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Skilled and Unskilled Japanese EFL Student Writers' Narrative Story Production

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A study was conducted to examine the differences in narrative essays produced by skilled and unskilled EFL student writers. Twenty-six Japanese university students participated in the study. They were told to write a narrative story based on six-frame pictures. The students were classified into two groups, skilled and unskilled, according to the holistic scores assigned to their compositions. Each student's composition was analyzed at both the sentence and discourse levels. The results of analysis revealed several differences between the two groups of writers at the sentence level. Namely, compared with the unskilled writers, the skilled writers tended to produce longer essays where a larger number of adjective and adverb subordinate clauses were used and where fewer errors were found. At the discourse level, the skilled writers tended to incorporate all the components of the story grammar, whereas several unskilled writers failed to include such components as Setting and Reaction. The skilled writers also used a variety of discourse styles to delineate characters' actions and psychology, but their unskilled counterparts employed only a few discourse types for describing characters' inner states of mind. The paper concludes by suggesting the importance of developing students' knowledge of narrative writing and providing them with opportunities to translate that knowledge into actual production of narrative writing.

Keywords: narrative story production, skilled, unskilled, EFL writers

1 Introduction

In the field of L2 writing research, comparisons between skilled and unskilled L2 writers have been made using different analytical measures at both the sentence and beyond-the-sentence levels. At the sentence level, various measures were used to discriminate L2 writing abilities. The most

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widely known measure used to gauge syntactic complexity is the mean number of words per T-unit (T-unit length) proposed by Hunt (1970). A T-unit is "a main clause plus all subordinate clauses and nonclausal structures attached to or embedded in it" (Hunt, 1970, p. 4), and it was originally used to discriminate the level of compositions written by L1 writers at different grade levels. In the Japanese context, Hirano (1990) found that not only this measure but also the total number of words in error-free T-units and the percentage of error-free T-units could discriminate compositions written by Japanese university students at different EFL proficiency levels. Tomita (1990), however, claimed that error-free T-unit length was a more reliable discrimination measure for Japanese high school students.

Comprehensively reexamining different objective indices used in the past studies, Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) proposed what they called the "best measures" for three properties of writing: to measure fluency, they proposed words per T-unit, words per clause, and words per error-free T-unit; for complexity they proposed clauses per T-unit and dependent clauses per clause; and for accuracy measures they proposed error-free T-units per T-unit and errors per T-unit. However, Ishikawa (2005) asserted that these indices are unstable across different types of writing, and are likely to be affected by the complexity of writing tasks where data are collected. Thus, past studies have revealed confounding results for the sentence-level indices due to differences in the complexity of writing tasks, student writers' grade levels, and standards for determining skilled and unskilled writers.

Studies that examined the development of EFL students' writing at the discourse level were conducted by focusing on argumentative writing. For instance, Nishigaki and Leishman (2001) conducted a study which involved Japanese university EFL students. They found that by receiving one-year instruction in academic writing, the students became more skilled in using the conventions of essay organization, paragraph, transitions, and academic style and vocabulary. Kamimura and Oi (2006) undertook a study where they provided Japanese university EFL students with instruction in academic essay writing and attempted to clarify the effects of the writing instruction on the students' essay production. It was found that after the instruction, (1) the students produced essays of better quality with clearer essay organization, logical consistency and objective support and (2) they also made more use of objective, logical devices, such as logical connectors (instead of coordinators) and third-person pronouns as grammatical subjects (instead of first-person pronouns). In contrast to those longitudinal studies, Kamimura (2012) conducted a cross-sectional study where she analyzed essays written by Japanese high school and university EFL students at seven different grade levels in terms of several discoursal properties in a cross-sectional research design. She found that as the students' grades increased, i.e., as they became mature EFL writers, they were more likely to produce compositions that achieved higher holistic scores, had a three-part essay structure (i.e., an

introduction, body, and conclusion), maintained logical consistency, and employed objective, as opposed to subjective, reasoning. These studies, however, all focused on argumentative writing, and discoursal differences in the other modes of writing have not been uncovered. We still do not know what pattern can be observed in narrative writing composed by Japanese students as they develop as EFL writers.

