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REWRITING WRITING AS TRANSMODAL AND  
TRANSLINGUAL: TRANSCRIBING JAPANESE

By

Alex Way  
B.A., Westminster College, 2009  
M.A., Washington State University, 2015

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
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Department of English  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY

August, 2022



REWRITING WRITING AS TRANSMODAL AND TRANSLINGUAL:  
TRANSCRIBING JAPANESE

By

Alex Way

A Dissertation Approved on

July 7, 2022

By the following Dissertation Committee

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Dr. Bruce Horner (Dissertation Chair)

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Dr. Andrea Olinger (Committee member)

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Dr. Mark Mattes (Committee member)

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Dr. Paul Prior (Committee member)

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to 魁.

Papa loves you to the stars and back.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I send my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Bruce Horner. You helped me shape my ideas for this project from the beginning, and without you, this work would have never been possible. Thank you, also, to Dr. Andrea Olinger for your continual support and encouragement, and for your deep involvement in my methodology section. I would have never found out about diary-based methods without your expertise.

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ABSTRACT

REWRITING WRITING AS TRANSMODAL AND  
TRANSLINGUAL: TRANSCRIBING JAPANESE

Alex Way

July 7, 2022

This dissertation analyzes the use of different scripts in Japanese writing practices to disrupt English-language and Western-centric approaches to multimodal composition. Early chapters establish a brief history of the Japanese writing system (JWS) and explore its functionality. I trace the JWS's development from borrowed Chinese characters (kanji), which were adapted to the Japanese language through the translation process of *kundoku*, to the contemporary system which utilizes the supplemental phonetic scripts of hiragana and katakana, in part, to represent Japanese syntax. Building on this historical context, I demonstrate how the use of the Japanese multi-scripts (hiragana, katakana, and kanji) in conventional and creative writing practices trouble linguistic boundaries and beliefs in the uniformity and stability of modal communication. To illustrate, variations in the meaning, pronunciation, and orthography of particular kanji, as well as variations in one's choice of script, usher in a range of stylistic and semantic possibilities that complicates the linearity that multimodal scholarship ascribes to written text. The final chapter of my dissertation draws on the results of a process diary study, in which Japanese undergraduates track their writing processes when composing academic and non-academic texts, to propose pedagogical practices for the English composition classroom. By placing historical and contemporary uses of Japanese writing in conversation with the scholarly fields of linguistic anthropology, writing systems research, and sociolinguistics, I demonstrate a transmodal orientation to writing and teaching that is strengthened by, and advocates for, greater attention to thinking across languages and modes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: WRITING AS MORE THAN MONOMODAL.....	1
Multimodality, Writing, and Monomodal Ideologies.....	2
Literature Review and Theoretical Constructs.....	7
Chapter Summaries.....	20
CHAPTER 2 EXPLORING WRITING IN JAPAN.....	22
Introduction to Japanese and the Japanese Writing System.....	25
Writing Standardization and Literacy Instruction.....	39
Orthographic Variation and Standardization.....	44
The Contemporary Japanese Writing System.....	48
Research Directions on Japanese Writing Practices.....	51
Conclusion.....	52
CHAPTER 3 TRACING MODALITY IN JAPANESE STUDENTS' LITERATE LIVES.....	54
Research Sites.....	55
Participant Recruitment.....	55
Data Collection.....	57
Data Analysis.....	65
Conclusion.....	93
CHAPTER 4 RE-ENVISIONING ALPHABETIC WRITING THROUGH JAPANESE WRITING PRACTICES.....	95
Transmodality in Action.....	96
Alphabetic Writing and Frozen Modes.....	97
Alphabetic Writing, Sociality, and Materiality.....	99
Japanese Writing and Multimodality.....	102
Writing as More Multimodal Than We Believe.....	107
Conclusion.....	122
CHAPTER 5 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR TRANSMODAL RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGIES.....	123
Tools for Future Research.....	126
Toward a Transmodal Pedagogy.....	129
Transmodality's Benefits to Literacy Research and Teaching.....	134
Conclusion.....	136
REFERENCES.....	139
APPENDICES.....	154
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	163



## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Comparison of hiragana and katakana for the word “thanks,” or <i>arigatou</i> .....	25
2. Basic syntax of English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese.....	26
3. Compound kanji.....	29
4. Radical-phonetic compound.....	29
5. <i>Kaeriten</i> .....	31
6. Meanings and readings for the character 酒, or <i>sake</i> .....	35
7. <i>Dajare</i> (word play).....	36
8. The evolution of two kanji characters into hiragana and katakana.....	37
9. Kanji study in primary and middle school.....	41
10. Kanji drill book for first grade children.....	43
11. Variation in Japanese orthography.....	45
12. Entry from Gen’s process diary.....	59
13. Sakura’s process diary.....	61
14. Gen’s ride sharing schedule.....	68
15. Gen’s LINE message to a choir member.....	70
16. The flick operation in action.....	72
17. Sakura’s study party.....	74
18. Gen’s email to the mixed choir club.....	75
19. Gen’s impressions of the mixed choir’s practice session.....	78
20. Gen’s ride sharing schedule template.....	80
21. Sample of Gen’s elementary school handbook.....	82
22. Gen’s sheet music with annotations.....	86
23. Sakura’s annotations on her notes.....	88

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: WRITING AS MORE THAN MONOMODAL

I begin this dissertation with two anecdotes demonstrating how my experience as a Japanese language learner has changed the way I view writing.

Anecdote 1: It was nighttime in rural Nagano Prefecture and I was studying kanji characters alone in my apartment. I was trying to master the 2,136 standard-use characters so that I would finally be able to read somewhat proficiently. Using the smart flashcard program Anki to memorize individual characters, I came across one that perplexed me: *myou* (exquisite) [妙]. The character itself consisted of two smaller characters for woman [女]<sup>1</sup> and few [少], respectively. I came up with my own mnemonic device to memorize the character, but I could not avoid making it sound sexist.

Anecdote 2: When preparing for my part-time construction job, I looked over the instructions for workplace etiquette and the document said “G 𠄎 𠄎 =NG.” Confused about what this document meant, I asked my wife. She explained that G 𠄎 𠄎 (*G pan*) means jeans (the *pan* part is short for pants), and the notational symbol “=” in this case means is or are. Finally, the “NG” means no good or not good. Taken as a whole, the

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<sup>1</sup> According to Yasuko Hio (2000), this character depicts a woman clasping her hands and bowing or curtsyng (160).

sentence means that jeans are not allowed in the workplace.<sup>2</sup> The above examples demonstrate writing practices that challenge how writing studies scholars and those working in related fields conceive of multimodality and writing. Building off my anecdotes as a jumping-off point, this dissertation chapter traces scholarship on multimodality, especially regarding its treatment of writing. I critique the discourses that stabilize writing as a monomodal and transparent means of communication and highlight how transmodality and Japanese writing practices can help us reconceive of alphabetic writing practices. My purpose is not to exoticize Japanese practices and other non-Western literacies, but rather to demonstrate that these writing practices can help us rethink scholarship on multimodality as well as the assumed monomodality of alphabetic text.

### **Multimodality, Writing, and Monomodal Ideologies**

Multimodality has been viewed as in opposition to, or in addition to writing despite scholars challenging monomodal logics (Trimbur & Press 2015, Horner et al. 2015, Powell 2020). Depictions of writing as monomodal treat alphabetic literacy and essays as transparent, and materiality and labor of writing and reading fall by the wayside (Trimbur 2002). Trimbur argues that the construct of essayist literacy is maintained by a deproduction rhetoric which makes us believe in a text's transparency, thereby minimizing the need for interpretation (189). This claim of a transparent flow of meaning

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Japanese uses the English loan word *jinsu* for jeans. The *ji* sound of the loan word perhaps explains why *G* is used in this lexical invention rather than *J* as in *J* ジャーン.

can be added to the list of why writing as monomodal is such an unrealistic and troublesome ideology.

The myth of alphabetic writing's transparency also helps explain why alphabetic literacy's supposed superiority has been pushed by great divide scholars (or the orality/literacy divide), such as Walter Ong (1982) and Eric Havelock (1982), who additionally view the alphabet as the most rational of any writing system. Ong and like-minded scholars instead paint logographic and pictographic writing systems as belonging to a category of illiteracy. The image gets sidelined in their scholarship—it is seen as manipulative, short lasting, and immature (Trimbur 2002, p. 190). Such depictions of logographic and pictographic writing are indeed troublesome as I hope to prove throughout this dissertation.

There are scholars resisting such harmful discourses on non-alphabetic writing. Various scholars identify how alphabetic writing has been used as a tool for colonization, while describing non-alphabetic writing practices as a form of resistance (Baca 2008) and even survival (Cushman, 2011).<sup>3</sup> However, such scholarship runs the risk of overlooking those who use non-alphabetic writing practices for colonization. Moreover, in tying oppression to specific forms of writing, these writing practices are removed from their spatiotemporal contexts, labor, and the responsibility involved in deploying them in said contexts.

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<sup>3</sup> See Boone (1994), Cohen and Glover (2014), and Newman (2014) for further critiques of the great divide scholars. They also provide diverging perspectives on whether labeling various indigenous communication practices, such as semasiographic systems, or those that depict ideas (for instance, pictographs or notational systems in music) as “writing” undermines or inflates Western-centric thinking about the centrality of writing to the value of a given culture (Newman, 2014, pp. 90).

Returning to our critique of conventional Western writing forms demonstrates that the essay has been anointed the pre-eminent form of alphabetic literacy due to how it ties together the logic of grammar structures and speech-sound structures, all while de-emphasizing the visual (Trimbur, 2002). In this way, essayist literacy seems as though it transmits information seamlessly—modes and mediums of production be damned (p. 190). Instead of subscribing to such harmful Alphabetic Literacy Narratives, Trimbur advocates for seeing the alphabet semiotically. He says writing should not be conceived “as a derivative of speech at all but instead as a typographical and rhetorical system of sign making” (p. 191). Such a way of viewing essays can act as a corrective to Stephen Bernhardt’s (1986) division of texts into a continuum containing non-visually informative texts, or those that do not appear to rely heavily on the visual to convey information, such as the essay; and those he deems to be visually informative texts, or those that rely on white space, illustrations, and differences in typeface and other elements to convey information, such as magazines (p. 66-7). As Trimbur and others have pointed out since, academic essays also rely heavily upon the visual and sensorial, but in ways that have been *deemed* monomodal. Horner (2020) points out that we see these visual and sensorial elements in font types, page size; smells, and a variety of other features, as well as how they are arranged. He argues that “conventional essays rely heavily on visual features and learned practices in reading those features in particular ways—say, as unimportant, immaterial” (Horner, 2020, p. 29). In other words, we are taught to see these texts as monomodal, although they are inherently multimodal. Instead of ascribing characteristics to these texts as visually informative or uninformative (as Bernhardt does), we might

instead focus on the choices involved in deploying a text's visuality for certain effects and audiences.

Building upon previous research about textual transparency, the autonomous text doctrine is an ideology which depicts writing as communicating perfectly what it means and speaking monologically without a need for the help of context or interpretation.<sup>4</sup> It is an implication of Street's (1984) autonomous model of literacy, or the idea of introducing literacy to the poor and illiterate to improve their cognition, economic status, and make "them better citizens" without paying attention to what factors (economic, social, and other) made them illiterate to begin with (Street, 2012, p. 28). Autonomous literacy hides ideological assumptions about literacy and makes all of its impacts out to be beneficial. Similarly, Trimbur and Press's (2015) autonomous text doctrine models the rhetorical effect which makes us give more or less truth to words, images, numbers, etc. when producing texts, and the craftsmanship of transparency is key to the doctrine (p. 22). To illustrate, the idea of autonomous text depends on concealing the material production of text which is not only in writing, but also in the semiotics of print, such as combinations of typography, images, numbers, and other elements that make the audience believe they represent reality in an impartial, objective, and authoritative way (Trimbur and Press, p. 25). These critiques add clarity to all writing practices as inherently multimodal.

Alphabetic writing has always already been multimodal, and the monomodality ascribed to texts is a problematic ideology. Multimodality is instead analytical, in that it recognizes features of texts and the combination of semiotic resources for communicative purposes. As Trimbur and Press (2015) argue, the ideology of monomodality is

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<sup>4</sup> See David R. Olson (1977) for a notable advocate of the autonomous text doctrine.

hegemonic. It is a language ideology, and scholars need to investigate what this ideologically motivated logic does rhetorically (p. 21). Indeed, the values ascribed to text help describe why compositions that fall outside of a standard essay format are deemed non-academic (Rule, 2020).

These analyses do a commendable job of pointing out the ideologies behind autonomous text and essayist literacy, which forward a deceptively simple one-to-one relationship in terms of meaning comprehension and modality. The analyses also utilize the ideas of design and materiality to demonstrate the multimodality of writing, which is a productive move. However, there is a tendency in these analyses to focus only on Western alphabetic writing. I will highlight how scholars and teachers need to analyze other writing practices, such as Japanese writing, which combines phonetic scripts with a logographic one, in order not only to demonstrate the inherent multimodality of all writing, but to foreground reading practices, contexts, orthography, labor, and other important aspects of writing which become overlooked in conversations about modality. My work further demonstrates there is a tendency to conflate Western alphabetic writing with all writing, which is akin to how essayist literacy has come to represent all literacy, thereby ignoring its variations and tendency to change.

In this dissertation I explore how the multimodal and hybrid visual/phonetic Japanese writing system can help us re-think writing as multimodal. To do so, I address the following questions:

- How do Japanese writing practices challenge the multimodality/writing divide?  
That is, how do Japanese writing practices highlight writing as more than monomodal text on paper?

- What are the implications of this reconceptualization of the modality of writing for how the fields of rhetoric and composition, as well as language studies, theorize writing and multimodality?
- How can the hybridity and fluidity of the three scripts in the Japanese writing system--two of which are phonetic, and one of which is logographic--help scholars explore the materiality and the mediation of language?
- How can the principles drawn out from Japanese writing practices be transferred to other settings, such as Anglophone contexts for pedagogical purposes?

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Constructs**

### *Modality: 'Multi' and 'Trans'*

The New London Group's (1996) seminal "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" served as a catalyst for multimodal research in literacy studies, as well as rhetoric and composition. It encouraged educators to think about literacy beyond the ability to read and write the printed word. The authors encouraged writers to utilize all available means of composition so that, as Lutkewitte (2014) puts it, "we can take advantage of ongoing social, cultural, and technological changes that impact our ways of knowing" (6).

Following in NLG's footsteps, other scholars have linked multimodality to the development of new technologies and new media (Hull and Nelson 2005, Alexander and Rhodes 2014, and many others).

In order to theorize multimodality, it would be helpful to define modes. According to Kress, a mode is "a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning" which includes image, layout, writing, and speech, just to cite a few examples



(p. 171). Furthermore, modes are always multiple as opposed to remaining in a vacuum (Halliday, 1978; Machin, 2016; Bezemer and Kress, 2008). For instance, essays rely not only upon text, but also on layout and other visual elements. Even in terms of “traditional” writing, Trimbur and Press (2015) point out that “print culture is as thoroughly multimodal in its practices of text production as the present digital age, though in different ways, with different effects, accomplished by different means” (p. 22). In addition to modes, Bezemer and Kress (2008) point out modal resources, which for writing includes grammatical, syntactic, and lexical resources, as well as graphic sources like font size. Modal resources may be shared among modes—for instance, speech and writing share lexis, grammar, and syntax (p. 171). On the other hand, a medium “is the substance in and through which meaning is instantiated/realized and through which meaning becomes available to others (cf. ‘oil on canvas’)” (p. 172).<sup>5</sup> Scholars tend to identify these mediums with a specific mode or sense, such as sound with hearing, writing with the visual or sight, and others. As Scheidler (2020) further points out in his review of sensorial ethnography, scholars imagine each of these senses as operating in a uniform manner.

Within writing and literacy studies, multimodality is based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and within this approach, social semiotics finds its roots. The social semiotic viewpoint on multimodality “construes that all

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<sup>5</sup> However, Lauer (2009) points out that the terms multimedia and multimodality are often conflated in how they are both used to describe “combinations of modes” in communication (28). She instead argues that audience considerations determine the terms’ usage (non-academic audiences understand multimedia), and multimodality represents more of an classroom-based emphasis on design/process, while multimedia emphasizes a finished product for non-classroom/industry-based audiences (production/distribution) (27-30).

communication practices are interlinked with social and cultural practices” (Yamada-Rice, 2015, p. 309). Specifically, this approach to multimodality was developed when the Sydney School drew inspiration from SFL, and these scholars were the first to use the term multimodality in the way that scholars currently use it (van Leeuwen, 2018, p. 449). They identify grammars of semiotic modes that are non-linguistic and tie them to culture due to their belief that meanings are owned by different cultures as opposed to different modes. However, a meaning expressed in one form versus another—for instance visually versus verbally—demonstrates that one form could be preferable to another for particular instances. In other words, one mode would be more suitable for a given purpose. This is where the idea of affordances comes into play.

Affordances refers to the meaning potential of various modes<sup>6</sup>, or semiotic channels, and this concept is visited time and again in multimodal scholarship which analyzes images and other artifacts. To illustrate the concept, Kress (2005) claims that speech and writing require significant interpretation, while images are specific and can be processed in a moment. He highlights that gains and losses occur when moving from mode to mode (p. 294). However, such a framing of modes has the effect of essentializing them. Paul Prior (2005) in his response to Kress (2005) critiques this treatment of affordances “as highly determinative, mutually exclusive, and binary” (26). For instance, Kress separates images and words into binaries, in which words are vague, finite, sequential, authored, among other things; and images are infinite, specific, special,

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<sup>6</sup> The term affordances is based in J.J. Gibson’s (1979) ecological perception theory that describes the potential uses of an object arising from how it is observed by different people who realize different uses (or affordances) rooted in their needs and differences. Afterwards, the field of design took up the term affordances to describe intuitive design. But the term within multimodality has become roughly the same as Halliday’s “meaning potential” (van Leeuwen 2015).

and transparent. Prior instead advocates for understanding multimodality, as well as multimodal affordances via a higher degree of complexity in classifications and interpretations of multimodality (p. 26-28). Anne Wysocki (2005) also critiques Kress (2005) by expressing concern with the constraints he ascribes to materials dealing with communication, such as how he bounds the word and the image “logically and respectively with time and with space” (p. 508). For my purposes, I will emphasize the emergent textual practices that trouble the concept of modes. In order to do this, it makes sense to critique multimodal methods for analyzing texts.

One such method that Kress (2011) points out is multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA). This approach to multimodality and social semiotics is designed to help scholars find out about meaning and meaning making; see agency in relation to meaning-makers; see identity in meaning making and the sign; and find out about social constraints during meaning-making (p. 38). Multimodality as previously mentioned analyzes meaning-making affordances, and in MMDA, language is not treated as giving us the full picture of meaning—rather, it is just a partial one. MMDA also concerns itself with the interconnectivity and persuasiveness of modes. Kress says that social semiotics,

serves to emphasize what is shared communicationally: that there need to be resources for showing connection and relation in any mode, even though they will be different in each mode; that features of meaning are shared among all modes—intensity, framing, foregrounding, highlighting, coherence and cohesion, forms of genre, [and others] (Kress, p. 46-47)

Put another way, the multimodal discourse analysis approach has an object of analysis and creates different categories of multimodal meaning-making that reveal something about the object. It seeks out meaning-making in various modes (Constantinou 603-4). It is important to note that in this way, an MMDA approach risks reifying social practices,

or objectifying them. In addition to flattening cultures and overemphasizing the product, MMDA ignores the conflict and struggle behind such meaning-making practices. For another approach, multimodal critical discourse analysis (MMCDA) draws upon critical discourse analysis (CDA), which specifically aims to show how ideologies are present within texts, and those in power “seek to re-contextualise social practice in their own interests and maintain control over ideology” (Machin, 2016, pp. 322-3). Multimodal critical discourse analysis, therefore, is interested in how ideology work is done multimodally through language and different semiotic resources. While this approach usefully adds ideology into modal practice and recognizes a degree of modal fluidity, it risks reifying the separateness of modes due to its emphasis on affordances.

The MMDA and MMCDA approaches provide two different frameworks for analyzing multimodal texts and their affordances, but their utility for analyzing Japanese writing practices remains disputed. Yamada-Rice (2015) argues that due to the Japanese writing system’s emphasis on the image, social semiotic theory cannot be easily applied to it. The multimodal social semiotic approach (as Kress and van Leeuwen [2006] envision it) also assumes a universality in the directionality of written languages, and this assumption conflicts with Japanese writing, whereby kanji characters can be written on the page horizontally from left to right or right to left; or vertically, starting from the top left or top right corner of the page (Yamada-Rice, 2015, p. 310). I will return to Yamada-Rice’s critique in later chapters, but suffice it to say, she rightfully points out Kress and van Leeuwen’s penchant for analyzing writing practices based on Western writing practices/autonomous text. Alternatively, a transmodal perspective on writing can productively highlight what social semiotics-based multimodal scholarship tends to

overlook in terms of non-Western writing practices. Below I lay out how an ecological approach to language and modality paves the way for a transmodal approach to analyzing texts.

Louis-Jean Calvet (2006) theorizes an ecological approach to language, in which language is always a part of a system, as opposed to a discrete unit one analyzes. He demonstrates that it is “a social practice within social life, one practice among others, inseparable from its environment” (p. 22). He argues that to take a language and partition it off from the entirety of available ways of communication is an ideological move<sup>7</sup>.

Bruce Horner (2019) points out that the same can be said of the separation and partition of modes, their combination, and the subsequent focus on their affordances. Such treatment of languages and modes cannot be said to constitute reality because language and modes always exist in a continuum with other languages and modes. Furthermore, such representations of modes impact how composers engage with and conceive of these modes (Horner 2019). This concept of language and modality on a continuum serves as a basis for what is coming to be called a transmodal approach to analyzing writing.

Transmodality has been theorized as a disposition towards multimodal communication that challenges the standard language and modal norm (SLMN) ideology, or a perceived norm for language reception and production which is stable, singular, and uniform, and which, according to Selfe in *Translinguality, Transmodality, and Difference*, a co-authored article in the form of a discussion on modality, makes it so “alphabetic/print texts [are fetishized]... as the modality of education/reason,” which in

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<sup>7</sup> Relatedly, Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Yamada-Rice (2014, 2015) draw upon the concept of geosemiotics to demonstrate how the meaning behind a given text (such as a sign) is embedded in the landscape, thereby emphasizing the importance of place.

turn causes process and materiality to be overlooked (Horner et al. 2015, Sense, p. 1). Horner et al. point out that the prefix ‘multi’ “encourages the danger of treating modes and media and languages as an array of discrete resources rather than acknowledging the plurality of interactions and relationships present in the complex production of languages/language media/modes” (Sense, p. 1). By rejecting these strict categorizations, transmodality allows composers to see modality as an emergent and fluid practice where modes result from labor practices.

Especially pertinent to transmodality is its emphasis on modality as a social practice, which runs counter to popular conceptions of modality that conceive of modality as a physical outcome, and a break from the past technology of writing and related conflation of modes and technologies. To illustrate, instead of treating modes like ingredients, or individual resources that composers utilize, transmodality expands outward to various participants’ labor which goes into creating the text, as well as reading the text. Transmodality also reinfuses materiality into writing (Horner, 2020, p. 31-32). And while the idea of affordances helps scholars avoid overemphasizing technologies by opening up the possibility for certain communication effects, these affordances then become tied to technologies and modes and their outcomes which a composer then chooses (Horner, 2020, p. 24). Such framing relies on a neoliberal logic that commodifies the desired communication effects of modality, but these effects are in fact the labor of composers (as I mention above).<sup>8</sup> (Relatedly, neoliberal rhetorics of “more is better” also tend to creep into conversations on composing with different modes—I will get to this

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Street makes a similar point with autonomous literacy—this ideology ignores the social practices of literacy and outcomes of this labor while focusing only on the supposed outcomes of this monolithic idea of literacy. Street thereby forwards an ideological model of multimodality, which Horner (2020) references in this description.

later). Furthermore, as Calvet (2006) points out, ideology shapes writing practices while writing shapes ideology, and these change each other over time—the same can be said of modes.

Transmodality as a practice-based theorization of modality thereby provides an opportunity to analyze the Japanese writing system in a way that resists the logics that social semiotics ascribes to them. Next it will be helpful to describe scholarship on Japanese writing practices before discussing how scholarship on “trans-” perspectives towards communication theorizes Japanese writing practices.

### *Japanese/Chinese Scripts and Multimodality*

The subheading above lists “Japanese/Chinese Scripts” to refer to the fact that the so-called Japanese Writing System (JWS) is made up of Chinese-derived logographic kanji characters, as well as the two native phonetic syllabaries (or scripts) of *hiragana* (*he-rah-gah-nah*) and *katakana* (*kah-tah-kah-nah*). Roman letters (*rōmaji*) and Arabic numerals also co-mingle with Japanese text. There are thousands of kanji characters in existence, although citizens are *only* required to know 2,136 of the characters to be considered literate by the government. Relatedly, there are 46 basic hiragana characters to capture phonetic information and 46 katakana characters which map the same sounds as hiragana, but for foreign words, onomatopoeia, science terms, and the like. Together these two scripts (hiragana and katakana) are known as *kana* (*kah-nah*). However, the multi-scripts (kanji, hiragana, and katakana), *romaji*, and Arabic numerals (when numbers are at issue) tend to intermingle. Indeed, a simple self-introduction will demonstrate this point:

私の名前はアレックスです。

My name is Alex.

The characters in red are kanji, the characters in green are hiragana, and the characters in blue are katakana to denote that my name is foreign<sup>9</sup>. This script variation in Japanese writing practices is a feature that lends itself well to scholarship on translanguaging.

In general, contemporary scholarship on Chinese and Japanese writing practices focuses more on translanguaging (Lee 2015, Turnbull 2019, Wei and Hua 2019, Wong 2021, among others) as opposed to multimodality, but there are notable exceptions (Yamada-Rice 2015, and Cousins 2021 who addresses both). Therefore, I start by tracing translingual/translanguaging scholarship on Japanese writing practices before moving onto my transmodal imperative for this dissertation.

