Reformulation Revisited

Yuri Kusuyama

Reformulation is a pedagogical technique often used in ESL composition instruction. This paper reexamines the effectiveness of this technique from a research perspective. It compares essays written by Japanese ESL writers with reformulated versions prepared by native-speaking ESL instructors. While these ESL instructors may reformulate ESL essays intuitively (i.e., without any conscious and deliberate linguistic analysis), the quantitative analysis separately undertaken confirms that the features reformulators choose to reformulate strongly correlate with the ESL essay features often perceived as native/non-native differences. This type of systematic comparison brings the ESL instructors' intuitive reformulation efforts to the conscious and explicit level of analysis, showing how the reformulation technique serves as a revealing research tool in second language writing.

As a non-native speaker of English who has gone through a number of years of academic training in the United States, I have taken many composition courses in English, both English as a second language (ESL) and mainstream. Composition instructors often use the reformulation technique to change, correct, and improve non-native speakers' writing quality. While some instructors are able to explain why they make these changes and how these changes make the text better, some would simply say, "It sounds better" – native English speakers' favorite answer to the changes and corrections they intuitively make without conscious knowledge of why they do so.

Reformulation is a technique traditionally used in composition instruction. It is a powerful pedagogical tool because this technique uses the students' own texts (Purgason, 2002), and many ESL instructors effectively utilize this when teaching composition to ESL writers. While writing instructors may reformulate ESL essays without any conscious and deliberate linguistic analysis, in the end, they provide sample texts that are native-quality writing.

In this paper, I look at reformulation in a new way and re-examine the effectiveness of this technique from a research perspective. This research investigates the grammatical features and expressions used in sentence-initial position both by Japanese ESL learners and native speakers of American English (NES). I first compare ESL essays to a set of the control group essays written by native speakers to identify the ESL non-nativelike features. I then demonstrate how these elements which native ESL instructors choose to change in reformulation correspond precisely to the areas of the quantitative differences between the two groups.

This type of systematic comparison brings the ESL instructors' reformulation efforts, which are mostly intuitive, to the conscious level of analysis, showing how the reformulation technique serves as a revealing and effective tool in second language acquisition research. The findings also reconfirm the value of reformulation as a pedagogical technique, particularly as an awareness-raising tool that both ESL writing

instructors and ESL writers could use in their teaching/learning of academic writing.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Reformulation

Reformulation is a teaching strategy frequently used in ESL writing instruction. According to Allwright, Woodley, & Allwright (1988), this strategy was first developed in the early 1980s by Cohen (e.g., 1982, 1983), who adapted the idea from Levenston (1978) and used it in ESL writing classrooms. Allwright, et al. (1988) explain reformulation as follows:

> "... it requires the native speaker to try to understand what the non-native was trying to write and then to rewrite it, where absolutely necessary, in a form more natural to the native speaker. This may involve making changes at all levels, but the point of any such changes must be to bring out the original writer's probable intention, not to deliberately substitute a new set of intentions for them." (p. 238)

Reformulation in this study is thus defined as "a technique and/or the texts produced by utilizing this technique, in which native speakers of English reserve the content of the original ESL essays but transform the ESL texts to the native-quality writing."

Reformulation as a teaching strategy is generally well-received by both instructors and students in academic writing instruction as it is believed to be an effective, powerful pedagogical tool (e.g., Allwright, et al., 1988, Purgason, 2002). In using reformulation in ESL composition courses, some instructors may use this approach for sentence-level grammar correction (e.g., Myers, 1997) while some others use it for more elaborate discourse-level improvement. Cohen (1983) suggests that the reformulation technique can successfully provide specific areas of assistance in the revision process such as selection of vocabulary, choice and ordering of syntactic structures, markers of cohesion, and discourse functions. In Cohen's (1983) suggested methodology, ESL writers would ask their native English-speaking (NES) friends/tutors to perform reformulation and use NES assistance both in writing and in oral interaction to work on revisions. However, the problems with this type of reformulation, as identified by Cohen, include both possible weaknesses of the ESL learners' writing ability in their native language (i.e., the weakness in their general writing skills which may not necessarily be related to their second language proficiency) and possible weaknesses of writing skills of reformulating native speakers. When this technique is implemented by qualified native-speaking ESL instructors, its effectiveness obviously increases because the qualified instructors could provide good, native-quality sample texts.

Nevertheless, the overall effectiveness of this technique still remains questionable if the ESL writers do not understand why and how the reformulated changes could make the text better. As the importance of discussion[1] on reformulated text is pointed out by Allwright, et al. (1988), how much assistance ESL writers are able to receive from this technique depends largely on each learner's willingness and ability to analyze the reformulated texts. It is believed that this technique could make the greatest impact at the advanced level (Cohen, 1983), and ESL students must be active analyzers of the changes for reformulation to be truly helpful. Because this notion of 'analysis' is extremely important in this process, ESL instructors' willingness and ability to explain their reformulated changes also becomes a significant contributing factor for the implementation of this approach.

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1   Discussion was conducted as "class discussion" in the study done by Allwright, et al. (1988).

Sentence-initial Adverbials

Even though reformulators deal with many different levels of linguistic features in reformulation, they often seem to change the use of sentence-initial linguistic elements, many of which are manifested as adverbials used in sentence-initial position. This essay, thus, focuses its investigation on the features that appear in silence-initial position.

Because how a writer begins a sentence has much to do with information organization and presentation, sentence-initial position carries particular importance in writing. The use of sentence-initial adverbials requires well-developed writing competence not only at the sentence level but also at the larger discourse level, and ESL writers' writing samples often indicate some problems in their use of sentence-initial elements. Some of the characteristics and functions of sentence-initial elements are summarized by Jacobs (1995, p. 153) as follows:

1. Sentence-initial position is often occupied by adverbial phrases or clauses indicating time or place.
2. Simple linkages between separate sentences are also common in sentence-initial position. They typically indicate logical relations of contrast, exemplification, elaboration, and so forth.
3. Sentence-initial position is also a place for direction setting linkages – phrases or clauses indicating the direction the text will now take.

