

## Intercultural Rhetoric and Local Research in the EFL Writing Classroom

Mark Frank

*Abstract:* Writing about local culture in English requires two distinct skill sets: first, an experiential knowledge of place, and second, the linguistic ability to convey this knowledge in English. This paper proposes strategies for acquiring the second skill set in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing classroom. Specifically, the potential of applying principles of intercultural rhetoric in the creation of English materials that have multicultural appeal is explored in an pedagogical context informed by Freire's idea of banking education and Saeki's learning donuts model of communication.

*Keywords:* local cultural studies, intercultural rhetoric, EFL writing, problem posing education

This paper is the first in a series considering the idea of student writing about Toyama, Japan in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Writing about a local first language (L1) community in a second language (L2) with the audience being non-Japanese speakers poses a number of significant challenges. First, although students may be from Toyama or nearby prefectures, they may not be able to write about Toyama effectively, either in Japanese or in English. Next, the pedagogical approach of the class must be considered; local research tends to be open-ended and does not lend itself well to a "transfer of knowledge" (or "banking") model of education (Freire, 1970). Rather, students and teachers must be equally engaged in exploring and developing questions that can lead to meaningful research (Sobel, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Finally, students need to consider the rhetorical expectations of their target audience when writing English materials (Connor, 2011;

Miyake, 2007). The goal of this first paper is to establish broad pedagogical and philosophical guidelines for the creation of a successful local writing classes in English.

When starting the project of “writing Toyama” in English, one of the first challenges is determining exactly *what* to write about. Once the initial tropes of “famous places” is worked through, a seemingly inexhaustible library of possible topics opens up. Generating topics is one of the crucial elements of Paulo Freire’s problem posing education (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). Students told to simply “find a local topic” will be at a loss, likely turning to one of the easy scripts of locality. Moreover, in rural Toyama prefecture, the major sightseeing spots promoted by city offices and chambers of commerce are relatively limited, although even these seemingly overly familiar spots can be made fresh again through the process of (re)writing them in English.

Beyond the most familiar points, the question arises of how to guide students in their research, and in this case, it is useful for the teacher to provide some initial input. In the Shibata Project, Frank (2005) worked with local city officials and tourism officials to set up preliminary lists of interview destinations based on approachability and locale. The city was divided into broad regions and students worked to identify the food cultures (both traditional and contemporary) in each area.

It is important in such a project to make no strict delineation between so-called

“traditional” culture and “contemporary” culture. The Shibata Project assumed the broad definition that culture is defined as the activities and practices of a people in a specific place and time. Such a project also benefits from examining both syncretic and diachronic cultures, both changing through time and captured at one particular moment.

Thus, the first step for students in becoming cultural researchers in English as a second language (ESL) is identifying the needs and problems of the local community which can be addressed in English. Next, each problem must be evaluated as a potential topic in a multi-step process. First, what needs to be said about Toyama in English? What are the local needs and whose needs are they? Second, of these needs, which can be best explored and expressed by university students? How can students’ unique viewpoints and experiences be best utilized? After a list of topics is generated, students and teachers can consider how each topic should be researched. Students begin by creating a database of existing materials and references, both in Japanese and English. After this, plans for primary original research done through interviews and visits can be made. In this compilation process, existing material must be evaluated in the context of intercultural communication, particularly on a scale of low and high context culture.

For example, as representative of a high context culture, Japanese tourist materials are often written in a language that presumes a shared cultural, ethical, and historical understanding (and acceptance) on the part of the reader. This can be

a challenge for Japanese, and of course even more so for non-Japanese. There are naturally missing pieces that a person outside the target culture cannot be expected to possess. In this sense, English materials that are translated directly from Japanese will be lacking, even though grammatically correct. For example, Japanese tourists would be expected to have a deeper experience with shrines and temples than the typical foreign tourist might. Thus, explaining a Shinto shrine to an adult Japanese tourist is a quite different task from explaining the same shrine to a New Zealander who is in Japan for the first time. Facing a lack of shared cultural understanding, explaining from the start is necessary, and this is a challenge for Japanese students. The problem with the direct translation of existing material, it ignores the needs and experiences of both students and English speaking audience. One way to address this challenge is to hold high context/low context culture awareness workshops and exercises as part of the local writing class (Meyer, 2014).

Thus, it is critical to evaluate writings (both extant and student-generated) not only on grammatical correctness but on cultural effectiveness. “Cultural effectiveness” can partially be evaluated by using research and techniques from the field of contrastive (intercultural) rhetoric (Connor, 1996; Connor, 2011). Herein lies the double challenge of local research in English for native Japanese speaking students: overcoming both linguistic as well as cultural obstacles. Writing about the appeal of Toyama in English in any meaningful way requires making Toyama the students’ own place. Even students who were born here may not have a strong

connection to the place or a knowledge of its features and culture; writing effectively about a place involves spending meaningful time there. If students plunge into the project unprepared, they will end up simply translating available Japanese notes into English. An ideal blend of information gathering in local cultural research might start with available materials and reworking into English.