### *Translingualism/Translanguaging*

Translanguaging describes bilingualism/plurilingual practices in a way that emphasizes that languages are not two or more discrete systems, but rather part of a single overlying repertoire which a speaker then deploys for communicative purposes (Vogel and García 2017). A translanguaging perspective on language and modality emphasizes temporality, and thereby emergence, as opposed to a fixity of linguistic and modal resources to be acquired. Translanguaging recognizes language practice as multimodal in addition to emphasizing the vast array of linguistic and other resources that may be used. As Li Wei (2018) describes:

...language processing cannot be wholly *independent* of auditory and visual processes... Language, then, is a multisensory and multimodal semiotic system interconnected with other identifiable

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<sup>9</sup> The little circle at the end of this sentence is a period or 句点 (*kuten* or *kooh-ten*).



and inseparable cognitive systems. Translanguaging... means transcending the traditional divides between linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive and semiotic systems. (20)

This emphasis on going beyond clearly defined linguistic and semiotic boundaries (echoing Calvet 2006, cited above) makes translanguaging an appropriate theory for exploring alphabetic and non-alphabetic writing. Such boundary crossing represents an epistemological break (to borrow from Horner & Alvarez, 2019) from previous notions of language, in other words, that see languages as stable entities tied to nation and culture (Otheguy et al. 2015, Horner et al. 2015). Hawkins and Mori (2018) describe ‘trans-‘ in an applied linguistics context as being intimately involved with languaging “as an always on-the-spot dynamic assemblage and negotiation of resources for meaning making” (p. 2). The resources that these speakers have can be used when the need arises, and the communication that occurs depends on the accumulated resources and meanings within the interlocutors (in terms of reception, understanding, and response), as well as on the specific situation (p. 2-3).

Some scholars have applied a translanguaging lens to Japanese writing practices. Blake Turnbull (2019), for instance, provides useful field data that demonstrates how translanguaging occurs within the Japanese writing system. He records the translanguaging practices of Japanese people by walking around two Japanese cities and taking pictures of various signs that showed evidence of translanguaging. He found six different ways that the Japanese translanguage through signs.

For instance, Turnbull identifies intrasentential translanguaging, in which a single phrase includes translanguaging between words. In an advertisement for a chicken product I found that utilizes intrasentential translanguaging, the product name for the

advertisement can be broken down into L<sup>10</sup> which stands for Lawson—a popular Japanese convenience store—and チキ, or *chiki*, which is a shortened form of チキン, or *chikin*, meaning “chicken.” These are combined with 濃厚(*noukou*), meaning rich or thick; and the *katakana* word *chiizu* for “cheese.” These elements combine to mean “Lawson chicken with thick cheese.”<sup>11</sup>

Turnbull also points out intralexical translanguaging in signs, or translanguaging occurring within a word. In a product label for a fragrant bug repellent one wears around their neck or ankle reading “香 Ring,” (*kaoring* or *kah-oh-reen-gooh*) the first part of the product name draws upon 香り (*kaori*), a Japanese word which means *fragrance*. But the English word *ring* substitutes for the hiragana *ri* (*reeh*) due to the two having the same pronunciation. Therefore, they combine to make “fragrant ring,” which is the intentional meaning (p. 12). The final category Turnbull points to is semiotic-reliant translanguaging, which bears some resemblance to other examples which utilize both linguistic and semiotic elements, but the translanguaging in this category relies wholly upon the semiotic symbol/symbols for its message (p. 12). One example Turnbull foregrounds is a street sign that reads “I ♥ 栄町,” or *I love Sakaemachi*, which is a place within Chiba Prefecture in Japan. Essentially, instead of using 私は (*watashi wa*) for “I,” the English is

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<sup>10</sup> Within the L itself is the *katakana* エル, which describes how to say the letter in Japanese *eeru* (*ee* sounds like the e in red).

<sup>11</sup> Turnbull originally used a similar example he found on a sign that read “New L チキ発売” and that described the release of a new Lawson chicken product, although he mistakenly identified it as *large* chicken instead of *Lawson* chicken (Turnbull, 2019, p. 9-10). Needless to say, I drew upon his example when searching for this one.

used, and then the semiotic sign (heart) which denotes love, and which takes the place of a verb; and finally 栄町 or *sakaemachi* in kanji This example also changes the Japanese syntax, where the verb normally comes at the end (I Sakaemachi like) (p. 12-13).

Turnbull uses these examples of the Japanese shuttling across languages and combining readings of characters, meanings, and orthographic features with semiotic features for crafting a message to demonstrate “that Japan is indeed a translingual nation, not merely a bilingual one, and certainly not a monolingual one” (p. 13).

Related to the translanguaging practices of Japanese advertisers, Wei and Hua (2019) analyze how multilingual Chinese language users subvert Chinese characters via what the authors call “transcribing,” or “creating a script with elements from different writing systems, such as Chinese and English, or... mixing conventional language scripts with other symbols and signs including emoji” (p. 7). For instance. Wei and Hua demonstrate that language users insert entire English words between Chinese characters for “quasi-homophonic” wordplay (p. 8), and others combine characters with numerals as opposed to other characters (p. 9). One particularly interesting category combines Chinese characters with alphabetic letters, when for instance the letters “HK” are inserted into a Chinese character meaning “independence” in order to express solidarity with the anti-China Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong (p. 12). This final practice demonstrates translanguaging that takes place within the character itself. Such translanguaging practices aim to subvert government authority and the attitudes of Chinese linguistic purists.

Similar to scholarship by Turnbull (2019), Wei and Hua (2019), and others on translanguaging in scripts, linguistic anthropologist Laura Miller (2011) analyzes *gyaru-*

*mojis* (gal characters), which are a mixture of Japanese syllables, numbers, Greek characters, and others that originated in e-mail, text messaging, and other media and are substantially different from typical Japanese writing.<sup>12</sup> Drawing upon *gyaru mojis* Miller demonstrates that girl-graphs is a substitution system where a standard Japanese character is substituted for a non-standard typographic, math, or science symbol such as x (times) for the katakana character ゃ (*me* or *meh*). Miller claims they are a form of group identity marking and verifier of difference and can signal care for the receiver of a message due to how long they take to compose (finding various symbols on older, or less intuitive cell phone interfaces is quite time consuming). Based on her analysis of the context in which *gyaru-mojis* are used, she identifies them as a form of resistance to male patriarchy that emphasizes a typeset of orderliness and uniformity.<sup>13</sup> They push the boundaries of what is considered the Japanese writing system and directly challenge the notion of language as a shared system.

The examples above demonstrate the hybridity of the Japanese script, as well as how people utilize both Japanese and Chinese scripts in creative ways to craft a message that relies upon multiple languages and semiotic elements. Underlying the translanguaging practices is a creativity that draws upon multiple competencies in English, symbols, and other areas. Although it is tempting to chalk practices such as intrasentential translanguaging to select creativity in advertisements and signs, the practice occurs in everyday Japanese. Size information for clothes and drinks use the letters S, M, and L (small, medium, and large) to denote the English words; and Japanese

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<sup>12</sup> Gyarū characters were popularized by their users—girls who belong to the *gyaru* (gal) fashion subculture, which is characterized by girls wearing heavy make-up, short skirts, and dyed hair.

<sup>13</sup> For a take on unique orthographic practices as subversion within western writing, see Sebba's (2007) *Spelling and Society*.

people have the competency to understand the corresponding meaning in their own language. My own experience confirms this phenomenon.

While this scholarship is important in highlighting how Japanese writing is always already translingual, less attention had been paid to Japanese writing and modality, especially in terms of the modal processes behind composing Japanese texts. I will therefore cover this lacuna throughout the dissertation, but for now, I turn from my all-too-brief introduction on Japanese writing practices to a layout of this dissertation which will flesh out the “how” of my project to use Japanese writing practices to demonstrate all writing practices as transmodal.

### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 2, “Exploring Writing Practices in Japan,” utilizes secondary research in order to map out a brief history of Japanese writing practices, as well as how these writing practices have been analyzed/theorized in disciplines such as sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and rhetoric and composition. I highlight the multi-scripts and their various forms, the overall linguistic situation in Japan, and common instruction for Japanese writing. I end by exploring variation among the scripts in writing practices.

Chapter 3, “Tracing Modality in Japanese Students’ Literate Lives,” utilizes interview and diary-based methods to explore the writing practices of Japanese college students at an education university in Japan. Specifically, I asked research participants to keep a diary of their writing for two weeks and then met with them in person to video record an interview about their writing samples and writing practices. Based on the

writing samples and interview data, I recorded how students deploy modality for certain effects.

Chapter 4, “Re-envisioning Alphabetic Writing Through Japanese Writing Practices,” draws upon my previous analysis of Japanese writing to rethink and re-envision all writing practices, including Western ones, as transmodal, which is similar to how translingual theorists envision “monolingual” writing as more translingual than we have been led to believe. In other words, this chapter seeks to re-envision our common treatment of writing as being distinct from multimodal composition.

Chapter 5, “Future Directions for Transmodal Research and Pedagogies,” presents my conclusions about Japanese writing practices and offers future directions for research and pedagogies. Drawing upon Japanese writing practices and my analysis of them, I theorize the principles for a pedagogy that centers transmodality—or at least centers texts (visual, textual, and other) as always already multimodal—as opposed to setting aside modality for only one unit or project. In order to highlight the principles behind my transmodal pedagogy, I recount my own previous efforts at a transmodal pedagogy which brought non-western scripts into the composition classroom with the aim of developing students’ awareness of ideology in language. I argue that students’ exposure to non-Western writing practices lays the groundwork for students to build critical literacy and reimagine writing as always already engrained in modality.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXPLORING WRITING IN JAPAN

“...one hesitates for an epithet to describe a system of writing which is so complex that it needs the aid of another system to explain it” (Sansom, 1928, p. 44).

The so-called Japanese writing system (JWS) is undoubtedly complex. It could very well be the most complex orthography in the world (Gottlieb, 2005); therefore, I will analyze the system in-depth in this chapter. Writing is by definition a representation of language, and so I interweave Japan’s history of linguistic diversity throughout the chapter while going over a general history of the JWS’s development from borrowed Chinese characters to current Japanese writing practices (JWP), which involves the deployment of multiple scripts. Of particular interest during the early days of Japanese writing is the role of translation in developing the multi-scripts.

Following this overview of JWP, I analyze the three main scripts of kanji, katakana, and hiragana. Starting with the kanji script, I point out that understanding the logographic characters and how they operate requires knowledge of their semantic as well as phonetic functions. The different readings (pronunciations) of these characters—one of which is Japanese and one of which is Chinese—complicates the notion of kanji as merely representing ideas without sound, and the tendency of kanji characters to “choose” certain pronunciations based upon which character they are paired with demonstrates phonetic variation driven by context. By the same token, orthographic

variation is highly prevalent in kanji, which is evidenced by one word containing several potential kanji variants, all of which communicate a slightly different nuance to a same general meaning. All these factors may make the JWS seem like an undecipherable mess, but the system works well with the Japanese language in deciphering homonyms and other important functions. The JWS is also the most unified it has ever been, due in no small part to governmental policies that attempt to limit the number of kanji in public documents, as well as limit orthographic variation. Such policies represent a double-edged sword—although they potentially make the writing system more accessible, these policies have negatively impacted linguistic diversity. I end by demonstrating the role of *kana* (katakana and hiragana) within the writing system and demonstrate how the deployment of all three scripts together in a given context usually follows a loose standard or convention; however, deviations from these norms abound depending upon unavoidable differences stemming from how Japanese writing practices developed in a divided country, instances where non-standard script aids in clarity, and stylistic preferences (Robertson 2020a).

The final part of this chapter moves beyond the development and description of the Japanese writing system to children's literacy practices and, finally, contemporary research on JWP. Due to the hybrid and interweaving nature of JWP, scholars in specializations such as linguistic anthropology, translanguaging, sociolinguistics, and writing systems studies have begun developing a keen interest in analyzing how the Japanese language is deployed by Japanese users. However, this scholarship remains in its infancy. Sociolinguists in particular have pointed out the tendency of their field to (until recently) focus almost exclusively on spoken language at the expense of language



represented in writing (Sebba, 2007; Spitzmüller, 2012; Lillis, 2013). My interest JWP considers sociolinguistic perspectives, however, I focus primarily on how Japanese writing practices can inform current scholarship on alphabetic writing and multi/transmodality (Powell 2020). Therefore, I finish the chapter by illuminating scholarship that takes a social semiotic approach to writing (Scollon and Scollon, 2003; van Leeuwen 2005, 2006), as well as scholarship that complicates such approaches. I point out that while a social semiotic analysis of writing is important for thinking about Japanese writing practices, there are some flaws in the approaches to analyzing textual writing that will be further fleshed out in the following chapter in my analysis of students' writing.

### *Terminology*

To define the terms of writing system, orthography, and script in this dissertation, I draw upon Philip Baker's definition of writing system as "any means of representing graphically any language or group of languages," as well as his definition of orthography, which is narrower: "[orthography is] a writing system specifically intended for a particular language and which is either already in regular use among a significant proportion of the language's native speakers, or which is or was proposed for such use" (Baker, 1997, p. 93 qtd. in Sebba, 2007, p. 10). In other words, orthography can be thought of as the rules for using a particular writing system in a specific context (such as in a language)—for instance, one who is writing in English could say they are using the Roman writing system and spelling words according to the English orthography. Lastly, it is important to define the word "script." "Script" is often used either interchangeably

with “writing system” (Sebba 2007, p. 10) or to refer to a style of writing, such as the “cursive” style of script for Chinese characters. However, I tailor the term more narrowly to the Japanese writing system to refer to the logographs (kanji) and two syllabaries (hiragana and katakana) that graphically represent the Japanese language under the Japanese writing system (Taylor and Taylor, 2014).<sup>14</sup>

### Introduction to Japanese and the Japanese Writing System

The Japanese writing system (JWS) is made up of three scripts: hiragana, katakana, and kanji. Hiragana is phonetic, and it is the native script commonly used for suffixes on kanji root words, verb conjugations, grammar functions such as particles (i.e., を [*wo* or *woh*] which marks an object which a verb acts upon), and other purposes.

There are 46 basic hiragana characters, and they tend to have a round look when compared to the other scripts. Katakana is the other native script, and it represents the same 46 phonological units as hiragana. But unlike hiragana, katakana is boxy, and it is generally used for foreign words (similar to italics in English), onomatopoeia, technical and scientific words, and Japanese companies.<sup>15</sup>

English Transliteration	Hiragana	Katakana
<i>Arigatou</i>	ありがとう	アリガトウ

Figure 1: Comparison of hiragana and katakana for the word “thanks,” or *arigatou*.

<sup>14</sup> How scholars distinguish between scripts also varies. While Taylor and Taylor (2014) lump hiragana and katakana together as a single script, I align with Masuda and Joyce (2018) in separating the two and labeling them as “scripts” in the plural.

<sup>15</sup> Foreign loan words are referred to as *gairaigo* and onomatopoeia are referred to as *gitaigo*. Both typically are represented by katakana. However, Chinese-derived words are considered separate from this category as *kango*, or Sino-Japanese vocabulary. They of course are represented by kanji.

Kanji are Chinese characters, which are the oldest form of writing in Japan. Kanji characters number in the thousands, and in general tend to be more complex than their native script cousins. For instance, the average number of strokes to write a kanji character which is in standard use hovers at around 10, but the stroke number ranges from one or two to just under thirty (Joyce et al., 2012). In addition to these scripts, the JWS also deploys Arabic numerals for numbers; the roman alphabet (ローマ字, or rōmaji); and other symbols and characters that one would use in text messages, online chat rooms, and the like to create smiley faces and other “affect tokens.”<sup>16</sup>

I now move on to the language that the JWS attempts to represent: Japanese.

Japanese grammar follows a subject object verb pattern, which is contrary to both English and Chinese which are subject-verb-object. The example below contrasts the basic syntax for the languages.

Language	Syntax	Example
English syntax	Subject-verb-object	I ate bread.
Chinese syntax	Subject-verb-object	我吃了面包。 I ate bread.
Japanese syntax	Subject-object-verb	私はパンを食べた。 I + (particle) + bread + (particle) + ate.

Figure 2: Basic syntax of English, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese.

<sup>16</sup> McGovern (2013, p. 60) uses this term in conjunction with Maynard’s (1993) description of how Japanese users deploy symbols in electronic communications to display their attitudes, share emotions, and create a sense of belonging. Maynard argues that the Japanese language is so strong in this regard that “emotion-sharing... forms the heart of communication [as opposed to information-sharing]” (p. 4).

In addition to demonstrating differences in syntax, the example demonstrates where kanji, hiragana, and katakana mix throughout. 私 is the kanji for “I,” (*watashi*, or *wah-tah-she*), and it is followed by the particle marker は (pronounced *wa*, as in wall), which is a hiragana character marking the topic of the sentence.<sup>17</sup> This particle is followed by パン (pronounced *pan*, which sounds like *pawn*) for “bread” in katakana, which marks the word as a foreign word (indeed, *pan* comes from the Portuguese word for bread, *pão*), which is followed by を (*wo* as in woke) which is a particle linking the object (bread) to the verb, and the kanji 食, meaning “eat” in this context. The kanji “chooses” the pronunciation of た (*tah*) when attached to the hiragana characters べた or *beta* (*beh-tuh*), thus becoming the past affirmative form of “ate” (*tabeta*, or *tah-beh-tuh*). The result is “I bread ate” in Japanese syntax, which becomes “I ate bread” when translated to English. What follows in the rest of this chapter is an in-depth analysis of the three scripts of kanji, hiragana, and katakana, which makes up the largest part of the Japanese writing system, and this analysis will flesh out the reason behind multiple scripts being deployed in everyday Japanese writing, like in figure 1. I begin by (briefly) tracing the history of the Japanese writing system, in tandem with the Japanese linguistic landscape.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Japanese grammar contains particles, which are short words or suffixes that highlight relationship between words in a sentence, and follow nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Particles often act like prepositions in English and do things like mark the direction of an action (similar to “to”) and mark a specific time (similar to “at”).

<sup>18</sup> In this section I rely heavily upon three seminal works: Gottlieb’s (2005) *Language and Society in Japan*, Frellesvig’s (2010) *A History of the Japanese Language*, and Seeley’s (2000) *A History of Writing in Japan*.

## *Kanji*

We must begin with the characters that started it all: kanji. Kanji are highly complex characters which were originally derived from Chinese characters. They would mark the first instance of the Japanese encountering and eventually adapting a writing system<sup>19</sup>. Some of the earliest Chinese characters to be found in Japan were inscribed on coins which date from the first century AD. Other early examples include inscribed bronze mirrors and swords, and Classical Chinese texts which all date back to the fifth century AD. However, the reading and writing of kanji characters by the Japanese did not begin until the sixth and seventh centuries AD, when Chinese Buddhism came into Japan through the Korean kingdom of *Paekche*. Thereafter, Chinese writing became important in areas such as philosophy, religion, and politics, although writing in Chinese characters remained the equivalent of writing Chinese for some time and required a deep knowledge of the language. By the middle of the seventh century, writing Japanese using the Chinese characters (via the utilization of the characters for either their phonographic or logographic values) became commonplace, and old Japanese would be written completely in kanji (Frellesvig, 2010).<sup>20</sup>

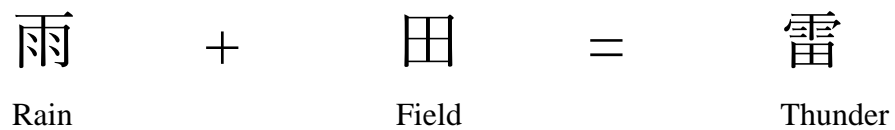
Japanese kanji roughly portray an object with minimal lines. When an object is represented directly in a kanji, it is a pictograph; but when it is an idea to be associated with an object, it is an ideograph (Shelton and Okayama, 2006, p. 160). The graphs were

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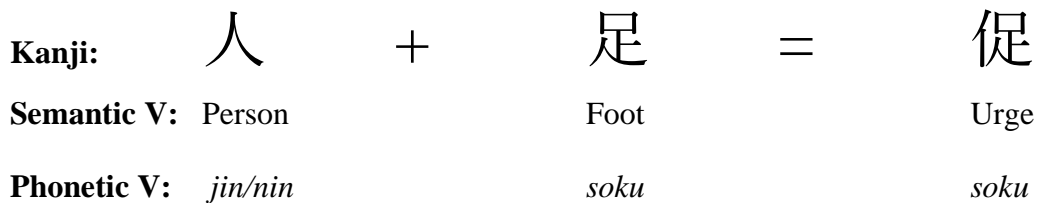
<sup>19</sup> Kanji's origins as a borrowed script has embarrassed nationalists throughout Japan's history who claim (falsely) that Japan had developed its own scripts before kanji, which they call *jindai moji*, or scripts of the age of the gods (Taylor & Taylor 2014 p. 271-2).

<sup>20</sup> My history or the development of the JWS is, of course, all too brief. Similar to the English language, there are many ancient forms of Japanese such as Old Japanese (8<sup>th</sup> century), early middle Japanese (794--1185), late middle Japanese (12<sup>th</sup> century – 16<sup>th</sup> century), and modern Japanese (17<sup>th</sup> century - present). The scale of the Japanese language remains outside this dissertation, but readers should refer to Frellesvig (2010) for an excellent overview.

later made into forms that were squarer. Multiple graphs would later be combined to make complex ideographs, “[which] meant compacting and juxtaposing the originals into the same square area that each of the originals had occupied previously on its own” (p. 160). Shelton and Okayama compare this process to an art montage, as opposed to combining letters in the alphabet for words and sounds. Complex characters made up of multiple graphs, are known as compound kanji characters.



*Figure 3: Compound kanji. This diagram depicts how the kanji compound for thunder (雷) is derived from the pictographs for rain (雨) and field (田) (Shelton and Okayama, 2006, p. 160).*



*Figure 4: Radical-phonetic compound.*

There are two ways to form compound characters: 1) combine multiple pictographs or ideographs (see Figure 3); or combine a radical (a character’s semantic value) with another character’s phonetic value which creates a different meaning (see Figure 4).

Notice how both foot *soku* (足) (the second kanji in the compound) retains the same phonetic value in urge *soku* (促). Shelton and Okayama (2006) argue that although over 80 percent of kanji are radical and phonetic combinations, which seemingly gives

credence to the argument that Japanese is a phonetic language, the opposite is true. They explain that, “[e]ven when a character is a radical-phonetic compound, a component of pictographic or ideographic origin remains with a high measure of semantic association—that is, bearing strong pictorial cues to meaning” (p. 161). In other words, the pictographic character that makes up a portion of the radical-phonetic kanji character will point to the meaning of the character as a whole.

The Chinese writing system was well-suited to the Chinese language but required considerable adaptation for the Japanese language. The main method of adaptation was *kundoku* (訓読), or “reading by gloss,” which entailed associating Chinese characters with Japanese words—for instance, the Chinese character for “meat” (肉) would be read phonetically as *ròu* in Mandarin Chinese, but as *niku* in Japanese—then reading them in an order that matches Japanese syntax (Masuda and Joyce, 2018). Thus, while the meaning of characters was the same, the pronunciation would be different. It would be like English speakers reading the character 肉 as “meat.”

楚<sub>1</sub>  
人<sub>2</sub>  
有<sub>8</sub>  
下<sub>下</sub>  
鬻<sub>6</sub>  
二<sub>二</sub>  
盾<sub>3</sub>  
與<sub>5</sub>  
矛<sub>4</sub>  
者<sub>7</sub>  
上<sub>上</sub>

*Figure 5: Kaeriten. This image demonstrates the kaeriten for a kanbun, or a classical Chinese text. The Arabic numerals by the characters outline the non-sequential order in which the characters should be read by a Japanese reader. (Or the reader can instead refer to the small hanzi/kanji characters for order [上, 下, 二, etc.]). This text could also potentially include a wakun to transcribe the eight-character sequence into Japanese (mochi, 2005).*

Due to the structural differences between Japanese and Chinese, such as Japanese being an agglutinative language, grammar and inflections were added to Chinese compositions. A numbering system (*kaeriten*) was added for word order, and annotations (*wakun*) also accompanied the Chinese (sometimes auxiliaries and particles were added as well). Linearity was therefore lost because the eye had to jump around, which Shelton and Okayama argue is like reading a picture. If the auxiliaries and particles were not added, the Japanese reader had to add them, thus, he or she was translating (Shelton and Okayama 2006).

Yet there remained a need to build a writing system for Japanese. Early attempts to adapt the Chinese script to Japanese involved rebus writings and diacritics, and were carried out by Buddhist and Chinese studies schools. By the ninth century AD phonetic scripts were developed throughout Japan to allow for the representation of Japanese



pronunciation, Japanese inflections, postpositions, and other aspects of Japanese grammar (Gottlieb, 2005).

Up until this point, I have demonstrated that the development of the JWS was not a simple and linear process. The multilingual nature of Japan, as well as political divisions, would furthermore complicate the establishment of a “unified” writing.<sup>21</sup> In addition to indigenous languages such as various Ryukyuan (Okinawan) languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of Ryukyu in the Japanese archipelago’s southernmost point, and the Ainu language, which is spoken by the Ainu in Hokkaido (Japan’s northern island), there are numerous dialects of the Japanese language. Indeed, under the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867), Japan was comprised of 250 self-governing domains, which were ruled by feudal lords, or *daimyo* (Gottlieb, 2005). Travel outside of the domain was forbidden, except for certain classes of people (like the *daimyo* themselves) and under certain circumstances; therefore, linguistic contact was rare and dialects flourished, although the Kyoto dialect was considered the lingua franca during the second half of the Tokugawa period (Gottlieb, 2005).<sup>22</sup> It was not until Emperor Meiji rose to

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<sup>21</sup> Japan is often thought of as a monolingual and monoracial nation, which is part of what’s known as the *nihonjinron* myth, but Gottlieb (2005), Frellesvig (2010), and various chapters in Heinrich and Ohara (2019) point out Japan’s multilingual reality.

