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[Research Paper]

# Meaning-Making with Tutoring Experiences in Second-Language Academic Writing by Japanese Language Educators

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**Keywords:** Academic writing, Japanese language education, learner autonomy, linguistic ethnography, native-speakerism

## 1. Introduction

Individuals enrolled in higher education organisations frequently encounter barriers to academic writing and struggle to address this problem. Given that students and teachers in such institutions are required to write substantial volumes of texts, such as term papers, master's dissertations, doctoral theses, and journal articles, writing ability has become increasingly emphasised in recent years. In other words, meaningful language communication has gained prominence, as exemplified by the increasing emphasis on writing skills in Japanese public education policy (Yasuda, 2024).

Writing—specifically, academic writing skills in the context of this paper—has become indispensable for being considered a ‘good student’. Therefore, many tertiary schools worldwide emphasise the significance of logical writing that readers can easily comprehend. As writing becomes central to higher education, extensive efforts have been made to enhance global mobility for students, teaching staff, and researchers. Consequently, a growing number of individuals have begun writing in their second languages in many settings, implying the need for educators in higher education to support ‘non-native’ writers. This tendency to centralise writing skills in rapidly globalised higher education is the basis of the present study.

Writing centres and labs are increasingly being established in Japanese higher education to support students and researchers, with some institutes focusing exclusively on writing in Japanese, English, and occasionally other

languages. In many writing support organisations, academic tutorials are often provided by postgraduate students affiliated with their respective universities, while some occasionally employ undergraduates. Employing students as staff has significant advantages for higher education institutions as they can upskill tutors and tutees simultaneously.

These trends are compatible with the commercialisation of globalised higher education as the critical thinking, logical thinking or communication that comes with writing are essentialised dispositions and attributes for students to have 'better' lives. Higher education institutions seem determined to survive by providing opportunities to train their students in these skills. In the context of upskilling prospective worker-self, 'education' is a mixture of different intentions and approaches, including 'teaching', 'training', 'cultivation', 'fostering' and 'facilitation'.

This study investigates how educators who have tutored students in writing perceive these experiences in their teaching practices after graduation. Essentially, this research focuses on Japanese language educators who teach Japanese as a second/foreign language because their experiences supporting writers who use Japanese as a second language allow them to apply their tutoring context directly to their post-graduation educational practices as language teachers. Accordingly, the following research questions were developed:

1. How do individuals with writing tutorial experience interpret their experiences?
2. How can tutor graduates reflect their tutoring experiences in comparison with their current work as Japanese language teachers?

Concerning the second research question in particular, the present study deliberately focused only on those who had tutored and were now working as Japanese language teachers after graduation, although tutoring experience could also impact tutors who pursue other career paths. The present study explores how they may reinterpret their own tutoring experience in the context of their post-graduation Japanese language teaching practices.

Overall, this paper is organised into five sections. Section 2 reviews relevant

literature on writing support and tutors in Japanese higher education, situating the research field. Section 3 explains the research design, illustrating the underlying paradigm, methodology and methods of data collection and analysis. Section 4 discusses, from a Foucauldian standpoint, the prominent themes that emerged from interview extracts based on participant observations. The final section presents concluding remarks, implications for education, and suggestions for further research.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section provides a brief overview of previous studies on writing support institutes in higher education. First, it historicises the establishment of writing centres in higher education institutions, mainly in Japan, illustrating how education institutions welcome the employment of student tutors to guide prospective language teachers and academic staff. Second, referencing Foucauldian discussions, it addresses the upskilling of prospective educators, especially in the late capitalist or neoliberal social situation. Finally, the need for a sociological or, more specifically, an ethnography-oriented approach to the situated construction of tutoring in the context of the globalisation of higher education is emphasised.

### **2-1 Writing Sessions as Places for Transdisciplinary/Intercultural Co-learning**

In 2004, Waseda University established a writing centre, leading to several centres and labs being established across Japan. Based on the philosophy of tutoring and writing support organisations (Sadoshima & Ota, 2013), referred to by various universities, the fundamental attitude in writing tutorials is to help writers assume responsibility for their own writing. This means that tutors should not ‘correct’ the text by reading it alone, identifying problems, or rewriting it on their own. Accordingly, two concrete guidelines are presented: 1) respect for writers’ intentions and 2) emphasis on dialogue. The three principles of a writing support organisation are (i) teaching writing as a process, (ii) teaching writing across the curriculum, and (iii) educating writers rather than

fixing what is written on paper. The Japanese Academic Writing Lab at Kobe University (hereafter KU JAWL), outlined in Section 3 as the context of this paper, applies this tutoring philosophy.

