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# A prolegomenon to a study of editorial practice: translating nihongo into English

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## Abstract

Each language offers its users a somewhat different (at times very different) view of the world, and when two languages also differ markedly in their lexis and syntactic surface structure, it is not easy to translate from one of these languages into the other. This is certainly the case when translating from **nihongo** into English. And though all languages possess ways of connecting utterances together and of giving consistency to their modes of reasoning, they do not always use the same linguistic devices to do so: this, again, is true of English and **nihongo**. When one's mother-tongue gets in the way of one's competence in the target language, this is known as mother-tongue interference; and when native speakers of **nihongo** aim to write in English, the linguistic patterns of their mother-tongue regularly prevent them from "chaining" their sentences together in the manner which is common to English, thus failing to achieve *cohesion*; they also prevent them from giving their arguments the appearance of logical consistency, thus failing to ensure *coherence*. This essay therefore aims to offer a preliminary analysis of some of the different ways by which the two languages achieve cohesion and coherence, and of the particular problems native speakers of Japanese experience when they wish to write academic papers in English. The writer bases his analysis and arguments on 20 years' experience of editing such texts, and the conclusions he has drawn from his experience. He balances this with a careful look at a recent book (by a Japanese scholar) which offers one of the

first coherent accounts in English of the structure of Japanese discourse. The writer hopes, by these means, to lay the foundations for further study of this most difficult, yet vitally important, issue.

**Keywords:** *mother-tongue interference, cohesion, coherence*

## Introduction

For the past 21 years, I have spent a fair proportion of my time editing papers written in English by scholars whose native language is Japanese. I have also, over 15 years, held a translation/composition class in The Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Hokkaido University, and, latterly, at Hokkai Gakuen Daigaku. Although the editorial work is demanding and can be exhausting, I have learned a great deal from it: not only about the subjects of the papers (from soil chemistry and cancer to the reproductive habits of frogs and pollution of the environment), but also about the habits of the Japanese language, **nihongo**. Although my knowledge of spoken Japanese remains rudimentary and I cannot read it, I have, over the years, come to recognise certain recurrent instances of faulty construction and misplaced focus which most translations from **nihongo** into English appear to share, and thus to exemplify.

I have also learned rather a lot about my own mother-tongue. I thought, of course, that I knew something of its workings, but I have been surprised, and at times ashamed, to realise how much I had, and still have, to learn about the language which I have spent a lifetime doing my best to use well. I have learned consciously, in addition to understanding intuitively, not only how to write sentences so that the new information comes in the appropriate place and with maximum

rhetorical effect, but also how to link and chain sentences so that they form a logical and coherent whole. I have learned this theoretically from studying the works of scholars like Michael Halliday, and practically by having to rewrite texts where these features, as they are commonly expressed in written English, seem to be absent<sup>1</sup>.

As I spend much of my editorial effort not only reversing the order of the elements in particular sentences but also re-arranging the sequence of those sentences so as to create coherent paragraphs, I have come to understand (or believed I had) that at the level of both the sentence and the paragraph written Japanese and written English employ radically different rhetorical and logical strategies. This is not to say that Japanese is illogical or—as frustrated native speakers of English and other European languages have sometimes alleged—alogical. If it were either, Japanese scholars would not be able to make sense of the notions which writers of English convey while obeying different logical rules. It is simply to affirm that to someone who must grapple with transliterated texts the Japanese language appears to achieve logical coherence in ways that differ markedly from the manner in which the English language does the job.

I have arrived at this conclusion by inference. In text after text, I have fallen back on Halliday's model of an English sentence (to which I shall come, Section 3) when I have needed to dismantle and re-assemble sentences whose sequence of events—in terms of what is normal in English—often seems back to front or inside out. I have supposed that the regularity with which I come across these more or less identical malformations must indicate a match between them and the discourse and surface syntactic structures of the Japanese language which—when (to all appearances) straightforwardly transliterated into English—seem so confusing and, indeed, illogical. I have kept photo-

copies of nearly all these texts and now have boxes full of them. For years, I have intended to lick my observations into some kind of shape, but have so far written no more than one short paper on the topic: *The Whispering of the Unseasonable Worm*<sup>2</sup>.

The labour of creating a data-base of sentences which would exemplify one or another of the anomalous linguistic features of English texts written by Japanese scholars is a task for which I am not at all suited, and even if I were, I have never so far had the time, although I have, for years, hoped that in my retirement I might be able to make a start upon such a task. I now doubt, however, whether I shall ever manage to find the time or the energy—or the necessary computational facilities—to do so. Which is why this paper is only a prolegomenon to such a work: a clearing of the ground and a staking out of the foundations upon which a later structure might perhaps be built<sup>3</sup>.

Until very recently, all my thoughts about this most difficult yet basic aspect of inter-lingual conversion have been arrived at, as I have said, by a process of observation and induction, and I have hesitated to commit myself to paper partly because I have had no knowledge, practical or theoretical, of whatever principles Japanese rhetoricians themselves consider to underlie the general management (both syntactic and semantic) of Japanese texts. That ignorance has now been remedied, at least in part, which may be why I am emboldened to make at least a start on an enterprise which, were I to set about it seriously, would occupy me for as many years to come as the gathering of the material (the data) has kept me busy in the years gone by.

In 1998, Cambridge University Press published *The Principles of Japanese Discourse* by Professor Senko Maynard of Rutgers University. Professor Maynard's book has given me just the information that I

have always lacked and knew that I needed. She may be surprised to learn that her book has been used in this way since it is actually a textbook for advanced students of Japanese who are learning it as a second language. Yet this makes the book all the more useful (from my reverse angle of approach) since its expositions have to be lucid as well as comprehensive (which they are). I shall return to Professor Maynard's book, but I must first offer a brief account of two characteristics of good writing which are just as necessary (Professor Maynard agrees) for successful communication in **nihongo** as in English, or any other language: *cohesion* and *coherence*.

Yet before I do so, I must at least touch on an issue which is perhaps the most problematic (in every sense of the word) for those of us who are engaged in the business of converting thoughts and perceptions expressed in one language into the linguistic forms of another: the attempt, that is, to take thoughts which come to us naturally in our own tongue and re-express them in a language into whose discourse styles and lexis our own assumptions and ways of looking at the world (the idioms and metaphors by whose means we view the world) may not fit anything like as easily. When our own native linguistic behaviour is so ingrained that we are unable to adapt to the different grammatical and semantic regularities of the "target" language and, as a consequence, carry over into that other language our native styles of speech and writing, linguists sometimes refer to this as *mother-tongue interference*. Such reliance on the idiosyncratic characteristics of our mother tongue is, as I imply, not a purely linguistic matter: more is at stake.

## 1 Mother-Tongue Interference

This is a familiar and easily understood issue, if at the same time

contentious. When we learn our mother tongue, we naturally absorb not only its linguistic forms and habits but also its thought-patterns and styles of reasoning, as well as the associated connotations of word and concept which that tongue has, over many centuries, evolved to express—or, we may argue, the ideas that have evolved as a consequence of the way in which the language has grown and changed—or, as is probably most likely, the interdependent and interactive influence of both of these developments upon each other.

