

An Investigation of the Use and Modification of the *ESL Composition Profile* at IUJ

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Abstract

This investigation aims to accelerate existing discussion among IUJ's English as a Foreign Language (EFL) faculty members about the desirability of making modifications to the *ESL Composition Profile*, the writing assessment instrument which is currently used by IUJ's EFL faculty for most writing assessment purposes. After briefly identifying the merits of the *ESL Composition Profile*, the author will point out that the *Profile* is based on an approach to composition instruction which is to a considerable extent at variance with the approach used during the centerpiece of IUJ's academic writing program, the Text Skills course in the Intensive English Program. Consistent with its underlying approach to composition instruction, the *Profile* has overlapping rating components, but this has caused problems for Text Skills composition raters operating in a writing syllabus which they feel requires greater separation of the rating components. The author will suggest that a closer analysis of the variance between the two approaches to composition can yield coherent answers to the question of what modifications Text Skills designers should make to the *ESL Composition Profile* in order to integrate it into the Text Skills writing syllabus.

Key Words: *ESL Composition Profile*, *Text Skills*, *Intensive English Program*

1. INTRODUCTION

After a long period of experimentation with a succession of different approaches to the teaching of academic English L2 composition, the full-time EFL faculty of the International University of Japan (IUJ) have in the last two years reached a consensus on the basic principles which shape L2 academic English writing and L2 academic English writing pedagogy. The most important beneficiary of this consensus is the Text Skills (TS) course which takes place during an annual nine week pre-matriculation Intensive English Program (IEP). This course delivers over half of the L2 academic English writing instruction received by students who enroll from the start in the university's EFL courses. The consensus about L2 academic English writing among IUJ's full-time EFL faculty does not mean that all, or even most of, the practical problems with the TS course(s) have been identified, examined and solved. This consensus, however, does provide a welcome opportunity for IUJ's EFL faculty to move beyond general debates about writing and the teaching of writing to consideration of problems and issues related to the design and delivery of the current TS writing syllabus. This report aims to make such a contribution by accelerating discussion about the extent and the type of modifications which should be made to the writing

assessment instrument, the well-known *ESL Composition Profile* (Jacobs et.al., 1981; Hughey et.al., 1983), which IUJ's EFL faculty introduced into TS courses in 1997.

After explaining why the TS designers selected the *ESL Composition Profile* as their default writing assessment instrument, the author will identify the feature of the *Profile* – its overlapping “trait” components – which appears to be at variance with the assessment needs of the TS course. The author will at the same time present the case for regarding this perceived variance as real and significant by showing that it is rooted in two quite different rationales of L2 English composition and L2 English composition pedagogy. At this point, reasons will be given why this variance has led to the decision to modify rather than abandon the *ESL Composition Profile*. The search for an answer to the question of what modifications to make to the *Profile* in order to make it more consistent with TS assessment needs will take the form of an examination of the “current-traditional rhetoric” approach to L2 English composition which shapes the writing component of the current TS course. This examination will focus on the identification of a coherent set of “composition rationale” criteria which TS designers might want to use when making decisions about modifications to the *Profile*. This will lead to an illustration of a hypothetical decision process in which some of the “rationale” criteria and an internal consistency criterion are used as a yardstick against which to measure the appropriacy and completeness of modifications to the *Profile* which TS designers implemented on a pilot basis in 1998. The investigation will conclude with a brief survey of possible future lines of inquiry in this area.

