On Increasing Instructional Emphasis on the Differences between Written and Spoken Language Grammars

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1. Introduction

The current trend of using a communicative approach in language classrooms has improved the average speaking skills of second/foreign language (L2) learners and has increased interest in a variety of instructional methods and approaches focusing on communication in the target language (TL). This trend is admirable, given that learners' primary purpose is to communicate in the TL with native speakers and that an increasing number of learners have acquired *survival* skills with their TL in the target culture. If they are to be truly accepted in the target culture, however, mere *surviving* should not be sufficient—the necessary condition will be the skill of communicating with an appropriate language in accordance with the situation.

This skill is not limited to spoken language but is also applicable to written discourse. However, the recent oral-communication-focused curriculum has made it difficult for teachers to spare enough time for the instruction of an appropriate language of written discourse. Hence, many of the learners of Japanese are found to apply spoken language grammar in their compositions, without any distinction between these two mediums of communication.

The current paper presents how differently native speakers of Japanese use the two mediums of language—the spoken and written languages—based on the Multiple Grammar Model (Iwasaki, in preparation). Native speakers of Japanese use a variety of styles in spoken language, such as in conversation or debate, in accordance with the situation in which the speakers find themselves. Speakers sometimes include written language in order to communicate what they mean most effectively. However, native speakers of Japanese never mix spoken language in their written products.

Our primary purpose in this paper is to propose the necessity to emphasize the difference between spoken language and written language in language classes and to have a dual focus on conversation practice and writing practice, based on the Multiple Grammar Model. The structure of the paper is as follows. Section two delimits the written language or writing that we deal with in this paper, and Section three reviews the literature background in terms of the difference between spoken language and written language. Section four presents our sample data to show how learners overuse spoken language in their compositions and categorizes their patterns into five types of overuse. We present samples from both intermediate and advanced learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and heritage learners in Los Angeles. We picked these samples out of third-year or higher classes, but this kind of overuse can be found also in the beginning level of learners. In Section five, we suggest possible factors of the overuse of spoken language in writings, and Section six concludes the paper.

2. Terminology

By the terms 'writing,' 'written language', and 'written discourse,' we are specifically dealing with *sakubun*, which is a general Japanese term for compositions as course assignments, reports of any kind, and articles or essays. In short, 'writing' in this paper refers to any kind of written products that are (1) intended to be read by superiors or unspecified and general people, (2) written about the author's ideas or opinions, or (3) require a certain level of logicality and objectivity. Thus, the 'writing'

in this paper does not include letters or personal writing, such as diary or journal entries.

3. Spoken Language vs. Written Language

Since the 1980s, it has been generally acknowledged that spoken and written languages are different (Chafe 1994; Clancy 1982; Halliday 1989; Iwasaki in preparation). Halliday (1989) put forward a question: *Can we say that spoken language and written language are different ways of expressing the same meanings?* (p. 92). He gave two answers of both *yes* and *no* to this question. For the answer *yes*, he explained that these two are both languages. For the answer *no*, he presented three reasons from three distinctive perspectives, as follows. (1) In terms of form, such as prosody or paragraphs, written language misses prosody and other meaning potentials of speech, while spoken language does not show sentences and paragraph boundaries. (2) In terms of context, purpose, and function, spoken and written languages are used differently. (3) In terms of the world or reality that both languages create, but differently—written language creates a world of things, while spoken language creates a world of happenings. We agree with his argument, but his viewpoint is rather general, and thus it is not clear how different the two mediums of language are in actual language use.

Then, let us take a closer look at more specific linguistic points in Japanese. Clancy (1982) found that connecting two or more verb phrases in Japanese, *te*-form—i.e, the gerundive form—is more likely used in conversation, while *ren'yoo-kee*, the infinitive form, is used exclusively in written language (see Examples 1 and 2). In this way, Clancy pointed out that spoken language is different from written language by using particular linguistic evidence.

1. Spoken language
   daigakuin e it-te, kenkyuu suru koto ni shi-ta.
   graduate school to go-GER, research do NOM DAT do-PAST
2. Written language
   daigakuin e iki, kenkyuu suru koto ni shi-ta.
   graduate school to go-INF, research do NOM DAT do-PAST
   '(I) decided to go to graduate school and do research.'