The dispute between the innativists, principally Chomsky and his followers, and the evolutionists is tendentious and can be rebarbative, but I am persuaded by an evolutionist like Terrence Deacon since his science seems to be better, as well as his prose. About two million years ago, the human being's language ability began to evolve along with the evolution of the brain: the two things went together, and in Deacon's view, language (however counter-intuitively this may strike us) had the more significant—indeed the leading—role: that is, language is something external to man, not inborn. What the human being possesses, uniquely among the animals, is the ability to use symbols, such as those offered by a language, which is a symbolic system, a system of signs, which he picks up very quickly. How homo sapiens came by this extraordinary ability is the theme of Deacon's wonderful new book *The Symbolic Species*<sup>4</sup>.

Although that paragraph may seem slightly outside the thrust of this piece, Deacon's views confirm my own long-held belief that Sapir and Whorf were not wrong (even if, as the Californian school of cognitive science has suggested, mistaken in some incidental details) when they made their famous assertion that different languages offer their users different ways of viewing the world, that our languages construct our worlds for us. And that, of course, is a relevant issue for

translators who face the task of adapting ideas and concepts at home in one language (**nihongo**) to the codes of a language (English) with which, certainly at surface level, it appears to have very little in common<sup>5</sup>.

Although speakers of **nihongo** and English understand their political and economic situations in ways which are similar enough for communication to be possible and often mutually informative, misunderstandings occur on many occasions because of the different ways in which our languages govern our perception of the world and the way it works.

At its most basic, “yes” in English does not mean quite what its apparent equivalent “**hai**” means in Japanese, even if accompanied by a nod of the head. Neither “hai” nor a nod signify agreement; they merely indicate that something has been heard, and may have been understood. A dozen or more years ago, ignorance of this elementary fact led to a court case in the United States when the FBI set up a sting operation to trap Mitsubishi and Hitachi employees into buying stolen industrial plans. It also led to considerable annoyance on President Reagan’s part when he quite failed to appreciate that if Prime Minister Suzuki said “**hai**”, he meant “maybe, probably not”<sup>6</sup>.

What this may also entail is that however hard I strive to turn the papers I edit into easily understandable English, I may at the same time lose a good deal of the subtlety of thinking which the writer will have laboured to communicate through the intricacies of the original Japanese text.

At the purely linguistic level—if we could really ever separate this from the semantic content—the syntactic, or surface, structure of a typical Japanese sentence differs in most respects from the surface features of a typical English sentence: parts of speech have somewhat



different functions (verbs are often treated as if they were nouns), word forms available in English (such as articles or anything corresponding to the plural ‘-s’) are unavailable in Japanese, while, conversely, the ubiquitous post-particles (essential for marking the place of topics in the hierarchy of the information structure) are not found in English; it is more comfortable to use the passive than the active voice, while devices for chaining are often textually embedded rather than transparent. All of these things make for huge difficulties when the Japanese attempt to write in English since those habits rooted in us since childhood are the hardest of all to break.

## 2 Cohesion and Coherence

I first came across a theoretical exposition of these rhetorical and stylistic habits of discourse management and execution—which writers of English from Chaucer to Evelyn Waugh will have understood intuitively—in the work of Michael Halliday and Henry Widdowson<sup>7</sup>, and ever since I came to Japan their accounts of the principles of cohesion and coherence have guided me in my approach to the teaching of composition.

Much of the meta-language of linguistics—the language that we use to speak about language—is metaphorical<sup>8</sup>. Some of the metaphors were coined recently, but most have a long pedigree. The terms cohesion and coherence are themselves both metaphors, and both come from the Latin **cohaerere**, to stick one thing with another. In the seventeenth century John Locke was already using the word ‘coherence’ to mean “the regular texture of a discourse, consistency in reasoning”, ‘coherent’ to mean “connected”, and ‘cohesion’ to mean “united”<sup>9</sup>. This is more or less how the terms are still used. Cohesion has to do

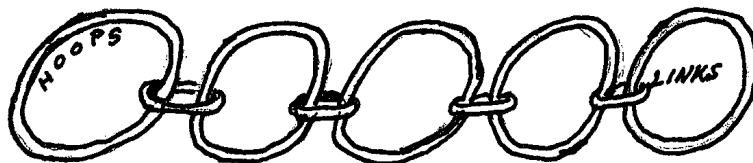
with the way the bits of the texts are stuck together grammatically, while coherence signifies how the ideas in the text fit together, how they sit comfortably with each other, how they hang together logically. Inevitably, the many devices of cohesion often work to ensure a text's coherence. Although Japanese writers no less than writers in English seek for cohesion and coherence, the linguistic devices designed to achieve this result often differ as do the ways in which they are employed. And even if my Japanese students can work out from the **kanji** what 'cohesion' and 'coherence' refer to when they are translated into their Japanese equivalents, they do not actually know them as meaningful words let alone recognise them as concepts.

Today, the concepts are introduced through a series of more recently invented metaphors, although these rely on older half-hidden tropes. Thus, today, linguists sometimes speak of language as a string, sometimes as a chain: a string of words is a chain of discourse, while the process of joining the loops into a chain is often spoken of as 'chain-ing'<sup>10</sup>. The current use of this metaphor depends upon far older tropes, tropes that we no longer think of as metaphors at all: that arguments must hang together, that they must be easy to follow. If we wish a string of words to be a coherent chain of discourse, the ideas which our words express must hang together like beads on a string. We have to be able to follow a text as we would follow a paper chase or the thread with which Ariadne led Theseus out of the maze. Since Professor Maynard translates the Japanese term **bunmyaku** as "threads of discourse" (after Joseph Grimes, perhaps, see note 10), **bunmyaku** must also be a metaphor. If we cannot understand a text, we say that it is difficult to follow: it is incoherent.

If we develop the metaphor of the chain, we can say that a chain is composed of hoops and rings; but the hoops will not hang together

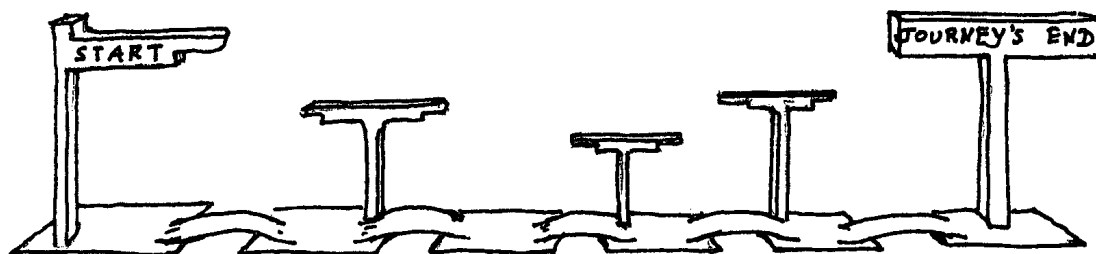
until they are linked together: the appropriate links will give the chain cohesion.

Figure 1



We can also think of a text as a journey. When we make (or take) a journey, we move from step to step or from stage to stage, and these steps or stages will be joined by bridges (what in music are called “bridge passages”), while to pass easily from stage to stage we shall also need signposts. Signposts point the way back as well as the way forward, as the first finger, the index finger points the way: they are indexes; they are indexical. They also help to orientate us<sup>11</sup>. That is to say, whenever we go on an unknown journey (or read a new text), we are always on the lookout for signs that will help us to arrive safely at our Journey’s End.

