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# A comparison of Japanese persuasive writing: The writings of Japanese as Foreign Language students in the NSW HSC examination and Japanese Native Speaking students in high school in Japan

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# **A comparison of Japanese persuasive writing: The writings of Japanese as Foreign Language students in the NSW HSC examination and Japanese Native Speaking students in high school in Japan**

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## **Abstract**

This study uses a functional model of language to examine the 2005 Japanese HSC<sup>1</sup> examination persuasive essays to investigate the structure and language features of the exposition genre, which students produce during this final high school examination. The examination scripts are compared to the essays which were written by Japanese native speaking (JNS) high school students answering the same question.

This study seeks to answer two questions: “How successful Japanese persuasive essays are constructed in the HSC Japanese Examination?”, and “To what extent a successful HSC examination model matches the native speaker equivalent?”.

The methodology used in this study is Generic Structure Potential (GSP) (Hasan 1996), which will identify the elements of structure and the language features within each element. GSP will be applied to both the Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) and Japanese Native Speaking (JNS) students’ texts to ascertain the extent to which they share commonality in terms of elements of structure.

Based on the analysis, all of the JFL students employed a deductive structure while some of the JNS students used an inductive structure; however, the majority of the JNS students also employed a deductive structure in their essays. This suggests that to answer the essay question in the examination situation, the use of a deductive structure in their persuasive essays is acceptable for both JFL and JNS writers.

## **1 Introduction**

As a teacher of Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) in an Australian high school, teaching ‘writing’ is the most challenging task. It is not surprising because writing in general involves various complex skills, for example, the writers are required to organise their texts appropriately to meet the demands of the context. In addition, the JFL learners are required to exhibit lexicogrammatical control of the Japanese language.

In order to provide an adequate JFL teaching/learning environment in a high school setting, programming the course and syllabus-based lessons are necessary. The Board of Studies NSW syllabi (Japanese K-10 Syllabus 2003; Japanese Continuers Stage 6 syllabus 1999) provide lists of major themes and related topics, text types, grammar points and Japanese character *kana* and *kanji* as guidelines. There are many teaching/learning resources available which focus on developing micro skills, such as clause level grammar and Japanese characters. To learn these micro skills is fundamental but also the students need to learn how to manipulate language in order to produce a whole text which is appropriate to the context. Thus more teaching/learning resources are needed which can link macro and micro levels of language, in other words resources which demonstrate the relation between organisation, semantics and lexicogrammar.

This research uses a functional model of language to investigate the language features of exposition (persuasive) writing in Japanese, which students produce during the Japanese HSC examination. The aim is to identify how the successful exposition in Japanese in the HSC

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<sup>1</sup> HSC refers to the Higher School Certificate, which is a qualification awarded to the students who successfully complete secondary education (years 11 and 12 or equivalent) in New South Wales, Australia. The HSC examination is the final examination in the NSW school curriculum, which is conducted externally and administrated by the Board of Studies NSW.

examination is organised and can be used as a model for teaching JFL students how to write a persuasive text. Providing effective and functional descriptions of the organisation of the text and the lexicogrammatical choices will be helpful for the JFL students. The exposition genre was chosen because it is one of the most popular genres that students are asked to write in the HSC examination and it involves more advanced language skills than other popular genres in HSC writing, such as the recount and information report.

This project seeks to answer two questions;

Question 1: “How are successful Japanese persuasive writings constructed in the HSC Japanese Examination?”

Question 2: “To what extent does a successful HSC examination model match up with a native speaker equivalent?”

## 2 The Corpus

In order to answer the research questions, two groups of texts were collected; JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) students’ texts and JNS (Japanese Native Speaking) students’ texts. The JFL students’ texts are written essays which answered the Japanese Continuers 2005 HSC Examination, Question 13, (a):

The title of your school’s Japanese Speech Contest is ‘*The best place in the world to live is...*’

Write your speech in which you persuade the audience that the place you have chosen is the best place.

Thirty five original examination scripts were collected and provided by the Office of the Board of Studies NSW for this research. The corpus consists of scripts from the following grading categories;

- (1) Five scripts of mark 9.0 / 9.0
- (2) Five scripts of mark 8.5 / 9.0
- (3) Five scripts of mark 8.0 / 9.0 - These marks from 8.0 to 9.0 out of 9.0 are in the top band, which is called band 6.
- (4) Ten scripts of mark 7.5 / 9.0 - These are in band 5.
- (5) Ten scripts of mark 5.5 / 9.0 - These are in band 4.

These scripts are from a mixture of gender-balanced examination scripts from government and non-government schools and a mixture of school locations (metropolitan schools or country schools). The JFL students who sat the HSC examination have typically studied Japanese for 400 to 500 hours in school (Japanese Continuers Stage 6 syllabus 1999).