To write effective narration, writers need to know that they are expected to produce an extended length of discourse in clear sentences which employ proper use of tense and which are organized in chronological order (e.g., Oshima & Hogue, 1997). Moreover, writers need to develop a story according to story grammar (Carrell, 1984) by setting the background for a character and an event, describing them, and interpreting them from different points of view, e.g., as observers or as participants (e.g., Blanton, 1993; Savage & Shafiei, 2007). Narration appears to be simple enough to be associated with the "knowledge-telling model," in which less planning and less revising are called for; however, for successful production of narration as is required in college writing classes, writers need to use the "knowledge-transforming" model where they attempt to reach a goal they set by reflecting on content and rhetorical knowledge and making effective use of planning and composing strategies both at the sentence and discourse levels (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). It is yet unknown whether skilled and unskilled student writers differ in these multiple skills, and if so, where they differ.

2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to investigate what differences at the sentence and discourse levels can be found between narrative compositions produced by skilled and unskilled Japanese university EFL students.

3 Procedure

3.1 Participants

Participants in the present study consisted of 26 Japanese EFL students (15 male and 11 female students). They were English majors and third-year students in a Japanese four-year university. Their EFL proficiency level was judged to be at the intermediate level with a mean TOEIC® score of 525 points.

3.2 Writing task

The students were told to write a coherent narrative story based on six-frame pictures for thirty minutes without using a dictionary (see Appendix). The

pictures were based on Hill (1960, pp. 22-23). They were told that the main character's name was Bill.

3.3 Classification of the students

Each student's composition was first holistically scored by two raters with a nine-point Likert scale, in which one was the lowest score and nine was the highest. One of the raters was a Japanese EFL instructor who received a Ph.D. in English and had twenty years of experience teaching EFL composition at a Japanese four-year university, while the other had an MA in applied linguistics and one year of EFL teaching experience at a Japanese nursing school. When any discrepancy in score occurred, the raters thoroughly discussed until they reached a full agreement.

A total of 26 students were divided into two groups according to the holistic scores given to their essays. The two groups' holistic scores differed at a statistically significant level (t (24) = 8.34, p = .001). Thirteen students whose compositions scored statistically higher were operationally labeled as skilled, while the other 15 students whose compositions were rated lower were labeled as unskilled in this study. The mean score of the skilled group was 7.38 (SD = 1.33 and R = 3) and that of the unskilled group was 3.00 (SD = 1.35 and R = 4).

3.4 Data analysis

Each student's narrative essay was analyzed both at the sentence and discourse levels. First, quantitative analyses at the sentence as well as discourse level were conducted. Then, an in-depth sample analysis of representative essays was attempted in order to clarify the differences between the skilled and unskilled writers.

3.4.1 Quantitative analysis at the sentence level

The students' essays were analyzed in terms of fluency, complexity, and accuracy at the sentence level.

3.4.1.1 Fluency

Although several measures were proposed to assess fluency, in this study, following Sato (2008) and Baba (2009), the total number of words written in each composition was counted as a measurement for fluency measure[1].

[1] Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) propose words per T-unit, words per clause, and words per error-free T-unit as measures for fluency. Latif (2012) argues that that text quantity is not a valid measure to assess writers' fluency. However, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) claim that counting the production rate is the only valid measure that can be applied to speech and writing. In the current study, therefore,

Token, instead of type, was applied to the counting of the number words. That is, when the same word appeared in several places, that word was counted whenever it appeared; thus, it was not counted as a single word.