Figure 2



The links, bridges and signposts are those bits of language with cement or bind the main parts of our textual construction together and this binding of discrete parts together is called cohesion. When the

hoops of the chain or the steps of the journey are arranged in a pattern or an order that we are able to follow—when that is, the order strikes us as logical, with cause preceding consequence, reason going before result—when the argument proceeds chronologically as it were, then we term such a logical arrangement or ordering coherent.

If I have read Professor Maynard aright, however, Japanese texts tend not to go in a straight line from Starting Point to Journey's End, and the markers of cohesion which let the reader know which way he is going may be embedded in the text with greater subtlety, less overtly, than they are usually required to be in English; they may not be overt at all. The metaphor which Professor Maynard uses to describe the progress of a Japanese text is that of stepping stones, and, as we know, stepping stones zig-zag their way across the stream, side-stepping in irregular bursts like a rugby player on his way to touch down the ball between the posts, the goal, the aim, the purpose of the pursuit.

When one looks into the matter carefully, one discovers that the English language possesses a quite enormous variety of means by which to achieve cohesion: verbal (conjunctions of many kinds, coordinators, subordinators, adverbial connectors, enumerators, transitional phrases of all sorts); the repetition of syntactical patterns; the placing of words in sentence positions where they point forward to words that come after them or backwards to words that have gone before.

Although the Japanese language shares many of these tools (even if it does not always use them in quite the same way), it lacks two other means by which English achieves cohesion: the punctuational and the intonational. In written English, semi-colons and colons signify the logical relationship between the sentences or parts of sentences which they serve to link, while in spoken English intonational movement is used to strengthen thematic connections by acting as an echo between

partners in a semantic chain, aural devices to which our inner ears are attuned when we read silently. The Japanese language is also able to establish such echoes, but it does so by other means.

### 3 The Given and the New

The writings of Michael Halliday taught me how to describe the model English sentence. When we set off on a journey, which at its textual shortest is a sentence, we must leave from a starting point. This will be what we are given to start with: a time, a place, and (if I were to use the metaphor of a folk tale narrative) a man about to set off on an adventure. We are offered an entry into our topic: our egress out of the blank page, a gateway into the garden of our theme. What we are *given* is sometimes called “old information”. It will, at any rate, be information and knowledge that the writer has to assume is ground he (or she) shares with the reader: a clearly established and commonly understood position from which reader as well as writer can set off with a certain degree of confidence. The nature of this adventure is in many accounts called the ‘theme’ (as it is in **nihongo**, which has taken the word over from English: **tema**).

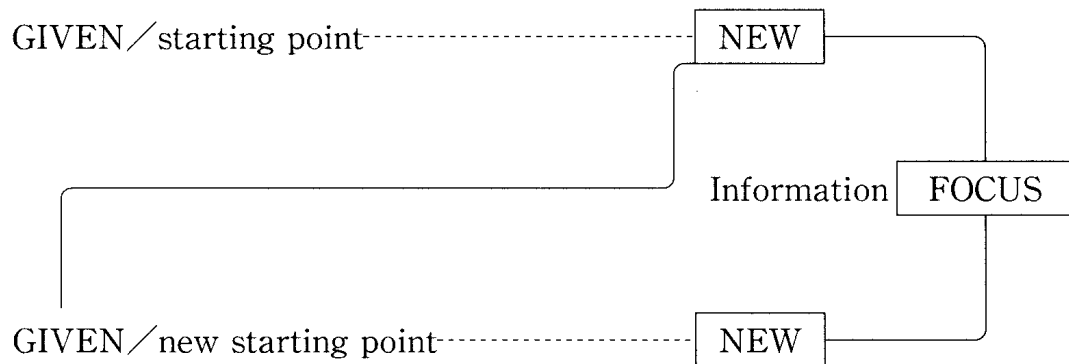
Halliday claims that each piece of “new information” about our topic will be the “focus” of the sentence in which it appears, and since, in English, propositions follow the verb by which they are introduced (or predicated) and thus come at the end of the sentence, the end of the sentence is logically the place where we shall expect to find focused new information. At the same time, speakers of English use far more intonational movement than speakers of Japanese, and they employ the most expressive “tone group” (in Halliday’s terminology) to mark new information. The tone group which displays the greatest amount of

movement will (when it is not marking contrast) be mapped on to the new information: and that, in English (as I have just said), comes as the culmination of the utterance, when all is made clear: the end of the text, and the arrival at understanding<sup>12</sup>.

The same may be said of Japanese (or Latin), but in these languages we wait for the verb, the final element in the sentence, to pull it all together. And though speakers of Japanese also use stress and (a little) intonation, they do so to mark the post-particles rather than new information specifically. Nor is there any “dying fall” to round off the sentence; indeed, Japanese sentences seem to end with a slight rise in pitch accompanied by a thump. So, since the end of a Japanese sentence is occupied by the principal verb (in Professor Maynard’s terms, the “predicate”), the new information—whatever is predicated of the verb—must presumably occur somewhere earlier in the sentence. If the transliterated sentences which I am asked to edit are anything to judge by, this must often be at the beginning, since I regularly have to turn them back to front<sup>13</sup>.

Since, in written English, we are careful to link and chain our sentences together for maximum cohesive effect, new information which comes in the focused position at the end of one sentence will often become the given information at the beginning of the following sentence, leading on to the second step of the process, in a pattern or sequence something like this:

Figure 3



One of my students wrote the following sentences:

3.1 Sapporo is a famous resort in Japan. The Clock Tower is the most popular place in Sapporo.

Clearly there is nothing grammatically wrong with these sentences and the only mistake is to call Sapporo a resort, which is the result of a simple misunderstanding of what the word “resort” refers to. I would wish to suggest, though, that in the second sentence the writer has given us the information the wrong way round. If Sapporo is the topic (or theme), the first sentence might be left more or less as it is, although we must somehow move “in Japan” out of the focused slot since it is not the most important information; but if we decide that we are starting from Honshu and travelling on to Sapporo, we might re-order the elements so that Sapporo occupies the focused space (3.2, 3.3):

3.2 Holiday-makers in Japan enjoy visiting Sapporo;

3.3 The Japanese on holiday like to visit Sapporo;

If, on the other hand, we decide that the idea of an “attractive destination” is the main new idea, “the focus of our attention”, we could

write a sentence like 3.4:

3.4 Sapporo is one of Japan's most popular tourist destinations;

These examples also demonstrate that when we decide to move something into the focused position—because that is what we think is the most important element in the utterance—we have to undertake more than a simple re-arrangement of the sentence elements. (Which is why the re-writing of lengthy scientific texts can be such an arduous and exhausting business.)

After this, however, the re-writing of the second sentence becomes fairly straight-forward. 3.5 would link up most effectively with 3.2 and 3.3, while 3.4 would lead more naturally into 3.6, and in both instances we would link the two sentences with a semi-colon (as I have noted) rather than a period.

3.5 and the most popular place in Sapporo is probably the Clock Tower.

3.6 and once they arrive in Sapporo, visitors usually make first for the Clock Tower.

Of course, it might be argued against me that the second sentence of 3.1 is acceptable if the phrase “The Clock Tower” is intended to be the topic, since when a focused new element is, or has been, “topicalised” it is usually brought to the front. Even were this to be so, however, it often improves cohesion to leave it in the normal place for focused information (especially in scientific texts), since, should we be attempting to chain our sentences coherently, it is likely to become the topic, the starting point, of the following sentence. Those whose work I edit always leave it to me to sort this out for them.