<sup>22</sup> The Tokugawa Shogunate also implemented an isolationist policy in Japan, which significantly reduced linguistic contact with the rest of the world. Although the first Europeans arrived in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (the first on record was a Portuguese cast-away who arrived in 1543), Japan would close its doors to them in the next century under the Tokugawa Shogunate’s policy of 鎖国 (*sakoku*) or “closed country.” This isolationist policy took place in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century/early 17<sup>th</sup> century and made it so that all Europeans, except for the Dutch, who had a trading post called *Dejima* (“Exit Island”) in Nagasaki, were prohibited from entering Japan, and it lasted until the 1850’s (the policy also restricted contact with Korea and China, as well as Japanese citizens’ ability to travel abroad) (Frellesvig 2010). The policy was likely due, at least in part, to the influx of Jesuit missionaries who would prove a threat to the government. Therefore, due to the limited contact with European countries, Dutch and Portuguese influence on the Japanese language was great. For instance, even as late as the Taisho period (1912-1926), Dutch and Portuguese loan words made up the second and third most loan words in use during that time with roughly 28% and 14%, respectively (Shibatani 1990, p. 149). The Dutch language also influenced Japanese grammar (Frellesvig 2010).

power during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1869), a period of rapid development and unification within Japan, that serious work on unifying the Japanese language began; by 1916, a Tokyo dialect based on the speech practices of the educated in the Yamanote district was chosen as the standard for the country. This dialect, which is still the standard, is known as *hyojungo* in Japanese, and it is to be used for writing and formal speech situations. (In contrast, *kyotsugo* is a less formal version of the standard dialect, and it is used for casual speech). Standard speech practices have been modeled not only through schools, but also NHK, Japan's government-owned broadcasting organization. NHK demonstrates *hyojungo* via radio and TV broadcasts, and it even issues pronunciation dictionaries and related language materials (Gottlieb, 2005).

In tandem with making an official dialect, the government would engage in dialect eradication. Students would be taught to use only the Tokyo dialect in schools; mass media would broadcast in the Tokyo dialect; and there would be punishments for using home dialects at school.<sup>23</sup> There was a great loss of linguistic diversity in Japan during the first half of the twentieth century as a result of language standardization and dialect eradication, and people still remain ashamed to use their dialects outside of their hometowns (Frellesvig, 2010). However, despite the dialect eradication efforts by the government, there remains a great diversity of dialects throughout Japan. For instance, my wife speaks *Noto-ben*, or "Noto dialect" (named after Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture where she was born), and even within this small prefecture on the central western coast, there is a pronounced diversity of dialects. For instance, my brother-in-

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<sup>23</sup> Students in pre-war Japan would be punished for using their dialects by having to wear a *hogen fuda* (dialect tag) (Frellesvig, 2010, p. 381).

law's wife is from the southern part of Ishikawa, and she speaks *Kaga-ben*. Sometimes she does not understand certain words in *Noto-ben*.

As I hope to have demonstrated with my brief history of kanji up until this point, the way the Japanese people have used the script has changed since the kanji were first introduced from China nearly 2000 years ago. The decentralized nature of Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration ensured isolation, as well as preservation of local dialects throughout the archipelago. These factors impacted how the written language developed in different parts of the country at different times. For instance, different pronunciations would be attached to kanji characters, and dialects would have impacted how the scripts were used as well. The result was the emergence of a writing system that was markedly different from the Chinese characters it was based on. Below I will point out some of the distinctive features of Japanese writing.

### *Differences in the Functionality of Japanese Kanji*

Currently there are thousands of kanji in use in Japanese, and these characters generally represent word information. The characters cover vocabulary, or parts of vocabulary, from the Japanese language. Kanji is the only Japanese script that is morphosyllabic, which “means that individual kanji characters can simultaneously possess meaning(s) and phonological information” (Matsunaga, 1996 cited in Robertson, 2020a, p. 4). For instance, the character 麻 means hemp, and it can be pronounced *ma* (*mah*) or *asa* (*ah-sah*), depending on the other characters it is paired with (Robertson, 2020a). One notable exception to this list of functionality of kanji is *ateji* where kanji are used in a matter that is similar to phonetic letters, such as 亜米利加, or *ah-meh-rih-kah*

for “America.” The kanji in this complex string of characters mean “Asia,” “rice,” “effective,” and “add,” respectively, but none of these concepts have anything to do with America, and all that matters are the sounds the kanji characters represent *a* (亜), *me* (米), *ri* (利), *ka* (加). In standard writing practices, the katakana アメリカ (*amerika* or *ah-meh-rih-kuh*) would likely be used, but the ateji is used in certain contexts. I will return to ateji later.

Kanji also differs from Chinese because it is multi-moraic, which essentially means multisyllabic in Japanese phonology. Japanese kanji tend to have multiple syllables, such as the kanji 桜, which is read *sa – ku – ra*, for cherry blossom; however, Chinese characters only have one syllable (Robertson, 2020a). In addition, most Chinese characters only have one reading, or possible pronunciation, but Japanese have an average of a little over two. For instance, 酒 can be read as *sake*, *shu*, or *saka*<sup>24</sup>. Much depends on whether the reading is a *kun* (Japanese) reading, or *on* (Chinese) reading. The chart below maps out the character, its meaning(s), and its reading(s) (Robertson, 2020a, p. 5).

Character	Meaning	<i>On</i> Reading	<i>Kun</i> Reading
酒	Sake, alcohol	<i>Shu</i>	<i>Sake, saka</i>

Figure 6: Meanings and readings for the character 酒, or sake.

<sup>24</sup> There are even more possible pronunciations if the kanji is used in a name. I will revisit this point later.

Important to note is that kanji often rely upon their Japanese reading when they are either alone or mixed with hiragana to help with verb conjugation. However, two kanji characters together, or what is known as a kanji compound, often rely upon *on* reading(s). Even though there are multiple potential readings for characters, the JWS is not prohibitively difficult, and in fact many find it to be helpful in discerning between homonyms (there are an enormous amount of homonyms in Japanese, and the writing system does not make use of spaces between words like English does). Robertson (2020a) provides a helpful chart which demonstrates *dajare* (*dah-jah-rey*, or word play/puns) that shows sentences with the same morae (phonetic pronunciation) but completely different meaning. The below example clearly demonstrates how kanji and the other scripts help to differentiate meanings.

Pun pair	Romanization	Translations
いいヅラ買った 言いづらかった	<i>Iizurakatta</i> ( <i>ee-zoorah-kah-ttah</i> )	I bought a nice wig.  It was hard to say.
佐賀市に有るか無いか 探しに歩かないか	<i>Sagashiniarukanaika</i> ( <i>sah-gah-she-knee-ah-roo-kah-nai-kah</i> )	Is it in the town of Sagashi or not?  Shall we walk around and search?

Figure 7: *Dajare* (word play) (adapted from Robertson, 2020a, p. 8).

The example above demonstrates the role that kanji plays in deciphering between homonyms, given that Japanese writing does not utilize spaces between words like the alphabet (beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> century) does.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the deployment of multiple

<sup>25</sup> A notable exception to this standard is young children’s books, which tend to rely solely on the script of hiragana and utilize spaces to delineate boundaries between words (McGovern 2013).

scripts (including kanji) helps distinguish between vocabulary and verb conjugations, among other ambiguities that may arise. Such work would be impossible with a single script (Robertson, 2020). In order to expand on what I mean by multiple scripts, we move on to the Japanese kana.

### *The Japanese Kana*

Both hiragana and katakana developed out of using the phonographic values of Chinese characters and ignoring the semantic information (Masuda and Joyce, 2018). All hiragana symbols were derived from a whole kanji character, while the katakana were derived from one part of a character, which is illustrated in the example below:

Kanji	Hiragana	Katakana
加	か	カ
呂	ろ	ロ

*Figure 8: The evolution of two kanji characters into hiragana and katakana characters.*

There were several hundred hiragana and katakana symbols early on because variations were created for the same sound, but now these have been whittled down to 46 of each (Gottlieb, 2005).

The number of hiragana and katakana (or *kana*) expands to 71 characters when diacritics are added to them. For instance, the hiragana character か/*ka* turns into かゞ/*ga* with diacritics, and the same character in katakana, カ/*ka*, turns into カゞ/*ga*. The diacritics

in this example are called 濁音 or *dakuon* (voiced). Other diacritics look like this (は/*ha* to ば/*pa* for hiragana, and ハ/*ha* to ぱ/*pa* for katakana). These diacritics are called 半濁音 or *handakuon* (semi-voiced) (Joyce et al., 2012). Although the number of characters in hiragana and katakana are greater than the roman alphabet, for instance, they require much less effort to master than the kanji characters. Both the number of characters, as well as amount of strokes required to write them, are much fewer than kanji. Furthermore, while kana do the important things I mention above (verb inflections, marking foreign words, etc.), they can represent all the words that kanji do within the Japanese language.

Hiragana and katakana can also act as a gloss to kanji. For instance, the kana appear as a smaller version of themselves either above or next to the kanji characters to aid in pronouncing rare characters, pronouncing kanji with non-standard *on* pronunciations (such as kanji used in names—more on that later) or to help children read certain materials. Eriko Sato (2018) points out how *furigana* (*fooh-reeh-gah-nah*)—a gloss which appears as small kana above or next to kanji characters—plays a unique role in translation. She explains that the gloss has developed as a way to express double meanings/overlapping significations (Sato, 2018, p. 323). For instance, in Sato’s analysis of a translation of Shakespeare, the translator Tsubouchi created a neo-loanword of cupid via furigana. The word is written in kanji as 戀愛神 (<sup>キューピッド</sup>*ren-ai-shin*) [romantic love + love + god], but the furigana that glosses the kanji characters above is written as キューピッド (*kyūpido*) [cupid] as opposed to the standard practice of sounding out the *on* or *kun*

reading of the kanji in hiragana or katakana. Although hiragana and katakana are the most popular scripts for furigana, Roman alphabet letters (and others) can gloss kanji as well. Furigana therefore plays an important role in translanguaging and translation in Japanese.

### **Writing Standardization and Literacy Instruction**

In the post-World War II era, the Japanese government has made efforts to limit the large amounts of kanji in use. Starting in 1946, the Ministry of Education came up with the 当用漢字表 (toyo kanjihyo), a list of 1,850 kanji that literate citizens would be expected to recognize for everyday use. In 1981, the 常用漢字表 (joyo kanjihyo) would replace the previous list. It would consist of 1,945 kanji. This list would later be revised in 2010 to become 2,136 characters. Five kanji characters which were previously on the list would be removed and 196 would be added.<sup>26</sup> On this list are 1,006 kanji to be learned during six years of elementary school (kyoiku kanji or education kanji) and 1,130 which were to be taught in high school (Joyce et al., 2012). However, the joyo kanji list does not represent all the kanji characters one would expect to come across in the modern JWS. The upper limit of the variety of kanji circulating within Japan would be the Japanese Industrial Standard (JIS) code, or JIS X-0208-1990), which includes a list of 6,355 kanji characters, and which is used for electronic devices (256). However, the joyo kanji cover the vast majority (98%) of kanji one would expect to come across in

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<sup>26</sup> The reason the list keeps expanding is that ironically, although the Japanese are forgetting how to write kanji characters by hand due to the effects of smart phones, tablets, computers, and other technologies that allow users to easily convert hiragana to complex kanji characters with the click of a button or a tap of the screen, the same technology is causing them to come into contact with more kanji characters.



newspapers, and the remaining kanji that fall outside of the joyo kanji list would likely appear in family and place names. Now that I have established a general understanding of the number of characters circulating in Japanese written communication, I turn to how they are systematically learned during compulsory education, which includes elementary school grades 1-6 and three years of middle school/junior high school.

Children officially begin learning to read and write in Japan during elementary school, but they are usually taught hiragana and some kanji informally before entering elementary school by parents or preschool educators. Research by the National Language Research Institute which took place between 1967 and 1970 revealed that almost all the 5-year-olds they studied could understand the majority of hiragana sounds, as well as read 53 of the 240 kanji which would be taught in the first and second grade just prior to entering elementary school (Muraishi and Amano, 1972). Therefore, preschoolers get a good head start on learning the scripts even before they begin compulsory education.

The 1998 elementary school curriculum for *kokugo* (Japanese), according to the Ministry of Education, required students to have been introduced to the three scripts of the Japanese writing system by the end of first grade. Students will also have learned 80 kanji characters. Students in grades 1 through 9 learn new kanji in the following amounts:

School	Grade	Number of kanji	Total number by the end of the grade
Primary	I	80	80
	II	160	240
	III	200	440
	IV	200	640
	V	185	825
	VI	181	1006
Middle	I	250-300	1075
	II	300-350	1600
	III	300-400	1950

*Figure 9: Kanji study in primary and middle school. This chart breaks down by year the number of kanji students are expected to learn from primary to middle school (adapted from Taylor & Taylor 2014, p. 336).*

By the time the students finish elementary school as sixth graders, they will have learned a combined 1,006 kanji characters, which are known as the Education Kanji, and this ensures they can read 90% of the kanji that would appear in a newspaper (Gottlieb, 2005). In the three years of junior high school, students will learn the remainder of the common kanji, or 1950 characters.

There are a variety of methods deployed to teach preschoolers and elementary students kanji. Starting with preschoolers, one method that can be deployed is the semantic/concentrated teaching method, which involves grouping together and learning kanji that share either a semantic or phonetic radical. For instance, the preschooler could be taught 木 (tree), 森 (forest), 村 (village), and various others in the same lesson.

Another approach is object-labelling, where kanji and kana labels are applied to various objects the child will come into contact with in his or her environment on a regular day. Whatever method one chooses, research recommends learning words in their customary scripts (i.e. the kanji 学校 for “school,” and the katakana テーブル for “table”), and they recommend only focusing on one kanji reading, such as the kun/Japanese reading (Taylor & Taylor, 2014).

In elementary school, methods incorporate learning materials (especially kanji drill books), repeatedly writing kanji on square sheets of paper, tracing kanji characters in the air with one’s finger, kanji radical charts, build-up methods, and others. The kanji students are introduced to are the characters they will most likely see in their daily lives, such as simple numbers, days of the week, and body parts.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, as Gottlieb (2005) points out, students might be introduced to complex characters early on, such as 曜 *youbi*, an 18 stroke kanji for “day of the week” because they are particularly relevant to their lives.

Students learn about kanji radicals in third grade, and starting in fourth grade, they begin learning to read and write simple words in the Roman alphabet, which occurs quite often in Japanese writing practices, such as in the names of companies, on buildings, in acronyms, and in various other walks of life. By the end of elementary school, children will have already learned hiragana and katakana, a sizeable portion of

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<sup>27</sup> In contrast, those who are studying Japanese as a foreign language often rely upon the semantic/concentrated teaching method to learn kanji. They memorize radicals and then build other complex kanji characters from these radicals. In combination with this method, the learners also typically use mnemonic devices (see Heisig, 2007 and Conning, 2013).

kanji to be literate in Japanese society, and they will have a working knowledge of the Roman alphabet (Gottlieb, 2005).



Figure 10: Kanji drill book for first grade children.

Above I have posted a picture of a kanji drill book for elementary school first graders that I recently purchased. The book lesson reads from right to left and goes over the characters 火 (fire), 水 (water), 木 (tree), and 金 (gold), which make up one of characters for the days of the week from Tuesday to Friday: 火曜日, 水曜日, 木曜日, and 金曜日. In the column for 火, the character is displayed prominently at the top in a yellow box. Underneath the yellow box are the on (Chinese) reading on the right (the hiragana 力, or *ka*) and kun (Japanese) reading on the left (ひ or *hi*). A pictogram of a fire, which the kanji character is supposed to represent, is in the lower right corner.

Underneath the picture of the fire is two squares, which are divided into four a piece. The first divided square has a written example of the kanji, which includes the strokes and stroke order. The red box on the left demonstrates what the kanji looks like after each stroke. The bottom divided square is devoted to practicing the kanji. The student will be expected to follow the stroke order as laid out in the drill book. Finally, in the lower left square of the column, common vocabulary which utilize the kanji are written. The list includes 火山 (*kazan*) or volcano, 火曜日 (*kayoubi*) for Tuesday, たき火 (*takibi*) for open-air fire/bonfire, and 花火 (*hanabi*) for fireworks. Now that I have established a snapshot of the amount of kana and kanji students will be expected to know for each grade; the methods via which kanji are learned inside and outside of schools; and an in-depth look at how kanji are expected to be memorized via a drill book, I move on to orthographic variation and standardization

### **Orthographic Variation and Standardization**

There is an incredible amount of variation within Japanese orthography. Not only is the user of Japanese equipped with various scripts to express herself, but she can also potentially draw upon a variety of kanji to express an idea that may be tied to one homonym and have the same general semantics, but with a slight semantic variation. For instance, the word 会う (*au*, or *ow* as in *how*) [to meet] can be expressed in the following ways:

	Meaning
あう <sup>28</sup>	Meet, encounter
会う	Meet, encounter
逢う	Meet, encounter (date or tryst nuance)
遭う	Meet, encounter (undesirable nuance)
遇う	Meet, encounter (unexpected nuance)

Figure 11: Variation in Japanese orthography. The word *au* or “meet” and its various kanji representations (adapted from Joyce et al., 2012, p. 264).

The above example is based on Joyce et al.’s analysis of the UniDic (Electronic Dictionary with Uniformity and Identity) corpus and how the project teases out *au*. However, the authors argue that the treatment of other words with similar semantic values by the corpus perhaps constrains words’ diverse semantic values too much. For instance, おさまる (*osamaru*) has meanings which vary from “be obtained” to “be at peace, be quelled” and five kanji at the beginning to denote the different meaning of the word (収、納、治, the original hiragana, etc.), but the developers of the corpus have proposed stripping out all other kanji but one (収) to cover all the possible meanings (265). What gets lost is visual cues to identify the nuance.

Other scholars have taken much more pointed aim at the inconsistency of Japanese orthography. Hidenori Masiko, in his revealingly titled, “Script and

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<sup>28</sup> These two characters are hiragana. The forms of *au* that follow in this list take the form of a kanji character and hiragana character.

Orthography Problems,” identifies “problems” with orthography that stem not just from the large number of potential readings for certain kanji like 生 (生きる [*ikiru*], 生まれる [*umareru*], 生娘 [*kimusume*], 生 [*nama*], 一生 [*issho*], 生活 [*seikatsu*], or *i, u, ki, nama, sho,* and *sei* if subtracting the other characters) all of which depend on the hiragana, katakana, or kanji that come after the 生 kanji), but also the fact that some kanji

1) need to have a historical referent or conventions (i.e. 北京 or *Pekin* [Peking] which is based on the name which was used by China, and therefore the kanji and pronunciation remained the same in Japan despite the *pekin* reading going against Japanese *kun* and *on* readings), 2) need to have context in order to have the appropriate pronunciation of them (i.e. 工夫 *kufu* [device, scheme] vs. 工夫 *kofu* [laborer]), or 3) rely on both history and context to discern the reading (清水区 *Shimizu-ku* or Shimizu Ward vs. 清水寺 *Kiyomizu-dera* or Kiyomizu Temple) (Masiko, p. 424-426). In this example, one needs to know either the ward of Shimizu in Shizuoka Prefecture for the former 清水, or the temple of Kiyomizu in Kyoto Prefecture for the latter 清水 to be able to discern which reading is appropriate<sup>29</sup>.

A final “orthographic problem” raised by Masiko and which deserves attention is the trend of “glittering names” or *kirakira-nemu* in which parents map names onto kanji

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<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that the kanji characters 区 (*ku*) and 寺 (*dera*) which are attached to 清水 let us know that each refers to a specific place (a ward versus a temple), but they do not change the pronunciation of the base word 清水, therefore readers need to be familiar with the context.

characters that go completely against Japanese orthographic norms. Due to loose conventions for naming children in Japan as per the Family Registration Law--which has two rules, 1) that the kanji must be simple and commonly used and 2) that scripts outside of kanji, hiragana, and katakana cannot be used--people are creating highly unconventional names. For instance, *shiiza*, or “Caesar” has been mapped onto 皇帝, a word which is pronounced *kotei* (emperor) by Japanese orthographic conventions. The parents use the pronunciation of Caesar because he was an emperor, and therefore, “the semantic side of kanji takes precedence and totally eclipses the phonological function of the script symbols in question” (427-428).<sup>30</sup> (Relatedly, my wife met a young man named *seben*, or “seven,” and his name was one simple kanji, 七, which is normally pronounced *shichi*, and means “seven” in Japanese). Unfortunately, glittering names have caused their recipients embarrassment, especially as they graduate college and enter the workforce (Masiko 429-430). Nevertheless, while such practices directly challenge the idea that one word should have one spelling, they also highlight the JWS’s possibilities regarding orthographic play. Below I will detail how the multi-scripts are deployed in both standard, as well as creative ways.

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<sup>30</sup> Kirakira-nemu have become a hot button issue in the media this year. Due to the popularity of glittering names, the Japanese government is exploring the possibility of including *yomigana* (*kana* as a gloss to understand kanji characters’ pronunciation) in family registers as part of digitalization efforts for public documents (up until now, *yomigana* has not been included on the documents).



## The Contemporary Japanese Writing System

As I briefly described above, writing practices within the current JWS involve the mixing of various scripts—this practice is referred to in Japanese as 漢字かな交じり文 (*kanji kana majiribun*), or “mixed kanji and kana writing.” Specifically, it involves mixing kanji, hiragana and katakana (syllabographic scripts), the roman alphabet (ローマ字) or “romaji,” which is a phonemic alphabet, and Arabic numerals for numbers. These various elements do things like demarcate boundaries between words (which can be done in kanji, hiragana, katakana, or romaji); demarcate grammar (usually through hiragana); and highlight the differences between native Japanese words (kanji and hiragana), Sino-Japanese words (kanji), and foreign loan words (katakana and romaji) (Masuda and Joyce 2018).

The amount of mixing of scripts within a given text is reliant on factors such as rhetorical effects (such as audience and publication venue [delivery]), stylistic preferences of the author, and content and context (p. 183). Masuda and Joyce note that in a study of the Asahi Newspaper that analyzed all articles from the year 1993, the authors (Chikamatsu, Yokoyama, Long and Fukuda 2000 in Masuda and Joyce, 2018, p. 183) found that out of the 56.6 million characters, kanji represented 41.38%, hiragana accounted for 36.2%, katakana for 6.38%, punctuation and other symbols for 13.09%, Arabic numerals for 2.07%, and the Latin alphabet for 0.46% (p. 183). While this kind of interweaving of scripts might sound complex to those who write in only one alphabet (like how Americans write English using the roman alphabet) it is a normal practice in

Japan, and even Japanese learners who struggle with mastering the scripts at first will find the deployment of multi-scripts far preferable to using only one script.

Any word in Japanese can be theoretically written in any script, which opens the door for a vast amount of expressive possibilities for a given sentence. Due to the amount of choices available, it is more difficult to determine an “incorrect” representation of words versus an uncommon representation of words, although a regular Japanese language user will be able to determine the common representation of given words. To highlight this idea, Robertson (2020a) created a chart of some nine ways to express the sentence “I [will] drink coffee at a café.” I will draw upon Robertson’s example and add color coding to demonstrate how hiragana, katakana, and kanji mix throughout. The standard way to write this sentence would be, “私は喫茶店でコーヒーを飲む” where words like 私 (I), 喫茶店 (café), and 飲 (drink) are all in **kanji**, as per standard practice. In this example, は (wa), を (wo), and で (de) are particles in **hiragana**, while コーヒー (ko-hi) is in **katakana** to demonstrate its role as a loan word (“coffee”). Teasing out the word “coffee” a bit further here, the word could be represented as 珈琲 (a kanji representation of the loan word, which is often used, especially for branding purposes for coffee products and coffee shops). Coffee can also be represented in highly unusual forms, such as こーひー (hiragana with dashes to represent elongated vowels), こうひい (all hiragana representation), 珈ヒい (mixture of kanji, katakana, and hiragana, respectively), and 個字非違 (*ateji* representation in kanji where only the phonetic values

of a kanji are used instead of their meaning) are within the realm of possibility (Robertson, 2020a, p. 9-12). The first two examples of “coffee” (コーヒー and 珈琲) are likely to be used in the vast majority of all situations. Indeed, 珈琲 shows up on Starbucks signs in Japan, despite the characters not belonging to the joyo kanji list (which serves as evidence that the majority of Japanese people can read the kanji) and a hiragana version of こーひー could show up in children’s books, for example. 珈琲 could perhaps be chosen for its elegance or complexity, while the hiragana example would perhaps suggest a simplicity or femininity (outside of its practical use in children’s books)<sup>31</sup>. The more extreme examples of “coffee,” (珈ヒイ and 個字非違, for instance) are experimental to the point of it being difficult to imagine the contexts in which they would be deployed. People can still read these highly unusual examples, but the *ateji* one (that which draws upon phonetic values of kanji alone) in particular seems like a written code. But even this legibly difficult *ateji* example demonstrates writing that, although rare, can be found in contemporary Japan (p. 11). Now that I have laid out the history, functions, and practices involving the JWS, I will briefly highlight scholarship adjacent to research on the JWS and conclude the chapter.

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<sup>31</sup> Hiragana could be seen as feminine because of sociocultural associations with concepts like “soft,” “light,” and “weak” which are associated with femininity in Japanese culture (Hiraga 2006 134). These ideologies are also based on historical tradition during the mid Heian period (794 – 1185 CE) in which women typically only wrote in hiragana (*onna-de* or *ohn-nah-day*) [women’s script/hand], and men wrote in kanji (*otoko-de* or *oh-toh-koh-day*) [men’s script/hand] (Seeley 1991, pp. 78-79).

## Research Directions on Japanese Writing Practices

Scholars within a variety of fields are paying greater attention to Japanese writing practices. For instance, scholarship within sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology traditions has analyzed how the Japanese multi-scripts are deployed with emojis and scripts such as Cyrillic and punctuation marks to foreground identity and display emotion (Miller, 2011; Kavanagh, 2016). Other sociolinguistics-based research on the Japanese multi-scripts seeks to uncover, as well as problematize, the linguistic ideologies behind script variation (Robertson, 2020; and see Spitzmüller, 2012 for what he calls “graphic ideologies” in German). Spitzmüller bases his definition of graphical ideologies, “any sets of beliefs about graphic communicative means articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived orders and communicative use of graphic elements” (2012, p. 257) on Silverstein’s (1979) definition of linguistic ideologies: “any sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Key to Robertson (2020a) and Spitzmüller (2012) is the idea that ideologies behind umlauts, typefaces, and script choices, for instance, are not fixed but tend to float around among language users based on social and historical factors. They are not stable, in other words, which is how the general public may tend to think of linguistic ideologies.<sup>32</sup> Translation studies scholars have traced how the Japanese multi-scripts can be deployed to translate hard-to-translate material such as jokes and puns from one language to the next via furigana and other strategies (Sato 2017, Sato 2018, Sato and Sharma 2017, Robertson 2020b).