Transforming a place into a compelling, cross-cultural narrative requires not only data analysis and deep cultural research but perhaps above all empathy: an understanding or an attempt at understanding the English-speaking audience who will be the ultimate audience of the narrative. The love of a place is based on this fluid combination of experience, research, and empathy. In *Life is a Miracle*, Wendell Berry writes of turning a place into a narrative, and conversely, the possibility of losing that place (Berry, 2000, p. 45). Similarly, poet Gary Snyder writes about knowledge without feeling and experience in his essay “Language Goes Two Ways:”

To see a wren in a bush, call it a ‘wren,’ and go on walking is to have (self-importantly) seen nothing. To see a bird and stop, watch, feel, forget yourself for a moment, be in the bushy shadows, maybe then feel ‘wren’—that is to have joined in a larger moment with the world (Snyder, 1995, p. 179)

Empathetic writing based on intercultural rhetorical awareness is one technique for joining into this “larger moment with the world.” Both Berry’s and Snyder’s views would suggest that writing about a place, writing about Toyama, would require a three pillar approach to curriculum:

(1) Solid and in-depth research on existing materials, both in Japanese and English.

(2) Experience in the field, talking to people and making human connection.

(3) Linguistic training and language education, featuring but naturally not limited to contrastive rhetoric.

Of these, pillar two would require talking not just to local people but also to foreign visitors and residents, ideally, in the same setting and at the same time. Through this active and ongoing exchange of ideas, needs, and experiences, students may be able to gain a sense of not only what to write but who to write for.

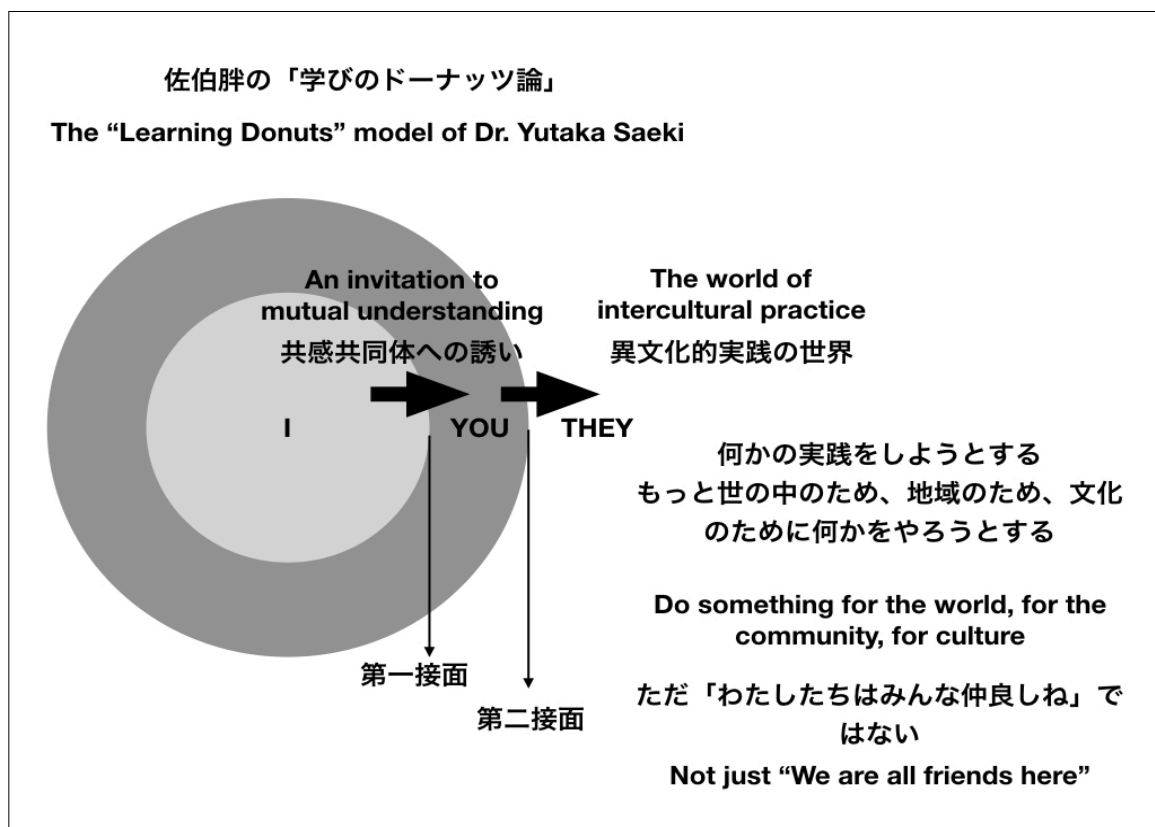
These three pillars are not distinct steps but rather series of processes which overlap and complement each other. For example, all three pillars require an understanding of and interaction with “audience.” Peter Elbow (2000) defines audience and expectations graphically in his essay “A Map of Writing in Terms of Audience and Response.” Elbow maintains that as writing becomes an interaction with an audience, students’ involvement in their writing becomes sharpened: they are not only writing “for” an audience, but determining “how” each audience will use and respond to that writing (Elbow, 2000; Elbow, 1998). Moreover, local writing in English carries the potential to raise writing to its highest level, that is, as a medium for helping people, as a tool for what sociologist Yutaka Saeki calls “cultural collaboration with others,” (Saeki, 1995), moving beyond his second and highest ring of intercultural communication. The endeavor of writing a local area is

