Speech Acts: Piloting a Pragmatics Course in the Japanese Context

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This paper describes the pilot phase of a video-based method for teaching pragmatics in the contexts of a junior high school, high school, and university in Japan. Discussion covers the design of the instructional materials then shifts to descriptions of each teaching context—starting with the junior high school level and continuing to 2nd-year university level. In all, four teaching contexts are introduced, with four intact classes in three schools. After a brief context overview—the institutions, English-language focus of the program, and introduction of the student population—is an explanation of how the pragmatics materials were structured to fit each institutional setting. Comments regarding the benefits and limitations of the instructional materials and method for that particular context follow.

本論文では、日本の中学、高校、および大学における、動画媒体を用いた語用論教授法の導入に関して論じる。まず、全体の教授内容を説明し、そして学習環境別（中学、高校、大学）に教授内容の詳細について議論を展開する。学習環境別の教授内容は、それぞれの学習環境下にいる学生のニーズに応じ、各レッスンが構成されている。本論文の最後には、語用論教授法導入の利点と問題点について、学習環境別に言及する。

FEW COMMERCIALLY available textbooks provide language instructors with resources for teaching L2 pragmatics. In addition, according to Vasquez and Sharpless (2009), though many American MA programs offer some pragmatics component, limited training is

given to future teachers, materials designers, and testers regarding the role pragmatics plays in the L2 learning context. As a result, instructional pragmatics exists to a minimal degree in L2 instruction. This paper outlines the curricular scope and sequence of a course that offers video-based instruction of pragmatics.

Though the foundation for the study of pragmatics that we now understand as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP; Kasper & Dahl, 1991) stems from research begun in the 1960s by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), it was in the 1980s when applied linguists first incorporated notions of what pragmatics is into theories of L2 competence. In their now classic 1980 article, Canale and Swain provided the most significant theory. In it, Canale and Swain relied heavily on work done by Hymes (circa 1960-1970), from which the notion of *communicative competence* originates (see Hymes, 1972). ILP's footing in SLA began with Canale and Swain's definition of *sociolinguistic competence*, which "is made up of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse" (1980, p. 30). Thomas (1983) then provided the terms *sociopragmatic* and *pragmalinguistic*, which distinguish *sociocultural rules* from *rules of discourse*. ILP researchers generally operationalize these two notions in the following ways. Sociopragmatics relates to the social setting and speaker roles that contextualize a speech event, specifying concepts such as speaker distance, status, and prior relationship. Pragmalinguistics relates to what people say when attempting to accomplish certain actions—the utterance-level choices speakers make when producing speech acts.

The course materials outlined in this paper present a method for raising learner awareness of sociopragmatic features and increasing learner familiarity with and productive use of pragmalinguistic forms. Their construction has been informed by findings raised within ILP research (see Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2008; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose & Kasper, G, 2001).

1. Sociopragmatic features and pragmalinguistic forms are teachable and learnable in L2 classroom contexts, and instruction should be explicit in nature. To this end, the instructional input for the speech act materials comes from a database of video clips extracted from English language television programming and films (primarily produced in the U.S., with a smaller number from the U.K.).
2. A variety of speech acts should be included in the instructional materials to provide adequate coverage of the range of speech acts recognized in ILP research. The materials provide input and instruction on 10 speech acts: *greetings*, *invitations*, *compliments*, *introductions*, *suggestions*, *apologies*, *offers*, *requests*, *complaints*, and *leave-takings*.
3. Multiple instances of each speech act should be included in the input to highlight the variety of pragmalinguistic forms competent speakers of the language use. For each lesson, 16 example clips have been designed as input.
4. Tasks should provide learners with a means of understanding how sociopragmatic features contextualize notions of "appropriate use" in relation to individual pragmalinguistic forms. The multimodal nature of video affords learners evidence of the variety of productive features inherent within conversation, which in turn provides learners with a vantage for recognizing various embodied meanings available as visual cues (i.e., proximal speaker distance, gestures, and facial expressions).
5. Time-on-task must be built into the instruction to highlight similarities and differences between common practices in the students' L1 and L2.