#### 4 Theme/Rheme

Before I move on, I ought to say something more about how linguists distinguish between the use of the paired terms “the given/old and the new”, “the topic and the focus”, “the topic and the comment”. Linguists, who often like to make things difficult, like also to see these terms in an adversative manner: as expressed, say, by the formulation “background/presupposition vs focus”. They have also introduced more arcane terminology to fox amateurs like myself: the term ‘rheme’ (Gk, **rhema**, ‘that which is said’) to balance ‘theme’, as in “theme vs rheme”. The rheme is neither old nor given, neither known nor previously understood or presupposed: it is whatever is proposed as new, the part of a sentence which adds a new comment to the theme.

So, since philosophers of language consider that terms like ‘given’ and ‘new’ are too imprecise, they prefer to analyse sentences in terms of theme/rheme, and find lots of counter examples with which to deflate one another’s definitions. Of this balanced pair of terms the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* says “the theme has the smallest and the rheme the highest degree of communicative dynamism.... The verb is usually in the transitional zone between these two poles”<sup>14</sup>.

This will presumably be easier to observe in English than in **nihongo** (or in Latin), while in some languages the rheme comes, if we are reading from left to right, at the left rather than as, in English, at the right. What is important for our purposes here is that whether we call new information the focus, the comment or the rheme, the most likely place to find it in an English sentence, in association with more dynamic (sometimes called ‘nuclear’) stress and wider pitch movement, is at the end of the utterance. We may sometimes find that we need to

employ “cleft sentences, topicalization and left vs right dislocation” as a means to highlight the stress and so add emphasis, but these are in general of more interest to theoretical linguists than to people who wish to write lucid and coherent prose.

## 5 The Principles of Japanese Discourse

Since Professor Maynard’s book provides me (and everyone else, I am supposing) with the first extended introduction in English to the principles of Japanese rhetoric, I must offer a quick sketch of those of her comments which are of special interest to me, looking at it as I am from my own particular point of view. (Although it must perforce take up quite a lot of the space allotted me for this paper, a quick sketch is what it actually has to be.)

Professor Maynard argues first that whereas English works deductively, Japanese is inductive in its approach; it is also often indirect. For instance, **ten**, the third stage of its best-known structural model (**ki-shoo-ten-ketsu**), is a “surprise turn”, when the argument seems “to stray”, and her students say to her “I don’t get it.” Conclusions are only reached at the end, not stated at the beginning, as she claims they are in English, a claim that I do not altogether accept, as my argument so far will have implied. The writer’s purpose is delayed, and the aim is often to provoke contemplation rather than to persuade.

The movement of a text is often organised by topic markers such as the post-particles **wa**, **mo**, **to ieba** (‘speaking of’), while topic shifting and sequencing are marked by many phrases (additive, adversative or consequential) which have English equivalents, although when translated directly into English, they can often seem rather clumsy and are sometimes not quite the connectives or scene-shifters that a native

speaker would use. That is to say, direct dictionary translations of such terms do not always fit into the English text, however well they worked in **nihongo**. That, at least, is my observation.

Dr Maynard sees three “threads of discourse” (**bunmyaku**) in Japanese texts: the situational, the psychological, and the logical. Although the third style is similar in organisation to the logical structures of English, topic markers are used to distinguish agents from non-agents, and since, in translation, this distinction seems to be lost, it is a point worth noting: indeed, as I shall discuss in more detail later, it is often very difficult to work out who the agent in translated sentences is. Although schools are now attempting to teach students more Western styles of logical presentation, many of the writers whose works I edit are middle-aged and may not have been taught such tricks.

Japanese texts are divided into paragraphs (**danraku**), but these are not paragraphs exactly since they show “weak semantic consistency”; and while many schools may indeed be attempting to teach students to place topic sentences at the front, and to use more demonstratives and connectives to ensure better cohesion and coherence, I see little evidence of this either in the work produced by my writing classes.

The connectives used in English (additive, adversative, causal, temporal) can all be matched in **nihongo**, but are used more frequently in Japanese “to confirm sequential discourse”, while the reader uses them to interpret the writer’s point of view. This is true of English, of course, but I was struck by how often the various devices which Professor Maynard discusses have this function, since it is often the writer’s point of view that I find hard to establish when reading these same works when they are translated into English. This may be because in Japanese the verb tense has such a function, and if the tense is non-past, the writer is present and the commentary exists outside any

narration, which is likely be in the past tense. Since Japanese has few pronouns, verb forms which suggest writer empathy, the writer's perspective and the locations of the participants may be used instead, along with passive or active forms, and, among other things, honorifics, causative constructions and quotations.

Japanese chaining devices also differ from those used in English. Topics are marked with post-particles (not found in English) to signify first references (**ga**) and second references (**wa**), as the articles do in English (if countable, 'a' for a first reference; 'the' for subsequent references)<sup>15</sup>; the verb forms (predicates) signify whether the statements which precede them are to be interpreted as facts or opinions, while consistency is achieved by sticking either to factual description or judgemental opinion, and by signalling, in various ways, whether the topic is agentive or non-agentive (which in English would be indicated by the voice of the verb—whether active or passive—and a consequent realignment of sentence subject and object).

The message of a text "may or may not appear verbatim", and if it appears, it will come at the end of the discourse or paragraph. Clues which help us to find the message are repetition, topic markers, hierarchical semantic networks, predicate types, statements for or against, quotations, organizational markers, the final segment. (Newspaper articles attend to the questions what, who, where, when, why, and how.)

If a text's cohesion is implicit it may also be signalled by the use of co-reference, and these references may be overt or covert. When covert, such references will (as happens in English texts, too) be indicated by sequencing strategies which will rely upon shared cultural knowledge. Since **nihongo** has few pronouns, pronominalisation is achieved by demonstratives, paraphrases, and by anaphoric and cataphoric reference (which I prefer to think of as signposts that point backwards

to what has been said and forward to what is about to be said), as well as by demonstratives which indicate if the information is objective (**sono**) and external (**soto**) or personal (**kono**) and internal (**uchi**). A “prime strategy” is repetition, while deletion is also favoured: deletion is used to achieve the **yojoo** effect.

**Yojoo**, which literally means “remaining”, leaves the reader with a sense “of something unfinished”, “a lingering feeling”, “a response towards the unsaid”; its message is indirect, oblique, implicit. Professor Maynard follows Satoshi Iishi<sup>16</sup> in seeing the difference between English and **nihongo** in this respect as a reflection of Edward Hall’s well-known categories of high context cultures like Japan and low context cultures like the USA, where the citizens of the former can rely on a great store of shared knowledge while the citizens of the later have to explain everything since you cannot be sure that your partner will share your cultural presuppositions.

As a native speaker of the English language myself, but not an American, I find such stereotypical explanations rather too pat, and I wonder if, in this instance, we are really talking about quite the same thing. A love of either indirectness and vagueness on the one hand or a passion of clarity and precision on the other have nothing to do with how much or how little you share a cultural context. Such attitudes may well be *manifestations* of a culture, but it seems a little too self-congratulatory to put this down to Japanese homogeneity when set off against the implied, and less respectable, fissiparity of North American life and culture.

