4 Factors Influencing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Writing Instruction in Japan from a Teacher Education Perspective

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Introduction

Japan has a long and complicated history of neglect regarding English as a foreign language (EFL) writing instruction in secondary and tertiary education. This is due, in large part, to the perception by teachers, students and other key stakeholders that writing instruction is too time consuming and extraneous to student needs. These perceptions regarding English writing have been influenced greatly by the educational policies of the country, and the local constraints English teachers face in trying to implement these policies. In order to meet the challenges faced by and needs of second language (L2) writing teacher education it is necessary to understand the severe impact of these policies and constraints on the English teachers in Japan's high schools and universities.

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the context of English writing instruction in Japan by reviewing prior research on English writing practices and teacher education. More specifically, the chapter focuses on three key factors that influence the teaching and learning of English writing in secondary schools and subsequently tertiary education: (a) the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Course of Study (CoS), (b) university entrance examinations, and (c) local constraints of English writing practices (for example, class size and teacher workload) especially at secondary school level, from the viewpoint of teacher education. As shown in Figure 4.1, these three factors are interrelated and are discussed throughout the chapter.

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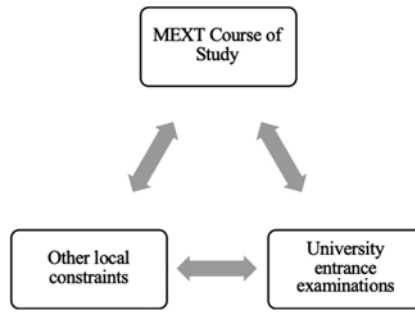

Figure 4.1 Key factors influencing writing practices in Japan

To situate English writing instruction in Japan, the chapter begins by providing an overview of the Japanese English education context and examines the MEXT CoS. Next, the washback from the university entrance examination system is explored, and its impact on the teaching of written English and teacher education is considered. This is followed by a review of the other local constraints faced by Japanese teachers of English (JTE). Finally, the chapter discusses the potential impacts of the new MEXT CoS alongside the changes to the university entrance examination and the implications of these changes on teaching writing and teacher education, providing recommendations for future writing practices and teacher education.

English Education and English Writing in Japan

The English proficiency of the Japanese is notoriously low. According to TOEFL iBT 2018 score data, the Japanese ranked third from bottom for total scores, second from bottom for writing scores and at the bottom for speaking scores in Asia (Educational Testing Service, 2019). Despite these figures, there has been an increase in the use of English in Japan's business communities. For example, Rakuten and Fast Retailing (a parent company of the international clothing retail chain Uniqlo) employ English as the in-house official language and conduct business meetings and correspondence in English. Other Japanese companies such as Honda have announced plans to do the same. However, social interactions in English are generally limited in everyday life in Japan.

A recent nationwide survey on Japanese secondary students' perceptions towards English revealed a gap between students' perceived social needs for the use of English and their personal needs for its use (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute [hereafter Benesse], 2014). More specifically, the majority of secondary school students (90%) perceived that the Japanese would use English in the future, whereas approximately 50% did not perceive themselves as using English in their

future. The gap between societal and individual needs for English was also found in JTE perceptions of social needs, as opposed to their students' personal needs, for English use (Benesse, 2016). It is also noteworthy that 90% of the student respondents in Benesse (2014) considered being able to speak English as 'cool,' which suggests that Japanese students may have a high level of motivation for learning to speak English. These findings concur with previous surveys of Japanese university students' views of studying English. For example, Koike *et al.* (1985) conducted a large-scale survey and found that 61% of university students wanted English speaking instruction, whereas only 3.1% wanted writing instruction ($N=10,095$). Existing survey results show that writing is the area that concerns Japanese students of English the least (see Hirose, 2005).

The Japanese students' low level of motivation for learning to write English displays a sharp contrast with learning to speak English. Therefore, a lack of need for English writing and low motivation characterize the Japanese context for English writing teaching. Although the perceived need for English writing proficiency remains peripheral for many students, the continued spread of English as a lingua franca necessitates that Japanese students now, more than ever, need to acquire written English skills to express themselves in personal social media interactions, academic term-papers and examinations, and future workplace communication such as emails and materials for meetings.

