The Importance of Learning and Teaching Communicative Writing：
To End the Primacy Battle between Writing and Speaking

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> The pen is the best and most eminent author and teacher of eloquence, and rightly so. For if an extempore and casual speech is easily beaten by one prepared and thought out, this latter in turn will assuredly be surpassed by what has been written with care and diligence. The truth is that all the commonplaces, whether furnished by art or by individual talent and wisdom, at any rate such as appertain to the subject of our writing, appear and rush forward as we are searching out and surveying the matter with all our natural acuteness；and all the thoughts and expressions, which are the most brilliant in their several kinds, must needs flow up in succession to the point of our pen；then too the actual marshalling and arrangement of words is made perfect in the course of writing, in a rhythm and measure proper to oratory as distinct from poetry.

Cicero, p. 220.

1．Introduction

Writing, as one of the communicative activities, has been neglected, compared with the other English activities—speaking, listening, and reading. This manner can be traced back to the time of Plato. In Phaedrus, Plato（trans. 1990）explains that speaking is superior to writing because speaking allows one to grasp the Truth. In contrast, writing, as a communicative activity, only dictates, edits, and revises spoken words, but does not convey Truth. In writing words are manipulated in the sense that it leaves room for the reader to have their own interpretations. For Plato, writing was similar to painting；it can represent a picture of a living being that does nothing but maintain silence and the picture remains the same for good. Plato states；

> Every word, when once it was written, is bandied about, alike among those who understand and those who have no interest in it, and it knows not to whom to

> speak or not to speak; when ill-treated or unjustly reviled it always needs its father to help it; for it has no power to protect or help itself.（p. 141）

Plato's point—writing cannot convey Truth, but speaking can—is not the emphasis of our discussion, but what must be stressed here is that writing, compared to speaking, is believed to be an unimportant activity, and that this belief has not totally disappeared even today.

Raimes（1991）argues that the teaching of writing must be undertaken with recognitions of the complexity of composing, student diversity, learners' processes, politics of pedagogy, and the value of practice. However, it is not clearly the case in Japan. Wachs（1993）states that, in writing classes, Japanese students learn not how to write but how to translate words, phrases, and passages from Japanese into English or vice versa; therefore, "they have rarely, if ever, *communicated* in written English"（p. 73, emphasis mine）. Nakata（2006）also reports that English education heavily depends on word-by-word translation（*Chyokuyaku*）, which is one of the university-entrance-exam-oriented class activities in high schools[2]. As a response to the orthodox method of English teaching, recently a number of scholars（e. g., Nakanishi, 2001; Cunningham & Carlton, 2003）have reported on how they undertake writing classes in Japan to teach writing as a communication process in authentic settings. Nevertheless, the study of communicative writing is still in the early stage of its development compared to speaking-related classes such as debate, drama, and public speaking[3].

In the light of the communicative approach, with communicative writing classes, universities and colleges can offer English learning in a more holistic experience. This paper aims to end the battle over the primacy between speaking and writing, not by posing an "either/or" inquiry but by describing writing as a crucial communicative activity in order to emphasize the importance of teaching communicative writing. In the attempt to do so, this current paper first explains how writing has been engaged in English as a second language. The second portion describes how communicative writing is distinguished from mere writing and composing. Thirdly, the paper explains the challenges and improvements that universities and colleges have to address. Through this discussion, readers will understand that it is crucial to transform mere writing activities to communicative writing activities and to make improvements like opening a writing center.

2．History of the Primacy of Speaking over Writing

This portion of the paper explains how the primacy of speaking has influenced linguistics and ESL studies and has come to overshadow the importance of writing. According to Raimes（1983）, since Charles Fries introduced an oral approach in 1945, the audiolingual method of

second language teaching had strongly influenced second language learning in the 1950s and early 1960s. Since the appearance of this approach, spoken language continues to be emphasized in English learning and teaching. Rivers（1981）explains that this method laid stress on developing listening and speaking skills by listening to utterances and repeating them as fast as native speakers uttered them. This approach holds that people normally learn their languages in a spoken form rather than in written form; therefore, quite naturally, listening and speaking were placed before reading and writing. To the extent that this concept is tenable, it is reasonable to assume that the concept underlying this approach is that speech was dominant, and writing was regarded as a secondary agenda and not a goal of language learning. Widdowson（1987）eloquently states as follows:

