9 percent of group B and C gave the correct response. In
addition to linguistic problems, some factors such as different logical organization patterns might have interfered with their responses. It is surmised that with more advanced learners of English than in this study, there might be a still higher correlation. The Japanese expository essay described the evolution of the earth and life, introducing the theory of natural selection and mutation. The original paragraphs are mainly organized in three parts: introduction, development and conclusion, citing some theories. There was no correlation between English proficiency level and scores of Japanese organizational patterns. Moreover, no correlation between scores of English and Japanese organization of paragraphs was found in the experiment. This suggests that the ability to organize English paragraphs is not transferred directly from the ability to organize Japanese paragraphs. However, results might have been different, if subjects were more advanced learners of English. (The subjects who took the tests in the experiments were regarded as high-elementary to low-intermediate learners of English.)

Next, let us examine the sequential patterns and observe which paragraphs were chosen as the first and the last paragraph, as the initial and the final positions play an important role in English rhetorical organization style. As an initial introduction, Paragraph 5 is concerned with something very general on the statue and catches the reader's attention, starting with 'there is'. As shown in Table 1, 70% of the subjects chose Paragraph 5, while all of the NS chose this paragraph as the start of a story. It shows that most JL have the same accepted perception as the NS. However, there might remain some doubt that some JL chose this paragraph automatically, simply because of the expression "there is", since this kind of marker often tells readers that a story is beginning. Another experiment should be administered in which this expression does not occur at the beginning of the essay. 12% of the JL chose Paragraph 3 as an initial position. Paragraph 3 depicts a scene of the Harvard campus. It neither tells something general nor does it contain a special message as a topic. It can be assumed as the beginning of an inductive style that Japanese writers often use.

As a final conclusion, Paragraph 4 is concerned with the statue as a "teacher", referring back to the points that the law professors are given a lecture to the students. "So Mr. Harvard, calmly looking out over Harvard Yard from his high seat ---" is a kind of closing remark. It is worth noticing that the majority of the JL's answers for the final paragraph chose one of the two paragraphs---Paragraph 4 (33%) and Paragraph 1 (31%), while 94% of the NS selected Paragraph 4. It is speculated that the difference in these answers was due to different styles of conclusion between English and Japanese organization of discourse. As mentioned before, a conclusion in English expository prose summarizes by emphasizing main points. "A statue" in Paragraph 5 was emphasized in Paragraph 4 as a conclusion. However, a conclusion in Japanese expository prose does not usually have such a style. In addition, the word "conclude" in Paragraph 1 might have led the readers to think of it as a marker indicating the end of a story.

Noticeable sequential patterns different from NS are 5-1-7-2 (7%), 5-4-7-2 (5%).
5-3-4-6 (4%), and 5-3-6-7(4%). Though each percentage is small, the fact that some JL selected the same sequential patterns should be examined again. The total percentages of each group are as follows: 13.9% of group A, 21.2% of group B, 20.6% of group C. After examining how each paragraph was connected, I could not derive any common logical organization from their sequential patterns. The JL followed a part of the information delivered in the previous paragraph apparently, sometimes tracing the repetition of lexical words. However, they frequently failed to comprehend syntactic shifts to indicate cohesion due to their limited linguistic knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Several implications were suggested through the research project described above. First, English and Japanese logical ability shows no correlation as far as the designs of the experiments above are concerned. Other investigation concerning reading ability, and logical reasoning should be conducted in order to obtain more profound research results. Next, linguistic problems play some factors in organizing English paragraphs. The significance of English proficiency level might increase if methods used in the experiments were more sophisticated. Third, definite conclusion on negative transfer could not be stated because of the limited nature and scale of my experiments. Some tendency, however, is observed fragmentarily, such as the choice of a final paragraph and low correct percentage of high-proficient group. As Kobayashi (1984) and Kubota's (1992) doctoral dissertation reported, this might be partly due to the writing pattern that Japanese people tend to favor, placing the main idea at the end of paragraphs. In this experiment apparent negative transfer was more evident than positive transfer in JL arguably due to the different syntactic construction and cultural backgrounds of the two. However, how much interference from the first language occurs is likely to be determined by many complex factors including language learners' proficiency levels, and special consideration should be made to learners who are in a developmental stage of interlanguage process.

Lastly, I would like to finish this paper by giving a hopeful pedagogical perspective that proper teaching methods and techniques will promote Japanese EFL learners to reach high levels of proficiency in English regardless of the different language rhetorical patterns between English and Japanese.

