

A CLOSE LOOK AT JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING

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This report is the result of an attempt to categorize and quantify the most frequently appearing errors in English writing made by a representative group of English Literature students.

During the '85-'86 school year, approximately 100 third and fourth year students wrote an average of five papers each (an average of about 150 words per assignment). These papers have been checked using a computer/word processor to aid in determination of numbers and percentages. Corrected errors, major and minor, have been entered by category, with a view of helping teachers, including myself, focus on some of the most common problem areas.

This report will hopefully be of some interest and use to those who teach English writing or composition to junior high, high school, or university students.

I would additionally hope to appeal to university oral English teachers to consider using extra writing assignments in their classes, for which the rationale, a method, and suggestions follow.

PART I: Using Writing Assignments in the Oral English Classroom.

Written English that is generated by the type of assignment used for this report is essentially the same as spoken English. We can expect considerable transference from improved writing skill to speaking ability. Writing may be partly or entirely done outside of class as homework, not compromising class time devoted to oral English.

Small group discussion topics go much better when students have been made to focus on the subjects to the extent of writing out their views, experiences, etc. beforehand.

Finally, classmates may learn more about each other, and teachers will definitely gain more insight into their students' lives from their personal writing assignments than they will from classroom oral English alone, particularly if the class is large. This gained insight may then be used by the teacher to facilitate oral communication.

These assignments, with large classes, can result in the teacher's homework far exceeding that of the students. The personal and pedagogical benefits, however, can more than offset this single disadvantage.

Some E.S.L./E.F.L. research has indicated that little improvement can be expected as a result of composition correction unless it's done immediately (as ideally it should be). But, in large classes, even if devoted entirely to writing, this is usually not possible. However, the following plan (which I intend to more systematically follow in the future) has resulted in at least temporary speech improvement as monitored in the classroom.

The Oral English Class Method

A homework assignment is given to write about some topic close to the students' lives and interests, or something personal about their pasts or about their future plans. A few minutes at the end of class might be devoted to letting the students get started writing, to make sure all have understood the topic and are on track. The following week, if not sooner, the papers are collected, then corrected and returned as soon as possible. Students who have made only one or two minor mistakes are asked to carefully study those error sections, and are given sufficient class time to do so, consulting the teacher if necessary. The rest, usually the majority, are asked to rewrite their papers (a new, clean copy) in accordance with the teacher's corrections and suggestions. The teacher should admit possible misunderstanding of the students' meanings and encourage them to discuss the corrections and suggestions with him or her.

Most students don't seem to interpret this rewriting activity as undesirable punishment. After all, they're writing about themselves; most want to get things set down right.

Those who finish rewriting are asked to spend a couple of minutes looking over their rewritten papers, paying attention to the changes that have been made. As soon as the first four students have finished (an ideal number for the purpose) they form a group to discuss with each other the subject at hand - in English only, of course. The teacher circulates, helps, or spends a few minutes with each group when time allows. During the discussion, students should have their papers face down and not use them unless

they are unable to recall some key word or phrase that they need to use to express themselves orally. If no other group projects are scheduled to follow, the teacher may want to sit in and converse with the first finishing group, keeping them out of mischief.

When following this procedure I have heard evidence of the written corrections being recalled and carried over into speech. So, while simply returning corrected papers may not produce results, this one-two-three method does seem to, both in writing and speaking.

Having one or more students tell the rest of the class something interesting learned during the discussion from a group member is one way to give additional oral-aural practice to the class. An alternate activity (one which may appeal to 'writing class' teachers) is to have each student write half a page or so about something interesting a fellow group member spoke of during the discussion. Their own feelings or comments should be added as a conclusion. These papers also, of course, should be turned in for later correction.

The expectation of making either an oral or a written summary of what another has said causes students to pay closer attention to one another during the discussion period. In other words, such follow-through activities can be used to further insure that real communication will have taken place. Resourceful teachers will work out additions or variations of these plans to suit themselves.

Another alternative is to have early finishing groups spend a few minutes looking over the corrected papers of their fellow group members. This could lead to additional questions and conversation as well as a cautioning regarding the corrected mistakes. Of course, this would only be

advisable when the students are completely at ease with each other and wouldn't be easily embarrassed by showing one another their errors.

Additional Suggestions to Teachers Who Give Writing Assignments.

Use blue rather than red ink for corrections. Red says, "Hey, you made a mistake here!" Blue speaks softly and says, "Let's work this out together; I'm just here to help." Blue in parentheses says, "Yes, and here's another way of expressing what you probably mean here, but it's your paper so I'll respect your choice." And, if 'color and curves' alone don't transmit those messages, the teacher's explanation and manner should.

Respond to the content of the papers. A student may be trying to use the language for its primary intended purpose - communication. If the only response students get from their teacher is correction (even in blue ink) they can't be expected to react positively to either writing or related follow-up activities. Just a few encouraging words from the teacher on a student's paper or a verbal response that shows some interest in the content of the writing can do wonders for a student's motivation.

Responding personally in this manner has several times helped me to 'make friends' with certain ones who had been maintaining a psychological distance. Improved attitude, cooperation, and effort were noticeable thereafter.

While Part I has been written with the oral English classroom primarily in mind, composition teachers, as well,

might consider occasionally augmenting their assignments with the same discussion follow-through plan.

An Introduction to Part II: What the numbers mean -- and don't mean.

The percentages given in the following section were not obtained from tests controlled to determine proficiency in the various areas of English usage. Being free to write in any way they chose concerning a given subject, students doubtlessly managed to avoid some of the trickier English problem areas by skirting around them or by not really needing certain grammatical forms in their short papers.

The 15% figure in the category "Conditional Case Error" does not mean that the remaining 85% are proficient; it means that some are, while others wrote in ways that didn't require it. What this and other percentages do mean is that the reported percent of students either misused the form in attempting it or wrote something which, unbeknown to them, required it, thus earning their teacher's correction.

The figures do not tell how often each student represented made a given type of error. It might have been only once, or several times. The percent figures do show the number of students that made the error within a limited amount of writing.

Papers dealing basically with past, future, and simple present tense topics were used in roughly equal numbers to try for a representative balance in highlighting problem areas. Other factors influencing percent figures are that

better students, as well as writing more, tend to make bolder attempts in trying to express themselves. Their more 'sophisticated' errors may therefore be similar in number to those of weaker students. Teachers, including myself, tend to correct 'gray' parts of a better student's writing but only the 'black' errors of lower level students.

There are a host of ways to classify language errors. Some of the enclosed could have been further subdivided, been made more encompassing, or differently approached. Occasionally errors may even have been miscategorized here due to a misunderstanding of what the student had intended.

While over 500 papers serve as reference for this report, the error percentages have been taken from a representative 200 papers from the, circa, 100 students, with the following rationale:

Using only one paper (often less than a full page) per student would usually have been insufficient to reveal problem areas. Using more than two papers each, on the other hand, would have inflated the figures and perhaps distorted the truth. The percentages quoted mean that within about 300 words of writing, that percent of students seemed to need correction at least once (often more) within the given category.

If they managed to get through two papers without committing those errors of omission or commission, then it would seem unfair and misleading to brand them as that kind of 'error-committer' because of perhaps a single uncharacteristic lapse somewhere in their third paper. The exact statistics are not the key; their importance lies in giving us a ranking of the error categories in terms of frequency.

If you should find this logic unconvincing, feel free to revise the figures upwards or downwards to suit your own

criteria. The point is that, with due consideration of what the figures don't show or mean, they do, I believe, give a reasonably fair comparative and quantitative indication of errors and quasi-errors actually made by this group. Having taught in previous years at three other Japanese universities, I judge my present group of students to be, if anything, above average in English ability, through no merit of my own, having been found so at first meeting.