to involve students outside the classroom, forming meaningful contacts with local people while arranging the time to communicate meaningfully and deeply: not just one interview or one short experience together, but the development and nurturing of a true relationship.

Saeki (1996) has proposed a “learning donuts” model of communication (Figure 1) which can be applied productively to intercultural communication studies. His model represents communication as two rings, one placed inside the other. The inner ring contains two agents, **I** and **YOU**. **I** represents the self who reaches out to the other, **YOU**, in an initial attempt at communication. This

**Figure 1**

*The Learning Donuts model of Yutaka Saeki*



attempted interpersonal communication, if successful and sustained, will result in the designation **WE**, a communicative community. Inside this group, others may easily join, particularly those in the same social or geographic group. For example, in the classroom, students who do not know each other at first begin to make communicative connections, two by two, four by four, until the entire class is connected in a communicative framework. When a strong **WE** group has been formed, interactive and productive group activity becomes possible: group work, pair work, presentation, the kinds of activities that are common in secondary and tertiary language classrooms.

Traditional models of communicative competence often end here (Shor, 1992; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998), but in Saeki's model this is simply the first step. The second step, which moves **WE** to the outer ring of the donut model, is the point where **WE** reaches out to **THEY**, namely, when a group of peers work together to reach outside their comfortable communicative zones to engage with those on the outside. The target **THEY** may refer to people outside the university, community people, people of other generations or socioeconomic groups within the same local community. Of course, **THEY** can also include people from other countries or cultures. In this sense, the learning donuts model can be applied effectively and simultaneously to both local communication and intercultural/multicultural communication.

For Saeki, the final goal of successful communication is the use the potential



communicative power of the group to work beyond itself. At the point when **THEY** is contacted, it is possible for students to consider exactly what kind of cultural activity is possible, how can they help other, how can they work together, how can they expand they secure **WE** into areas previously unconsidered. Students realize that their English can be used to actually *do* something. This process continues as the student progresses beyond the classroom toward becoming an adult member of society (*shakai-jin*), and thus is also indispensable in employment searches and future pursuits after leaving university. The learning donuts model poses the critical question of what can be done with English in the local community, particularly for students who wish to find employment using English and intercultural communication skills in Toyama prefecture or the surrounding area.

Saeki-based community connections can be fostered with such activities as producing a local newsletter or sponsoring events and forums where local-based topics are introduced and discussed. These opportunities for direct exchange are crucial in supplying student writing with a greater sense of informed necessity, even urgency. School festivals can also be excellent opportunities for initial local contact as well as small discussion groups and presentation events. Building such long-lasting relations between the local community and the university will be mutually beneficial and open-ended, leading to positive results that will transcend the initial project of writing Toyama in English.

One strategy of moving beyond the classroom and into the community is in

the application of intercultural rhetorical models. Intercultural rhetoric is a field of research that compares texts from two different language backgrounds to discover the similarities and differences in their rhetorical structures (Connor, 2011).

Intercultural rhetoric started as a field of study when it was observed that international students studying in the US were writing in ways that were different from the expectations of their supervisors. To find out why these students' writing was different, Kaplan (1966) compared the compositions of international students with those written by native English speaking students. He concluded that the international students developed their paragraphs in ways that reflected their first language (L1) cultural thought patterns. Based on this conclusion, Kaplan coined the term *Contrastive Rhetoric* to refer to the comparison of texts constructed from different cultural backgrounds and this became an area of study in English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) writing pedagogy.