The JNS students’ texts were written by Year 12 Japanese students who live in Japan. A Japanese high school agreed to provide forty two expository texts in response to exactly the same question as in the 2005 NSW HSC Examination. The JNS students were asked to write this essay under the same conditions as the JFL students. They were told the recommended length of around 300 *ji* (characters) and allowed about 30 minutes to complete their essays. The JNS students wrote their essays in class and were told that they were doing it for research purposes.

## 3 Methodology

This paper reports on the investigation of the structural organisation of the essays in the corpus. Firstly within the JFL texts, the question of whether there are different patterns of organisation across bands 4 to 6 is examined. Secondly the structural organisation of the JFL students’ band 6 (the top band) texts are compared with the JNS students’ texts.

To analyse the corpus, Systemic Functional (SF) Theory is adopted. SF theory is a functionally oriented theory of language that systematises the choice of meanings in language. SF theory emphasises how language is being used to realise meaning in the texts and how the text is influenced by context (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

Considering the genre and the particular structure of the texts, two major approaches have been developed within SF theory: the Genre approach established by Martin (cf. 1984, 1986, 1997) and the Generic Structure Potential (GSP) approach established by Hasan (cf. 1978, 1979, 1984, 1985). The fundamental difference between these two approaches relates to their respective uses. The Genre approach was developed to explore typological and topological differences among genres (Martin 1997). On the other hand the GSP approach highlights the variations in text structure within a particular genre, which occur within a particular culture (Hasan 1985). This study focuses on the genre of 'exposition' within the context of the HSC examination, to identify its defining generic elements. Thus, the GSP approach is employed, as I am looking at variation within one genre.

Before talking about the GSP approach, it is appropriate to explain how SF theory defines 'text' and its 'structure'. Text refers to any instance of language that is functional, which means any instance of the language that makes sense to someone who knows the language (Halliday and Hasan 1985; Halliday and Hasan 1976). Text can be of any length, spoken or written, with a unity of purpose. Butt et al (2000) describe text as "a harmonious collection of meanings appropriate to its context" (p15). For a text to be functional, it needs to 'fit' within the two contexts; context of culture and context of situation.

In a text, meanings are woven together to produce a functional piece of language through two design features 'texture' and 'structure' (Hasan 1985). Texture ties together the meanings of individual clauses into a text as a cohesive whole (Butt et al 2000). Structure refers to the syntagmatic patterns - the particular structural elements and their ordering which achieve the text's purpose (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Butt et al 2000). Texts which achieve the same general social purpose tend to share similar structural patterns; therefore, knowing these text structures is useful for speakers and writers to configure the meanings into a functional text. The GSP analysis can reveal these structural patterns in each genre.

GSP analysis highlights the variant and invariant properties of textual structures within the limit of one genre, and enumerates all 'obligatory' and 'optional' elements. The term 'obligatory' is used in GSP for the element of structure which *must* occur for a text to be recognised as an instance of a particular genre. 'Optional' elements *can* occur and 'iterative' elements are those that *can occur more than once* in the limit of one genre (Hasan 1985).

Hasan (1985) describes the GSP analysis as having three stages;

1. Identification of the actual structures of text.
2. Identification of obligatory, optional or iterative elements.
3. Representation of the potential order of the elements.

Hasan (1996) states that any structured piece of writing involves at least three types of abstractions:

Type 1: an element of a GSP

Type 2: its crucial semantic attribute(s), in other words, the nuclear meanings of each element

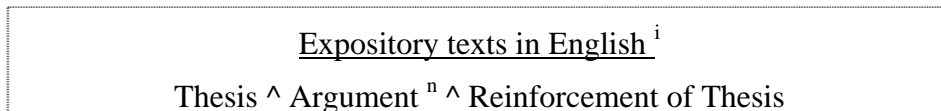
Type 3: The lexicogrammatical pattern(s) capable of realizing the nuclear meanings.

The nuclear meanings are semantic attributes that are necessary for the elements of a structure to achieve their purpose; elaborative meanings are also possible but are optional (Hasan 1984). The elements of structure and the semantic attributes are realisationally related to each other, i.e. the structural elements activate the semantic attributes and semantic attributes construe the elements. Lexicogrammar realises the attributes, which in turn, realise the elements or stages (Hasan 1985).

In the next section, the GSP of the expository texts in English and in Japanese are explained before describing the actual GSP results of the corpus.

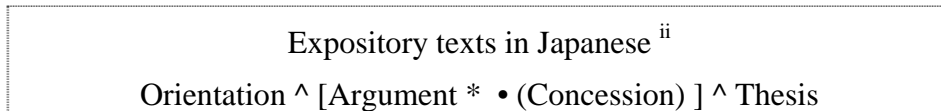
#### **4 GSP of expository texts in English and in Japanese**

According to previous studies, expository texts in English and in Japanese have different elements and orders in their GSP. The GSP for expository texts in English and in Japanese are shown in Figures 1 and 2.