> Early developments in discourse analysis tend focus attention on spoken language, on the management of talk and the speech acts of conventional utterances. This preference may in art be attributed to the orthodox linguistic belief in the primacy of speech. Old tough habits die hard. Pedagogy too has tended to the same belief, even to the extent of sometimes supposing that communicative language teaching involved only the development of the ability to converse—as if written language was no really authentic communication（p. iii）.

Without a doubt, the teaching of speaking was dominant before the 1960s, and it still affects the view of writing in English learning.

　　From the historical standpoint of writing, the 1960s have been considered a revolutionary age because writing began to be one of the objects of researchers' and teachers' attention; yet it led to the disciplinary division between composition studies and ESL writing（see Matsuda, 1999）. Silva and Matsuda（2002）point out that writing was a means of recording students' speech and a support for the learning of speech because the technology for sound recording had not fully developed before the 1960s. During the 1960s, however, with the growth of ESL students in American universities, writing got much more attention because it was necessary to become familiar with the form of writing and how to write ideas beyond the word and sentence level. Furthermore, composition studies were developed in the U.S.A. and the audiolingual approach was fell at that time.

　　Contrary to this radical change, as noted by Matsuda（2005）, many teachers of L1 composition were troubled with ESL students because they were not willing to change their style of teaching grammatical and syntactic forms and did not know how to adjust to this new demand for speaking instruction. In order to solve this problem, ESL specialists who played a part in ESL writing（although they were not composition specialists）, attempted to help L1

composition teachers figure out how to teach writing in ESL classes. As a result of this ESL issue, the growth of composition studies and the popularity of second language writing, led to the separation of composition studies and ESL writing. Due to this separation, *composition* specialists lacked the interest in and enthusiasm for instructing ESL writers, and ESL specialists had to engage in teaching ESL writing.

The tendency to neglect writing in ESL has continued even after a communicative approach was developed. Since the communicative approach was introduced into the field of ESL, communicative language teaching has been praised for its emphasis on fluency rather than on accuracy. Yet, at the same time, it gathered much criticism because the systematic learning tended to be underestimated (see Takahashi, 1995). However discussed, in the relatively short history of the communicative approach, the importance of writing has not been acknowledged because the communicative approach focuses very narrowly on speaking and listening. For instance, although Littlewood (1981), in his book *Communicative Language Teaching*, does not entirely ignore communication through written mode (writing and reading), he identifies learners as speakers and describes communication mostly as oral activities such as discussions and role-playing. Takahasi (1995) suggests that since the term communication is associated for many people with oral communication such as speaking and listening, communication in the written mode tend to be glossed over.

Johnson (2000) also argues that communication has become a buzz word. His assertion must be taken seriously when considering the rapid increase of departments and classes with the name of English Communication because, as he states, the emphasis placed on communication often replaces systematic learning activities with entertaining communicative activities. Writing e-mails would be a meaningful and motivational activity for students to engage in and learn writing; yet, if the activity is undertaken without clear instruction and pedagogical purpose, it becomes simply a *filler* in English learning[4]. As Takahashi (2000) asserts, when undertaking communicative language teaching, teachers must set specific tasks and maintain control over classes; otherwise, class activities will lose their pedagogical essence and become mere entertaining games.

Even though writing is believed to be an important communicative activity, writing courses based on the communication approach have not been systematically developed as a theory or a method of ESL writing, and, regrettably, the idea of writing as an important communicative skill has not been put into practice as much as it should have. The reason for this may be because there is no consensus on the method for teaching writing. For example, three approaches in writing emerged from composition studies：controlled composition, the

paragraph pattern approach, and the process approach. In controlled composition, "writing is regarded essentially as reinforcement for oral habits and as a secondary concern"（Silva & Matsuda, 2002, p. 258）. Accuracy is the primary concern, and students are expected to adjust to the systematic process of English writing. The paragraph pattern approach holds that the arrangement of sentences is the key element in effective writing, which means that following particular patterns is essential. These two approaches instruct certain formulas of writing, presupposing that adopting *right* ways of writing makes students good writers. Contrasting with these two approaches, in the process approach, the content of writing is important. The measurement of successful writing depends on whether one can convey the message effectively through writing. However, whether this approach improves students' writing ability has not been conclusively proved（see Mochizuki, 2007）. This confusion over different methodologies for teaching writing might make it hard for teachers to engage in writing classes.