Also, Taylor (2010) found that the morpheme *-tari* has different structures and functions between spoken and written languages. In written language, it is used to list several actions with multiple *-tari* phrases in the construction of V_1-*tari* V_2-*tari suru* 'doing such as V_1 and V_2.' However, in conversation, it is more often used in a single *-tari* construction and expresses hedge (see Examples 3 and 4).

3. *o-ryoori shi-tari mo suru no?* (hedging; spoken language)
   HON-cooking do-*tari* too do PP
   'Do you also cook or something?'
4. *ryoori shi-tari sooji shi-tari shi-masu* (listing; written language)
   cooking do-*tari* cleaning do-*tari* do-PRES
   'I do such as cooking and cleaning.'

From these and other different linguistic phenomena, Iwasaki (in preparation) proposed the Multiple Grammar Model in which "a speaker will acquire various grammatical constructions not only from conversational language but also from other types of language, most significantly from written language, and learn to employ the appropriate grammar for the task at hand" (pp. 5–6). Iwasaki argues that:

> The spoken/conversation grammar and the written language grammar are expected to take different shapes as they evolve in two significantly different environments (sound vs. graphic mediums), and are used mainly for different purposes (interaction vs. ideational formation). Though the two will be merged at the most abstract level, each grammar contains specific grammatical resources with varying degrees of abstraction (p. 1).

Thus, spoken language grammar and written language grammar develop differently in the cognition of native speakers through two completely different mediums. However, in spoken discourse made by Japanese native speakers, as Iwasaki noted, a 'mixture' of these two types of grammar is often found in order to communicate the speaker's point most effectively. Let us look at an example of 'mixture,' which was spoken by Shinzo Abe, the current Prime Minister of Japan. This example is a part of a debate that took place between two major political parties in 2012. When this debate occurred, the party of Shinzo Abe was not the ruling party, and he was not Prime Minister yet.

5. Example of 'mixture' in spoken language by a native speaker[1]

1 *tatoeba watashi no toki to Hatoyama-san no toki* ***[ ]*** *kurabe-mashoo*
for-example I GEN time with Mr. Hatoyama GEN time compare-let's
2 *watashi no toki wa 81 choo-en* ***deshita****.*
I GEN time TOP 81-trillion-yen COP-PAST
3 *soshite soshite desu* ***ne****, soshite* ***meemoku*** *GDP wa ikura* ***datta ka****.*
and and COP PP and nominal GDP TOP how much COP-PAST QP
4 *513 choo en desu* ***yo****.*
513 trillion yen COP-PRES PP

'Let's compare the budget of my Cabinet (in the past) with that of Mr. Hatoyama (of your party). It was 81 trillion yen during my time as Prime Minister. And, and, and how much was the nominal GDP? It was 513 trillion yen.'
(Spoken by Shinzo Abe. adapted from Iwasaki in preparation)

In this example, the features of spoken language, particularly of conversation, are grey-shaded, and the linguistic forms often used in written language are underlined. The speaker, Abe, basically uses written language grammar such as *-deshita* (line 2) and *-datta-ka* (line 3), and written language word choice such as *meemoku* (line 3)

[1] Throughout this paper, the grey-shaded part in bold font stands for spoken language, while the underlined part in bold font refers to written language.

due to the formality of this speech environment, which is the National Diet of Japan. However, he also makes an effective use of the features of conversational grammar, such as lack of the accusative particle (line 1) and the use of pragmatic particles *ne* (line 3) and *yo* (line 4), in order to enhance the liveliness and cogency of speech.

However, in writing, Japanese native speakers consistently adopt written language grammar without any of conversational grammar. Let us look at another example. This is a part of a native Japanese speaker's composition, and the writer is an 18-year-old female student from a high school in Tokyo.

