Voice in the test: a preliminary analysis of writing tasks set in the New South Wales Higher School Certificate Japanese Continuers Course

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Abstract
Voice is one of the most significant concepts that has attracted the attention of many writing teachers and researchers in both first and second language domains. Though the notion of voice has been given various meanings, Matsuda and Jeffery provide one useful definition of voice – ‘a metaphorical concept capturing the sense of author identity that comes through when readers interact with texts’ (2012, p. 151). Recently, the concept of voice has started to be applied to multiple educational contexts. However, the current scholarship is often restricted to a certain area of English language education and therefore the validity of the notion in non-English language educational contexts still remains largely speculative. To respond to this paucity of current scholarship on voice, I intend to apply the existing body of knowledge regarding voice to Japanese language education and investigate how voice is dealt with there. More specifically, my study aims to understand how native-speaker Japanese language teachers perceive and respond to student voice expressed in writing tasks set in the New South Wales Higher School Certificate Japanese Continuers Course (hereafter, the Japanese Continuers Course).

In this presentation, I will offer a comprehensive analysis of the writing tasks that appear in the Japanese Continuers Course. In particular, I intend to present what sort of voice the HSC candidate is encouraged to produce in these writing tasks. Four major official documents issued by the New South Wales Board of Studies will be analysed, including actual HSC papers, the marking guidelines, the Japanese Continuers Course Syllabus, and the notes from the Marking Centre. To illustrate the types of voice that the Japanese Continuers Course potentially directs the candidate to produce, I will apply three major stances to voice in writing: individualist, social-constructionist and social-constructivist. At this stage of the research cycle, my framework is still in the process of being developed. Therefore, this presentation also aims to develop my research plan further through exchanging ideas with and receiving feedback from the audience.
Bibliography