3.4.1.2 Complexity

To examine complexity, two measures were used. One was the number of words per T-unit, which is a traditional complexity measure (Hunt, 1970). The other index was one that focused on the use of subordinate clauses, which Hinkel (2002) identified as a marker of structural complexity. In the present study, following Hinkel, the number of subordinate clauses was counted. Moreover, the numbers of noun, adjective, adverb subordinate clauses, and their respective reduced forms were tallied. Examples of reduced forms of noun, adjective, and adverb subordinate clauses are listed in Hinkel (2002, pp. 130-140). In this type of analysis, for example, it was considered that a sentence "he climbed the hill because he thought that he had to save the passengers riding on the train" had one subordinate noun clause ("that he had to save the passengers riding on the train"), one adverb clause ("because he thought that he had to save the passengers riding on the train"), and one reduced adjective clause ("riding on the train"), the full form of which would be "who were raiding on the train."

3.4.1.3 Accuracy

For an accuracy measure, the number of errors was counted and divided by the number of words for each composition. Several past studies have used the total number of words in error-free T-units to examine accuracy in students' compositions (e.g., Hirano, 1990). However, as Struc and Wood (2010) pointed out, the number of error-free T-units was not considered to be an appropriate measure to capture accuracy in the compositions produced by the students in the present study, as their English proficiency level was not high enough and we would therefore expect to find only a few, if any, error-free T-units. Thus, in this study, the number of errors divided by the total number of words was calculated for each composition. A focus was placed on the appropriate use of the past tense because the past-time frame is a key factor that characterizes narration (Hinkel, 2002). The two researchers who served as the raters of holistic scoring engaged in counting errors in the past tense.

3.4.2 Quantitative analysis at the discourse level

Two kinds of discoursal analysis of the students' compositions were conducted: story grammar and action/speech presentation.

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counting the number of words produced in each essay was used as a measurement for fluency.

3.4.2.1 Story grammar

The analysis of narrative structure was first attempted by Propp (1968). He claimed that irrespective of differences in topic, various fairy tales have a consistent structure that consists of a series of acts that can be generally grouped into "preliminaries," "development," and "denouement" (as summarized by Lenkema, 1993). Since Propp's study appeared, several researchers have proposed different models of narrative structure. Mandler and Johnson (1977), for example, presented a psycholinguistics-based model and examined its effects on L1 students' reading comprehension. More recently, from the perspective genre analysis, Hyland (2011) argued that there are three structural elements in a narrative story: orientation, complication, and resolution. Although Hyland's model is more recent, the present study draws on the model proposed by Carrell (1984) because it delineates the structure of a narrative more succinctly.

Table 1. Examples of Components of Story Grammar

Components	Example
Setting	Long ago, a man whose name was Bill lived alone. His house was made by wood near the house, and there were one railway and a big tree.
Beginning	One day, he walked along the railway and found the tree lying on the railway.
Reaction	Then Bill thought that people who were driving a train would not notice about this. If it were truth, it would be so dangerous.
Attempt	He climbed over the tunnel, and the train was just coming. He stood on the railway and shouted to let the driver notice him waving his hands.
Outcome	Fortunately, he managed to stop the train and prevented the accident and saved many lives.
Ending	Three days later, he was awarded by the President in front of thousands of people. They gave a big applause to Bill.

Carrell (1984) notes that a simple prototypical story is comprised of six basic components: Setting, Beginning, Reaction, Attempt, Outcome, and Ending. The Setting introduces the time and place where a protagonist appears. In the Beginning, the protagonist faces a certain problem. The Reaction shows what he/she thinks and how he/she feels about the problem. The Attempt shows what and how he/she does to solve the problem. The Outcome represents the result of his/her attempt. Finally, the Ending corresponds to the conclusion of the whole story. Based on Carrell's model, the students' narrative stories were segmented into those six different components, and the number of each component found in the compositions

was tallied. Examples of each component of story grammar found in the students' compositions are shown in Table 1[2].

