

Analysis of English Textbooks and Natural Speech  
— Using Functions and Function-chains —

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1. Introduction

Widdowson (1978:22) argues that 'normal linguistic behaviour does not consist in the production of separate sentences but in the use of sentences for the creation of *discourse*.' The purpose of this study is to investigate the 'patterns of discourse development' (Widdowson, 1978: 53) and 'create systematic speaking skills programmes ... that will generate output as close as possible to naturally occurring talk' (McCarthy, 1991:144-45).

First of all, in Section 2, the author will show the results of her investigation into the distribution of functions, comparing the junior high school English textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education with natural speech. Although a lot of research into the distribution of functions in English textbooks has been carried out, little examination of function-chains has taken place. In Section 3, therefore, the author would like to show the results of her investigation into function-chains in junior high school English textbooks and natural speech.

2. Investigation into the distribution of functions

—Comparing English textbooks and natural speech—

To begin with, the author will examine the distribution of functions. The author studied the authorized junior high school English textbooks which were published in 1997, and also studied, as an example of natural speech, *The Good Life* (BBC, 1975). The author's concern is to examine functions that are distinctive features of natural speech compared with those in the textbooks.

As for the list of functions, in this study the author basically referred to the list in *Function in English* (Blundell, et al., 1982). Functional areas occurring in Blundell, et al. (1982) are as follows —  
Section 1: Main functions (Function number 1-93 [About information: 1-12, About attitudes: 13-60, About action: 61-93]), Section 2: Social formulas

(Function number 94-124), Section 3: Making communication work (Function number 125-135), Section 4: Finding out about language (Function number 136-140). In this paper, the author would like to focus attention on the functional areas expressing attitudes, which will promote students' power of expression.

The author investigated all the dialogues in the textbooks (including the target sentences, practices, the dialogues in the reading matter and all other information presented). As for practices, the author selected all the patterns presented for practice, and examined them. The purpose of this investigation is to extract the patterns of the interaction between the speakers. Therefore, the author is not concerned here with a single speech-act. When a single utterance has more than one function, it is classified into every relevant function category.

Below is a list of functions from Blundell, et al. (1982) which the author used for classification.

List 1: List of functions expressing attitudes

- 13 Asking if someone is sure about something
- 14 Saying you are sure
- 15 Saying what you think is possible or probable
- 16 Saying you are not sure
- 17 Saying what you think is improbable or impossible
- 18 Talking about what might happen
- 19 Asking how someone feels before something happens
- 20 Saying you are curious
- 21 Saying what you hope will happen
- 22 Saying what you want
- 23 Saying you are looking forward to something
- 24 Saying you are optimistic
- 25 Saying you are pessimistic
- 26 Saying you are worried or afraid
- 27 Asking how someone feels after something happens
- 28 Expressing surprise
- 29 Saying you are pleased
- 30 Saying you are displeased or angry
- 31 Saying you are relieved
- 32 Saying you are disappointed
- 33 Saying you are excited

- 34 Saying you are bored
- 35 Calming or reassuring
- 36 Asking about likes
- 37 Expressing likes
- 38 Expressing dislikes
- 39 Asking about preference
- 40 Saying what you prefer
- 41 Asking if someone approves
- 42 Saying you approve
- 43 Saying you do not approve
- 44 Comparing
- 45 Saying something is not important
- 46 Asking for someone's opinion
- 47 Giving your opinion
- 48 Saying you have no opinion
- 49 Avoiding giving an opinion
- ※50 Trying to change someone's opinion (including arguing back)
- 51 Asking if someone is interested
- 52 Saying you are interested
- 53 Saying you are not interested
- 54 Giving reasons
- 55 Asking if someone agrees
- 56 Agreeing
- 57 Disagreeing
- 58 Saying you partly agree
- 59 Saying you are wrong and someone else is right
- 60 Saying you have reached agreement
- ※A- 1 Asking about possibility or probability
- ※A- 2 Saying how you feel before something happens  
(explaining your condition)
- ※A- 3 Expressing sadness
- ※A- 4 Saying how you feel after something has happened
- ※A- 5 Asking for reasons
- ※A- 6 Asking if someone acknowledges something
- ※A- 7 Acknowledging something
- ※A- 8 Acknowledging something for the present
- ※A- 9 Blaming someone
- ※A-10 Making an excuse (including explaining the details)
- ※A-11 Justifying oneself

- ※A-12 Pleading for someone
- ※A-13 Covering up a fact
- ※A-14 Disclosing a fact
- ※A-15 Hesitating to say
- ※A-16 Demeaning oneself
- ※A-17 Blaming oneself
- ※A-18 Being sarcastic about something
- ※A-19 Despising something (someone)
- ※A-20 Saying something that you don't mean

※50 : The function that the author added partially to the original one

※A-1~※A-20: The functions that the author added entirely to the original list

Below is the distribution of functions expressing attitudes in the English textbooks and natural speech.