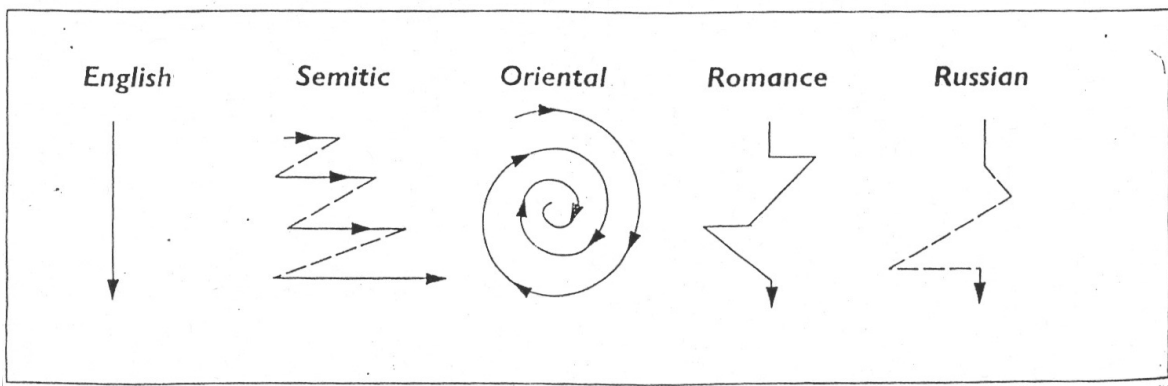
Contrastive rhetoric (CR) has been broadly defined as “the view that the rhetorical features of L2 texts may reflect different writing conventions learned in the L1 culture, and the cross-cultural study of these differences” (Hyland, 2006, p. 312). Although primarily focusing on expository writing, CR has expanded since its inception in the 1960s and today represents an extremely complex field combining, among others, issues of writing, culture, and learning/teaching a second language (Atkinson, 2004). As such, it is ideally suited as an approach to the production of locally-based L2 texts: in writing about Toyama, working with CR will aid students

in reaching out to international readers and foster dynamic and reciprocal linguistic encounters.

In originally defining contrastive rhetoric, Kaplan (1966) first argued that logic, which dictates rhetorical organization, is a cultural phenomenon and an expression of world view. Kaplan suggested that students' work fell into certain cultural groups that shared a similar rhetorical style (Figure 2):

**Figure 2**

*Kaplan's models of contrastive rhetoric*



*Semitic language cultures*: Based on a series of complex parallel constructions, both positive and negative.

*Oriental language cultures*: Circling around the subject and showing it from a "variety of tangential views."

*Romance language cultures*: Much more room for digressions.

The English expository paragraph was described as linear, usually beginning with a topic statement followed by evidence to develop it and relate it to other ideas

(inductive reasoning).

Kaplan (1966, p. 13) indicates that “the thought patterns which speakers and readers of English appear to expect as an integral part of their communication is a sentence that is dominantly linear in its development,” further stating that the paragraph patterns of other languages need to be “discovered or uncovered and compared with the patterns of English in order to arrive at a practical means for the teaching of such structures to non-native users of the language” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 21). For the practical means of teaching English rhetorical patterns, Kaplan points out that “certain practical pedagogical devices have been developed to expedite the teaching of rhetorical structures to non-native speakers of English” (p. 22).

The term *Intercultural Rhetoric* (IR) was later proposed by Connor (2008) to replace *Contrastive Rhetoric* with the explanation that what exists among rhetorical styles across cultures are similarities and differences and “no rhetorical tradition is pure but that everything exists between cultures” (Connor, 2008, p. 28). So, the field of IR started as a result of the writing needs of students studying in the US: the need to acquire the discourse conventions of English academic writing and the need to write term papers, dissertations and theses that conformed to the academic requirements of North American universities. Most studies in IR research compared ESL/EFL writings with native English pieces of writing to find out how ESL/EFL writings differed from native English writing. The aim of the comparison is to understand the differences and to explain why the differences arise in order to

devise pedagogical strategies to help learners to acquire English rhetorical norms. Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) has become one of the necessary linguistic abilities in the 21st century. Meanwhile, the development of ICC has already become teaching concept with connections to all aspects of language teaching activities. (Panetta, 2001; Miyake, 2007; Yamanashi, 2019)

Of course, such a broad term as expository writing, the subject genre of most IR, is likely to encompass many different discourse communities, each with its own preferred rhetorical styles and expectations, and often operating in more than one genre. This division is particularly the case among different academic subjects and between the same subject across different cultures. Swales (1990) particularly rejected the idea put forward by educators such as Widdowson (1979) that academic disciplines have universal rhetorical tendencies transcending national/cultural, and therefore, linguistic boundaries. This “Universalist” argument fails to take into account differences among cultures which develop from “peculiarities of study modes, teaching styles and general educational expectations within particular institutions” (Swales, 1990, p. 65). Moreover, rhetoric is not isolated to expository writing, nor is expository writing the only type which EAP students, or students learning English for other purposes, will create. Local cultural writing in English gives students a chance to compare rhetorical styles and audience expectation across cultures.