Writing support creates dynamic learning by intertwining numerous factors, such as specialised fields of study, previous learning experiences and the preferred communication strategies of tutors and writers. This learning situation diversifies, especially when the cultural backgrounds or first languages of the tutor and writer differ. In the increasing complexity of our socio-cultural situations, one of the most prominent terms is ‘intersectionality’, that is, ‘the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations’ (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). In this sense, it is inevitable that various fields share multiple perspectives and construct new understandings. Thus, language teaching and learning, or, in a broader sense, language use in education as a space where diverse factors such as cultures and communication intersect, is also transdisciplinary. Accordingly, it emerges that academic writing support in Japanese as a second language overlaps with different fields, such as language education, academic skills education, intercultural communication and transdisciplinary endeavours.

## **2-2 Essentialised Technologies of the Self for Prospective Educators**

Higher education provides students with the skills required to empower subjects; specifically, ‘making’ workers is the prominent objective of educational systems (Urciuoli, 2008). Del Percio and Wong (2019, p. 207) suggest that training in specific skills related to language use creates an ideal worker-self. In a late-capitalist society, higher education offers specialised content for individual academic disciplines and soft skills, mediated by language, to enhance their employability (Urciuoli, 2019, p. 92).

Currently, the experience of Japanese academic writing support is heralded as a stepping stone for aspiring prospective Japanese language teachers to achieve their goals of becoming professional language educators. Morita (2019, p. 38) stated that students specialising in Japanese language education aim to develop academic writing teaching skills and utilise the knowledge and

competencies related to Japanese language learning and teaching, as fostering teaching staff is also a salient purpose of KU JAWL. A part-time job at a university where current students can apply their knowledge of Japanese language teaching to actual learners of Japanese would augment their educational experiences, especially for prospective Japanese language teachers.

The skills provided to students in higher education programmes are often communication-centred or perceived as essential for self-betterment. Sadoshima and Ota (2013) identified two main points regarding tutoring attitudes, approaches, and reflections in their research with in-service tutors. First, as tutors gain experience, they become sensitive to situations and develop contextualised thinking. Second, as tutors become flexible in their responses to writers and texts, they regard writing tutorials as spaces for collaboration. Accordingly, they suggested that the learning and development of tutors have much in common with previous research on actual teachers, assuming that tutoring experience has the potential to upskill prospective educators.

Attributes such as communication, problem-solving, and flexibility are considered soft skills. According to Urciuoli (2008, p. 215), '[s]oft skills are what Michel Foucault (1988) calls "technologies of self", ways to fashion subjectivity compatible with dominant practices, institutions, and beliefs'. Foucault's 'technologies of the self' can be re-read as interpersonal abilities (re)producing privileged values, even in an unstable and competitive employment situation where employees are expected to acquire skills at their own risk. Sunyol and Browning (2023) clarify that these skills, attributes or even personalities can be honed through language teaching and learning. Accordingly, tutors gather skills considered suitable or desirable for educators through their support of language use.

### 2.3 The Need for an Ethnography-oriented Approach to Reflect Tutoring Experiences in Japanese Language Education

While research on upskilling in teacher education has been cumulative, there is scant research questioning how former tutors connect or feel connected to their tutoring experiences in their work after graduation. Although there has

been a growing body of research on writing centres in recent years, it has mostly focused on texts (Kawakami et al., 2024) or scrutinised in-service tutors and their training systems (Nishiguchi, 2024). Furthermore, there is limited evidence to confirm the impact of tutoring experiences on the career paths of experienced tutors.

Subsequently, more research is needed regarding how tutoring experiences can be reflected in language education. Regarding the philosophy of writing centres, all writers should be treated equally regardless of whether they are writing in their first or second languages. Concurrently, it is also recognised that when the writing language is the tutor's first language and the writer's second language, the session will likely be tutor-oriented, and the writer would expect correction by a 'native speaker' (Akita et al., 2014). Taguchi et al. (2020) note that while criticism of native-speakerism has accumulated in English language education, it is nevertheless believed that someone's 'native' status confirms and strengthens their legitimacy in the use of language. The imbalanced power relations are represented in the term 'native checking', where the myth of 'nativeness' is prioritised over a person's specialised knowledge and work achievements. It is also worth scrutinising how the concept of 'native speaker' is perceived by those who have become Japanese language teachers after working as tutors.

Subsequently, it is imperative to explore how tutoring experiences may be reflected in education based on descriptions of educators who have tutored. This project makes an original contribution by combining ethnography-oriented research focusing on how Japanese academic writing tutorials can be situated in the field of Japanese language education and sociological research on education, investigating its actual implications from a critical education perspective in language teaching practices.

### 3. Research Methods

This section describes the methodological choices and research tools used in the study, with the researcher establishing the research context. The research method is presented after discussing the research paradigm with its theoretical

perspectives and details of the applied research design. Following the data collection method description and the participant selection procedure, this section explains the data analysis method.