Sentence-initial adverbials, therefore, carry some of the syntactic features that writers use in creating meaningful organization of information (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Jacobs, 1995; Kolln, 1990). Because sentence-initial adverbials occupy initial position in the sentence, they constitute a marked word order in English, frequently signaling special functions such as discourse constraints, contrast, and emphasis (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Jacobs, 1995; Kolln, 1990). Such use of sentence-initial adverbials in academic writing is important both grammatically and rhetorically for information organization and presentation (Plattor & Washburn, 1981), and some ESL textbooks incorporate sections on the use of sentence-initial adverbials. For example, Brinton, Jensen, Repath-Martos, & Holten (1997, p. 11) explain the functions of fronted adverbial phrases in academic writing as follows:

1. To provide sentence variety,
2. To orient the reader—spatially or in time,
3. To move information you want to emphasize to the end of the sentence,
4. To help sentences flow together in a paragraph, (and)
5. To give the language a more poetic flavor.

Citing McCarthy's (1991) examples of exaggerated fronting, no fronting, and discriminating use of fronting, Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000, pp. 153-54) also discuss the importance of teaching variations in style for the purpose of showing ESL students options in English to achieve a more "effective and convincing manner" in their written communication.

While sentence-initial adverbials may appear in different forms (e.g., word/phrase-level adverbials, clause-level adverbials, multiple adverbials), this paper focuses on the use of word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials. Word/phrase-level adverbials have been categorized differently by various linguists and researchers (e.g., Buysschaert, 1982; Chafe, 1986; Ernst, 1984; Greenbaum, 1969; Halliday, 1985, 1994; Lyons, 1979), but *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber, Johansson, Leech,

Conrad, & Finegan, 1999) presents the most comprehensive analysis of adverbials. As far as functional classes of adverbials are concerned, Biber et al. (1999) categorize them into three classes: circumstance adverbials, linking adverbials, and stance adverbials, which essentially parallel the fundamental categorical classifications used by other linguists (i.e., adjuncts, conjuncts/conjunctive adjuncts, and disjuncts/mood adjuncts as used by Greenbaum, 1969; Halliday, 1985, 1994; Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973).

Circumstance adverbials, according to Bibler, et al. (1999), are the ones "most integrated into the clause structure," and they answer "questions such as 'How, When, Where, How much, To what extent' and 'Why'" (p. 763). Virtanen (1992) looks at the placement of sentence-initial adverbials of time and place in written English (narratives and procedural place descriptions), and Virtanen's findings suggest that the placement of adverbials varies depending on text type and text structure as well as information status and overall discourse context.

Linking adverbials, which some linguists may call conjunctive adverbials or logical connectors, function to "connect units of discourse of different sizes" (Biber, et al., 1999, p. 765). Semantic categories of linking adverbials suggested by Biber, et al. are: enumeration and addition, summation, apposition, result/inference, contrast/concession, and transition. Halliday & Hasan (1976) present four broader categories for linking adverbials (or conjunctive adverbials in Halliday's terms): additive, adversative, causal, and sequential. Additionally, Halliday & Hasan (1976) explain that some coordinate conjunctions, such as *and*, *but*, *so*, and *then*, sometimes indicate conjunctive cohesive relations rather than structural coordinate relations.

The function of stance adverbials is to "convey speakers' comments on what they are saying ... or how they are saying it," and they may be categorized as epistemic, attitude, or style (Biber, et al., 1999, p. 764). Biber & Finegan (1988) also suggest a clustering approach of six semantic categories for stance adverbials: *honestly*, *generally*, *surely*, *actually*, *maybe*, and *amazingly*, which may be considered as tokens giving criteria and guidance for further subcategorization of stance adverbials.

Sentence-initial adverbials, therefore, carry special functions in organizing information and in creating rhetorical effects in written discourse, both of which are important factors in academic writing. Because the adequate use of sentence-initial adverbials requires a certain level of writing ability, it is not surprising that ESL learners seem to have some difficulties with the use of sentence-initial adverbials (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Williams, 1996). In this study, I investigate the Japanese ESL writers' use of sentence-initial adverbials by using the reformulation technique as a research tool.

RESEARCH METHODS

Two separate data sets are used in this study. Data Set 1 includes timed essays on the same topic written by Japanese ESL learners (ESL) and native American English speakers (NES). This data set provides the comparisons of ESL and NES essays so that similarities and differences between the ESL and NES essays in their use of sentence-initial adverbials may be identified. The identified areas of similarities and differences are used to discuss non-native features of the Japanese ESL writing samples. The second data set, Data Set 2, consists of essays reformulated by native English-speaking ESL instructors. This data set is used to analyze which ESL writing features native-speaking ESL instructors choose to reformulate and what strategies they use in order to transform the ESL essays into native-like texts.

Data Set 1

This first data set contains two sets of essays: essays written by Japanese ESL students (ESL) and essays written by native English-speaking students (NES). This is used to identify the ESL nonnative-like features comparing their essays to the NES control group essays. The comparison of ESL and NES essays

thus allows a quantitative analysis of sentence-initial adverbials used by both groups.

Data Set 1 – Participants

ESL essays written by Japanese ESL students came from the composition section of the ESL Placement Examination (ESLPE) administered at one of the University of California Campuses. Twenty essays were selected based upon the placement (i.e., placed either in an advanced level ESL course or exempted from ESL instruction on the basis of their ESLPE scores). This condition was applied because the ESL essays written by beginning- and intermediate-level students were shorter and contained numerous problems in content, organization, and language use. Specifically, lower-level ESL students were often not able to produce essays long enough to examine the use of sentence-initial features investigated here. See Appendix A for the information on the ESL subjects.

