Japanese ESL Writers' Sentence-initial Tendencies: Ambiguous Writer Stance

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the use of sentence-initial stance expressions by Japanese ESL writers. The study consists of two parts. Study 1 compares 20 academic essays written by Japanese ESL students with 20 essays written by English native speakers. The differences between the two groups show that the Japanese ESL writers' use of stance expressions is often inadequate or unclear. Study 2 looks at the essays written by Japanese students in Japanese and investigates possible L1 sources of ambiguous writer stance manifested in Study 1. In Japanese, sentence-initial stance adverbials are not used very frequently; instead, weak stance expressions (*e.g. omou* 'I think') are used saliently. The findings from Study 2 thus correspond with the tendencies identified in Study 1, suggesting a likely source of transfer from L1 writing into ESL essays. Because native English writers avoid ambiguous, weak stance expressions in academic writing, these transferred features are often perceived as linguistic or rhetorical weaknesses in ESL writing samples. As pedagogical application and possible solutions to these ESL tendencies, this study also provides sample texts reformulated by experienced ESL instructors, which can be used to demonstrate how writer stance can be strengthened in ESL academic essay samples.

INTRODUCTION

In my previous study (Kusuyama, 2006), I discussed Japanese ESL writers' use of sentence-initial adverbials in English academic writing. Three types of sentence-initial adverbials (i.e., circumstance adverbials, logical connectors, and stance adverbials) were investigated in that study. The findings showed that the ESL writers' use of circumstance adverbials is similar to native English-speaking (NES) writers' in frequency, but their use of logical connectors is higher and their use of stance adverbials is lower than NES writers' in frequency. This paper reports a follow-up study of the previous research, and it particularly looks at the Japanese ESL writers' use of sentence-initial stance adverbial in more details.

As positions of stance expressions differ cross-linguistically, the mastery of stance expressions in English becomes difficult for some ESL learners. NES writers often employ stance expressions in sentence-initial position to create particular rhetorical effects (e.g., Biber et al., 1999; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Kolln, 1990). In Japanese, writers' attitudes/evaluations are usually incorporated morphologically in verb endings even though other stance expressions may appear sentence-initially. This indicates that Japanese writers often postpone expressing their stance until the very end of the sentence when writing in Japanese. Therefore, the incorporation of writers' attitudes/evaluations into the sentence-final verb morphology not only delays the expressions of writer stance but also allows suspended ambiguity of writer stance in Japanese.

Such delay of indication of writer stance seems to be transferred and manifested in Japanese ESL learners writing samples in general. Hinds (1990) discusses the notion of a "delayed introduction of purpose." The problems related to both delayed introduction of thesis statement or unclear thesis statement is commonly observed in Japanese ESL learners' essay organization. When this notion of "delay" is applied at sentence level as done in Japanese writing, it often creates stance ambiguity within a sentence, and such writer stance ambiguity is often perceived as a weakness or limitation in English academic writing.

This study, therefore, investigates the NES/ESL writers' use of stance expressions in sentence-initial position, and it attempts to demonstrate how some salient features of writer stance expressions used in Japanese essays are manifested in the ESL academic writing samples.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Starting with Kaplan's "cultural thought patterns" article (Kaplan, 1966), the area of contrastive rhetoric has become popular, and contrastive rhetoric studies of English and Japanese have also gained some attention (e.g., Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990). The rhetorical differences identified in these studies include an expected topic shift (Hinds, 1983), reader versus writer responsibility (Hinds, 1987), and a "delayed introduction of purpose" or a "quasi-inductive" pattern (Hinds, 1990). Some studies also suggest that certain rhetorical patterns are found only in Japanese discourse while others are common to both English and Japanese (e.g., Kubota, 1992, 1997, 1998 a; Ricento, 1987).

Because contrastive rhetoric studies were closely related to pedagogical concerns for ESL writing from the very beginning, the application of this approach to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has spread quickly. Researchers have looked at problem areas and suggested the possible transfer of L1 rhetorical patterns in L2 writing. Their findings report mixed results: some indicate learner preferences for L1 rhetorical patterns in L2 texts (e.g. Maruranen, 1993) while others claim no major interference from L1 rhetorical patterns (e.g. Kubota, 1992, 1998 b; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Stalker & Stalker, 1988). For analyses of Japanese ESL texts, some studies analyzed rhetorical patterns of L1 texts in Japanese and in English as well as rhetorical patterns used by Japanese ESL writers studying in America (e.g., Achiba & Kuromiya, 1983; Kobayahi, 1984; Oi, 1984). These studies indicate that the transfer of rhetorical patterns from L1 to L2 writing may be predictable because the essays written by the same Japanese students in English and in Japanese had similar rhetorical patterns.