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<sup>32</sup> Spitzmüller (2012) found that, for instance, people associate the blackletter family of typeface and umlauts with everything from Nazism to toughness (this latter ideology is especially prevalent in heavy metal groups’ album covers and related materials). Interestingly, the Nazis disliked blackletter to the extent that they banned Fraktur, one of the blackletter typefaces.

Scholars in cognitive linguistics have also examined the Japanese multi-scripts utilizing indexicality and Peircean semiotics to expose the layers of visual meaning in Japanese and English poetry (Hiraga, 2005), and other scholars in psychology have analyzed the reading processes behind the multi-scripts (Pae, 2018), and argued for script relativity, or the idea that the script or alphabet one uses impacts their cognition (Pae, 2020). Multimodality and other semiotics-based approaches have used children's literacy practices with the Japanese language to analyze how the multi-scripts are multimodal, while also rejecting the Western bias of the Kressian approach to analyzing text (more on this in later chapters) (McGovern, 2013; Yamada-Rice, 2015) and kanji-adjacent research demonstrates how the image and text blend seamlessly together in Chinese hanzi in artwork and protest writing (Lee, 2015; Wei and Hua, 2019).

My interests lie within Japanese semiosis, or meaning making practices, and I deploy social semiotics, transmodality, and translanguaging as theoretical frameworks to discover how meaning is made. This project builds upon recent scholarship exploring modality and Japanese writing practices by Emily Cousins (2021) to lay out empirical evidence for many of her theoretical claims. Put another way, my research study provides evidence of how Japanese undergraduates deploy modality in writing for various purposes, while laying the groundwork for analysis of these practices through a transmodal framework.

## **Conclusion**

I have briefly demonstrated the history, as well as the sheer complexity, of the JWS. While the writing system is more unified than ever thanks to the emergence of a

unified modern Japanese state and policies that have attempted to standardize both the Japanese language and Japanese writing as much as possible, the nature of the writing system itself, as well as variation in the multi-scripts, allows for a wide range of stylistic expression. And while scholars have begun to shine a sociolinguistic lens on written language in general, much work remains to be done on the Japanese scripts, especially in terms of ethnographic research and writing processes. Concepts such as translanguaging and transmodality can be applied usefully to theorize about Japanese semiosis, and what is learned in this process can influence research on English writing practices in turn.

The next chapter lays out my process diary method for understanding Japanese students' writing processes, and it therefore seeks a bottom-up (as opposed to top-down) perspective (Robertson 2020a) on how meaning is made in Japanese writing. Through my process diary method, as well as recorded interviews with Japanese students at Shinshu University in Japan, I seek to understand how students' reflections on their writing processes can help theorize multi/transmodality and writing. Unlike McGovern's (2013) tendency to assign meaning-making potential and agency to the JWS, I want to address the meaning-making potential of writing, not as something that an established writing system allows one to do, but rather as emerging practices in tandem with a writing system.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRACING MODALITY IN JAPANESE STUDENTS' LITERATE LIVES

This chapter introduces the methods and methodological framework for this dissertation. As mentioned previously, there has been research conducted on how translanguaging occurs within Japanese-language artifacts such as building signs (Turnbull, 2019), translated literature (Sato 2017, 2018), hip-hop and manga (Pennycook, 2003; Yamashita, 2019), text messaging and social networking websites (Miller, 2011; Kavanagh, 2016), and on how artists and other creative types experiment with non-standard scripts or play with the visuality of kanji and Hanzi to make new meanings (Lee, 2015; Robertson, 2015, 2017; Wei and Hua, 2019; Cousins, 2021), but this research tends to focus on finished products instead of emerging processes of writing. In order to forward an emergent and ethnographic trans- approach to Japanese writing practices, I deploy a mixed methods approach to this project based on a diary-based research method, interviewing, and discourse analysis. The first phase involved students recording their writing using a process diary and collecting samples of said writing (Hart-Davidson, 2007). During the second phase of the research study, participants answered questions about their writing during an interview and drew a picture of their writing process which they then discussed (Prior and Shipka, 2003; Durst, 2019). This method of interviewing has allowed me to understand students' decision-making process for their writing, the genres students' write within, changes made between handwriting and typed writing, and other aspects of writing that would be difficult to explore via other methods.

## **Research Sites**

I conducted the video interview portion of my research at Shinshu University in Nagano, Japan. Shinshu University is a *tako* (octopus) campus, which refers to the fact that there are five locations of the university spread throughout Nagano Prefecture in east central Japan. I conducted the video-recorded interviews at the Nagano City campus of Shinshu University, which is an education campus preparing future teachers to teach various subjects and age groups in the K-12 education system. I chose Shinshu University as my research site because it is a representative sample of a small four-year college. I also have connections to the university. In the summer of 2007, I completed a one-month study abroad program at Shinshu University where I learned basic Japanese. During this time, I met Dr. Hideki Sakai, who would come to be my main point of contact as I completed the IRB for this research project. The parts of this mixed research method which did not involve interviewing, such as transcribing and analyzing data, were conducted from my home in Ishikawa, Japan.

## **Participant Recruitment**

I relied on the help of Dr. Sakai to help me find participants for this diary and interview-based research project. After finding two potential participants, he relayed the information to me, and I sent them a recruitment email.

In this study, I am using pseudonyms for both participants. One participant is female and the other is male. Both participants were second-year students at Shinshu University at the time of their recruitment. Below I have laid out the demographic information and starting date for these participants' participation in the study.



<b>Student Name<sup>33</sup></b>	<b>Year at University</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Study Start Date</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Gen	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (sophomore)	Male	12/1/2021	1/6/2022
Sakura	2 <sup>nd</sup> year (sophomore)	Female	12/4/2021	1/7/2022

### *Consent*

I initially wrote an informed consent form to send to my participants to be signed. After writing the form and receiving help translating it into Japanese through Dr. Sakai, I was informed by my university's IRB official that a preamble unsigned consent form would suffice for the study because the participants would not be sharing sensitive information. However, the participants' privacy could not be 100 percent guaranteed because of the possibility that classmates in the same course might recognize the work of the participant, for instance. The possibility someone knows the participant could therefore potentially lead to self-consciousness on behalf of the study participant, and I laid this out in both my initial informed consent form and preamble unsigned consent form.

Due to the international nature of this study, I was required to abide by additional stipulations originating from Japan's laws regarding participants' data privacy. Therefore, an additional data privacy form was created which laid out the University of Louisville's role as controller of the data, the participant's rights to data privacy, the five-year duration of data storage, and other important aspects of how the participants' data would be handled. Finally, the form contained a blank field for the participant's signature and date. Only upon receiving my participants' signatures was I able to begin the study.

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<sup>33</sup> All participant names are pseudonyms.

## **Data Collection**

### *Phase 1: Text Collection*

My diary study approach (Hart-Davidson, 2007) involved collecting diary entries from participants in which they detail the kinds of writing they produced. I also collected writing samples from the participants to get an idea of the writing that Japanese university students may do, both inside and outside their university contexts. I wanted to see what kinds of writing students were producing; how participants utilized the Japanese writing system, other alphabets, and emojis when composing; who they were composing to; what kinds of technologies they used to compose; what kinds of choices they made when composing texts; and how much time they spent composing certain texts, among other questions. The instructions in my preamble unsigned consent form to participants stated that I wanted them to keep track of their daily writing over a two-week period. I also wrote that I wanted participants to share some of the writing they produced. In this manner, I did not ask for a specific amount of writing, and so it was up to the participants how much they wanted to share (although I was hoping for one writing sample per day). My reason for the two-week time frame for my study was to get a good amount of writing samples in terms of both number and variety of sample genres. Furthermore, I wanted to ensure my study was not a burden for my as-of-yet unknown participants. I figured that if I could create a low stakes and minimal effort study, in which participants record their literate activity in the way they prefer, and collect as many samples as they like, I would have success in recruiting participants.

I used CardBox, the University of Louisville cloud storage system, to store students' writing samples and process diaries. CardBox is a version of the cloud content

manager Box, which is similar to Google Drive. I chose CardBox over other storage systems because it takes additional data security measures, such as encryption, to comply with HIPAA. Through CardBox I was able to see my participants' process diaries and writing samples as they were uploaded.

Within CardBox I created two folders—process diary (プロセス日記) and writing samples (ライティングサンプル)—for participants to upload their writings into, and I was able to view them on my end. My participants, Gen and Sakura, started keeping their process diaries and uploading their writing samples in December. Gen started uploading his files starting on December 1, 2021, and uploaded his last ones on January 6, 2022. while Sakura uploaded all her process diary entries and writing samples by December 26, 2021. I gave the participants the freedom to record their diaries in whatever format suited them. They could use Word, Excel, pen and paper, or any other medium for recording the kinds of compositions they produced. The preamble unsigned consent form I sent to participants allowed for great leeway in how students write their diaries:

You will be asked to record your daily writing activity in a process diary over a two-week period, share some of this writing, and be interviewed about it.

Sakura asked for clarification on what I was expecting, and I sent her a process diary template, which could have affected how she recorded her writing as compared to Gen (see Appendix A for the diary template). Gen submitted a diary entry and writing sample each day, and on individual diary documents divided his writing into classroom writing or outside writing.

## プロセス日記4

12/4

本日の授業:  
なし

授業外  
友人と LINE でチャットした。  
サークルの話し合いで書記として会議の内容をメモした。

*Figure 12: Entry from Gen's process diary.*

The figure demonstrates Gen's process diary entry from December 4, 2021, which also happens to be the fourth process diary entry. The top field under the date is labeled "Today's class" and underneath it, "None" is written in hiragana. The next field is labeled "Outside of class," and under this field, Gen writes that he chatted with his friends on the LINE application. In the second sentence, Gen writes that in his role as secretary for the mixed choir club, he wrote down notes from their meeting.

In terms of Gen's diary submissions and reports, he submitted Word documents. However, he chose to recreate messages from his LINE<sup>34</sup> Chat in the Notes feature in CardBox.

Below I have laid out the identifiable genres of writing the participants produced:

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<sup>34</sup> LINE is a popular Japanese instant messaging application which is similar to Facebook Messenger and other applications that allow one to chat with one or more people virtually.

<b>Kind of Writing Produced</b>
Class Writing: Reports/Reflections/Notes
LINE Messages
Ride Schedules
Mailing List Emails
Meeting Notes
Form Signature
Annotated Sheet Music
Handbook for Elementary Students

Additionally, I have included a list of the artifacts I received from Gen and Sakura as Appendix B.

Unlike Gen, Sakura wrote her diary entries in a single Excel spreadsheet. She divided the sections into “date,” “time,” and “content.” A sample entry on December 5, 2021 demonstrates that she compiled all her notes for class (1-5 pm), chatted with her friend (7:30-7:35 pm), sent a message to her friend on Instagram (7:35-7:40 pm), wrote a report in Word from (10-11:30 pm), and then chatted with her friend via LINE (11:30 to 11:40 pm).

	A	B	C	D
1				
2		date	time	content
3		12/4/2021	7:30~7:35	友達にInstagramで返信した
4			12:00~12:05	郵送のため宛名と住所を書いた
5			15:50~15:55	友達にLINEで返信した
6			19:30~19:40	友達にLINEで返信した
7			20:30~20:40	友達にLINEで返信した
8			22:40~23:20	友達にLINEで返信した
9		12/5/2021	13:00~17:00	Wordで授業内容をまとめた
10			19:30~19:35	友達にLINEで返信した
11			19:35~19:40	友達にInstagramで返信した
12			22:00~23:30	Wordでレポートを書いた
13			23:30~23:40	友達にLINEで返信した
14		12/6/2021	9:50~10:00	PCで授業の感想を書いた
15			10:30~12:00	PCで授業の板書を取った
16			13:10~13:20	PCで授業の感想を書いた
17			13:20~14:20	PCで授業の板書を取った
18			14:45~14:50	友達にLINEで返信した
19			15:20~16:10	Wordでレポートを書いた
20			20:40~23:40	Wordでレポートを書いた
21		12/7/2021	7:10~7:20	PCで授業の感想を書いた
22			8:40~10:20	PCで授業の板書を取った
23			10:15~10:20	プリントに書き込んだ
24			10:40~12:10	PCで授業の板書を取った
25			13:15~13:20	友達にLINEで返信した
26			14:50~16:20	PCで授業の板書を取った
27			17:00~18:10	PCで授業の板書を取った
28		12/8/2021	9:00~10:10	プリントに書き込んだ
29			13:10~16:30	PCで授業の板書を取った

Figure 13: Sakura's process diary.

Sakura's writing samples were also compiled into a single file—in this case, directly input into CardBox as a note—and this writing sample compilation contained multiple pages of notes from Sakura's special education course. The notes were compiled collaboratively with Sakura's friends, but she wrote everything herself while relying upon her own and her friends' content.

## Phase 2: Text and Discourse-Based Interviews

I drew upon discourse-based interviews in order to gather students' tacit knowledge about the choices (rhetorical, stylistic, and other) behind their writing. In this method, participants use their writing samples as mnemonics to recall their writing choices in various situations (Hart-Davidson, 2007, Shipka and Prior, 2003).

I traveled to Nagano on January 6<sup>th</sup> to interview my participants based on materials from the two-week diary and writing sample collection period. I conducted my interview with Gen from roughly 4:30-6:30 pm on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, while Sakura's interview took place from roughly 3:30-5:30 pm on January 7<sup>th</sup> on the Nagano City Shinshu University campus. The interviews were conducted almost entirely in Japanese, but some English was sprinkled in throughout. Due to Japanese being my L2, there were moments where I needed to seek extra clarification. The use of hand gestures also helped clarify unclear information, and there were a couple of instances where I used Google Translate to double check the meaning of certain words.

During interviews I asked my participants about the choices in their writing, such as their choice of scripts and symbols such as “@”; the technology they used for writing, how they collaborated with others, and what their writing processes involved. Finally, I asked my participants to draw two images of their writing process from a specific project they recently completed. After the participants drew a visual representation of their writing processes, we discussed what they had drawn. The prompt for the writing process was adapted from Prior and Shipka (2003). Due to my limited competence in Japanese, I wrote the prompt in both English and Japanese. My Japanese description of the prompt likely contained errors because I was unable to get it translated by a Japanese L1 user. Considering the possibility of confusion, I was on hand to answer questions about the prompt the participants had. In the end, the participants were able to complete their two diagrams in line with the prompt.

My interviews were conducted in-person at the Shinshu University campus in Nagano City.<sup>35</sup> I used a videorecorder as my primary recording device, but also used my computer's voice recording tool as a backup in case something interrupted the video recording process. For the interview with Sakura on the next day, I used my iPhone as backup during the interview because I found the voice recording tool on my laptop to be too quiet, which is likely due to the positioning of the laptop's speakers. The video data for the interview was stored on a 32-gigabyte memory card, and I later downloaded it onto my computer. Unfortunately, the memory card unexpectedly became full during Sakura's process diagram on the final day, and so I had to switch to video recording on my laptop via Zoom in order to capture this final important data. After downloading all video and audio data onto my computer, I encrypted the files.

### *Sample Questions*

For the most part, I asked questions that were specific to the participant's diary and writing samples; however, there were general questions that conformed with the preliminary questions I submitted to my IRB. A list of these questions is available as Appendix C. Below I provide some example questions I asked each participant on (1) their process diaries and (2) their writing samples. Before conducting the interview, I translated these questions into Japanese, and then I asked the questions in Japanese. I do not include these Japanese translations. For the English questions I provide, I have added information for my audience's ease of reading (new content highlighted in yellow) for things like the translation of terms.

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<sup>35</sup> I gave my participants the option to conduct virtual interviews out of concern of the coronavirus pandemic.



### *Gen's Process Diary Questions*

- Can you tell briefly tell me about your choir group? What is the 混声合唱団のメーリングリスト (mixed choir mailing list)? Is the list physical or online? How often do you write for your circle, and what kinds of writing do you write for them? Do you consciously change your writing to address the audience?
- What kind of communication for your circle (club) takes place through LINE and what takes place through the mailing list? (Day 2)
- You said you created a handbook for elementary students. What content is in the book? What kinds of choices did you make (in terms of content, script, aesthetics, etc.). What were the steps for creating this handbook? (Day 4)

### *Gen's Writing Sample Questions*

I also translated some writing samples into English and asked questions about their content. In the example below, I translated the third response from Gen on his classroom reflection and then came up with a question. My question which developed from Gen's insights is in red:

- In the fifth class, I learned about the developmental stages of painting. I was interested in the fact that children around the age of 5 devise strategies which involve drawing a base line and dividing the picture into upper and lower sections. It made me reflect on what I had written unconsciously. (I wonder, how might this reflection inform his reflection on his writing process?)

I have included a list of my translations of Gen's artifacts, as well as the English version of my general interview questions as Appendix D. Next, I will detail the interview portion of my methods.

### *Videorecording and Embodied Actions*

I video recorded my interviews to capture gestures and other semiotic information that is meaningful in the interview (Olinger 2014, 2020; Gonzales, 2015). Unfortunately, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the participant and I wore masks which covered up our faces. Therefore, I was unable to record facial expressions, which represents a limitation on this method in this context.

The gestures I captured include bowing, nodding, and pointing. My participants occasionally used gestures that would be considered unfamiliar to a general American audience. These gestures are meaningful within Japanese culture, but do not carry meaning in the US. I noted these gestures, as well as their meaning, when analyzing my data, but did not incorporate them into this dissertation because of time limitations. The gestures helped me understand certain Japanese words I was unfamiliar with, and they also provided me with useful context when revisiting my video to transcribe the interview, thereby demonstrating the importance of modality to interviewing (as well as writing practices).

### **Data Analysis**

My data analysis consisted of compiling the diary entries and writing samples from phase 1 of the study and then analyzing the Japanese text for areas that seemed salient to my work, such as explorations about how participants used various scripts and non-textual modes to make meaning (other areas of inquiry are embedded in the interview questions I list in this chapter). I translated portions of my participants' documents into English when devising questions to ask my participants for my own ease

of use, and in case I needed to show the participants the English version of the questions. I used Google Translate to help me quickly understand the gist of some of the lengthier writing samples in order to save time, and then made my own corrections to the automated translation. All translations of the interview and writing samples included in this dissertation chapter are my own.

The analysis of phase 2 data from this research project consisted of transcribing 3 hours of audio and visually recorded data from the interviews with the research participants. I used the ELAN transcription software to transcribe video and audio data. ELAN is a free transcription tool available under the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands. The program allows researchers to add layers of data (called tiers in the program's parlance) to transcriptions so that researchers annotate not only audio, but also visual material like gestures. After transcribing, or annotating, this data in Japanese, I translated selections of the data into English on a Word document and analyzed the data for different themes.

### *Limitations*

My study aims to gain insights about the compositions and writing practices of writers of Japanese. It goes deeper in analyzing individual choices and metacognition in Japanese writing than studies that interpret "finished" written products. This approach also allows the researcher to trace writing that occurs outside of normal school and work environments (Hart-Davidson, 2007). However, diary entries and interviewing on previously written work are still somewhat retroactive approaches to composition and writing. Other writing process research methodologies allow for more up-to-

date/moment-by-moment analyses of writing processes, such as think-aloud protocols (Flower and Hayes, 1981) and screen capture techniques (Takayoshi, 2016, 2018). These alternative methods are generative, and I would like to explore them in the future. However, due to my limited resources, as well as the more invasive nature of such studies, my diary and interview mixed method approach is sufficient for tracking how writers make sense of how they conceive of writing, their stylistic choices, writing processes and the tools through which they compose.

### *Inductive Analysis*

I analyzed the data from the interviews and participants' documents and first noted the following broad topics that occurred in either one or both of the data sets: technology, discourse communities, non-standard composing, audience, collaboration, templates/genre, processes, social media, and annotations. After identifying these broad topics, I conducted an inductive analysis, whereby I started with specific data in each broad topic and then found patterns among them, thereby generating specific generalizations within the broad topics. For instance, the broad topic of "Technology" I identified became the specific generalization, "Technology Mediating Script Choice." The other generalizations I identified include, "Technology Automating Reading and Writing Processes," "Participants Maintaining Sociality Through Politeness, Formality, and Informality," "The Impact of Genre and Audience on Design," "Annotating Texts for Clarification," "Relying on Kanji to Understand Unknown Terminology," and "The Deployment of English for Multimodal Purposes." Below I analyze each of these specific generalizations and highlight their significance.

## ライティングサンプル② 2021-12-02 22.56.33

12/3(金) 19:00~22:00  
場所: あがたの森  
行き  
車 17:00 : @2  
車 17:00 : @2  
車 ファミマ 17 : 40 :@4  
帰り  
車@4  
車@4  
12/4(土)10:00~16:00  
場所:あがたの森  
行き  
車 8:00 : @4  
車 ファミマ 8 : 00 : @3  
車 8:00 : @3  
帰り  
車 : @1  
車 : @3  
12/5(日)12 : 50~17:00  
場所:音文メインホール  
行き  
車 11:00 : @3  
車 8:00 : @3  
車 11:00 : @2  
帰り  
車 : @3  
車 : @2  
車 : @2  
車 : @3

Figure 14. Gen's ride sharing schedule

Gen is the vice-president of the mixed choir club at Shinshu University. In order to relay important information to members of the mixed choir club, he uses a mailing list through Gmail, as well as an application called LINE for communicating with choir members.

Gen varied his choice of script (hiragana, katakana, kanji, romaji) based upon the technology he was using. For instance, he used hiragana instead of the seemingly standard kanji for one of his messages when he was coordinating rides to go to and from

Agata Forest. I assumed “Agata” would be written in kanji because it is the name of a Japanese place, or proper noun. When asked about whether he would normally write the word in kanji, Gen said that yes, he would, but taking the time to convert the characters into kanji on his (unspecified) device would be a burden, and so he chose to just type the hiragana instead. (I can personally attest to how time-consuming it is to scroll through automatically generated kanji suggestions to find a single kanji character). However, after concluding the interview, I searched for Agata Forest on the Internet, but all results, including Agata Forest’s official website, displayed Agata in hiragana (あがた). This makes me believe that hiragana is the preferred, or only method for displaying the name of this particular Agata Forest, however the 森 or “forest” word is always displayed in kanji.

Continuing our discussion of the ride-sharing LINE message, Gen described the meaning of the non-alphabetic and non-JWS symbols. For instance, Gen denotes how many people can ride in each car by writing the name of the person and then “@,” which is then followed by an Arabic numeral. For instance, 山田@4 means that four people can fit in Yamada’s car. After sending out the LINE message, Gen needs to wait for everyone’s response via LINE and then compile the responses and find out who is riding in who’s car. The process is quite time consuming, according to Gen.

Gen’s reflection on this writing sample demonstrates the meaning he attaches to “@,” for instance, which differs from normative uses of it as a symbol meaning “at.” However, the symbol has a long history, and its meaning changes from context to

context.<sup>36</sup> Gen’s choice to write “Agata” in hiragana possibly demonstrates that there are no clear demarcating lines on what script should be used in a given situation, even in the case of proper nouns. Another possibility is that Gen’s recollection of his script choice was imperfect, which underlies a limitation of interviews, or personal recollection, as a research method. An implication of expediency also underlies such choices. Furthermore, the ride schedule as a whole is quite compact for the amount of information it communicates. Below I include another LINE message to the mixed choir group which demonstrates how technology, and specifically, interfaces, impact the choice of script.

## ライティングサンプル5 2021-12-06 10.32.54

サンプル数が少なくなっていました。

チャットのサンプル↓

おねがいします！

あざす！

です！お願いします🙏

*Figure 15: Gen’s LINE message to a choir member.*

This writing sample is Gen’s reply to a choir member regarding the ride schedule. The first two lines of the message are geared towards me as the audience. The first says, “The writing samples have become few,” and the next line says, “Chat sample” and points to the content of his message to the choir member. In the message, Gen writes a brief three-line introduction whereby he starts with a greeting in hiragana, おねがいしま

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<sup>36</sup> See Willan (2000).

す, *onegaishimasu* (*oh-neh-gah-ee-she-moss*), thanks the person he is chatting with, identifies himself, and finishes with the same greeting, but in both hiragana and kanji this time, *お願いします* (*oh* is in hiragana, *ne-gah* is in kanji, and *ee-she-moss* is in hiragana). When asked about why he wrote certain words in kanji, he explained that it is easy to press the space bar on his computer and change the initial hiragana he has written to kanji. But at the same time, he says there is no specific reason why he chose to incorporate kanji, over hiragana. Gen shares his thoughts on script and script selection below, which are related to, but not necessarily tied to this specific writing sample.

Gen says that writing English is easier than writing Japanese by hand because of the high number of strokes for individual kanji characters. However, when writing Japanese, Gen prefers the *フリック操作*, *furikku sousa* (*foo-ree-kku so-oo-h-sah*) or “flick operation.” Smartphones have this functionality, and it lets the user choose from a list of hiragana characters that are laid out in a grid to input characters. These characters are typically laid out with the characters that have the “a” or “ah” vowel at the end, and so the iPhone, for instance, has *あ、か、さ、た、な、は、ま、や、* and *ら* which correspond to “a (ah), ka (kah), sa (sah), ta (tah), na (nah), ha (hah), ma (mah), ya (yah), and ra (rah).” To get a different hiragana which starts with the same consonant, the user would hold his or her finger down on the screen for a longer period of time and then alternative vowel sounds will be displayed one character up, down, left, and right. For instance, holding *か* (kah) would display options *く* *ku* (*kooh*), *け* *ke* (*keh*), *き* *ki* (*kee*), and *こ* *ko* (*koh*) in all these directions. After choosing one or more characters in



this manner, hiragana, katakana, or kanji word suggestions are usually displayed at the top of the interface for the writer’s consideration. Thus, the flick operation makes it easy to produce hiragana, katakana, and kanji characters, as well as entire words (in any script) quickly and easily. This interface also gives an example of why Japanese users can read and type a much greater number of kanji than they can write by hand.

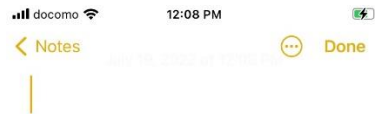


Figure 16: The flick operation in action.