2. THE MERITS OF THE *ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE*

IUJ's EFL faculty see four main merits in The *ESL Composition Profile*. Its first merit is that it has a broader set of purposes than proficiency testing alone. Jacobs and her colleagues state that the *Profile* has also been designed to take into account the instructional needs of a program, which they identify as the *diagnosis* of the writer's strengths and weaknesses, measurement of the writer's *progress* and *feedback* to the writer of this information (1981, p. 11). The second merit is that the *Profile* aims for content validity by creating a two dimensional holistic rating scale which later writers on the subject have termed an “analytical assessment scale” or a “multiple-trait scoring instrument” (e.g., Hamps-Lyons, 1991). The equal emphasis which the horizontal “trait” components of the scale give to *content* and *organization* on the one hand and *vocabulary*, *language use* and *mechanics* on the other hand (see Appendix 1) are intended to correct the tendency of English instructor raters to respond to errors rather than to the overall communicative effectiveness of the writing (Jacobs et. al, 1981, p. 36). The third merit of the *Profile* is that it is well-developed and well-documented. Perhaps the best features of its development are the detailed sets of

descriptors for the five horizontal "trait" components which Jacobs and her colleagues have elaborated (Hughey et.al., 1983, pp. 141-145). The documentation includes, among other things, several sample compositions and a comprehensive listing of the scores that they were awarded by each of four raters (Jacobs et. al., 1981, pp. 109-138). Last, but not least, another good reason for adopting the *ESL Composition Profile* is that it has the reputation of being one of the most widely used EFL/ESL writing assessment instruments in English-medium universities (e.g., Astika, 1993).

3. THE *ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE'S* FIVE OVERLAPPING "TRAIT" COMPONENTS AND THEIR UNDERLYING RATIONALE

One of the most characteristic features of the *ESL Composition Profile* is the quite intentional overlapping of its five horizontal "trait" components: *content*, *organization*, *vocabulary*, *language use* and *mechanics* (see Appendix 1). The designers of the *Profile* have realized this overlapping by refusing to draw hard and fast distinctions among the five components. Considered as a complete set, the descriptors in each component certainly differ from the descriptors in the other components in terms of the aspects of the composition on which they focus. On the other hand, the boundaries among the components are somewhat blurred, particularly the boundaries between *content* and *organization*. Appendix 2 presents the complete lists of detailed descriptors for the four major horizontal "trait" components which the *Profile's* designers formulated for the benefit of both raters and instructors. Some of the descriptors which illustrate the blurring of component boundaries are presented below:

1. *Content* and *Organization*

Content: Is there a specific method of development (such as comparison/contrast, illustration, definition, example, description, fact, or personal experience?)

Organization: Are the points logically developed, using a particular sequence such as time order, space order or importance?

2. *Organization*, *Vocabulary* and *Language Use*

Organization: Are there effective transition elements – words, phrases or sentences - which link and move ideas both within and between paragraphs?

Vocabulary: Do transition elements mark shifts in thought? pace? emphasis? tone?

Language Use: Are main and subordinate ideas carefully distinguished?

The author regards this feature of the *ESL Composition Profile* as "characteristic" in two ways. First, only a few L2 English writing assessment instruments available in the public domain have fully developed "trait" components. L2 English writing assessment

instruments such as the Test of Written English (Educational Testing Service, 1996) which have been developed solely to measure proficiency typically have a single vertical rating scale in which there are no separate “trait” components. Second, and more importantly, the presence of “trait” components in the *ESL Composition Profile* do not reflect a belief that these trait components represent truly independent aspects of a composition. Instead, they are intended by their creators to offer multiple views of a single compositional product (Jacobs, 1981, pp. 34-37). The reasons for this subjective orientation to the “traits” lie in the views of the *Profile’s* developers about the nature of English L2 composition.

For the purposes of this investigation, two of these views are significant. The first view is the belief that good writing does not develop by imitating models but develops out of an intense process of creation and revision. The second view is that there is no *essential* difference between L1 and L2 English composition. This second view is not stated explicitly, but it is implicit in all the arguments of the *Profile’s* developers and in their heterogeneous citation of L1 and L2 English composition theory and practice sources. If investigations of L1 English composition indicate that writing is a process in which the variety of surface forms of the writing product – from rhetorical form to syntactic form - are determined less by pre-existing models than by the writer’s creative struggle with the topic at hand, then, because of the second view, the same is also true of L2 English composition (Hughey et. al., 1983). As the authors state several times, the students in an ESL writing program need to develop rhetorical patterns, but they also need to develop these patterns by themselves in answer to certain questions or problems (e.g. 1983, pp. 106-107).