As the contrastive rhetoric studies on Japanese text structure indicate different patterns of expressing writer stance from English, a possibility of delay in expressing writer stance may be hypothesized due to the cross-linguistic differences discussed above. Such delay could also be the cause of ambiguity of writer stance and possible difficulties experienced by some Japanese ESL writers in their English academic writing. The use of these sentence-initial elements requires well-developed writing competence not only at the sentence level but also at the larger discourse level, and Japanese ESL writers seem to have some difficulties in their use of these sentence-initial elements (Kusuyama, 2003).

Stance Expressions in English

Japanese ESL writers, of course, have different types of problems in expressing their writer stance in English. However, as this paper looks at the use of stance expressions in sentence-initial position, two main features are investigated here: the use of sentence-initial stance adverbials and the use of *I think* expression in sentence-initial positions.

Because how a writer begins a sentence has much to do with information organization, sentence-initial position often becomes important in presenting information in English writing. When adverbials appear in sentence-initial position, which constitutes a marked word order in English, they frequently signal special functions such as discourse constraints, contrast, and emphasis (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Jacobs, 1995; Kolln,1990). The use of sentence-initial elements in academic writing is also important both grammatically and rhetorically (e.g., Plattor & Washburn, 1981). Because instructions on word order variation are not only important but also necessary for ESL composition teaching (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000), some ESL textbooks incorporate sections on the use of sentence-initial adverbials (e.g. Brinton, Jensen, Repath-Martos, & Holten, 1997).

1. Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials in English

Most stance expressions appear in the form of adverbials. Although adverbials may appear in various forms (e.g., word/phrase-level adverbials, clause-level adverbials, multiple adverbials), this paper focuses its investigation on the ESL writers' use of word/phrase-level adverbials. Various linguists and researchers categorize these adverbials differently (e.g., Biber, & Finegan, 1988; Buysschaert, 1982; Chafe, 1986; Ernst, 1984; Greenbaum, 1969; Halliday, 1985, 1994; Lee, 1991; Lyons, 1979). Among these categorizations, *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999) categorize them into three classes: circumstance adverbials, linking adverbials, and stance adverbials.

Stance adverbials "convey speakers' comments on what they are saying…or how they are saying it," and may be categorized as epistemic, attitude, or style (Biber, et al., 1999, p.764). Stance adverbials appearing in sentence-initial position allow writers to indicate their writer stance in a very specific way at the very beginning of a sentence.

2. *I think* Construction in English

Another stance expression often used in sentence initial position is *I think*. Thompson & Mulac (1991) hypothesize that the *I think* + complement structure has gone through a process of *that*-deletion and has been grammaticalized in an epistemic parenthetical expression, *I think*. Thompson (2002) also proposes a reanalysis of traditional 'main subject and verb + complementation' as a 'formulaic stance marker toward the content of the clause.' Indeed, Biber et al. (1999) include *I guess* and *I think* as a category for "other epistemic stance adverbials of certainty or doubt" (p.854).

Even though the *I think* + complement structure frequently appears in conversation, the use of expressions like *I think* and *I guess* is usually discouraged in academic writing in English. These expressions are perceived to be colloquial and are often deleted or replaced by more formal expressions suitable for academic genre. Thus, indication of writer stance, including indication of degrees of certainty and doubt, is expected to be specific and unambiguous in English academic written discourse.

Stance Expressions in Japanese

In Japanese, even though stance adverbials appear sentence-initially in the same manner as in English, stance expressions are often realized by morphological elements included in sentence-final, complex verbs. Many of the features corresponding to English sentence-initial elements thus appear in sentence-final position. In this study, two features are investigated in Japanese: 1) sentence-initial stance adverbials and 2) sentence-final stance expressions, in particular, the *omou* 'I think' expressions.

1. Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials in Japanese

Some studies on Japanese adverbs/adverbials (e.g. Masuoka & Takubo, 1989; Yamada, 1908; Yazawa, 2000) point out the differences between two types of adverbial expressions: adverbial expressions indicating manner, degree, quality, and tense/aspect versus sentential modifying adverbial expressions indicating speaker/writer stance such as epistemic stance, evaluation and utterances. Even though the terminology differs from the English categorizations, the second group essentially corresponds to the category of sentence-initial stance adverbials. This provides a parallel, corresponding category in both languages, affording consistent, compatible standards in cross-linguistic comparisons of the two languages.