A final instance of technology mediating Gen’s choice of script and length of message occurred when he used the application LINE to chat with friends, and in one instance uses “あざす” (azasu) [thanks] instead of ありがとうございます (arigatou gozaimasu) [thank you]. I asked Gen if he was doing this in order to be playful, but his reasoning was that because he was chatting a lot with his friend, he wanted to make the message as short as possible or else it would be めんどい, or tiresome/burdensome to write. Thus, he is again demonstrating how expedience and the affordances of technology

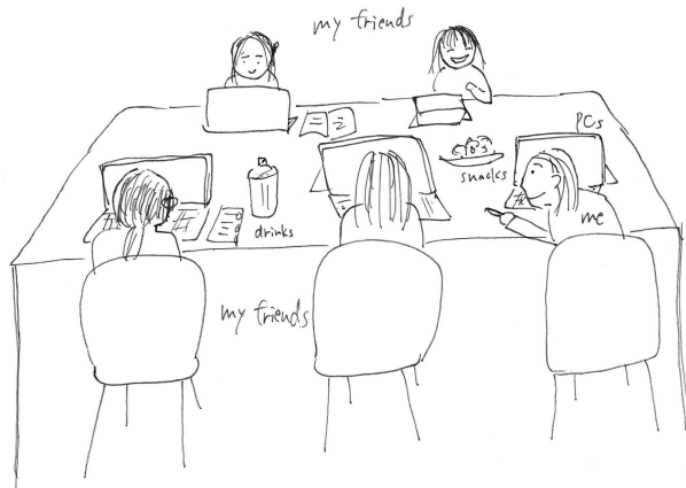
are mediating script and word choice. In the next section, I highlight how automation was used in the other participant's classes to ease reading and writing processes.

### *Technology Automating Reading and Writing Processes*

Sakura used Google Lens<sup>37</sup> to help her understand the readings of difficult kanji which were written by her professor on the blackboard during her special needs education class. The kanji in the course were difficult because they were medical terminology, but to compound the difficulty, the professor had poor handwriting. As Sakura describes it, “字汚いんですよ、その先生,” or “That professor has poor handwriting” (or more literally, “That professor's characters are dirty”). She questioned whether the kanji characters the professor wrote on the board matched with characters that were typically used for the terminology. Sakura furthermore wondered about whether converting what she hears the professor say phonetically into kanji via her device would result in kanji that does not match what the professor wrote on the blackboard, which gives off the implication that the professor's kanji could be incorrect. For all these reasons, Sakura drew upon Google Lens as one tool of automation to help her make sense of the professor's notes.

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<sup>37</sup> Google Lens is an application for computers and smart phones that allows the user to scan and translate text in real time by pointing the camera at signs, documents, and other interfaces with text. The target language text then appears above the source language text after a few seconds. The user can also copy passages with the application and send them directly to their PC.



at my house

We all had a good time with snacks and drinks during the study party for <sup>the</sup> test.

Figure 17: Sakura's study party. Sakura depicts her study party with her friends for her process diagram.

In a slightly different use of Google Lens, Sakura said that her friend used the application to transcribe her hand-written notes instantaneously into text. In this episode, Sakura and a number of friends got together to compile their notes for their special needs education test, which I called a “study party,” (and Sakura picked up on the term). While Sakura used a laptop to write out her notes, one of her friends wrote out her notes by hand and then used Google Lens to convert her notes into text on her screen. However, the friend had to go back into the automatically “typed” document afterwards and retype certain kanji with many strokes because Google Lens had a difficult time picking up on them. This example demonstrates that even though applications like Google Lens have the potential to greatly speed up composing processes, they are ultimately imperfect and require close attention to their accuracy. The example also points out students mixing automated processes and writing which is rooted in embodied practices. Next I describe

how participants maintained sociality through various writing choices and the registers of Japanese deployed which meet varying levels of politeness.

### *Participants Maintaining Sociality Through Politeness, Formality, and Informality*

#### サンプル 13

みなさんいかがお過ごしでしょうか。👍です😊  
12/26(日)に予定されているクリスマス会の詳細を共有したいと思います。カシミア!

みんなで遊ぼう! クリスマス会

日時: 12月26日(日) 13:30 開始  
会費: 100円  
※飲食物代に使用します

タイムスケジュール

13:30 集合、説明

13:45~14:25 グループレク①

14:30~15:10 グループレク②

15:15~全体で集合

15:30 歌: クリスマス・イブ、Joy To The World、愛唱歌など

16:00 おわり

クリスマス会の参加アンケートを送るのではばっと回答してください! 🙏12月17日、今週の金曜日までに回答お願いします! 特に54,55期の方々は不参加の場合もアンケートに回答してくださいね~  
先輩方も是非お越しください😊

<https://forms.gle/nZQvG1VNDgZdDxuV6>

現在レクのアイデアを募集中です!! アンケートの備考欄でおしえてください! よろしくお願ひします😊

Figure 18: Gen's email to the mixed choir club.

I asked Gen how he addresses members of his club through this mailing list versus communications with other audiences. He said that he writes things in a way that is *かたくない*, or informal. He specifically mentions that he writes in a way that is frank (フランク), although this Japanese English loan word does not quite match with the typical English definition of the word “frank.” He expounds that his writing becomes fun

and he uses emojis. When asked if he uses *sonkeigo*, or polite language which is usually associated with rigid or formal situations, he says that he throws it in a bit. This mixing of formal and informal language demonstrates the complexity of communication for maintaining relationships with groups.

Gen made various choices to maintain sociality when communicating to his mixed choir group via the listserv. To illustrate, the above image is an email Gen sent to his choir members that lays out the schedule for the mixed choir's Christmas party and solicits ideas for the celebrations. Gen mixes formal and standard politeness levels of Japanese when, for instance, the beginning of the email starts with a slightly non-standard script because Gen uses hiragana みんなさん, or *minnasan* (meen-nah-san) "everyone" instead of kanji mixed with hiragana (皆さん). However, the next sentence is polite because of its use of the honorific prefix お (oh) which is attached to the respectful conjugation of the verb "to spend time" 過ごし, *sugoshi*, (*soo-goh-she*). The verb thus becomes お過ごし *osugoshi* (oh-soo-goh-she) and でしょうか *deshouka* (deh-shoh-kah) is added on to make a question<sup>38</sup>. The meaning of the sentence becomes something akin to "How is everyone doing?". At the end of this line, Gen introduces himself (I've redacted his real name) and adds a smiley face *emoji*. In the second line Gen writes that he wants to share details about the December 26<sup>th</sup> Christmas party with members of the choir. The end of the second line, タノシミだね!, *tanoshimidane!* (*tah-noh-shee-mee-dah-neh*)

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<sup>38</sup> The only part of this sentence in kanji is "過," while the rest (verb conjugation and question) are in hiragana.

is an informal and highly non-standard way of saying, “I’m looking forward to it!” because the phrase is in all katakana. Usually the phrase would have an honorific お attached, and there would be a mix of kanji and hiragana like this: お楽しみ. The standard politeness for ending sentences would also be used, です, *desu (dess)* instead of the casual form which Gen uses, たね, *dane (dah-neh)*. Finally, Gen’s katakana タノシミダネ is squished to be roughly half size (the standard size looks like this: タノシミダネ).

When asked about this choice, Gen explained that he used 半角カタカナ, *hankaku katakana (hahn-kah-koo katakana)*, or half-width katakana. He explained that half-width katakana is not used often, but he wanted to make his writing お茶目, *ochame, (oh-chah-meh)* or playful.<sup>39</sup>

The rest of Gen’s composition contains numerous emojis (praying hands to signify a favor, Santa Claus, and another version of a smiley face), the title of a song in English (Joy to The World), and a link to a Google Form, among other content which is in a mixture of hiragana, katakana, Arabic characters, and other symbols.

Gen’s email demonstrates the complex mixture of standard and non-standard elements of writing (such as words being represented in all hiragana as opposed to a mixture of kanji and hiragana, i.e. みんなさん), as well as polite and informal registers that he constantly switches between when communicating with the mixed choir group.

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<sup>39</sup> The two kanji in this word mean “tea” and “eye/eyes,” respectively.

He does not stick with a single choice from a dichotomy (formal vs. informal), and instead consistently mixes them throughout the email, which potentially conflicts with the idea that one way of writing or speaking matches one audience. And the half-width katakana characters which are used in the highly irregular タノシミダネ (I'm looking forward to it), demonstrates how spacing can signify fun, or at least in this situation. Gen's liberal use of emojis in this email also adds to its "fun" or light-hearted feel. He continues some of the same strategies in another email to his group which I list below.

## サンプル 14

外国語のリンキングなどを指導 短いし転調もなかったので移動ドを使って歌いました 跳躍を注意して歌うよ 音取りが一段落したところで次の段階として *marcato* を意識 今日はずーズに練習できた感じがしますワ-イ!(^o^)

*Figure 19: Gen's impressions of the mixed choir's practice session.*

In writing sample 14, Gen writes his impressions on one of his mixed choir's practices. In this reflection, Gen briefly lays out areas which can use improvement and which areas worked well. The word "marcato" is written in English instead of katakana to describe the section that is supposed to be played relatively louder. In addition, half-width katakana is again used for the word ワ-イ, which means "yay" in English. At the end of the message, Gen includes a *kaomoji* (kah-oh-moh-jee), or vertically oriented emoticon (Robertson 2022) which means singing loudly "(^o^)." Kaomoji and emoji like these are commonly found in Gen's writing samples which involve communication with others.

In a similar attempt to maintain sociality, Sakura reflected on using “stamps” in LINE, which are cartoonish and oftentimes exaggerated or comical emoji-like images with text. The stamps usually convey a short message like “Thank you!” or “Good morning!” These stamps are sent out as a single message as opposed to embedded in a line of text like an emoji. When the stamp is selected and then sent, there is a sound like a wine bottle being opened, which is the default sound for non-stamp messages as well.

Sakura reflects on the playful sending of these stamps:

スタンプっていう機能がありますよね。。。あれを、あのスタンプってほしい表情じゃなくて、文字がついていることが多い。。。それを送り、送り、送るだ結構普通に送るです。で、向こうがそれにあっただんな返事をスタンプで返してくる (unintell.)スタンプ、スタンプ、スタンプっていうのを楽しみにやったりします。

So there’s this function called stamps... for the most part, they (stamps) do not really focus on facial expressions, but rather many of the [images] have text in them... you send, send, send them quite normally. Then, the person you are communicating with finds a stamp that seems like a good reply, and sends it to you (unintelligible). I look forward to the stamp, stamp, stamping (laugh).

As Sakura’s quote demonstrates, she turns the stamp function of line into a kind of fun engagement with her friends where they match their reactions in a back-and-forth stamp exchange. The next section analyzes how formal and informal genres of writing, as well as audience impact design decisions behind given texts.



## ライティングサンプル 8 2021-12-09 14.30.32

12/10(金) 19:00~22:00  
場所：あがた  
行き【希望/配車場所人時発/なし】  
帰り【希望/配車/なし】  
要望【】

12/11(土)9:30~16:00  
場所:本郷  
行き【希望/配車場所人時発/なし】  
帰り【希望/配車/なし】  
要望【】

*Figure 20: Gen's ride sharing schedule template.*

The purpose behind the documents Gen produced (and Sakura referenced) greatly impacted their design. For instance, Gen provided the original template for coordinating ride schedules as writing sample 8. He explained that the template is to be copied and pasted by choir members, and that certain parts of it are to be deleted and then filled in. The day, location, and time of the event are set in the template. For instance, the first ride schedule is for an event that occurs on Friday, December 10 from 7-10 pm in Agata; and the second event occurs on Saturday, December 11 from 9:30 am-4 pm at Hongo. The template sections that are to be filled out by choir members and sent back are for preferences for departing to and returning from the location (lines 3 and 4). Both departure and return ask for preferred departure time, place, and the person they would like to ride with. Members are also able to write that they have no preferences. The bottom line is for specific requests. This document is highly utilitarian, and there is limited text because the recipient is supposed to fill out the information. It is highly

compact, and kanji help make it even more so. Even with hiragana incorporated for words like なし *nashi* (*nah-shee*) for none, almost all words are two characters (the only exception is Agata).

Sakura, on the other hand, referenced writing on a delivery package label in her process diary, but she did not include physical or digital copies of it. However, we talked about this address form she filled out to send apples to another prefecture as a gift. When asked if she filled out the address from top to bottom (縦書き or *tategaki*—vertical writing), she said she instead filled out the label from left to right (横書き or *yokogaki*—horizontal writing) and then the top layer of the label was ripped off for her records. She made a ripping gesture and said “ピール” (*pee*) to demonstrate the action. According to Sakura, writing on envelopes can be done vertically or horizontally—notably, New Year’s cards are usually written vertically. Otherwise, Sakura claimed that writing vertically is rare after graduating from elementary and junior high school.<sup>40</sup> The next example details a book which Gen made collaboratively with classmates for an elementary student audience.

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<sup>40</sup> Tategaki is very much alive though in publication. For instance, books, magazines, newspapers, and others are often written from top to bottom and right to left, based on my own observations.



Figure 21. Sample of Gen's elementary school handbook.

Gen wrote a handbook for elementary school students that introduces them to school life. As Gen told me, the handbook is aimed towards children, specifically 校低学年, *teigakunen*, or children in grades 1 to 3. He was generous enough to give me a copy of his book. In the handbook, which is 30 pages and printed in color on glossy paper, Gen covers material such as a period-by-period breakdown of how a typical school day will unfold, subjects students will study, and special activities such as field trips and hiking. The handbook is written in a manner that makes it easily understandable for elementary students of all ages. All scripts are used in the book, but hiragana is especially prevalent, and this was a choice to aid in children's comprehension, according to Gen. The surprisingly complex kanji characters which have been included contain furigana above them to act as a gloss for the young readers. Similar to children's books which are aimed at a young audience, spacing is also used liberally to help children separate between

words due to less kanji being present. The book also contains many illustrations which Gen's friends created when they collaborated on the handbook together. Gen said these illustrations were all done by hand, and they were useful because they could accompany kanji that the young children had not yet learned. Otherwise, he and his collaborators used Microsoft Word and PowerPoint to create the handbook.

When making the handbook, Gen used the book that his 先輩 (*senpai*, or schoolmate who is one year older and that one respects/looks up to) created as a model. He mentioned that he was careful to ensure that there were plenty of illustrations to accompany the text so that it would “become commonsense.” He also ensured that the fonts, beginning on page 1, were unified. He specifically uses 創英角ポップ体 (そうえいかくぼっふたい [*soueikakupopputai* or *soh-ey-kah-kooh-poh-pu-tah-eeh*]). I feel that this font has a playful vibe to it. The content of the book reveals interesting script choices. Page 6 (above) says, 4 じかんめ：もうすこしで給食だ！がんばろう～！ Or “4<sup>th</sup> period: Lunch will begin soon! Let's finish strong!” If this text were geared towards an older audience, more of the hiragana would be rendered into kanji, but as it stands, there is only one word devised in kanji here (給食 or *kyushoku* or *kyuu-shoh-kooh*) and furigana is present for this character to aid in reading. Page 7 lists the activities that students may engage in during recess. The text reads, やすみじかん (こうてい)：友達とあそぼう！なわとび、おにごっこ、ドッチボール or “Recess (playground): Let's play with our friends! Jump rope, tag, dodgeball.” Similar to page 6, many of the

words that are normally in kanji are displayed in hiragana here. However, 友だち (*tomodachi, toh-moh-dah-chee*) uses the original kanji character for the first part of the word without any furigana, which suggests that Gen and company expect students to know the kanji. However, the rest of the word, だち (*dachi, dah-chee*) which usually relies on a single kanji (達), and is a suffix to pluralize nouns (friends<sup>41</sup> as opposed to friend) is written in hiragana instead, which signals that the authors did not expect young children to be able to read the kanji. On the other hand, the loan word for "dodgeball" (ドッチボール or *docchiboru/doh-chee-boh-rooh*) remains in katakana as it should. As the copy of Gen's handbook illustrates, images do a good job of describing the text. This image and text combination ensures that ideas are represented in a simple and clear manner.

In summary, Genre and audience greatly influence the design of given texts, which is yet another consideration that needs to be emphasized in conversations surrounding modality. Gen's ride schedule is inherently participatory. It is designed with circulation in mind, which is also evidenced by the sections that choir members fill out. The ride schedule is also simple; fixed information includes dates, times, locations, rider preference fields, and not much else. In terms of multi scripts, the form deploys kanji, with some hiragana (mostly for verb conjugations), Arabic numerals, and brackets. Crucially, readers of this form must have familiarity with its workings and context to use

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<sup>41</sup> Other instances of this suffix in use include *kodomotachi* (children), *watashitachi* (us), *bokutachi* (us, masculine form), and others.

it correctly. This form contrasts sharply with Gen's elementary school handbook, which is meant to inform young students about their daily school life. In the handbook, text that captions images is mostly in hiragana with a few kanji sprinkled throughout. And these kanji have furigana above them in case students are unfamiliar with any characters. White space is generous throughout the handbook, the font is playful, and images abound. Finally, both the font and illustrations are playful. The handbook requires little to no specialized knowledge to use or understand. And in Sakura's conversation about labels, she makes it clear that vertical writing is done in few contexts outside of formal schooling, such as on package labels (though not always) and New Year's cards. Kressian multimodality overlooks some of the nuance required in the labor of reading practices, and it also assumes a Western logic behind writing directionality (more on this in chapter 4). The next section analyzes the personal and conventions-free annotations.

Annotating Texts for Attention and Clarity

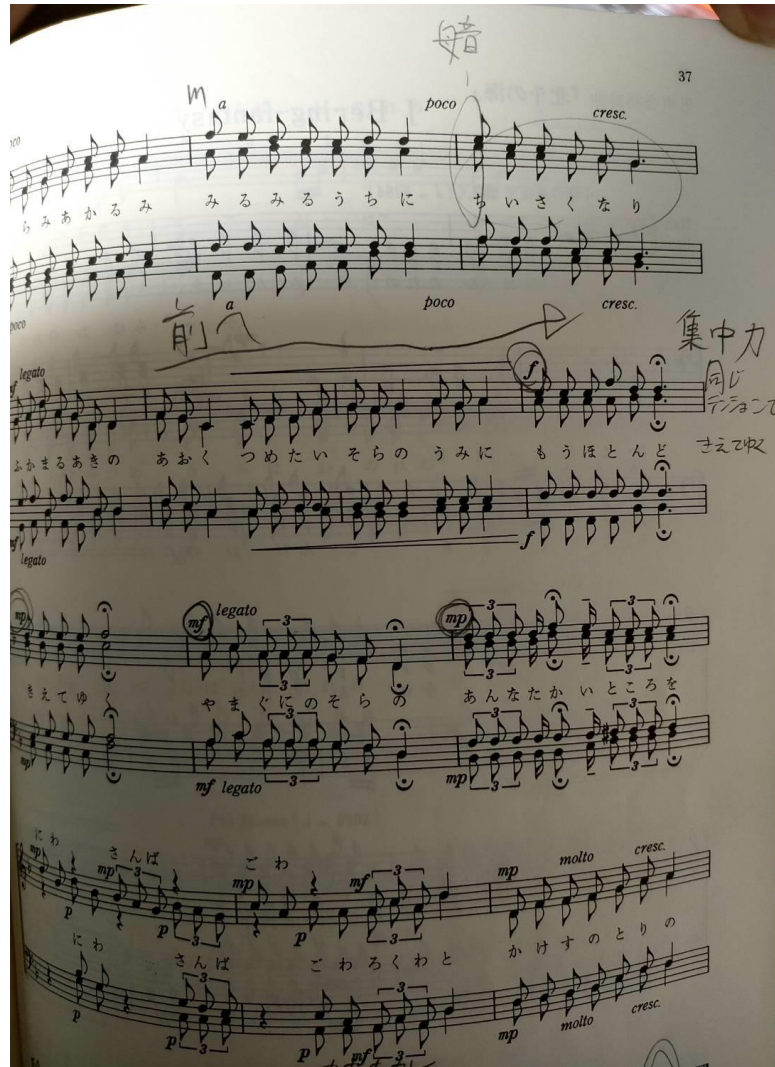


Figure 22: Gen's sheet music with annotations.

As a choir member, Gen often annotates his sheet music to draw attention to elements of his music. At the top and center of Figure 24, Gen wrote 母音 (*boin* or *boheen*), which is a kanji compound for “vowel” in what appears to be pencil. Gen then wrote a note on his sheet music to highlight where these important vowels occur. He specifically notes ち (*chi* or *cheeh*), which is written in hiragana on the sheet music. Next, the notes and hiragana for ちいさくなり (*chiisakunari*, *chee-sah-koo-nah-ree*),

meaning “get smaller” (or “get quieter”) are circled. Underneath these circled notes, there is an arrow and the text 前へ, meaning “go forward” (前 *mae mah-eh* is the kanji for “in front/before,” while へ (*e* or *eh*) is a particle denoting direction, and can be thought of a “to.” Gen said he was creating the feeling of moving forward for himself in this section. On the right-hand side, he writes 集中力 (*shuchuryouku, shoo-choo-ree-yoh-koo*) in all kanji for “concentration.” In his next note he writes, 同じテンションで消えていく, meaning he wants to keep the same tension and fade out. 同じ (*onaji, oh-nah-jee*) is in kanji and hiragana, respectively. The next word テンション (*tenshon*) is a loan word for “tension,” and で (*de, deh*) stands in as a particle which means “by way of.” Finally, 消えていく (*kieteiku, key-eh-tay-eeh-koo*) is a mixture of kanji and hiragana. The first kanji 消 marks the verb for fade away, and えて is the conjugation of the verb, and いく is a grammar point that emphasizes a continuous state.

Gen said this part of the music was difficult to perform because it is supposed to be in forte, as we can see with Gen circling the F under his note “go forward,” but the next staff below is in mezzo piano, or “mp,” which Gen circles. Mezzo piano is relatively soft, but louder than piano. As Gen described, the volume balance is tricky because this part of the music is mostly loud, but he’s then supposed to fade away, which means it is getting quieter. Gen’s annotations therefore reveal how various scripts, circles, and lines draw attention to specific parts of the music and help Gen navigate the intricacies of



performing this piece. Below, Sakura annotates her notes for a test in her special needs education course.

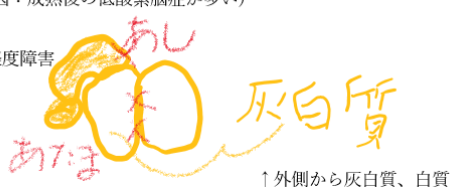
ジストニア(異緊張性、姿勢の異常)/振戦(ふるえ)

▷混合型…痙直+アテトーゼ 痙直+強剛 痙直+失調

痙直型の部位別分類

▷四肢麻痺…左右上下四肢に明らかな障害 体幹に重度障害  
 坐位・咀嚼等困難、未定類  
 合併症：重度知的障害が多い(原因：成熟後の低酸素脳症が多い)

▷両麻痺…主に **両下肢**障害 体幹に軽度障害  
 主な原因：白質軟化症



↑外側から灰白質、白質

▷対麻痺…主な原因：脊髄障害 主に痙性

▷片麻痺…主な原因：出血性病変(交通事故など)  
 多量の出血が神経を圧迫・閉塞  
 脳の表層に障害→**上肢**のほうが重い 移動は良好◎  
 ex)交通事故で頭の右側をぶつけた→衝撃が左脳に片麻痺：右半身や言語機能に麻痺  
 ex)とても強い衝撃が加わる→脳全体がねじれたようになる→瀰漫性

Figure 23: Sakura's annotations on her notes.

Sakura annotated the notes that she was compiling with her friends for their special needs education course's test. The screenshot of the note above lays out the classifications of cerebral palsy, including tetraplegia,四肢麻痺 (second arrow in the image), diplegia 両麻痺 (third arrow), paraplegia 対麻痺 (fourth arrow), and hemiplegia 片麻痺 (fifth arrow). A breakdown of the meaning of these individual complex kanji<sup>42</sup> reveal the following:

- 四肢麻痺 (*shishimahi, shee-shee-mah-hee*) - 四four; 肢limb, arms and legs; 麻hemp, flax, numb; 痺palsy, become numb, paralysed.
- 両麻痺 (*ryomahi, ryoh-mah-hee*) - 両both, two; 麻hemp, flax, numb; 痺palsy, become numb, paralysed.

<sup>42</sup> This is my analysis of the kanji instead of Sakura's.

- 对麻痺 (*tsuimahi*, *tsoo-ee-mah-hee*) - 对 *vis-a-vis*, *opposite*, *even*, *equal*; 麻 *hemp*, *flax*, *numb*; 痺 *palsy*, *become numb*, *paralysed*.

From a purely semiotic standpoint, the kanji characters help communicate the concept of these disabilities; however, the specific concepts remain unclear. Using a stylus and her Windows Surface tablet, Sakura drew the above image of a brain directly onto her notes in the white space. She explained that she drew this picture because simple writing does not explain the concept very well, and because she had trouble following as the professor went through a lot of information during the presentation of the material. She drew the picture to make the concept easier to understand.

The labels that Sakura has drawn in hiragana in red are あし (legs), あたま (head), and the label in kanji in orange reads 灰白質 or “gray matter.” The text under the image with an arrow pointing to it says, “From the outside, gray matter and white matter.” Relatedly, for the arrow which begins 両麻痺 (*ryoumahi* or *reeyo-mah-hee*) meaning diplegia, Sakura highlights 両下肢 (*ryoukashi* or *reeyo-kah-she*) meaning “both lower limbs.” She explained that she highlights this portion because the kanji 下 (*shita* or *she-tah*) meaning “below” helps her not confuse this particular form of cerebral palsy as affecting the upper limbs. Sakura also highlights 上肢 (*joushi* or *joh-shee*) meaning upper limbs for the arrow which begins 片麻痺 (*henmahi* or *hen-mah-hee*) for hemiplegia. The kanji 上 (*ue* or *ooh-eh*) means above, and so it is likely she highlighted this word as well

to contrast diplegia and hemiplegia, although she did not say as much during the interview.

Sakura's choice to highlight certain parts of her notes and draw a picture of a human brain with hiragana and kanji labels helped differentiate similar concepts from each other. Through highlighting and drawing, she was able to understand which disabilities impacted which parts of the body. The original typed kanji characters gave off semiotic clues, but Sakura's annotations provided additional clarity. Below I demonstrate a specific example of Sakura using kanji's semiotic cues to understand unknown terminology.

