Analyses of Native English Speakers' Performative Data to Produce Instructional Materials for Communication Strategies

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1　Introduction

The present study is one of my preliminary studies on communication strategies (CS), whose central focus is placed on the teachability of CS, i.e., whether CS-based instruction helps second language (L2) learners enhance their communicative competence as a result of the development in their strategic competence to make up for their linguistic deficits.　Despite CS researchers' endeavors to obtain affirmative evidence for the teachability of CS, past empirical studies have some problems as discussed further below.　One of them is concerned with the teaching materials used in these studies.　On the basis of descriptive data collected from 454 native speakers (NS) of English, the present study mainly reports findings obtained from analyses of the collected data, which is followed, in the last section, by a brief discussion regarding the requisites to settle the pedagogical issue.

2　The teachability issue of CS and its problems

One of the important missions of applied linguistics is to produce teaching materials for L2 learners.　Such production of L2 materials should reflect not only L2 practitioners' intuitions or teaching experiences but also empirical evidence from L2 studies that justify the appropriateness of the adopted method or introduced items.

This orthodox production process appears not to be fully taken into account in creating CS teaching materials because available CS-based textbooks (e.g., Dörnyei & Thurrell 1992, Kenny & Woo 2000) have become public before CS studies succeeded in affirming teaching effects of CS.　One may claim that benefits of CS instruction have been proved by some researchers (e.g., Dörnyei 1995) and, therefore, the teachability of CS is a settled issue.　Against such an optimistic view, I pointed out, in my previous studies (Iwai 2000a, 2001), three methodological and theoretical problems of the past empirical CS studies dealing with this issue.　I also argued, citing some negative

perspectives on CS training (e.g., Bialistok 1990 and Kellerman 1991) and the output hypothesis by Swain (1996), that it is necessary to show how CS instruction develops L2 learners' linguistic competence including well-formedness in their linguistic productions before concluding that CS training brings desirable effects.

One more problem I would like to add in this study is that the teaching materials used in the past empirical studies on CS teachability solely consisted of L2 learning tasks which the researchers of these studies assumed to enhance L2 learners' strategic use of the target language. However, since these studies do not clarify the relation between linguistic items taught and items learned, we cannot judge whether the materials used were appropriate and to what extent they contributed to the development of L2 learners' linguistic competence in addition to their strategic competence.

To compensate for the shortcomings of the past empirical studies on CS instruction, Konishi's studies (1994, 2001) are unique and, thus, worth referring to. In these studies, Konishi attempted to find syntactic, semantic, and lexical patterns in paraphrased expressions, from which he expects that we can generalize pedagogical norms to introduce CS-based instruction into L2 classes. The findings of his studies are based on the fundamental data that were obtained from the definitions of 2,000 words in Longman Active Study Dictionary of English (Konishi 1994) and from oral interviews given to 30 American NS regarding 17 lexical items (Konishi 2001). The analyses of his studies are exhaustive and conducted appropriately; however, it is not clear to what extent the dictionary data reflect the actual language use. In addition, the oral data from 30 NS appears not to be large enough to generalize the findings.

Modeled on Konishi's CS studies, the present study was planned to advance his studies by examining a larger amount of NS performative data that could eventually be used in producing teaching materials for future studies on CS instructional effects.

3 Data collection method

One of the most unavoidable obstacles to collecting a sizable amount of English NS data in Japan, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), is the impracticality involved in finding an adequate number of NS informants. The advent of the Internet, however, has brought us a methodological revolution to overcome this EFL restriction. Compared with authentic data elicitation, it still has some limitations; however, it has a great potential to facilitate our empirical data collection.

