

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 11th International Pragmatics Conference

Reported by Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska

The 11th International Pragmatics Conference 2009 was held July 12-17 at the University of Melbourne in Australia, sponsored by the International Pragmatics Association. There were many interesting papers. In this report, I will introduce some of the presentations given by the Pragmatics SIG officers (alphabetical order).

In what way do age factors influence the development of pragmatic competence?

Kawate-Mierzejewska, Megumi

This paper investigates if there are differences in the development of pragmatic competence between people moving to Tokyo from Kansai (the west of Japan) after puberty and those who move to Tokyo before puberty and, in what way the development is different. Twelve native speakers of Japanese (NJs) born in the Kansai Japanese speaking community (KJs) but now living in Tokyo (the east of Japan) and one hundred NJs born and living in the Tokyo area (a control group: TJs) participated in this study. Six KJs moved to Tokyo before puberty, and the other six KJs moved to Tokyo after puberty. The participants were university students and office workers ranging in age from twenty to fifty. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) consisting of five situations was created based on a previously conducted pilot test and distributed in class or office. Each participant took about 10-15 minutes to complete it. In

addition to the DCT, the twelve KJs were interviewed to confirm the DCT results. The interviews were recorded. In analyzing the data, the core issue (e.g., showing off) in each scenario was first highlighted. Then, each response in each scenario was first divided into two categories, 'yes (e.g., showing off),' or 'no (e.g., never showing off),' and further coded to examine each utterance in detail. Finally, utterances by the participants who moved to Tokyo before puberty were compared with those by the participants who moved to Tokyo after puberty. Moreover, responses made by TJs were used as the control data. The findings indicate that pragmatics competence may be acquired unconsciously along with the development of mother tongue (L1) in its speaking community.

Self-reflective instructional activities to develop L2 learners' pragmatic development

Rinnert, Carol

This study focuses on a series of self-reflective, video-based activities created to raise Japanese learners' awareness of a variety of effective English pragmatic strategies that can be used in sensitive social situations. Based on earlier empirical studies of production and perception of requests, complaints and disagreements by L1 and L2 speakers, several effective and potentially ineffective strategies were identified as target forms to be included in the

instructional activities. Although the video clips were taken from American films, the activities encouraged learners to produce and evaluate a wide variety of alternative pragmatic strategies, many of which could be considered more effective than those used in the original clips. The presentation reported on learners' production and interpretation of target and other strategies before, during and after the instructional period. It also reported the results of their evaluation of the activities and of their own performance and offered some recommendations for improving the activities and for creating more effective instructional approaches.

The Structural Analysis of Product Names Observed in Naming Diet Supplements

Tatsuki, Donna, Ikuhiro Tamori and Hideo Tominaga

There was a time when the word 'Diet' referred exclusively to the Japanese parliament. But as lifestyles and eating habits have changed, the meaning of diet [*daietto*] has expanded along with local waistlines. Diet products are an ever expanding market in Japan. Every year diet product consumers demonstrate their insatiable appetite for new and varied names and claims. People of all ages buy these lifestyle products—not just fashion conscious young women but also health conscious people of all ages. So there are many products competing for a slice of the diet supplement market, and this means advertisers need to be creative with their product names and ad campaigns.

This study examined 218 product names of diet supplements to look for structural/lexical trends and patterns,

specifically key words or terminology found in most diet supplement names. It was noted that code-mixing was involved in the most dynamic and popular naming trends. Near the end of the presentation there were comments on other characteristics such as onomatopoeia, compounds and hybrids, and conversation-style expressions.

Co-construction by Adult Learners in a Beginning Japanese Language Classroom

Yamashita, Sayoko

This paper tries to see how adult learners learn not only the linguistic contents but also interactional competence in a target language (Hellerman, 2008) by co-operating with each other, even sometimes without a teacher's assistance. The classroom in this study was a unique composition of adult students of mixed nationalities (nine students from nine different mother tongues), all with medical or dental backgrounds. The video-taped data, recorded weekly using two video cameras in the classroom, were collected longitudinally from April to September 2005. The classroom interactions were studied and some periods were transcribed in order to analyze them more closely. Co-construction by students to learn new words and expressions (especially related to medical topics due to the students' specialty) as well as their giving explanations to referential questions raised by the teacher were analyzed by looking at who took the floor and how they took turns. Still pictures from the video clips were used to show the interactions with arrows indicating students' eye contact and gestures that accompanied their verbal utterances. Code-switching was also

found in students' verbal exchanges when topics became complicated, particularly when the teacher could not follow the students' interactions. The findings suggest the dynamism of adult language learners' co-construction in classroom participation and also imply a teacher's role in an adult class that is somewhat different from a traditional teacher-student interaction model.