**Figure 1:** GSP in Expository texts in English (Stated in Disadvantaged School Programme 1994)

<sup>i)</sup> The symbol <sup>n</sup> refers to any number one or above, thus this is used as Iteration in the DSP formulation of the GSP. In the Figure 1, the element of Argument can be repeated.



**Figure 2:** GSP in Expository texts in Japanese (Sano 2003)

<sup>ii)</sup> In Sano's (2003) work, an arrow was used to symbolise the Iteration. However, the iterative arrow is unstable in the text, thus, it was replaced as the symbol \* in Sano's (2006) work and I am adapting this change in the present study.

The notational conventions used in Figures 1 and 2 are explained in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Notational conventions used in Figures 1 and 2 (Sano 2006, adapted Hasan 1996)

Key	Notation meaning
^	Ordering, e.g. A ^ B = element A precedes Element B
<sup>n</sup>	Iteration (in the DSP), <sup>n</sup> is any number more than 1, e.g. A <sup>n</sup> = element A can occur more than once
*	Iteration, e.g. A* = element A can occur more than once
( )	Optional element, e.g. (A) = element A is optional
•	Choice of order, e.g. A • B = element A can precede or follow element B
[ ]	Limit of the mobility of the elements, e.g. [A • B] = element A and element B are a structural pair
/	Choice of element, e.g. A / B = either element A or element B can appear but not both simultaneously in a structure

Both English and Japanese expository texts share the same obligatory elements of Thesis and Argument; however, the Thesis element is located differently. English expository texts begin with the Thesis where the writer's position is presented clearly and succinctly. On the other hand, Japanese expository texts end with the Thesis element. Thus, the writer presents his/her position at the end of the text.

In English exposition, the Thesis element comes first and in the following Argument element(s) the writer provides some evidence and/or supportive opinions in order to convince the readers to consider that the presented position in the Thesis element makes sense. Moreover, the position is reiterated at the end of the text in the Reinforcement of Thesis element to persuade the readers to agree with or endorse the writer's position.

In contrast, the Japanese expository texts as described by Sano (2003) begin with Orientation, which is an obligatory element. In the Orientation, the writer sets the scene of the text and provides background information for the readers to prepare them for the following elements. In the subsequent Argument element(s), the writer presents the main reasons or premises to support the writer's position which is then presented in the following Thesis element. In the Thesis element, the writer finally expresses his/her position; thus, in the successful Japanese expository text, when the readers reach the Thesis at the end of the text, they have already been persuaded by the arguments prior to the Thesis, in a naturalised manner.

There is an optional element in Japanese exposition, which is called Concession. The concession element can occur before or after the Argument to present concessive or counter

arguments to the main arguments to show the recognition of the existence of oppositions or particular conditions.

From these different structural elements and their ordering, the English expository text can be characterised as 'deductive' and 'writer oriented' and the Japanese expository text as 'inductive' and 'reader oriented'. By deductive, I mean the writers construct their texts deductively. They propose their positions at the beginning of the text, and subsequent supportive arguments are expressed in order to persuade readers that the proposed position is valid. The position is also reinforced at the end of the text to remind readers.

On the other hand, in inductive structures in Japanese expository texts, the writers construct their texts in an opposite manner from the deductive structure. The writer invites readers and introduces a main subject matter at the beginning of the text, and then particular examples or facts follow as supportive arguments to lead the readers to accept the writer's position as a reasonable and natural one. In this inductive structure, the writer's position is expressed at the end of the text. Sano (2006) refers to some studies on inductive and deductive models, such as Hinds (1980) and Spyridaki and Fukuoka's (2000, 2002) studies and concluded that the inductive model is preferred in Japanese exposition texts, but notes; however, that the use of the deductive model has started to appear in more recent Japanese expository writings.

As previously mentioned, in a deductive model, the writer states his/her position first and the valid arguments to back up the position follow. It can be said that this deductive model is a 'writer oriented' structure, suggesting that in English expository texts, the writers assume power and authority and try to convince readers by justifying their position. In other words, if the English expository text is written successfully, the readers will be persuaded to agree with the writer's position.

In contrast, using an inductive model, the writers present evidence before stating a position, which can be considered as a 'reader oriented' structure, because the readers' thoughts are emphasised. By this meant, that the reader is free to formulate their own position while reading the evidence supplied by the reader. In a sense the reader is less constrained by the writer as the writer's position is yet to be declared. In this manner, the reader is guided by the arguments but not by the claim. Thus, the writers try to induce the readers to accept and share their position. It means that the readers are allowed to form their own opinion, which the writer hopes will coincide with his/her position. The position is then a shared one.

It is suggested that these different structures in English and in Japanese reflect their different situations and culture, since the structures are activated by the situation and culture in which they are embedded (Hasan 1985).

The following section will describe the situation types of the corpus.