Thus, it was decided to make use of this modern invention in collecting data for

this study. Prior to the actual survey, four sets of a data collection web site were prepared in an ordinary personal computer with the Windows operating system. Each set had three pages that were linked to each other. The first page was a greetings page, which was followed by a page consisting of questions regarding respondents' background information (e.g., first language background, L2 learning experiences, age, and gender) and by a main page, where a total of ten words (some were displayed by a photo image) were listed vertically with two horizontal open spaces for each word in which to type responses. Thus, the total number of words investigated in this study was 40 (10 words x 4 sets).[1]

These words were selected from the CS studies by Chen (1990), Iwai (2000b), and Konishi (2001), and they were classified into the following five categories: persons, materials, living creatures, tools, and abstract nouns (2 words each for one set).[2] The main task on the prepared web sites was to describe each target item in comprehensible English words for non-native English speakers at a lower level.

In the actual survey, it was intended to gather responses from at least 100 NS for each set. Participants were randomly recruited first by looking for e-mail addresses on the Internet and then by sending a request e-mail message for cooperation with this study individually until the intended goal was achieved. As a result, the message was sent to approximately 3,500 people in the world, most of them living in English speaking countries such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia, and responses were returned by 504 people including 454 NS (approximately 100 for each set) and 50 non-native English speakers. Since its purpose was to collect NS performative data, this study examines only the NS responses. Table 1 summarizes the lexical items investigated and the total number of respondents to each set and to each item.[3]

Table 1: Summary of task words and the numbers of responses

Set	N	Persons	N	Materials	N	Creatures	N	Tools	N
Set 1	102	accountant	102	linen	101	rhinoceros	101	barber pole	89
		caretaker	102	oak	100	cicada	95	bubble wrap	47
Set 2	99	MC	97	mercury	87	ostrich	97	bookmark	57
		go-between	97	dough	96	ladybug	96	latch	42
Set 3	136	dermatologist	135	cardboard	133	centipede	132	coffee filter	90
		smuggler	133	velvet	132	lizard	131	connection cable	54
Set 4	117	realtor	111	plaster	111	mantis	112	multiple socket	107
		usher	115	brass	111	weasel	110	bag clip	65
Total Responses			892		871		874		551
Valid responses (%)			98.2		95.9		96.3		60.7

N.B.: N next to the set number shows the number of respondents from whom answers were returned.
N next to each task word represents the number of valid respondents (i.e., the answer space was filled).

4 Analyses and results

The analyses in this section were carried out in reference to Konishi's studies

cited above. Although his recent study (2001) shows the results of semantic analysis in terms of functions and attributes of the target items, the present study does not demonstrate the results of this type of analysis due to space restrictions. Instead, the focus of analysis is placed on syntactic and lexical features of the responses. Furthermore, it should be noticed that the investigation of the responses was limited to the first one or two sentences of the whole response in each descriptive task.[4] This was due to a practical reason that some generous participants wrote extremely long responses, some of which consisted of more than 200 words in over 10 sentences.

4.1 Syntactic structures

From both the dictionary-based study (1994) and the NS performative study (2001), Konishi showed that the majority of the definitions or descriptions of the investigated lexical items contained superordinate terms (head nouns in this study), which were commonly preceded by premodifying (PrM) components and followed by postmodifying (PoM) components, e.g., (A rhinoceros is) a <u>big animal</u> <u>with a horn on its nose</u> (Konishi 2001, p. 6, parentheses and underlines mine). Using his analysis frameworks, the syntactic structures of the entire responses (3,188 in total) were examined, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of syntactic structures by category