Materials and Methods Overview

The instructional materials comprised content designed to focus learner attention on specific speech acts. The video-based input

is in clip form and ranges from 5 to 20 seconds in length, with each highlighting a single speech act. To prepare students for the video input a variety of tasks were designed. The progression of classroom tasks is as follows.

1. Speech Act Introduction

At the start of lessons, a description of the speech act is provided, along with examples of the first pair-part (FPP) and second pair-part (SPP) possibilities speakers might use to realize the speech act. Figure 1 shows an example.

What is a Compliment?

Compliments are things people say (utterances) to point out something positive about someone else. Normally, the Compliment is directed at a person's looks (physical appearance), something they own (possession), or the way they are dressed (attire).

you're looking good	(appearance)
that's a cool phone	(possession)
I just love that dress	(attire)

Figure 1. Example speech act explanation.

The speech act introduction is brief and is framed by a standard question: "What is a X?" A few examples are given to highlight specific elements of the pragmalinguistic character of the speech act.

2. FPPs / SPPs

The first target-language (TL) task is designed to increase learner awareness of various TL turn-taking practices—with a focus on the relationship between FPP and SPP utterances in speech act realization. Figure 2 shows an example.

	Compliment (fpp)	Accept (spp)	Downgrade (spp)	Reject (spp)
1	*great haircut* _____	*a.*	*b.*	*it makes me look stupid*
2	*love the ring* _____	*I know I just love it too*	*a.*	*b.*
3	*you're so cute* _____	*a.*	*b.*	*no I'm not*

Figure 2. FPP / SPP task.

3. Listening Strategies

Because parsing streams of naturally occurring talk presents a challenge for L2 learners, this section engages learners with various elements of naturalistic speech, raising their awareness of features of connected speech (e.g., elision, assimilation of voicing, and place of articulation). Figure 3 shows an example.

LONG VOWELS > SHORT VOWELS

Another way sounds change when people speak is when longer vowel sounds change to shorter sounds. This is very common with the sound "ooo" (e.g., *to, do, you*), which changes to the shortened sound "ə". How do you say the following with the "ooo" sounds changed to "ə" sounds?

How do you do?	*When do you get up?*	*Where do you go?*
How did you get here?	*What do you like?*	*Why do you want that?*

Figure 3. Connected speech example task.

Students are made aware that very few words in the transcripts are unknown to them. They become aware of the fact that their inability to understand stretches of talk spoken at naturalistic speeds stems not from a limited lexical or grammatical knowledge but from an inability to parse sound streams into recognizable words. Teaching students how to listen for specific sound changes due to rules of connected speech enables them to attune their listening.

4. Transcription

An underlying assumption of the materials design is that learners need a method for engaging with the video and audio input. Learners are provided with practice tasks that focus their attention on the pragmalinguistic forms representative of the particular speech act. Figure 4 gives an example of one transcript and highlights the "gap-fill" nature of the task (which also provides a backdrop for instruction of the turn-taking structure).

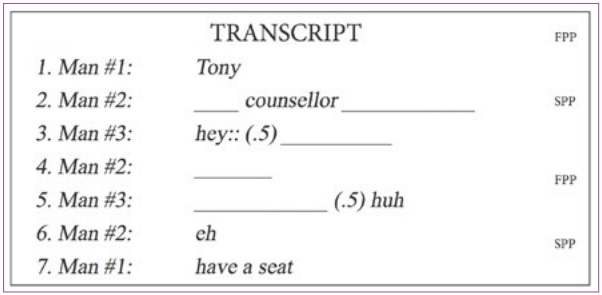

Figure 4. Transcription task.

It is essential for students to deal with spoken discourse represented as *utterances* rather than as *sentences*. The rules of talk revolve around specific principles regarding turn-taking. The transcription practice provides a visible representation of learner comprehension and enables teachers to see week-by-week what difficulties students are having. The transcript also offers a way of indexing FPP/SPP connections, pauses, sound stretches, and the meaningful nature of silence.

5. Analysis of Pragmalinguistic Forms

After multiple listenings and transcript work, learners are provided with complete transcripts and instructed on how the talk is organized. Figure 5 gives an example of the completed transcript from Figure 4. (Additional teacher notes in the lesson plans enable instructors to flesh out important points.)