The applicability of contrastive rhetoric to teaching has also been addressed in a

Japanese context. Yoshimura found that students explicitly taught the “organizational patterns, coherence structures, and argumentative patterns” outperformed other students in argumentative essay writing (Connor, 2003, p. 231). Despite criticisms against focusing on form (for example, by process writing proponents), Yoshimura claims the successful outcome was partly related to Japanese students needing to be comfortable with a form of writing. Again, this suggests a strong need for models before engaging in local-based L2 writing.

Hinds (1990) has been prolific in the area of Japanese-English IR and put forward the *ki-shu-ten-ketsu* pattern of Japanese composition:

*ki* - Begin one’s argument.

*shu* - Develop further.

*ten* - Turn the idea to a sub-theme where there is a connection, but not a directly connected association.

*ketsu* - Bring all of this together and reach a conclusion.

The most notable element of this pattern from the perspective of English composition is *ten*; in the *ten* section, information that is not directly relevant is introduced with minimal syntactical marking. Hinds (1983) suggests that if transferred, this could cause problems for English readers who do not expect digressions and superfluous material to be suddenly introduced. The *ketsu* (conclusion) section may also be problematic as the definitions of *ketsu* and “conclusion” (in English rhetorical practice) differ. *Ketsu* “need not be decisive. All it

needs to do is indicate a doubt or ask a question” (Hinds, 1987, p. 80). Such a conclusion would likely be deemed insufficient by native-speaking English readers expecting something more concrete.

The overall style of Japanese writing has been characterized as reader-responsible (Hinds, 1987). Overly explicit prose is not valued in Japanese writing and readers are expected to ‘think for themselves’ (Hinds, 1990). This pattern has been termed the ‘quasi-inductive’. The quasi-inductive style differs from the inductive and deductive styles ordinarily favored by Anglo-American writers and readers, not only in the responsibility it places on the reader, but that the thesis statement is often hidden within the passage rather than being easily identified at the beginning or end. When asked to score English translations of Japanese writing, English-speaking readers scored the quasi-inductive style consistently lower than Japanese readers, indicating a preference for rhetorical patterns of their own language (Hinds, 1987). Miyake’s research supports the findings of Hinds that Japanese and English utilize different rhetorical patterns and suggests a tendency among Japanese students to use L1 language patterns and general statement types even when using L2 (Miyake, 2007).

The pedagogical recommendations of IR researchers have been criticized by Kubota and Lehner (2004), who argue that this pedagogical practice has “reinforced an image of the superiority of English rhetoric” (p. 9). They maintain that the “tendency to define the expectations of ‘native speaker or reader’ as the rhetorical

norm reflects a prescriptive orientation that overlooks plurality within language groups” (p.10). They further maintain that there should be plurality of norms in teaching ESL/EFL learners writing. From their point of view, English rhetorical norms should not be the pedagogical model for ESL/EFL writing instruction.

Another criticism of IR pedagogical recommendations is that explicit teaching of the rhetorical structures of English is similar to back-to-basics movement or traditional pedagogy. According to Kubota and Lehner, “this approach views literacy as consisting of merely basic writing and decoding skills that can be taught in a hierarchical manner from simple to complex” (Kubota & Lehner, 2004, p. 13).

Further, the pedagogical recommendations of IR have been criticized as perpetuating acculturation and assimilation of English rhetorical norms. The raising of awareness of cultural differences in rhetorical structures promotes “acculturating students through language exercises with concrete models that meet audience expectations” (Kubota and Lehner, 2004, p.13). Kubota and Lehner also assert that the IR pedagogical approach has a transmission and assimilationist orientation which aims at acculturating students into the discourse conventions of English so that the students will become faithful members of the English community which has a set of linguistic and rhetorical conventions. However, when viewed again from the perspective of intercultural communication, the creation of local English materials is less assimilationist and more associative and inclusive. As the idea of “place” stands between writer and reader in a rhetorical triangulation, students find modes of self-



expression while growing more aware of the needs of their non-Japanese readers. Successful students in this process will gain new rhetorical skills in both Japanese and English discourse styles.

Rhetoric is not isolated to expository writing, nor is expository writing the only type which ESL students will create. Using an intercultural rhetorical approach, differences in genre and generic expectations can be explored and compared. In this approach to local writing, different rhetorical preferences and traditions are celebrated rather than critically compared to find which one is “better.” Local writing should be seen as a means of increasing and fostering intercultural communicative competence as well as L2 linguistic fluency. In course design, communicative and rhetorical models for local English are needed.