Categories	Persons			Materials			Creatures			Tools		
Syntactic structures	Freq.	%	Total	Freq.	%	Total	Freq.	%	Total	Freq.	%	Total
HN PoM	770	86.3		282	32.4		250	28.6		236	42.8	
PrM HN PoM	11	1.2	88.2	213	24.5	70.8	394	45.1	78.7	57	10.3	55.5
AP PrM HN PoM	1	0.1		33	3.8		9	1.0		3	0.5	
AP HN PoM	5	0.6		89	10.2		35	4.0		10	1.8	
HN CL	8	0.9		16	1.8		16	1.8		97	17.6	
PrM HN CL	1	0.1	1.2	17	2.0	7.5	26	3.0	5.7	5	0.9	19.1
AP PrM HN CL	0	0.0		8	0.9		3	0.3		1	0.2	
AP HN CL	2	0.2		24	2.8		5	0.6		2	0.4	
HN	22	2.5		35	4.0		41	4.7		39	7.1	
PrM HN	29	3.3	5.8	73	8.4	17.2	69	7.9	15.0	5	0.9	8.0
AP PrM HN	0	0.0		13	1.5		3	0.3		0	0.0	
AP HN	1	0.1		29	3.3		18	2.1		0	0.0	
Others	42	4.7	4.7	39	4.5	4.5	5	0.6	0.6	96	17.4	17.4
Total	892	100.0	100.0	871	100.0	100.0	874	100.0	100.0	551	100.0	100.0

N.B.: Ap=formulaic expressions for approximation (see Section 4.2.2 for details), PrM=premodifying components, HN=head nouns, PoM=postmodifying components, CL=independent clauses adding information on head nouns.

These results are comparable with the results in Konishi's studies. In his studies, the dominant syntactic structure PrM + HN + PoM was used in 93.30% of the dictionary definitions (Konishi 1994, p. 70) and 57.74% of the NS responses (Konishi 2001, p. 8). The results in this study fell between these two extremes, ranging from 88.2% (persons) to 55.5% (tools), about a 70% average as a whole. The difference between his studies and the present study could be attributable to the difference of the

data elicitation methods. That is, the dictionary method is the most formal and, thus, resulted in dominant occurrences of a relatively fixed structure; while the written responses in this study, whose formality level falls between those of the two methods in his studies, led to fewer occurrences of this structure than the dictionary study but more than the study of oral performance.

The structures of PrM components are simple. Most of them are composed of adjectives or adjectival phrases with or without an intensifier (e.g., very, really) and a formulaic expression to approximate the target item (e.g., a kind of, a sort of). Since these are lexical features rather than syntactic ones, PrM components will be discussed in Section 4.2.

Table 3: Summary of postmodification structures by category

Category		Persons		Materials		Creatures		Tools	
Main structures	PoM structures	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Prepositional	preposition	36	4.0	103	11.8	292	33.4	56	10.2
Participial	-ing	9	1.0	0	0.0	4	0.5	2	0.4
	pp	3	0.3	191	21.9	47	5.4	86	15.6
	infinitive	1	0.1	5	0.6	1	0.1	30	5.4
Relative clause	that	31	3.5	176	20.2	241	27.5	62	11.3
	who	678	76.0	0	0.0	6	0.7	0	0.0
	which	0	0.0	43	4.9	41	4.7	15	2.7
	prep + which	0	0.0	3	0.3	0	0.0	3	0.5
	whose	14	1.6	2	0.2	6	0.7	0	0.0
	where	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.9
	no relative pronoun	1	0.1	20	2.3	8	0.9	14	2.5
	what	0	0.0	27	3.1	0	0.0	2	0.4
Appositional phrase	appositional adj	5	0.6	23	2.6	26	3.0	0	0.0
	appositional NP	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0
	restatement	9	1.0	19	2.2	15	1.7	29	5.3
Others	additional clause	11	1.2	66	7.6	50	5.7	105	19.1
	approximation	52	5.8	149	17.1	130	14.9	45	8.2
	no head noun	22	2.5	6	0.7	3	0.3	67	12.2
	giving an example	15	1.7	23	2.6	2	0.2	18	3.3
	omission of head noun	5	0.6	10	1.1	1	0.1	11	2.0
	none of above	0	0.0	5	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.2
	Total	892	100.0	871	100.0	875	100.0	551	100.0

In contrast to PrM structures, PoM components consist of a variety of syntactic structures; however, frequently used structures are restricted to a few patterns as shown in Table 3, in which the cells with more than 5% occurrences are shaded. Although the category of <persons> presents somewhat different patterns from the other three categories, three of the most common PoM structures are prepositional phrases, past participial phrases (pp), infinitive phrases, and relative clauses. Below are typical examples of the most frequently occurring PoM structures.