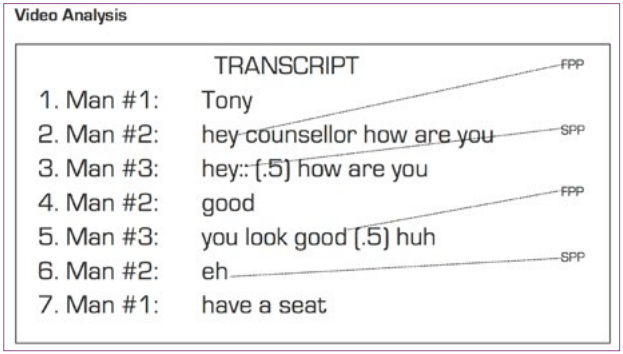

Figure 5. Teacher feedback for transcription task.

6. Analysis of Sociopragmatic Features

Learners then analyze any visible evidence in the clip that may allow for an understanding of the nature of speaker relationships (e.g., context, gaze, gesture, speaker proximity, and touch). For this part, learners use the graphic in Figure 6.

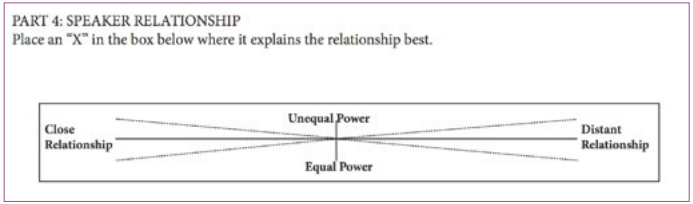

Figure 6. Sociopragmatic decision task.

Figure 6 provides a simple way for students to approach the notion of what kinds of relationships speakers *display*. The diagonal lines extend into four quadrants of the rectangle. The left side represents close relationships that differ in speaker status. The upper is for perhaps *parent* / *child* relationships (as they are *close* / *unequal*), and the lower would possibly be *friends* (as they are *close* / *equal*). The right side is for distant relationships, with those that are unequal in the upper right (e.g., *customer* / *sales person*) and those that are equal (e.g., *strangers*) in the lower right. This task assists students in building on implicit cues, generally of a visual nature.

7. Productive Role-Play

The final task is designed to reinforce the instruction of the socio-pragmatic features and pragmalinguistic forms by providing learners with an opportunity to display their skill at managing turns at talk while producing speech acts of interest. Students work in pairs or small groups to formulate what they consider to be appropriate talk. Figure 7 shows an example performance task card.

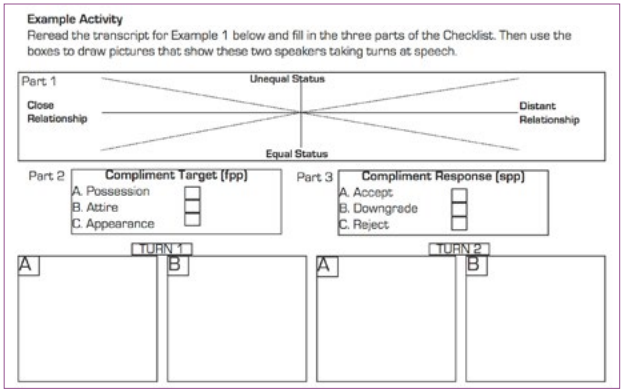

Figure 7. Performance task example.

After receiving the video input and instruction, students are given prompts they can use to design specific turns at talk. The task card allows teacher to choose various speaker relationships, the target of the FPP speech act, and the type of SPP response. Students can take notes or script out a full conversation.

Piloting Phase Goals

The purpose of piloting *Speech Acts* (the course title) was to gain insights into how adequately the video-based materials and method of instruction satisfied the following conditions:

1. Were teachers able to present the materials in the time and physical restrictions of their teaching contexts?
2. How well were students able to interact with the range of paper-based instructions, descriptions, tasks, and activities?
3. How did the students respond to the video-based method of instruction with clips taken from feature-length movies and television programs designed for English-speaking audiences?
4. For teachers, what were the limitations of the materials?
5. What benefits did teachers feel the materials provided for their students' L2 learning in general and specifically in regards to learning the set of speech acts?