3.4.2.2 Action/speech presentation

A story presents the characters' acts as well as their speech and thought. In the writing task used in this study, the former corresponds to what is shown, i.e., visible in the pictures, while the latter corresponds to characters' inner state of mind, i.e., what can be inferred from the pictures. Concerning the latter, it should be pointed out that there is virtually no difference between speech and thought; their difference lies only in whether characters verbally express what is on their minds or not. In this study, therefore, the term "speech" is used to cover both the characters' spoken speech and internal speech.

There are various modes of presenting a character's acts and speech, and these modes have been examined by studies in stylistics. Following Saito (2004), these modes are called "discourse styles" in this study. Leech and Short (2007) and Saito (2004), for example, present a framework that includes six different discourse styles of describing characters' physical and speech acts. Figure 1 illustrates these different discourse types and examples for each type taken from Leech and Short (2007). If we follow this framework, first, characters' physical acts can be reported as a Narrative Report of Acts (e.g., "Bill came back to the house in the evening"). Characters' speech acts can be presented in different discourse styles: Narrative Report of Speech Acts, Indirect Speech, Free Indirect Speech, Direct Speech, and Free Direct Speech. The Narrative Report of Speech Act closely reflects a narrator's voice, and is closest to a narrator's point of view. Conversely, the style that most closely reflects characters' voice is Free Direct Speech. Direct Speech consists of a reporting clause (e.g., "Bill said") and a character's words directly quoted verbatim with quotation marks ("I will save the passengers here"), whereas Indirect Speech includes a reporting clause ("Bill said") and a reported clause with modification of tense and pronouns ("that he would save the passengers there"). In Free Direct Speech, a reporting clause and quotation marks are deleted (e.g., "I will save the passengers here"), and as a result readers feel that "characters apparently [spoke to them] more immediately without the narrator as intermediary" (Leach & Short, 2007, p. 258). In Free Indirect Speech, an introductory reporting clause is deleted, but a reported clause is maintained ("he would save the passengers there"), which creates a mixture of the narrator and a character's voice. This is often used when writers try to shift their focus from an objective description of a character's acts to a psychological description of the character's inner state of minds.

[2] When parts of the students' composition are shown as examples in this study, all grammatical and spelling errors found in the compositions are left intact.

Presentation	Voice	Stylistic modes	Examples
Presentation of character's physical acts	Narrator's voice	Narrative report of acts	He came to see her.
Presentation of characters' psychology (speech acts/thought)	↑	Narrative report of speech acts	He promised his return.
		Indirect speech	He said that he would return there to see her the following day.
		Free indirect speech	He would return there to see her again the following day.
		Direct speech	He said, 'I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow.'
	↓ Characters' voice	Free direct speech	I'll come back here to see you tomorrow.

Figure 1. Framework of discourse styles [Based on Saito (2004), Leech & Short (2007)]

Umeda (2003) analyzed her students' compositions in Japanese and English by drawing on these different styles, and found that the use of different styles made their stories more interesting. In the present study, based on this classification, T-units in the students' compositions were first divided into two groups depending on whether they portrayed characters' physical acts or psychology. The T-units in the latter group were further categorized into either Narrative Report of Speech Acts, Indirect Speech, Free Indirect Speech, Direct Speech, or Free Direct Speech. The number of T-units that fell in each category was counted.

3.4.3 Statistical analysis

In order to examine the differences between skilled and unskilled student writers' compositions at the sentence level, *t*-tests were administered to the following data: the total number of words, the average number of words per T-unit, the total numbers of subordinate clauses, and the number of errors divided by the total number of words. A two-way ANOVA was employed for the number of three different kinds of subordinate clauses.

Concerning the discourse level, a chi-square test was used for the data derived from the story grammar analysis. Two ANOVAs were administered

to examine whether there were any differences in discourse style between the two groups. A two-way ANOVA was employed for the number of styles that were used to portray the character's physical acts and psychological states, respectively. In addition, another two-way ANOVA was used to examine differences between the two groups in the use of the five different styles for presenting characters' psychology (i.e., Narrative Report of Speech Acts, Indirect Speech, Free Indirect Speech, Direct Speech, and Free Direct Speech). When the ANOVA revealed a statistical difference, *t*-tests were used to examine where the differences were observed. In addition, to avoid Type II errors, the probability level was adjusted when *t*-tests were used repeatedly for the same set of data.