## **5 Situation types of the corpus**

Situation types, which Hasan (1985) calls 'contextual configuration' is "a specific set of values that realises field, tenor and mode" (Hasan 1985: 56) and the total set of values need to be seen as one configuration.

To define the contextual configuration of the corpus, its field, tenor and mode are described. In the present study, three different contextual configurations need to be considered.

Firstly, there are two different groups of writers involved. One group of writers is the JFL students who produced the corpus in the 2005 HSC examination. The other group of writers is the JNS students who are Year12 high school students in Japan and they were asked to answer the same question from the 2005 HSC examination.

Secondly, the writers are in two different situations. One situation is an 'imaginary situation'. The essay question demands that the students write a speech for their school's Japanese Speech Contest to persuade the audience. The title of the speech is '*The best place in the world to live is...*', which mean that the students need to pretend to respond to the imaginary situation. This imaginary situation occurs for both JFL and JNS students. Moreover, since the JFL students wrote their essays in the HSC examination situation, they also needed to consider the other 'real

situation', i.e. the JFL students were particularly required to write a piece of work for assessment. Consequently, the readers of the essays were the examination markers.

These contextual configurations are explained in the following sections by each aspect of field, tenor and mode.

### 5.1 *Field of the corpus*

Field is 'what is happening' in a very general term and characterised by specifying its i) subject matter and ii) social activities (Halliday 1998).

In expository texts, various subject matters are discussed; however, there are common and particular social activities that are carried out. The common social activities in expository texts in English are presenting the writer's position, arguing to support the position and reinforcing the position. In contrast, Sano (2006) proposes the common social activities for Japanese exposition as attracting, relating and sharing. There are other social activities, such as, summarising, anticipating and suggesting which are used in not all but some expository texts.

In the present study, the same subject matter was given to both the JFL writers and the JNS writers. They were asked to answer the question of "*The best place in the world to live is ...*" as a school's Japanese Speech Contest to persuade the audience.

The common social activity for both groups of writers is that they need to pretend to give a persuasive speech in writing. However, there is also difference in the social activity. The JFL writers were in the real activity of demonstrating their best competence to produce a persuasive essay in formal examination conditions. On the other hand, the JNS writers were in class and they were asked to write the essays for my research rather than for assessment.

Another difference relates to the kinds of Japanese speakers. The JFL writers have been learning Japanese as a foreign language in Australia and the JNS writers are in Japan and have been learning Japanese as their first language. Therefore, the native speakers are competent writers and are able to employ many more elements of the lexicogrammar. In contrast, the JFL writers have a very limited lexicogrammatical repertoire and have first language interference problems. Thus, both groups of writers used Japanese but their background cultures and linguistic competencies are very different. This difference naturally has affected their texts.

### 5.2 *Tenor of the corpus*

Tenor refers to 'who is taking part'; in other words, it is focused on the relationship between the writer and reader. Tenor is identified by analysing its i) social status, ii) social distance, iii) the degree of institutionalisation (degree of control) and iv) the agentive role of the writers and the readers (Hasan 1985).

In expository texts, the social status of the writers and readers differs depending on the context of culture and situation, and writers can have higher, lower or similar social status with their readers. This social status closely relates to the social distance. If social status is different for writer and readers, this difference creates maximum social distance; on the other hand, if the social status of the writer and reader is similar, the social distance is minimal. The degree of institutionalisation (degree of control) is described as hierarchic with readers in a superordinate position, since they are free to choose to agree, disagree or ignore writers' position. The agentive role of the writer may be described as *persuader* and readers as *persuadee* in any expository text.

For the present study, there are two contexts of situation; 'imaginary situation' and 'real situation' which impact on tenor.

Firstly, focusing on the social status, both the JFL writers and the JNS writers have lower to similar social status to their readers in the imaginary situation. According to the imaginary situation, the writers were asked to write a speech for their schools' Japanese Speech Contest; thus they were expected to speak to their audience who are their teachers and peers. This means that the writers have a little lower social status to their teachers and similar social status to their peers. However, when focusing on the JFL writers' real situation, which is that they were writing their essays for

their HSC examination, the writers (the JFL students) have lower social status to their readers who are the HSC examination markers of their texts.

Secondly, as the social distance is created in proportion to the social status, both groups have neutral to maximal social distance in their imaginary situation. In their imaginary situation, where the writers are going to give a speech at a Japanese Speech Contest at their schools, the writers were imagining that they know the audiences who are their teachers and peers; therefore, between the writer and her/his peers, the social distance is neutral and between the writer and her/his teachers the social distance is close to maximal. For the JFL writers' real situation, which is the examination situation, writers and markers clearly have maximum social distance.

Thirdly, for the degree of institutionalisation (degree of control) in the imaginary situation of the speech contest, the speakers (the actual writer of the essay) have control over the listeners. The writers present their speech and try to persuade their audiences. Since it is a speech rather than a discussion, the writers simply present their positions and support it by arguments, and readers have no space to comment or discuss. On the other hand, in the real examination situation of the JFL writers, the readers who are the markers of the examination papers have complete control over the writers. The readers (examination markers) can judge whether the writers persuaded well or not based on the examination criteria.