Hellerman, J. 2008. *Social actions for classroom language learning*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Comparison of Japanese and American Predisagreements

Yaeger-Dror, Malcah, Shoji Takano and Carol Rinnert

This poster presentation described the relative likelihood of prefatory material before an actual disagreement, the various predisagreement strategies used in different societies, and interrelations between given strategies and particular cultural assumptions and practices in each of the corpora. It also discussed implications of this type of cross-cultural conversational analysis for foreign language pedagogy and tried to determine how differences in cultural assumptions and practices create different contexts of interpretation, and how the diversity of linguistic structures influences distinct cultural systems.

Comparison of politeness strategies for conversational cooperation in different cultures reveals great diversity. Given the importance of context to pragmatics research, this presentation investigated the interrelationship between two types of politeness strategies, prosodic prominence and various predisagreement strategies, as used by speakers from

different cultural backgrounds in remedial turns.

Previous work has shown that prosodic prominence in 'remedial' turns is distributed differently across languages and that syntax interacts in complicated ways with the prosody. For example, while negatives used supportively are generally more likely to be prominent than those used remedially, the negatives used for disagreement are more likely to be prominent in a language which places them near the end of a turn, like Japanese (Takano, 2005), French or English (Yaeger-Dror, 2002), than in a language which places them near the beginning of a sentence, as Spanish does (Yaeger-Dror et al., 2009), despite the fact that prominence is more common in initial sentential position.

Social situation is also important. In every language studied to date a remedial negative is much more likely to be prominent in televised debates than in friendly interactions. From those studies it was concluded that social setting, language and culture are all critical to variation in disagreement prosody. While the initial studies were posited on the assumption that some cultures are inherently more willing to permit disagreement than others, the studies themselves permit one to hypothesize that the greater the opportunity to insert prefatory warnings before a remedial turn, the greater the likelihood that the actual disagreement itself will no longer be 'news', and therefore no longer constrained to be nonprominent. On the other hand, previous studies have shown that Japanese, for example, prefers more elaborate prefatory elaboration than, say, American English (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003).

To test the hypothesis that prefatory material releases constraints against prominent negation, parallel corpora of conversations from the U.S., Ireland and Japan were compared. While genre expectations can differ cross-culturally, a genre like political panel programming might minimize cross-cultural differences. The focus of the analysis was on material preceding the actual remedial/disagreement. Following early programmatic studies by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, 2002), this prefatory material was coded for multivariate analysis. Some of the coded features are shown on the table below.

Variable	Sample
Prefatory material	Presence/absence
Upgraded	{whoever told you that?, how silly, no way}
Downgraded	{well, I'm not sure}
Discourse marker	{well, um, er}
Prosodic marker	Amplitude prominence on the prefatory material
Self fault	{I'm not sure, I don't understand}
Other fault	{are you crazy?, how dumb}
Account	The reason I say this is...

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). 1989. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Blum-Kulka, S., Blondheim, M., & Hachohen, G. 2002. Traditions of dispute: from negotiations of Talmudic texts to the arena of political discourse in the media. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34: 1569-1594.

Kobayashi, H. & Rinnert, C. 2003. Coping with high imposition requests: High vs. low proficiency EFL students in Japan. In A. M. Flor, E. U. Juan, & A. F. Guerra (Eds.) *Pragmatic Competence and Foreign Language Teaching*. Castello de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I.

Takano, S. 2005. Re-examining linguistic power: Strategic uses of directives by professional Japanese women in positions of authority and leadership. *Journal of Pragmatics* 37(5): 633-666.

Yaeger-Dror, M. (Ed.). 2002. Special issue of *Journal of Pragmatics* 34(10/11).

Yaeger-Dror, M., Takano, S., & Granadillo, T. (to appear). The sociophonetics of prosodic contours on neg in three language communities. In Preston & Nedzielski (Eds.) *Sociophonetics Reader*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.