### 3-1 Researching Student Supporters' Post-Graduation Reflections

This project aims to explore the meaning-making of postgraduate tutors regarding their own tutoring experiences after graduation. Specifically, it targets tutors working as Japanese language teachers after leaving KU JAWL.

The participants, who have previously tutored at KU JAWL, are now working as Japanese language teachers. Thus, this research case study gathers data on tutors whose first language(s) is Japanese and who are tutoring writers using Japanese as a second language. The scope of support of this organisation is limited to academic articles and writing assignments for higher education and similar educational institutes. Although the writers may bring writing assignments from Japanese language classes at universities, they are generally not allowed to bring documents for job-hunting. In this context, the tutors, most of whom are postgraduate students at Kobe University, are teaching staff who provide part-time writing support. Working as a postgraduate tutor at KU JAWL for approximately three years, this researcher became acquainted with several tutors and observed the actual tutoring management and tutor-writer interactions as one of the members of this social group.

Considering the research gap, this study investigates educators' varying perceptions using a qualitative method, which is preferred when clarifying meanings and understanding inductively through rich descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 14–18). I assume an interpretivist paradigm underpinned by relativism and constructionism. Ontologically, this study assumes 'relativism', considering that multiple realities exist, and each reality is unique because it does not pursue broadly generalisable results but rather assumes a diversity of feelings and interpretations that can vary from one participant to another, even in the same setting. Thus, this study attempts to interpret tutors' multiple and individual perceptions of their tutoring experiences. Epistemologically, this study takes a 'constructivist' stance, considering that knowledge is inevitably



constructed through a series of everyday performances. This is because the study sees the tutors' daily tutoring experiences as contributing to shaping their views on language and education.

### 3-2 Thematic Analysis of Ethnographically Generated Data

The study adopts an ethnography-oriented case study as the research methodology. Primarily, this research uses ethnography as its research design because this researcher first visited the research site, gained access to a target group, spent a considerable amount of time with that group, watched and listened to what people said and did, and engaged them in conversations to probe specific issues of interest (Bryman, 2016, p.423). Concurrently, this research can also be categorised as a case study since all the participants were selected from former tutors at KU JAWL.

While this study uses various data sources, its primary data were generated through online interviews conducted mainly during the summer holidays at Kobe University in 2024 to explore participants' introspections regarding the value or meanings of tutoring second-language academic writing. This study adopted semi-structured interviews as this interview method allows the interviewer to maintain the flow of the questions through the use of prepared interview material and to probe further at interesting points (McGrath et al., 2019, p. 1003), with this researcher also playing the role of interviewer. Another former tutor participated as a pilot interviewee to improve the content and flow of the interviews. The language in all interviews was Japanese because it was at least one of the first languages of all interviewees.

While its main data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, the subsidiary data in this study are findings obtained through participant observation. As noted above in 3-1, I was a member of KU JAWL for approximately three years. In the initial stages of this study, my role as an ethnographer was that of a covert full member, which involves 'full membership of group but the researcher's status as a researcher is unknown' (Bryman, 2016, p.434). Although my role as a researcher was overt at the stage of conducting the interviews after gaining inspiration for this study, at the later stages, I

assumed more of an interviewer role rather than that of an ethnographer. This research uses a linguistic ethnography approach, a language-centred examination of 'situated meaning-making' to unpack 'institutional, socio-cultural and ideological processes' (Pérez-Milans, 2015, p. 12). A significant portion of this research is still ethnographic, as the two research questions uncover how members negotiate the meaning of tutoring and the inherent value of academic writing tutorials in this context (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, p. 42).

All four participants in this project have been working as Japanese language teachers with similar educational trajectories: 1) Haru has been engaged in Japanese academic writing tutorials for two and a half years and is a Japanese language teacher at a tertiary school. 2) Sora worked as a postgraduate tutor for three years and is now a Japanese language teacher at a tertiary school. 3) Rui, who worked at KU JAWL for two years, is a freelance Japanese language teacher. 4) Rio, who worked at KU JAWL for a year, teaches Japanese at a tertiary school while concurrently instructing academic writing. Note that all four names appearing in this paper are pseudonyms.

This research used semi-structured interviews as the primary method for generating data. The first half of the interview asked participants to share their tutoring experiences, while the second half focused on how tutoring experience is reflected in their current educational practices as Japanese language teachers. The contents of the questions varied depending on the responses of each interviewee, given the flexibility of semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis is employed to examine the interview transcriptions as it facilitates the identification of analytic categories from large volumes of qualitative data. The analysis was conducted using Ryan and Bernard's model (2003, pp. 89-94). For instance, this study examines repeated words and expressions, relationships (similarities and differences) among narratives, and theory-related utterances. Moreover, after coding the original interview transcripts, further analysis and interpretation of the data were carried out, referring to the findings from the participant observation.