All selections are taken verbatim from the aforementioned students' writing. While some error examples were chosen for interest or humor, most are very representative, and few, if any, are atypical. Longer selections, in the latter part of this article, will, I hope, show that in spite of the acknowledged errors, these students are doing a reasonably good job of communicating - for which we can commend previous teachers, and they themselves for their perseverance in trying to master a very difficult language.

PART II: THE ERROR CATEGORIES AND EXAMPLES

1. Lack of Capitalization of Titles Error Rate 82%

- * "the ^T most ^M interesting ^I incident ^I of the ^S summer"
- * "my ^M worst ^W habit"
- * "my ^M winter ^W vacation ^V plans"

The percentage figure given here, unlike all of those which follow, refers only to first assignments. If I hadn't in some classes written assignment titles on the board (with capitals, of course) the figure might have been over 90%. It seems that most have never noticed that titles are always capitalized, and that no one has ever told them. Let's do tell them. This is an easy one to correct. By the second or third paper most of my students had remembered. While we're at it, we should probably also inform them of the convention of not capitalizing articles, prepositions, and short conjunctions - the 'unimportant words' in titles unless one of them is the first word, e.g. "A Day in the Life of an Overworked Teacher."

2. Singular and Plural Nouns

2a. Nouns written using singular case in the following should be plural. E.R. 71.4%

- * ...and unfortunately, the road was crowded in London. ^{(streets)s were}
- * Under a ^x wonderful star ^s I was chatter^xing with pretty girl friends. ^(Monkeys chatter; people chat.)
- * I wonder whether it was caused by a difference between American habits and Japanese one or from individual character. ^{s (by)}

- * When all the examinees^(had) finished their test, I was told I'd to be given another chance.

2b. Nouns written using plural case which should be singular E.R. 25.7%

- * I have^a high and soft voice for^{a man} men.
- * We stayed at a station built for Teuri believers. The rooms were clean, but the systems^x ~~were~~^{was} very bad because of the meals and the morning broadcast at 5:00.
- * I'll never go to this lodgings^(x) again, I thought.
- * All^{the} musics^x ~~were~~^{was} very nice.

"Every" modifies only singular nouns.

- * I am very^{much} looking forward to it, because I like tennis very much and we will have parties every nights^x.

2c. Wrong construction of the plural form E.R. 9%

- * We heard that there are many thieves thieves in that area.

"People" is already plural, except when it is used in the sense of "varieties of" as in "peoples of the world."

- * And I think that the cat is^{cats are very unfortunate} so poor, because there are some peoples^x who manage the cat^{treat (cats)} as like^x a lifeless object^x.

3. The use, lack of use, and mixing up of the articles, "a", "an", and "the"

Articles "the" and "a" indicate important distinctions in English, although in speech they're both weakly stressed and,

therefore, often almost inaudible or indistinguishable to non-native listeners.

3a. Omission of the definite article, "the"

E.R. 60%

* It was ^{the} beginning of the latter half of our badminton season.

* On ^{the} 22nd of June, I finished my teaching practice in Nakano ^{(#9)?} 9th Junior High School.

School, court, prison, work, sea, and bed are used without "the" when they are visited or used for their primary purpose. Although "library" is similar in nature to school and court, it always requires an article.

* But at ^{the} library a cooler is ^(running) working and I can study very comfortably.

3b. Omission of the indefinite article, "a"

E.R. 54%

* It was ^a very big shock to me, because last year, I was ranked in ^{x number} 4. (or, ranked in 4th place.)

* I ^(attended) went to ^(a) driving school to get ^a driver's ^{license} ^{& all} through this vacation. ^(I spent the whole vacation going to a driving school to try to get a driver's license.)

* This ^(was) ^a very small incident, but ^a very ^(live) impressed ^(one) incident for me.

3c. Using "the" when it should be "a" or "an"

E.R. 31.4%

Many students incorrectly use "the" the first time a thing is mentioned. In the following example, "mound" had not been mentioned yet.

* When I came to the top of ^a the mound, I stopped there, and then see ^(looked to) my right and left to check ^{that} no cars ^{were} ^(ing) come.

* At that school, no one had ever had the second chance.^a

3d. Using "a" or "an" when it should be "the" E.R. 17%
When the subject has already been established, "the" is usually correct.

* We decided to go sight-seeing by taxi. ^{The} A driver was very kind and we had our photograph taken ^{by him.} ~~with him.~~?

* So ^{(since I was trying} ~~(only for)~~ amusement, I made less progress in a ski group.^{the}

3e. Using an article when there should be none E.R. 14.2%

* But I'm going to Hakone to play the tennis with ^(a) my friend. ^{or, (with one of my friends.)}

* I began to play field hockey when I entered ^(the) University, and my position is ^a goal keeper.

There is little logic involved in the use and non-use of the definite article with various proper nouns. At the end of this report a reference list of these conventions, with examples, is provided.

* The camp of my seminar is in the Lake Kawaguchi for three days.^{a (will be) at}

* We skated in Korakuen Ice Palace and stayed in ^{(at) the} Tokyo

International Youth Hotel near Iidabashi Station.

3f. Using "a" instead of "an" and vice-versa E.R. 5.7%

Among students who remember to use the indefinite article as the lead word of a singular countable noun phrase, many carelessly forget to substitute "an" when the next word begins with a vowel.

* On July 25th I was going to have ^(supposed to take) ~~a~~ ^{an} examination of teaching English in Niigata.

* On August 10th, when I got up in the morning, I had ^{an} ~~a~~ ⁱⁿ ache of my right arm.

It is the vowel sound, not the presence of a vowel letter, which requires an "an"

* I'd heard Brighton is ^{an} ~~a~~ hour away from London.

* At my high school I ^(we) ~~didn't have to~~ must not need to ^a wear ~~a~~ uniform. And a few students admirably but incorrectly overapply the rule, leaping adjectives to do so.

* I bought ^a ~~an~~ large, delicious apple [×] ~~at~~ there.

4. Failure to recognize an uncountable noun E.R. 16%

As expected, students had trouble using those nouns which are sometimes countable and other times uncountable. In the following examples the nouns in question, which were used in the uncountable sense, should have been singular.

* There were technical trainings[×] and traffic regulation lectures in ^{the} ~~a~~ school ^u curriculum.

* Maybe my vacation will be filled with hard works[×].

* And three of us ate some foods[×] worth about fifteen thousand yen.

* Then I'm going to study my summer vacation^(X)'s homeworks[×].

* After she washes her laundry, she hangs ^{it} ~~them~~ up.

The second manifestation of failure to recognize an uncountable noun is the use of an article where there should be none.

* I have ^xa confidence that I trained very hard.

* But now I have realized that a teacher must always study hard for ^xa new knowledge.

One last problem related to this category is that some failed to use a singular verb with an uncountable noun.

* Students observed the school's ^(x)rule_λ well and their attitude ^{was} were good.

5. Wrong word order

E.R. 42.8%

Since the meaning of a sentence often depends on what parts are physically close to others, sometimes humorous and unusual situations can be conjured up. A carpenter who can mend something without even being there has remarkable skill, and most people would want to be able to drive on any day of the week, not just on Sunday.

* The carpenter warned us not to touch the wall until the paint ^{had} dried well, but my grandmother accidentally (^{— did —} touched it.) We were a little angry with her and ^{phoned} asked the carpenter and asked him to ^(fix it) mend it. ^(repaint it)

* Recently I ^{ve been} m practicing ^{with} my father's car. It is an automatic one, so ^m My father teaches me how to drive on Sundays.