Table 1: The distribution of functions expressing attitudes

	Book1	Book2	Book3	Books1~3	BBC
13	2	0	0	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.8%)
14	2	2	0	4 (1.0%)	3 (2.3%)
15	4	10	8	22 (5.7%)	1 (0.8%)
16	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
17	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
18	0	3	0	3 (0.8%)	2 (1.6%)
19	2	2	0	4 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
20	9	5	3	17 (4.4%)	1 (0.8%)
21	0	1	1	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.8%)
22	5	2	7	14 (3.7%)	3 (2.3%)
☆23	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
24	2	0	0	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
25	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	3 (2.3%)
26	0	5	0	5 (1.3%)	3 (2.3%)
27	1	1	3	5 (1.3%)	1 (0.8%)
28	18	9	4	31 (8.1%)	5 (3.9%)

	Book1	Book2	Book3	Books1~3	BBC
29	2	18	4	24 (6.3%)	3 (2.3%)
30	0	1	1	2 (0.5%)	5 (3.9%)
31	0	0	2	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
32	1	1	1	3 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)
33	0	11	5	16 (4.2%)	2 (1.6%)
34	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
35	2	2	3	<u>7 (1.8%)</u>	<u>12 (9.4%)</u>
36	4	2	2	8 (2.1%)	1 (0.8%)
37	7	4	2	13 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)
38	1	0	3	4 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
39	5	2	0	7 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)
40	5	3	1	9 (2.3%)	1 (0.8%)
41	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
42	0	11	2	13 (3.4%)	5 (3.9%)
43	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
44	0	23	3	26 (6.8%)	0 (0.0%)
☆45	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
46	0	6	3	9 (2.3%)	1 (0.8%)
47	0	9	11	20 (5.2%)	3 (2.3%)
☆48	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
49	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	2 (1.6%)
50	1	6	10	17 (4.4%)	6 (4.7%)
☆51	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
52	1	0	3	4 (1.0%)	1 (0.8%)
☆53	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
54	1	10	4	15 (3.9%)	5 (3.9%)
☆55	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)
56	1	3	3	7 (1.8%)	7 (5.5%)
57	0	1	1	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.8%)
58	0	4	1	5 (1.3%)	3 (2.3%)
59	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
60	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
A- 1	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
A- 2	2	0	0	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
A- 3	0	2	3	5 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)

	Book1	Book2	Book3	Books1~3	BBC
A- 4	1	5	10	16 (4.2%)	1 (0.8%)
A- 5	2	7	4	13 (3.4%)	2 (1.6%)
A- 6	0	0	2	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
A- 7	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.8%)
A- 8	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
A- 9	1	3	0	<u>4 (1.0%)</u>	<u>8 (6.3%)</u>
A-10	0	1	1	2 (0.5%)	2 (1.6%)
☆A-11	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)
☆A-12	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)
A-13	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
A-14	0	1	0	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
☆A-15	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)
A-16	0	0	1	1 (0.3%)	2 (1.6%)
☆A-17	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)
☆A-18	0	0	0	<u>0 (0.0%)</u>	<u>10 (7.8%)</u>
☆A-19	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.1%)
☆A-20	0	0	0	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.6%)

( ) : Percentage of each function in the area of attitudes  
rounded to the nearest 0.1 %

☆ : Functions that are not in the English textbooks

underline: Functions that are distinctive features of natural speech

Further, the author would like to examine the functions that make communication work. This is what Blundell et al. have to say on the matter: "Another purpose we may have in speaking is to *help communication* rather than to communicate actual ideas, feelings, etc. themselves. That is to say we may keep a conversation going ('Really! ...Oh!...I see!...Mmm...Aha!...'), check we have understood something, repeat something, say something another way, give examples of what we mean, change the subject and so on. The purpose of the speaker here is to make communication possible rather than to communicate something for its own sake" (Blundell et al, 1982:xvii). There is a suggestion in Blundell's argument that it will become possible to generate output close to natural speech when we pay more attention to the functions that make communication work. Thus, the author investigated the functions

that make communication work in the English textbooks and natural speech.