And as an affronted Englishman, I also take exception to this lumping of all writings in English under the blanket of American custom, for while scientific texts will indeed seek for clarity and logical exposition, the best creative works of British (or Commonwealth)

writers of English can be just as oblique, indirect and allusive as similar works in **nihongo**<sup>17</sup>. The difference seems much more to lie with the kinds of writing we are talking about.

In the European tradition of philosophical discourse, which Europe inherited from the Greeks, chronology is valued since cause precedes consequence and reasons go before results. This is not, as Professor Maynard suggests, simply a fondness for syllogisms, but a desire for clarity, a search for understanding (even for truth).

Nonetheless, Professor Maynard argues that the vagueness and ambiguity which may be attributed to **yojoo** is partly a myth, since as long as *enough* information is overt, the discourse is comprehensible. The same would be true of texts in English, and my students have as much trouble interpreting the innuendos of English discourse as Americans may have in interpreting Japanese texts. Professor Maynard says “in **nihongo** we must grasp the unsaid, the deleted, the assumed, what is shared”. This is what a Gricean conversational implicature asks us to grasp, and its workings can be found in plenty of English novels, too<sup>18</sup>.

Rather more valuable from my point of view is the notion that texts in **nihongo** do not move from step to step, as an English text does in my Figure 2 with neat little bridges laid out in a straight row, but moves in a zig-zag manner, over stepping stones, tracking from side to side. I can appreciate the truth of this since this is what the texts I edit tend to do, although of course they also leave things out which a native speaker of English may feel we ought to include if we wish the message to be grasped with the mind rather than “felt along the heart”<sup>19</sup>.

Since the end segment of a Japanese sentence is occupied by a verb, there are a great many ways of signalling the writer’s mood through the verb and its associated features: these will indicate whether the writer

is offering facts or opinions and will affirm the writer's own standpoint. Whereas the end of an English sentence offers us new information, the end of a Japanese sentence is crucial "in defining what a sentence *means*" (my italics). The information predicated by the verb will, however, have preceded the verb and may not occur in any special position, for although "various elements within a sentence have preferred positions", the word order of a Japanese sentence is "relatively free", and while amongst eight specified sentence elements references to time and place come first and second (as they do in English sentences), the starting point comes sixth!

Yet if references to time and place come first in a Japanese sentence, I wonder why references to time almost always come last in sentences I have to edit. Is this something that the writers have been taught at school, as they are obviously (and equally mistakenly) taught that adverbs always come at the end, too, even if separated from the verb by lengthy dependent clauses?

Japanese sentences can also be broken into two, and I sometimes find examples of this in the texts that I edit, often when the second sentence is a 'because' clause. The device is known as post-posing, and the effect is to make the reader pause, which it makes me do, too: the idea is that "the less said the more the reader must work". This again creates the **yojoo** effect and leaves "a sense of something unfinished".

This may be all very well in a literary text but it leaves the reader frustrated when he stumbles over it in a piece of scientific writing, where the writer's aim should be to make the reader's passage through the material as easy, as pain-free, and as communicative as possible.

Professor Maynard also reveals why it is so difficult to teach the notion of concord (agreement between verb tenses) to my students since tense shifting is acceptable for literary effect. Changes of tense indi-

cate how the writer or the characters react to the event. She inadvertently provides an example herself. Either her editor at CUP did not spot it or has accepted the unhappy American habit of dispensing with aspectual forms of the verb (especially that of the present perfect). In retelling a short story, Professor Maynard writes “Although he is delighted in the beginning, he soon realizes that he came too far”. Had I been her editor, I would have suggested that the proper aspectual form for the final verb ought to be “he has come”.

I found the section on quotations particularly illuminating, since it taught me that in **nihongo** the distinction between direct and indirect speech is often left unclear, and that again, if we wish to work out who the speaker is, we must attend to clues. If it is direct speech, the writer will use perception verbs in the past tense, imperative endings, polite forms and appropriate modal expressions; if indirect, none of these will apply and the verb forms will be informal. At the same time, however, the voices may be mixed and markers to indicate who is speaking will be absent. In writings meant to persuade, the writer will often resort to veiled allusions. Quotations “highlight known concepts, ideas, others’ opinions, hearsay”, since “support from others in society adds credibility to one’s view” (p.141).

I find this especially revealing since the texts I edit often adopt versions of this device, and it is difficult to know who is responsible for whatever is being claimed<sup>20</sup>. Often, it seems, the writer hides behind the device so as not to commit himself to an individual opinion, since in Japanese society the expression of individual opinions is discouraged.

A frequent means of achieving such self-effacement is to begin a sentence “it has been said”: **to yuu** in **nihongo**. Such a phrase is commonly used “for expressing general concepts or to indicate indirectness as well” (p.142). The reader is left frustratingly in ignorance, and



I have to question the writer. Who said this? You or someone else? If someone else, who said it, what is his authority for saying so? Such indirectness may be a method of evading responsibility, or it may indicate respect for the out-dated editorial practice of writing scientific papers in the passive voice<sup>21</sup>. At any rate, it does appear to reflect something in the Japanese psyche, and it is a serious impediment to unambiguous communication between languages (and cultures).

The structure of **nihongo** also lends itself to lengthy sentences and when these are transliterated (as so often they are) it may take me thirty minutes to unpick one of them and stitch all the pieces together again. There may be “multiple layers of clauses”, and once more we must use clues to work our way through them. We must look for adjectives, modification phrases, adverbs, abrupt verb-endings, informal verb endings; we must sort through the hierarchies and work out the functions. So says Professor Maynard, and this, over the years, is what I have had to teach myself to do. We must carry out a predicate search and try to locate the topic and the comment. The main predicate is likely to be at the end of the sentence in Japanese, but when the sentence is translated into English it may be anywhere. If there is no overt topic, we must seek for it in the context. Again, this is something that I have had to train myself to look out for.

The tendency of Japanese texts to require the reader to interpret the “writer’s position” since there is sometimes “no indication of the agent” leads naturally to a fondness for sentence constructions in the passive voice, and I was especially struck by Professor Maynard’s comment that “The self-centred description of the event is prevalent in Japanese discourse”. That this attitude should be “self-centred” is, for me, an entirely new way of looking at the phenomenon, since self-effacement, as I have just implied, appears to lie behind the usage. It

is perhaps another aspect of the paradoxical nature of Japanese culture and society: one has continually to come to terms with contradictory characteristics, which may, however, be two sides of the same coin—such as extreme shyness and inordinate pride.

When Professor Maynard uses the term “self-centred”, however, she seems to leave it open to interpretation whether she means this in a quite neutral sense (that this is how the Japanese see themselves vis-a-vis the world, unselfishly, self-effacingly) or whether it is to be interpreted pejoratively: that the Japanese are egotistical and interpret everything that happens as being directed towards themselves. Whichever of these meanings she may have intended, or whether both at the same time, both help to explain why the habit of thinking of oneself as being acted upon rather than as being the actor is so ingrained a habit of thinking and why, if they always see themselves as being acted upon, it is so hard to persuade Japanese writers of English to take an active, positive approach to their narratives, to take responsibility for their actions, to accept accountability<sup>22</sup>.