In junior high and high school English education in Japan, English can be viewed as a series of mathematical formulae to master in order to pass exams rather than a means of international communication. From the start, English ceases to be a language and is transformed into a textual topic, a tool for disentangling problems not directly connected with communication (the mutual transfer or exchange of original information). This is a representative example of what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls “banking education,” where information is “deposited” in students and extracted, essentially unchanged, at test time (Freire, 1990; Sobel, 2004).

In a large sense, the subject taken at secondary schools known as “English” and language education necessary for university work are completely different. This

indicates perhaps the biggest disjunct between high school and university English education, and poses one of the greatest challenges for EFL teachers. Students are not prepared for the tasks given to them at university because the English they have studied until that time is not what their university instructors expect of them (Takamasa, 2019). Not only are there the initial and readily apparent obstacles of classroom communication and the creation of a nominally “English only” environment, but there is a deeper problem concerning the goals of study. The exam-based goals students have possessed until the point when they enter first year university English classes is largely unrelated to the kind of independent, motivated communicative study that will be expected of them. Starting local-based English study at this point is problematic: Students have little idea of how English can help them, let alone benefit the local community. The very idea of English as a tool for not only international communication but social change is nearly non-existent, even more foreign than the language of English itself.

For university students embarking on this kind of local education, a nascent lack of confidence in using English is frequently combined with a lack of experience and interest to speak about the local community. Unfortunately, both are downplayed in secondary ESL education in Japan. In contrast, the key of local research in English is that is not a fully immersive experience in L2, so linguistically and psychologically it can be less stressful than a traditional study abroad experience, which requires full immersion from the start. In this way, the shortcomings of a student’s English

experience can be turned into a benefit.

Local writing, the idea of “Toyama” in English, must also be cast in light of students’ experiences, with a vocabulary and a viewpoint that the students themselves bring. Accordingly, the role of the teacher in such a project is to match the students’ levels with what is possible and what is needed. Students’ lack of knowledge about their hometown in their L1 may actually be useful because there is less interference: New knowledge, the language of investigation, begins in English.

The transmission of cultural information (language) to learners, who in turn transmit cultural information (locality) in their L2 is a kind of complex, multi-directional exchange. For example, when acting as tour guides for foreign visitors to Toyama or giving assistance to residents whose Japanese language skill is insufficient, students can receive direct, immediate communicative feedback confirming whether their English was sufficient or not. This is education which occurs primarily beyond the classroom, beyond the mediating force of the teacher. No matter how dynamic a classroom environment the teachers provides—in fact, at exactly the point where it becomes more engaged and more dynamic—the focus falls with increasing weight on the teacher herself, where students are motivated to do a good job prompted by the emotional appeal of a single teacher. Whether this kind of education can be meaningfully replicated outside the classroom is not without question; more importantly, the practice of locally-based L2 writing is to move students into a different frame of mind completely.

Mead (2012) maintains that our first steps at interpersonal communication are based on observations on the effect our words have on others. Whether it is cooperative or conflictive, a child sees that his or her words have effect on others: this is where communicative competence begins. Such a process is very much relevant for second language education as well. An education where students' words are removed from context and (unpredictable, organic) response will also hinder their growth as a fully capable speakers of the target language. Therefore, providing students with contexts that are both new to them and cross-culturally authentic is essential to their growth as students and as community members. Moreover, such a project in the language learning classroom has meaning even if the student's future career does not directly use English to a great extent.

Writing meaningfully about a local place is not a project that can be accomplished in a semester, a year, or even the entire 4 year cycle of an individual student's time at the university. Rather, it can be treated as the creation of an ongoing legacy, transcending a single class or a single student. In a number English courses at Toyama University of International Studies, student work in local and creative writing is passed on to the next year in the form of student-created educational materials. Students read model stories and essays by previous years' students and treat this as a springboard from which to create their own original work, which will in turn be used by future students. Students become rooted in both the place and the school through their work. Student work is valued beyond the

classroom, beyond a grade, beyond the expectation of a single teacher or department: each student leaves a legacy in some small part. Using an example from agriculture, in seed saving, seeds are saved from one season's crop, dried, preserved, and planted in the next season. In turn, this second generation of seeds is gathered and used to plant the third generation. In this way, after 10 generations of natural mutation and selection, it is said that a new variety begins to emerge: a variety that is uniquely suited to the environment and soil from which it emerged.

Similarly, after several academic cycles of recycling and passing on stories and research, a distinct voice emerges from the university community anchored in a locale. Such students can feel the value of their work when the next generation of students reads and comments on it. Moreover, these creations are not controlled from the top down by teachers or curriculum, but rather from the bottom up, through the cooperation and hard work of all involved. This is the process that Freire refers to as "the creation of culture" (Freire, 1970).