2. Sentence-final Stance Expressions in Japanese

Japanese also uses sentence-final elements to indicate the writers' stance, and these features may either be morphologically incorporated in complex verbs (e.g., evidentiality, probability) or may be created by the use of *I* + verb expressions as the main subject and verb of the complex sentence, both of which appear in sentence-final position. Because all subordinate clauses appear before the main clause in Japanese, the verb appearing at the end of an orthographic sentence is a verb belonging to an independent clause. The distinction between coordination and subordination is sometimes ambiguous in Japanese; therefore, the *"I + verb"* expressions in the sentence-final position of an orthographic sentence may be the main verb of the first T-unit[1] or of any of the subsequent T-units. For analytical purposes, different categories of the *"I + verb"* expressions are identified, but this paper only reports on the use of one salient expression in Japanese, *omou* 'I think.'

Thus, English and Japanese ways of expressing stance present some differences, the main one being the sentence-initial versus sentence-final positions. It is, therefore, expected that the features of Japanese sentence-final elements could well be manifested in sentence-initial position in ESL writing. Achiba & Kuromiya (1983) mention Japanese EFL learners' frequent use of expressions such as "as you know" and "I think" and suggest a possible L1 transfer from Japanese because these expressions are commonly used both in formal speech and writing in Japanese. The ESL writers' problems with the use of sentence-initial elements could, therefore, include possible L1 transfer from both sentence-initial elements and sentence-final elements in Japanese, and it is necessary to investigate both sentence positions in Japanese.

This paper looks at two sentence-initial features that appear in English academic writing: sentence-initial stance adverbials and sentence-initial *I think* expressions. Sentence-initial adverbials are investigated in order to examine the possibility of transfer of stance adverbials used in sentence-initial position in Japanese. Sentence-initial *I think* expressions are selected to investigate the possible transfer of the salient sentence-final expressions appearing in Japanese.

METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted in two stages. The first stage (Study 1) compares two types of timed academic essays written by two groups: English essays written by Japanese ESL learners (ESL) and English essays written by native English speakers (NES). The second stage (Study 2) investigates Japanese essays written by native Japanese speakers (NJS).

Study 1

This first data set is the same data used in my previous study (Kusuyama, 2006). It contains two types of essays: English essays written by Japanese ESL learners (ESL essays) and English essays written by native English speakers (NES essays). 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 stance expressions may be identified.

1. ESL Data

ESL essays come from the composition section of an ESL placement test administered at an American university. The ESL placement test allows test takers to spend 50 minutes writing an essay, and the writing instructions provide the options of two possible writing prompts. The prompt used here is titled as "Confidence in the future." It refers to a 1979 speech by President Carter, in which he warned that people were losing confidence in the future. ESL writers are asked to compose an academic essayky either agreeing or disagreeing with Carter's statement and by providing evidence from their personal experience. Twenty essays placed either in an advanced level ESL course or exempted from ESL instruction are selected for analyses.

2. NES Data

The control-group data come from 20 timed essays written by NES writers[2]. For the NES data collection, the essay-writing time is adjusted to 40 minutes because the writers are native English speakers and the NES data collection session uses only one prompt without an option, unlike the ESL placement test.

3. Method of Analysis

The method of analysis of this part follows the same format as my previous study. A "sentence" means an orthographic sentence, i.e., a string of words which a writer begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. The number of tokens reported has also been converted to a relative frequency reflecting tokens per 100 orthographic sentences for ESL/NES comparison. The analysis is limited to the first clause in an orthographic sentence, and other types of embedded clauses (e.g., relative clauses, clausal complements) are excluded from the analysis. The sentence-initial adverbials discussed in this paper are also limited to word/phrase-level sentence-initial stance adverbials even though the other two types (i.e., circumstance adverbials and logical connectors) and other levels (e.g. sentence-level)[3] of sentence-initial adverbials were analyzed. The method for analyzing sentence-initial stance adverbials also follows my previous study, which adapts *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al.,1999).

Study 2

As part of the follow-up study, another data set is collected in order to analyze the Japanese essays written by native Japanese speakers (NJS essays). The data set supplies the comparison of ESL and NJS essays for the purpose of investigating possible L1 transfer factors in ESL writing.

1. NJS Data

The NJS essays include the 20 essays[4] written by native Japanese-speaking university students, who have no prior experience with living in an English-speaking country. This condition is applied to assure that the NJS essays are not influenced by their exposure to English academic writing. The data collection of these NJS essays uses a prompt that is parallel to the English prompt in length, content, organization, and genre. The original prompt is slightly modified in wording in order to eliminate culture-specific factors that might not be considered common knowledge to young Japanese college students. This is to assure that the quality and quantity of the NJS timed essays are not downgraded by the writers' lack of background knowledge. Thus, instead of quoting President Carter, the prompt uses more general expressions (e.g. "at around 1980, some people expressed social concerns in the United States," "in present-day Japan, some individuals are also indicating similar concerns"). The NJS writers are asked to agree or disagree with this concern and

provide evidence for their opinion based on their personal experience--the same task that both ESL and NES writers are asked to perform.

The allocated writing time for the NJS essays is adjusted[5] from 40 minutes (i.e., the NES essay writing time) to 45 minutes because writing Japanese orthography by hand is more demanding than writing English by hand.

2. Method of Analysis

The definition of "an orthographic sentence" as a linguistic unit of analysis is straightforward in Japanese, and it is similar to that of English. Japanese is a verb final language, and an orthographic sentence normally ends with a particular verb form *(shuushi-kei)* and is marked with a punctuation mark " " (the equivalent of a period in English). The orthographic sentences in Japanese are thus identified in the same way as in English in this study.

Because of the cross-linguistic differences between English and Japanese, the method of analysis for the NJS essays differs slightly from the method used for the ESL/NES analyses, and the coding system for the NJS essays has been modified to accommodate these differences. While the categorization of adverbs in Japanese may include some variations and differences in opinion as discussed in the literature review, the summary of studies of adverbs/adverbials in Japanese and the functional categorization of adverbials in this study follow the English coding system in order to provide a consistent ESL/NJS comparison. The coding for stance adverbials[6] follows the general principles discussed by Biber et al. (1999), the system used for the English analysis. Expressions such as *niyoreba* 'according to' indicate the source of the writers' knowledge/information, and it is included in stance adverbials, following Biber, et al. (1999).

Many of the verbs in sentence-final position in Japanese include expressions that are the equivalent of the pronoun *I* + verb construction in English, with cognitive verbs usually used in these expressions. Seven semantic categories that are commonly used in the *I* + verb construction in Japanese are identified: *omou* 'think,' *kangaeru* 'think, consider,' *kanjiru* 'feel,' *sansei-suru* 'agree,' *utagau* 'doubt,' *miru* 'see,' and *iu* 'say.' An additional eighth category includes only one verb (*bunsekisuru* 'to analyze'),and it is included here because this verb appears in a verb complex indicating the writer's stance.

Since Japanese allows both topic-drop and pro-drop in *I* + verb constructions, pronoun references are recovered from the context in the case of topic-drop or pro-drop. Because of the morphological complexity of verbs, a complicated paradigm of morpho-syntactic realizations of verbs is observable in sentence-final position. For the sake of analysis in this study, morpho-syntactic realizations of complex verbs are divided into eight types[7], but the analysis in this paper mainly focuses on the dictionary form (basic form) because it is the most straightforward equivalent of the English *I think* expression.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings and discussions of the two studies are presented according to the two features, sentence-initial stance adverbials and the *I think* expressions.

1. Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials
<u>Study 1</u>

Study 1 compares the two sets of essays (ESL and NES) in regards to the writers' use of sentence-initial stance adverbials. The ESL essays are compared against the NES essays both in frequency and quality. Word/phrase-level sentence-initial stance adverbials in this study are realized in four forms: adverbs, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, and formulaic expressions. The comparison of the NES and ESL

essays (Table 1) indicates that the overall frequency of stance adverbials[8] is higher for the NES writers (4.67) than for the ESL writers (2.51).

Table 1. Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials - NES vs. ESL

	Number of Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Number of Sentence-initial Stance Adverbialsper 100 Orthographic Sentences	
Stance Adverbials	**NES** (S=492)	**ESL** (S=398)	**NES** (S=100)	**ESL** (S=100)
Adverbs	14	3	2.85	0.75
Adverbial Phrases	1	0	0.20	0
Prepositional Phrases	1	3	0.20	0.75
Formulaic Expression	7	4	1.42	1.01
Total	**23**	**10**	**4.67**	**2.51**

Not only do the Japanese ESL writers use stance expressions less than the NES writers, but also the sentence-initial adverbials used by the ESL writers are very limited. Only several expressions are identified: *unfortunately, indeed, probably, of course,* and to *make the matters worse.* The NES writers, on the contrary, use a wider variety of stance expressions: *certainly, clearly, indeed, obviously, perhaps, sadly, basically, interestingly, overall, overwhelmingly, similarly, superficially, unfortunately, in fact, in retrospect* (one token each), and *of course* (5 tokens).

In addition, the ESL writers sometimes misuse these expressions in sentence-initial position. Example 1 shows how the ESL writer begins his essay with a stance adverb *unfortunately* without supplying enough context to justify this kind of circumstantial evaluation.

Example 1 (Opening Sentence)

> **Unfortunately**, I agree with former President Jimmy Carter's concern that people are losing confidence in the future. (ESL 319)

Because stance adverbials are important means of expressing the writer's attitudes and evaluations, the ESL writers' underuse/misuse of stance adverbials is often perceived as weakness in conveying their stance, showing the limitations of ESL writers' linguistic and rhetorical control in academic writing.

Study 2

Study 2, an examination of NJS essays, reveals that the Japanese ESL writers' use of sentence-initial stance adverbials corresponds to the use of stance expressions written in Japanese. As Table 2 indicates, the NJS writers do not use many stance adverbials sentence-initially in Japanese (3.42), and this corresponds with the ESL writers' underuse of sentence-initial stance adverbials. The number of tokens identified in ESL/NES comparisons above is repeated here for the purpose of NJS/ESL/NES comparisons.

Table 2. Word/Phrase-level Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials - NJS vs. ESL vs. NES

	Number of Stance Adverbials (Number of Orthographic Sentences)			Number of Stance Adverbials per 100 Orthographic Sentences		
Word/phrase-level Sentence-initial Stance Adverbials	**NJS (S=351)**	**ESL (S=398)**	**NES (S=492)**	**NJS (S=100)**	**ESL (S=100)**	**NES (S=100)**
	12	10	23	**3.42**	**2.51**	**4.67**

In this particular essay, the NJS writers used Japanese sentence-initial expressions that are equivalent of *actually, of course, precisely/undoubtedly, personally, originally, to be honest,* and *according to X* . Because Japanese is their native language, it is not surprising that the NJS writers use a wider variety of expressions. Yet, the relative frequency of the sentence-initial stance adverbial use is still lower than that of the NES writers, indicating that sentence-initial stance expressions do not appear in Japanese as frequently as they do in English academic writing, and this feature seems to be transferred and manifested in the ESL writing samples.

2. Use of *I think*

Another non-native feature observed in the ESL essays, which is related to stance expressions, is the use of first person pronoun *I* + verb expressions.

Study 1

The expressions coded as "*I* + verb" analyzed here include only the expressions containing cognitive verbs, modal expressions, and stance expressions (e.g., *I think, I guess, I suppose*); the verbs indicating specific actions of the writers (e.g., *I learned..., I received...*) are excluded in the analysis.

A considerable difference exists between the ESL writers and the NES writers in their use of these expressions. As Table 3 indicates, the ESL writers use first person pronoun *I* + verb constructions in sentence-initial position much more frequently than the NES writers do (NES=4.07, ESL=10.05).

Table 3. Use of First Person Pronoun *I* + Verb NES vs. ESL

	Number of *I + Verb* (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Number of *I + Verb* per 100 Orthographic Sentences	
First Person Pronoun *I* + Verb	**NES (S=492)**	**ESL (S=398)**	**NES (S=100)**	**ESL (S=100)**
	20	40	**4.07**	**10.05**

Among these expressions with first person pronoun *I* + verb, a major difference is identified in the use of one particular expression: *I think/I don't think.* The NES writers seldom use *I think/I do not think* in academic essay (NES=0.61) while the ESL writers overuse of *I think/I don't think* (ESL=3.27) as shown by Table 4.

Table 4. Use of *I think/I don't think*-NES vs. ESL

	Number of I think/I don't think (Number of Orthographic Sentences)		Number of I think/I don't think per 100 Orthographic Sentences	
	NES (S=492)	**ESL** (S=398)	**NES** (S=100)	**ESL** (S=100)
I think/I don't think				
	3	13	**0.61**	**3.27**

Example 2 shows the ESL writer's overuse of *I* + verb expressions in this first paragraph of the essay. The repeated use of *I think/I do not think* in this paragraph weakens the writer's thesis statement, causing the lack of assertiveness in this portion of the essay.

Example 2 *I think* **(ESL) (First paragraph)**

> **I admit** he did very good jobs when he was President. However, as for his speech in 1979, **I would have to say** he was wrong. Losing confidence sometimes helps us keep everything up. So **I don't think** it would destroy the social & political fabric of the nation. **I think** it is sometimes important to think thing pessimistically so that you can prepare for what's going to happen in the future. So maybe his misjudge gave us this nice situation in 1998. (ESL 442)

The notion of "I think" is the most basic assumption in English academic essays; therefore, adding *I think* expressions conveys no particular function or meaning to the essay content. Instead, the use of this expression often results in weakening or softening of the writers' stance, which is perceived negatively, and is, therefore, discouraged in academic writing. This affects the level of assertiveness expressed in the ESL essays, and a separate study (Kusuyama, 2003) reveals that the ESL writers' ambiguous stance is one of the areas that demonstrates some weaknesses in argumentative essays.

<u>Study 2</u>
Study 2 shows that the NJS writers frequently use *omou,* the corresponding expression of 'I think' in Japanese academic essays. The base form (dictionary form) *omou* alone appears 30 times[9] (8.55 per 100 orthographic sentences) in the NJS data set (Table 5). This finding is consistent with the Study 1 findings: ESL writers overuse the *I think/I do not think* expressions. The morphological complexity of verbs in Japanese creates a complicated paradigm in expressing the writer's stance, and many of these features correspond to the *I* + verb constructions in English. The frequent use of *I* + verb expressions in Japanese such as *omou* 'I think' is, therefore, transferred to the ESL writing because the ESL writers overuse these expressions in English. A salient L 1 sentence-final feature is thus manifested in sentence-initial position in L2 writing, supporting a possible L 1 transfer of these features into ESL writing.

Table 5. Comparison of Use of *I think*-NJS vs. ESL vs. NES

	Number of I think Expressions (Number of Orthographic Sentences)			Number of I think Expressions per 100 Orthographic Sentences		
	NJS (S=351)	ESL (S=398)	NES (S=492)	NJS (S=100)	ESL (S=100)	NES (S=100)
' I think'	30*	13	3	8.55*	3.27	0.61

omou **'I think' (Base form only) in Japanese**

As seen from the results, Study 1, the comparisons of ESL/NES essays, demonstrates the ESL writers' weaknesses and limitations regarding the use of stance expressions in sentence-initial position. Specific features identified are their underuse/misuse of stance adverbials and their overuse of *I think*. The ESL writers' underuse/overuse/misuse of particular expressions are perceived not only as nonnative-like features but also considered ambiguous writer stance. Study 2 has looked at the Japanese grammatical features that correspond to the ESL weaknesses identified in Study 1. The findings suggest that many of these features are indeed consistent with the features salient in the NJS writing. The analysis of sentence-initial and sentence-final constructions in Japanese, therefore, demonstrates that some of the ESL problems with the use of sentence-initial elements in English (i.e. underuse of sentence-initial stance adverbials and overuse of the *I think/I don't think* expressions) actually come from the strategies that the NJS writers use either very frequently or very infrequently in Japanese texts.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The main areas of concern identified in Study 1 (ESL/NES comparisons) are related to the ESL writer's use of sentence-initial stance adverbials and *I* + verb expressions. Japanese ESL writers' overuse, underuse, and inappropriate use of stance expressions appearing in sentence-initial position can be used as an awareness raising tool for both ESL instructors and Japanese ESL writers. The overused features (e.g. *I think/I do not think*) should be warned against, and underused features (e.g., use of writer's stance expressions) may be more explicitly taught, particularly for advanced ESL writers who have developed enough writing ability to start working on finer syntactic and rhetorical effectiveness. The identified problem areas can thus help both ESL instructors and Japanese ESL writers in raising awareness not only for sentence-level grammaticality but also for discourse-level text appropriateness, rhetorical effects, and stylistic variations.

Study 2, the comparison of the ESL and NJS essays, reveals some L1 transfer features, which are the possible sources of some weaknesses that the Japanese ESL writers demonstrate in academic writing. Salient features in the written Japanese texts (e.g., frequent use of *I* +verb expressions) are clearly manifested in the ESL writing samples, and these often result in text features that are undesirable for academic writing. Knowledge of these salient L1 transfer features will help ESL instructors understand some of the Japanese ESL writers' problems in their English academic writing. This can be used to advise Japanese ESL writers to be cautious in using the writing tendencies that are salient in Japanese but advised against in English, alerting inappropriate overuse of such features in their ESL writing.

Finally, as further pedagogical applications of this study, some reformulation samples are provided here to demonstrate examples of possible solutions to the findings above. Reformulation is a technique

often used in teaching ESL writing (Allwright, et al., 1988; Cohen, 1983; Kusuyama, 2006). The reformulations in this study were performed by three experienced ESL instructors on some of the ESL texts used in Study 1. Three reformulators (Reformulators A, B, C) were instructed to reformulate the ESL writing samples by keeping the content but changing the language to their own writing quality. To be consistent with the findings, the examples provided here deal with the two areas discussed in this study: (1) the use of stance adverbials and (2) the use of *"I think."*

As shown in Study 1, the Japanese writers do not use sentence-initial stance adverbials appropriately and adequately in their ESL essays. The reformulated texts below (Example 3) are examples of how ESL instructors added stance adverbials (*indeed, in fact,* and *like it or not*) in reformulation, besides using corrections, sentence-combining, and rephrasing. The examples show how the reformulators have achieved more effective expressions of writer stance by adding the stance adverbial expressions. These reformulated samples also could show how ESL writers can improve their writing and demonstrate how stance expressions used in academic writing can strengthen writer stance.

Study 1 also indicates the ESL writers overuse *I think* (ESL=3.27, NES=0.61). The following example (Example 4) show how native-speaker ESL instructors unanimously consider the *I think* expressions unnecessary and delete them in reformulation.

Example 3

ESL 1		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 - <u>indeed</u>, 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. <u>In fact</u>, 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, <u>like it or not</u>, change is inevitable.

Example 4

ESL 2		Reformulation
I think that Carter's claim applyies to not only 1998, but next few years.	A	Ø President Jimmy Carter's claim that Americans are " losing confidence in the future" is as true today as it was thirty years ago.
	B	Ø Carter's claim that the general population's loss of confidence can lead to the deterioration of a nation currently rings true in the late twentieth century and will also apply in the years to come.
	C	Ø President Carter's words apply to the current sentiment today as much as they did in 1979.

In these reformulation examples, all three instructors invariably deleted the sentence-initial *I think* expression. It is often difficult for ESL instructors to explain how certain features may be used or avoided in English academic essays. Furthermore, in my own teaching experience, instructors' words alone often do not seem to convince students. The reformulated texts like these are clear examples of how consistently ESL instructors delete this particular expression. A visible presentation of these reformulation samples can supply ESL writers with specific examples, which is more convincing to the learners than instructors' oral advice.

This paper, a follow-up study of my previous research (Kusuyama, 2006), looked at the Japanese ESL writers' use of sentence-initial stance expressions. It identified their tendencies, i.e., their underuse of stance adverbials as well as their overuse of expressions undesirable in academic writing, which is often perceived as ESL weaknesses or limitations. The reformulation samples also provide good quality writing samples, and they can be used as an effective pedagogical tool to demonstrate specific strategies and as an awareness-raising tool for instructing Japanese ESL writers.

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Endnotes

[1] T-unit is defined as "an independent clause and any associated dependent clauses, i.e., clauses which are attached to or embedded within it (Hunt, 1965)" (cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 46)

[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.

[4] Out of 26 NJS essays collected in Japan, six essays that demonstrated non-academic writing features (e. g., use of the polite form copula *–desu/-masu,* frequent use of colloquial language) were excluded.

[5] The subjects participated in the pilot data collection indicated concerns regarding their difficulties with writing too quickly in Japanese.

[6] In some cases, scope ambiguity may occur, making it unclear whether word/phrase-level sentence-initial adverbials modify the main clause or the subordinate or embedded clause. Example 1 contains a sentence-initial use of a stance adverb, *jitsuwa* 'actually, to tell you the truth.' Whether this adverbial expression belongs to the subordinate clause or to the main clause is ambiguous.

Example 1 a (Modifying the main clause):

> *jitsuwa,*
> **actually**

[*konnichi no　　shakaiteki joukyou wa,*
today　　GEN social　　situation TOP
yutakasa no　　uragaeshi to

wealth　　GEN reverse (noun) NML
miru koto mo dekiru to　　omo-wareru].
see NML too can　　NML　think-POT

Modifying the main clause:
'Actually, I think it is possible to consider the today's social situation as the other side (reverse) of our wealth.'

Example 1b (Modifying the subordinate clause):
> **[*jituwa,*
> **actually**

> *konnichi　　no　　　shakaiteki joukyou　　wa,*
> today　　　GEN　　　social　　situation　　TOP

> *yutakasa　　no　　　uragaeshi　　　to*
> wealth　　　GEN　　　reverse(noun)　　NML

> miru　koto　mo　　dekiru]　to　　omo-wareru.
> see　NML　too　　can　　　NML　think-POT

Modifying the subordinate clause:
'I think that it is **actually** possible to consider the today's social situation as the other side (reverse) of our wealth.'

In such cases, i.e., if it is possible to interpret the use of the sentence-initial adverbial as part of the main clause, the adverbials are counted as sentence-initial elements in this study.

[7] Eight types are defined and coded as follows:

Type I refers to verbs that contain the basic verb form.
> *kangaeru*
> think
> 'think, consider'

> *kangae-teiru*
> think: ASP
> "be thinking, be considering'

Type　includes both spontaneous and potential verb forms. These are identical in form, and both are expressed by the *–(r)are* or *–(r)e* suffix. Expressions like the following belong to this category.

> *kangae-rareru*
> think:SPON
> 'think, conisider'

> *kangae-rareru*
> think: POT
> 'can think, can consider' or 'it is possible to think, it is possible to consider'

Type   refers to passive voice verbs, including tense/aspect variations.   The passive verb form also carries the same morphological realization as Type II. The following are examples of this type.

> *kangae-rareru*
> think: PASS
> 'is thought, is considered'

> *kangae-rare-teiru*
> think: PASS: ASP
> 'is being thought, is being considered'

When the morphological realization of Type II and Type III takes the same form, discourse content is used to judge which type an expression should belong to.

Type   refers to verbs that are accompanied by morphemes indicating the writer's desire/attempt to perform the action indicated by that verb. Expressions such as verb + *–temiyoo* 'let's' and *−(temi) tai* 'would like to' belong to this category. This type, however, does not include modal expressions, such as epistemic, evidential, or evaluative stance expressions. These are analyzed separately in a later section. The following are examples of this category:

> *kangae-temiyoo*
> think-try
> '(let's) try to think, (let's) try to consider'

> *kangae-temitai*
> think-would like to
> 'would like to think, would like to consider'

Type   refers to verbs that have an adjective forming suffix (-*nikui* 'difficult to do,' -*yasui* 'easy to do') as shown by the example.

> *kangae-nikui*
> think-difficult
> 'it is difficult to think, it is difficult to consider'

> *kangaete-yoi*
> think-fine/acceptable
> 'it is fine/acceptable to think, it is fine/acceptable to consider'

Type   includes expressions that use a verb + NOMINALIZER (*no, kogo*) + NOMINATIVE CASE MARKER *ga* followed by another element.

> *kangaeru   koto   ga   dekiru*
> think   NML   NOM   possible
> 'it is possible to think, it is possible to consider'

> *kangaeru   koto   ga   kanoo   dearu*
> think   NML   NOM   possible   COP
> 'it is possible to think, it is possible to consider'

Type   refers to the construction that contains a verbal noun + *dearu* 'be' or a verb + NOMINALIZER *no* + *dearu* 'be.'

> *kangae dearu*
> thought COP
> 'it is (my) thought, it is (my) consideration'

> *kangaeru   no   dearu*
> thought   NML   COP
> 'it is that I think = I think, it is that I consider = I consider'

Type   includes the form that takes a verb + the formulaic expression *-zaruoenai* 'cannot help but to VERB' or *to shika* + verb + *yooganai* 'there is no other way but VERB-ing.'

> *kangae-zaruoenai*
> think-formulaic 'cannot help but'
> 'cannot help but to think'

> *to   shika   kangae-yooganai*
> QUOT only think-formulaic 'there is no other way but thinking'
> 'there is no other way but thinking'

[8] A separate study undertaken (Kusuyama, 2003) demonstrates similarities and differences in the use of sentence initial adverbials between the NES writers and the ESL writers by functional categories (i.e., circumstance adverbials, logical connectors, and stance adverbials).

[9] The total of 39 tokens (11.11 per 100 orthographic sentences) appear. Additionally, the verb *kangaeru* 'I think, consider' also appears at a relatively high frequency rate (5.13 per 100 orthographic sentences).