In order to provide comparable control-group data, 20 timed essay samples were collected from NES writers[2]. These 20 NES writers are university students (from the same university as the ESL students) who volunteered and consented to participate in this study. See Appendix B for the information on the NES subjects.

Data Set 1 – Writing Task

In the composition section of the ESLPE administered at this campus, each test provides students with a choice of two possible writing prompts. The composition section of the placement test allocates 50 minutes for students to compose an academic essay (Appendix C). This study uses a prompt entitled "Confidence in the future." This writing prompt refers to a 1979 speech by President Carter in which he warns that we are losing confidence in the future. Test takers are asked to agree or disagree with Carter's statement and provide evidence for their opinion based on their personal experience.

For the NES data collection, the allocated essay-writing time was adjusted to 40 minutes because each NES data collection session used only one prompt without an option, unlike the ESLPE, and because the writers were supposedly native English speakers. See Appendix D.

Data Set 1 – Methods of Analysis

A "sentence" in this study refers to an orthographic sentence, i.e., a string of words which a writer begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. The focus of the analysis is limited to the first clause in an orthographic sentence although initial position in the second clause of a complex or compound sentence is taken into consideration when it seems to suggest some importance in the analysis.

The sentence-initial adverbials examined here are limited to word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials[3]. The method for analyzing sentence-initial adverbials is adapted from *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber, et al., 1999), which suggests three levels of analysis for adverbial elements: position, syntactic realization, and functional class. The analysis here obviously deals with the sentence-initial position, and the syntactic realization of word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials includes both conjunctive and adverbial elements that appear prior to the main subject. The categorical

2   In the course of collecting NES control group data, a total of 26 essays were collected. The following conditions were applied and 20 essays were used for analysis:
  a. Essays which contained many illegible words were excluded.
  b. Essays which did not demonstrate NES writing quantity as well as quality in the use of Standard American English were excluded.
  c. Essays which seemed to indicate extreme and non-native overuse of sentence-initial adverbials were excluded. This was determined based upon two criteria: the frequency of overall sentence-initial adverbials and the frequency of sentence-initial adverbials excluding adverbial clauses. The essays were excluded if they had: 1) over 60% frequency for overall sentence-initial adverbials AND 2) over 40% frequency for sentence-initial adverbials excluding adverbial clauses.
3   The sentence-initial elements appear in four main categories in this data: 1) word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials, 2) clause-level sentence-initial adverbials, 3) multiple sentence-initial adverbials, and 4) other constructions affecting sentence-initial elements. Only the word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials are investigated here.

elements identified in this study are: conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, adverbs, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, noun phrases[4], and formulaic expressions. As far as functional classes of adverbials are concerned, three main categories (circumstance adverbials, logical connectors, and stance adverbials) are maintained although some minor adjustments are made with reference to the subcategorization of these classes. The ESL essays and the NES essays are compared in order to identify the non-nativelike features that the ESL writers demonstrate in their use of sentence-initial adverbials.

For the purpose of the NES/ESL comparison, the number of tokens reported here has been converted to a relative frequency reflecting tokens per 100 orthographic sentences.

Data Set 2

The second data set provides essays reformulated by native-speaking ESL instructors (RFM). Reformulated essays are used to investigate how ESL instructors deal with problems in ESL essays in order to transform them into writing that native speakers deem stylistically appropriate.

<u>**Data Set 2 – Participants**</u>

Four ESL essays comparable with reference to total number of words and words per sentence are selected for reformulation. Six university-level ESL instructors reformulated two essays each, making the total number of RFM essays 12 (i.e., three reformulations per essay).   All six reformulators have completed their Master's degrees in Applied Linguistics or a related field and worked as ESL instructors either at the time of data collection or prior to the time of data collection.

<u>**Data Set 2 – Tasks**</u>

The reformulators were instructed to preserve the content of the ESL essays but to reformulate them so that they would approach the quality of their own writing. The reformulators were also requested to fill out a response sheet on each reformulation they performed so that they could write any comments they wished to make. See Appendix E.

<u>**Data Set 2 – Methods of Analysis**</u>

The original ESL essays and RFM essays are compared in reference to the use of sentence-initial elements. The four original ESL essays are coded as "ESL1" to "ESL 4." The six reformulators are identified as Reformulators A through F, each reformulating two ESL essays.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings demonstrate how the changes native English-speaking ESL instructors make in the reformulated texts correspond to and confirm the quantitative analysis of the Japanese ESL learners' writing features, which may be considered as "deviations from native writing norms" (B. Lin, personal communication, June 19, 2006). In reformulation, the reformulators often maintain the ESL writers' use of sentence-initial adverbials. This is expected because the overall rates of sentence-initial adverbial occurrences per 100 orthographic sentences are quantitatively similar between the NES (26.42) and ESL (28.64) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Word/Phrase-level Sentence-initial Adverbials – NES vs. ESL

Number of Sentence-initial Adverbials (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Number of Sentence-initial Adverbials per 100 Orthographic Sentences	
NES (S=492)	**ESL (S=398)**	**NES (S=100)**	**ESL (S=100)**
130	114	**26.42**	**28.64**

[4] This category refers to what some analysts label as prepositional phrases with deleted or zero prepositions (e.g., this summer).

However, because the ESL writers' use of sentence-initial adverbials is often inadequate or uninformative, the reformulators may make changes in order to create more effective texts both grammatically and rhetorically. Some of the reformulators are conservative and moderate in changing the ESL texts both at the sentence- and discourse-level. These reformulators tend to maintain the original ESL sentence structures whereas others reformulate essays more radically and change sentence structures and essay organization more freely. Both types of reformulators, however, employ similar strategies in their reformulation of the ESL essays.