Professor Maynard uses the theories of one of Japan’s best-known linguists, Yoshihiko Ikegami, to elaborate upon this feature of the language: that whereas English is a “Do-Language”, Japanese is a “Become Language”; that whereas in English the event is the result of an agent’s doing something, **nihongo** “frames” an event as an existing fact, which is beyond the agent’s control, and situations give rise to events almost without human volition: things become the way they are through their own agency. If this is true, the political and moral implications are enormous, and are quite outside the scope of this essay, although they help to explain why politicians can simply dismiss so many of their mistakes as “regrettable”, and why it seems so easy to evade taking responsibility for one’s own actions or admit accountabil-

ity. It will also be reflected in what is written.

## 6 Some Examples

### 6.1 Problems of cohesion

I have no room here to do more than touch fleetingly on a handful of examples, and I begin with an instance of poor chaining and weak cohesion. Since the writer has kindly let me have his original Japanese text for the purpose of this exercise, I asked members of my composition class if they thought the Japanese text was easy to read. They told me that it was well written. Since the same can hardly be said for the English text, we have to assume that its ideas were chained in ways that are perfectly acceptable in **nihongo**:

6.1.a “The waste problem has been a big social issue of these days in Japan. Needless to say the siting and safety of final disposal sites of waste, such as Teshima Island in the Seto Inland Sea, which is notorious for illegal dumping of industrial waste, Mitake Town of Gifu Prefecture, for siting of disposal site of industrial waste, and Hinode town of Tokyo, for safety of final disposal site of municipal waste, there are a lot of unsolved problems accumulated. They are all stood for the problems of environmental pollution...”

It seems to me that our starting point here is the general idea of contemporary social issues; we then focus upon the particular issue to be talked about, waste disposal, which will then, of course, become the theme of the essay. I suggested:

6.1.b “One of the biggest social problems facing present-day Japan is the issue of waste and waste disposal”.

The final clause of sentence 2 is linked to what precedes it ungrammatically as well as somewhat incoherently. It can still be the focus of its sentence, however, but only if the three instances are left until later. We could connect the first two sentences with a simple additive, ‘and’, thus:

6.1.c “One of the biggest social problems facing present-day Japan is the issue of waste and waste disposal, and, needless to say, many of the hazards to safety that have accumulated as a result of the locating and conduct of waste disposal sites remain an unchecked danger to the environment and the people”.

I have also found it necessary to add something in order to achieve a better link with what is to come next, as well as having to modify the lexis for better coherence. Since the beginning of sentence 3 is unnecessarily anaphoric (as it entails picking up too much prior information) as well as getting itself into a grammatical mess by turning what is active into something passive, I bring it forward to introduce the three examples: we are then moving forwards rather than looking back:

6.1.d “We can select three particularly troublesome sites to stand for [to represent] these problems: Teshima Island in the Seto Inland Sea, which is notorious for the illegal dumping of industrial waste, Mitake Town in Gifu Prefecture, which is used for the disposal of industrial waste, and Hinode Town, Tokyo, where people have become seriously concerned about the safety of disposed municipi-

pal waste.”

I then link this up with the claimed or assigned causes:

6.1.e “Such instances of environmental pollution are the result of a number of related causes: the choice of landfill disposal sites, disputes over siting, and so on...”

The original second paragraph reads:

6.1.f “Hence I would like to confirm the point at issue from a general point of view of Japanese waste problem. Japan imports and consumes approximately one-third of raw material and resources to be used. By the domestic consumption of raw material and resources it amounts to about four tons of waste per person on the average annually. Waste is classified into mainly two, domestic and industrial waste. Industrial waste occupies about 80 to 90 percent of the whole waste in weight, to be concrete, about 400 million tons in 1994. Consequently 19 kinds of industrial waste are provided. Some of them “injurious to human health and living environment” are classified into specially managed industrial waste. The definition of industrial waste by item principle has the problem that industrial waste except for the listed 19 kinds of industrial waste, polluted surplus soil for instance, is not included in the list.”

This is extremely hard to work through since, apart from many grammatical mistakes, the organisation of both individual sentences and the paragraph as a whole does not proceed chronologically nor does

it move from cause to consequence. It seems to exemplify Professor Maynard's account of **nihongo**'s weak semantic linking, its wandering character, and its mixing up of an argument's staging and sequencing.

I had again to rearrange the contents, and I had particular difficulty in devising a way of stitching sentence 2 into the fabric of the rest of the paragraph. In the end, I had to use evidence and draw conclusions (the parts in brackets) from material that appears later in the essay to achieve this, which may bear out at least the first part of Professor Maynard's claim that **nihongo** moves by indirection towards its conclusion whereas English needs to make its conclusions clear from the start: I am still resistant to the second part of the claim, however, since though the second bracketed sentence may certainly seem like a conclusion it is material that seems (to me) necessary to achieve effective cohesion and coherence. At any rate, this is what I have finally come up with now, and is, I believe, an improvement on what I sent off to the writer last March:

6.1.g "I therefore need to establish the conditions for disposing of waste in Japan by first considering the relevant issues that must be taken into account if the problems are to be overcome. (We need first to appreciate that) Japan imports at relatively low prices and treats in a regularly wasteful manner approximately one third of the raw material and resources that it consumes. (Thus more waste is generated than would be the case if raw materials were harder to come by.)

Waste itself is classified roughly into two types: domestic waste and industrial waste. In 1994, the domestic consumption of raw materials and resources amounted to about four tons of waste per person annually, while industrial waste amounted to about 400

million tons, between 80 to 90 percent of the total quantity of waste. 19 kinds of industrial waste have been classified and those which are classified as “injurious to human health and the living environment” are located in specially managed sites. Unfortunately, the 19 specified items do not cover every kind of industrial waste: the list ignores, for example, the pollution of surplus soil”.

I am not still not sure what “surplus soil” refers to. As you can see, I had to rewrite this essay totally, all 10,000 words of it (in my version). It is not a way, however, by which I could earn my living, even if it may soon be the only one left open to me.

## 6.2 Problems of passivisation

Professor Maynard suggests that we should look for certain clues when trying to decipher a Japanese text: one of these clues will be the verb. I am always looking for verbs.

6.2.a “Recently, there is a very interesting report being conducted in the state of Washington. The authors questionered 1,449 persons. The conclusion of this report is like this: people of having PSA test for the prostate cancer is highly observed in the group who are taking chemopreventive agents as vitamins and or minerals more than the group who are not taking the agents.”

I am very familiar with this writer’s English, having taken care of it for eighteen years, but I brooded over this passage for some time, before I decided that the clue was “is highly observed”. I had to ask

myself “Who observed what, and where does the “highly” enter the picture?” In the end I decided to rewrite these sentences like this:

6.2.b “Scientists in the State of Washington, the USA, have recently carried out a most interesting survey. After collating the results of 1,499 questionnaires, the authors (of the survey) observed a much closer correspondence between the group of men who were taking PSA against prostate cancer and the group of men who were also taking such chemopreventive agents as vitamins and/or minerals than they were able to find between the PSA group and those men who were not taking the agents.”

### 6.3 Problems of syntax

In Japanese the verb comes at the end of the sentence and the negative particle (**nai**) comes after the verb, at the very end. It is therefore especially difficult for Japanese writers of English to know where to put the negative particle. I frequently come across sentences of this particular type:

6.3.a All of the mice did not die.