#### *Relying on Kanji to Understand Unknown Terminology*

The terminology within Sakura's special needs education notes were highly technical as the cerebral palsy example above demonstrates. Therefore, the number of kanji (and complexity of the kanji) was great by extension. I asked Sakura if she would be able to read these highly technical terms without furigana, and she said that she would; however she would not be able to understand what the terms are describing. As an example, she points to 低酸素 (*teisanso*, *tey-sahn-soh*) which describes hypoxia, or what happens when the amount of oxygen is insufficient for the human body. The first character for this term, 低 means "lower" or "short" while the two character compound that follows, 酸素 means "oxygen." Reading the kanji, she mused, "*teisanso* (hypoxia)...There is little oxygen, I guess..." Sakura pointed to another example with 虚

血 (kyoketsu, kyoh-keh-tsoo), meaning “ischemia,” or the condition where blood flow, and by extension, oxygen, is limited in a part of the body. She said, “The *kyo* of *kyoketsu* means few/a little, so there is little blood, I guess. And it’s in the brain, I suppose. But that’s about all I know.” She then explained that because each kanji has meaning, she can read the terminology, more or less. The kanji themselves are not that difficult, and Sakura says she can understand both the *kun* (Japanese) and *on* (Chinese) readings. At the same time, she said that if she only heard a given term, she might not understand it, but if she sees it written down, she more-or-less gets it.

Sakura demonstrated in her above examples how the visual helps her understand difficult terminology “more-or-less,” and it also bolsters scholars’ claims about the utility of kanji in discerning among the myriad homonyms of the Japanese language and the ability of logographs to communicate concrete meaning. The final phase of my analysis will investigate how Sakura used English in her notes for non-textual purposes.

### *The Deployment of English for Non-Textual Purposes*

In order to break up the visual density of kanji, Sakura purposely writes English. She said that “If you only have kanji, your eyes will get tired after all. And you will start to overlook things.” For this reason, she uses English to give her eyes some rest. Sakura said that writing English in this way is a practice she replicates for note-taking in other classes.

Sakura writes the English term “Shaken baby syndrome” for a different reason in her notes.<sup>43</sup> In this instance, Sakura knew the English before the Japanese term she identifies, 頭蓋内出血 (zugainaishukketsu, zoo-guy-na-ee-shoo-ke-tsoo), which according to Google Translate and various Japanese-to-English websites, means intracranial hemorrhage or intracranial bleeding without reference to babies. After she realized the Japanese term (newly understood word for her) matched the English one she had previously come across, she wrote the English “Shaken Baby Syndrome” in her notes. Sakura said she was glad she identified a word she knows, and so she quickly wrote it down in English. In this instance, English was intertwined with Sakura’s understanding of 頭蓋内出血, although it is not a one-to-one transfer from the source language to the target language.

Sakura’s experience writing English on her notes points to the use of English going beyond a mere textual communication of meaning within a sea of Japanese characters. It serves an important function breaking up the visual density of kanji, which aids in readability. English furthermore serves as a point of recollection, or an expression of a concept that means something specific to Sakura, but in another language. Below, I conclude the lessons learned from this study and point to the next chapter, which describes how the findings in this one may help writers re-envision writing as transmodal.

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<sup>43</sup> Searching the imiwa? dictionary for the term “shaken baby syndrome” reveals a different Japanese version of the term. This long and complex-sounding word makes use of both kanji and hiragana: 揺さぶられっ子症候群 (Yusaburarekkoshōkōgun, yoo-sah-boo-rah-reh-koh-shoh-koh-goōn). However, the meaning of the word is strikingly similar to its English counterpart (揺さぶられっ means “shaken,” 子 means “child,” and 症候群 means “syndrome.”)

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented my research methodology, which involves collecting diary entries and writing samples from two Japanese university students in order to analyze their literacy practices. After analyzing the data from my two research participants and interviewing them on their writing samples and diaries, I used inductive reasoning to come up with general themes describing patterns among the data, and then analyzed them. I found various instances of technology mediating the use of scripts, such as how the ease of inputting kanji with the “flick operation” impacted which words were rendered into kanji from Gen’s writing samples. I also noticed how software applications automated translation processes, such as difficult kanji on the blackboard to help Sakura write her notes. Prominent in Gen’s diary and writing samples were variations of politeness levels, standard and non-standard script choice, and the shrinking of text in order to create playful communications, in addition to group solidarity and identity with the mixed choir club.

Related to writing choices for maintaining sociality, Gen (and company’s) audience expectations impacted the kinds of information present in both the ride schedule template and school life handbook, which in turn impacted each text’s design and script choices. Many fewer words were rendered into kanji in the school life handbook, and a variety of pictures accompanied the text to make reading easier. Furthermore, Gen and Sakura’s use of annotations on sheet music and notes, respectively, provided clarity for the tasks at hand. Sakura’s drawing of a brain, for instance, helps her visualize the different kinds of cerebral palsy that the semiotic cues of kanji are unable to communicate. Finally, Sakura’s use of English as a break from the density of kanji

highlights the visual aspect of alphabetic text, which directly challenges the autonomous text doctrine.

The insights from Gen and Sakura's diary entries, writing samples, and interviews make a clear argument for considering how writing is embodied and mediated by actors such as technology, which is a point I explore in the next chapter. And the deployment of the JWS should be analyzed with an eye not only towards the deployment of standard and non-standard scripts, but also how features like half-width katakana characters create meaning. However, the reading practices which Sakura revisited to demonstrate her understanding of complex kanji characters underline the importance of this labor in all meaning-making practices.

The next chapter draws upon research on the modality behind writing practices (both alphabetic and Japanese), as well as my analysis of Japanese writing to rethink and re-envision all writing practices, including Western ones, as more multimodal than claimed. I conduct this work similar to how translingual theorists envision "monolingual" writing as more translingual than scholars, teachers, and students have been led to believe. By analyzing the themes, artifacts, and interview data from chapter 3 in more detail and making connections to relevant scholarship, I aim to demonstrate how all writing is transmodal.

CHAPTER 4:  
RE-ENVISIONING ALPHABETIC WRITING THROUGH JAPANESE WRITING  
PRACTICES

In this chapter, I return to the Western alphabetic writing practices which are presumed to be the bread and butter of our work as teachers/scholars in rhetoric and composition. I lay out a transmodal disposition towards writing and compare this disposition with scholarship by Kress, van Leeuwen, Shipka, and others who work with multimodality. I pinpoint how these scholars reify, but in some cases challenge, the perceived boundary that separates the linguistic from all other modes (Rule, 2020). Next, I review the literature on the overlap of Japanese writing practices and modality (Yamada-Rice, 2015; McGovern, 2013) and note that although I appreciate these scholars' tendency to take on what they see as a Western<sup>44</sup> bias which theorizes all writing as if it is alphabetic and monomodal, the manner in which they argue their point reinforces rigid East/West binaries and identifies modality within the Japanese Writing system itself as opposed to it being an emergent practice.

In the latter half of this chapter, I draw upon my research on Japanese writing practices from chapter two and my diary study from chapter three to re-envision English writing practices as transmodal. I make the case that orthography should be considered not only a social practice (Sebba, 2007), but a transmodal one as well. I furthermore hone

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<sup>44</sup> I am aware of the extent to which "Western" and "Eastern" are used as all-encompassing terms to simplify sociocultural difference.



in on readers' labor in reading modality into a given text as part of the transmodal process. In the next phase of my critique I demonstrate through templates and models how similarity in writing structures can also be considered an enactment of transmodality, in that boundaries of convention are being consistently reified and/or contested. Finally, I argue that observing various writing systems and practices surrounding them allows scholars and students to conceive of their own practices with modality as emergent and practice based.

### **Transmodality in Action**

I see transmodality as a disposition towards modality which allows for more fluidity than traditional theorizations of multimodality. To explain, the prefix “trans-” allows for movement within and across concepts which are treated as stable, such as language. Similar to how the “trans-” in “translingual” allows for moving within and across the perceived boundaries of demarcated languages (Horner et al., 2011),<sup>45</sup> “transmodal” allows for movement within and across the perceived boundaries of modes (visual, gestural auditory, and so on). Transmodality furthermore foregrounds communication practices, as opposed to semiotic channels (a.k.a modes), a common practice in multimodal scholarship. Although multimodal scholars acknowledge at least some degree of modal fluidity, they still tend to freeze these modes, decontextualizing them. I instead argue for theorizing modality as an emergent social material process which is always already bound to geopolitical, sociohistorical, and contextual factors.

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<sup>45</sup> See Hawkins and Mori (2018) for an exploration of -trans perspectives in language.

Below I flesh out my transmodal orientation to writing by contrasting it with multimodal theorizations of writing.

### **Alphabetic Writing and Frozen Modes**

While scholars have argued for some time that alphabetic writing is multimodal (New London Group 1996), their treatment of this argument tends to reify categories which pit the linguistic on one side and everything else on the other. To illustrate this reification, Cheryl Ball and Colin Charlton (2015) in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies* write a short essay on the threshold concept “All writing is multimodal” that cites the example of the academic research essay, which is seemingly monomodal, as being multimodal. They write that “such a text is recognized from its linguistic mode *and*<sup>46</sup> its visual and spatial arrangement on the page (title, name block, double spacing, margins, default font size, formulaic structure, etc.)” (p. 43, cited in Rule, 2020, p. 67). By highlighting such non-textual elements, Ball and Charlton make clear that one can only understand the multimodality of the essay by recognizing its nonlinguistic design and visual aspects, which surround and order the text (Rule, 2020, p. 67). They see the visual based on the design of the page as multimodal—as a backgrounded part of the text. This framing of writing as multimodal depicts teachers’ and scholars’ work as always already multimodal, which, to be fair, rationalizes teacher-scholars’ continual pursuit of multimodality in the classroom and re-envision the work teachers and students do as designerly. However, the “and” renders multimodality as an additional, discrete element of writing: additional to and discrete from the linguistic. That

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<sup>46</sup> Emphasis added by Rule.

is, it treats the multimodal and linguistic—which represent categories abstracted from writing practices, for purposes of analysis—as instead the real, mistaking their model of the real practice as the reality of the practice, or, as Bourdieu (1977) puts it, “from the model of reality to the reality of the model” (p. 29).

Kress’s (2005) treatment of affordances, or benefits-approach, to modality also separates the textual and everything else. As I have discussed earlier in this dissertation, Prior (2005) rightly critiques Kress’s treatment of affordances “as highly determinative, mutually exclusive, and binary” (Prior 26). For instance, Kress depicts words as vague, finite, sequential, and authored; and images as infinite, specific, special, and transparent (among other features) (26). Yet the binary continues in Kress’s work on children’s literacy as well.

Kress (1997) separates the linguistic from multiple modes through his observations on the literacy development of young children. He observes that children first see alphabetic text as aesthetic objects; thus he is objectifying words. Kress is turning the Western assumptions that alphabetic-print literacies come first and are primary on its head. Therefore, the center of meaning at this point in literacy development is multimodality *instead of* the linguistic (Rule, 2020, pp. 76-77). Although infusing multimodality into our literacy practices helps dispel notions about multimodality being new and unconventional for societies which use alphabetic literacy, Kress re-entrenches the binary. The focus of transmodality on process instead of product rejects Kress’s objectification of the textual and other modes, as I explain below.

## **Alphabetic Writing, Sociality, and Materiality**

Modality is a social practice, as Horner (2020) argues, and scholars and teachers should reject the multimodal framing of alphabetic print texts as products made up of components like the size-12 New Roman font, the 1-inch margins, the indentations, and (commonly) five paragraphs. The words on the pages of alphabetic print texts are not timeless and immaterial (Horner, 2020). Rather, multiple agents, including the composer(s), reader(s), and others are involved in this composition. Each time a student writes an essay, s/he labors in a way that goes beyond these component parts. Even though the end product might look like something wholly conventional, labor is essential to the process, which is mediated not only by the student's consciousness, but also by the setting, unique in its temporal and spatial location, where the essay was written, the technology that was used, and a variety of other factors. As Raymond Williams (1977) notes, "...practical consciousness and experience inevitably exceed official representations of experience" (p. 130-31, qtd. in Horner, 2020). In other words, the practice of writing an essay will always differ from its portrayal. Transmodality therefore involves rejecting the notion of essays as products which have certain set features, and instead considers the practices that went into creating the essay—or those aspects that tend to be black boxed.

Scholars like Shipka (2011) have also been arguing for the composing process (as opposed to product) as multimodal. Shipka finds that composing processes involve listening, inscribing, reading, speaking, gesturing, and a variety of other activities which belong under a variety of modes (12-13). Johnson (2018) argues that process is inherently multimodal, and that we must pay more attention to the material bodies, aesthetics, and

objects with which we interact (26). Indeed, as I write this dissertation, I cannot help but think about how my fingers interact with the computer keyboard, how the words I type on the screen impact the spacing of the page, and other aspects of embodiment. The very act of envisioning this dissertation draft is another form of multimodality that impacts me in a myriad of ways (Berthoff, 1982). Rule (2020) builds upon this idea in stating that “...linguistic meaning [is] itself multimodal and multisensory, as visual-linguistic-kinetic-spatial processes without absolute demarcations” (69). These scholars’ emphasis on embodiment makes a compelling case for composing processes as always already multimodal. Furthermore, the latter part of Rule’s position on modality attempts to settle another problem with theorizations of multimodality: countable modes.

Multimodality has succumbed to neoliberal arguments which tie the idea of “more is better” to modes. Such discourses reduce modes to being countable objects, which takes away from analysis of process and oversimplifies the idea of what makes an effective composition. Scholars and teachers cannot deny that a certain composition might rely upon images while another does not, for instance, and there can be benefits to freezing and analyzing semiotic channels in certain analyses, but we must not fixate on and count these semiotic channels as if the channels themselves are the only things that control meaning-making. Again, to do so would be to fall for neoliberal rhetorics that objectify modes and freeze them in place. We should not merely claim alphabetic texts are also multimodal as a charitable act, because doing so would be to reduce modes to countable objects and (again) claim that text-objects have certain effects baked into them. I will reiterate, we need to instead look at practices and conditions.

A transmodal disposition would specify that one must consider the labor which goes into composing and reading modes. Even in the most conventional of essays, the engagement with the text differs from person to person. The agency of the composers and readers of texts must be acknowledged instead of (abstractions of) the texts themselves and the variety of semiotic channels they rely upon. Otherwise, in giving agency to the modes in terms of affordances (Kress, 2005), we risk changing how we engage with composing and the possibilities imaginable with something as conventional as the essay. And even though certain characteristics might be ascribed to essays, such as a unidirectional flow, readers and writers do not necessarily have to follow such a pattern. The same can be said of visuals, which are lauded for their immediacy (Hill, 2004). In other words, the affordances associated with various modes are not always true—rather they are the consequence of specific practices, just as wheat does not have a bread “affordance”; instead, it only has a “use value” for bread making if/when humans perform labor on wheat to make it into bread. Likewise, images do not have the inherent impact value attributed to them by Kress and others. Rather, images have immediacy or impact if we labor to make them so.

As I demonstrate above, modality is a social practice which goes beyond finished multimodal products to the process of making them. The labor that goes into composing and reading these texts is thereby key to transmodality. By paying attention to such processes, scholars and teachers can avoid objectifying modes and reproducing neoliberal rhetorics. Next, I turn to discourses surrounding Japanese writing on the topic of multimodality to demonstrate overreach on claims that Japanese writing is uniquely multimodal.

## Japanese Writing and Multimodality

Scholarship on the overlap of Japanese writing and multimodality tends to critique multimodal scholars' treatment of all writing through a Western (a.k.a. Kressian) lens. A common target is the binary erected between the linguistic and visual modes, which envisions the visual as only applying to language as a mere additional or background element. Yamada-Rice (2015) argues that these discourses obtain due to English being represented phonetically in the alphabet; therefore Japanese writing practices are also seen through an alphabetic lens. However, instead of highlighting all writing practices as multimodal, Yamada-Rice argues that the JWS is unique because of its three scripts—two of which are phonetic, and one of which is logographic—and these “are unavoidably [centered] on visual affordances” (310). This representation of Japanese writing practices paints them as stable and discrete, which is problematic for reasons I have previously covered. In Yamada-Rice's view, the diverging history surrounding the development of these writing systems ensures that Kress's multimodal framework will fail when applied to Japanese writing. In particular, she asserts that alphabetic writing is based on speech while Japanese writing is based on the image<sup>47</sup>; therefore “social semiotic theory... is problematic when transferred to [Japanese] cultural contexts” (p. 310). Consequently, she argues that basing the analysis of the visual mode off of Halliday (1978), as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) do, makes flawed assumptions about the directionality of languages (Yamada-Rice, 2015, p. 310). The difference between Western conceptions of written language and Japanese conceptions of written language are thus made clear in Yamada-Rice's view. I expand on her critiques below.

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<sup>47</sup> Yamada-Rice also points to Kress's commentary that the alphabet crowded out the image for much of Western history, and reiterates that Japanese writing has always already been grounded in the visual.

Writing directionality is highlighted in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as an important aspect in which Western and Eastern conceptions of writing differ. Kress and van Leeuwen state that within Western writing, given information is on the left and new information is on the right, although the opposite may be true in some Asian contexts. But Yamada-Rice (2015), drawing upon Oyama (2000), challenges this idea by demonstrating that given information can be displayed in lower levels and new information on top, such as in news broadcasts and urban settings (signs on buildings). She therefore argues Japanese writing is not fixed, but rather multidirectional, and such directional logics represent affordances and are culturally determined (p. 315-6). Yamada-Rice essentially demonstrates how directionality in Japanese writing practices falls within a multimodal framework relying on cultural practices and affordances, thereby aligning with Kress (namely affordances and the social), but in a way that differs from how van Leeuwen and Kress (2006) describe writing practices. In other words, Japanese writing practices allow for more flexibility than van Leeuwen and Kress imagined.

The centering of text is another area in which Japanese writing practices diverge from Western logics, according to Yamada-Rice (2015), and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) agree on this point. Specifically, Yamada-Rice notes how kanji are drawn/formulated in a module-like space and “[centered] to create balance” (p. 315). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Scollon and Scollon (2003) also make note of these centered structures within Asian texts that foreground the visual. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) believe this centric logic is common in Asian texts potentially due to the cultural emphasis on “hierarchy, harmony and continuity in Confucian thinking that makes



centering a fundamental organizational principle in the visual semiotic” (as cited in Yamada-Rice, 2015, p. 315). Writing built upon such modulation is baked into the Japanese school curriculum from the get-go as children are taught to write kanji on square paper divided up into four small squares. Students thereby learn to center their characters and balance their strokes (p. 310). In my role as an assistant language teacher (ALT) at various Japanese public schools, I can attest to the value placed on proper stroke order and the centering of characters.<sup>48</sup>

In the end, Yamada-Rice synthesizes her studies of Japanese literacy practices to advocate for more attention be paid to landscapes and embodiment as well as links between the social and historical communication practices in cultures and environments so researchers can “add to current ways of thinking about literacy and multimodal practices” (p. 319). But while I agree with Yamada-Rice’s expansive view of literacy practices, the way she contrasts Western and Japanese writing practices reinforces Eastern/Western binaries and misses an opportunity to forward writing practices as transversing such binaries and being less settled. The one concession Yamada-Rice makes in this regard is to argue that Western writing practices are moving towards Japanese writing practices (in terms of directionality and other areas) due to affordances which are newly available through new media technologies, such as screen-based media which allows for multiple reading entry points (which she argues is something Japanese language users have already been doing in texts [Yamada-Rice 2011]). However, I advocate for a reorienting to all writing practices as transmodal—as a disposition which recognizes modality in all writing practices—as opposed to new media affordances.

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<sup>48</sup> I also understand the importance of stroke order centering characters due to my time as a Japanese language learner.

In another application of multimodality to the Japanese writing system, Sean McGovern (2013) ties each script to a specific mode. For instance, he argues that kanji is a visual object, hiragana is a text object, and katakana is a sound object. The logic behind McGovern's observations is that characters often derive from an image or images of a concept, or have radicals conveying ideas—i.e. like something being a liquid as in 酒 [*sake*] (the three “dots,” [which have come to resemble scratch marks over time due to abstraction of the radical component] to the left of the “bottle” in this kanji compound) or something being related to the idea of a tree 桜 [*sakura*] (the 木 radical in this character for cherry blossom looks like a tree). This idea follows Hiraga's logic that kanji are figures that anchor meaning and hiragana are the ground (the surrounding components like verb conjugations and particles) (Hiraga, 2005). Katakana plays the role of sound object for McGovern because it is a phonetic script that not only marks foreign words but also renders onomatopoeia and other mimetics. For instance, the shaking of glass and plates during an earthquake would make the sound ガタガタ (*gah-tuh-gah-tuh*). The fact that one can clearly see the differences between these scripts also makes it tempting to ascribe a specific mode to each of them. Following McGovern, I might be tempted to partition them and put them into little boxes to perform certain roles. However, the fact remains that I am willfully ignoring the visual when I ascribe a label like “sound object” to katakana. I am further objectifying these scripts, similar to Kress (1996). Even when looking at Japanese writing from a sound object standpoint, it will also always already be visual and spatial. I would be placing too much agency on the writing system itself and

not enough on the practices of Japanese users. Modality should instead be something language users continually experience and do.

As I mentioned previously in my discussion of the binary of the linguistic and all other modes, writing should be conceived as a transmodal process, and that includes Japanese. Scholarship on Japanese semiosis (Yamada-Rice and McGovern) highlights the differences between the JWS and alphabetic writing as distinct systems. It also underscores the way that Kress (1996), Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), Kress (2010), and others view Japanese writing practices from a standpoint that skews Western. Japanese writing, as seen by Yamada-Rice (2015) and McGovern (2013), allows for greater freedom in writing directionality, for instance. Other scholars who follow this freedom/creativity line of argument in the JWS include Robertson (2020a), who notes how writing in Japanese can theoretically be represented in any of the three scripts, and Masiko, who demonstrates (to his chagrin) that Japanese writers can attach phonetic values to kanji at will when naming places or people. While all of this scholarship is important in its own right, the scholars emphasize the *affordances* of the JWS, which represents it as operating autonomously on users. That is, the affordances are attributed to the scripts themselves as characteristics/effects of those scripts, and it omits the labor of those engaging with them in various ways (as readers/writers) to produce specific effects.

Rather than argue that Japanese writing practices are inherently multimodal, I forward an orientation to Japanese and English writing practices that considers writing as transmodal through its involvement of embodiment, materiality, and place; and also in terms of technology and orthographic conventions which are bound to the social, and

which must be navigated. I use existing scholarship in addition to the results of chapter 3's diary study to make my case.

### **Writing as More Multimodal Than We Believe**

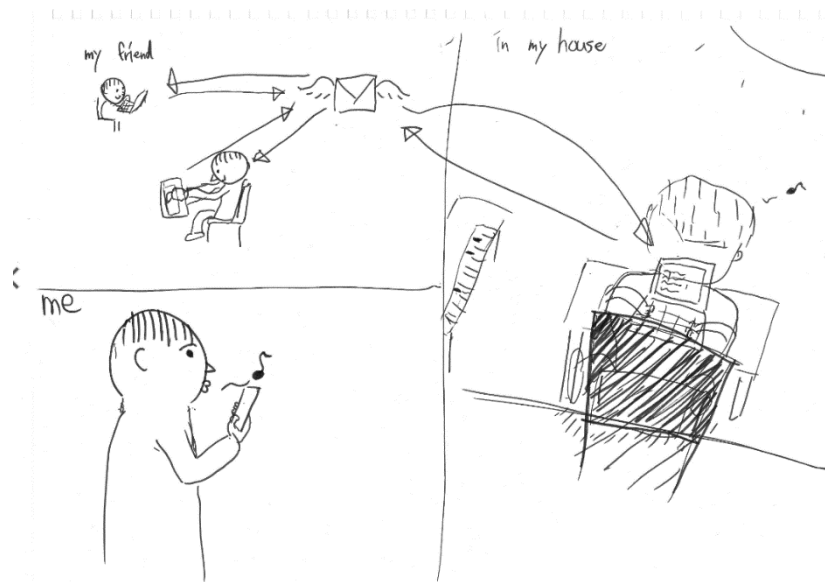
I analyze Japanese writing practices to gain an inside look into how all writing practices are more multimodal than we have been led to believe due to the standard language and modal norm (SLMN) ideology (Horner et al., 2015). In order to emphasize this practice notion of modality and how it corresponds to writing, my research method involving real writers was necessary. By way of my diary method involving students reflecting on their writing practices, I was able to understand the thinking behind their writing choices, as well as how embodiment, technology, rebellious orthography, and other hidden aspects of composition come to the fore. I demonstrate the modality of all writing by revisiting artifacts and interviews from the diary study and then apply these observations to composing practices utilizing the Roman alphabet.

#### *Technology and Embodiment*

Technology is a part of all composing processes, and Gen's diary entries revealed how it impacted the content of emails that he sent to his mixed choir group. Gen chose certain scripts based on what was easiest to type via the interface (flick operation-enabled or not) that was available to use. For instance, he chose hiragana over the standard kanji when writing おねがいします ("Please" or "I look forward to it"). This kind of embodied action, which involves tapping of fingers, eye movement, and others, is part of Gen's composing process. Writers who use alphabetic scripts face similar situations

where a technology mediates writing choices. When composing with a keyboard, I typically compose differently than if I do so with a smart phone, for instance. This is just one of the ways in which technology and embodiment overlap during composition.

The social media technology LINE also factored prominently in both Gen and Sakura's composing. Gen, for instance, used LINE to send drafts of his work for feedback as he demonstrates in his process diagram below.



Another instance where technology impacted composing practices could be seen in Sakura using Google Lens to translate the professor's notes on the board in her special needs education course. As part of her process of decoding the content, she relied upon technology not only to help recognize kanji characters which she deemed as unclear/poorly written (as in poor handwriting), but also to ensure their correctness. Sakura's friend also used Google Lens to copy and transfer her handwritten notes for the exam into an electronic format. However, due to what I can assume are limitations of the software and complexity of the kanji characters, she had to go in and manually make corrections.

Also in Sakura's special needs education course notes, she wrote English text instead of Japanese in some areas for a variety of reasons, including the need to alleviate graphological density on the page. This concern for textual overload is rooted in visual considerations which impact one's ability to discern and remember information. Such a concern for graphological density is directly connected to the visual and textual, and it represents modality as entangled with the translingual, or not bound to a single discrete language. Instead of the presence of alphabetic text getting in the way of meaning-making for Sakura, it created a sense of space and contrast, thus it improved the clarity of communication. However, the same would likely not hold true for others, especially if their knowledge of English was limited. In an English language/alphabetic context, writers also make choices that impact the density of information<sup>49</sup> and aid in readability. The use of abbreviations, bullet points, and other techniques to manipulate space on the paper is always already bound up in the visual and textual. It is the deployment of spaceness (as opposed to space as a countable semiotic channel with affordances built in) in modality for clarity.