I will first present the ESL/NES comparisons of the use of sentence-initial adverbials to demonstrate the ESL non-nativelike features; then, I will provide reformulation examples to illustrate how the changes native-speaking ESL instructors make in reformulation correspond precisely to these features. The analysis here is limited to word/phrase-level adverbials as explained previously, and the similarities/differences in sentence-initial adverbial usage between the ESL and NES writers are discussed in terms of functional class: circumstance adverbials, logical connectors, and stance adverbials. The quantitative comparison of the ESL and NES essays, in short, shows the following (See Table 2):

1. The ESL writers' use of circumstance adverbials is similar to the NES writers' in frequency

2. The ESL writers' use of logical connectors is higher than the NES writers' in frequency; and

3. The ESL writers' use of stance adverbials is lower than the NES writers' in frequency.

Table 2. Functional Categories of Word/Phrase-level Sentence-initial Adverbials (NES vs. ESL)

Functional Category	Number of Word/Phrase-level Sentence-initial Adverbials (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Number of Word/Phrase-level Sentence-initial Adverbials per 100 Orthographic Sentences	
	NES (S=492)	ESL (S=398)	NES (S=100)	ESL (S=100)
Circumstance Adverbials	56	43	11.38	10.80
Logical Connectors	51	61	10.37	15.32
Stance Adverbials	23	10	4.67	2.51

Additionally, some instances of ESL writers' use of these adverbials result in ungrammaticality, inappropriateness, unclear transitions, and lack of rhetorical manipulation in indicating their position and stance.

Circumstance Adverbials

As shown in the quantitative comparison of the ESL/NES essays (Table 2), the overall frequencies of word/phrase-level sentence-initial circumstance adverbials are similar for NES (11.38) and ESL (10.80). The quantitative findings also show that the most common function of circumstance adverbials observed in the writing samples of the two groups is to define or frame time, place, people/group, domain, instrument, manner, and reason. The use of circumstance adverbials in sentence-initial position, particularly for specifying time and place, is a common linguistic phenomenon in English (e.g., Virtanen, 1992; Kolln, 1998). Because the prompt used here deals with possible comparisons of time (e.g., 1979 vs. today), place

(e.g., U.S. vs. another country), and domain (e.g., political, social, economic), it triggers a high frequency of sentence-initial circumstance adverbials. The ESL writers' use of circumstance adverbials is similar to that of the NES writers' in both frequency and function; however, the ESL writers may lack versatility in using different forms and expressions. For example, the NES writers use not only adverbs (e.g., *today, currently*) but also various prepositional phrases (e.g., *as of now, at the turn of the 1900's, at the present time, in this era*) to frame the present time, whereas the ESL writers' use are limited to adverbs (e.g., *today, now, recently*), showing less versatility and sophistication in form and meaning.

In the reformulation task, the native speaker reformulators frequently maintain the ESL writers' use of sentence-initial circumstance adverbials as in Example 1 and Example 2. The reformulators also use other strategies such as sentence-combining, rephrasing, the addition of relevant information, and the deletion of irrelevant information.

Example 1 – Reformulation Samples

ESL 4 (Exempt)	ID	Reformulation
1. <u>Inside America</u> you can see such a diversity. 2. <u>Outside America</u>, the Cold War is over, and European union is created.	A	1. <u>Within America</u> there is diversity, <u>while outside</u>, the Cold War has ended, and the European Union is a strong global force.
	B	1. <u>Within America</u> you can see a racial and cultural diversity far greater than at the time of Carter's speech. 2. <u>Outside America</u>, the Cold War is over, America is the only superpower, and the European Union has been created.

Example 2 –Reformulation Samples

ESL 4 (Exempt)	ID	Reformulation
1. <u>In this composition,</u> I would like to compare the time of President Jimmy Carter to present and describe how the two are different. 2. Then I would like to consider a way to understand the current condition of our world and how things will be different in the next five to ten years.	A	1. <u>In this composition,</u> I would like to compare and contrast the time of President Jimmy Carter with the present, in order to aid understanding of the current state of the world and how things might change over the next five to ten years.
	B	1. <u>In this composition,</u> I would like to compare President Jimmy Carter's era to the present one and describe how the two are different. 2. After this, I would like to propose a way to understand the current condition of our world and how things will be different in the next five to ten years.

Sentence-initial circumstance adverbials are often maintained in reformulation as long as they are used appropriately by the ESL writer. If the ESL writers' use of sentence-initial circumstance adverbials is inappropriate, the reformulators may replace these expressions with something else that is more suitable (e.g., changing "inside America" to "within America"). The reformulators' treatment of sentence-initial circumstance adverbials, therefore, reflects their perception of the ESL writers' weaknesses in this area. At the same time, their use of sentence-initial circumstance adverbials in the reformulations reflects the similarity between ESL/NES writers in frequency and function of sentence-initial adverbials as identified in the NES control group.

Logical Connectors

For logical connectors, the token frequency of the ESL writers (15.32) is much higher than that of the NES writers (10.37) as shown in Table 2. Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) point out that the problem ESL writers demonstrate is "not the underuse of logical connectors: it is their overuse" (p. 537), and the quantitative findings here confirm this point. This is particularly noticeable with the ESL students' higher tendency to use conjunctions in sentence-initial position. In academic writing, opening a sentence with conjunctions, particularly *and*, is stylistically permitted, but overuse is discouraged and advised against, especially when it has no meaningful function (e.g., Johnson, 1982). The NES writers seem to follow such recommendations. Only one NES writer used *and* in sentence-initial position[5], and in this token (Example 3), it functions more like a conjunctive adverb with specific emphasis placed on the additive meaning (Halliday & Hasan, 1976):

Example 3 – NES Writing Sample

More females and minorities are overcoming the barrier of discrimination. It won't happen all at once but I believe a slight, but important, change will occur in the next 5-10 years. **And** this course of action will give more people hope for the future, making our nation strong socially and politically. (NESA12)

Conversely, the ESL writers seem to utilize sentence-initial conjunctions without attaching any meaningful function to them (Example 4), resulting in inappropriate use and/or overuse of conjunctions in sentence-initial position. Therefore, logical connectors, particularly conjunctions, in sentence-initial position, are overused by the Japanese ESL writers in their academic writing.