3.5 Sample analysis

Representative sample essays were chosen and closely analyzed in order to elucidate where and what differences were found between the two groups of student writers and to substantiate the findings derived from the quantitative analysis.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of the analysis at the sentence level

First, results of the analysis at the sentence level will be explained. Table 2 summarizes the result of sentence-level analysis.

4.1.1 Fluency

The mean number of total words for the skilled group was 143.92 words (*SD* = 34.10 and *R* = 133), whereas that of the unskilled writers was 103.31(*SD* = 37.05, *R* = 99). The result of a *t*-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of words between the skilled and unskilled groups of writers (t (24) = 2.91, p = .008). This means that the skilled student writers were more fluent in writing narrative stories.

4.1.2 Complexity

Table 2 shows results of analysis at the sentence level. It was found that there was no difference between the skilled and unskilled writers in the number of words per T-unit (t (24) = -.16, p = .48). However, when the two groups were compared by the number of subordinate clauses, a significant difference was observed (t (24) = 4.87, p = .000). It seems that the number of subordinate clauses, rather than T-unit length, may be a more sensitive complexity measure for Japanese EFL students at the intermediate level.

Table 2. Results of Analysis at the Sentence Level

	Mean		Standard deviation		Range	
Measures	Skilled	Unskilled	Skilled	Unskilled	Skilled	Unskilled
Number of words	143.92	103.31	34.10	37.05	133	99
Number of words per T-unit	7.78	7.85	1.22	1.23	4.64	3.58
Number of subordinate clauses	5.46	2.38	2.43	1.55	8	5
Number of noun clauses	1.92	1.31	1	1	4	3
Number of adjective clauses	1.85	.54	2	1	5	2
Number of adverb clauses	1.92	.85	1.19	.80	4	2
Number of errors/words	.39	.67	.02	.04	.06	.09

The result of the ANOVA showed no significant difference in the three types of subordinate clauses (F (2, 48) = .94 , p = .406), but a significant difference between the two groups (F (1, 24) = 14.11, p = .001). When t-tests were administered to examine the differences between the two groups in their use of the three types of subordinate clauses, they differed significantly in the number of adjective (t (24) = 2.76, p = .016) and adverb clauses (t (24) = 2.71, p = .012)[3]. As Hinkel (2002) states, skilled writers make more use of subordinate clauses, especially adjective and adverb clauses, which enable them to produce the more detailed and vivid descriptions that are essential for successful narrative writing.

4.1.3 Accuracy

A significant difference was detected between the skilled and unskilled writers in terms of accuracy (t (24) = -2.514, p = .019). This suggests that skilled writers tend to write more error-free compositions than unskilled writers. A close examination of the students' essays revealed that errors in tense agreement were most frequently found in the compositions of the unskilled groups; particularly, a large number of the unskilled writers used

[3] To avoid Type II errors in this analysis, the probability level for each t-test was set at .017, which was derived by .05 (the usual probability level) divided by three (the number of types of subordinate clauses).

present tense at the beginning, when the story's setting is introduced, and then suddenly shifted from present to past tense, as the following example shows:

> In some town, Bill lives alone in his small house. His house is by the train road. There is also a tree by the railroad. One day Bill came back to his house after fishing. He put some fish in his house and went out. (Subject 4)

4.2 Results of quantitative analysis at the discourse level

The following section shows the results of quantitative analysis at the discourse level.