#### 4. Results & Discussion

This section analyses the interview data to answer the research questions, presenting the findings also based on the ethnographic data collection, and the narratives are organised into three main parts. Part 1 explores methods for fostering writers' learner autonomy by gathering the narratives of four Japanese language teachers with reference to the findings from the participant observations. Part 2 comprehensively explores how their tutoring experiences for learners of Japanese as a second language have a contradictory influence on their perceptions towards 'nativeness' in language. Part 3 discusses the paradoxical phenomena in the transdisciplinary and intercultural fields that have emerged by comparing the interviews with the participant observation from a Foucauldian standpoint.

##### 4-1 *'I wanted to give the writers a souvenir (something they could make use of)'*: Fostering Learner Autonomy in Writers

A series of ethnographic interviews in the present study first explored how research collaborators perceived 'writing tutors'. Common to all four interviewees was the perception that the tutor's job is to foster writers' autonomous learning. For instance, Sora clearly stated that tutors should not exclude writers' intentions and should consider writing as an original piece of work:

ソラ：利用者さんの文章はその利用者さん自身のものなので、利用者さんの考えが無いものにしてしまっではダメですよ。レポートとか論文とかもそうですけど、人によって正解が違ったり色々な答えが考えられたりするものについては、相手の考えを尊重して取り上げていかないといけないとおもうんです。そうじゃないと、こっちの答えを押し付けて「こういう風に書きなさい」って言ってしまったら、その文章は利用者さんの作品じゃなくてこっちの作品っていう風になってしまうので。

Sora: *The texts written by users are their own, and we tutors shouldn't change them to exclude their ideas. When the 'correct' answer differs by person or when there are*

*many possible answers, we must respect others' ideas and consider them. I think it's the same with essays or theses. Otherwise, if we force our answers on them and tell them, 'Write in this way', the text would be our work, not theirs.*

Sora's standpoint explicitly reflects the philosophy of writing centres 'protecting writer ownership'. His narrative further suggests that the deductive teaching of writing, which the tutors see as a better style/use of language, prevents them from respecting the writer's intentions. The expression 'to foster a better/independent writer' is frequently expressed in KU JAWL's observations. It is clear that 'fostering independent writers' is one of the explicitly articulated principles of the Waseda University Writing Centre. This value of fostering the writer's autonomy has become a shared understanding in the KU JAWL community. The significance of 'fostering' rather than 'teaching' has received more attention in educational institutions, and a review of the tutors' practice shows that it is important to consider suitable scaffolding for the individual.

Rui elucidated the attitude a tutor should adopt to interpret the unique intentions of individual writers by unpacking her memories, while Sora highlighted the taboos of what not to do as a tutor. Her statements represent how a tutor collaborates with the writer, facilitates spontaneous thinking, and helps transform the writer's ideas into the written form.

ケン：ライティングラボで、向いた方が良い方向がどちらなのか最初はよくわからなかったなっていうのを今話聞いててふっと思い出しました（笑）。

ルイ：うん（笑）。ラボだと決められたゴールも無いし正解もそんなにないから、私たちがその利用者の人にとってのベストを探していかなきゃいけなかったですね。ただ、私たちがずっと「こうしたら？ああしたら？」って言うだけじゃなくて、相手からもどんどん出してもらわないとベストが見つけれないから、どうやってアイデアを出させるかっていうのをチューター同士でよく喋ってましたよね。「知の集い」みたいな。みんな、利用者に対してすごく真摯だったし、そんな中で「チューター＝教える人」っていうイメージは変わりましたね。「一緒につくる」ものなんだなって。で、セッション後に利用者さんたちに得るものがあったと思ってもらいたかったの

で、お土産をわたせるようなチューターでいたいなって思っていました。

Ken: *I remember now, listening to you, that at first, I didn't really know which direction to take in writing tutorials.*

Rui: *At KU JAWL, we had to determine what was best for each user as there was no definite goal and few correct answers. It is not enough for us to just say, 'Why don't you do it this way?' or 'How about doing that?' constantly. We can only find the best by getting the users to come up with more ideas. So, we held discussions to encourage writers to spontaneously consider potential or alternative ideas. It was like a 'gathering of knowledge', wasn't it? My fellow tutors were sincere towards the users. In that context, my previous image of 'tutors = those who teach' has changed. A writing session was something we could 'create together' with writers. I wanted users to feel that they had gained something from the tutorials. So, I wanted to be a tutor who could give them a souvenir.*