The reason that teaching writing has not been actively engaged in English education is due to the primacy of speaking, limiting communication to oral activity, and having no consensus on teaching methodology. Institutions, researchers, and teachers must work in harmony to provide students with appropriate opportunities to learn writing as a part of a holistic English learning experience because, as Kaplan（1987）argues, speaking and writing are complementary communication activities.

3．Communicative Writing

Raimes（1996）lists five emerging traditions in writing to illustrate characteristics of the teaching writing. They are recognitions of the complexity of composing, student diversity, learners' processes, politics of pedagogy, and the value of practice, and teachers

If typical writing classes are to instruct students how to translate word by word, to compose a collection of words following grammatical rules, or even sheer writing activity which uses authentic materials such as e-mail but are only exercised as a *filler,* how are communication-oriented writing classes different from them, or even from composition classes？ Widdowson（1978）argues that there are two aspects in language ; one is rules, such as grammar, that determine correctness, and the other one is the performative ability that allows people to undertake meaningful communication. He labels the correctness as usage and the performance as use. Since the language functions systematically and communicatively, both spoken and written modes of language cannot leave out either the grammatical and communicative aspects. According to Widdowson, writing is the matter of use, and composing

is the act of usage. Writing is not a communicative act because it is evaluated only by its correctness, and, in this sense, the equivalent of writing in the spoken mode is saying, simply reciting un-contextual words. Composing is a communicative activity of the written mode, as speaking is in the spoken mode. In Widdowson's argument, sheer writing is the matter of writing a correct sentence by following grammatical rules. Composition can be described as a collection of sentences, yet it cannot be communicative writing in a holistic sense.

For example, speaking can be altered in form depending on the type of communicative activities, such as public speaking, presentation, and debate. These spoken activities are socially reciprocal because they take place in the presence of listeners. When being situated in socially reciprocal settings, speaking becomes talking. Talking, in comparison to speaking, is a communicative activity because talking is an intended interaction with a listener. No matter how beautiful a poem you read, if you are doing so by yourself or without reciprocity, it cannot be communicative. The same case is applied to composing. One can compose journals, essays, and academic writings；yet, if one does so without thinking of communicating with a target audience, these written materials cannot be communicative products. In other words, for writing as well as speaking to be a communicative activity, these activities must be addressed in the presence of readers or listeners. Composing also must be in a reciprocal setting in order to be a communicative activity；Widdowson calls this corresponding.

Communicative writing can be described as the act of corresponding. Of course, as Widdowson（1978）acknowledges, the socially reciprocal setting of the written mode is different from that of the spoken mode because, unlike listeners, readers are not always available for immediate responses or, even worse, for any form of interactions whatsoever. However, communicative writing entails the presence of readers as a target audience. The important point is that one can write following grammatical rules, and one can compose in order to communicate with others through writing, yet, if the one does not write with the target audience in mind, composition cannot be an act of communication. A personal diary, for example, is not a communicative writing. It is a simply composition because of its absence from the socially reciprocal setting with a target audience. Hence, communicative writing can be defined as writing activity aiming to correspond with a target audience.

The reason why the presence of the target audience is in crucial communicative activity is that it provides not only the socially reciprocal setting, but also a specific purpose, format, and style for communicating. Aristotle sees these elements of communication are the beauty of language and the distinctiveness of humans, stating "it is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend

himself with his speech and reason"（trans. 1954, p. 23）. It is worth noting that the translator, Roberts, chooses "speech and reason" to provide an insightful understanding of the Greek term *logos*, which is often translated into language[5]. To some extent, *logos* moves people to communicate with one another. A technique which humans should acquire to communicate effectively at any given moment, for a certain audience, and with a certain style is, of course, rhetoric.