The implications of these views for the *Profile’s* descriptor criteria in the five “trait” components are spelled out by Jacobs and her collaborators in their analogy of the five components as five “widows” which have five views of the same scene:

Very often what a reader sees from each window will be the same and the score awarded to each component will indicate approximately the same mastery level in all aspects of the composition, suggesting that each cog in the machinery of discourse is interacting appropriately with other elements and contributing its fair share to the smooth efficient operation of the communication process... In any case, the components should be evaluated only for their contribution to the total communicative effect... Given this role for the component scales, readers should not regard them as independent or even readily identifiable parts or pieces of a composition.

(1981, p. 32)

4. THE NEED OF THE TEXT SKILLS WRITING COURSE FOR A MODIFIED *PROFILE* WRITING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Ever since adopting the *ESL Composition Profile* for the writing component of the Text Skills (TS) course, IUJ's full-time TS instructors have appreciated its merits, but have also felt uneasy about the overlapping of its "trait" component descriptor criteria, especially the descriptor criteria for the *content* and *organization* components. The source of this unease lies in an approach to writing pedagogy which is significantly different from the principles of composition which underlie the *ESL Composition Profile*. The full-time EFL faculty at IUJ face the dilemma that the pedagogical approach they feel is appropriate for the students enrolled in TS classes lacks a good dedicated assessment instrument available in the public domain. They feel that they lack the technical expertise and the resources needed to develop from scratch such a dedicated assessment instrument, so they have opted instead to modify a well-known and well-developed assessment instrument which belongs to a different approach.

A close examination of the variance between the two approaches to composition should help to answer two questions: (1) whether the unease of full-time TS instructors with the relative lack of separation of the "trait" component descriptor criteria is justified, and (2) if this unease is justified, what sorts of modifications to the "trait" component descriptor criteria should, in principle, make the *Profile* more consistent with the characteristics of the Text Skills course. The answer to this second question will serve as a yardstick against which the author will measure the limited modifications of the descriptor criteria which the TS instructors attempted during the course of the 1998 Intensive English Program at IUJ. First, however, an explanation is in order as to why the TS designers chose an approach to the teaching of academic English writing which raises this significant assessment issue

4.1. Reasons for The "Current-Traditional Rhetoric" Approach in the Text Skills course

The TS writing syllabus which emerged in 1997 and crystalized in 1998 has been aligned towards a "current-traditional rhetoric" approach (Silva, 1990). The reasons for this choice of approach derive from the needs of the students who are enrolled in the TS course. The two most important of these needs are the students own L2 English writing needs and the need for both instructors and students to work within fairly severe time constraints.

Neither the Japanese nor the Indonesian students who represent over 90% of the students enrolled in the TS courses have much experience in writing English for academic purposes. Research also indicates that Japanese students do not receive much explicit Japanese writing instruction *at the discourse level* during the course of their L1 education (Mok, 1993; Yamada, 1993; Hattori et al, 1990; Hinds, 1987). The situation in Indonesia is unclear, but it appears from our Indonesian student informants that explicit writing instruction *at the discourse level* in Indonesia is not as systematic as, say, it is in freshman composition courses in the USA. In addition, all of our students have moderate to severe needs to improve their knowledge and use of English lexis and syntax. The overall average TOEFL score of incoming TS students in 1997 and 1998, for example, was 529 in the range 440 to 610.

The time constraints on instructors and students are fairly severe. The students who enroll in all the English courses available during their first year of study can expect to receive about 60-70 hours of classroom writing instruction, of which they will receive about 35-40 hours during the IEP. Individual writing tutorials may add another ten hours to this total. This amount of instructional time is modest in relation to the challenges the students face in trying to deal with the writing demands of their English-medium graduate level studies in either international business or international relations.