Writing has never been center stage in English language teaching in Japan, where the grammar-translation method has traditionally been used (Nishino, 2011). Surveys conducted over the past four decades (e.g. Hirota *et al.*, 1993; Yasuda, 2014) show that Japanese students' English writing instruction history is characterized as follows: (a) translation from Japanese to English; (b) accuracy-focused writing to learn vocabulary and structures; and (c) limited opportunities for students to produce their own ideas and thoughts in English. When writing is used in English classrooms it is employed as a service activity, i.e. practice/reinforcement of structures and vocabulary learned. Translation from Japanese to English at the sentence level is still a familiar activity in Japanese high school classrooms (Yasuda, 2014). Classes dedicated to English writing per se do not usually occur until students enter university, and writing courses are not required for most university students.

Furthermore, the writing activities in university classrooms do not seem to be substantially different from those mentioned above. Examining Japanese students' English writing instruction backgrounds, Yasuda (2014) conducted a survey for second year university students ($N=481$) and found that 'writing on a given topic using a paragraph consisting of several sentences' (Yasuda, 2014: 166) was the most frequently experienced writing activity and writing summaries of materials read was the most frequent genre. Writing term papers and reports was highly limited in their English writing experience.

A cross-country survey of tertiary English writing teachers' beliefs and practices in the Asia-Pacific region found that English teachers working in Japanese higher education perceived the biggest gap between the realities and their ideal views of teaching, suggesting that the local constraints were more severe than in other countries (see Pennington *et al.*, 1997). For example, the teachers in Japan employed process-oriented writing pedagogies such as peer feedback the least. This is partly because those teachers are not necessarily specialized in or familiar with English writing teaching.

Subsequently, JTEs in both secondary and tertiary education have little instructional English writing experience, not to mention training in English writing instruction. Hirose (2007) examined Japanese graduate students' perceptions of the English writing instruction they had received as undergraduates. All the participants of the study had an English teacher's license at secondary school level and their mean year of university English writing instruction was 1.47 years. In other words, they had taken an English writing course once a week for one and a half years. The participants reported having almost never experienced such writing procedures as pre-writing activities (e.g. brainstorming and discussion of topics), peer feedback and teacher–student conferences. Most of the participants majored in English education in the Faculty of Education, although students of other majors can obtain an English teacher's license in Japan.

As has been discussed in this section, the Japanese English writing teaching and learning context is characterized by discord. This discord appears to be closely related to such macro factors as national English education policy decisions made by MEXT and university entrance examinations in Japan.

The MEXT Course of Study

The MEXT CoS guidelines describe national English education policies in Japan. The guidelines explain the overall objectives for English teaching in secondary school education and specific goals for each subject area of English as well as a brief overview of the contents and how they should be treated. There are, however, no national guidelines for English teaching at tertiary level. The MEXT guidelines have a great influence on actual teaching practices in the Japanese classroom at the secondary school level. Furthermore, MEXT-approved textbooks are written in tandem with the guidelines and these textbooks heavily influence how teachers organize their classes. It takes several years to implement a revised CoS after it has been officially announced.

The first CoS was announced in 1947, and in 1958 the CoS, with legal influence over textbook production and curriculum organization, was announced by the Minister of Education. The guidelines are revised

approximately every 10 years, as MEXT attempts to incorporate new ideas and practices into education that consider social changes as well as changes to student circumstances, which have occurred since the previous CoS was introduced.[1]

The course of study for English education

Although a number of changes have been made to the objectives and contents of English education in the guidelines, over the three decades the revision of CoS for English teaching has been oriented to the communicative approach. The 1989 version used the word 'communication' for the first time in its overall objectives and included the statement that foreign language education should foster a positive attitude towards communication through foreign languages (MEXT, 1989). In response to advances in internationalization, the following CoS version went further, stating that education should develop practical communication abilities in its overall objectives (MEXT, 1999). This version was then implemented from 2003 at high school level, and in 2003 MEXT issued a five-year 'action plan to cultivate Japanese with English abilities' (MEXT, 2003), and the plan was implemented between 2003 and 2008 (see Butler & Iino, 2005, for a critical examination of the plan).