4.2.1 Story grammar

Table 3 shows the number of students who included each of the six components of the story grammar in their essays. Almost all the students in both the skilled and unskilled groups incorporated such components as Beginning, Attempt, Outcome, and Ending into their stories. In contrast, only half of the unskilled writers included Reaction (53.85%) and Setting (53.85%) ($\chi^2(1) = 4.887$, $p = .027$). The unskilled writers tended to abruptly begin a story without specifying when or where the story took place, and they tended to merely describe the pictures without paying much attention to what the characters were supposed to say and think. Namely, those writers lacked a clear schema of the narrative story that should be produced according to story grammar.

Table 3. The Number of Students Who Included Each Component of Story Grammar

Groups	Components					
	Setting	Beginning	Reaction	Attempt	Outcome	Ending
Skilled	12	13	13	13	13	13
(n = 13)	(92.31%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)
Unskilled	7	13	7	12	13	13
(n = 13)	(53.85%)	(100%)	(53.85%)	(92.31%)	(100%)	(100%)

4.2.2 Action and speech/thought presentation

Table 4 illustrates the results of the analysis concerning the action/speech presentation in the students' essays.

Table 4. Number of Various Discourse Types Observed in the Skilled and Unskilled Writers' Essays

	Discourse types	Skilled	(*n*= 13)	Unskilled	(*n*= 13)
			(*M*)		(*M*)
(1)	Narrative reports of acts	149	(11.46)	110	(6.88)
(2)	Narrative reports of speech acts	56	(4.31)	38	(2.92)
(3)	Indirect speech	14	(1.08)	9	(.69)
(4)	Free indirect speech	3	(.23)	0	(0)
(5)	Direct speech	22	(1.69)	17	(1.31)
(6)	Free indirect speech	2	(.05)	0	(0)
(7) [(2)~(6)]	Total of modes related to characters' psychology	97	(7.46)	63	(4.85)

An ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference between the two discourse types that depicted characters' actions ((1) in Table 4) and psychology ((7) in Table 4) (F (1, 24) = 30.35, p = .000), and between the two groups of writers (F (1, 24) = 6.61, p = .017). It was found that both groups illustrated characters' actions significantly more in detail than they portrayed their inner states. When the two groups were compared, the skilled writers used a greater number of Narrative Reports of Acts (1) (t (24) = 2.73, p = .012). As for the modes for presenting the characters' thoughts (7), no significant difference was observed between the two groups (t (24) = 2.07, p = .05)[4].

However, as Table 5 shows, the skilled writers used a variety of discourse styles in illustrating the characters' thoughts; on the other hand, their unskilled counterparts employed neither Free Indirect Speech nor Free Direct Speech. It can be said that the skilled writers were more able to produce a richer story with more detailed descriptions of characters' physical acts as well as their thoughts and feelings.

4.3 Sample analysis

In this section, in-depth analysis of representative sample compositions produced by skilled and unskilled student writers respectively will be attempted.

[4] For this analysis, the probability level for each t-test was set at .025, by dividing 0.5 by 2, which corresponded to the two types of discourse style for physical action and speech/thought.

4.3.1 Sample 1

Sample 1 is a composition written by Subject 19, who was classified as an unskilled writer.

Sample 1 (Subject 19)
Beginning[Bill went home and *bring* some fishes. There *are* big tree and tunnel near his house. Suddenly the big tree *failed* down on the rale. He heard train's sounds.] Attempt[Then he climbed the mountain and tried to stop the train.] Outcome[He told about the tree to train's driver and all people were safe. Bill did a great job.] Ending[After the accident, train's driver prized Bill. He *is* celebrated by a lot of audience.] (78 words, holistic score: 1)

The holistic score given to Sample 1 was one point. The composition is only 78 words long, and there are several errors in the use of past tense (e.g., as is shown by italicized parts). No subordinate clause is used, but a coordinating conjunction "and" is frequently used, which makes the composition less syntactically complex. At the discourse level, the essay presents neither Setting nor Reaction; the readers cannot understand when or where the protagonist Bill lived, or why he climbed the hill. There is only one instance of a speech/thought presentation: one Narrative Report of Speech Act ("he told about the tree to train's driver") can be observed. Thus, Subject 19 pays attention to what is shown in the picture, however, she fails to incorporate elements that are not shown (i.e., the characters' speech and thought), which are nevertheless indispensable in creating a coherent story according to the story grammar.