1) (An accountant is) a person who deals with money for a company. (Person, relative clause)

2) (Velvet is) a material for dresses and other things. (Material, prepositional phrase)

3) (Brass is) a shiny material used for trumpets and trays. (Material, participial phrase)

4) (It is) a panel to place plugs so you can get electricity. (Tool, infinitive phrase)

5) (Ladybug is) a small insect. It is red with black spots. (Creature, additional clause)

6) (A lizard is) <u>like a crocodile</u>.   (Creature, approximation)

4.2 Lexical Features

Lexical information is crucial in producing L2 materials. Its importance could be shown through the analogy of building a house: a house would be unsubstantial unless the quality of pillar and wall materials is good, no matter how firm the structure of the house is. In the same manner, utmost attention needs to be paid to the lexical entries in producing L2 materials since these materials would be of little help for L2 learners if the means of expression, i.e., lexical items, are far beyond their competence.

For this reason, the features of lexical items used in the responses were examined in detail. As a result of this analysis, several features were revealed, which will be discussed in the following order: (1) head nouns, (2) formulaic PrM expressions for approximation, and (3) adjectives used for PrM.[5]

4.2.1 Head nouns

Table 4 summarizes the frequencies of head nouns that appeared in more than 5% of the overall responses for each task item. The analysis results indicate not only that most items can be described with just a few kinds of head nouns (e.g., person, material, animal) but also that they consist of mostly basic English words, which seem to be easily learned by L2 learners.

4.2.2. Formulaic PrM expressions for approximation

One strategic solution to overcome a lexical deficit is to replace an unknown word with a familiar superordinate term that covers the attributes of the unknown word, e.g., Velvet is a kind of cloth. A substitutive means of this type has traditionally been called an approximation strategy (e.g., Tarone 1977) or a holistic strategy (e.g., Poulisse 1990) in CS studies. When this strategy is used, it often accompanies a formulaic PrM expression.   The frequencies of occurrence of such expressions were examined, and the results are summarized in Table 5.

Even though several idiomatic expressions were obtained from this analysis, there were only two expressions that were used commonly, namely, 'a kind of' and 'a sort of'.   In addition, it was noticed that the use of these formulaic expressions was far less common in the category of <persons> (only 1.1% of the entire responses) than the other three categories.

Table 4: Frequency of head nouns (HN)

Persons

Word	accountant		caretaker		MC		go-between		dermatologist		smuggler		realtor		usher	
N	102		102		97		97		135		133		111		111	
HN	person	66	person	61	person	63	person	46	doctor	109	person	54	person	65	person	74
	someone	20	someone	29	leader	16	someone	24	person	12	someone	53	someone	30	someone	32
	-		-		someone	6	-		someone	7	thief	11	-		-	
Total	86		90		85		70		128		118		95		106	
%	88.2		88.2		87.6		72.2		94.8		88.7		85.6		95.5	

Materials

Word	linen		oak		mercury		dough		cardboard		velvet		plaster		brass	
N	101		100		87		96		133		132		111		111	
HN	cloth	35	tree	77	metal	36	what	18	paper	83	material	49	material	40	metal	96
	material	16	wood	13	element	17	mixture	13	material	16	fabric	38	substance	12	-	
	fabric	12	-		material	9	bread	8	-		cloth	33	stuff	7	-	
	-		-		chemical	5	stuff	6	-		-		paste	6	-	
	-		-		-		-		-		-		something	6	-	
Total	63		90		67		45		99		120		71		96	
%	62.4		90.0		77.0		46.9		74.4		90.9		64.0		86.5	