The action plan set the goals of 'English language abilities required for all Japanese people,' not only for students but also for JTEs to improve communication abilities. To improve English education, the plan set specific score objectives for English teachers to attain in external proficiency examinations: TOEIC 730, TOEFL PBT 550, Eiken[2] grade pre-first level or over. For achieving these goals, the plan included in-service intensive training for *all* English teachers in Japan to improve their English abilities and teaching skills in order to conduct English classes to realize the objectives of English education. The training was planned and operated by each local government board of education, and its content as well as its period differed according to its organizing body. Although MEXT funded the training, it was discontinued after five years. Questions need to be asked as to the effectiveness of the training. Regarding JTE general English proficiency levels, according to the most recent data (MEXT, 2019), 68.2% of high school English teachers have achieved the set goals; concerning the use of English, 12.5% of them conduct English classes in English over 75% of the class time and 38% use English 50–75% of the class time. However, these data do not disclose the teaching methods actually employed to conduct these English classes. Both JTE English proficiencies and the ratio of English use in Japanese classrooms are on the rise, although these test results did not specifically show that teachers had improved their English writing proficiency.

The advent of communicative language teaching (CLT) has resulted in writing taking a back seat in English classrooms because both teachers

and students are preoccupied with oral, rather than written, communication abilities. The current 2009 version of the CoS refers to writing in one of the objectives of English teaching as follows: 'To develop students' communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc.' (MEXT, 2009: 1). Subsequently, the next high school CoS was announced in 2018 and will be due in 2022 (MEXT, 2018).

The current and the next CoS for secondary school English teaching promote the enhancement of communication abilities and specifically advise integrative teaching of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The next CoS also emphasizes developing productive skills (speaking and writing). Furthermore, the guidelines espouse the principal use of English as the medium of instruction in English classes and active learning, through the employment of student-centered activities. Active learning is defined by MEXT as 'proactive and cooperative learning and instruction methods focusing on the discovery and resolution of issues' (MEXT, 2014: 2).

The course of study guidelines and textbooks for English writing

The guidelines for writing instruction and its contents are a list of statements about what to teach, not how to teach. The following statements are examples from the present guidelines for high school level writing (the 2009-released CoS):

- Writing brief passages on information, ideas, etc., based on what one has heard, read, learned and experienced.
- Writing coherent and cohesive passages on information, ideas, etc. based on what one has heard, read, learned and experienced.
- Writing brief passages in a style suitable for the audience and purpose.
- Writing with due attention to phrases and sentences indicating the main points, connecting phrases, etc. and reviewing one's own writing.

Although these statements are comprehensible, they are quite abstract and vague. With no models or guidance given, they are open to interpretation. For example, 'writing brief passages in a style suitable for the audience and purpose' does not provide guidance regarding the content, context, length or genre of writing. Furthermore, the guidelines do not provide JTEs with techniques or methodological suggestions to facilitate their students practicing this type of writing. Nor do they appear to consider the many local constraints JTEs face regarding the implementation of these practices. Without guidance, teachers are prone to rely on textbooks that have been designed to adhere to the guidelines and approved by MEXT.

Nevertheless, past studies reveal that the textbooks appear to encourage or reproduce translation and drill instructional methods. For instance, Kobayakawa (2011) analyzed the English textbooks designed for writing classes reflecting the guidelines in the 1999 CoS.[3] The writing tasks in all of the textbooks she analyzed were dominated by translation and controlled practice activities. Translation comprised the largest percentage (41.42%), followed by controlled writing (e.g. conversion, sentence-combining, reordering; 33.18%), free composition (13.10%) and guided writing (e.g. fill-in-the-blank without translation, question-answer; 6.93%), implying that students' English writing experiences are limited. The results also showed that the writing tasks did not require students to write for an audience or revise their compositions.

In another study, Gorsuch (1999) analyzed activities in six MEXT-approved high school textbooks (four-skill integrated subjects) to examine whether or not the textbook activities included an explicit call for students: (a) to exchange information; (b) to use language according to their own purposes (i.e. unscripted language); and (c) to focus on meaning beyond the sentence level. Gorsuch found that none of the reviewed activities contained either one of them and concluded that 'the textbooks are a hindrance to teachers who want to teach students how to communicate in English' (Gorsuch, 1999: 9). Furthermore, every textbook has 'a teacher's manual that has detailed lesson plans emphasizing translation and drill-focused teaching techniques' (Browne & Wada, 1998: 105), with little or no time given to the teaching of writing. If teachers use such textbooks they take on the demanding task of adapting activities to make them communicative or of creating writing activities on their own.