Below is a list of functions from Blundell, et al. (1982) which the author used for classification.

List 2: List of functions that make communication work

- 125 Asking someone to say something again
- 126 Checking that you have understood
- 127 Checking that someone has understood you
- 128 Saying something again
- 129 Saying something in another way
- 130 Giving an example
- 131 Showing you are listening
- 132 Taking up a point
- 133 Giving yourself time to think
- 134 Changing the subject
- 135 Summing up
- ※M- 1 Saying you understand
- ※M- 2 Saying you have become aware of something (someone)
- ※M- 3 Pressing someone for an utterance
- ※M- 4 Putting in a few words to help a person
- ※M- 5 Stopping someone from speaking
- ※M- 6 Trying to continue a conversation
- ※M- 7 Repeating another's words
- ※M- 8 Making a reply
- ※M- 9 Asking back
- ※M-10 Talking to oneself

※ : The functions that the author added to the original list

Below is the distribution of functions that make communication work in English textbooks and natural speech.

Table 2: The distribution of functions that make communication work

	Book1	Book2	Book3	Books1~3	BBC
125	1	0	0	1 ( 0.8%)	0 ( 0.0%)
126	0	0	1	1 ( 0.8%)	3 ( 3.4%)

	Book1	Book2	Book3	Books1~3	BBC
☆ 127	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	0 ( 0.0%)
128	1	0	1	2 ( 1.5%)	0 ( 0.0%)
129	0	0	1	1 ( 0.8%)	6 ( 6.7%)
130	0	2	1	3 ( 2.3%)	3 ( 3.4%)
★ 131	4	10	4	18 (13.5%)	14 (15.7%)
☆ 132	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	0 ( 0.0%)
★ 133	0	10	7	17 (12.8%)	26 (29.2%)
134	0	0	2	2 ( 1.5%)	3 ( 3.4%)
☆ 135	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	1 ( 1.1%)
M- 1	0	13	3	16 (12.0%)	7 ( 7.9%)
M- 2	3	11	19	33 (24.8%)	4 ( 4.5%)
☆ M- 3	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	7 ( 7.9%)
☆ M- 4	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	4 ( 4.5%)
☆ M- 5	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	3 ( 3.4%)
☆ M- 6	0	0	0	0 ( 0.0%)	2 ( 2.2%)
M- 7	2	0	0	2 ( 1.5%)	3 ( 3.4%)
M- 8	1	0	0	1 ( 0.8%)	0 ( 0.0%)
M- 9	8	3	20	31 (23.3%)	3 ( 3.4%)
M-10	5	0	0	5 ( 3.8%)	0 ( 0.0%)

( ) : Percentage of each function in the area of making communication work rounded to the nearest 0.1 %

☆ : Functions that are not in the English textbooks

★ : Functions that are distributed at large both in the English textbooks and natural speech

### 3. Investigation into function-chains

In this section, the author would like to investigate function-chains in English textbooks and natural speech. The author investigated the distribution of the function-chains (the frequency and the location) in the English textbooks and the BBC screenplay.

Below is an excerpt of the list of function-chains expressing attitudes, which the author extracted from the English textbooks and the natural speech. The serial number below is from Blundell, et al. (1982).



Figure 1: Example of the pattern: function 13 to function 14

Speaker	Actual Utterance	Function
Speaker A	Is it really safe?	13 (Asking if someone is sure)
		↓
Speaker B	Yes, of course.	14 (Saying you are sure)

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, the distribution of functions and function-chains was investigated, comparing English textbooks with natural speech. In the light of this investigation, it is clear that there are various kinds of functions and function-chains not only in natural speech but also in the English textbooks. In section 3, the author has presented a programme (Figure) that will be helpful to learners and teachers. The future direction of this study will be to investigate students' performance on the communication patterns shown in section 3. And the author would like to continue comparing the English textbooks with more examples of natural speech. From the other examples the author hopes to extract more communication models.

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