Creatures

Word	rhinoceros		cicada		ostrich		ladybug		centipede		lizard		mantis		weasel	
N	101		95		97		96		132		131		112		110	
HN	animal	86	insect	71	bird	91	insect	50	insect	75	animal	57	insect	88	animal	70
	mammal	10	bug	10	-		bug	22	bug	20	reptile	47	bug	17	mammal	25
	-		-		-		beetle	12	creature	11	-		-		rodent	8
	-		-		-		-		animal	10	-		-		-	
	-		-		-		-		worm	7	-		-		-	
Total	96		81		91		84		123		104		105		103	
%	95.0		85.3		93.8		87.5		93.2		79.4		93.8		93.6	

Tools

Word	barber pole		bubble wrap		bookmark		latch		coffee filter		connection cable		multiple socket		bag clip	
N	89		47		57		42		90		54		107		65	
HN	(barber('s)/barbershop) pole	36	bubble wrap	20	bookmark	32	(window) handle	19	coffee filter	34	(electrical) cable	17	power strip	14	clip	12
	sign	10	material	9	string	8	(window) latch	10	container	11	wires	10	surge protector	7	this	4
	symbol	9	plastic	7	bookmarker	4	door handle	3	-		(electrical) cord	8	device	6	tie	4
	pole	8	-		ribbon	4	thing	3	-				outlet	6	-	
Total	63		36		48		35		45		35		33		20	
%	70.8		76.6		84.2		83.3		50.0		64.8		30.8		30.8	

Table 5: Summary of formulaic premodifying expressions for approximation

Category	Persons		Materials		Creatures		Tools	
N of PrM	50	%	499	%	562	%	83	%
kind of	6	12.0	83	16.6	23	4.1	6	7.2
type of	4	8.0	96	19.2	46	8.2	3	3.6
sort of	0	0.0	5	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
piece of	0	0.0	7	1.4	0	0.0	4	4.8
form of	0	0.0	4	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
group of	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
member of	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.4	0	0.0
family of	0	0.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
set of	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.4
any others	0	0.0	2	0.4	0	0.0	2	2.4
Subtotal	10	20.0	199	39.9	71	12.6	17	20.5
Overall	892	1.1	871	22.8	874	8.1	551	3.1

4.2.3 Adjectives for PrM

Adjectives modifying head nouns were isolated and their total occurrences were counted for each target item.[6] Table 6 shows the ratios of adjective use in the responses and the specific adjectives that were used in more than 5% of the entire responses.

Table 6: Summary of PrM adjectives

Persons

accountant	102	caretaker	102	MC	97	go-between	97	dermatologist	135	smuggler	133	realtor	111	usher	115
-		-		-		-	0	skin	25	-		-		-	
	2		1		1		0		31		4		2		1
	2.0		1.0		1.0		0.0		23.0		3.0		1.8		0.9

Materials

linen	101	oak	100	mercury	87	dough	96	cardboard	133	velvet	132	plaster	111	brass	111
		large	11	silver (coloured)/silvery	15	uncooked	5	thick	41	soft	63	white	20	shiny	25
				liquid	14			hard	17	smooth	12	thick	6	gold(-colored /hued/like/looking)	16
				chemical	6			stiff	17	thick	9			yellow/yellowish	9
								brown	9						
								heavy	8						
	15		34		50		18		110		115		55		67
	14.9		34.0		57.5		18.8		82.7		87.1		49.5		60.4

Creatures

rhinoceros	101	cicada	95	ostrich	97	ladybug	96	centipede	132	lizard	131	mantis	112	weasel	110
large	60	flying	11	large	56	small	51	small	19	small	37	large	12	small	48
African	18	noisy	7	big	17	red	13	long	17			green	6	furry	18
big	9	large	6	flightless	10	little	11	worm-like	6					wild	6
				African/Australian	7	orange	5								
	115		42		104		106		66		69		48		119
	113.9		44.2		107.2		110.4		50.0		52.7		42.9		108.2