Inconsistencies between the course of study guidelines and writing instruction

Despite the expected influence of the CoS, discrepancies have been noticed between the objectives and the actual practices of English education (e.g. Yoshida, 2003). Past surveys have revealed Japanese students reporting not having experienced the kind of teaching proposed by the CoS, including those of English writing (e.g. Benesse, 2014; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; O'Donnell, 2005). Examining student perceptions of classroom pedagogies, Kikuchi and Browne (2009) found a substantial gap between the MEXT guidelines and actual teaching practices. They found that 'students didn't feel that the goals of the CoS Guidelines were being effectively implemented by their teachers in the classroom' (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009: 187). As for the writing classes, they reported: 'not one of the communicative objectives related to writing was actually being implemented in the classroom' (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009: 187). Regarding what was actually implemented in the classroom, students' open-ended responses indicate that the primary focus of the writing classes was 'the

memorization of grammatical structures and long explanations by the teacher on usage' (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009: 187). A more recent Benesse survey (2014) showed that Japanese students rarely have to write English passages related to what they have heard, read, learned and experienced, for example (recall this is one of the writings specified by the guidelines quoted above). Therefore, although the guidelines have a significant role in English education, they seem to play a very limited role in what actually happens in Japanese school classrooms.

This mismatch between the MEXT guidelines and actual writing instruction practices is not new. JTE implementation of CLT has suffered a similar fate (Humphries & Burns, 2015). Although more than two decades have passed since the endorsement of CLT in the CoS, most JTEs still revert to what they are most familiar with, the grammar-translation method, and perceive CLT as unattainable (e.g. Nishino, 2011; O'Donnell, 2005; Sakui, 2004). Examining JTE beliefs about and practices of CLT, Nishino (2011) found a gap between their positive beliefs about and inconsequential use of CLT. A lack of confidence in implementing CLT, a lack of practical training in CLT, non-optimal classroom conditions such as class size, and a lack of exposure to CLT in their own education were regarded as reasons for the substantial gap. This last point is particularly salient. The fact that JTEs have similar classroom experiences to their students means that they lack experience with CLT themselves and cannot draw on their own experiences as students in their teaching practices. This is a significant factor in the grammar-translation method continuing to be the established teaching method in Japanese secondary schools (O'Donnell, 2005). As Tahira (2012) reasons, the mismatch between the proposed guidelines and the actual practices is due to the lack of commitment by MEXT to provide support and training for JTEs.

Not surprisingly, various survey results have shown that JTEs have found it difficult to embrace the MEXT guidelines. For example, the Benesse (2016) nationwide survey of teacher perceptions revealed JTE lack of confidence in implementing the kind of English teaching recommended by the CoS. Practicing JTEs have voiced their concerns over the application of teaching practices advised in the guidelines, as well as their need to receive teacher training for writing instruction, along with speaking instruction and integrated four-skills teaching. The survey also found that over 70% of JTEs felt torn between the need to develop students' communication abilities and to prepare them for entrance exams. A major problem lies in the fact that university entrance exams do not directly test productive skills.

The University Entrance Examination System

While there are basically two types of university entrance examination in Japan – the national test and individual university tests – the system is

very complex. Under the purview of MEXT, the National Center Test for University Admissions (known locally as the Center Test) is produced by the National Center for University Entrance Examinations (NCUEE). In cooperation with participating universities, it is administered at over 700 sites throughout Japan on the same days, using the same test items. The Center Test is a computer-scored test of multiple-choice questions. Each year approximately half a million students take the Center Test, which includes an English test with written and listening components. It is a very high stakes exam because national, public and private universities all use the test scores to filter applicants. Although students generally have to take the Center Test to obtain admission to national and public universities, those who apply for private universities can often take individual university tests only.

The university entrance English examinations in Japan

The English component of the Center Test focuses on reading and listening skills, with writing restricted to word order rearrangement tasks (Watanabe, 2016). The exam is used by universities to vet course applicants, usually in conjunction with an interview and/or another local exam prepared by the specific university the applicant has applied to. The local university exams are prepared by the professors at the individual universities. They typically consist of reading texts with multiple-choice and cloze items which are designed to test grammatical, lexical and reading comprehension and the relationships between different parts of the text. There are also likely to be separate grammar, lexis and translation questions (Kitao & Kitao, 2014). In addition, these exams sometimes have writing components including free composition, conditional composition and summary writing (Watanabe, 2016).