Concerning rhetoric, Burke（1969/1962）, influenced by Aristotle, asserts, "Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the fall"（p. 23）. The study of contrastive rhetoric precisely deals with various writing styles "with the state of Babel after the fall." Kaplan（1966/2001）was the first to examine how different thought patterns appear in writings of different cultures. According to Kaplan, a native English writer "expects as integral part of their communication is a sequence that is dominantly linear in its development"（p. 13）. In contrast, the Koreans and the Chinese write indirectly, and the paragraph tends to be developed as what Kaplan refers to as "turning and turning in a widening gyre"（p. 17）.

Following Kaplan's path, various studies have been undertaken to offer insight into different thought patterns across cultures（eg., Connor, 1996 ; Eggington, 1987）. Hinds（1987）'s article is one of the most notable studies on the Japanese written mode of communication. Hinds argues that, in the Japanese culture, readers are expected to understand the writers' message, whereas native English writers feel greater responsibility to the reader. The traditional style of writing for the native Japanese, *Ki*（starting argument）−*Shyo* （developing it）−*Ten*（After its development is finished, offering subthemes that are not directly tied to the main theme）−*Ketu*（concluding all points）, is not preferred in English writing because the third stage of writing, *Ten*, leads to the lack of liner development in an argument.

At the same time, studies of contrastive rhetoric have gathered criticism for making cultural stereotypes, simplifying complex writing styles, and domesticating English writing style in different cultures（see Panetta, 2001 ; Mao, 2003 for overviews of criticisms）. In fact, Kaplan himself has been modifying his first assertion on his thought pattern（Kaplan, 1987, 2001）. Interestingly though, Kaplan's（1966/2001）thought patterns appear in the Japanese texts books for English writing to introduce Japanese students to different styles of writing （Uemura & Ooi, 1992 ; Kadota, Ujiki & Ito, 2006）. This is because, as Miyake（1995）argues, introducing differences and similarities between Japanese and English writings will help Japanese students understand that writing English essays is not a simply putting together a collection of sentences translated from Japanese to English.

The crucial point here is not that learning contrastive rhetoric is the most effective way to improve the ability of communicative writing[6], rather that acknowledging differences and similarities among writing styles is the minimal yet essential step to compose an effective communicative writing[7]. For writing to be communicated effectively, communicative writing must deal with "the state of Babel after the fall," and it is the cooperative tusk among institutions and English teachers to offer students opportunities to learn the multifaceted diversity of communication styles[7] and obtain the ability to write to.

4．Challenges and Improvements

Undertaking communicative writing classes requires both English teachers and institutions to change. There has been a heated debate across a large number of universities and colleges employing external exams to measure students' English ability. Various external tests such as Test of English for International Communication（TOEIC）, Test of English as a Foreign Language（TOEFL）, and Society for Teaching English Proficiency（STEP test）, now include a writing section or provide an additional speaking and writing test. Each test is set to measure one's English ability in a particular context；therefore, the format of writing questions varies. For instance, TOEIC is a test of English ability in the workplace environment, and the content of questions is related to business and societal issues. In the TOEIC Speaking and Writing test, test takers are asked to write a complete sentence to describe a given picture by using two words provided, to reply to business related e-mails with two requests, and to compose an essay on a given topic. In contrast, TOEFL measures the ability in the pedagogical settings, and its Internet-Based test includes a 50-minute writing section（providing 2 writing questions）along with the 20 minute speaking section. One is an integrated writing question where test takers first read a passage（approximately 300 words）for 3 minutes, listen to a lecture（approximately 300 words）for about 2 minutes, and finally write either an argumentative, descriptive, or comparative essay. The style of the other question is the same as the last question of the TOEIC Writing test, asking one to write an essay concerning a given topic for 30 minutes. What English teachers must acknowledge is that, although the vocabulary used and formats may differ between each test, they share specific guidelines to compose an essay：the clear liner process from introduction to body then conclusion. Of course, this liner writing process is not the main issue. Both TOEIC and TOEFL writing tests employ an integrated writing question, providing a real life setting.