This is a transliterated sentence: and it is how you would express the notion in Japanese, though with the particle here coming in front rather than behind the verb (as in Japanese). While it may be possible from the context (and from this kind of Japanese construction) to guess what the writer means, the sentence, as an English sentence, is essentially ambiguous. The writer might have meant to say either



6.3.b Not all the mice died

or

6.3.c None of the mice died

We can be reasonably sure that he meant 6.3.b, but 6.3.c remains a possibility. In texts where the context is less helpful, the ambiguity may remain.

If we wish to use a negative term in sentences of this kind, it is normal in English to put the negative element at the beginning of the sentence, as 6.3.b and 6.3.c demonstrate.

I cannot resist adding, at proof stage, a sentence just written by a student in my second year composition class. He is writing about a waste disposal company which had, for fifteen years, been allowed to dump and incinerate proscribed waste.

6.3.d It was until 1990 that the police didn't raid the company's offices and didn't charge them with breaking the law.

I hope my student now understands that he should have written

6.3.e It was not until 1990 that the police raided the company's offices and charged them with breaking the law.

#### 6.4 Problems of coherence

One of the most elementary logical links is the adversative relationship that is set up between "Although" and "nevertheless" (which, in English, we usually omit), as in "Although a, (nevertheless) b": "Although the weather forecast promised rain, it has been rather a nice

day”. Since the “although a, b” construction is apparently unavailable in Japanese, we usually find instead the construction “a, however (**daga**) b”:

6.4.a “The weather forecast promised rain. However, it has been rather a nice day.”

I find the “a, however b” construction in almost everything I read. It is easy enough to link the two clauses in my example, but in scientific texts the “a” clause can go on for many lines, so that when you come to the “however”, you have to go back to the beginning and read the sentence all over again. I therefore attempt to teach all whose works I edit to use the “although a, (nevertheless) b” construction, since signals which point backwards can sometimes cause the reader confusion and irritation. “Although”, on the other hand, signals the way forward and the reader is aware at once of the logical direction in which the sentence is intending to proceed. At times, I meet with a certain amount of resistance.

The same logical objections can be levelled against the construction “a, so b”, especially when the sentence is a lengthy one. As I hope this essay exemplifies, it is much easier for the reader to follow you if you use the construction “Since/As/Because a, (therefore) b”. You are always pointing out where you are going. English sentences by Japanese writers do not seem to care for this progressive aspect of a narrative, preferring to backtrack or digress, and the writers will also, as I have indicated, break a sentence in two when the second part begins with a “Because”. The result is certainly to break the back of the logic as well as the sentence. Professor Maynard has helped me to understand why this should be so.

The topics dealt with in my next examples may seem a little technical, but they are typical of the material which, over the last twenty years, I have had to try to comprehend:

6.4.b “The glycolipid moiety of LPPG is sensitive to PI-PLC. However, neither gp64 nor gp80 of the cellular slime moulds could be cleaved with PI-PLC.”

I suggested 6.4.c, where the juxtaposition of the two references to PI-PLC strengthens the cohesive link.

6.4.c “Although the glycolipid moiety of LPPG is sensitive to PI-PLC, PI-PLC was unable to cleave either of the cellular slime moulds gp64 or gp80.”

6.4.d “Lymph nodes show little activity (Fig 5). Thus, this membrane bound sialidase acting as neutral pH is specific in thymus among immune tissues.”

I suggested that this should be rewritten

6.4.e “Since the lymph nodes showed little activity (Fig 5), we concluded that among immune tissues this membrane bound sialidase acting at neutral pH is specific to the thymus.”

Of course, it is perfectly possible that I may have misunderstood the writer’s intended meaning.

## Conclusion

As this essay is only an attenuated preface to a much longer work, a work which would attempt to classify every kind of error into which Japanese writers of English fall, with a fair range of examples, all of this related where possible to those features of **nihongo** which Professor Maynard has listed; and as this would probably need to be a joint work carried out by myself (or someone else) and a Japanese colleague, any conclusion I might come to now would perhaps be premature; but I hope that I have been able to indicate some of the issues that might be covered by such a work, and how one might set about treating them: issues which make translation from **nihongo** to English so difficult, at least when our texts are of an academic nature: such “un-scientific” characteristics as the Japanese predilection for deletion, reduction, indirection, a wandering focus, self-effacement, passivisation, an alusiveness which is also elusive, and a marked fondness for putting the cart before the horse.

## Notes

1 During the '60s and '70s, M.A.K. Halliday published many important papers in various journals. In 1964, he collaborated with A. McIntosh and P.D. Strevens to produce *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (Longman), and, in 1976, Longman also published *Cohesion in English*, which he wrote with his wife Ruqaiya Hasan. But because he was British, his invaluable insights appear to have been overlooked as linguists from the USA have elbowed themselves on to centre stage.

Some of Halliday's notions were taken up by Margaret Berry in her two volume *Introduction to Systemic Linguistics*, Batsford, 1975.

2 *The Whispering of the Unseasonable Worm*, published in the Journal of the Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Hokkaido University, 1994,

No 26. This was an analysis I conducted of two thousand translations into English of a single Japanese sentence. It was a very difficult sentence, and the students produced two thousand different versions of it, many of them strangely poetic in a surrealistic kind of way.

3 I have in mind R.B. McKerrow's *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare: A Study in Editorial Method* (Oxford, 1939). This may be rather presumptuous of me, since the editors of the most recent Oxford Shakespeare (Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor) call it a "great" work; it is always treated as important. But it, too, was a sketch and McKerrow never got round to his own edition; and as it was a study in method, in approaches to the task to be attempted, so is this meant to be.

4 Terrence Deacon, *The Symbolic Species*, Allen Lane, 1997. Deacon is a distinguished neuro-physiologist. The first part of the book is about language, symbolisation and the evolution of language; the second explains the neuro-physiological constitution of the brain and how it is likely to have evolved; the third, which considers the making of a computer with the characteristics of a brain, ends with a discussion of sentience and consciousness (which it is hard to imagine computers will ever possess): sentience is awareness of the world outside oneself, whereas consciousness is awareness of one's own sentience. (In *How The Mind Works*, at times a coarse and vulgar book, Steven Pinker appears to use the terms the other way round.) Human consciousness, as opposed to sentience, which is something that we share with other animals, is a consequence of the joint evolution of the brain and language. Evolution "does not build in anything innate", although it can produce something out of nothing, while the ability to use symbols, which is unique to mankind, frees us from the possible and the present since it enables us to look back over history and forwards towards a predictable or speculative future.

Since symbolic representation is the medium of consciousness and can be shared (or communication would be impossible), any future capacity on the part of human beings to make computers which model human brains, will raise, Deacon argues, ethical issues about personhood and its boundaries, questions about where a person begins and ends, and it will have to face some of our "contemporary ethical dilemmas", for example, over

abortion, euthanasia, animal rights. The problems will be compounded since we are still unable, with our human brains, to think straight about mind and non-mind, conscious states and unconscious ones.