Finally and as previously mentioned, from the perspective of agentive role, the writers are *persuaders* and readers are *persuadees*.

### 5.3 *Mode of the corpus*

Mode refers to 'what part the language is playing'. Mode is clarified by investigating its i) channel, ii) process sharing, iii) language role and iv) rhetorical purpose (Hasan 1985).

The channel refers to how the text is received, either orally by spoken form or graphically by written form. The process sharing relates to whether the writer has a chance to receive any feedback from the readers. In terms of the role, language may be constitutive or ancillary. The rhetorical purpose for expository text is persuasion.

For the present study, since the corpus consists of written essays, the channel is graphic. The process sharing of all texts is via the written medium for a spoken imaginary context. The language role of all texts is largely constitutive. The general rhetorical purpose is persuasion, as mentioned, and the JFL writers are demonstrating their Japanese language competencies as they construct their essays in the HSC examination situation.

Based on the above description, the situational features of the corpus are summarised in Table 2.



**Table 2:** The situation type of the corpus texts in the present study

<b>Field</b>		
Subject matter	Common for both the JFL and the JNS writers	Persuade the audience to answer the question of “ <i>The best place in the world to live is ...</i> ” as a school’s Japanese Speech Contest
Social activity	Common for both groups of writers	To respond to the imaginary situation, the writers pretend to give a persuasive speech in their schools
	Particular for the JFL writers	Real activity of demonstrating their competence to conduct a persuasive essay in the HSC examination situation
	Particular for the JNS writers	Writing persuasive essays which will be used for a research but not as their assessment
<b>Tenor</b>		
Social status	Common for both groups of writers	In the imaginary situation, the writers have a little lower social status to their teachers and similar social status to their peers
	Particular for the JFL writers	The writers have lower status than the marker in the real situation of the HSC examination
Social distance	Common for both groups of writers	In the imaginary situation, the writers have maximum social distance for their teachers and neutral social distance for their peer audiences
	Particular for the JFL writers	In the real situation, between the writers and the markers have maximum social distance
Degree of control	Common for both groups of writers	In the imaginary situation, writers (speech presenter) have definite control over readers (audience)
	Particular for the JFL writers	In the real situation, readers who are the markers have complete control over the writers in the HSC exam
Agentive role	Common for both groups of writers	Writers: <i>Persuaders</i> , Readers: <i>Persuadees</i>
<b>Mode</b>		
Channel	Common for both groups of writers	Graphic
Process sharing	Common for both groups of writers	Written medium for a spoken imaginary context
Language role	Common for both groups of writers	Largely constitutive
Rhetorical purpose	Common for both groups of writers	Persuasive
	Particular for the JFL writers	Demonstrative of competencies in the HSC examination situation

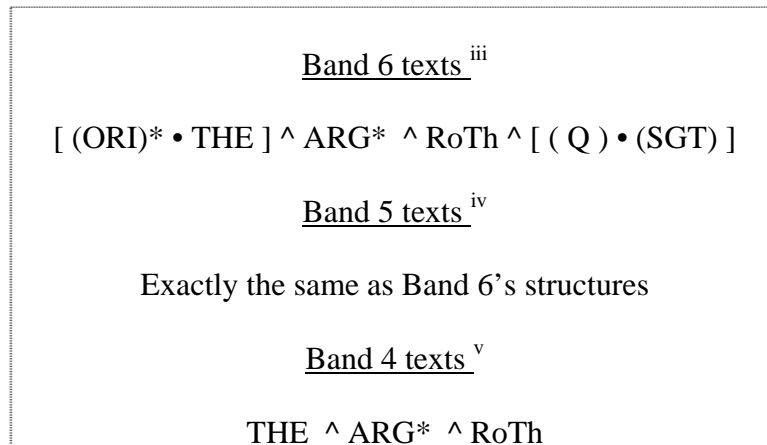
Situation type is an important factor when identifying GSP. In the following section, the results of the analysis carried out to identify which structure, inductive or deductive, is employed by the JFL writers of the Japanese expository texts will be described and discussed.

## 6 Results

### 6.1 Results of JFL students’ texts

All of the JFL writers chose the deductive structure. The labels of the elements of structure are adapted from Sano’s (2003) exposition in Japanese, except for the Question element.

To identify the structure of successful texts, the GSP is described with bands in the following Figure 3. Band 6 is the highest score (marks of 9/9, 8.5/9 and 8/9 in the HSC examination for Question 13).