6. Example of 'No Mixture' in written language by a native speaker:

1	*senshuu*	*no*	*nichiyoobi*	*ni*	*yuujin*	*to*	*toshokan*	*ni*
	last-week	GEN	Sunday	on	friend	with	library	LOC
2	*benkyoo*	*o*	*shi-ni*	*iki*	***mashi-ta***.			
	study	ACC	to do	go	PAST			
3	*gogo*	*kara*	*it-ta*	*node,*	***manseki***	*de*	***suwarezu***,	
	afternoon	from	go-PAST	because	fully-occupied	and	unable-to-sit	
4	*benchi*	*de*	*benkyoo*	***sezaru-o-e-nai***		***jookyoo***	***deshi-ta***.	
	bench	LOC	study	cannot-help-doing		situation	COP-PAST	

'I went to the library with my friend to study last Sunday. Because we went (there) in the afternoon, all seats were occupied, and we could not help studying on a bench.'

In this composition, the writer neither includes any pragmatic particles nor drops any case particles. Instead, she explores appropriate written language grammar (the underlined parts) such as sentence endings like *-mashi-ta* (line 2) and *-deshi-ta* (line 4), and also *ren'yoo-kee* 'the infinitive form' for *suware-zu* 'unable to sit' (line3). She also adopts appropriate words and expression for written language, such as *manseki* (line 3), which means 'all seats occupied,' *sezaru-o-e-nai* (line 4) 'cannot help doing,' and *jookyoo* (line 4) 'situation.'

Thus, the important point we need to notice in the comparison of these two mediums of language—i.e, spoken language and written language—is that native speakers of Japanese tend to mix spoken language grammar and written language grammar in spoken language in order to make their communication the most effective possible, but they do not use spoken language grammar in their writing.

4. Sample Compositions

This section presents some samples of non-native speakers' compositions and classifies five types of their overuse of spoken language grammar into written language grammar. Four of the types are from JFL learners, and the fifth is from heritage learners. Below are three sample sentences excerpted from three non-native speakers of Japanese. The writers are all from intermediate-advanced Japanese classes in universities located in the Los Angeles area.

7. *kono kooen ni iku no wa sutoresu kaishoo no hoohoo desu* ***ne.***
   this park LOC go NOM TOP stress release of way COP PP
   'Visiting this park is a way of stress release, ***right?***'
8. *kongakki, watashi wa takusan* ***yara*** *naku-****cha****-ikenai koto ga atta kara,*
   this-term I TOP many do have-to thing SUB exist-PAST because
   'Because I had a lot of things to do this quarter,'
9. *sono kurasu wa mae no* ***[_]*** *yori* ***sugoku*** *muzukashi-katta.*
   that class TOP previous of than terribly difficult-PAST
   'The class was much harder than the previous one.'

The grey-shaded parts indicate the spoken language form that should not be involved in written language. It can be seen that each of the samples includes a certain amount of spoken language grammar of some type. We classify these and other examples of overuse by non-native JFL learners into the following four types: Interactional, Contract, Word Choice, and Ellipsis.

4.1 Interactional

The first type of overuse, Interactional, is found in Example 7 above. The grey-shaded part *-ne* at the end is called a pragmatic particle or a sentence final particle. The function of this particle is basically to 'reflect the speaker's attitude toward the proposition and/or the interlocutor(s) and play a pivotal role in spoken Japanese' (Hasegawa 2010, p. 71). In writing, the writer should not be interactional or friendly to readers, and thus no sentence final particle, such as *-ne, -yo, -sa, -no,* and *-na*, should be included.

4.2 Contract

The second type is the overuse of contracted forms in written language, with the most noticeable contracted forms being *ja* and *cha*. The former is the contracted form of *de wa* (Example 10), and the latter is the contracted form of *te wa* (Example 11).

10. *watashi wa gakusee* ***ja*** (→ ***de wa***) *arimasen.*
    I TOP student CON COP TOP exist-NEG
    'I am not a student.'
11. *kyoo wa shukudai o shi-naku-****cha*** (→ ***te wa***) *ik-e-nai.*
    today TOP homework ACC do-NEG-CON te TOP go-POT-NEG
    'I have to do homework today.'