* But I persuaded my parents by explaining why I want to go the States. many times.

The placement of the key words "not" and "once" makes quite a difference in the following examples.

* When I decide to do something once, I tend not to / don't intend / to change my mind.

* All the fault is not mine.

6. Spelling

E.R. 68.5%

The situation is not as bad as it appears. Most made only one or two (usually minor) errors. (Of course, dictionaries were consulted by the diligent.) Since English spelling is phonetically inconsistent and arbitrary, we might do better to put it positively and say that within about 300 words, 32.5% of the students made no spelling mistakes whatsoever! Native speakers who are the same age don't do a great deal better.

Commonly misspelled words which were found in the student papers include the following:

exercise: excersise, excercise

seminar: seminer, seminor

license (licence): lisence

vacation: vacatian, vaction

cooperated: cooprated

entrance: enterance

spaghetti: spagetti

communicate: communicate

interesting: intresting

examination: exsamination

transferred: transfered

separate: seperate

promised: promiced

clothes: cloths

term: turm

believe: belive

happened: happend

famous: famouse

forty: fourty

habit: habbit

technical: tecnical

decided: desided

easily: easilly

signing: signning

until: untill

noisily: noisely

lens: lense

beginner: biginner

rank: ranck

But confusion between "r" and "l" caused the single largest group of errors in this category.

- * I think we should drink pure alcohol^l.
- * In September I also have club activity and ^a game match ^{(try to) (in?)} to win at the autumn league.
- * I am going to stay at ⁱⁿ Los Angeles for four weeks.
- * When we ^{re} alived ^x at there, the weather was too hot.
- * And even if I ^(when) ^{made} ^{elaborate} ^{to} elaborately made teaching plans, I felt that they were not enough.

7. Preposition Errors

7a. Failure to use "during," which is often a much better word choice than "in" E.R. 17.1%

- * ^(during) In this summer vacation, I have plan^s to go to the States for ^a home stay.
- * I ^(x)ll want to become a good driver, so I must drive many times ^(during) in the vacation.
- * But ^(during) because of that training, I ^{injured} broke my left knee badly and ^{was forbidden} banned to play badminton by the doctor.

7b. Use of wrong preposition E.R. 65.7%

Although students made a great variety of errors in this category, the mistakes involving "in" and "at" were most frequent.

- * I said to him, "I'm a member of ^{the} ^(at) Badminton team in Seijo University."

- * ^(X) Another plan ^(s are) is to go to the camp of my seminar and ^(to another) of my association. The former is in ^{at} Lake Nojiri.
- * The station's staff ^(turned off) stopped the air conditioning at 10:30 ^(at) in the night.
- * Then the dog sat down ⁱⁿ the middle of the street and looked ^(into) at my eyes.

Since "by + (vehicle)" is appropriate only when used in the uncountable sense, that is, as a general statement about mode of travel, this student should have used "in."

- * I went home ⁱⁿ by my friend's father's car.

"In the morning" would be correct in many situations, but in this example "on" is a better choice.

- * ^{In} After all, ^{was (directions)} I ^(on) asked by three different women in the same morning.

As a general rule, "to" is overused.

- * We will go ^{on} to field trip once a week, and we will spent ^d the weekends with ^{the} family.
- * We had a game ^{at? with?} to Hagoromo Junior College ^(X) on last [&] Saturday.

Students missed some opportunities to use "because of."

- * It happened ^{because of} by my mistake.
- * ^{Because of} By this rain I caught a cold.

7c. Omission of preposition

E.R. 34.2%

- * My hobby is reading books and listening ^{to} music.

- * While I ^{was looking at} watched pictures at an exhibit, an old deaf man picked up a note, ^{look} and wrote ^{on} the paper ^(that he was) to be ^(the?) an artist.
- * ...or every day on the train, looking ^{at} people who take ^{more space than they should} larger place for one person, I get disgusted.

British and American English differ in regard to the next example; in America the preposition "from" is necessary.

- * She graduated ^(from) Seijo Junior College this year and ^{is} now working in ^a certain office.

7d. Errors handling special verb/preposition combinations
(two word verbs) E.R. 9.5%

- * I went and took ^{in (saw)} a movie with ^{one of} my friend ^(in Shinjuku)
- * I'm looking ^r foward ^{to} for it, but for the camp^x, each of us^(x), juniors^(x), ^{has} have to make a book report.
- * I made ^a ^{as much effort as possible to prepare for} effort for preparation of your contest as ^x much as possible, in order to get ^{(win) a} prize.

7e. Preposition errors involving destination E.R. 14.2%

- * I have not traveled ^x to anywhere for the past three years, so ^x that I just cannot wait for the trip.
- * When we arrived ^x at there, we discovered that we had forgotten the key.
- * But I'm probably going to go ^{to} some cool place where I can play tennis.
- * I went ^{to} Shonan Gakuen Junior High as a student teacher.

- * In the middle of September, I'm going to go ^{to} Kiyosato Heights in Yamanashi ^{to} prefecture for ^(my) the seminar(s) training.

8. Verb Errors

- 8a. Wrong choice of main or auxiliary verb, infinitive, gerund, or participle. E.R. 85.7%

To the students' credit, the bulk of these examples show that they flawlessly constructed the tenses, forms, and cases of these verbs. Their error lay with a misunderstanding of the exact meaning and use of the chosen verb, or perhaps they chose one which would not normally be used by a native speaker in that particular situation.

- * We ^(reserved) pre-engaged a tennis ^{court} coat for two hours.
- * And in particular I ^{remember} memorized that I went to the sea ^(going to the beach) with my club members.
- * This summer, my family and I ^{stayed at} were in my grandfather's house in Chigasaki, because ^{our own} my real house ^{was being} had been ^{rebuilt (or remodeled)?} building.
- * The fire extinguisher salesman ^{(tricked) (or 'high pressured' us)} cajoled us out of thirty ^x and five thousand ^(s) and yen!!
- * I got angry and ^(shouted?) cried to ^{at the} fifth or sixth call, "You'd better stop or I'll ^(call) tell the police."
- * We ^(stay) live in Tokyo in spite of having a house in Chiba, because my father and I ^{couldn't commute!} can't go ^(to) Tokyo every day.

* We enjoyed ^{chatting} chattering, eating, drinking, and seeing ^(watching) the cats.

* The bus put ^{had (x)} on a name-plate, ^(which said, or which read) Zama junior high school. Mixing up "say" and "tell" is a common error.

* I would like to ^{talk} say about the club's events.

* One time I was ^{told} said, "What ^x a big ear ^s you have!"

* Sometimes I ^{tell} say a lie when I have to ^(tell one) say that, but I don't like to.

* After all, I made up my mind to continue my training without saying ^{anything (or telling anyone)} about my knee! "Know", "understand", "recognize", "learn", and "realize" are frequently confused.

* They do not ^(learn) understand at the same ^(pace) time.

* During the practice teaching, I ^{found out (or realized)} knew how hard teaching was.

* I was very surprised when I heard ^x that she got ^{married} marriage, but soon I ^{realized} recognized that it was not such a surprising thing, because she is twenty three years old, and that is old enough for ^(a woman) women to marry.

* I ^{realized} knew how much I ^{had} looked up ^{to} him after he died.

In some cases the meaning of what they wrote was the reverse of what they had intended.

* I was very sad, because unless I ^{passed (that)} failed this test, I couldn't have finished my curriculum.

- * About a week ago, ^(my) Father ^{got (was given)} gave his bonus.