Rui's use of the expression 'お土産 *souvenir*' is worth noting. It refers to the knowledge and skills writers can utilise independently after the writing session. Through participant observation, it has been clarified that many experienced tutors, including myself as well as the interviewees, used the term 'souvenir' daily. The reason for this may stem from the fact that the Writing Centre at Waseda University uses the term 'souvenir' to train tutors. KU JAWL tutors are encouraged to attend intensive courses on academic writing held by staff from the Writing Centre at Waseda University when they become tutors at Kobe University. All the interviewees in this study attended intensive lectures or seminars given by staff members of the Writing Centre at Waseda University. Thus, similar to the KU JAWL tutors, there is evidence of an internalisation of the importance of giving writers writing tips after the session so that they can write their own work without the tutors. Rui's perception of the tutor's job strongly points to the concept of learner autonomy, where learners' ability to take initiative in their own learning and to assume responsibility for it is cultivated. In the context of second-language writing, learner autonomy is closely connected to scaffolding, as it improves students' abilities to accomplish what

they could not achieve independently.

Higher education institutions have recently focused on upskilling their students. Autonomous learning has been recognised as an important skill that students should cultivate alongside communication skills and critical thinking. When it comes to the marketisation of higher education, institutions sell detachable skills to students and ship them once they have acquired the skills. Synchronously, students visit higher education institutions to ‘buy’ skills and strive to increase their value as commodities by enhancing their purchased skills. In this context, tutors and writers seek to hone their expertise and dispositions to ‘live better’ in the society where they are situated.

Cultivating learner autonomy in writers often requires tutors to comprehend the situation, the knowledge and skills they possess, and the required support. Rio’s statement exemplifies this, ‘I reckon it’s the job of the tutors at KU JAWL to listen well to the writers’. Her reference to the ability to listen as a desirable quality in a tutor corresponds significantly with the attitude of not disregarding the writer’s intentions, as described by Sora, and the disposition of encouraging the writer to generate ideas, as elucidated by Rui. To understand what writers tend to expect, another vital point that made them knock on the door of the lab was raised by another interviewee regarding the needs of writers who use KU JAWL:

ハル：日本語が第一言語の人がチューターだとたぶん利用者は心強いっていうのがあると思うんですね。それがゆえに、実際に役に立っている部分っていうのは大いにあるんだろうなと思います。かたや、それって利用者もラボも、利用者の指導教員も含めてそうだと思うんですけど、日本語の文法とか表現とかの正しさっていうものがそれだけ重要視されているんだなっていうことの表れのようにも感じていますね。

Haru: *I think KU JAWL users probably feel reassured when their tutors have Japanese as a first language. Therefore, I believe that being a native speaker is very useful. Meanwhile, I also feel that it highlights how much importance is attached to correct Japanese grammar and expression, both by users and lab, as well as by*

*users' supervisors.*

Haru's statement that, as a tutor, he wanted to respond to KU JAWL users' needs for correcting language expression to reassure them suggests that there is a phenomenon among writers who use Japanese as a second language that they rely on 'native speakers' to guide them in the correct use of the target language, which will be investigated comprehensively in what follows.

#### 4-2 *'Regardless of whether Japanese is writers' first or second language, they are likely to struggle at the same points': Increasingly Complex Gazes on Native Speakerism*

At KU JAWL, tutors whose first language is Japanese support tutees whose second language is Japanese. Accordingly, tutors should consistently develop sessions to foster writing skills regardless of whether the target language is their first or second language. In reality, sessions tend to be tutor-led, with writers relying on 'nativeness' and expecting corrections by tutors in such cases. This section describes how second-language teachers who have experienced these conflicting dilemmas perceive such situations.

This section begins with an interpretation of Rui's perception of the 'native speaker's self, where she reflects on this challenging question in the context of Japanese language lessons.

ルイ：うーん、なんて言うんだろう…はっきり表現しづらいんですけど、ネイティブであることを利用しつつ傲慢にならないようにしたい、と思ってますかね。私は日本語の母語話者として生きてきているので、理屈無しで感覚的に身につけている話し方とかがあるはずで。そういうものも教えたいですね。(中略)教科書でルールとして網羅されているものだけでなく、(自分のレッスンで)できるだけ3D感を出したいというか。

ケン：2Dで終わらず、よりリアルな感じをっていうことですね。その一方で、傲慢にならないように気を付けたいとも言ってくれてましたが、それはどういうことですか。

ルイ：感覚に頼り過ぎないってことですね。私たちが日本語の文法を細かく勉強

してきたわけではなかったりしますし、言葉の由来や語源も全く知らずに使っていたりもします。あと…表現や漢字の読み方も私が間違えたままで覚えてきたことも結構あって。でも相手の皆さんは第二言語、第三言語で勉強しているので、言葉の歴史や変遷、文法の成り立ちや助詞の役割も含めてそこに信憑性の裏付けをしたいと思っています。