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Bibliography


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Appendix

(1) The following story is from an article which appeared in The Student Times. It is composed of seven paragraphs. They are not put in order. Read the following paragraphs and put them in order in order to make the connections logical and coherent. Write the number of each paragraph later.

1. Law professors sometimes take their first-year class over to the statue, from their classrooms a couple of blocks away, to give a lecture about truth and the need to question authority. They expose the three lies, and conclude, "Don't even trust Harvard. Don't believe totally what I tell you. Learn and prove things for yourself."

2. First, the college was founded in 1636, not 1638. John Harvard made a significant gift to the college in 1638, so that is the date associated with him. Second, John Harvard was not Harvard's "Founder." He was the first major contributor, donating his books and half his money. Third, no one knows what John Harvard looked like. Many years ago the students held a contest to dress the way Mr. Harvard may have looked. The winner became the model for this statue by America's best sculptor. So the statue is not, in fact, of John Harvard.

3. Many people who visit Harvard stop to have a photo taken beside the famous "lying statue." This includes crowds of eager high school students and their parents, who are visiting colleges before applying to them. And it also includes tourists from all over the world, especially Japan, who can be seen in large groups surrounding the statue at almost any hour of the day, patiently waiting while each person steps up beside the statue and smiles for a photo.

4. So Mr. Harvard, calmly looking out over Harvard Yard from his high seat, is a teacher himself from time to time. And every day he leads the pleasant life of a popular celebrity. Nobody gets upset about his lies.

5. In Harvard Yard - the center of our campus - there's a collection of handsome, old buildings and one more thing: a statue of John Harvard himself. Or that's what it appears to be.

6. This statue's incorrect information provides many laughs among students and tourists, especially because the school's motto is "Veritas." (Veritas is Latin for "Truth.")

7. That's what the words under the statue say:

   John Harvard
   Founder
   1638

But don't believe everything you read. This famous statue's also called "The Statue of the Three Lies."
しかしこの考えに賛成しない人々も少なくない。たとえ
ばわが国の今村信治（1902〜1992）は、突然変異〜自然選
択説に反対して、著書である「ダーウィン論」（中公新書）
その後の中で、それにかかわる説として「強み分け説」を提
案した。彼のこの論の出典点は、彼が若き日に大仁川（当
時）で行った4種類のヒラタカワラの研究であった。彼
は、4種類のヒラタカワラが互いに異なった性質をとっている
のをみて、そこから深い印象を受けたのである。

現代の進化論の主流をなす考えは、自然選択と突然変異
である。それらはそれぞれチャールズ・ダーウィン（1809
〜1882）およびヴィー・ド・フュリース（1848〜1935）によ
るものである。

ひるがえって考えてみると、今春のいうように自然環境が
つまらなかった。また環境がかわってもかわかりないとす
ば、それに適した個体（クライマックス）があらわれただ
だけで、そこに新しい種が誕生する可能性はたいへんに低い
であろう。

地球は約46億年前、微細なや原始惑星が衝突をくり返し
て生まれた。人類の数百万年を及ぶ歴史も、広大な宇宙の
歴史にくらべれば、ほんの一瞬にすぎない。地球誕生後、
原始地球は、どのような時間・空間の変化を経てその環境を
かえたのだろうか。そしてその環境の変化は、生命の
発展に進化にどのように影響を与えたのであろうか。
生命の起源と進化をたどってみよう。

ダーウィンによれば、同じ種から生まれたものでも、生
物には個体によるさまざまな変異がみられる。その中で環
境に適した個体をもつものが選択されて生き残り、そ
ういうことができれば、やがて新しい種が生じる。
これがダーウィンの「自然選択説」である。ダーウィンの
いう個体変異が実は突然変異によるものであり、それにダ
ーウィンが考えた自然選択がはだして生物が進化したと
するのが、フュリースによる「突然変異説」である。い
ずれにしても突然変異と自然選択は、その後の進化論の出
生となり、現在に至っている。

これらの著書その他の著者に語った私は、突然変異〜自
然選択説にちょっとしたつけ加えをすれば、それを受け入
れることができると考えることに気付いた。そのつけ加
とえば、自然選択説の中の「突然変異の中で、環境に適した
ものだけが選択されて生き残り」ものだけが選択されて生
き残り」などの部分に、「その（時間・空間的）変化」を加えて、「突然変異の中で、環境
の（時間・空間的）変化に適したものだけが選択されて生
き残り」とあらためることである。

また「生物進化を考える」（岩波新書）という本の中で分
子生物学者の木村光男（1924〜1994）は、自然選択（自然
選択）に対して突然変異は中立であるとしている。これも
また一見、突然変異〜自然選択説に対する反対論のように
みえる。

Ans.（）