Tools

barber pole	89	bubble wrap	47	bookmark	57	latch	42	coffee filter	90	connection cable	54	multiple socket	107	bag clip	65
		plastic	6		1							electric/electrical	11	plastic	26
		packing	4											small	4
	5		15		1		0		3		3		24		39
	5.6		31.9		1.8		0.0		3.3		5.6		22.4		60.0

Similar to the analysis of head nouns, we can notice that the frequently used adjectives are not numerous and that they are mostly basic adjectives which are used to describe the following features of the target items: a size or shape (e.g., large, long), a color (e.g., brown, white), a material (chemical, plastic), material nature (soft, hard,), an origin (African/Australian), or general descriptions (e.g., uncooked, worm-like, flying). Furthermore, premodifying adjectives were extremely uncommon for the items in the <persons> category. This was also the case in the <tools> category; however, it is not clear whether this was caused by the selected words or the different methods of displaying the tasks (see note 3).

5 Final remarks

As was emphasized in Section 2 of this study, the issue of CS teachability is still unsolved, and further studies are required to claim that this teaching method is superior to other conventional methods for communicative language teaching. One theoretical problem of the past CS studies is that they mainly examined how CS-oriented instruction could promote L2 learners' ability to deliver a message. Since the main function of languages is considered to be the delivery of messages, it is understandable why CS researchers were interested in this aspect of language use.

However, we should not forget that successful message delivery is an ultimate goal of L2 learning. What is missing in their studies is discussion regarding how much CS-based instruction contributes to the acquisition of linguistic competence, which motivates critics of this teaching method to reject it. To persuade these critics, we have to show evidence that L2 learners' grammatical accuracy and lexical richness, in addition to performative skills for successful message delivery, are strengthened by CS-oriented instruction,

The outcomes of this study are by no means conclusive because the purpose of this study was to seek referential NS norms to produce teaching materials for future CS studies. The responses and revealed expression patterns were so numerous that this study could not cover all of them. However, the findings from this study are being made use of in my ongoing production of CS-based materials. Based on this preliminary study, I am currently planning a primary study to investigate the pedagogical issue, which will be completed within two years from now. It is hoped that the results of this study will be helpful for students and researchers interested in CS studies and that the results of the planned empirical study will be reported in the near future.

Notes

1 Strategic solutions are applied not only to lexical problems but also to several other kinds of problems including pronunciation, discourse, and pragmatics. This study, however, concerns only lexical problems since its main purpose is to produce teaching materials targeted at EFL learners who have lexical and grammatical difficulties expressing intended concepts.

2 Abstract nouns are excluded from this study since their response patterns are numerous and, therefore, they do not fit into the space of this paper. They will be discussed in a future study.

3 The obtained responses in the category of <tools> are far fewer than the other categories. This was due to a mechanical problem that occurred unexpectedly. Each one of these items in this category was displayed visually by a photo, which was programmed to become large once it was clicked. While the survey was ongoing, however, it was noticed that this function was more machine sensitive than it was expected even though it was tested repeatedly in advance. For this reason, some respondents had difficulty identifying the displayed objects.

4 A majority of investigated sentences were, in fact, the first sentence of the responses. The second sentence was also included in the analyses only if it was a further description of a head noun in the first sentence. Furthermore, the respondents who filled out the second response space (see Section 3 about the response spaces) were not numerous (less than 10% in each one of the target item), so the secondary responses were discarded in this study.

5 The features of postmodifying components (including verb, prepositional, participial, and infinitive phrases) were also analyzed. Their features are, however, omitted in this study also due to space limitations.

6 Some adjectives were coordinated as in "*heavy, smooth, luxurious* cloth". In such a case, all the adjectives were counted separately. For this reason, the total number of adjectives of some items (e.g., rhinoceros) in Table 6 exceeds the total number of responses.

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