As this kind of writing project requires two fluencies (linguistic and cultural), the teacher needs to introduce examples of successful place-based writing in English as a model or form for students to follow: a linguistic place-based education to accompany the cultural component. Local cultural writing in English gives students a chance to compare rhetorical styles and audience expectations across cultures (Ono, 2018; Sobel, 2004). Furthermore, the provision of multiple example texts from a specific genre in the writing classroom allows students to compare and deconstruct

the language used and thereby discover the underlying assumptions and ideologies (Hyland, 2006). All available English materials should be made available; further, English materials for places similar to Toyama (for example, Portland in the US) can be used for comparative purposes.

As local cultural studies in English use English as a medium for the global transfer of knowledge, the experience of working in intercultural rhetoric will ideally foster in students an interest in foreign or international affairs, a willingness to go overseas to stay or work, a readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, ultimately, an openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures as well as an increasingly multi-cultural Japan (Yashima, 2004).

This project, particularly the intercultural rhetorical approach, is suitable for language learners who lack contexts of direct interaction with L2 communities. University teachers are frequently in the position of asking students to talk about something they do not fully understand in a language that they have not mastered. In both cases, is it vital to ask students to start where they are, meaning with the language that they know in the place where they live (Horton, 1998).

In terms of both research and tourism materials in English, Toyama prefecture is behind other prefectures in the Hokuriku area, particularly Ishikawa prefecture. Toyama city has produced a representative line of promotional materials in English, available in print and online, but the information tends to be short, somewhat superficial, and rhetorically impersonal. Meanwhile, foreign tourism in Japan has

grown in recent years at a nearly unsustainable rate. In response to this, both tourists and local residents have experienced a renewed interest in out of the way places, defined as places away from the major tourist areas of Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka. Besides the relatively major tourist areas, Toyama has its share of out of the way places. One is Ooiwasan at Nissekiji Temple in Kamiichi. The main attraction is a large carved face of Buddha, etched into an enormous boulder embedded on a steep mountain slope. The place itself is enveloped in mystery and spirituality but this is not conveyed in English as there are scant materials available in English. This is exactly the kind of experience that foreign tourists want (Lockley, 2019). Nearby is an old farm house that was used as the main setting for the 2012 film “Wolf Children Ame and Yuki” by the popular anime director Mamoru Hosoda. The home used in the movie is an excellent site with a friendly staff that has expressed a keen interest in international visitors and cross-cultural communication. On the other hand, at this time, there is very little English guidance materials there. More English guidance, specifically connecting the facility to the movie, would be a boon to current and future visitors. Hosoda’s work is currently at a peak of popularity overseas, a potential successor to the position of Hayao Miyazaki. Anime tourism has grown as a trend for international visitors; Toyama can also have a role in this. Intercultural rhetoric has a critical role in the synthesis and recasting of anime culture for the widest possible international audience.

There are three writing skills necessary for place-based writing in L2. The first

skill is the accurate conveyance of a place, particularly a place known as a sightseeing spot. There is procedural information, for example, open times and how to procure tickets. There are economic data, for example, how much it costs to get in or how much souvenirs cost, as well as temporal and spatial issues such as how to travel to the destination. These pragmatic ideas need to be conveyed clearly, accurately, transparently, and honestly. In this, there is very little room for student (writer) imposition. It is essentially not a creative act but rather a transcriptive (legalistic) act, where accuracy is of highest importance.

In this, the critical points are the confirmation of the source data and the choice of terms that will convey the exact legalistic and contractual meanings to the greatest number of people in the target language. In this section, there is no room for misunderstanding.

Skill number two invites the student into more creative realms. In conveying the story of a place, an entirely different set of skills is needed. It is easy enough to find copy from writers who are required to write about a place using hackneyed phrases and expressions that reveal nothing: the challenge is finding the heart of the place and letting it match the heart of the writer.

Skill number three is capturing the heart of the reader, engaging Saeki's THEY in meaningful, intercultural dialogue. Intercultural communication education has been posited to be an exchange between two or more speakers (interlocutors) from differing cultures. The Toyama writing project offers a new model in that it places



the theme “Toyama” in between them. The notion of “Toyama” becomes a mediating factor, a common unshared ground where mutual discovery and sharing becomes possible. To mediate a new kind of local English, we have to imagine what we know (Toyama) in the eyes and experience of the other (**THEY**). In other words, the project requires dual fluencies, both of which can be out of reach for young students.

Ultimately, students are translating not a language but a place; for this, a new “language of a place” is needed. American farmer and poet Wendell Berry has written about the language of place in depth, particularly in his work *Life is a Miracle*. When place becomes a mediating factor in intercultural communication, words that emerge from the soil itself need to be documented and conveyed honestly. The cultural view of place is bound to the temporal view of place; both a diachronic and a synchronic approach is necessary.