The technologies above that mediated writing for Gen, Sakura, and Sakura's friend were integral to their writing processes. They impacted elements of embodiment in relation to composing (gestural, visual, and other sensorial functions), the circulation of drafts for feedback, and the repetition of inputting and absorbing new information. These aspects of embodiment and technology should be considered under a transmodal framework for composing practices. Next it is useful to interrogate modality and

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<sup>49</sup> I mean "information" as in written representation of information, which is always visual. I will not fall prey to an autonomous text doctrine.

ideologies, which demonstrates a social layer beyond the static conception of frozen and countable modes.

### *Ideologies and Modality*

Research on Japanese writing practices highlights a need to pay attention to ideologies in modality. Some of this work is being done through critical multimodal discourse analysis (Machin, 2016), and other scholarship which specifically demonstrates how fonts, for instance, have ideologies attached to them (Spitzmüller, 2012). In chapter 2 of this dissertation I referenced an example of the word coffee in Japanese. I revisit coffee here to demonstrate how peoples' images of what kind of coffee is being served differ depending on the script.

...when *kōhī* [coffee, normally in katakana] is written in kanji, the image arises of a thick, rough mug sitting on a table with cabriole legs inside a dim, brick café. At least, it does not seem that instant coffee will be served. (Nakamura, 1983, p. 38)

The concept of indexicality would be useful here in helping identify how ideologies potentially weigh on readers' interpretation of texts, and in this case, coffee. Indexicality, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005) put it, is “the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings” (594). In English, for instance, the words “garbage” and “rubbish” refer to the stuff one discards for various reasons (the thing is dirty, broken, or unwanted in some other way). Although in a vacuum/dictionary the terms mean the same thing, when the term is used in the real world—for instance the linguistic variant is used in a location where it is not standard—then it has the potential to mark nationality (such as Britishness or Americanness) (Robertson, 2020a, p. 30). Indexicality indexes things

beyond nationality—in Japan’s case, gender and social position are commonly indexed through choices made in speech and writing, for instance.

Scholars who have developed the concept of indexicality note the complex web of historical factors, ideologies, context, and others which go into an interpretation of speech or writing (Agha, 2007; Eckert, 2008; Ochs, 2012; Silverstein, 2003). As Robertson (2020a) puts it, the indexical field refers to how “a language user’s ultimate interpretation of an index within a context of use occurs in real time and is mediated by their understanding of the context itself, the multitude of linguistic ideologies they engage with, and their prior experiences with language users and language use (Agha, 2007; Wortham, 2008)” (35). In other words, complex factors impact peoples’ interpretation of text in a variety of complex ways, and it is impossible to simply state that one linguistic choice will have one specific effect on a population’s interpretation of a given text. Nevertheless, the concept helps frame the potential for ideologies in writing, as I demonstrate below.

In addition to orthographic choices tied to specific words that impact meaning (like the coffee example above) Japanese scripts themselves are interpreted as highly gendered. For instance, as I have noted earlier, kanji could be seen as a masculine script due to sociocultural associations with concepts like “heavy,” “strong,” and “large,” which derive from their ascribed angularity and varying shapes. On the other hand, hiragana could be seen as feminine because of sociocultural associations with concepts like “soft,” “light,” and “weak” which are associated with femininity in Japanese culture (Hiraga, 2006, p. 134). These ideologies are also based on historical tradition in which women typically only wrote in hiragana (*onna-de* or *ohn-nah-day*) [women’s script/hand], and



men wrote in kanji (*otoko-de* or *oh-toh-koh-day*) [men's script/hand] (Seeley, 1991, p. 78-79). Men could also write in hiragana, but it was uncommon because these authors felt that writing in Japanese was beneath them (Sato, 2018, p. 318)<sup>50</sup>. Women were thereby essentially excluded from academic, intellectual, and public writing, which primarily occurred in Classical Chinese (Frellesvig, 2010, p. 162). Thus, deep sociocultural factors play out in everyday reading and writing practices.

The closest equivalent in English to Japanese script ideologies would be in how the fonts we choose impact how the reader interprets the information, a.k.a. (written) language ideologies. Perhaps no better recent example illustrates this point than the announcement of the Higgs boson discovery.<sup>51</sup> The font used for the presentation was Comic Sans, and the choice created a controversy because the “childish” font went against the importance and seriousness of the occasion. Those who write in an alphabetic script may view the Comic Sans font as indexing funny or light-hearted information which stands in stark contrast to the occasion of presenting the biggest scientific discovery of the past 40 years (Bridgeford, 2018, p. 12). Consider how the event was covered on news websites and social media. Sam Byford (2012) from the American technology news website *The Verge* summarizes:

For many of us, the most shocking revelation to come out of CERN's Higgs boson announcement today was quite unrelated to the science itself. Rather, we were blown away by the fact that a team made up of some of the most undoubtedly

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<sup>50</sup> Sato (2018) points to an interesting exception: the male poet Ki no Tsurayuki wrote *The Tosa Diary* (11<sup>th</sup> century) in hiragana. But the poet begins his diary by stating that he is writing “as a woman” (Seeley 1991, p. 79 qtd. in Sato 318).

<sup>51</sup> This is the discovery of the “God particle” which, in tandem with other particles in the Higgs field (an energy field), gives mass to fundamental particles and could unlock the physics behind dark matter, among other possibilities (Greene, 2013).

brilliant people in the world believe that Comic Sans is an appropriate font for such a historic occasion. (Byford, 2012)

He captured a Tweet by the designer of Comic Sans, Vincent Connare, who replies to a particle physicist's Tweet on the discovery: "@ProfBrianCox: what's with the shit slides!..." Patrick Kingsley (2012) from *The Guardian* also noted how both "Higgs boson" and "Comic Sans" were trending on Twitter following the announcement. He displayed a handful of angry Tweets on the font choice, as well as the opinion of a designer who founded the Ban Comic Sans movement. However, he defended the use of Comic Sans by saying it is legible and research demonstrates that it "makes complex information easier to understand," which is why dyslexia coaches like it (Kingsley, 2012). This Comic Sans example not only reveals the range of interpretations of this font, but it also demonstrates how news media and social media coverage of the use of Comic Sans in this announcement changes how this font decision is perceived. To recap, choices such as font add semiotic information which indexes potential meanings. This semiotic information is interpreted while being influenced/biased by others' interpretations (such as news media's fixation on the Comic Sans font). I would finally like to add that the name "Comic Sans" potentially shapes how the font is regarded. Therefore, text is always already more than the information on the page. Fonts, italics, and other tweaks impact how a given text is interpreted. Next, I demonstrate through a transmodal framework how my research participants deployed modality for specific effects.

### *Deploying Modality*

Overlapping with indexical potential of script and font, Gen demonstrates similar transmodal work in his communication practices with his choir group. In figure 19 from chapter 3, Gen writes an email about an upcoming Christmas party. In the message, he writes out some words in katakana instead of kanji to knowingly subvert established orthographical practice. His タノシミダネ subverts the conventional 楽しみだね (tahnoh-shee-mee-dah-neh) [I'm looking forward to it]. In this sense he is effectively removing the kanji (the figure which anchors meaning) and choosing a foreign (a.k.a. katakana) “ground,” for the rest of the line. This choice also made the word take up more space (bloated it, really) before Gen shrunk it with half-width characters and expected his readers to interpret this non-standard script choice in a manner they view as playful. Katakana also encourages the reader to pay attention to the phonetic reading of the characters, and this effect is strengthened through katakana’s association with sound.

My diary study provides examples of why meaning-making processes surrounding modes should be emphasized over products. For instance, Sakura wrote the picture of a brain in her notes on the Special Needs Education course to help her visualize which parts of the brain affected which limbs when she outlined cerebral palsy. This example of drawing in combination with text (and appropriate labels) would appear to be a classical version of multimodality, or using the affordances of both image and text in combination to make a concept clearer. I could frame this example as a representation of multimodality in the classical Kressian form, and then go onto other more subtle examples of seemingly monomodal texts being more multimodal than they are, in fact. But to do so would be to reinscribe hard boundaries set aside for writing vs. visual vs.

sound, and others. I instead turn my attention to the process of meaning-making. This instance of modality is instead a transmodal (i.e. emergent) deployment of visuality (the always already visual and textual writing, the drawing of the brain, spacing demonstrating the relation of concepts, and others), to aid the author herself in meaning-making. The creation of meaning is what is important here.

I now reach a critical point that cannot be overlooked: in line with the idea that new media allows for access to different semiotic channels for composing, Japanese writing and reading practices differ from English writing and reading practices. In *Translinguality, Transmodality, and Difference*, a co-authored article in the form of a discussion on modality by Bruce Horner, Timothy Lockridge, and Cynthia Selfe (2015), Horner states that language is not separate from the multimodal. Selfe responds that while that is true, not all environments are created equal, and that new media, for instance, allows for much more mixing of modes. In the same sense, the writing technology of Japanese in combination with reading practices has more semiotic possibilities at its disposal. As Hiraga (2006) notes, kanji are both iconic and metaphoric, and font choices always add yet another semiotic layer to the mix, as Gen's use of 創英角ポップ体 (*soueikakupopputai*) in his school handbook demonstrates. But I am operating from a disposition towards modality, as opposed to theorizing the existence of a new and exciting multimodality. Modality has been around forever; it is not new. Instead, the interpretive framework of multimodality is relatively new (Trimbur and Press 2015). The examples of Japanese writing practices I mention above clarify that alphabetic writing is more modal than we have been led to believe. By paying attention to not only the lexical choices we make in alphabetic writing, but also font and other aspects, our readers

visualize our writing in different ways. We also always already deploy semiotic channels to give off certain effects. Next, I will demonstrate how orthography is an important factor in forwarding writing as transmodal.

### *Orthography as Transmodal*

My study demonstrates how orthography is a transmodal practice. I build my claim upon other scholars who argue for orthography as a social practice (Sebba 2007, Jaffe et al. 2012). As discussed previously, orthography attempts to lay out conventions for writing, but ultimately social factors determine how signs mean when representing language, despite the centrifugal forces of these conventions acting on language. As Sebba (2007) explains,

Orthography is par excellence a matter of language and culture. It is a matter of linguistics too, of course, but one where the classic principle of sociolinguistics comes into play: the signs carry not only linguistic meaning, but also social meaning at the same time. (7)

There is a clear overlap with literacy which goes beyond equating good spelling with literacy. For instance, Sebba observes both an autonomous model of orthography and a sociocultural model of orthography. As he explains, the autonomous model does not recognize the social nature of orthography and tries to define it as neutral technology which is then detached it from its social contexts. This autonomous model also promotes alphabetic phoneme writing as the ideal form of orthography with the advantage of it being the easiest to learn. Such notions are of course misguided.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The notion of shallow versus deep orthography may be an oversimplification, but it can help demonstrate why claims about ease of learning an orthography require a grain of salt. Shallow

Variation and deviation in orthography give us the clearest view into how orthography is social, because they demonstrate the choices people make to, for instance, give off certain effects (sound like a rapper) or align with certain groups. Regarding the latter, Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of iconicity is useful for alphabetic and other texts. Iconisation is a process which "involves a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images with which they are linked. Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37) (qtd. in Sebba 83). For example, in Spanish orthography, the deviant <k> that anarchists write to replace the standard <c> would become an icon of spelling rules and rules in general (Sebba 83). Likewise, the capital A in an English context can act as an icon that indexes high quality work or adultery depending on the context, and on the (literal) opposite end of the spectrum, the letter Z (which is not present in Russian orthography), is an icon of fascism to many Ukrainians who see it painted on Russian tanks. Considering the sociocultural implications of orthography above, I want to extend the idea of orthography as transmodal practice.

I take Sebba's argument about the social nature of orthography one step further by arguing it is a transmodal process. My reasoning is that modality is a process which goes beyond the mixture of clearly defined modes (visual, aural, textual, and other) to the emerging processes, reading practices, semiotic channels, and sociocultural factors (such

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orthography denotes a near one-to-one relationship between a sound and characters, while deep orthography denotes a complex relationship between sound and characters in areas such as homonyms (too vs. two), or words that sound different but have the same spelling. English is an example of a deep orthography (Sebba 2007).

as ideologies) that form all instances of communication. For instance, in chapter 3 I established that Gen's タノシミダネ (tah-noh-shee-mee-dah-neh) [I'm looking forward to it] subverts the orthographically conventional 楽しみだね. Rather than this example demonstrating a simple choice to play with text in order to index playfulness, there is a need to dig deeper. One might consider how the standard 楽しみだね mixes kanji and hiragana characters which are native to China and Japan, respectively. Conventional Japanese orthography assigns 楽 at least three *on* readings (ガク, ラク, ゴウ, or *gah-koo*, *rah-koo*, and *goh*) and two *kun* readings (たの, この, or *tah-noh* and *koh-noh*), but 乐 in Mandarin Chinese is read *lè*. A traditional form of the Chinese character is 樂, while the simplified form is 乐. Returning to what would be considered the conventional Japanese form of this sentence (楽しみだね), the しみだね are in hiragana. As mentioned earlier, hiragana most often serve as suffixes for kanji, verb inflections, and adjectives. Hiragana is attached to the adjective 楽 [fun] to turn it into an expression of anticipation [I'm looking forward to it]. However, Gen instead uses all katakana for the sentence. Katakana indexes many potential ideologies including coolness, foreignness, abruptness, coldness, fun, and a host of others (Robertson 2020 17). In addition, Gen used half-width katakana characters instead of the full size, thereby visually marking the タノシミダネ. We can therefore see various semiotic channels at play, including spacing, size, and font style.

The above demonstrates orthography as transmodal in terms of the sociohistorical factors behind the scripts (and individual characters), including their geographical origins, conventional uses (or artificially set practices), various script ideologies, and manipulation of script size. However, a transmodal orientation requires the reader's participation as well. One must consider that the audience for the message will ultimately determine whether it succeeds in its intended effects. Whether Gen's choir members see the all-katakana message as fun, or as an effective way to identify with him is ultimately up to them and their individual practices of reading which are informed by personal experience and the ideologies they attach to scripts and other aspects of writing, including word choice and formality.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, a Kressian affordances approach would not afford the same leeway in visual effects of writing indexing potential ideologies for readers.

### *Creativity in Similarity*

In theorizing a transmodal disposition, it is important to point out that all composition is creative, even when it involves reiterating sameness. I therefore trouble multimodalist discourses that connect creativity and agency to the addition of countable modes in students' compositions. These logics are based in neoliberal capitalism—not only for their emphasis on countable modes (the “more is better” logic), but also in how they ascribe creativity to the new and different. Transmodality can counter such logics by drawing on a translingual disposition which recognizes the labor occurring in all language use due to “the inherent productivity operating in language ‘reproduction,’ the

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<sup>53</sup> See Robertson (2020a) for an in-depth analysis of how Japanese users across a variety of demographic categories perceived of a mixture of script choices in combination with various personal pronoun uses.



creative operating in the ‘recreative’” (Horner and Alvarez, 2019, p. 13). As Cousins (2021) points out, language conventions are repeated practices which have become sedimented. To be clear, these conventions are not firmly in place or stable, but rather dynamic and constantly being negotiated through the practices of everyday language users (p. 1246).

I will add that the spatiotemporal location from which one operates ensures that reiterations of the same (in whatever form that takes) will always be different (Pennycook 2010). For instance, composing according to conventional practices of modality will reinforce those conventions. To illustrate with a highly conventional example, students who compose a double-spaced essay in a Times New Roman 12-point font will both reinforce and change these modal practices by “rendering them more reinforced” (Horner 2020, pp. 36). Creativity in this sense can be both sameness and difference, as opposed to just difference, which is what neoliberal discourses would have us believe.

In my diary study, I was initially disappointed that a few of Gen’s writing samples were based on templates or models which were originally composed by his *senpai* (or perhaps someone who came earlier). For instance, Gen’s complete ride schedule (figure 16) and the template it was based on (figure 22) were highly conventional of the form genre in how they provided fields for choir members to fill in information regarding the preferred departure time, place, and the person they would like to ride with. However, it provides a fascinating example of conventions in practice. I have no idea if the format of this ride schedule is specific to Shinshu University’s mixed choir group, or whether other clubs use the same form. I also do not know whether other vice presidents use the @ mark to denote how many people can fit into a car, but a transmodal orientation helps us

see how the conventions for this form are consistently being reinforced or changed each time it is deployed (re-written for the specific context/event, sent out to members, and gathered).

In another iteration of creativity in similarity, the school handbook (figure 23) Gen composed collaboratively was based on a model which he received from his senpai. It is impossible to tell how closely Gen's school handbook matched his senpai's, but it would be interesting to discover where the handbooks overlap and differ. It would also be worthwhile to consider the technologies used for each—for instance, Gen's handbook relied upon what could be considered an unconventional use of PowerPoint, but I am unaware of what Gen's senpai used. Choices such as these would impact interaction with the digital tools used when making these handbooks, and the specifications of the university assignment these handbooks are created to fulfill would furthermore determine the amount of freedom granted when designing these educational materials.

A transmodal orientation, therefore, highlights how both of these compositions have an imitation component at their core. The first is a highly conventional form to fill out, while the second is a collaborative composition based on another classmate's example. It is difficult to determine how closely these compositions follow their originals without further follow-up emails and/or interviews, but what remains important is not the product, but rather the process of composing these materials which are mediated by technologies, instructions, and uptake from the various actors involved (choir members, classmates, etc.). Even if the product ends up as highly similar to others, thus reinforcing convention/sedimented practice, the labor and spatiotemporal factors involved ensure this work moves beyond semiotic channels which have been frozen in time and space.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have forwarded a definition of transmodality which is practice-based and rejects any notion of modes operating autonomously—i.e. without regard to context, materiality, sociocultural, and spatiotemporal concerns. In doing so, I contrast a transmodal orientation with a multimodal orientation towards modality, which tends to separate modes and freeze them in space and time while separating the linguistic from everything else. Kressian multimodality proves an awkward fit for Japanese writing practices because it assumes a fixed directionality in writing. While scholars on Japanese semiosis point out these flaws in the framework, and attempt to remedy them by accommodating Japanese writing practices into a Kressian framework, they end up reinforcing the objectification of modes in the process.

Through my diary study, I have demonstrated how Japanese writing practices always involve factors outside of countable modes, such as technology and embodiment, ideologies which obtain through the interpretation of scripts, orthographical conventions, and spatiotemporal location which colors all acts of composing as emergent and acting upon conventions. I have thereby demonstrated how Japanese writing practices can help draw our attention to the ways in which modality operates beyond the binaries. Transmodality as a framework in combination with my diary method shines light on the ways in which communication occurs through modality, and how this labor is importantly determined by material and social factors. My next (and final) chapter explores the implications of my dissertation study on pedagogy in the English composition classroom.

## CHAPTER 5

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR TRANSMODAL RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGIES

Through my various critiques of theories of multimodality I hope to have demonstrated some underlying loose ground of dominant conceptual frameworks for addressing modality and its relation to writing. I do not advocate for throwing the baby out with the bathwater, as they say. Theories of multimodality have importantly strengthened calls for literacies, or multiliteracies, as opposed to the autonomous “literacy” (or big L literacy) a lay audience would associate with the term. Furthermore, analyzing modes, or semiotic channels that are deployed in certain ways for certain effects, is important for addressing features of communication which we have been led to believe rhet/comp has overlooked.<sup>54</sup> However, multimodal scholarship often reinscribes binaries between the textual and what are seen as all other modalities and treats the modes themselves as giving off certain effects, as opposed to the practices of modality producing these effects.

To remedy the shortcomings of multimodal analysis, I advocate for a transmodal approach to modality which I hope to have demonstrated is focused on process, or the deployment of certain modes in particular ways for certain effects. I have also shown that modality is fluid, and it involves materiality and embodiment. One must take into consideration the various things that impact our compositions—the paper, the pencils, the

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<sup>54</sup> Palmeri (2012) counters this notion by demonstrating that pedagogical scholarship produced by the likes of Elbow, Flower, Sommers, Hayes, and Emig from the 1960's onward has been multimodal.

size 12 Times New Roman font; and the things that are not so obvious (e.g., the surroundings, things interacting with senses, the interfaces) that impact the ways in which people compose. Finally, one must focus on the labor involved in modality which ensures that even the most conventional writing genres produced will be unstable due to our interactions with them. I lay out below how my dissertation attempted to cover these points.

In chapter 1, I introduced the purpose of my dissertation—to analyze writing practices as being highly involved in modality. I laid the theoretical groundwork for the rest of the dissertation by critiquing ideologies that paint writing as monomodal and autonomous, and also introduced scholarship on multimodality and writing systems/practices before briefly introducing Japanese writing practices and related scholarship.

In chapter 2, I introduced the Japanese writing system and the linguistic landscape of Japan. I started the chapter by tracing the arrival of kanji in Japan from the Korean peninsula beginning in the first century CE, its eventual uptake in Japanese writing practices, and the emergence of the native phonetic scripts of hiragana and katakana alongside kanji. In this way I demonstrated that Japanese was always a language with intimate connections to translation. From this point on, I demonstrated how policies such as *sakoku* in Japan isolated towns and bolstered linguistic diversity at home, thereby demonstrating that even in what is identified as the (singular) Japanese language itself, linguistic diversity abounds, thus disproving discourses that paint Japan as a monolingual and homogenous nation. I then reported on centrifugal forces on language which attempted to standardize Japanese speaking and writing practices before finally

demonstrating how Japanese writing practices are highly hybrid due to phenomena such as orthographic play and *kira kira* names. I found scholarship on the sociality of writing practices in both sociolinguistics and multimodality to be limited and highlighted the need to address this oversight.

In chapter 3 I reported on a diary study I conducted involving two second-year students at Shinshu University in Nagano, Japan. The students kept track of their writing over a two-week period and shared it via a Box account. I met with the students in January 2022 and discussed their writing with them. Then I conducted a preliminary analysis of the data in which I identified patterns in how students used technology in unique ways, how they negotiated sociality, how they deployed certain modes in certain situations in order to aid in comprehension, and how they utilized English in order to lessen the cognitive burden in reading, among other findings.

In chapter 4 I articulated a theory of transmodality which focuses attention on process and labor as opposed to semiotic channels. I contrasted this approach with scholarship on modality and writing practices (both Japanese and alphabetic) which tends to reinforce East/West binaries and double down on objectifying modes. I demonstrate through scholarship and my own diary study how a transmodal disposition allows us to see both Japanese writing practices and alphabetic textual writing practices as being involved in modality to a greater extent than we have been led to believe. I also make an argument for orthography to be considered a transmodal practice, and for us to see conventions as consistently contested or reinforced with each use. I argued that analyzing a fluid logographic writing system in tandem with alphabetic text from a transmodal

orientation allows multimodal scholars to overcome the reification of modes as set, discrete, and in themselves having particular affordances and effects.

## **Tools for Future Research**

### *Linguistic Anthropology and Sociolinguistics*

Going forward with research on a transmodal orientation to writing, I suggest that the field of linguistic anthropology provides some useful tools for analysis. Indexicality describes the concept of pointing to (or indexing) social groups, or peoples' traits. Indexicality aligns well with a transmodal orientation because it describes how certain groups are marked through language use, but acknowledges the complexity of this phenomenon, which depends on the previously mentioned ideologies the actor engages with, one's interpretation of context, and other factors. It helps identify linguistic choices (i.e. pronoun use and dialect) and written features, such as graphological variation in Japanese, that impact meaning. Work by scholars such as Robertson (2020a) helps us understand how meanings are never stable and rely upon a complex ecology of histories, previous ideologies, readers, and contexts.

Iconicity is another important concept in linguistic anthropology which may further shed light on transmodality, orthography, and speech practices. As demonstrated in chapter 4, the concept gives a good explanation for the kinds of ideologies which potentially obtain through non-standard spelling, certain registers<sup>55</sup>, and features of text. Iconicity also obtains in non-textual, semiotic ways. Likewise, iconicity allows us to see potential motives behind speaking or writing in a certain way.

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<sup>55</sup> See Inoue (2006) on women's speech in Japan.

### *Ethnography*

My diary study confirms the value of an ethnographic approach to transmodal research due to transmodality's emphasis on emergence and practice. The diary and interview approach is one option—it allows researchers to collect students' writing samples and hear from them about the choices they made while composing. This approach is somewhat limited though because of the retroactive aspect of students' reports on their writing practices. Other scholars working with transmodality demonstrate participant ethnographic approaches via sensorial ethnography (Scheidler 2020) and observation-based ethnography (Murphy, 2012; Newfield, 2014). Still other approaches could draw upon speak-aloud protocols and screen capture technologies (Takayoshi, 2018). Ethnographic work potentially captures the emergent nature and fluidity of transmodality, and the multimodal assemblages, or the various modes and their combinations which are deployed to produce meaning (Hawkins, 2018); in addition to specific cultural settings. Non-ethnographic research can also advance a transmodal orientation, and book studies sheds light on how textual and other research methods may help in this area.

### *Book History and Media Studies*

Transmodality could potentially gain from the field of book studies. Specifically, a bibliography methodology (McKenzie, 1999) which involves analyzing all aspects of a text, including its paratext, circulation, reception, various editions, and factors related to materiality. This methodology can be applied to aspects other than books such as computers; for instance, Matthew Kirschenbaum (2008) used a bibliography



methodology on computers to argue (regarding materiality) that new media, which seem to shed the material, actually leave material traces. To illustrate, he divides materiality into forensic materiality, which is based on the principle that no two things are the same, and formal materiality, which, on the other hand, deals with manipulating symbols that do not have matter, such as bits (11). It is what appears onscreen but leaves no physical trace; however, this immateriality is an illusion (12), and materiality (including technology and labor) are very much a part of the material process of new media technologies. New media works hard to black box, or make invisible, these material processes (what Kirschenbaum refers to as screen essentialism). A bibliographic methodology could thereby help scholars studying transmodality unravel the material processes of new/digital media.