Instructional Context Overview

The discussion of how the instructional method and materials were implemented progresses in the following manner. First is a description of the institution, with information about student numbers, class streaming and placement, English instruction contact hours, and the selection and scheduling of materials from *Speech Acts*. Second is a discussion of learner performance, motivation, and progress, including talk of any individual differences exhibited by students in how they engaged with the

instruction and materials. Last is a description of the positive aspects and limitations of using *Speech Acts*.

Contexts

Context One: Junior High School

This is a private all-boys junior and senior preparatory school in western Japan. In the 2013-14 academic year, 1,767 students attended the school, including 554 boys in the junior high and 659 in the senior high. The English department consists of nine full-time teachers (seven Japanese teachers of English [JTEs] and two native English-speaking teachers [NESTs]) and one part-time NEST. All teachers hold a Japanese teaching license for secondary education. The JTEs follow the national curriculum established by the Ministry of Education (MEXT). The NESTs have developed an independent English language program, which focuses on developing communication skills through conversational activities and presentations.

Speech Acts was incorporated into the 3rd-year junior high communication program developed by the NESTs. There were 186 boys divided into four classes, with approximately 45 students per class. The boys had an English content class each day Monday through Friday. A JTE taught four classes, and a NEST one. For each academic year, students receive approximately 140 hours of English instruction. There is no placement or streaming based on English language abilities; therefore, each class has a wide range of abilities. All English classrooms had a computer connected to built-in sound system and projector for presenting course materials.

Each term has approximately 14 classes. Two weeks of class time were dedicated to teaching the following speech acts: *greetings*, *introductions*, *compliments*, *invitations*, and *offers*. Additional lessons were devoted to performance and production tasks. A typical lesson for each 50-minute class began with an introduction of the speech act in both Japanese and English. Next, students viewed a number of clips while completing the transcription and accompanying tasks. The final 10 to 15 minutes were spent reviewing the dialogues, focusing on pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic features. A limited amount of time was used for production and performance tasks.

Teacher Comments

The students responded well to the pragmatics material. First, it was new, and watching clips from movies and television programs of "real" situations was interesting for this age group. Basically, these students have only been exposed to a grammar-based syllabus, so studying specific speech acts was seen by many as useful language learning. Students were especially eager to learn about the sociopragmatic aspects of status and distance and how language is affected when a change occurs with the setting or the speakers' relationship.

In regards to limitations of the materials and method, there were two issues for this age group. First, each class was only 50 minutes in length, and this proved to be the biggest challenge—simply because introducing and explaining the materials adequately took time. Students also needed time to engage with the printed materials and practice each speech act. Consequently, the instructional pace was quick, and students often stated they felt "rushed." More time was needed to review previous lessons as classes occured once a week. The second difficulty was the level of the listening materials. Though the students enjoyed the video clips, their listening ability was not high enough for them to fully comprehend the dialogues; also, slang, idiomatic expressions, and connected speech proved to be very challenging. In addition, many clips were of adults speaking to other adults, and there were very few instances of interactions involving young people. It was difficult for students to identify with and understand some of the situations.

Overall, the pragmatic materials provided students with a new and interesting way of learning English by clearly demonstrating how native speakers use language to communicate with people of differing social status and in varied social settings. By analyzing the similarities and differences in how people realize speech acts in their L1 compared to their L2, even these young learners were able to comprehend English communication patterns. Nevertheless, the format of the materials was too difficult. There should be more fun activities designed to engage younger students in the tasks. Also, more quizzes, speaking tasks, and other forms of assessment would greatly improve the course for teachers interested in adopting such materials for a junior high school program.

Context Two: High School

A total of 642 students attending a coed high school in western Japan were taught *Speech Acts* in the 2012-2013 academic year. The school has 18 teachers in the English Department. The goals of the English department align with those of MEXT by requiring that all students display a specific level of English ability (defined as passing Level 2 of the Eiken test) by graduation. Weekly coursework includes approximately 6 hours of English separated into reading, oral communication, and writing. Students are streamed by faculty decision, without consideration of language proficiency, and class sizes are approximately 45 students.