4.3.2 Sample 2

Sample 2 is an essay produced by Subject 7, who belonged to the skilled group. Sample 2 was given nine points by holistic scoring, and it is approximately three times as long as Sample 1. Several instances of errors in tense are found, as can be seen in italicized words. However, unlike Subject 19, Subject 7 uses a variety of subordinate clauses, as is shown by the underlined parts: one subordinate noun clause ("that the man suddenly appeared in from of the train and stopped it"), one subordinate adjective clause ("who were on the train") and one reduced form of this construction ("to help people"), two subordinate adverb clauses ("if the train had bumped this tree," and "as soon as he found the train coming") and one reduced form of a subordinate adverb clause ("after fishing").

Sample 2 (Subject 7)
Setting[A man *lives* near the tunnel. This man *is* Bill. Bill lives by himself. His house *is* by the train's tunnel and rail. He likes seeing train running.]
Beginning[One day, Bill went back to his home after fishing, and he found a tree falling down. The tree fell down over the rail.] Reaction[He was very

surprised to find it and then he was about to help someone put the tree away. At the same moment, a certain idea made him scared. If the train had bumped this tree, many people would have been injured or dead. Bill was scared and thought, "The only person to help people is me!"] Attempt[He was running over the train's tunnel and waited for the train coming.

The train was coming. As soon as he found the train coming, he stood in the middle of the rail and stopped it.] Outcome[People who were on the train were surprised that the man suddenly appeared in front of the train and stopped it. Bill informed them of the tree falling over the rail. Bill was very relieved and every people were grateful to him.]

Ending[A few days later, Bill was prized for helping many people. He was surrounded by many people. He usually *lives* alone, so he was a little embarrassed. However, he *looks* happy. This made Bill famous and changed his life.] (226 words, holistic score: 9)

At the discourse level, Sample 2 includes all the components of the story grammar, which suggests that Subject 7 has an appropriate schema of the narrative genre. What is most notable about this sample is that Subject 7 uses a variety of discourse styles to describe the characters' speech and thoughts (as is shown by the gray parts in Sample 2). He writes the following long Reaction part that consisted of five T-units:

> (1)He was very surprised to find it (2)and then he was about to help someone put the tree away. (3)At the same moment, a certain idea made him scared. (4)If the train had bumped this tree, many people would have been injured or dead. (5)Bill thought, "The only person to help people is me!"

In the first three T-units (1 ~ 3), Subject 7 uses objective Narrative Reports of Speech Acts. In particular, because the T-unit (3) uses an inanimate subject, the narrator's objective point of view is stressed. In the T-unit (4), he uses Indirect Free Speech, where the narrator's and protagonist's voices are intermingled. In the next T-unit (5), he then employs Direct Speech, through which he makes the protagonist express his thoughts directly to the reader. Is this way, Subject 7 attempts to describe the protagonist's psychology by using various discourse styles. This use of different discourse styles attracts readers' attention and makes it possible for them to empathize with the protagonist.

5 Conclusion

This study attempted to explore the differences in narrative writing produced by skilled and unskilled Japanese university EFL student writers. The analysis was conducted both at the sentence and discourse levels. The results

of the analysis revealed that the skilled Japanese university EFL students' narrative writing was characterized by fluency, complexity, and accuracy at the sentence level. Namely, they tended to produce longer essays where more adjective and adverb subordinate clauses and fewer errors were found. At the discourse level, the skilled writers were likely to incorporate every component of the story grammar and to use a variety of discourse styles for delineating characters' action, speech, and thought.