- 5 Benjamin Lee Whorf published *Language, Thought and Reality* in 1956 (Cambridge, Mass). Although attempts have been made to refute the strongest form of the hypothesis by those who have found that colour terms tend to coincide across all languages, Whorf's observation (the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) that "people who use languages with very different grammars are led by these grammars to typically different observations and different values for outwardly similar observations" (Whorf: 1956: 20) does seem to square with one's own experience.
- 6 "Suzuki, who?", his compatriots asked when he suddenly and unexpectedly assumed the premiership. When they were told "Suzuki Zenko", they were none the wiser.
- 7 The work of Henry Widdowson, like that of Michael Halliday, is not much referred to in the literature these days but his *Teaching Language as Communication*, OUP, 1978, is still worth reading.
- 8 Professor Maynard is rather dismissive of metaphors, speaking of them, as it has become fashionable to do, as 'deviations', but the metalanguage of any science or academic discipline would be impossible without them. I have, in a number of essays, set out my reason for thinking that metaphor and metonymy are fundamental features of language and language growth. Metaphors are balls sent straight down the fairway, and to call them deviations (as if there was something immoral, certainly distasteful, about them) is wilful blindness in the face of every day usage, which is driven and carried forward by metaphor.
- 9 I take these citations from Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1756.
- 10 Margaret Berry discusses chaining in the work cited above. The most illuminating book that I have read on the topic is by Joseph Grimes: *The Thread of Discourse*, The Hague, Mouton (1975).
- 11 The present uses of the term 'orientate' is a beautiful example, as I have said in other places, of the way in which metaphor and metonymy carry language forward. It comes from the Latin 'oriens', which means 'rising',

and as the sun rises in the east, so, by metonymy, the term was transferred to refer to the east. Since, in Europe, churches were built so that the east window faced Jerusalem (in Hakodate the east window of the Roman Catholic Church very properly faces west), again, by metonymy, the aligning of a church came to stand for the action of lining up anything which had an end-point in view. So, as alignment can come to signify the taking of one's bearings, the term has also come to mean finding one's direction, or having it pointed out to one. The term 'occidens' has only undergone the first of these shifts.

- 12 In a set of examples (*The Principles of Japanese Discourse*, p.152), Professor Maynard says that in the sentence "Kobe is near to Osaka", Kobe is both the topic and the focus of attention, whereas I would have thought that "is near to Osaka" is the focus since that is what is being predicated about Kobe: it is new information about the topic, which is how the term 'focus' is normally used. I think I understand what Professor Maynard is wishing to suggest, but I am slightly puzzled nonetheless.
- 13 I deal with all these issues in "A Matter of Prosody, or Why Prosody Matters", *The Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, Hokkai Gakuen University*, No 7, October, 1996.
- 14 *The Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (originally *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*), ed Hadmund Bussmann, translated by Gregory P. Trauth and Kerstin Kazzazi, Routledge, 1996.
- 15 'An Article on the Article', in the *Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, Hokkai Gakuen*, No 8, March, 1997.

*The Japan Times* was guilty of a horrible misuse of articles when Professor Amartya Sen was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics. It stated that "Dr Sen is a master at Trinity College, Cambridge". Now, I was "a master at Shrewsbury School for eighteen years", along with fifty or so others, including the Head Master, just one among many, picked out of the hat as it were. Dr Sen, on the other hand, is *the* Master of Trinity College, a very different sort of person altogether: he is the Head of the College, elected to that position by the Fellows of the College, a single, unique figure; and there are many who would argue that to be elected Master of Trinity, the college of Isaac Newton and Bertrand

Russell (among others), is an honour of far greater significance and lasting honour than to be awarded a Nobel Prize. I am afraid that this may be another example of the insouciance (even at times contempt) with which *The Japan Times* treats most matters of British usage and custom.

Professor Maynard's editor sometimes lets her down, and in one instance allowed indefinite articles to slip in when definite articles would have been appropriate: "First let me start with a well-known beginning of a novel *Yukiguni* by Yasunari Kawabata (1996: 7)." I may appear to be 'nit-picking', but neither article is appropriate (if I may be prescriptive). If the name of the novel had not been specified, then the indefinite article would have been appropriate, since Kawabata wrote several novels and this is one of them; but the moment that the novel is named, you are pointing to a specific, definite, unique work. Similarly, you could speak about a well-known opening chapter in a work by Kawabata, when neither work nor chapter is specified; but once again the moment the novel is named, it can only have one, unique opening chapter or sentence, and so the definite article is again required. I therefore suggest (or would have suggested): "First let me start with the well-known beginning of the novel *Yukiguni*..."

- 16 Ishii, Satoshi, 'Thought Patterns as modes of Rhetoric: The United States and Japan'. *In Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. by Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, 1982, Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- 17 It was, after all, an Englishman, William Empson, who pointed out how full of ambiguity good writing can be, and that this is not a bad thing: *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 1930, revised 1947, several publishers.
- 18 I am thinking of Wordsworth revisiting Tintern Abbey and the banks of the Wye in 1798:

Though absent long,  
These forms of beauty have not been to me,  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,



And passing even into my purer mind

With tranquil restoration.

*Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey* (ll 24-31)

19 Although we can work out what this exchange from L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (Hamish Hamilton, 1953, Penguin, 1958) is all about, it helps if we know the context ('I' is Leo aged 12, 'She' is Marrison, a young woman):

'Is your hair dry now?' I asked solicitously.

She laughed and said 'Thanks to you bathing suit!'

I felt proud of having been of use to her, but I couldn't think of anything to say to her except, 'Does it only come down by accident?'

She laughed again and said 'Haven't you any sister?'....

20 One of my Japanese friends, a distinguished oncologist, has twice recently told me that he is becoming increasingly interested in the notion of 'accountability', aware that this is not a notion which has ever been much valued in Japanese culture, where each is subsumed in the all, and so individual accountability is passed on to the persons above you in the hierarchy, or below you if you happen to be at the top (it is always "my secretary" who took the bribe: "I knew nothing about it").

21 I have taken much comfort over the years from Robert A. Day's *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. This work was originally published by the Oryx Press, and went through several editions before it was taken over by Cambridge University Press, who published a 4th Edition in 1995. Since Day was for years the Editor of the *Journal of Bacteriology*, his work has given me the courage to turn sentences in the passive voice into active sentences, often against the will of the writers, who think that the passive voice is what editors of scientific journals want. I use Day to confute them: "I herewith ask all young scientists to renounce the false modesty of previous generations of scientists. Do not be afraid to name the agent of the action in a sentence, even when it is "I" or "we". Once you get into the habit of saying "I found", you will also find that you have a tendency to write "S. aureus produced lactate" rather than "Lactate was produced by S. aureus." As Professor Maynard makes clear, the problem for Japanese scholars is compounded since in

their mother tongue they experience life passively as well as write that way.

Sir Peter Medawar (the Nobel Prize winner for Medicine and Physiology in 1960) was also a great advocate of the Active Voice. He had nothing against metaphor either.

22 In the early 80s, soon after coming to Japan, I wrote a little book called *Down to Earth*, which was published by the Shinozaki Shorin Press in 1983, with notes by my friend Nobukatsu Takahashi, and I ought perhaps to have made the connection between passivity and self-centredness since one of the themes of my book is that whereas western societies are centri-fugal, Japanese society is centri-petal. Although I did not mention it in the book, the writing of addresses on envelopes is a prime example (provided by another Japanese friend after he had read my first essay at cross-cultural studies): the western style is to start with oneself and move outwards; the Japanese style is to work inwards to focus finally on the individual person who is the recipient of the message.