The curriculum for locally based research in English should include myriad voices and multiple ways of knowing, experiencing, and understanding life that can help students to find and value their own voices, histories, and cultures. In this, the role of intercultural rhetoric cannot be overestimated. Further essays in this series will explore concretely how students used techniques and concepts from intercultural rhetoric to create meaningful and useful texts in English about Toyama.

## References

- Atkinson, D. (2004). Contrasting rhetorics/contrasting cultures: Why contrastive rhetoric needs a better conceptualization of culture. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 3, 277–289.
- Berry, W. (2000). *Life is a miracle: An essay against modern superstition*. Counterpoint.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Connor, U. (2008). Mapping multidimensional aspects of research: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric. In U. Connor, U. Nagelhout, and W. Rozycki (Eds.), *Contrastive rhetoric: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric*. John Benjamins.
- Connor, U. (2011). *Intercultural rhetoric in the writing classroom*. University of Michigan Press.
- Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing without teachers* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone can write: Essays toward a hopeful theory of writing and teaching writing*. Oxford University Press.
- Frank, M. (2005). The Shibata project: A Freirean approach to community-based research in the EFL classroom. *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, 14.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Goldberg, N. (2005). *Writing down the bones: Freeing the writer within*. Shambala.
- Goldberg, N. (2016). *The great spring: Writing, zen, and this zigzag life*. Shambala.

- Hinds, J. (1983). Linguistics in Written Discourse in English and Japanese: A contrastive study. In R. Kaplan (Ed.), *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics III*. Newbury House.
- Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus Writer Responsibility: A New Typology. In U. Connor and R. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*. Addison-Wesley.
- Hinds, J. (1990). Inductive, Deductive, Quasi-Inductive: Expository Writing in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai. In (eds) U. Connor and A. Johns (Eds.), *Coherence in Writing: Research and Pedagogical Perspectives*. TESOL.
- Horton, M. (1998). *The Long Haul: An autobiography*. Teachers College Press.
- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: an advanced resource book*. Routledge.
- Kaplan, R. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. In T. Silva and P. Matsuda (Eds.), *Landmark essays on ESL writing* (pp. 11-25). Erlbaum.
- Konosu, Y. (2018). *Honyakutte nan darou?* [What is translation?]. Chikuma Shobo.
- Kubota, R., & Lehner, A. (2004). Toward critical contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13, 17–27.
- Kurotaki, M. (2019). *Jitai no toraekata to jutsugo no katachi: Eigo kara mita nihongo* [Capturing the situation and the form of the predicate: Japanese from an English perspective]. Kaitakusha.

- Lockley, T. (2019). *Gaikokujin ga hontoni shiritai nihon no bunka to rekishi* [What foreigners really want to know about Japanese culture and history]. Tokyo Shoseki.
- Makino, S. (2018). *Nihongo wo honyaku suru to iu koto*. [On translating Japanese]. Chuokoron Shinsha.
- Mead, G. (2012). *G.H. Mead: A reader*. Routledge.
- Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Decoding how people think, lead, and get things done across cultures*. PublicAffairs.
- Miyake, M. (2007). *Contrastive rhetoric in Japanese and English writing: Reflections on the history of contrastive rhetoric studies, the Japanese written language, and its educational system*. Fukuro Publishing.
- Ono, H. (2018). *Shiten no chigai kara miru: Nichi eigo no hyougen to bunka no hikaku* [From a different viewpoint: A comparative study of expression and culture in Japanese and English]. Kaitakusha.
- Panetta, C. (Ed.). (2001). *Contrastive rhetoric revisited and redefined*. Routledge.
- Saeki, Y. (1995). *Manabu to iu koto no imi* [What it means to “learn”]. Iwanami Shoten.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. University of Chicago Press.
- Snyder, G. (1995). *A place in space: Ethics, aesthetics, and watersheds*. Counterpoint.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Sobel, D. (2004). *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities*. Orion Society.

Steinberg, S., & Kincheloe, J. (1998). *Students as researchers: Creating classrooms that matter*. Falmer Press.

Takamasa, K. (2019). *Nihongo no shikumi* [Japanese Language Structure for English Teachers]. Taishukan.

Yamanashi, T. (2019). *Nichi eigo no hassou to ronri: Ninchi mo-do no taishou bunseki* [Concept and logic in Japanese and English: A comparative analysis using the cognitive mode]. Kaitakusha.

Widdowsom, H. (1979). *Explorations in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Yashima, T. (2004). *Second Language communication and intercultural adaptation*. Taga Publishing.