In the examples below, verbs expressing a process were confused with verbs which express a state.

- * I hope that he will be ^(become) a graceful dog.
- * ..., I showed a picture of Sazae. Then, instantly they ^{became} kept silent, ^(looking at it) watching it, and began to laugh, and got interested in English class.
- * To my disappointment his car gradually ^(overtook) (went faster than) mine and I ^{couldn't} ~~x~~ ^x ^(keeps) could no longer catch up with him.

8b. Conditional Case Error

E.R. 15%

If we hadn't been so hungry, we ^{wouldn't have wanted} didn't want to go to go there. - Or, we ^{wouldn't have gone} wouldn't have gone there.

- * I know it ^(would have been) is the ^(had I done it) best that I do it / taking a long time and consider ^{ed} a lot of things.
- * If they ^{would} sit more ^(carefully) neatly, one more person ^{could} can sit there.
- * If I ^{made} make good use of ^(my) time, I ^{would} must be able to have time with my heart.
- * I wonder why she needs to do such things early ^{in the} y morning every Sunday? If she ^{only} sometimes ^{did} do so, I could bear ^(it) them.
- * But even ^(though I wasn't able to) if I could not ^(get) acquire a good mark, I will be ^{(am en-} glad to continue to ^{couraged to)} ^(pursue worthy things diligently) do one things hard.

- * And they ^{planned not} didn't plan to make ^a bathroom because if the new house ^{had a} had the bath^xroom, my parents ^{thought} would think that I ^{wouldn't have gone} didn't go to the old ^{house?} one.

8c. Difficulties in Constructing Correct Verb Phrases

E.R. 88.5%

Errors in the present and present continuous cases

- * Once I ^{am or get} used to getting up early in ^{the} morning, I think it ^{will not be} is not difficult to keep early hours.
- * Now we ^{'re} get ^{ring} very big berry and it's getting ^(ripe) red, so I am ^{watch it very} looking at it so often, so the birds cannot eat it.
- * My pet peeve is the person who ^a is ^{sits} sitting with his legs crossed boldly in the ^a crowded train.

Errors in the narration of past events

- * In May, we had a game which ^{was} is very important and hard as ^a team match.
- * There are two elevators, whose doors opened at the same time. In one of them there ^{were} are many young ladies, and ⁱⁿ the other, many university boy students.
- * First, I ^{was} disappointed to hear that I ^{would} will stay in Brighton, not in London.
- * This year, I couldn't get this regular position on the team. It was ^a big shock because I have confidence that I ^{had} since trained very hard.

Errors in the description of future plans

- * I ^{am going to} (go to) America because I want to ^{(learn) about} know ₁ America.
- * My summer vacation has ^{will not be} not long period. ~~X~~
- * I ^{'ll} tell you ^(about) a terrible experience.
- * Those things mean I ^{'ll} live with my mother, only ^{the of us} ₁ two.
- * It is my first trip to European countries, so I'm ^{will be} looking forward to everything ^{that will} ₁ happen there.

Future in the Past

One of the more difficult constructions results when narrating a situation in which a consideration of the future was required at the time of action.

- * We considered what ^{would be} was the best present.
- * So it was ⁿ planned ^{would leave} that the bus left from the school by 5:30.
- * The doctor told us ^(she should be given an) to give her a ^(have) operation at once, and that it ^{would be} was easy to operate ^X itself.
(that the operation would be (rather) simple.)

8d. Errors using "can" or "could"

E.R. 20%

Usually, "could" should be avoided, as shown by these examples.

- * In particular, we ^X could ^{had} have a chance of seeing a shooting star sometimes.
- * I enjoyed swimming, but the time I ^X could enjoy ^{ed (myself) was} most is at night.

By the end of the season had been able to take part
* After all (I could appear in only three games (Regular
players have to play ten games) and we ^{*weren't able to*} couldn't get the
or *(we failed to win ~)*
first prize.

* But I ^{*had*} could have funny and confused feelings that
night.

8e. Non-Agreement in Number of Verb and Subject E.R. 25.7%

* The other two ^{*x*} plays tennis very well.

* When my mother ask ^{*s*} me the same thing ^{*(two)*} twice or three
times a day, I soon shout loud ^{*ly*} "I told you about it
or *("I told you about that already!")*
before!"

Using "was" instead of "were" with plural nouns is a common
pattern among uneducated native speakers.

* When it stopped, the rooms ^{*were*} was so hot that we couldn't
sleep.

* A few days later, I saw there ^{*weren't*} wasn't any berries there.

Words between the subject and verb sometimes cause mistakes,
especially when the word adjacent to the verb is plural.

* Each of us, ^{*had or has*} juniors, have to make a book report.

* Even looking at ^{*(cockroaches)*} them ^{*s*} make me shudder.

8f. Errors Using Gerunds E.R. 17%

* On the contrary, if I miss to ^{*eating*} eat even one meal, I can
easily lose ^{*(x)*} my weight.

* Last Sunday I went to ^{*driving*} drive to Jogashima with some of
my circle members.

* I'm looking forward to ^{going} go there.

8g. Errors Using Infinitives

E.R. 19%

* I am going to traveling ^{to} San Francisco and Hawaii.

* We want ^{to} give (as many) plates to customers as possible.

8h. Errors Using Participles as Adjectives

E.R. 9%

* It was a ^{raining} day and it was very cold.

* I've never ^{a (had an accident)} (crushed) in spite of my brake ^{ing} style.

9. Noun Errors

E.R. 60%

This category contains a variety of errors, including choosing the wrong noun, using the wrong form of the noun, omitting the noun, failing to use a better alternate choice, and mistaking one noun for another that is similar.

* The eraser was worn out, but I was very, very moved by her ^{thoughtfulness} mind.

* ^(Late at night) In the midnight, I got up and went out to the ^{way} passage. ^{or hallway}

* I ^a and my team ^{events} mates of the Archery club took part in all subjects [^]; tennis, softball, table tennis, basketball, and badminton.

* ^a Recent Interesting Experiment ^{ence}.

* I heard a very clear bird's ^{song} sing very near my room.

* But the company I ^a serched ^{office} has the main room in Nagoya.

* ^(looked) I sought around me, and under my ^{seat} sheet, etc.

* A special feature of his class was his gesture ^s and play ^{fulness?} ^{showmanship?}

- * A student must study English, mathematics, Japanese, social ^{studies} study, and so on.
- * They do not understand at the same ^{learn} time. ^{rate}
- * When students feel ^(enthusiasm) passion from a teacher, they try ^(x) themselves to understand what he is saying or teaching.
- * I ^{paid} ~~was~~ ^{careful} ^{make} ^{mistake} attention, not to do the fault of yesterday over again.

There is often a use of "sea" when "beach" is correct.

- * As soon as the tests finish, I will go to the sea by ^(beach) where ^{which some} friend ^s of mine ^{have} has their second home.
- * And I have ^(plans) a plan to go to the ^{beach} sea after the camp.

10. Errors Using Adjectives

E.R. 40.0%

- * Then I took the half eaten ^u berries and other damaged berries and put ^{them at} the edge of the veranda in a line.
- * I hadn't played tennis for a long time, and I was ^{pleased} pleasure with my game.
- * A friend of mine sold it to me for a cheap ^(low) price.
- * In the first week when I'd began ^u teaching, I'd found ^(x) ^{not easy} - or ^{difficult} teaching uneasy.

Adjectives expressing quantity caused trouble for some.

- * I think a person such as in Geino-kai ^{one} | ^{never has any} always has no | privacy in his life.