Example 4 – ESL Writing Samples

It is difficult to predict how our lives will be in the future. **And** it is not even proper to say that our lives are getting better or worse. (ESLA166)

To solve this problem, we should accept much more immigrants to increase workers. **And** child care system should be much organized. Now almost of all the kindergarten in Japan close in 5pm, and parents have to take their children to home even if they have much work to do after that time. **And** child care center is always full, so at the beginning of the year, parents need to follow the long line to present an application form to the center, in addition, there is no guarantee to be accepted. (ESLA167)

Furthermore, the use of sentence-initial logical connectors indicating sequence (e.g., *first/second/third*) frequently appear in the ESL essays but seldom occur in the NES writing samples. Examples of the ESL writers' overuse from the quantitative findings include sequential logical connectors, such as *first of all*, *firstly/secondly*, *at first*, *in the second place/in the third place*, which are often used incorrectly and/or inappropriately. The NES writers do not use these types of sequential logical connectors even though their essays show similar organizational patterns. Like the ESL writers, the NES writers may utilize the five-paragraph essay pattern, which is frequently taught in introductory academic writing classes; however, their organizational strategies vary, and they use a wider variety of transition signals to present their supporting points. The NES writers demonstrate more linguistic flexibility in presenting ideas in sequence without

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5   Three other NES writers started a sentence with *and* if we include multiple adverbials that are used sentence-initially (*And because, And certainly, And in the U.S.*). These cases seem to indicate some emphatic additive meaning.

relying too heavily on formulaic expressions. The use of sequential logical connectors may be acceptable in academic writing, yet determining whether they are well used in the overall organization of the essay is another question.

Additionally, in the ESL writing samples, some tokens of certain discourse markers, such as *now* and *anyways*, appear as transition markers. These expressions are not appropriate for academic writing, and the NES writers do not use these expressions as transition markers. The NES writers tend to avoid these colloquial expressions, but some of the ESL writers seem to be transferring colloquial discourse markers (e.g., *anyways*) into their academic writing.

The reformulation examples confirm the differences observed in the ESL/NES comparisons. The reformulators often remedy the ESL writers' overuse of logical connectors by deleting them and rephrasing portions involving transition signals. When the ESL writers use logical connectors in sentence-initial position, their choices of logical connectors are sometimes unsuitable or ineffective. The ESL writers also have a tendency to use short, one-word logical connectors or conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *then*, *also*) rather casually as discussed earlier, and the reformulators often choose to change these sentence-initial logical connectors as seen in Example 5 and Example 6.

Example 5 – Reformulation Samples

ESL 2 (35)	ID	Reformulation
1. The unemployment rate is almost hitting five percent. 2. It is said that the Japanese economy has hit the bottom line and now starting to rise. 3. But I don't believe it.	A	1. With an unemployment rate at nearly five percent, many people continue to lose their jobs. 2. However, conventional wisdom has the Japanese economy now at its nadir, with an impending rise in the near future. 3. Personally, I don't believe that.
	B	1. The Japanese economy is so bad that many people have lost their jobs and the unemployment rate is almost five percent. 2. It has been predicted that the Japanese economy has hit "bottom" and is starting to rise. 3. However, I do not believe this
	C	1. People continue to lose their jobs, and unemployment has hit almost 5 percent (unthinkable in Japan 10 years ago). 2. While some are predicting that the economy has bottomed out and will rise again soon, I do not share their optimism because Japanese citizens still lack confidence in themselves.

Example 6 – Reformulation Samples

ESL 1 (33C)	ID	Reformulation
<u>Also</u>, people start to lose confidence because of so many social problems.	**D**	<u>In addition to</u> the loss of confidence in the political arena, citizens of the United States and Japan are losing confidence in the future as a result of the many social problems that plague the modern world.
	E	<u>In addition</u>, the citizens of both countries have lost confidence in their leadership because a plethora of social problems have not been addressed.
	F	Japan and the United States are <u>also</u> facing many of the same social problems.

Example 5 contains one ESL writer's use of *but* in sentence-initial position (sentence number 3). The reformulators all rephrase this to indicate the notion of concession more strongly and more effectively in this portion of the essay. Reformulator A changes the sentence-initial use of *but* to the stance adverb *personally*. Reformulator B rephrases *but* with a conjunctive adverb *however*, and Reformulator C with a *while* clause. All reformulated versions express more clearly the contrastive notions as well as the writer's stance, both of which should be indicated in this thesis statement portion of the essay.

In Example 6, the ESL writer starts a new paragraph with *also*. S/he attempts to introduce this section immediately after the paragraph which describes political problems in the U.S. and Japan. The ESL writer's use of *also* does not effectively illustrate the additional factor that the writer intends to express here. The first two reformulators (D and E) change *also* to *in addition*; the third reformulator (Reformulator F) changes the grammatical subject from *people* to *Japan and the United States* and moves *also* to a sentence-medial position. The three reformulated versions clearly show that this paragraph continues to discuss an additional problem that the two countries (the U.S. and Japan) face. These examples indicate that the ESL writers often use sentence-initial logical connectors less effectively, and the reformulators use several strategies, including deleting and rephrasing logical connectors, to deal with such ineffective or less sophisticated use.