**Figure 3:** The GSP of written Japanese expository texts by JFL students in the HSC examination

- iii) The majority of writers in this band followed this GSP, however, there is an exception that two writers did not use the Reinforcement of Thesis element.
- iv) The majority of writers in this band followed this GSP, however, there are a few exceptions, i.e. one writer used the Reinforcement of Thesis element three times, and two writers did not use the Reinforcement of Thesis element.
- v) The majority of writers in this band followed this GSP, however, there are a few exceptions, i.e. one writer used Orientation, two writers did not use Reinforcement of Thesis, and one writer used Suggestion.

The abbreviations used in Figures 3 are explained in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Abbreviation used in Figures 3

Abbreviation	Abbreviated element
ORI	Orientation
THE	Thesis
ARG	Argument
RoTh	Reinforcement of Thesis
Q	Question
SGT	Suggestion

Based on the findings, the GSP structure and its obligatory elements for JFL students' texts are the same regardless of the grade which the writers received in the HSC examination. However, more capable students who received higher marks employed optional elements in their texts.

In the JFL students in HSC examination corpus, the obligatory elements are Thesis, Argument and Reinforcement of Thesis and optional elements are Orientation, Question and Suggestion. The Thesis element appears towards the beginning of the text and always occurs before the Argument element. The Argument element can occur more than once and Reinforcement of Thesis element follows Argument element(s).

Orientation is an optional element; however, many writers employed this element in their texts. It was placed at the beginning of the text, but this element can be used either before or after the Thesis element to invite the readers to think about the topic and/or to preview the text. Question and Suggestion elements are optional elements and are used towards the end of the text, yet, few writers employed these elements in their texts.

For this study, I used the label 'Question' when writers asked questions toward the end of the text, such as 'Everyone, what do you think?' and 'Do you agree with these reasons (which I provided)?'

Some writers employed the 'Suggestion' element which gives recommendations to the readers, such as 'If you have a chance, please go to Australia (which the writer has chosen as the best place to live)' and 'For these reasons, I think Australia (which the writer has chosen as the best place to live and described as a very fortunate country) should help people who are suffering in the world'.

These Question and Suggestion elements can be eliminated without changing any meanings of the text as a whole; however, by including these, the writer can connect with the readers more closely. Especially, in the 2005 HSC examination question, the writers were given the situation that this text is for a speech contest. Therefore, some writers adapted a technique, such as asking some questions or giving suggestions to the audience in order to engage them with the writer (in this case, the speaker in the speech) in the Question and Suggestion elements. In other words, the Question and Suggestion elements are employed to check whether the readers were convinced successfully of the writer's position through their presented arguments.

Comparing the JFL students' HSC examination texts with expository texts in English (Disadvantaged School Programme 1994) and in Japanese (Sano 2003), all of the JFL students' texts employed the deductive structure. In other words, the structural organisation of the JFL students' texts in HSC examination is rather similar to that of expository texts in English, but the capable JFL students employed optional elements of Orientation before the Thesis and Question or Suggestion after the Reinforcement of Thesis.

In the next section, the analysis of the JNS students' texts will be described and compared with the band 6 (the top band) JFL students' texts to identify similarities and differences. This comparison was conducted to find out how successful JFL writers persuasive essays are relevant as Japanese persuasive writing. Are they appropriate in a native Japanese context and understood as native Japanese interlocutions?

If the GSP of both JFL and JNS students' texts are similar, it can be said that the aim of constructing persuasive text for HSC level meets the reality of native Japanese speakers, thus, as an outcome, JFL writers are able to produce culturally acceptable texts.

On the other hand, if the GSP of JFL students and JNS students texts are different, there are two possible reasons. Firstly, the aim of constructing persuasive texts at HSC level is different from the texts constructed by native Japanese speakers in Japan. The HSC examination candidates can be considered to be at an intermediate level of Japanese as a foreign language, and so the HSC examination aims at testing accuracy and the appropriate use of structure and lexicogrammar for that level, but not at the native speaker's level.

Secondly, the different contexts of culture and situation of the two groups affect their texts. It may be that successful JFL writers produced their persuasive essays with correct lexicogrammar, yet, the texts are constructed differently from the native speakers' texts because the two groups have different situation types.

## **6.2 Results of JNS students' texts**

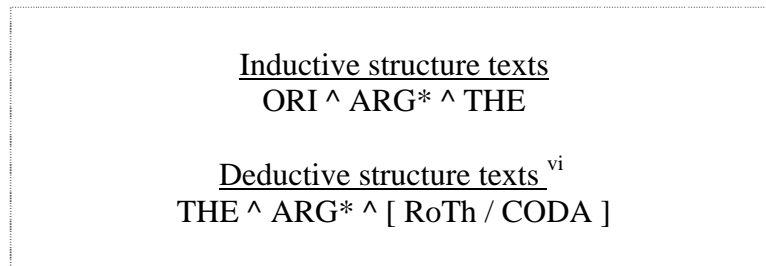
The same essay question was asked under very similar conditions (same limited time and length were presented) to the JNS students in Year12 in Japan. As previously mentioned, the difference is that the JFL students' texts were written under the conditions of a formal examination, while the JNS students' texts were written in class for my research purpose but not as their assessment<sup>2</sup>.