Errors with "so", "so much", "much", and "very"

- * Anyway I have much ^{many} split hairs. - or a lot of split hair.

* My partner was Nakamura, a man about 35 years old. He
was ^{very} kind.

* I'll ~~very~~ enjoy the vacation. ^{very much}

* I am ^{much} very looking forward to it, because...

Comparative and superlative case errors:

* I became more ^{healthier} healthy than I ^(had been) was because of playing
field hockey.

* As a result I became ^{fatter} fat more.

* There were three reasons... ^{the} third was ^{worst} most bad.

11. Errors Using Adverbs

E.R. 31.4%

* I want to spend my summer vacation ~~enjoyfully~~.

* Though I ^{didn't} don't travel very ^{much} little, I spend ^t my summer
vacation ^{ingly (enjoyably)} fulfillly.

12. Errors Relating to Time

E.R. 28.5%

* I ^(can't) can not get up early every ^(in the) morning because I always
^{go} went to bed at two ^{in the morning} midnight.

* My worst habit is that I ^{I get} m bored ^{quickly} soon.

Students had trouble with time references when they were
narrating past events.

* I thought I had to go to Niigata right ^{then (or, right away)} now.

* It was the same place I had visited a few days ^{before} ago.

* ^{The next day} Tomorrow I was going to have the examination to be a ^(an) ^(become)
teacher.

13. Errors using Conjunctions

E.R. 31.4%

"Then" was a major culprit in this category.

- * You might say I have a trial spirit. ^{So I have} Then my hobby ^x is not just one or two, but, in fact, many. ^{hobbies.}
- * She told me we should have a party for him. ^{So} Then, we ^{(had a party for him) ^{did} on ^{the} 15th of June.}

Mistakes with "and" and "so":

- * This place is far from here, ^(That) ^(was) ^(there) ^{so} and we stayed nearby.
- * It was a clean and large public ^(place) ^{and} space, ^{so} each private room ^{was} ^x connect~~ed~~ed by a corridor.

When connecting parts of phrases in negative sentences, students often forgot that the preferred conjunction is "or," not "and."

- * I am not a queer ^{or} and strange girl. Perhaps I am ordinary and conventional.
- * The job was not so pleasant ^{or} and interesting.
- * She said, "I want to be a student again. Working in ^(an) the office is ^{very} so hard.", though when she was a student she didn't like studying ^{or} and college.
- * We decided to ^(go driving) drive and ^(and) drink ^(at) or eat in my house after the drive.

Sometimes the "and/or" swap was made between independent clauses.

- * I can't wake up on time in the morning ^{and} or I can't ^{go to} ^t sleep early at night.

Another frequent mistake was to choose "and" rather than the preferred "but."

- * I am cheerful, honest and considerate to other people.^x
but
And sometimes I am short-tempered when I am very tired.

14. Sentence fragment with "because" E.R. 17.1%

The students were actually very good at creating complete sentences. Except for the many instances of breaking a sentence at "because," there were practically no sentence fragments in all of these student papers.

- * But every day I am fighting with myself in my heart.^x

b
Because if I will eat more, ^x *(I'll gain too much weight.)*
keep eating a lot my weight will be too much.

- (Doctors say?)*
* A doctor says it is a bad habit of eating ^{to eat} before you go
to sleep.^x *b* Because our stomach doesn't work during our
sleep.

15. Comma errors E.R. 22.8%

The number of errors of omission was nearly the same as the the number of errors of commission.

- * It was not an interesting or pleasant incident, but it
was
is the most impressive one for me.

- * One is ^a joint camp with other universities.^x and ^w We are
going to learn *(debating)* "debate."

- * Nowhere I *(looked)* could see my lens^φ. I sought around me,^x and
under my sheet, etc.

- * Then, my stomach made a big sound,^x on the way to ^{the} 30th
floor in the elevator.

The author of the following example intended for the apos-
itive, "where my sister lives," to be an unrestrictive
restatement rather than a restrictive narrowing of the mean-
ing of the proper noun "Belgium." Hence, a comma is
required.

- * Next vacation I want to visit Belgium, where my sister
lives, if possible.

16. Upper case/lower case errors

16a. Upper case which should have been lower case E.R. 8.2%

- * When I was a junior high school student, I belonged to
a ^bBasketball team.
- * My ^sSummer ^vVacation ^{will} has not ^{be} long ^x period.
- * We went to ^{Tomiura}TOMIURA shore in Chiba.

16b. Lower case which should have been upper case (excluding title errors) E.R. 11.4%

- * ^(x) On last ^sSaturday there was a big event. That is, ^{the a}all
Japan ^sstudent ^aassembly.
- * I wanted to say "my ^mmother made me delicious ^(meals)foods
every day."
- * In ^sSeptember, our seminar ^ais going to ^{have a}make ^xsummer camp
in Hotaka, Nagano ^pprefecture.

17. Negative sentence errors

E.R. 8.9%

- * We thought ^(not all)
^(none)the seats were reserved.
- * ^{None}Any of them is not ^xeasy to complete.

- Neither of us went.*
* Both of us didn't go.

18. Miscellaneous errors

E.R. 80%

- * It ^{is} (is a problem for all teachers how to make more students understand.)
- * My student had a test. I'm always anxious about the result of the test, as if I had ^{his} a test. ^{taken it myself.}
- * I drank some things ^{that I was} to ^{be} able to (drink) like water, orange juice, ^{draft?} pure beer and so on to ^(try to) put off "fire."
- * We made ^{lots of} a noise loudly in the room.
- * When I found out her she ^{was} tapping ^{ing} on another girl's shoulder.
- * Something black came into the room and ^{flew} flied from the ^{one} corner to the ^{other.} corner of the room.
- * He hates celery ^{most (of all)} best.

Sometimes the students know the right phrases but use too many of them.

- * (After a while) I could stand up (at length,) but I found that I'd hurt my left (leg on the) knee.
- * We enjoyed the day on his sailboat. He was nice enough to treat us (as) (like) regular crew members.

INTRODUCTION TO PART III

The following section is made up of a few complete student papers, retyped exactly as they were written in their original drafts. The selections, not all of which are from the current academic year, were chosen for interest (not English level) and for the insight they give into student thinking and activities.

With this section, I hope to show how well, in spite of frequent errors, the students are able to express themselves. I also hope that other English teachers might be stimulated by reading the following pages to act upon the suggestions in Part I regarding the use of this type of writing assignment in their classes.

* * * * *

MY WORST HABIT

I sometimes go to my B.F.'s home to ^{boyfriend's} make a cook ^{cook for him.} I go there once a week. I shop before I reach his home^x, ^b But I think only ^{of (that)} the day's menu. In short, I don't ^{remember what} think the food^s that I ^{had} bought before. So the vegetables and other food^s, and the seasonings increase naturally in his dining room. For example, there are two salt pots, three ^{jar of} mayonnaise, ^x and three ^{heads} pieces of cabbage, and so on. Three days ago, I bought^t six onions to cook. I open^e ^(cupboard) a closet^e to put ^x into them^x ^{in a} And a great lot of onions fell down on my head with great noise. ^(!)

The Most Interesting Incident of the Summer

An old junior high school friend
My friend in junior high school got married on last

Saturday. I didn't attend the ceremony but went to the party to which only the new couple's friends came. There

were are about seventy people and I couldn't eat *(very)* so much.

b Because the place was too small for so many people to move.

x a of my is
My another friend and I felt sad because we were looking

forward to eating some good food. Otherwise we didn't want *wouldn't have wanted*

to go there, *(since)* for the husband and we had fought against each *(argued with)*

other a month before. We didn't want to fight because we

met for the first time at that time. But he drank too much

and was too unreserved. And he began to complain about

women. We got angry. And we fought though we *(argued)* *(had)* wanted to

talk happily. So we don't like him so much. But we like

our friend (and food), *so* And we went to the party. But the

husband was *again (ill mannered?)* unreserved for all *(in)* *(ways)* (things.) For example, he *asked* told

me "Why don't you fight, today?" loudly. Why can't he *couldn't have* talked

about *(casual)* easy or happy things? It was *a* very strange party.