Furthermore, this type of adjustment in the use of logical connectors is observed at a larger discourse level as well. Examples 7 and 8 involve comparisons of the original ESL4 essay and its two reformulated versions. These examples contain excerpts from the first paragraph, concluding paragraph, and first sentence of each paragraph in between. The ESL essay first defines the political, social, and economic domains that the writer is going to discuss (sentence number 3). Logical connectors (*first of all, in the second place, in the third place*) appear in each paragraph-initial position of the body of the essay. This use of logical connectors seemingly conforms to the so-called five-paragraph essay pattern. The problem with the essay, however, is obvious: incorrect expressions and not so effective use of these logical connectors.

Example 7 – Reformulation Sample

ESL 3 (Exempt)	Reformulator E
1. I do not believe that the President Carter's words apply today to American people.	1. President Carter's words may have been appropriate in the late1970's, however, I do not believe they apply to American people today.
2. They are not losing confidence in the future.	2. <u>In general</u>, American people are currently optimistic about their future, their society, and their economic and political situations.
3. <u>Rather</u>, they have a hope in their future, politically, socially, and economically.	3. <u>Firstly</u>, the political scene has changed dramatically since 1979.
	(3 more sentences in this paragraph)
4. <u>First of all</u>, their political situation is greatly different from that of 1979's.	4. <u>Secondly</u>, the United States has become a truly "multicultural society", as opposed to the 1970's, when ethnic groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics, were splintered and fought for their own respective civil rights.
(5 more sentences in this paragraph)	(2 more sentences in this paragraph)
5. <u>In the second place</u>, American society is going to realize "multicultural society" today.	5. <u>Third</u>, the United States has also recovered from the poor economic situation in the 1970's and is currently one of the wealthiest nations in the world.
(5 more sentences in this paragraph)	(2 more sentences in this paragraph)
6. <u>In the third place</u>, the United States got over their bad economy situation.	6. All of the issues discussed above make it clear that the American people are not currently losing confidence in the political, social, and economic issues they face today.
(3 more sentences in this paragraph)	
7. All these things make it clear that American people are not losing their confidence politically, socially, and economically, and they will not in the future, too.	7. <u>In general</u>, there is much optimism in the future, thus President Carter's words do not apply to the current American situation.
8. They have a big hope in the future.	
9. <u>Therefore</u>, I do not believe the President Carter's words apply to American people today.	

Example 8 – Reformulation Sample

ESL 3 (Exempt)	Reformulator D
1. I do not believe that the President Carter's words apply today to American people.	1. <u>When President Jimmy Carter stated in a 1979 speech that people were "losing confidence in the future"</u>, he was clearly speaking in a different time to a different group of American people.
2. They (the American people) are not losing confidence in the future.	2. I do not believe that Carter's words apply today in the United States of America.
3. <u>Rather,</u> they have a hope in their future, politically, socially, and economically.	3. <u>In the following paragraphs</u> I will consider some of the political, social, and economic factors that have contributed to what I will argue is a revitalized sense of confidence in the future among the citizens of the United States.
4. <u>First of all,</u> their political situation is greatly different from that of 1979's. (5 more sentences in this paragraph)	4. <u>In 1979, when Carter gave his speech decrying the possible destruction of "the social and political fabric of the nation"</u>, the political situation in this country was quite different. (3 more sentences in this paragraph)
5. <u>In the second place,</u> American society is going to realize "multicultural society" today. (5 more sentences in this paragraph)	5. <u>In addition to the changes in the political landscape that have occurred in the past thirty years,</u> the United States has also experienced great social change. (2 more sentences in this paragraph)
6. <u>In the third place,</u> the United States got over their bad economy situation. (3 more sentences in this paragraph)	6. The political and social changes of the past thirty years <u>were accompanied by great economic changes as well.</u> (2 more sentences in this paragraph)
7. All these things make it clear that American people are not losing their confidence politically, socially, and economically, and they will not in the future, too.	7. <u>In conclusion,</u> it seems quite clear that in this day and age the American people are not losing confidence in the future.
8. They have a big hope in the future.	
9. <u>Therefore,</u> I do not believe the President Carter's words apply to American people today.	8. <u>In fact,</u> the situation appears to be quite the contrary: Americans have a growing sense of confidence in the future and a renewed sense of optimism that is reflected in the political, social, and economic factors outlined above.

Example 7 is a version with moderate reformulations while Example 8 shows a more radical and sophisticated type of reformulation. Reformulator E in Example 7 maintains the use of logical connectors; however, not only are the forms changed to more correct expressions but also the sentences following the

logical connectors are changed structurally in order to make the argument clearer.

Reformulator D in Example 8 reformulates this essay in a more radical fashion, and this reformulator comments on the original ESL4 essay as follows: "list-like (i.e., no fluid transitions between paragraphs) '*first of all*,' '*in the second place*', etc. are functional but not too appealing stylistically." Accordingly, the reformulator deletes the logical connectors used by the ESL writer and reconstructs the essay by using structural variations that reflect development in a more subtle yet effective way (sentence numbers 4 through 6).

Some of the ESL writers overgeneralize the use of logical connectors and transition signals suggested for academic essay patterns. If they do not have enough linguistic and rhetorical flexibility and still develop a well-organized essay, it is likely that they rely on the essay patterns they have already been exposed to. This kind of overgeneralization probably contributes to both overuse and inappropriate or less effective use of logical connectors in academic essays written by the ESL writers, and the reformulation examples indeed reflect how reformulators often deal with the use of sentence-initial logical connectors.

Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials

For stance adverbials, not only do the ESL writers (2.51) use stance adverbials less frequently than the NES writers (4.67) as shown previously in Table 2, but also they sometimes misuse stance adverbials. In Example 9, the ESL writer starts his essay with *unfortunately* without providing enough context to justify such an evaluation of the circumstance being referred to. Example 10 is an instance of an incorrectly used formulaic expression.