In the case of STEP test, the writing question requires reading an e-mail, which contains 3 general questions about topics ranging from learning a foreign language to one's favorite

holiday, to which test takers write a response. For instance, university students after 2 years of education should be able to pass the Grade Pre-1 test. Ideally, students should have the ability to compose an essay that meets the expectation of the organization. But how many students in writing classes are able to compose an effective essay? The point that needs to be clear is not that teaching the liner process of writing is the best way of teaching writing, or that the external English proficiency tests must be incorporated as a measurement of students' English ability, but rather that teachers need to acknowledge a gap between the level of writing they are teaching as an expert of writing and the level that external tests are expecting students to be at. If one of our students uses the *Ki-Syo-Ten-Ketsu* style to write an essay when taking the TOEIC test, it means we did not do our job appropriately in the writing class.

Kashiwagi（2007）suggests that writing could be the most difficult skill to teach among the four activities――listening, speaking, reading, and writing――because writing produces tangible records that allow countless revisions and consist of both technical accuracy and artistic fluency. Writing also can be the most time consuming activity to teach. Having 25 students in a writing class where they are to compose a 4 page academic paper means endless work in correcting, giving feedback, holding individual conferences, and so forth. Teachers must be available to them during the recursive process of writing from choosing the topic to finishing up the final draft[8]. Individual feedback session after draft writing would take several class sessions out of a typical 15 week session in a semester. It is extremely tempting for teachers to fall into what Corbett（1996）refers to as "the lazy way of teaching writing"（p. 8）. There is no denying that composition teachers are there to teach composition; however, placing the duty of teaching writing squarely on composition teachers would limit the potential of teaching writing. Institutions must reorganize a holistic system in order to create an encouraging environment for teaching writing across disciplines because learning writing is a never ending recursive process and because it should not be narrowly undertaken in regular class time.

As an attempt to offer a holistic writing learning experience, Corbett（1996）reports an intriguing case of teaching composition: "the writing-across-the-curriculum"（p. 7）. This actively integrates liberal arts education with degree-related education. In this way, English education is not marginalized as a sort of two year liberal arts education but rather situated in the continuity of university education as a whole. As speaking and writing are two distinctive acts of one larger whole, liberal arts classes and degree-related education should be complementary just as speaking is to writing and vice versa. In the case of writing, as Corbett asserts, any teacher can be a teacher of writing when assigning students to write essays,

speeches, thesis, and so forth, while composition teachers are experts on teaching writing. The English education at Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin has been attempting to employ this method. With their beliefs in the communicative approach, the objective of writing classes is to obtain the basic skills required to write a research paper（Torikai & Shindo, 1996）. Interestingly, one of the teachers rejected the idea of teaching composition under the university's new policy, claiming that it would not be worth teaching writing to students who could not engage in ever everyday English conversation. The teacher's criticism shows how the primacy of speaking over teaching and learning writing is a deeply rooted assumption in English teaching. The change in the educational system cannot be done overnight；however, the first step is to create an encouraging environment for teaching communicative writing, and opening a writing center would be beneficial.

5．Conclusion

Under the primacy of speaking, English writing has been neglected over the years. The audiolinguistic approach and communicative approach have somehow overlooked the importance of writing while teachers taught students translation as the primary writing activity. Although, the Grammar-Translation method has been greatly criticized, it has not completely disappeared. Following Widdowson, communicative writing is defined as correspondence, distinct from the more basic ideas of writing and composition. It is a writing activity through which one tries to effectively communicate with a target audience. When Japanese writers use a foreign language, they must acknowledge the differences and similarities between thought patterns in languages, which make communicative writing difficult. As external English tests now include writing sections, the skill of communicative writing skills have become an important English ability to learn.

In order to create an encouraging environment for students as well as teachers, setting up a writing center would be valuable[9]. For example, Waring（2005）analyzes exchanges between a tutor and a tutee in a graduate writing center to show how advice is given and refused between a tutor and a tutee. These competitive exchanges on revising a paper show that writing is a long process to be completed as an effective communicative medium satisfactory to both a writer and a reader. To some extent, a writing center allows students to engage in competitive, creative exchanges over writing, showing them how writing is not merely a collection of grammatically correct sentences. With a writing center, furthermore, "writing across the curriculum" could be undertaken, fostering the idea that writing is a never-ending learning process.