Rui: *Well, how should I say this...? It's hard to express it clearly, but I feel I want to use the fact that I am a native speaker of Japanese, and synchronously, I don't want to be arrogant. There must be specific ways of using the Japanese language that I have sensibly acquired, as I have been a native speaker. So, in my lessons, I'd like to teach these things too. I don't just want to deal with what is covered as rules in the textbooks but provide a '3D-like' feel.*

Ken: *So, you mean you want to make your educational practices more 'real' rather than the 2D-like feel. You also mentioned that you want to be careful, not arrogant. Can you elaborate on this?*

Rui: *Well, I shouldn't rely too much on my personal sense of language. We haven't really studied Japanese grammar in detail, and sometimes, we use words without knowing their origins or etymology. Also...there are many expressions and kanji readings that I have memorised incorrectly. But I've been teaching people studying Japanese as their second or third language. Therefore, I'd like to teach them with credibility in terms of the history and transition of the language, as well as the origins of grammar or the roles of particles.*

While Rui's description may somewhat reproduce the privilege of being a native speaker of a language, it also implies that we do not have thorough and 'correct' knowledge even regarding our first language(s). Sora stated, 'Just because you are Japanese does not necessarily mean you can always use correct Japanese', citing his experience in a class on corpus linguistics that he took as a postgraduate student. Scepticism about native speaker-ism that people whose first language is Japanese cannot always choose to use Japanese in a way that is considered 'correct', is clearly expressed in Rio's description below.

In writing centres, it is assumed that, in principle, both first- and second-



language writers can be tutored in the same manner. Contrary to this point, the tendency of writers and their supervisors to expect writing centres to perform 'native' checking of expression or grammar typically in second-language writing implies the existence of a strong assumption that writing in the first language differs significantly from writing in the second language. In the current research, one of the interviewees, who elucidated her experience supporting both first- and second-language writing, noted that the difficulties writers face while writing are similar, regardless of whether Japanese is their first or second language.

リオ：結局のところ、ある程度の日本語力に到達していれば、日本人も留学生も悩むところはけっこう一緒なんだなっていうことが印象的でした。そこは面白いなって。違う国から来て、受けてきた教育も違うだろうから、持っている知識も全然違うんだろなって思っていたんです。それでも結局、ひっかかるポイントって構成とか論理とか、似ていますね。あと、日本語の表現に関しても、日本人だからといってすべてが分かるわけではないっていうことも改めて発見しました。「留学生」というのがポイントのラボなので、コミュニケーションがきちんととれるかっていうのは意識してましたが、実際にやってみたら一緒に相談していく仕事でした。なので、自分のバイアスは減りましたね。

Rio: After all, as long as they have reached a certain level of Japanese language proficiency, I found that both domestic and international students have much in common regarding their struggles. I found it intriguing. First, I thought that international students' knowledge would be quite different from that of students who were raised in Japan, as they came from different countries and thus had different educational backgrounds. However, the difficulties they face while writing regarding structure and logic are very similar. I also became conscious that just because you are Japanese doesn't mean you understand everything about Japanese expressions. I was a bit concerned about communication, as the 'international student' was a key feature of this lab. However, when I joined the lab, I felt it was a job that we had created together, reducing my bias.

It can be argued from her statement that while proficiency in the target language may support writing skills, there is no association between writing tutorials and ‘nativeness’. Rui and Sora also mentioned that people whose first language is Japanese cannot always provide ideal support for learning Japanese. Essentially, the myths of ‘native speakers’ have been broken through the experiences of tutoring second-language writing at KU JAWL, although to varying degrees for each person.

One of the principles in writing support is that tutors and writing centres should treat writers as equals and have similar sessions, regardless of whether the language of writing is the writer’s first or second language. However, in reality, supporting writing in a writer’s second language is often considered separate from supporting writing in their first language. Moreover, KU JAWL was no exception to this. As Rio stated above, when she became a member of KU JAWL, she noticed similarities between first- and second-language writers. Conversely, for many people who are not involved in writing support, these differences are sometimes considered self-evident. Misunderstandings of the roles of organisations supporting writing and how to deal with them have been one of the main points of discussion among tutors at KU JAWL, as there have been frequent requests from many writers and their supervisors for tutors to take the lead in direct revision of their writing.

This section concludes with Haru’s narrative, where he describes how he shifted his focus when diagnosing texts from the concrete level of expression and grammar to the abstract level of research questions, structure, and logical development.