Example 9 – ESL Writing Sample (Opening Sentence)

Unfortunately, I agree with former President Jimmy Carter's concern that people are losing confidence in the future. (ESLA319)

Example 10 – ESL Writing Sample

To make the matter worse the recession coincided with high-level government employee's corruption scandal. (ESLA163)

Another linguistic device that is frequently used to create effective stance expression in writing is the use of punctuation marks, and some differences are observed in the use of punctuation marks between the ESL writers and the NES writers. As shown in Table 3, the NES writers use punctuation marks quite frequently (3.86), not only in combining sentences but also in creating stance and rhetorical effectiveness in sentence-combining (Examples 11 and 12).

Table 3. Use of Punctuation Marks in Sentence Combining
(Combining Second T-unit to the First T-unit) – NES vs. ESL

	Use of Punctuation Marks in Sentence Combining (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Use of Punctuation Marks in Sentence Combining per 100 Orthographic Sentences	
Punctuation Marks	**NES** (S=492)	**ESL** (S=398)	**NES** (S=100)	**ESL** (S=100)
	19	2	**3.86**	**0.50**

Example 11 – NES Writing Sample

Our species is doomed to believe that there must be a higher reason for living – simply surviving and procreating is simply not enough to fulfill the requirement of a productive life. (NESA3)

Example 12 – NES Writing Sample

I came into college with the same mindset about race that I had in high school: race doesn't really matter, only the persons characters. (NESA23)

This type of rhetorical manipulation is not utilized by the ESL writers very much. The ESL writers seldom use punctuation marks (0.50) as a sentence-combining device in connecting an independent clause added to the first T-unit.

Because stance adverbials function as an important and effective means of expressing the writer's attitudes and evaluations, the ESL writers' use (underuse, incorrect use, or inappropriate use) of stance adverbials indicates their lack of both linguistic and rhetorical control in expressing their stance in academic writing, and the reformulators seem to adjust the sentences involving stance expressions (or the lack of stance expressions). The reformulators often add stance adverbials or other features (e.g., use of punctuation marks) or rephrase the ESL use of stance adverbials to transform the ESL writing into the texts that are more native-like in expressing writers' stance and positions in academic essays. The reformulators also employ punctuation marks in order to improve the quality of ESL writing both structurally and stylistically.

For example, in Example 8 presented earlier, the stance adverbial *in fact* is inserted in sentence 8 of the reformulation, which definitely strengthens the concluding sentence. In the next example (Example 13), all three reformulators add stance adverbials (*indeed, in fact*, and *like it or not*) to achieve effective expressions of the writers' stance. The reformulators also delete the use of sentence-initial conjunction *and* (Sentence 2 of ESL), another example of changes to remedy the overuse of sentence-initial conjunctions discussed earlier.

Furthermore, Example 13 illustrates the use of punctuation marks in sentence-combining. Reformulator A employs dashes in sentence numbers 1 and 3, an example of attaining rhetorical effects by using punctuation marks as a sentence-combining device. Reformulators thus seem to add some kind of stance expressions in order to make up for the ESL writers' lack and/or inappropriateness of adverbial use in expressing their stance. Adding stance adverbials, therefore, is another strategy commonly used in the reformulations, and this is consistent with the quantitative findings that show that the Japanese writers do not use sentence-initial stance adverbials appropriately and adequately in their ESL essays.

Example 13 – Reformulation Samples

ESL 4 (Exempt)	ID	Reformulation
1. It is difficult to predict how our lives will be in the future. 2. And it is not even proper to say that our lives are getting better or worse. 3. Our lives are just changing as our world is changing. 4. It is important to realize that things are always changing and try to change ourselves simultaneously. 5. We should not cling to the old tradition.	A	1. Life is unpredictable – indeed, it would be improper to say that life is getting "better" or "worse". 2. Life merely changes as the world changes. 3. We should understand that the world is always changing, and that we should change with it – we should not cling to old traditions.
	B	1. It is difficult to predict how our lives will develop in the future. 2. It is not even helpful to speculate whether our lives are getting better or worse. 3. Our lives simply change as the world changes. 4. In fact, it is important to realize that our environment is always changing and that we need to try to change ourselves in order to be in harmony with our environment. 5. We should not cling to old traditions.
	C	1. It is difficult to predict what our lives will be like in the future and perhaps even more difficult to evaluate whether our lives are improving or not. 2. Our lives are simply changing as the world is changing, and, like it or not, change is inevitable.

In summary, the native English-speaking ESL instructors often choose to adjust the ESL writers' use of sentence-initial adverbials in reformulation, and their treatment of these sentence-adverbials differs slightly depending on the functional classes of sentence initial adverbials. Circumstance adverbials are often maintained or rephrased when not suitable, and logical connectors and stance adverbials are deleted, added, or rephrased depending on appropriateness. The reformulators' remedies used in reformulation examples correspond to the ESL problem areas identified in the ESL/NES comparison, and the reformulation changes made by the reformulators successfully bear out the differences in ESL/NES writing features. The reformulators' treatments of sentence-initial adverbials, therefore, clearly demonstrates how this reformulation corresponds to and confirms the ESL problem areas.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates how the reformulation technique often used in ESL composition teaching could serve as an effective tool in second language writing research. The systematic analysis of the reformulation examples successfully captures and confirms the non-nativelike features the Japanese ESL writers demonstrate in their use of sentence-initial adverbials. This study, therefore, makes contributions both in research findings and in suggestions for practical application. Distinct Japanese ESL writers' features can be used as the basis for awareness-raising activities for Japanese ESL writers. Specific examples of reformulation in this study also present possible solutions to the difficulties ESL writers often face in writing academic essays, which can be incorporated into ESL composition courses.