A course of writing instruction based on "current-traditional rhetoric" approach helps TS students in two ways. The first way it helps is by focusing the students' attention on cross-cultural variations in rhetorical forms (Kaplan, 1988) and/or in the writer-reader relationship (Hinds, 1987). As Mok (1993, 152-154) points out, the Japanese rhetorical patterns to which Japanese students are exposed through the reading of Japanese texts tend to be different from the linear-hierarchical forms which predominate in academic English. The need for speed in TS mandates an approach which allows for early and explicit identification of the academic English rhetorical norms and, in some cases at least, for contrast of these L2 norms with whatever L1 norms the students are familiar with. The second way it helps students is by offering a clear and relatively simple prescriptive guide to many of the minimum organizational requirements of academic English writing. "In short," as Silva emphasizes,

... from the perspective of ... current-traditional rhetoric, writing is basically a matter of arrangement of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns.

(1990, p. 14)

The choice of writing textbook, *Writing Academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991) and the choice of classroom activities for TS 98 reflected this prescriptive approach to the organization of academic English writing.

4.2. Implications of “Current-Traditional Rhetoric” for L2 English Writing Assessment

For Kaplan, the key implication for L2 writing teaching and assessment of a concern with the cross-cultural variability of rhetorical forms is the need to regard “good” textual structure and grammatical correctness as quite separate constructs since his analysis of text leads to the conclusion that the former represents a cultural variable and the latter represents a linguistic variable (1989). If this analysis is correct, the separability of the two types of variable becomes clear when it is realized that notions of “good” text structure can vary in accordance with specialized professional genre norms as well as with national literary or academic norms. In Kaplan’s view, both textual coherence – the successful realization of a structure of idea relationships – and textual cohesion – the grammatical and/or lexical links between the different elements of a text – should be typed as elements of culturally variable rhetorical forms and should be wholly differentiated from purely *grammatical* elements, which belong to fixed linguistic systems (1989). Apart from the concern with the separation of rhetorical form from the elements of composition which are typed as purely linguistic, Kaplan and others who share his views about “contrastive rhetoric” appear to be neutral with regard to the relationships among other assessment constructs such as “content”, “language use” and “vocabulary” (e.g., Connor & Kaplan, 1987).

4.3. Implications of “Current-Traditional Rhetoric” for Text Skills Writing Assessment

This analysis indicates that, if Kaplan and others are correct about the significance of “contrastive rhetoric”, the answer to the first question posed above is that the unease of full-time TS instructors with the relative lack of separation of the “trait” component descriptor criteria is justified to some extent. With the same proviso, we can also state that the answer to the second question is that any modifications to the “trait” component descriptor criteria should focus primarily on the *organization* component. Modifications to the other component descriptor criteria are justified to the extent that they eliminate overlaps with descriptor criteria which appear in the *organization* component. More specifically, we can state that the *organization* component should be structured in accordance with the principle of a construct of English academic rhetoric which embraces both the attributes of textual coherence and of textual cohesion. On the other hand, the question of the proper relationship

among other descriptor criteria in the “trait” components is not one to which this theory of L2 composition has an answer.

This answer to the second question permits an attempt at an evaluation of the limited modification of the descriptor criteria which the TS instructors initiated in 1998. This modification represented an attempt to create a clear separation between the *content* and *organization* components of the *Profile*. Since the intended audience for the modified criteria included the students as well as the instructors the modification was not developed in great detail. Figure 1 shows the document which emerged from a series of discussions among the TS instructors.

Figure 1

1998 TS Content & Organization Checklist

Content Selection & Development

- Relevance to the topic**
- Depth and sophistication**
- Length (according to specified range)**
- Appropriate balance (among paragraphs)**

Organization

- Introductory paragraph**
 - **Background**
 - **Thesis statement**
 - Body paragraphs**
 - **Topic sentences**
 - **Supporting sentences (ideas and examples)**
 - Concluding paragraph**
 - Coherence**
 - **Linkers between paragraphs & between sentences**
-

This presentation of the descriptor criteria has three merits for a “current-traditional rhetoric” approach to composition:

- (1) there is no overlap between the descriptor criteria in the two components;
- (2) the descriptor criteria in the *organization* component relate to English academic rhetorical form;
- (3) several elements of textual coherence are specified in the *organization* component

This modification of the descriptor criteria, however, will require further development if it is to result in a new writing assessment instrument which conforms fully to the “current-traditional rhetoric” approach to composition. There are two main suggestions.