Examination washback on English teaching and learning

Over the last 20 years the effects of the Center Test on teaching and learning (washback) in Japanese high schools have been periodically discussed. A number of studies argue that the university entrance examinations greatly influence the teaching and learning of English in Japanese high school classes. High school English classes conducted by JTEs tend to be university entrance examination oriented and focused on receptive skills (reading and listening) or translation skills (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Kikuchi, 2006; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009). Consequently, they give little attention to productive skills such as speaking and writing (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Butler & Iino, 2005).

On the other hand, in his preliminary study of the washback of the Center Test, Watanabe (1996) suggests that the Japanese university entrance exam washback on JTE teaching practices is limited, and that

teachers' educational histories, personal beliefs and teaching experience play a more important role in their classroom pedagogy. He argues that because of this, even if question and task types were changed, it would not necessarily result in teachers changing their teaching practices. Indeed, studies have highlighted that changes to the Center Test do not always have the intended consequences on teaching and learning. For instance, Sage and Tanaka (2006) found that, although the introduction of the listening component to the Center Test in 2006 may have promoted more listening and speaking instruction in Japanese high school classrooms, there were issues with the construct validity of the multiple-choice questions in the listening exam. They concluded that the exam was an unreliable measure of listening proficiency.

Although some local university exams do have productive writing components, the positive washback on the writing task appears to be negligible. Kowata's (2015) comprehensive doctoral thesis on the 'washback effects of university entrance examination writing tasks on learning and teaching' investigated 239 local entrance exams administered at 177 universities in 2007.[4] The results found about half (48.1%) of the exams had no writing components, whereas 29.3% had free composition, 28.9% translation from Japanese to English, and 2.5% summary writing. Of the free composition writing tasks, 80% were of essay type, with examinees required to state and to clarify the writer's opinions, although they were not required to write for a specific audience. Furthermore, only 11% of the writing exams provided English texts for reading, whereas listening was not integrated at all. Regarding the quantity of free composition, 31.8% set a word limit of 100 words and 44.4% less than 100 words.

Subsequently, Watanabe (2016) analyzed 50 writing tasks (free compositions) in the university entrance exams in 2013 and found only a limited range of micro-genres (i.e. expositions, personal reflections, discussions and sequential explanations). Kowata (2015) also found writing composition was not integrated into the high school curricula. The 33 freshman students he interviewed began preparing for the writing component of the university entrance exam in the third grade of high school, and they usually studied at cram schools (known locally as *yobiko*s or *juku*s), in supplementary classes at their high schools or at home. The extracurricular writing study usually involved the students producing a text, and the teacher correcting the text. No other exercises or writing practices were employed to help students improve their writing skills. Negative washback of this kind is well documented. Leki, Cumming and Silva (2010) provide an accessible and comprehensive review of the research and argue that if 'tests define the construct of L2 writing too narrowly or simply, they may elicit pedagogical practices, or even coaching, that simply involve test preparation rather than legitimate writing development' (Leki *et al.*, 2010: 90). These issues and lack of attention towards writing in

Japanese school classrooms are also the result of the constraints JTEs face when planning and conducting their English classes.

Other Local Constraints

Local factors that influence the teaching and learning of English writing include teacher training, time and resources, class size, and established attitudes and motivation towards L2 writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Leki, 2001). Previous research has identified these constraints in English writing contexts in Asia and Europe (e.g. Lee, 2008; Reichelt, 2005; You, 2004). English writing instructors have to modify their pedagogic practices to accommodate such contextual constraints. There are a large number of local constraints that impact the amount and quality of writing instruction in Japan. Chief among these are class size, the lack of JTE teacher training in English writing, and student (de)motivation.

Class size and time management

Japanese classes usually have a maximum of 40 students of mixed-level proficiencies in each class, and this has long been considered a critical issue in the teaching of English in Japan (see Nishino, 2008). From a JTE perspective, the central problem large class sizes cause is the impact that the number of students has on the teacher's time. This is because marking and providing feedback on students' written work is labor intensive, particularly for busy teachers who often have additional school responsibilities and duties such as managing a homeroom class, supervising club activities and preparing for school events such as culture festivals. All these problems are also shared by teachers of L1 Japanese writing (Kobayashi, 2002).

The consequences of teachers being overloaded with work are that they spend less time on lesson preparation and therefore are less likely to seek professional development (Browne & Wada, 1998; Nishino, 2008). A survey conducted by Kowata (2015) revealed a link between the busyness of JTE schedules and the paucity of writing instruction. Completed by 129 JTEs in 33 high schools in Japan, the survey revealed that many teachers had little time to provide instruction for university entrance exam writing tasks.

JTE teaching and learning culture

The issues of class size and time management are compounded by the school learning culture and professional development activities for JTEs in many Japanese high schools. For example, in their one-year qualitative study into the beliefs and practices of JTEs in a private high school in Japan, Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) found that most teachers were heavily

influenced by their personal experiences of learning English and teaching. This is problematic because most Japanese learn English through grammar-translation, and pre-service JTE teacher training usually takes place at the school the teacher attended as a student. In many instances, this initial training involves not only observing how classes are taught but also being mentored by the teacher who taught the practicing student teacher. This apprenticeship model for teacher training is flawed because experienced teachers generally mentor the novice teachers with the moribund teaching practices that were handed down to them in their initial teacher training. This has led to a cyclical pattern of novice teachers observing their own high school teachers and being socialized into the grammar-translation methods and exam-orientated classes they experienced as students. Moreover, there is a strong pressure to adhere to the existing teaching practices and routines in Japanese schools (O'Donnell, 2005). If novice teachers do not conform to the expectations and norms of their school culture they are likely to make their workplaces awkward, which in turn may impede their career development (Cook, 2010; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004).

Indeed, in her longitudinal study of the effects of in-service teacher education, Cook (2010) found that the MEXT-sponsored high school JTEs who studied CLT in Canada abandoned many of the new methods and practices they had learned when faced with the constraints of teaching in Japanese high schools. The teachers reverted to traditional teaching methods such as grammar-translation because of 'a perceived need to conform to the practices of colleagues' (Cook, 2010: 60). Similar observations are made by Casanave (2009), who described how working JTEs who studied in a US university TESOL graduate program reacted to such methods as communicative and process-oriented teaching, in other words, their dilemmas of not being able to apply the newly learned methodological ideas in the local realities of Japanese classrooms.

Student motivation towards English learning

These local constraints impact student motivation. Kikuchi's (2009) study of the factors that demotivate Japanese high school students found that the grammar-translation method, lessons that focused on tests and university entrance examinations, the rote learning of lexis, and dated, uninteresting and incomprehensible textbooks all demotivated students studying English. Hamada's (2011) study concurs with Kikuchi's findings and stresses the impact these demotivators have on student self-confidence, and especially how poor test results can increase student anxiety and demotivate them 'more than being unable to understand lessons or English' (Hamada, 2011: 32).

Clearly, the university entrance exam exerts a strong influence over the learning of English in Japan. It provides students with English learning

aims and objectives and, because passing the entrance exam can open the door to other opportunities, many students invest heavily in their English studies. In short, as Yoshida (2003) notes, the exam provides a motivation to study English. Next, changes to the entrance exam and its possible impacts on teaching English, especially writing, are examined.

The Future: Changes to the University Entrance Examination

Japan's university entrance exam system is currently being reassessed and large-scale reforms regarding the exam's content will be introduced in the 2020 academic year. These proposed reforms are intended to disrupt the status quo of English education in Japan. The new national Center Test (now referred to as the University Entrance Common Test) will include new English exams to measure productive skills in addition to receptive skills, in order to make the assessment congruent with the CoS objectives. Importantly, the new English university examination system requires universities to shift their focus away from individual reading and listening test components towards an integrated four-skills test. In 2017 MEXT announced that, transitionally from the 2020–2023 academic years, NCUEE will continue to produce a computer-scored test of multiple-choice questions of reading and listening, just like the present Center Test. In addition, to test students' speaking and writing skills, MEXT will allow universities to make use of the scores of external commercial English examinations such as Eiken, TOEFL iBT and IELTS. From 2024 onwards, however, only certified external English exam scores considered to be consistent with the CoS will be used.

Proposed English writing tests

In order to illustrate the impact of the proposed new English exam on writing instruction, it is useful to consider the proposed new writing component for the exams. One certified exam worthy of consideration is the new Test of English for Academic Purposes (TEAP) because it is specifically tailored for Japanese university entrants. The exam is currently being redesigned to support the next MEXT CoS due in 2022, which proposes an ambitious shift in teaching methodology towards active learning. It is proposed that there will be two writing tasks in the new TEAP exam (Weir, 2014). The first task, which is designed for most examinees, is likely to include summarizing a critique or an expository text in approximately 70 words and is expected to be accessible to and achievable by students with a B1 Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) assessment level of proficiency (see Table 4.1).

The second task is expected to be accessible to and achievable by students with a B2 CEFR assessment level of proficiency (see Table 4.1) and will be designed to 'discriminate among high-level test takers as

Table 4.1 CEFR descriptors for writing assessment proficiency B1 and B2

B1 Writing	B2 Writing
• I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. • I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	• I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. • I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. • I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

Source: CEFR (https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home).

appropriate for the future TEAP test-taker population. The second task would be at this higher level but it still should be accessible to candidates at the B1 level' (Weir, 2014: 10). It is likely to involve reading multiple texts, graphs and charts, summarizing main points and writing a 200-word opinion essay (Eiken Foundation of Japan, n.d.). These changes have significant implications for students' and teachers' perceptions of the role and importance of English writing instruction in the curricula of compulsory and subsequent tertiary education. Teachers will have to prepare students for these types of writing. Students will have a concrete reason to focus on their writing and may see the value of writing instruction intended to prepare them for these tasks. For the first time, JTEs will be required (as a minimum) to provide instruction on summary writing, which will include differentiating between important information and minor details, taking notes and identifying key supporting points, as well as how to use synonyms, referents and cohesive devices, all while listening to and reading related English texts.

There are a large number of pedagogic challenges for JTEs in responding to the new exam changes. The changes are intended to provide opportunities for improved English writing instruction and learning; however, they could actually provide greater obstacles given the considerable constraints teachers will have in implementing them. In order to turn the changes into opportunities, the constraints of class size, time and current teacher training practices will need to be addressed. How are the tens of thousands of JTEs going to be trained how to teach English writing, and above all in English? Who is going to train the teachers to teach this integrated skills approach to writing? Which active learning writing instruction methods will be employed? Will the chosen writing methods incorporate strategies to alleviate the constraints? How do JTEs already overloaded with work find time to introduce and manage writing instruction for classes of 40 students used to a teacher-fronted transmission method of learning? How do they cope with the increased workload of providing feedback on written compositions? There are no easy answers to these questions, particularly when many JTEs are lacking in confidence regarding their own English abilities (Benesse, 2016). Although the

structural and institutional changes of the kind required by the new university entrance examination may be difficult to implement, they must be addressed in order to actualize the objectives. Sufficient teacher training will hold the key to achieving the objectives.

JTE teacher training

The current structure and process of JTE teacher training programs have fundamental drawbacks for the wide-scale introduction of radical English curriculum changes that include integrating writing with other skills and the introduction of summary writing instruction and practice. Generally, trainee JTEs are often English literature or linguistics majors who are not normally required to take courses in ESL/EFL methodology, second language acquisition theory or language assessment (Browne & Wada, 1998; Lamie, 2001; Nagasawa, 2004). Moreover, although a small minority of teacher trainers at Japanese universities have international postgraduate qualifications in EFL and applied linguistics, many JTE teacher training programs have required courses that are taught in Japanese by unlicensed teachers, with little knowledge or experience of contemporary language learning practices and methods (Nagasawa, 2004; Nagatomo, 2011). In fact, because many of these teachers have had the same English education as the students they teach, most teacher trainers and in-service teachers have had little experience in writing texts of the kind needed for the new exam themselves.

Even though we are now in a post-process era (Atkinson, 2003), process writing approaches have yet to become widespread in Japanese classrooms (Hirose, 2007). However, a number of studies have been conducted assessing the suitability of process writing instruction methods with Japanese high school and university students. For example, Andrews (2016) reported the positive effects of process-oriented writing instruction with Japanese high school students, noting how his students became actively engaged in their writing and perceived it as relevant and meaningful. Indeed, the use of peer feedback is becoming more common and its effects are being investigated in university and high school classrooms (e.g. Kamimura, 2006; Kurihara, 2014). Previous studies seem to consistently indicate the positive effects of peer feedback on revisions. After comparing compositions before and after peer feedback, Kamimura (2006) revealed improvements in both high- and low-proficiency Japanese university students' English writing. Exploring the effects of written-plus-spoken peer feedback in English, Hirose (2012) found students enhanced their motivation and engagement in English writing in addition to improving both in quantity and overall quality after a semester-long writing course. Examining the effects of self-regulated learning strategy instruction on writing revision, Tando (2015) found the instruction had rich possibilities for facilitating the writing process and enhancing the ability of