Even though this study used Japanese ESL writers as its research subjects, the above findings and implications could also apply to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Japan. Japanese

university students, particularly English majors, are often required to write reports and essays in English. Even though these EFL students do not have (and may not need to have) the same level of writing proficiency as ESL students in American universities, the non-native writing features observed among both ESL and EFL students are usually similar or of the same nature. Actually, in the case of EFL students, their non-native features are often manifested not as mere "deviations from native-speaker norms" but as more serious language problems that hinder their written communication in English. Thus, in teaching both lower-level ESL students in an English-speaking country and EFL students in Japan, reformulation can be utilized to explain and demonstrate changes and corrections that need to be made at a more fundamental level.

Furthermore, the variations in the reformulations generated in this study provide the possibility of using different reformulated versions of an essay for teaching different levels of students. Moderate versions tend to show minimal modifications while radical versions reveal more extensive reorganizations and larger-level modifications. These illustrate two different types of possible revision and editing samples, both of which can be important in teaching and learning academic writing. Two types of revisions, moderate and radical (Example 7 and Example 8 respectively) may be useful for teaching two different levels of ESL writers or for showing two different stages of revision work. The question of what type of reformulation is better for what type/level of learner, however, remains an area for further research.

Both in the ESL and EFL contexts of teaching academic writing to Japanese students, the instructors' role is vital. Instructors' conscious knowledge of their own reformulation efforts, as shown by the systematic comparisons in this study, not only serves as a useful pedagogical tool in classroom settings but also could foster their professional research interest ESL/EFL writing.

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Appendix A: Information on ESL Subjects

ESLPE ID #	PL	Comp	Listen	Read	UG/G	Major
ESLA006	EX	30	24	18	2	Elect. Engineering
ESLA047	EX	33	25	19	2	Asian-Am. Studies
ESLA050	EX	35	27	19	2	Linguistics
ESLA059	35	30	22	14	1	Undeclared
ESLA136	EX	30	24	18	2	Economics
ESLA163	33C	21	29	18	2	Health Service
ESLA166	EX	36	24	18	2	Education
ESLA167	33C	24	20	13	1	Undeclared
ESLA174	33C	27	23	19	2	Education
ESLA216	35	24	23	19	1	Sociology
ESLA244	33C	18	23	17	2	Computer Science
ESLA271	33C	24	21	16	2	Undeclared
ESLA306	EX	33	27	18	2	Economics
ESLA309	35	30	23	14	1	Psychology
ESLA319	33C	30	21	13	2	Education
ESLA442	33C	18	24	17	2	Elec. Engineering
ESLA479	33C	21	17	15	1	Sociology
ESLA561	EX	30	26	18	1	Elec. Engineering
ESLA742	EX	27	24	19	2	Political Science
ESLA753	EX	27	26	20	2	Management

Coding: PL = Placement level
Comp = Composition section score
Listen = Listening section score
Read = Reading section score
UG/G = 1 – undergraduate; 2 – graduate
35 = Advanced Multi-skills ESL
33C = High-intermediate Multi-skills ESL
EX = Exempt from ESL courses

Appendix B: Information on NES Subjects

NES ID#	UG/G	Major
NESA1	2	Applied Linguistics
NESA3	2	Applied Linguistics
NESA4	2	Applied Linguistics
NESA5	2	Applied Linguistics
NESA8	2	Applied Linguistics
NESA9	1	Physiological Science
NESA10	1	Anthropology
NESA11	1	Political Science
NESA12	1	Biology
NESA13	1	Undeclared
NESA14	1	Political Science
NESA15	2	Chinese Literature
NESA16	2	Law
NESA17	1	Organic Biology
NESA19	2	Japanese Linguistics
NESA22	1	Econ/Int'l Studies
NESA23	1	Elect. Engineering
NESA24	1	English
NESA25	1	Business Economic
NESA26	2	Japanese Linguistics

Coding: UG/G = 1 – undergraduate; 2 – graduate

Appendix C: Instructions for ESLPE and Prompt

You will have 50 minutes to plan, write, and revise a <u>formal academic composition</u> on the topic on the next page. Choose only one of the topics for your composition. Your composition will be analyzed on content, organization, and language use.

You may use this page for making notes and planning your composition. Use the lined pages for your composition.

DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

(First page of prompt)

(Second page of prompt)

Prompt

Appendix D: Instructions for NES Essays

Read the following instruction.
Do not turn the page until you are told to do so.

You will have 40 minutes to plan, write, and revise a <u>formal academic composition</u> on the topic on the next page. Your composition will be analyzed on content, organization, and language use.

You may use this page for making notes and planning your composition. Use the lined pages for your composition. **Turn in all four pages.**

(First page of prompt)

(Second page of prompt)

Prompt

Appendix E: Instructions and Response Sheet for Reformulation

ESSAY ID: _____   REFORMULATOR ID: _____

You are requested to reformulate an essay written by an ESL student. Please reformulate it to approach a quality which you consider as being equal to your own writing. **This is not proofreading or editing.**

1. **Read the attached essay. Write down the problems you noticed in the space below.**

    a.   Organization (cohesion, transition, paragraph development, a theme, etc.)

    b.   Grammar

    c.   Vocabulary/Register (academic)

    d.   Others (specify)

2. **After completing your reformulation, please fill out the following questionnaire.**

<u>Questionnaire</u>

Please rate the following regarding **the degree of difficulty of reformulation for <u>Essay ID</u>.**

	N/A	Easy				Difficult
Organization:						
Cohesion	0	1	2	3	4	5
Transition	0	1	2	3	4	5
Paragraph development	0	1	2	3	4	5
Theme	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar:						
Sentence structures	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	0	1	2	3	4	5
Register	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others (Specify: _____)	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: