

2. Investigating spontaneous speech for a cross-linguistic study of interaction: Some empirical evidence in spoken narratives and task-oriented dialogues

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This presentation aims to investigate the spontaneous speech data and shows that the traditional notion of the sentence in written mode does not automatically apply to utterance units in spontaneous speech. It is clarified, especially, that sentences in dialogues are not always represented by an individual speaker but are constructed as a product of collaborative effort involving more than one participant.

We introduce three types of spontaneous speech data and give the results of analysis on referential choice and clause construction in interactive discourse. The data we analyse are (1) spoken narratives of English and Japanese collected by an experiment based on the film of *the Pear Stories* (Chafe 1980), (2) task-oriented dialogues called English and Japanese (Labelless) Map Task Corpus (MTC), and (3) another task-oriented dialogues based on a Lego block task by a pair of native Japanese speakers, by a pair of native English speakers, and by a pair of Japanese learners of English. In data (1), comparing a corpus of English and Japanese narratives, the choice and the distribution of referring expressions are investigated. In data (2), focusing on the clause constructions observed in exchanges between two participants, discourse entities can be realized by explicit referring expressions rather than by implicit referring expressions. The research also highlights a particular sentence construction in particular context, ‘conditional clause’: How are conditional clauses used in spontaneous spoken language? Data (3) is constructed for a pedagogical research purpose. The representation of joint attention and the organisation of common ground are investigated.

Our findings in data (1) are that English and Japanese narratives show interesting correlations between the referential choices of discourse entities and local coherence of utterances, but most of the entities are represented by pronouns rather than noun phrases in English, and mainly by bare nouns in Japanese. In dialogue data (2), it is clear that the chains of NPs can contribute to the topic chains as local focus of discourse in both English and Japanese. Comparing with the original MTC, the labelless map task dialogue is more complicated due to the additional task design: naming the landmark. The lack of ‘ready-made’ written labels on the maps encourages the participants to construct their own descriptions to identify entities of landmarks. This task can require more effort into the participants’ cooperation, especially at the initial stage of the dialogue. Furthermore, conditional clauses that stand alone function as instructions or mild orders. This type of instruction implicitly requires back-channels from the interlocutor. In dialogue (3), comparing the different workspace in either ‘hidden’ or ‘visible’ conditions, both participants contribute to dialogue processing by using more questions and answers in the hidden condition, and the different pairs tend to use different information structures in giving instruction.

Finally, despite the grammatical differences between the two languages, the ways of discourse development in both data sets show distinctive similarities in the process by which the topic entities are introduced, established, and shifted away to the subsequent topic entities.