In English, the contracted forms such as *isn't* for 'is not' and *gonna* for 'going to' are limited to casual conversation. Likewise, the contracted forms in Japanese, such as *-ja* and *-cha*, are not suitable for written material and should be avoided. Among other Japanese contracted forms that are inappropriate for written language are: ***-te nai*** (→ ***-te inai***), ***-teru*** (→ ***-te iru***), and ***-toku*** (→ ***-te oku***).

4.3 Word Choice

The third type of overuse is word choice. As spoken language such as conversation has its own proper vocabulary to be used, so written language should explore its appropriate words and expressions. For example, *yara-* in Example 8 above, which is a conjugated form of the verb *yar-u* 'to do,' should be exclusively used in relatively casual conversation, and in the cases of more formal spoken language and written language another verb form with the same meaning, *sur-u* 'to do,' is preferred. Likewise, Example 9 includes an extremely casual intensifier *sugoku* 'terribly/tremendously/very,' which should be changed to another, more formal intensifier such as *totemo* 'very' or *hijooni* 'very' in written language.

This is a rather complicated type of overuse because it is closely related to formality, which requires further investigation. In this paper, we would like to present several cases of overuse in terms of the three categories listed. Below are the words or expressions that are only usable in very casual conversation between those with a close relationship, so that they should be avoided in written language.

- Casual expressions: *dame* 'no good,' *daijoobu* 'OK,' *heeki* 'OK'
- Degree words: *sugo-i* 'terrible,' *sugo-ku* 'terribly,' *kekkoo* 'fairly,' *chotto* 'a little'
- Function words: *toka* 'or,' *nanka* 'something/like,' *mitai-na* 'something like,' *-tte* (quotative marker)

4.4 Ellipsis

The fourth type of overuse is ellipsis. In casual conversation in Japanese, repeated words and case particles are frequently dropped. However, ellipsis is not appropriate in written language. The sentence presented in Example 9 above has an ellipsis of a word *kurasu* 'class' after *mae no* 'the previous.' Thus, the correct sentence that is preferred for written language is in Example 9':

9' *sono kurasu wa mae no **[kurasu]** yori muzukashi-katta.*
that class TOP previous of class than difficult-PAST
'The class was much harder than the previous class.'

4.5 Heritage Learners' Overuse

The previous sections showed the four types of salient overuses in compositions written by learners of Japanese as a foreign language at all levels. However, these kinds of overuse not only happen with learners of Japanese as a foreign language but also with heritage learners. Moreover, heritage learners' compositions involve a much more interesting type of overuse that clearly shows that written language needs its own particular way of instruction independent of spoken language. In this section, we would like to present the fifth type of overuse that is particularly found in the writings by heritage learners. First, let us take a look at a sample composition below.

12. A heritage learner's composition (a male student from a university in Los Angeles).

Topic: Cultural difference

1. *... tatoeba, maeno nihon no josee wa ie ni i-te, kaji* ***toka*** *o-kane no koto o shi-te i*
2. *mashi ta*.
3. *ima wa mada sou iu* ***kata*** *mo* ***irasshai-masu*** *ga, dandanto shigoto* ***[_]*** *shi-te*
4. *daigaku mo sotsugyoo shi-te iru* ***kata*** *mo* ***kekkoo*** *i masu.*

'For example, Japanese women before stayed home and did housework ***or (S)*** managed the household budget. Although ***there are (polite)*** still some ***women (polite)*** doing so now, there are also ***many (S)*** other ***women (polite)*** who work (outside) and graduate from university.'

In this case, the writer's parents are both first-generation Japanese in the U.S., and the writer speaks Japanese in his home and community. So, his speech sounds like native speakers in both casual and formal settings.

The interesting point of his composition is that it clearly shows that he merely transcribes his spoken discourse. If this were a spoken discourse and we had just heard him speaking, it would sound just like a native speaker's speech. However, since this is a written discourse, it points up multiple inappropriate words and expressions as described in the previous sections: two instances of inappropriate word choice (Type 3), such as a casual hedging expression like *toka* and a casual degree word *kekkoo*, and one ellipsis of an accusative case particle after *shigoto* 'job' in line 3. However, the most interesting and noteworthy type of overuse that is typical in heritage learners' writing is polite expressions. There are two unnecessary polite expressions in lines 3 and 4, *kata* and *irasshai-masu*—the former is a polite noun form for 'a person,' and the latter is a polite verb for 'to exist.' In the Japanese language, honorific expressions—e.g., *keigo*—are generally based on the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, and thus written discourse, which should be as objective as possible, should not include them.