It is easy to blame researchers and institutions on underestimating the importance of writing; however, what about individual teachers who actually stand in classrooms and teach? Aren't we trapped in the easy routine or quoting Platonic notion to make an excuse such as "Writing is too difficult to teach"?　Fu and Townsend（1998）state:

> To help diverse students become competent and confident writers we must help them become bilingual and bicultural learners. The process may be slow and often frustrating for both students and instructors. And, at best, this process will not be one of accommodation or assimilation, simply replacing or adding on another language, another set of values. Rather, it should involve both students and teachers in a process of mutual transformation, so that each becomes an entirely new type of language user.（p. 132）

Casanave（2004）, after helping her students edit their papers and seeing their improvement, asked herself how her method of teaching writing improved students' writing skill. Her answer was that she did not know. Thus, Casanave suggests that writing teachers should finds answer to the questions concerning teaching writing, such as how, how long, and how much help concerning the method of teaching writing, "by reflecting on, looking at, and attending to their own decisions, and the consequences of their decisions, about how to help their students down the path to improve"（p. 95）. Communicative writing is challenging for both those who teach and those who learn. But if learning writing is a process, the process must begin somewhere; otherwise, there can be no process.

Notes────────────

1）私が今こうしてこの場に日々生きているのは，敬和学園大学在学時に故野村啓示先生との出会いがあったからです。卒業後も時折ご指導をいただき，先生がご家族の皆さんと共に渡米中には，私はボロ車を 10 時間運転し先生を訪ねたこともありました。先生からいただいたご好意や知識は，決して忘れることの出来ない貴重な財産です。野村先生，本当にありがとうございました。先生のご冥福を心よりお祈り申し上げます。

2）It is important to mention the huge impact of university entrance exams on high school English education. How influential university entrance exams are can be understood by remembering an incident from 2006, in which it was found that more than 600 high schools did not teach certain required subjects. Instead, they were teaching only subjects needed for entrance exams. Quite naturally, as Nakata（1999）reports, students start to lose their motivation or dislike English when English learning becomes grammar-, memorization-, and entrance-exam-centered. Cornwell, Simon-Maeda, and Churchill（2007）see the crucial role of the examinations in the education system. Summarizing different studies on entrance exams, they claim that exams of 20 prestigious universities（10 public and 10 private）have not changed in the past 10 years. Even

  in new types of questions, such as listening and summarizing, the reading difficulty was the same, testing mostly translation skills. Also, the reason translation plays such a crucial role is that the main English programs are often parts of literature departments, and they could be predisposed to testing translation skills in entrance exams.

3）Interestingly, Tsuda（2006）reports the high demand for English writing ability in the workplace.

4）For example, on the one hand, concerning the use of movies for English teaching, Someya（1989）concludes that movies are surely effective tools of teaching English. However, on the other hand, Kadoyama（2008）claims that movies could be *motivational* materials for students to learn English, but he also argues that movies have never been proved to be *effective* in developing students' English skills.

5）See Aristotle（trans. 1954）p. 23.

6）As Casanave（2004）argues, contrastive rhetoric is more like the field of research, not teaching methodology.

7）By analyzing grades of the same sample essays done by Japanese and the native English teachers, Nakanishi and Akahori（2004）assert that Japanese and the native teachers have different view on the effective organization.

8）Manchón and de Larios（2007）explain that the recursive process of writing as a cyclical interaction among planning, formulation, and revision that "entails a continuous backward and forward movement between the already written and the emerging text"（p. 104）.

9）It would be difficult today to find a Japanese university which does not have a CALL facility. But it would also be difficult to find one which has a writing center. In order to offer a holistic English learning experience, however, a number of Japanese universities have set up a writing center. See the Webpage of Tokyo University, www.komed.c.u.-tokyo.ac.jo/kikou/wrilab.html, and see Sekiya（2007）for the case of Kanda University of International Studies.

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