* * * * *

The Most Interesting Incident of the Summer

I went to Hodaka this summer. It was *(for)* my seminar camp.

We studied a lot but we also *had* have a party every night. On

the 2nd day, we talked about a strange person who was in our class. One day in the English Conversation class, ^(someone) one asked him if he had a girl friend. He answered, "Too young." It was the only answer that he ^{gave} said to the question. ^(To) For the question, "What do you do on Sunday?," he answered, "Close the window." We talked ^{to} each other ^{about} how strange he was! I had a very good time at each party, ^(and) but this was one of the topics which we laughed ^{about} very much.

* * * * *

My Pet Peeve

My pet peeve is a smoker. I hate the smoke of cigarette. Especially, ^I if someone smokes while I am eating something good, I really hate him. ^{Because} ^{the} smell of the smoke kills the good smell of the food.

Second, ^(ly) ^a in the cafe, the smoke make ^s my hair and my clothes ill-smelling. Even just after washing my hair, if I ^(get) ^{near} am in front of a smoker, I will feel that my hair has been ^{become} dirty. After I go to ^a the cafe which is full of smoke of ^x cigarette, I always take ^a shower.

Third, ^(ly) ^(a) in the train or in the car, if there are many smoker ^s and there is little fresh air, I will feel sick at once. So, I always take ^a no smoking car. I am happy that ^(no one in my family smokes.) none of my family is a smoker.

My Pet Peeves

I don't like my ^{neighbours} neighbours' wives. They are very ^{yossipy?} noisy. They want to see ^{(investigate?) or (know all about my life)} my life and they are always talking in front of my house about the other people's life style. So I don't want to meet them, because I must ^{greet} salute them, "good morning", ^H "hello", and ^{ng} "good evening". They stare at me from head to feet and ^{(only) (do)} then they ^{return my greeting} salute me. I don't like them! I don't ^(become) want be like those wives.

* * * * *

My Pet Peeves

I hate those who call ^(a) for a long time at the telephone box. Of course they know that there is a long row of people in front of the box, but they keep on ^{talking} calling.

I hate those who try to sell things by telephone. Once I begin to ^{listen to them} hear their saying, it is very hard to hang up before I promise him (or her) to meet. So I always answer those telephone calls like this: "Sorry, but Yasuyuki hasn't come home yet."

I hate the trucks that ^{sk} change newspapers for toilet papers. They often disturb my comfortable sleep or my study with their loudspeakers.

I hate the railway crossing near Seijo Station. At 8 o'clock in the morning it often never open^s for ten minutes,

or even more than that. I suppose many students have experience ^{d/ being} that they are late for their first class because of the hateful crossing. Of course I am one of them!

My cat often gets up late, especially in winter. When I must get up at 7.20, feeling very sleepy, he is still sleeping beside my pillow. I hit him on the head and he opens his eye (not eyes) for a few seconds and then begins to sleep again. So I cannot help ^(falling back) relapsing on my bed!

* * * * *

My Worst Habit

I sometimes speak to a friend on ^{the} telephone for a long time. The ^{my} record ^(for) of the longest ^(call) talk is seven hours. When I ^{had} ^{to} ^(only) talked ^{to} the friend for ^{only} two hours, I could not hang up ^x. Because I don't like the loneliness after ^{ward} ^(I hang it up) ^{x x x}. But I decided that I ^{ll} never talk for such a long time ^{again} because I felt sick the next day.

* * * * *

Crazy Spring Vacation

During my spring vacation, about two and half months, I was always ^{either} eating ^{or} but sleeping. I'm sure now ^I it was what was called "overfed" Actually I ate everything anytime ^{is} as I could by myself, ^{and} ^I went to the various restaurants around

Tokyo^x, for example, I love Indiaⁿ food so that I appeared
 three days in the same res_taurants, and ^{also ate} Chinese food or
 humberger^s, and so on. Especially as ^{with a} humberger^s, I tried to
 compare which shops gave the most tastely^x, and reasonable
 b^urgers. Then Mos^{b?u?} Berger won it. But my crazy interest ^(appetite)
 continued. Every^yday on the way back home, I went to a
 supermarket as Ihii, ^{like 'ishii'?} and put everything that I wanted to eat
 into the shopping bag. Each time I spend^t a lot of money.
 Then I ate ^{the food late at night! a w} them at midnight! - Whole a loaf of bread, cheese,
 a few piece^s of cake^s, cookies, fruit^s, all sweets, everything,
 as if I ate all of ^{until I had eaten all of the food from?} things in the supermarket. At last I
^{spent} lost my market money, while I gained ^(and) terrible^a amount of weight,
 naturally. Some friends who ^{hadn't met me for} didn't meet a few months said,
 "Oh! You look ^a little fat, don't you?" At the ^{that} moment I
^{realized} noticed ^x that how crazy I was. ^(had been)

Now I'm ^{ing} trying to lose my weight and exercise, so I go ^(a) to the
 health club. But I don't want to be Karen of Car^{like}penters. ^{the}
 You ^{must} think how stupid I am, but this is the very ^(a very common) feeling of
 a ^x (young) girl, ^{in her} nearly twenties. ^{(very common behavior)?} ^{for}

(An)
The Interesting Thing Which Happened Recently

Recently I've been absent from school. Every^yday I go to the hospital and back home. So I've not experienced^(any) an interesting thing.⁽¹⁾ In the hospital^{(my) m} Mother is lying with other patients in a room. ^{The} Other patients are old women. And Mother is so bad that she cannot clothe or eat by herself. We employ a helper who takes care of her. She is almost as old as Mother. At first when I went to the hospital, I felt depressed. But as I went there everyday, I made friends with some of the patients. They told me various things about their lives ^(some) a pleasure a hard life. I really ^(realized) thought old women had much more experiences^x than us, young people. Their talk was very useful to me. Especially the helper's story about her life was very shocking to me. She was born in a poor family. Her father was a bad drinker and violent man. She couldn't go to school. She had to work and work all day long to make money. But her father spent the money on gambling. When she protested to him, he beat her violently. She told about her hard life to us, showing the ^{scar?} wound which she got in ^{on?} her back in her childhood. I have never seen such a pitiful person around me. I think students in Seijo University live ^(at) in a quite different world from hers. They are happy and

rich. Recently I thought I was a pitiful girl because I couldn't go to school enough or have a class on account of my mother's sickness. I couldn't work at a part-time job or travel with my friends. And every[✓]day I had to take care of Mother and do household ^(chores) matters. I've been stressed for more than half a year. But after I heard^x the old woman's story, I reflected on myself. I felt fight in me again. I really think it is important and useful to hear other people's stories. It was a wonderful experience for me!

* * * * *

My Summer Experience

I went to England last summer, and I travelled all over the U.K. This story is what I ^(experienced) enjoyed in Canterber^uy.