- (a) TS designers should seriously consider developing a whole *organization* sub-component which comprises significant elements of textual cohesion – these elements are not present in Figure 1.
- (b) They should consider modifying the *vocabulary* and *language use* components so that the elements of textual cohesion which belong to the *organization* component are deleted from these two “linguistic” constructs.

4.4. The Internal Consistency of the Modified *Profile*

Beyond paying attention to the rationale underlying the “current-traditional rhetoric” approach, TS designers might also want to improve the internal consistency of the modified *Profile*. This would mainly involve restructuring the *vocabulary* and *language use* components so that they exhibit greater separation. Leaving these two components in a condition in which the two sets of descriptor criteria were not clearly separated would result in a modified *Profile* which lacked internal consistency, with two components clearly differentiated and two components not fully differentiated. If this proves to be difficult or to result in somewhat artificial or rigid definitions of *vocabulary* and *language use* one available solution would be simply to merge the two components into a combined *vocabulary and language use* component. Whatever the decision regarding these two components, the objective should be to develop “trait” components which are consistent with a “current-traditional rhetoric” approach and with each other.

5. CONCLUSION

This investigation has shown that, in terms of the L2 English composition theory which underlies their writing course design - “current-traditional rhetoric” approach - , the TS designers are justified in their feelings that they need a writing assessment instrument which designs in greater separation between the *organization* “trait” component and the other “trait” components than is the case for the “trait” components of the *ESL Composition Profile*. The investigation has also shown that the “current-traditional rhetoric” approach offers some clear prescriptions for a re-design of the *organization* component and, to a much lesser extent, for

the vocabulary and language use components of the "trait" rating scale in the *ESL Composition Profile*. On the other hand, the investigation also reveals that this theory of L2 English composition offers no clear answers to questions about either the separability of the *vocabulary* and *language use* components or the detailed descriptor criteria which should belong in them. Another limitation of this study is the lack of empirical data which could help to answer the question as to whether the modified version(s) of the *Profile* does in practice function in the way it is intended to function.

It is therefore suggested that future investigative work should focus on two areas.

- (1) A review of research into the validity of the traditional linguistic constructs, "grammar" and "vocabulary" may help TS designers to find answers to questions about the proper re-design of the *vocabulary* and *language use* "trait" components.
- (2) A precise statistical analysis of the rating outcomes generated by the modified version(s) of the *Profile* could provide useful feedback on the practical effectiveness of the re-design efforts. The developers of the *ESL Composition Profile* have compiled a fairly comprehensive set of statistical data about the *Profile*; this may enable useful comparisons with a similar set of data for modified versions of the *Profile* in use at IUJ.

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Appendix 1
ESL Composition Profile
 (Source: Jacobs et. al., 1981, 101)

ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE			
STUDENT	DATE	TOPIC	
SCORE	LEVEL	CRITERIA	COMMENTS
CONTENT	30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic	
	26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
	21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic	
	16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate	
ORGANIZATION	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/supported • succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive	
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing	
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development	
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate	
VOCABULARY	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register	
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage <i>but meaning not obscured</i>	
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage • <i>meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form • OR not enough to evaluate	
LANGUAGE USE	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions	
	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions <i>but meaning seldom obscured</i>	
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions <i>and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	10-5	VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate	
MECHANICS	5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing	
	4	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing <i>but meaning not obscured</i>	
	3	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • <i>meaning confused or obscured</i>	
	2	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate	
TOTAL SCORE	READER	COMMENTS	

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Appendix 2
The Detailed Descriptors of the Four Main Horizontal "Trait" Components of the ESL
Composition Profile
(Source: Jacobs et. al., 1981, 92-96)