ケン：先ほど、利用者のニーズとしては正しい表現にしたいというものがある、と語ってくれましたね。そして、チューターとしてそのニーズに応えたいという思いがあったと。そのような中でも抽象的な問題点へと視線が向いた理由ってというのは何かありますか。

ハル：チューター同士のやり取りの中で気づいていったんだと思うんですけど、やっぱり大きい単位のことと筋が通っていないと文章としてそもそも読めない、ということに気づいたってということかなと思います。(中略)ちっちゃ

い単位ですと文章の意味が分からないミスもありますが、意味が分かるミスもあります。おっきい単位ってミスしてしまうと何が言いたい文章なのか分からなくなってしまうことに気づかされてきたなって、良い表現ではないですけど「しみじみ」と… (笑)。

Ken: *You said earlier that one of the needs of users is to use grammar and expressions correctly. You also told me that you wanted to meet their needs as a tutor. What made you concentrate on abstract issues even in this context?*

Haru: *Following discussions with my fellow tutors, I realised this: if the written text doesn't make sense at an abstract level, then it wouldn't be readable. In concrete matters (such as grammar and expressions), some errors do not prevent the reader from understanding the meaning of the text, while there are also errors that make it impossible for the reader to understand its meaning. However, when errors exist in highly abstract matters (such as structure and logical development), readers find it difficult to understand the text. I realised this point, ...let's say, gradually?*

Through the participant observation, it has been found that these expressions ‘おっきい単位のミス *mistakes in larger units (errors in abstract matters in my translation)*’ and ‘ちっちゃい単位のミス *mistakes in smaller units (errors in concrete matters in my translation)*’ are also common expressions used among KU JAWL tutors. KU JAWL has a writing analysis sheet that is used for tutors’ on-the-job training and for sharing session content among tutors. The sheet has been used consistently since the early days of KU JAWL; while minor changes have been made occasionally, the basic content has remained the same. Its content is a table in which the components of a text are described in order from the abstract to the concrete. While the tutors use this sheet and, therefore, do not explicitly explain the level of abstraction of the components in the text to the writers during the session, the conversation between tutors, as between the interviewer and interviewee in this case, assumes a shared knowledge and mutual understanding. To make the most of the limited 45 minutes per session, it can be clarified that the tutors have been trying to understand the level of

abstraction of the issues/errors in the writers' texts and provide support that respects their intentions.

The tutors' realisation of the 'native speaker' myth could be an unexpected by-product of intercultural communication work. In the context of the marketisation of higher education, self-responsible competition for skills increases the gap between the skilled and the unskilled. Language proficiency is also a retrofittable skill in today's increasingly globalised societies; using a language with hegemonic power as a first language could be regarded as prestigious in late-capitalist society. However, the tutors' growing scepticism about native speaker-ism is an example of the unanticipated dynamism of intercultural communication since intercultural communication can sometimes create unimaginable dynamics.

#### **4-3 Reproduction and Transformation of Power Relations: From a Foucauldian Standpoint**

This research primarily aims to understand how Japanese language teachers interpret the meaning-making of their tutoring experiences and explore how they perform it in their current teaching practices in Japanese language education. Concerning the first research question, the interviewees' self-reflections illustrated that tutoring could foster second-language writers' learner autonomy. Regarding the second research question, their tutoring experiences may influence their own beliefs in the 'nativeness' of a language, which was one of the unanticipated findings in the initial phase of this research.

It is evident among the practitioners in this study that the Japanese language is not the property of the native speaker as a first language. Meanwhile, mentioning 'Japanese tutor' reinforces imbalanced power relations by reproducing the stereotype of [supporter = native Japanese speaker = 'Japanese people']. While the privileged value of being a native speaker may remain prominent in tutoring Japanese academic writing, based on the participants' remarks, it can be argued that the imperfections of nativeness are becoming increasingly apparent through tutoring experiences. In tutoring academic writing in Japanese as a second language, there are ongoing dynamic

transformations in conflicting discourses between the reproduction of power relations of the privilege of 'nativeness' and increasing scepticism towards native speaker-ism.

Through the narratives of Japanese language teachers with tutoring experience, it was apparent that tutors aim to inspire their tutees' autonomous learning through the writing-mediated negotiation of meaning-making. Their shared goal of cultivating communicative competence is internalised as the preferred technology of the self to be acquired under the currently dominant discourse on language-related education in late modern society. Considering Foucauldian perspectives, Urciuoli (2008) illustrated the following phenomenon: that is, in the neoliberal job market, acquiring skills is key to success, and an employee is considered a 'bundle of skills'. Thus, employers perceive individuals as collections of useful, detachable skills.

Higher education institutions have been increasingly focusing on upskilling students. Concerning the commodification of higher education, educational organisations sell detachable skills to students and ship them once they have acquired them. Concurrently, students visit higher education institutions to buy skills and are eager to increase their own 'commercial value' by bolstering their purchased skills. In this cycle, both tutors and writers attempt to hone their expertise and dispositions to achieve academic success, increase their employability, and improve their lives in the society they inhabit. However, while they cannot be completely free from the dominant power relations in which they are constantly positioned, meaningful interactions in transdisciplinary or intercultural settings can lead to societal change in hegemonic discourses.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explored how writing tutors' experiences can be interpreted and reflected by Japanese language educators, focusing on two objectives:

1. To interpret postgraduate tutors' experiences of learning support through ethnography-oriented interviewing;
2. To investigate the meaning-making of postgraduate tutors regarding their tutoring experiences specifically situated in Japanese language

education through semi-structured interviews based on participant observation.