I visited Canterber^ury at the end of September with a few friends, who I made in a class of the English school. We saw the Cathedral and wandered around, and got tired. We went to a tea-shop and enjoyed tea time. As we finished and wanted to pay^x the check, a friend of mine ordered ^(the) a waitress, "Bill, please." And then after a few minutes beer came before us. We explained, "No, we meant, bill." in vain. For next time ^{the thing} the lovely thing served for us was milk! We, then, ^{became} ^(x)desperated^x, but almost cried, "We want the bill,"

PLEASE!" So she smiled and apologized^g for her mistake. Then kindly and obligingly she brought us some kind of beans. Indeed, that seemed the last straw, but she finally managed to understand what we meant^{by the u} (forth time!) Thus we (got) won the bill at last.

Anyway we lost the self-confidence about English, but they say these things often happen in the improving stage of English acquisition.

Don't feel bad. She may have been a foreigner herself. There are many foreign waitresses working in England. R.O.

* * * * *

The Love of my Parents ----

My parents have been getting along very badly for many years. Since I was a little child, I saw many quarrels between them. I heard them blaming each other every day. There was a very cold air^(atmosphere) in the house. (I dare say it was a house, not home. I really felt so.)

I knew that they wanted to get divorced but they couldn't for ^xa financial reasons and for the children's future. My father is a type of typical old Japanese husband to his wife, though he has very international ideas concerning other things. (I think his ideas^{are} mixed up---) He had a

girl-friend outside, and came back to the house very late almost every night. He didn't like his wife--my mother, to go out. He called her "the maid". My mother has been tolerating such treatment by her husband. It was the only ^{thing she could do} way of her because she didn't know how she could live by herself, alone.

I felt very sad to see them and I preferred going out when they were at the house. But gradually I became a little bit accostomed to it. ^u maybe it was that I was neglecting to see and think about it. I thought I would never marry.

But recently, I realized that my mother ^{is} ^{ing} looked happier than before. She doesn't cry as much as before. She often laughs, ^(and) she often has smiles on her lips. And one day she said to me after the dinner when my father was out. "Ran, I think it's important not to give up anything. My belief, I've got recently, in my life is tolerating ^(ion) If you tolerate and never give up, everything ^{will} work ^x it out," and she told me about father's recent change.

Actually my ^f ^(has) Father changed, I could recognize it. How should I express the change?! It's so hard to tell in words---but it seems ^{to} for me as if his eyes are now looking inside the home, though they were looking outside before.

I often hear that most bad husbands, violent, selfish, and unkind will turn^{out to be} to "not so bad" ones when they become old. But I was thinking that such a thing would never be (*true of*) applied to my father. I thought he would never change whatever would happen to this world. I was really afraid that there was *a strong* possibility for my parents to get divorced^d after my sister and I *became* (would have get) independent from them.

But, unexpectedly^x, he has changed recently, anyway. I'm relieved^r thinking of my mother. She's, anyway, happier than before, and it's really good for the family. I also feel happier for some --- but, then, at the same time I'm afraid of my future. I wonder if I'll *(also)* have such tragedies *(in)* of marriage? and if I'll *(do)* have them, *(will I be able to stand up to)* can I stand with *(them?)* And, if tolerating so much so long *is* really worth *such effort*, hard doing to be happy in my life?

Part IV A Summary and Checklist

(of areas for teachers
to re-emphasize to their students)

The following "top 21" rules and admonitions were selected as covering the high frequency error areas in which focused teaching and study effort is most likely to result in marked improvement:

1. Pay attention to whether nouns used are singular or plural. Use "a," "an," or "the" with the former, and usually "s" or "es" with the latter.
2. Pay attention to tense, especially simple past tense, changing the verbs accordingly. Use the past perfect when from a certain point in the past the narrator or subject looks back on earlier action. Ex: I ~~didn't~~^{hadn't} play^{ed} tennis before last Sunday.
3. Capitalize titles and proper nouns including weekdays, months, and prefectures.
4. The two most common ways to render dates are "On March (the) 22nd..." or "On the 21st of December..."
- 5a. Don't use "to" before a gerund. However, "to go" is fine.
Exs: I'm going to go skiing. I'm going ^(or to go) to shopping.
- 5b. Don't use the preposition "to" before the following words: abroad, home, there, or before compound nouns such as outside, downtown, or upstairs.
6. Remember that adjectives and the first part of compound nouns are singular. Exs: ^a2 day^s trip, ^ashoe^s store
7. Be cautious of beginning a sentence with "because." Students usually create sentence fragments when they do so.
Ex: I'm very happy^x [&] Because the rain has finally stopped.

8. "Could" is much overused. Ex: I could find out what my grade was. Or, if you really want to emphasize the idea; Ex: I was able to find out...
9. "Enjoy" is overused. It does not quite include or substitute for doing something. Enjoyment is a result or happy accompaniment of an action, not the action itself. Ex: (to initially inform) I enjoyed playing tennis yesterday... (and if you insist on making us all envious)... and really enjoyed it.
10. Usually replace "and" with "or" in a negative sentence. Ex: I can't swim, ski, ^{or} and ice skate.
11. "So" and "very"--Except in a few trite expressions, such as the bride's gush "Oh, I'm so happy!", statements needing simple amplification should be modified with "very". "So" needs a conclusion. In the bride's case, it is implied--"I'm so happy I could (cry!)" Exs: It rained ^{very} so hard. It rained so hard that we had to swim. The second example is grammatically correct (though of doubtful truth).
12. Learn which of the most commonly used nouns are normally uncountable and treat them accordingly, that is, don't use articles and plural forms. Exs: bread, rice, all liquids, hair, fruit (the word), luggage, baggage, music, work, homework, scenery, etc.
13. Possessives (especially inanimate) are often awkward and unnecessary. Exs: our school's ^(X) campus, my home's ^(X) garden, the hospital's ^(X) room, my seminar's ^(X) teacher
14. Put yourself last in a pair or group. Ex: ^X I, ^M my sister, ^X and her friend. *and I...*
15. Don't write or say "my friend..." unless that friend has already been named or mentioned. Instead, use "a friend of mine..." or "one of my friends..." To use "my friend"

implies that you have only one friend in the whole world.

16. "Have to" is more commonly used than "must" and, unlike "must," it offers the convenience of having a past tense form. Ex: I ^{had to} must study hard last night.

17. "A lot of" is more commonly used than "much" and has the advantage that it can be used with both uncountable and countable nouns. Exs: I ate ^{a lot} much for dinner. We had ^{a lot of} many beans.

18. Don't use "my" until its yours. Ex: I went shopping to buy ^{some} my shoes. (*for myself*)

19. Midnight means 12 o'clock at night. Don't use it when you mean "late at night," "after midnight," or e.g. "about 3 A.M."