Finally, research on transmodality can benefit from referencing media studies scholarship. Specifically, scholars in Native American/Indigenous Studies who work on Indigenous media have been involved in fruitful conversations on literacy, writing, and materiality for many years. Some scholars (Boone, 1994) would label semasiographic systems, or those that depict ideas such as notational systems in music, Aztec pictographs, and *khipu*, or knotted cords, for instance, as “writing.” But others (Newman, 2014) reject the “writing” label as “[upholding or even inflating] the prestige of writing as a cultural credential” (p. 84-90). These conversations trouble Great Divide arguments while challenging scholars to carefully consider labels attached to communication practices. NAIS and media studies scholars are also highly invested in materiality. They analyze not only traditional texts like treaties, but also wampum belts, birchbark scrolls, weapons, body art, tobacco smoke, and various other artifacts within their cultural

contexts to demonstrate how information is stored and transmitted (Bohaker, 2014).<sup>56</sup> In this way book history and media studies scholarship could enrich conversations in transmodality on materiality, semiosis, modality, and reading practices.

### **Toward a Transmodal Pedagogy**

Unlike translingualism, which has found pedagogical footing (Horner and Tetreault, 2017, Ayash, 2019, Kiernan et al., 2021), transmodality is a relatively new theoretical framing of modality in rhetoric and composition; therefore pedagogical development is limited. The notable exception to this lack of pedagogy comes in the form of recent scholarship (Horner, 2019; Horner, 2020; Cousins, 2021) which demonstrates how giving students the option to compose modality in the format they choose (including highly conventional written alphabetic essays) is a method which grants students a high degree of agency. The scholars who take this approach note that students mostly choose to reproduce the alphabetic text essays recognized as highly conventional. Therefore, the students were deploying modality in the way they felt was most effective given the situation.

The aforementioned transmodal approach to pedagogy is effective in highlighting how a transmodal orientation considers all instances of writing as a deployment of modality. In contrast to the approach by Horner and Cousins, my previous approaches have more specifically incorporated Japanese kanji characters to teach students about ideology in language. Initially, I thought about this assignment as translingual, due to its

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<sup>56</sup> See other various other articles in Cohen and Glover (2014).

use of multiple named languages, but I have come to understand it as a transmodal one instead. I will cover the activity below.

I developed a kanji activity and tested it in my FYC classes in 2014 and 2015. The activity relied upon a pedagogy I called “code contact” to emphasize students’ immersion in a different code (or language, in a semiotic sense) during the activity, and it was originally meant to teach my students about ideology in language. In this activity, students analyzed a list of kanji characters which were broken down into their radical (semantic) and additional components. To illustrate, the kanji 好 (like) was divided into its component parts: the radical 女 (woman), and addition 子 (child). Students analyzed characters in this manner to discover possible connotations about power relationships in the logograms and to gain a greater awareness thereby of the ways in which language is inherently ideological. For instance, by analyzing 好 (like) and other characters with the 女 (woman) radical, students recognized a gender bias. Finally, students were to connect what they learned about ideology in kanji to the English language by engaging with discussion questions at the bottom of the activity prompt. My intention was for students to draw analogies between English and kanji, thereby becoming more critically aware language users. I was essentially attempting to build students’ metalinguistic awareness while 1) informing them about non-alphabetic writing technologies and 2) de-centering alphabetic literacies (Cushman, 2016).

To expand on the above, my code contact portion of the assignment looked like this:

女 + 石 = 妬  
Woman Stone Jealous

女 + 女 + 女 = 姦  
Woman Woman Woman Adultery

And the questions for students to answer included the following:

- What do these kanji examples demonstrate about power in the Japanese/Chinese language?
- Can you think of any similar examples in English?
- The symbol *otoko* (man) [男] never comes up as a radical in other characters.

Why do you think this happens?<sup>57</sup>

Students by and large understood what I was asking them, and they provided appropriate examples for each of the questions. For instance, in response to the first question, one student noticed how negative meanings obtain when the woman radical is paired with additional characters, and they said women did not hold power in Japanese and Chinese cultures. In response to the second question on English language examples, students found a large variety. For instance, one drew upon basketball and the idea of guarding a man, despite the fact that many women play the sport. They connect this idea to the male dominance of the sport in the past. Responding to the same question, other students mentioned suffixes and prefixes (one even mentioned the Greek and Latin roots of

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<sup>57</sup> A copy of this activity is included in the appendices.

words) and focused more on the technical use of the words more than the ideological dimension behind them. One particularly interesting response described how the word “woman” cannot escape “man” due to the nature of the word itself.

Finally, for the admittedly difficult third question which asks why the character for “man” never comes up as a radical, students’ responses demonstrated that they understood the concept. One particularly notable example explains that the student believes “man” is never used as a radical because men are considered whole, but women are not. The student furthermore provides the Biblical example of Eve, who was supposedly made from Adam’s rib. Therefore, women are not considered individuals. The student in question noticed that [男] is dominant and thus cannot be seen as part of another character.

As the responses demonstrated, students understood the language ideology point I was trying to get across. They could identify the power dynamics at play in both Japanese kanji characters and within alphabetic writing. However, if I were to update the assignment, I would change a few details describing the history of kanji. I would also add a note to the kanji handout that describes how my purpose is not to single out the Japanese written language for criticism—indeed, ideology obtains in all languages—and that I am instead demonstrating how all writing technologies change throughout the years. Finally, I would add one more question to the kanji handout revealing that recent kanji dictionaries have replaced many of the gender biased kanji compounds, and then ask students to identify similar kinds of revisions happening in English and other languages. I would ask them to reflect on why these changes are occurring.

While I originally conceived of this activity as a translingual one, I believe it could be considered a transmodal pedagogy. To explain, I am asking students to engage with not only alphabetic text, but also logographic characters. I am furthermore asking students to consider the reading practices behind modality and demonstrating how writing changes over time (this point will be more pronounced when I change the prompt for this assignment to include information on updated kanji dictionaries). Finally, encouraging my students to apply their knowledge about ideologies in logographic form to ideologies in alphabetic text encourages a recognition of the sociality behind these writing practices and a dexterity in engaging with different ways of reading and writing. At the same time, I am not asking students to produce a larger assignment, which is one of the potential weaknesses of my previous approach which I will continue my reflection on below<sup>58</sup>.

While this activity encourages students to think about language and modality as a social practice, I think the scaffolding leading up to it can use some improvements. In addition to the revisions to the prompt I have proposed above, I advocate for covering modality—and specifically sociocultural practices behind modality—early in the semester. I only covered the kanji activity in one class session, and the previous week’s homework served as the primary scaffolding for the assignment. However, students would benefit from more preparation, and the activity should build into a larger assignment or unit, or even the overall theme of the course.<sup>59</sup> And I agree with Horner

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<sup>58</sup> Schiavone’s (2017) critique of multimodal pedagogy textbooks’ penchant for emphasizing consumption of multimodal texts rather than their production is relevant here.

<sup>59</sup> Georgia Tech’s WOVEN (Written, Oral, Visual, Electronic, and Non-Verbal Communication) approach bakes multimodality into the university’s writing curriculum from first-year writing onward, but it is unclear whether any time is set aside for students to theorize or question conceptions of modality.

and Cousins' approach which gives students the agency to choose how they deploy modality instead of pressuring them to compose in anything but text. Future courses I teach which utilize this assignment will give students the freedom to deploy modality in whatever way they see fit.

### **Transmodality's Benefits to Literacy Research and Teaching**

As my pedagogy and diary study highlight, a transmodal approach offers various benefits to literacy researchers and teachers. For one, a transmodal approach demonstrates how reading practices tend to be culturally/contextually situated. Thinking about situated semiosis allows scholars and teachers to see beyond reified modes and their affordances. My kanji assignment, for instance, provides students with a chance to read logographic characters similar to how Japanese language users might read characters when first being introduced to them. It points students to potential meanings instead of right or wrong answers. And the alphabetic examples students come up with demonstrate that they are thinking critically about English writing. My activity highlights just a couple possibilities for encouraging students to read in different and critical ways.

By introducing highly visual and hybrid Japanese writing practices into the composition classroom, students engage in a form of translation, and thereby inhabit a world of a non-western writing practices. Here I draw upon Weiguo Qu's (2014) pedagogy, which calls on students to translate between Chinese and English. Such a pedagogy demonstrates that "translation or thinking in a language that is not native de-automatizes perception and thinking" (p. 73). Qu's students were made aware of choices in writing that they were previously unaware existed, which gives credence to Qu's

argument that students can gain critical literacy and thinking through perceiving the world in a different way, and translation allows for this kind of work to occur (p. 73). By inhabiting fundamentally different writing practices and asking students to make meaning within them, they will potentially engage in the critical literacy and critical thinking that Qu refers to. To be clear, the transmodality of Japanese writing practices are not only characteristic of these practices, and so students would need to be encouraged to re-translate these insights to their own seemingly monomodal writing practices. By further introducing sociolinguistic concepts, students would potentially gain metalinguistic awareness that will aid them in developing their writing abilities.

Transmodality furthermore benefits literacy researchers and teachers because of its insistence that modality does not operate autonomously. As my kanji assignment and research demonstrate, written language is constantly developing. Revisions to kanji dictionaries, the range of phonetic values which people attach to characters over the years due to their circulation throughout Japan (and creative naming practices), and the very development of the JWS and its three main scripts remind us of this fact. My activity in particular encourages students to take a step back and explore modality (and alphabetic writing practices in particular) in all their sociohistorical complexity.

A transmodal approach to pedagogy also breaks down binaries of Eastern and Western writing practices. As my diary study demonstrated, Sakura deployed English as a tool to help her better highlight important information. Instead of alphabetic writing here being a separate language, and thus, a barrier to comprehension for this native Japanese speaker, the English instead existed in the student's single linguistic repertoire and aided in meaning-making. Likewise, my critique of ascribing a special



multimodality-ness to Japanese writing through objectifying the multi scripts and emphasizing their relative freedom in directionality, as well as visuality, points to how we can even out the differences we have built into the different writing systems.

## **Conclusion**

In my treatment of Japanese writing practices and modality, I avoid fast capitalist discourses that argue for contact with more writing systems due to increased globalization (i.e. contact with East Asian writing on the Internet, increased access to machine translation, popularity of popular culture and anime on streaming services and the like, the need for marketable language skills, and the need to be technically savvy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, among others). This choice stems from the need to avoid fast capitalist logics which creep into scholarship on modality, such as the assumption that the more modes used, the better. In reality, more is not necessarily better, and scholars and teachers need to stop objectifying modes.

Instead, I utilize a transmodal orientation to Japanese writing practices and the choices behind questions of such features as script variation, space and visuality, which allow us to see how different sociocultural factors and reading practices impact the deployment of modality through writing. As I hope to have demonstrated, all too often these factors are left out of multimodal analysis in exchange for a focus on the affordances of different modes, which ascribes power to the modes (semiotic channels) themselves instead of the practices involved.

My analysis of Japanese writing practices from my secondary research and diary study avoids arguing that Japanese writing practices are inherently multimodal as some

would have us believe. Instead, my analysis demonstrates how labor and reading practices are involved with all writing, or all instances of modality, and a transmodal orientation provides reasons why sociohistorical and material factors should be considered in alphabetic writing as well.

In this chapter, I highlight specific concepts, such as indexicality and iconicity which can be usefully deployed in further transmodal work in identifying ideologies behind textual and linguistic features. I also highlight the field of book studies as potentially fruitful, especially due to the bibliography methodology which could aid in non-ethnographic transmodal work. And I identify how transmodality could potentially further conversations on media, especially due to its emphasis on reading practices, which could help scholars reimagine meaning-making in indigenous media like wampum.

I closed by identifying pedagogical directions for transmodality and point to my kanji activity in particular as an example. This activity involves students analyzing Japanese kanji characters for ideologies and thinking critically about how similar ideologies obtain in the English language. In this way, students practice reading alphabetic and logographic writing, and come to realize how sociohistorical factors impact modern-day language use and writing.

I would like to end on one final disciplinary note. Through my research, I have become convinced that transmodality represents a chance to make our field about *writing* or *composition* as opposed to *English* writing. It is exciting to have the chance to make our curriculum not only translingual, but transmodal as well. I hope my research and pedagogical explorations have demonstrated why this work is not only feasible, but

preferable. Instead of tacking multimodality onto the end of our courses as remediation projects, why not emphasize the theoretical underpinnings of modality from the get-go and give our students the agency to choose how they deploy modality throughout the semester? And furthermore, why not utilize various writing practices (and scripts) as part of our emphasis on writing and composing? Ellen Cushman (2016) points out the decolonial potential of translingualism, and the opportunity to invite more writing practices into our research and reorient how we think about writing and do our work. I believe this idea can be extended to transmodality and the opportunity to re-envision modality as an integral part of what we do.

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## APPENDIX A: DIARY TEMPLATE

Process Diary Template (Example)  
ライティングプロセス日記のテンプレート (例)

Date 日付	Time 時間	Category ライティングの種類	Location 場所	Purpose/Comment 目的・コメント
例 10月21日	午前 11:00-11:15	メール	アパート	友達に連絡した。
	午後 1:00-1:30	ブログ更新	図書館	最近の旅行について書いた。
	等			

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS' ARTIFACTS

### Gen's Artifacts (File/handout name or genre in Japanese and English with notes)

- 第7回までの授業で関心を持った点[Gen's class reports until week 7]
- ライティングサンプル② 2021-12-02 22.56.33 [Writing Sample 2] – Filled out ride schedule form.
- ライティングサンプル 3 2021-12-04 22.50.13 [Writing Sample 3] – Line message.
- ライティングサンプル 4 2021-12-04 22.53.54 [Writing Sample 4] – Notes for Cat's Story, the song which will be performed at the choir concert.
- ライティングサンプル 5 2021-12-06 10.32.54 [Writing Sample 5] – Line message.
- **ライティングサンプル 6 児童理解・生徒指導概論③レポート課題** [Writing Sample 6 – Introduction to children's comprehension and student instruction (3), report tasks.
- ライティングサンプル 7 [Writing Sample 7] – Introduction to be sent out to choir via mailing list.
- ライティングサンプル 8 2021-12-09 14.30.32 [Writing Sample 8] – Ride schedule template.
- サンプル 9 [Sample 9] – Gen's impressions of a demo lesson.
- サンプル 10 異文化教育 1210 9 回 [Sample 10 - Cross-Cultural Education 1210 9<sup>th</sup> Class]
- サンプル 11 [Sample 11] – Picture of Gen's sheet music annotations.
- サンプル 12 [Sample 12] – Picture of Gen's signature and filled out form to use the choir room.
- サンプル 13 [Sample 13] – Invitation for the mixed choir's Christmas party.
- サンプル 14 [Sample 14] – Gen's impressions of one of the choir's practice sessions.

### Sakura's Artifacts

- ライティングサンプル[Writing Sample] – Sakura's notes for her special needs education class. She includes the notes for class meetings 1-7, except for class 3.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE IRB

### Interview Questions

Please explain your writing process for this essay/blog post/email/etc.

How much time do you spend writing per day? What genres do you often write (email, text message, report, etc.)?

What were you thinking as you wrote this text (indicate a specific sentence)?

Why did you choose to write this text vertically instead of horizontally?

How many drafts did you write when completing this paper/essay/report/etc.?

Why did you choose (hiragana/katakana/kanji/etc.) for this word?

Why did you choose this emoji for your text message/email?

Why did you write this portion of your message in (English/some other language)?

You incorporate a lot of kanji in this section of your (writing genre). Why is that?

What program/technology did you use to help you compose this text?

## APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS FOR GEN'S PROCESS DIARY AND WRITING SAMPLES

### Process Diary

- Can you tell briefly tell me about your choir group? What is the 混声合唱団のメーリングリスト? Is the list physical or online? How often do you write for your circle, and what kinds of writing do you write for them? Do you consciously change your writing to address the audience?
- What kind of communication for your circle takes place through LINE and what takes place through the mailing list? (Day 2)
- You write that you thought of an English introduction for class on 12/3. Thinking about your writing is also considered composing. How much of your planning is typically done mentally vs. writing? Does this change for English-language texts? (day 3)
- You said you created a handbook for elementary students. What content is in the book? What kinds of choices did you make (in terms of content, script, aesthetics, etc.). What were the steps for creating this handbook? (day 4)
- What kinds of things do you write when you write impressions for a class? Are the comments evaluative or only reflective? Is there a genre for this kind of writing? How would you explain it? (6?)
- Do you often write lesson plans? If so, do you often put the into action (demo lessons, real class interactions)? (9)

### Artifact 1 Translation:

- 1. In the second class, we (promoted the act of making?) made shapes using materials and mediums. More shapes were created than I could have imagined and children did many things that surprised me (lit. behaviors I couldn't think of). It was interesting.
- 2. In the fourth class, we looked at pictures of 頭足人 (とうそくにん) that were drawn by children who were around three years old. I was surprised to find out that the iconographic features of 頭足人 are common throughout the world. I felt a commonality/connection with my fellow humans.
- 3. In the fifth class, I learned about the developmental stages of painting. I was interested in the fact that children around the age of 5 devise strategies which involve drawing a base line and dividing the picture into upper and lower sections. It made me reflect on what I had written unconsciously. (I wonder, how might this reflection inform his reflection on his writing process?)

- 4. In the same stage of painting development, the mixed viewpoint (perspective?) part was very interesting. I was impressed that the boy who was playing with a hoola hoop was able to draw himself being encircled by the hoola hoop.

Artifact 2 Translation:

12/3/21 (Friday) 7-11 pm.

Location: Agata Forest (Is Agata usually in hiragana?)

Departure

(Names)@2 (What does the @2 mean?)

フアミマ 17:40:@4

Return

(Names)@4

Artifact 3 Translation:

My samples are few.

Chat sample ↓

Please! (Or I'm looking forward to it! Depending on context)

Thanks! (Very casual colloquialism)

- Why did you write your message in all hiragana? What do the arrows mean? What is the context for this exchange?

Artifact 4 Translation:

Plan

A Gift from Cats (song)

There are various versions for voice parts...

- Are these notes for a concert?

Artifact 5 Translation:

My samples are few.

Chat sample ↓

Please! (Or I'm looking forward to it! Depending on context)

Thanks! (Very casual colloquialism)

This is Gen (or I'm Gen—depends on the context)! (Emoji of a woman bowing)

- What is the context of this exchange?

Artifact 6 Translation:

Student's understanding of the material/Introduction to student guidance  
(3) Discussion Report

- Question for clarification: Are your classes in-person or online?

Artifact 7 Translation:

A concert that conveys overflowing love and heart for choir and makes a deep impression on both singers and the audience.

- Did you write this piece? What was your process when composing this piece?
- Seeing as to how you're involved in choir, do you compose music as well? How would you compare your writing and composing processes?

Artifact 8 Translation:

12/10/21 (Friday) 7-11 pm.

Location: Agata

Departure [Desired/vehicle dispatch location (man-hour [departure]?)/None]

Return [Desired/vehicle dispatch/None]

Request [ ]

- Did you change the template? If so, why?



## APPENDIX E: KANJI ASSIGNMENT

Background: Japanese kanji is an early multimodal writing technology that began as Chinese hanzi around 2000 BC or earlier. Hanzi is a logographic system, or a system that uses symbols to represent words or morphemes (the smallest meaningful unit of language)—as opposed to a phonetic, or sound system, such as the English alphabet.

How it works: Many kanji characters can stand alone to mean something and also be a part of other characters. The character *ki*(tree) [木], is one of these kanji characters. If it stands alone, it means tree, but if it gets repeated three times like this 森, it becomes *mori* (forest) [森]. We would say that *ki* (tree) [木] is a radical. It shows up in other characters (森, 机, 板, etc.).

For Exploration: The character for woman, *onna* (woman) [女], is also a radical. Let's look at some common characters with the *onna* (woman) [女] radical.

女 + 少 = 妙

Woman

Few

Exquisite

女 + 亡 = 妄

Woman

Deceased

Delusion

女 + 干 = 奸

Woman

Dry

Wickedness

女 + 石 = 妬

Woman

Stone

Jealous

女 + 女 + 女 = 姦

Woman

Woman

Woman

Adultery

女 + 又 = 奴

Woman

Again

Slave

What do these kanji examples demonstrate about power in the Japanese/Chinese language?

Can you think of any similar examples in English?

The symbol *otoko* (man) [男] never comes up as a radical in other characters. Why do you think this happens?

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Alex Way  
EDUCATION

### **PhD English/Rhetoric and Composition, 2022**

University of Louisville

Dissertation: “Rewriting Writing as Transmodal and Translingual: Transcribing Japanese”

Committee: Bruce Horner (chair), Andrea Olinger, Mark Mattes, and Paul Prior

### **MA English/Rhetoric and Composition, 2015**

Washington State University

Culminating Project: “Code Contact in Composition”

Committee: Victor Villanueva (chair), Wendy Olson, Nancy Bell

### **BA Communication and International Business (double major), 2009**

Westminster College

Honors: *summa cum laude*

## **Research and Teaching Interests**

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Translingualism, Second Language Writing, Multimodality, Technical and Professional Writing, Sociolinguistics, Antiracism, Sustainability, Writing Studies, Multiethnic Literatures, Multiethnic Media, Transnationalism, Linguistic Anthropology, Book History

## **Publications**

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### In Press & In Print

Peer-Reviewed Book Chapter: “(En)countering Monolingualism in International Higher Education and Graduate School.” Co-authored with Emily Yuko Cousins and Joe Franklin. *Translingual and Transnational Graduate Education in Rhetoric and Composition*. Eds. Carrie Kilfoil and Nancy Bou Ayash. University Press of Colorado. (Under Contract, Forthcoming, 2022)

Journal Article: “Transnational Carework in the Time of COVID-19.” *Carework and Writing During COVID*, special issue of *The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*. (Forthcoming, October 2022)

Journal Article: “Creating a Virtual Space for Collaborative Project Planning using the Future Creating Workshop Process: Building the Global Climate Change Education Initiative.” Co-authored with Mary Brydon-Miller, Bronwyn T. Williams, Socorro Aguja, Michaela Blumrich, Luiza De Sousa, Cathy Dzerefos, Bennett Kolb, Leonard Marimbe, Irene Muller, Genevieve Pillar, Maricar Prudente, Shira Rabin, Christa Rauch, and Franz Rauch. *Educational Action Research*. (April 2022)

Research Bibliography: “Translingual Approaches to Writing and Its Instruction.” Co-authored and compiled with Bruce Horner, Emily Yuko Cousins, Jaclyn Hilberg, Claire N. Jackson, and Rachel Rodriguez. WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies, No. 28. *WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies*.  
<<https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/comppile/wpa/TranslingualApproaches.pdf>>  
(October 2019)

### In Progress

Activity: “Exploring Ideology in Written Language: A Translingual Activity.” *Activities and Assignments Archive. Writing Spaces*, Vol. 5. (Proposal Accepted, April 2022)

## **Editorial Work**

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Special issue in development on Antiracist Conferencing for *Writers: Craft and Context*. With Andrea Olinger, Caitlin Allen, and Michael Benjamin. To appear in summer 2022.

## **Conference Presentations**

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“Antiracist and Inclusive Conferencing: Co-Constructing Access, Attending to Power, and Practicing Accountability.” with Andrea Olinger, Caitlin Burns Allen, and Michael Benjamin. Conference on College Composition and Communication, Chicago, IL, Mar. 2022.

"Leveraging Exhaustion: Mobilizing Graduate Student Experiences Towards Institutional Change." with Emily Yuko Cousins and Joe Franklin. Conference on College Composition and Communication, Spokane, WA, Apr. 2021 (session cancelled due to COVID-19)

“Code Contact in Composition.” Qualitative Research Network CCCC, Pittsburgh, PA, Mar. 2019.

“Language and Power in First-Year Composition: Translating Sociolinguistics, Subjectivity, and Critical Consciousness.” with Edie-Marie Roper and Liz Francese. The Tenth Annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Storrs, CT, Mar. 2015.

“ESL at a Land-Grant University: Highlighting the Need to Focus on Inclusive Practices in the Academy.” Thomas R. Watson Conference, Louisville, KY, Oct. 2014.

“Language as Ideological Interface: Using Writing Technologies to Foreground Bias in Japanese Kanji.” Computers and Writing Conference, Pullman, WA, June 2014.

“Sexism in Kanji Characters: How Critical Theory and Technology Uncover Gender Bias in the Japanese Language.” Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, Moscow, ID, Mar. 2014.

## **Teaching**

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<u>University Composition</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Year</u>
Scientific and Technical Writing	University of Louisville	2021
Intermediate College Writing	University of Louisville	2020
Introduction to College Writing	University of Louisville	2019
College Composition	Washington State University	2014-2015
Writing Tutorial	Washington State University	2013
<u>English as a Second Language (ESL)</u>		
English for Academic Purposes I & II	Kanazawa University	2018, 2021
English for Academic Purposes III & IV	Kanazawa University	2017-2018
Portfolio Revision Workshop	Washington State University	2015
Assistant Language Teacher	Interac Corporation, Japan	2015-2017

ESL Instructor	A-to-Z Corporation, Japan	2012-2013
ESL Instructor	Aeon-Amity, Japan	2010-2012
ESL Instructor	Berkeley English Language Institute, South Korea	2009-2010
Volunteer ESL Instructor	English Skills Learning Center	2009

### **Relevant Coursework**

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Introduction to Antiracist Pedagogy Mini Course, Dec. 2021

### **Academic Service**

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Thomas R. Watson Conference Assistant Director, University of Louisville, Aug. 2019 – May 2021

Volunteer Online Writing Tutor  
University of Louisville Writing Center, Apr. 2021

Interviewer  
University of Louisville Writing Center Oral History Project, Jan. 2021

Global Climate Change Education Project Conference Coordinator, University of Louisville, Jan.-May 2020

PhD Liaison  
English Graduate Organization, University of Louisville, 2018-2019

Conference Volunteer  
Thomas R. Watson Conference, University of Louisville, Oct. 2018

Composition Liaison  
Washington State University, English Graduate Organization, 2014-2015

### **Honors and Awards**

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University Fellowship (\$40,000)  
University of Louisville, 2018-2022

Graduate Network in Arts and Sciences Research Grant (\$200)  
University of Louisville, 2022

Graduate School Council Travel Award (\$62)  
University of Louisville, 2021

Graduate School Council Travel Award (\$600)  
University of Louisville, 2019

English Graduate Organization Service Award  
Washington State University, 2015

## **Languages**

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Japanese: Upper Intermediate Level  
Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N2 level. Proficient in listening, reading, and speaking

Korean: Elementary Level  
Basic level in reading, writing, speaking, and listening