From the interviews and participant observations, some prominent outcomes were identified. This section discusses how transdisciplinarity or intersectionality can impact the reproduction of power relations and the transformation of discourses. Further, I propose some implications for learning support and suggestions for further research.

Tutors and writers have internalised the hegemonic ideologies in current higher education, the dominant discourses in the field of language learning and teaching, and the disciplines favoured by their respective communities. While they may continue to reconstruct imbalanced power relations, tutors (at least in the present study) embrace contradictory dynamics between creating a better worker self through acquiring professional attributes and simultaneously becoming aware of the imperfections of nativeness. This study does not necessarily frame tutors' acquired skills and attitudes in a negative light. However, it has deployed the technology of the self by Foucault as its theoretical framework, in which the notion of internalising disciplines in the context of modernity in a critical sense was initially proposed. Nevertheless, tertiary schools have become a space for students to develop their attributes, which consciously or unconsciously encourages students to gain wide-ranging pragmatic experiences through campus life, acquire skills that could be an advantage for their future, and strategically create a better worker-self. Concurrently, the practice of tutoring second-language writing, which is transdisciplinary and cultivates learner autonomy through dialogue, can potentially transform powerful discourses in education.

The salience of 'fostering' or 'scaffolding' rather than 'teaching' or 'training' in educational institutions has regained prominence. Reflections on tutors' educational and communicative practices show that it is crucial to consider scaffolding for individuals. Furthermore, a co-learning setting in which students assume the role of educational staff in tertiary institutions could benefit both tutors and tutees. Tutors need not be teachers, and students who need support can expect to learn through dialogue with their counterparts in equal

positions, where dynamic learning can occur. It is imperative to consider that student staff can be hired at relatively low salaries, inevitably creating unequal power relations between employers and employees. Therefore, staff members have a responsibility to remind themselves continually that students are not disposable resources.

In the present study, the past tutoring of research collaborators was successfully approached because this researcher was an ‘insider’, although it was impossible to ethnographically explore their current language teaching practices. If how tutors’ experiences can be situated in their current Japanese language teaching could be explored, it would be possible to focus not only on their perceptions but also on how their experiences are reflected in practice. A limitation of this study is that it only included individuals pursuing careers as Japanese language teachers. However, KU JAWL graduates have entered various professions, with some working in higher education, though not in Japanese language education. Expanding the scope of this exploration to include them would allow for a broader investigation into how tutoring experiences are reflected in education and research.

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〔研究論文〕

## 第二言語アカデミックライティングのチューター経験が 日本語教師によってどのように意味づけされ得るか

杉原 健

### 要旨

「書く」という力は「より優れた」学生であるために必要不可欠なスキルとみなされるようになっている。グローバル化の一途を辿る今日の社会において多くの人々が第二言語でのライティングを要求される状況に鑑みて、学生をチューターとして雇用し、第二言語を用いる書き手を支援する組織が高等教育機関にて次々と設立されてきた。しかし、ライティング支援に携わった経験と既卒チューターらの教育・研究実践における認識や解釈との連関についてはほとんど知られていない。本研究の目的は、チューターらが第二言語としての日本語アカデミックライティング支援に携わった経験を、卒業後に日本語教師としてはたらく中でどのように意味づけしているかを探ることである。言語エスノグラフィーを主軸とした質的なアプローチに基づき、神戸大学「留学生のための日本語アカデミックライティングラボ」でのチューター経験を有する日本語教師4名に対して半構造化インタビューを行った。参与観察から得られたデータと照応しながら理論的枠組みとしてはフォーコーの「自己のテクノロジー」を主に参照して主題分析を行った。その結果、第一にチュータリングが第二言語を用いる書き手の学習者オートノミーを涵養するという目標のもとにチューターらによって展開されてきたことが浮かび上がった。第二にチューターにとっての第一言語が書き手にとっての第二言語であるという文脈において、チュータリング経験が言語の「ネイティブ性」に対するチューターら自身の認識に影響を与えていることが明らかになった。本稿は、高等教育が学生に実践的な経験を積ませることで特権的な価値を有するスキルを獲得し、「よりよい」労働者としての自己を戦略的に創造することを促す一方で、学際的に対話を通じて学習者オートノミーを涵養しようとする第二言語ライティングのチュータリング実践は、今日の言語教育においてネイティブスピーカイズムという言説に依拠する不均衡な権力関係を変容させる可能性を秘めていることを示唆する。