Forty-two texts were collected as the corpus but five of them were did not answer the essay question; therefore those five texts are excluded from this study. Within the valid thirty seven texts of JNS students' texts, two different types of structures; 'inductive structure' and 'deductive structure' were found.

The GSP of the JNS expository texts are summarised in Figure 4.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to the details in the 'Situation types of the corpus' section.



**Figure 4:** The GSP of the JNS students' texts

<sup>vi)</sup> The majority of writers in the deductive structure followed this GSP, however, there are a few exceptions, i.e. one writer used Orientation, two writers used both Reinforcement of Thesis and Coda, one writer used Suggestion instead of Reinforcement of Thesis or Coda and three writers did not use either Reinforcement of Thesis or Coda.

To reiterate, for the inductive structure, the writers present the Argument element before the Thesis element; thus, stating their opinion at the end of the text. On the other hand, using the deductive structure, the Thesis element precedes the Argument elements.

For the deductive structure, the labels of the elements of structure are adapted from exposition in English (Disadvantaged School Program 1994) except the element of 'Coda'. 'Coda' is the element, which is often used in 'narrative' texts where it is the element in which the narrator of the story expresses his/her personal evaluation toward the end of the text (Butt et al 2000). In this study, some of the JNS writers used this Coda element to express their personal opinions even in their persuasive essays, for example 'I want many more people to know about Japan' and 'I would love to go to Taiwan (which the writer has chosen as the best place to live) and live there'. Most of the writers who used the Coda element chose it instead of the Reinforcement of the Thesis element at the end of their text. Thus it would seem that using Coda is a way of avoiding strong opinion, such as *oshitsuke* (forcing argument) in Sano (2003).

In the present study of JFL students' texts, the deductive structure is the preferred model with thirty-four texts followed this structure. In contrast, only three texts used the inductive structure. The inductive structure of the corpus consists of the obligatory elements of Orientation, Argument and Thesis and there are no optional elements. The Orientation element is used to invite readers' to the main subject matter, and is followed by some Argument elements, which provide some valid information to lead the readers to feel the subsequent Thesis element seems adequate.

The use of the deductive structure in the corpus involved the obligatory elements: Thesis, Argument and Reinforcement of Thesis or Coda (presented at the end of the text). The writers state their position at the beginning of the text in the Thesis element and the following Argument elements support the Thesis element. The Reinforcement of Thesis element was employed at the end of the text to summarise the presented arguments and to reinforce the writer's position. The Coda element is used to present the writers' personal opinion but this opinion is not the same as the one in the Thesis element. The writers use either Reinforcement of Thesis or Coda elements but not both in their texts (except in the two texts in the corpus), however, more writers employed the Reinforcement of Thesis element than Coda element.

### 6.3 Comparison of the GSP of the JFL and the JNS students' texts

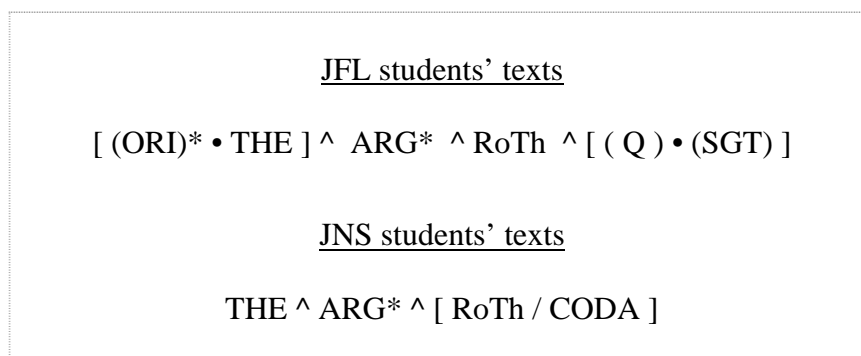
Comparing the GSP of the JFL and the JNS students' texts, the most significant difference is the existence of the inductive structure only in the JNS students' texts. Although many more writers in both groups employed the deductive structure in the corpus, no JFL writers used the inductive structure in their texts. Studies have shown that the inductive structure is a popular structure for Japanese expository texts, especially in newspaper commentary articles (Fukuoka and Spyridakis 1999; Sano 2006; Hinds 1980), thus, the JNS writers are familiar with the use of this structure to persuade readers. However, all the writers in the JFL students' texts and the majority of the writers in the JNS students' texts chose the deductive structure to construct their texts as expository texts.

This result does not reflect Sano's (2003) GSP of expository text in Japanese which employs inductive structure. Possibly, this is a result of their being different styles within the genre of exposition. Sano's (2003) corpus is from an editorial section of a newspaper and books, all written professionally. In contrast, the present study's corpus consists of essays which were written by high school students. This different context of situation (field, tenor and mode) could affect the preference of choosing inductive and deductive structures.