20. In spelling, pay special attention to words with "l" or "r" in them.

21. Don't forget to change the verb (add "s" or "es") when its subject is third person singular.

Often Confused Words and Phrases

Because of similar meanings, the words below are often confused. It's quite possible for the word or phrase on the left to be the best in a given situation, but students should be cautioned that they are often less appropriate than the words and phrases listed in the center column. On the right side of the page, some examples have been included to add further clarification.

say	tell	I have a story to ^{tell} say.
come	go	
bring	take	
see	look at, watch	
know	learn, understand, hear, discover, find, find out, realize	
early	quickly	My mother said ^{to} get up quickly early!
find out	find	I found out my purse.
by	until	I'll work on it ^{until} by late Sunday night. I must turn in this report ^{by} until Monday.
chatter	chat	
get in/on	ride	I (^{rode} got on) the train from Shinjuku to Seijo.
get off	get out of (a car)	

put on	wear	I ^{wore} put on my new dress at the party.
put off	take off	
ashamed	embarrassed	I was ^{embarrassed} ashamed when I slipped on the rug.
hate	dislike	
silent	quiet	The children were very ^{quiet} silent.
be	get or become	I want to ^{become} be more relaxed as I grow older.
narrow	small	My room is very ^{small} narrow.
cry	shout	
borrow	loan, rent	We ^{rented} borrowed a row boat at the lake.
by	because of	I get angry ^{because of} by the phone.
tiresome	tiring	
dust	trash or garbage	
had to	should have	I ^{should have gone} had to go there today.
both didn't go	neither went	
think	wonder	
hardly	hardly ever	
almost	most of, almost all	We ate almost ^{all of} the candy.
exercise	practice	
wound	injure	

man	person (male or	I am not a ^{woman or person} man who likes
	female)	parties.
sometimes	occasionally, rarely,	
	often, frequently	
go to	get to	I always go to this
		this university just
		in time for class.
wish	hope	
sunburn	suntan	I want to swim and get a
		<u>suntan</u>
		sunburn.
cut my hair	have my hair cut	I'll go to the beauty
		shop to ^{have my hair cut.} cut my hair.
wake up	get up	
accident	incident	

A GUIDE FOR
THE USE AND NON-USE OF "THE"
WITH PROPER NOUNS

1. PLACE NAMES

<u>THE</u>	<u>NO THE</u>
hemispheres	continents
the Western Hemisphere	Asia
rivers and canals	countries
the Mississippi River	Brazil
the Panama Canal	states & prefectures
oceans and seas	Texas
the Pacific Ocean	cities
the Japan Sea	Nagano
peninsulas	sections of cities
the Izu Peninsula	Shinjuku
deserts	avenues and streets
the Sahara Desert	42nd Street
buildings (usually) and ships	parks and squares
the Marunouchi Bldg.	Central Park
the Queen Mary	mountains
bridges (in the U.S.)	Mount Everest
the Golden Gate Bridge	islands
tunnels	Tahiti
the Lincoln Tunnel	lakes
the ~ of ~	Lake Michigan
the (Bay) of (Biscay)	harbors and bays
the (Gulf) of (Mexico)	Singapore Harbor
the (City) of (Rome)	falls
groups of states (unions, republics, etc.)	Niagara Falls
the Union of South Africa	beaches
groups of mountains (ranges)	Shonan Beach
the Japan Alps	religious place names like
groups of islands	"Heaven" and "Hell"
the Canary Islands	
groups of lakes	
the Great Lakes	
the East, the Orient, etc.	Southeast Asia
the Kanto Plain	northeastern Japan
the Kansai District	Kansai

THE

museums
 the Goto Museum

hotels and inns
 the Imperial Hotel

institutes
 the Red Cross

centers
 the Foreign Student Center

banks
 the Chase Manhattan Bank

departments
 The Department of (State)
 the State Department

ministries
 the Ministry of (Justice)

railroads
 the New York Central

department stores
Macy's
hospitals (usually)
Bellevue Hospital
abbrev. of institutions
(frequently, but not
countries or the U.N.)
NATO
stations
Yotsuya Station

the (Sony) Corporation	Sony
the (General Electric) Company	General Electric

The University of California U.C.
(Iowa State) University

newspapers
the New York Times

Magazine is not part of the name	Magazine is part of the name
the (Reader's Digest)	(Time) Magazine
the ~ Monthly	(The word "magazine" is
Report	often omitted)
Review	
Journal, etc.	

(must be memorized individually)

The Grapes of Wrath	West Side Story
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titles without names	names
the Ambassador	John
families	title and name
the Joneses	Ambassador Smith

Some Elements of Style

Word Division

Unlike Japanese, in which there is no requirement to keep the characters of a word grouped together, words in English are treated as single units. The best advice to students of English in regard to word division is usually: 1) Don't do it. (If it is too long to fit as the last word on a line, it's safer and usually better to move the entire word to the next line.)

2) When you have an extra long word and really want to divide it for the sake of balance or paper economy, use the following guidelines:

- a) Divide only between syllables. (Please consult a dictionary or other reference.)

Exs: birth-day, never bir-thday or birt-hday

- b) Don't divide at the end of the first or last lines of a page.
- c) Don't divide the last word of a paragraph.
- d) Each part of the divided word should have at least three letters.
- e) Don't divide a word with five or fewer letters.
- f) Don't divide a one syllable word, no matter how many letters it may have. Ex: through
- g) If a final consonant is doubled before a suffix, the added consonant goes with the suffix (e.g. allot-ted). However, if the root word ends in a double letter, divide after the double letter (e.g. pass-ing).

Use of Pronouns

Just as speakers of English tend to avoid repeating a verb or predication, they tend to avoid repeating a noun or noun construction in the same sentence or a following

sentence. There are several ways to do this, such as substituting "kind" or "type" for uncountable nouns and for countable nouns substituting "one" or "ones." One way that students often overlook is the substitution of a pronoun like "it," "him," "they," "some," or "any."

For better writing style, using more pronouns (after the noun has been identified) is recommended. Please note the following example:

* My ^fFather drinks a lot of sake. (^{He}) My Father often gets drunk and argues with my ^mMother. (^{She}) My ^mMother and I both wish (^{he} my ^fFather) would stop drinking.

Use of Conjunctions

For stylistic reasons the student should be cautious about beginning sentences with the conjunctions "and," "but," and "so." For variation he or she might make more liberal use of these words: besides, furthermore, incidentally, by the way, in addition, moreover, afterwards, at last, later, next.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report has been twofold. First, an attempt has been made to categorize and highlight the areas of English that are most troublesome to Japanese students. While many of these have surely come as no surprise, it is hoped that by confirming what is suspected, and by perhaps shedding more light on other areas, the reader will have an additional source of information to draw upon when considering teaching plan priorities. Part II contains information regarding error categories and percentages, as well as examples taken from the student papers.

The second purpose of this report is to offer help on how to treat the ills that have been categorized in Part II and that have been further illustrated in complete papers in Part III. The intent has been to accomplish this purpose by describing a classroom method and by providing a check list of the most vital areas for student study.

The classroom method is not offered as a cure-all to replace strategies currently being used. Rather, it is a plan which might augment the methods that teachers are already successfully using. Part I contains a description of the details of that method, and some general suggestions concerning paper correction and teaching psychology.

Finally, the check list provided in Part IV will hopefully serve as an aid in the determination of teaching priorities. It may also serve as a handy reminder and quick reference for planning classroom activities.

SUGGESTED 'PERSONAL' TOPICS
FOR
SHORT STUDENT PAPERS

About Myself - Why I Am Different
My Most Interesting (Recent) Experience
My Earliest Memory
My Pet Peeve(s)
My Worst Habit
My Hobby (or Main Interest)
What I Like (or Dislike) About My Present Life
My Club
My Favorite Possession(s)
In What Ways I Am Like (or Unlike) My Parents
My Happiest Time / Moment
My Hometown / Neighborhood
My Favorite Entertainment / Activity
Something I'm Proud of
Something I Can Do Well
Something I Wish I Were Good at
My Biggest Regret
My First / Last / Present Love
My Most Frightening / Dangerous Experience
Some Interesting Work I've Done
My Favorite Pet
Some Good / Bad Luck I've Had
My Best Friend / What Makes a Good Friend
An Argument or Disagreement I Had with Someone
Good and Bad Things about My University
Problems I Have / Had with My Family
How I Spent My Last Vacation
The Last Time I Was Really Angry
My Most Embarrassing Experience
An Amusing Experience
Something I Want Very Much
What Makes Me Happy and Unhappy
The Most Difficult Job / Thing I've Done
Something I'm Looking Forward to
My Hopes For the Future
(Write one page on any subject you like)