Content

Descriptor	Criteria
Knowledgeable	Is there an understanding of the subject? Are facts or other pertinent information used? Is there recognition of several aspects of the subject? Are the interrelationships of those aspects shown?
Substantive	Are several main points discussed? Is there sufficient detail? Is there originality with concrete details to illustrate, define, compare, or contrast factual information supporting the thesis?
Thorough development of thesis	Is the thesis expanded enough to convey a sense of completeness? Is there a specific method of development (such as comparison/contrast, illustration, definition, example, description, fact, or personal experience?) Is there an awareness of different points of view?
Relevant to assigned topic	Is all information clearly pertinent to the topic? Is extraneous material excluded?

Organization

Descriptor	Criteria
Fluent expression	Do the ideas flow, building on one another? Are there introductory and concluding paragraphs? Are there effective transition elements – words, phrases or sentences - which link and move ideas both within and between paragraphs?
Ideas clearly stated/supported	Is there a clearly stated controlling idea or central focus (a thesis) to the paper? Do topic sentences in each paragraph support, limit, and direct the thesis?
Succinct	Are all ideas directed concisely to the central focus of the paper, without digressions?
Well-organized	Is the overall relationship of ideas within and between paragraphs clearly indicated? Is there a beginning, middle and an end to the paper?
Logical sequencing	Are the points logically developed, using a particular sequence such as time order, space order or importance? Is this development indicated by appropriate transitional markers?
Cohesive	Does each paragraph reflect a single purpose? Do the paragraphs form a unified paper?

Appendix 2 (continued)

Vocabulary

Descriptor	Criteria
Sophisticated range	Is there facility with words and idioms to: convey intended information, attitudes, feelings? distinguish subtleties among ideas and intentions? convey shades and differences of meaning? express the logic of ideas? Is the arrangement and interrelationship of words sufficiently varied?
Effective word/idiom choice and usage	In the context in which it is used, is the choice of vocabulary accurate? idiomatic? effective? concise? Are strong, active verbs and verbals used where possible? Does word placement give the intended message? emphasis? Is there an understanding of synonyms? antonyms? homonyms? Are denotative and connotative meanings distinguished? Is there effective repetition of key words and phrases? Do transition elements mark shifts in thought? pace? emphasis? tone?
Word form mastery	Are prefixes, suffixes, roots, and compounds used accurately and effectively? Are words correctly distinguished as to their function (adjective, adverb, noun, verb)?
Appropriate register	Is the vocabulary appropriate to the topic? to the audience? to the tone of the paper? to the method of development? Is the vocabulary familiar to the audience? Does the vocabulary make the intended impression?

Language Use

Descriptor	Criteria
Effective complex	Are sentences well-formed and complete, with appropriate complements? Are single-word modifiers appropriate to function? properly formed, placed, and sequenced? Are phrases and clauses appropriate to function? complete? properly placed? Are introductory <i>It</i> and <i>There</i> used correctly to begin sentences and clauses? Are main and subordinate ideas carefully distinguished? Are coordinate and subordinate elements linked to other elements with appropriate conjunctions, adverbials, relative pronouns, or punctuation? Are sentence types and length varied? Are elements parallel? Are techniques of substitute, repetition, and deletion used effectively?
Agreement	Is there basic agreement between sentence elements: auxiliary-verb? subject-verb? pronoun-antecedent? adjective-noun? nouns -quantifiers?
Tense	Are verb tenses correct? properly sequenced? Do modals convey intended meaning? time?
Number	Do nouns, pronouns, and verbs convey intended quantity?
Word order/function	Is normal word order followed except for special emphasis? Is each word, phrase, and clause suited to its intended function?
Articles	Are <i>a</i> , <i>an</i> , and <i>the</i> used correctly?
Pronouns	Do pronouns reflect appropriate person? gender? number? function? referent?
Prepositions	Are prepositions chosen carefully to introduce modifying elements? Is the intended meaning conveyed?