It may also relate to the particular situation that the writers in the present study's corpus were asked to answer a specific question. In the HSC examination, the writers were asked the question "*The best place in the world to live is ...*" to answer in their persuasive essay. Using the dots "... " at the end of the question sentence strongly guides the writer to fill in the dots "...", which means that the writers are invited to use a particular sentence to state their position at the beginning of their essay to answer the question. The typical Thesis sentence the writers used in the corpus is that "I think the best place in the world to live is (chosen place name)".

Another possible reason why the present corpus texts prefer to employ the deductive structure would be the limitation of time and the length of the text, which were allocated for the writers. In the HSC examination, the suggested time for this text is about 30 - 40 minutes (In the examination question paper, it was suggested to do two essays within one hour) and suggested length of texts is about 200-300 *ji* (characters) for this text, which is roughly about 25 clauses in a text. The writers are given quite a short time and a short length of the text (200-300 *ji*) to manage to produce the persuasive text. Using the deductive structure, the writers can present their position at the beginning of the text and the rest of the text can be used to provide the supportive arguments or optional elements. If the time and/or the rest of the allocated text space is getting shorter, the writers are able to decide which of the optional elements not to include. Alternatively, when the writers use the inductive structure, they need to place the Position element at the end of the text; thus, this requires greater organisation and management skills for time as well as length in order to include the Position element in their text. If the writers cannot manage their time well, the Position might not be included in their essay.

The deductive structure is popularly adapted in both JFL writers and JNS writers in the present study. When comparing both types, there is little difference between them in terms of kind of obligatory and optional elements. The GSP of texts from both JFL and JNS writers are summarised in Figure 5



**Figure 5:** GSP of the deductive structure in the JFL and the JNS students' texts

Both of the JFL and JNS students' texts have obligatory elements of Thesis, Argument and Reinforcement of Thesis.

The differences between the JFL and JNS students' texts are existence of Orientation, Question and Suggestion elements as optional elements which occur only in the JFL students' texts and existence of the Coda element only in the JNS students' texts. The JFL students used two types of Orientation elements; 'invitation' and 'preview'. Both invitation and preview are elaborative meanings, which the writer can use one or both. Invitation invites readers and introduces the main subject matter and Preview signals the topic or lists the following arguments. Preview is frequently

used in the JFL students' texts and it seems that through schooling, the JFL students may have been taught that a 'preview' is a useful element when constructing expository texts logically in English.

The Question element is employed only for the JFL students' texts to use the technique of public speech to reduce the distance between the speaker and the listeners. Since the JFL writers which produced HSC examination texts are culturally more familiar with the 'speech contest' situation than Japanese native speakers in Japan, the JFL writers used this Question element in order to fit in the imaginative situation (providing a speech in a speech contest). The Suggestion element is also used only for the JFL students' texts, (except of one native Japanese writer used it in her essay) to provide recommendation to the readers.

On the other hand, only JNS writers used the Coda element instead of a Reinforcement of Thesis element at the end of the text. Possibly this is because when the writers use Reinforcement of Thesis, the Japanese readers can feel a little intruded upon; thus in order to avoid this feelings of *oshitsuke* (forcing argument, cf Sano (2003)) some of the writers employed Coda instead in their essays.

In summary, the deductive structure is the more common and popular structure for both groups of JFL and JNS students when they answer the 2005 HSC examination question. The GSP of both groups are partly different in terms of their obligatory and optional elements. These differences result from the situation types, their context of cultures in general and especially how they have been learning to write persuasive essays through their schoolings.

## 7 Conclusion

This paper investigated the GSP of JFL and JNS students' written Japanese persuasive texts by specifying its order and those elements of the structure which are obligatory and optional. Within the JFL students' texts, it was found that students who have minimum capability to organise their texts employed only obligatory elements but the better marks were gained if students demonstrated control of the optional elements as well as obligatory elements. Comparing JFL and JNS students' texts, only JNS students adapted an inductive structure but all JFL students and the majority of JNS students employed the deductive structure. In other words, for this particular essay question, using the deductive structure is more popular than the inductive structure; thus, it can be said that using deductive structure for answering this essay question will be acceptable to Japanese native readers. When looking at the elements of structure within the two groups, some optional elements are used only in JFL or JNS students' texts. The Orientation, Question and Suggestion elements are used only by the JFL students. The JFL students used the Orientation element to organise their essay logically. They also may have focused on the 'imaginary situation of the speech contest' and showed their understanding of the technique of using questions and suggestions to reduce the distance between the speaker and the listeners. On the other hand, the other optional element, the Coda element was used only in the JNS students' texts instead of Reinforcement of Thesis. This choice may be affected by the social notion of avoiding *oshitsuke* (forcing argument).

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