These results suggest several implications for EFL writing. Among the four discourse modes (i.e., narration, description, exposition, and argumentation), narration is considered to be the easiest mode of writing for a writer to produce (Kamimura, 2007) and often considered to be associated with the less sophisticated "knowledge-telling model," as opposed to the more complicated "knowledge-transforming model" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). On the contrary, to write a successful narrative story is not an easy task. A writer is required to possess appropriate knowledge about the narrative genre, including its organizational, syntactic and grammatical features (Hyland, 2011). Thus, when teaching narrative writing to students, it is important to help the students develop this genre knowledge. Specially, instructors need to teach their students that a coherent narrative is structured according to (1) the story grammar (Carrell, 1984) and uses (2) various discourse styles to describe characters' physical as well psychological movements (Blanton, 1993; Savage & Shafiei, 2007). Moreover, the purpose of a narrative is to communicate to readers when, where, and what happened to characters clearly; therefore, the instructors need to teach their students that in narrative writing, (3) the past tense is usually employed (Oshima & Hogue, 1997) and also both (4) subordinate adverb clauses that show time sequences and (5) adjective subordinate clauses that create clear descriptions of characters are frequently used as well. Instructors also need to encourage their students to plan and revise in their composing processes by translating this genre knowledge into actual production of narration.

The results of the present study call for further research. First, the number of participants was small, and only intermediate EFL students participated in the study. Moreover, the participants were classified into "skilled" and "unskilled" writers according to the holistic scores given to their essays; that is, the classification was made within the limited sample population in the study. Therefore, there might be a possibility that "skilled" writers in the current study would not be "skilled" if they were placed in different sample population. Therefore, studies which involve a larger number of students at a different proficiency levels need to be conducted to conform the present results. Second, interviews could be used to investigate students' past writing and reading experiences. The unskilled writers in this study tended to lack a schema of narrative writing. It is assumed that they could have acquired such a schema if they had read various stories in their childhood. If so, the interviews could clarify the importance of the

relationship between reading and writing for the successful production of narrative writing. Lastly, it might be necessary to examine whether developing students' genre knowledge, as explained above, really has a positive effect on their production of effective narrative essays. More studies are definitely needed to conduct a more detailed investigation of the differences between skilled and unskilled writers in narrative writing, and to devise effective teaching methods that will lead students to write successful narrative essays.

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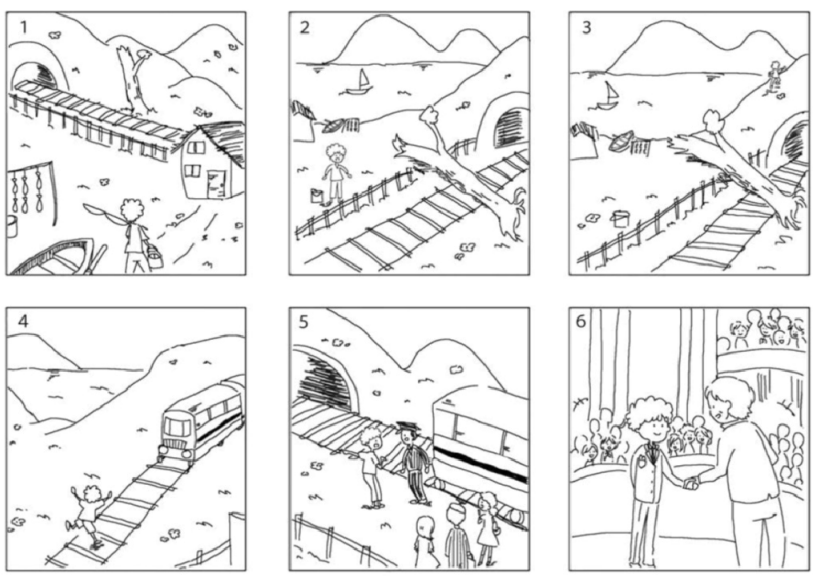
Appendix
Pictures Used in the Writing Prompt



Based on Hill (1960, pp. 22-23)

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