English writing revision by Japanese university students. These studies examining the effects of new writing pedagogies suggest that they could be introduced and utilized more widely in Japanese high school and university classes. The use of other current writing pedagogies in the Japanese EFL context such as the genre approach (Yasuda, 2011) and collaborative writing (Storch, 2013) should also be developed and exploited.

Implications for Teacher Education

This chapter has detailed the current context of English writing teaching in Japan as well as the coming changes and considered how the constraints and challenges could impact writing teacher education in the country. The new CoS and changes to the university entrance system are an opportunity to reconfigure the teaching and learning of English, particularly English writing. Evidently, JTEs require extensive training in the teaching of writing, but first they need to be able to demonstrate their own writing ability and practice in English. In order to carry out the changes in the next CoS it is essential that JTEs be provided with professional development opportunities in order to gain experience of writing for a purpose and audience themselves. Such experience is crucial as it will inform how teachers interpret the English writing guidelines of the CoS as well as their assessments of the writing needs of their students. Moreover, professional development opportunities should be facilitated by highly trained writing instructors who use (model) writing instruction methods that epitomize how the objectives of English writing teaching guidelines in the new CoS can be achieved. This will enable JTEs to experience the pedagogic value of the kind of writing instruction they will be asked to use from a student perspective, as well as to provide a foundation from which to build their own understanding of new instructional methods and techniques.

JTEs face monumental new challenges to teach writing practices integrated with other skills in English. The proposed pedagogical shift from teacher-fronted grammar-translation to student-centered active learning requires teachers to reconceptualize English writing teaching as 'dialogic mediation' (Johnson, 2009). In order to support their students' writing development, JTEs require theoretical and practical training in the purpose and use of appropriate English writing pedagogies. The efficacy of English use in writing instruction should be justified to the teachers. The use of peer feedback and revision, which has been shown to be effective in Japanese EFL classrooms, should be exploited. Feedback practices should move away from dominant instruction techniques that emphasize grammar error correction towards content-based comments that support students through the drafting and review processes. However, new methods and techniques need to acknowledge the contextual constraints of class size, teacher workload and student proficiency and motivation, and be adapted accordingly to find their rightful place in the Japanese EFL writing classes. How this last

crucial point is achieved is uncertain, but these issues must be thought through prior to the introduction of the new CoS, if it is to be successful.

The challenges described above will not be met unless teacher training is ongoing. The teaching and learning culture of JTEs has to become more dynamic and flexible. JTEs have to share best practices, problems and other experiences regarding writing instruction in regular professional development workshops, seminars and conferences. In these professional development sessions new ideas and pedagogical experimentation have to be encouraged. The redeployment of existing resources could alleviate some constraints, for example. Since the introduction of CLT, the team teaching of JTEs and non-Japanese English speaking teachers known as assistant language teachers (ALTs) has been widespread in high school English oral communication classes in Japan. The role of ALTs in high schools could be increased to support the teaching of writing. This could ease the workload of JTEs, especially regarding feedback on student writing. However, ALTs would also require specialized writing teacher training, which would in turn require further commitment and investment from MEXT and the Japanese government.

Notes

(1) Therefore, teachers need to adapt to the new CoS and corresponding textbooks and curriculum every 10 years. It takes approximately five years to change the mentality of teachers to adapt to a new CoS and textbooks (K. Yoshida, personal communication, 10 June 2017).
(2) Eiken is a public-interest incorporated foundation in Tokyo, Japan. Eiken produces and administers English-proficiency tests to over 2 million test takers a year.
(3) The existing published studies concerning English textbooks and students' classroom experiences mostly provide information about those under the previous 1999 CoS, which was implemented during the previous 10 years from the first year students in 2003. The present CoS has been implemented since 2013.
(4) The number of exams exceeds that of universities because some universities prepare and administer multiple exams for applicants to different departments.

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