Heritage learners of Japanese at the advanced level in general have fewer grammatical errors, but they have the following three inappropriate characteristics in their writings: (1) they write in the same way as they talk to other Japanese speakers, (2) they include an excessive number and quality of polite expressions, and (3) they adapt inappropriate vocabulary from conversation, mostly for hedging. Thus, advanced speaking skills do not always mean advanced writing skills. Therefore, teachers need to emphasize the difference between the spoken and written languages.

In summary, through the analysis of compositions of non-native speakers of Japanese, including both learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and heritage learners of Japanese, we identified five types of overuse of spoken-language grammar in written language.

Table 1: Five Types of Overuse of Spoken Language in Written Language

Type	**Examples**
Interactional	Pragmatic particles such as *-ne, -yo, -sa, -no, -na* *kinoo no eega wa omoshiro-katta desu* ***ne****.* 'Yesterday's movie was interesting, ***ne*** (right)?'
Contract	Contracted forms such as *-ja, -cha, -teru, -tenai, -toku* *kyoo wa ame* ***ja*** *nai*. → *kyoo wa ame* ***de wa*** *nai*. 'It will not rain today.'
Word Choice	*kyoo wa* ***sugoku*** *samui*. → *kyoo wa* ***totemo*** *samui*. 'It is very cold today.'
Ellipsis	*kono tokee wa* ***watashi no [_]*** *yori takai*. → *kono tokee wa* ***watashi no tokee*** *yori takai*. 'This watch is more expensive than my watch.'
Politeness	***nihon no kata*** *wa mina kinben* ***de irasshairu*** *to omoi-masu.* → ***nihonjin*** *wa mina kinben* ***da*** *to omoi-masu.* 'I think Japanese people are all industrious.'

5. Possible Factors of Overuse

In this section, we would like to suggest four major possible factors that contribute to the overuse of spoken language in writing: (1) the excessive focus on communication in language instruction, (2) the learners' intention to express their friendliness and politeness, (3) the learners' exposure to mixed uses in ***spoken materials***, and (4) the learners' exposure to mixed uses of spoken and written languages in ***written materials***.

The first factor, the excessive focus on communication in language instruction, has affected the allocation of time and energy in the instruction of communication and writing. Teachers tend to devote more time to communication practice rather than writing practice. Thus, teachers need to keep in mind that writing needs a special type of instruction and exercises outside the communication practice.

The second factor, the expression of friendliness and politeness, stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of politeness by non-native learners of Japanese, especially native English speakers. Hill et al. (1986) and Ide et al. (1992) pointed out that in English-speaking culture friendliness is considered to be a part of politeness. However, in Japan, if you are friendly to interlocutor(s), you are not considered to be polite at all. This factor is mostly related to the overuse of the pragmatic particles *ne* and *yo*.

The third factor, the learners' exposure to mixed uses in ***spoken materials***, can be found both inside and outside the language course. As we mentioned before, spoken language produced by native speakers of Japanese involves both spoken language and written language grammar freely, as they try to make their communication more lively, persuasive, and effective. Thus, a teacher's language in the language classes and also various spoken materials outside the language course, such as TV news, formal presentations, and conversation with native-Japanese friends, contain a variety of language and communication styles from both spoken and written language. Unlike native speakers of Japanese, non-native learners of Japanese will have difficulty

making a distinction between spoken and written language phrases and expressions if they do not have instruction from native speakers.

The last and most important factor is the learners' exposure to mixed uses of spoken and written languages in ***written materials***. This is also found both inside and outside the language classes, including in textbooks and other course materials inside the course and a proliferation of Weblogs and other written media on Internet outside the course. The most significantly influential source is the textbooks used in language classes. Textbooks are learners' language models, and in some cases, where learners have almost no exposure to their target language in their daily lives, textbooks are their one and only language model that they try to imitate and from which they try to learn. Even for those with a certain amount of target-language exposure outside the course, they are often willing to adopt the phrases and expressions their textbooks contain.

However, with the recent emphasis on communication, the amount of spoken language in textbooks has been increasing in comparison with written language grammar. Thus, there is a risk of learners' acquiring spoken language grammar, phrases, and expressions as the best and most useful samples of the target language, without understanding the distinction between spoken and written language.

Here in this section we would like to specifically deal with the mixed uses in written materials, showing three major factors through actual examples from some Japanese textbooks.

5.1 Transcribed Dialogues and Conversations

The first factor is that most textbooks have dialogues or conversations that are transcribed into a written format in every lesson. This is an inevitable and necessary source of learning communication, but exposure to transcribed spoken languages possibly makes learners confused and also makes them believe that they can freely use spoken language in their writing without any question. Let us take a look at Example 13.

13. Dialogues/conversations transcribed into a written form.
Excerpt 1 (from Intermediate Japanese, p. 239)
Ken'ichi: *Jason, **kono goro** nihongo ga **zuibun** joozuni natta **ne**.*
'Jason, your Japanese has improved a lot these days, ***ne (right)**?*
Jason: ***soo demo nai kedo**.*
'Not quite / not really.'
Ken'ichi: ***sonna** koto **[_]** **it-te** kenson suru tokoro mo, **sasuga** Jason da **ne**.*
'Your saying that modestly is really impressive, as I expected, ***ne (right)**?*'

In this excerpt, again, the grey-shaded parts are the words/phrases or grammar particular to spoken language. Since this is an excerpt of a dialogue exercise in a textbook, it includes a considerable number of spoken language phrases and also ellipsis. In order to avoid learners' confusion and prevent them from mixing spoken language in their compositions, we propose that teachers need to carefully indicate which tokens or expressions should not be used in writing.

5.2 The presentation of target grammar points

The second factor from textbooks is the way of presentation of target grammar points. Some grammar points are not appropriate for writings, but the marking system is not clear enough and not systematic. Thus, when they teach new grammar points of spoken language in the textbook teachers still need to clarify which grammar points should not be used in writing.

5.3 The possibility of 'fossilization' of spoken forms

The third factor is related to the possibility of 'fossilization' of overuse of spoken forms in written language. In some textbooks, because of much focus on communication, the contracted forms such as *ja* or *cha* are emphasized from the very beginning level. For example, the textbook *Genki 1* introduces *ja nai desu*, meaning 'isn't,' as early as lesson 2 and continuously provides learners with written input of *ja*. The result is that some students still overuse this contracted form *ja* in compositions at the beginning of the third-year class. Thus, instruction with more emphasis on the distinction between spoken and written languages should be started at the beginning stage in order to avoid the persistent overuse of spoken forms in writing.

6. Conclusion

This research on how to make learner's writing more native-like has just started and is still going on. The main point we are making at this beginning stage of the study is that writing in Japanese requires specific instruction focusing on the written language grammar—it is not just a transcribed form of spoken language. Spoken language and written language should be treated differently from the elementary stage of learning Japanese. This does not mean that writing is more important than conversation. Rather, we would like to propose that a dual focus on conversation practice and writing practice is needed in Japanese language classes. As the first step of this proposal, we listed the five most salient types of overuse of spoken language grammar in written discourse: interactional, contract, word choice, ellipsis, and politeness. In our future study, we would like to go further into the formal level of word choice in written language, including written media such as texting and Weblogs.

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Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative particle	CON	Contracted form
COP	Copula	DAT	Dative particle
GEN	Genitive particle	GER	Gerundive form
HON	Honorific marker	INF	Infinitive form
LOC	Locative particle	NEG	Negative marker
NOM	Nominalizer	PAST	Past tense
POT	Potential verb	PP	Pragmatic particle
PRES	Present tense	QP	Question particle
SUB	Subject particle	TOP	Topic particle

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