Though some students posses a high English proficiency (with some having resided abroad), lessons are predominantly conducted in Japanese. After a brief introduction of the lesson's speech act, students were asked to personalize the speech act by coming up with real-world examples of how Japanese speakers produce the speech act. This was something the students could conceptualize, especially in the sense of the relationship between various FPPs and SPPs. Students were then asked to consider if different FPPs would "fit" a variety of SPPs and consider whether their L1 example FPPs would fit in different situations involving different speakers (different genders, age groups, or social distances). It was very important that the concepts be offered in small doses and in ways that facilitated students picturing the language in use. For the most part, students were able to provide a range of examples from their L1.

The lessons then shifted into English, as students created target language (TL) examples of FPPs and SPPs. Usually, students produced examples similar to those in textbooks, with the range of examples more limited than their L1 examples. It was important for students to notice this gap, one that they realized through accomplishing the task. The lesson shifted to working with the video clips and transcription tasks. Only two or three clips could be shown because of time limitations. Generally, those were the first clips from the lesson, which were the shortest and often the easiest to transcribe. The videos allowed students a means of comparing their initial knowledge and assumptions about how the speech act was used in English with that produced in the videos.

Teacher Comments

For students, the materials and method were novel, in both good and bad ways. The materials were written for a target student audience more comfortable with lengthy written descriptions and examples. Working each speech act unit into a class—in terms of student ability and allotted time—took planning. Whole sections and tasks were unusable due to the demands they placed on student reading ability. Some portions of the materials are academic in nature. These students generally get more from lessons when information is presented in limited quantities. A 45-minute lesson needs to center around a set of specific things to be "learned"—things that can be easily assessed. The materials offered limited opportunities for ways

to routinely test students. In high schools, periodic formative assessments are necessary, and these are easiest (at least from students' perspective of how they will be graded) when instruction is offered as "what to memorize." To this end, additional quizzes needed to be made. Test items were constructed to direct student attention to only the larger points covered in class—things like the key terms (e.g., FPP and SPP), concepts (e.g., reject and accept), and example speech act utterances (e.g., *that sounds like fun but . . .* as an example way of prefacing an invitation rejection). Finally, L1 assistance was absolutely necessary. Japanese high school students expect that a certain part of their English language instruction will be offered in their L1.

On an institutional level, high school semesters undergo frequent scheduling changes. School events take precedence and result in lessons being replaced with event preparation. This results in different classes receiving different amounts of instruction. Despite this, all students are generally required to take the same test at semester's end. Though this does not reflect negatively on teaching *Speech Acts* in the high school context, there are issues relating to assessment and adaptability.

On the positive side, students quickly learned that many English speech acts have easy-to-understand Japanese equivalents. This was good as it made some complicated ideas more approachable. The focus on comparisons between L1 and L2 speech act routines simplified the transition into other more difficult tasks. It was clear that students grasped the concepts and enjoyed watching the video component. There was a lot that students could get from watching the videos. Students were able to make inferences about speaking contexts, gestures, and facial expressions that allowed them to figure out sociopragmatic elements displayed in the clips. The videos definitely helped motivate students to remain engaged. Over time, it was clear how students became more engaged in activities that required pair work production of L1 and L2 examples. As well, having a similar set of tasks in each lesson provided students with a sense of what was expected of them.

One reason I participated in the pilot test of *Speech Acts* is that pragmatics—and a means for building students' communicative competence—were lacking in the existing curriculum. The *Speech Acts* course provided that missing part. Something I learned through teaching this course was the value of repeated listening. Simply having students repeatedly listen to and watch the same input—each time paying attention to different elements—was beneficial for students' listening ability.

Context Three: 1st-Year University

The third context was a university located in the western region of Japan, where two teachers at two levels (1st-year and 2nd-year) participated for one 15-week semester. Within the university's English Department, instructional goals and objectives vary between classes and years. At the time of instruction, all students were streamed using an institutional TOEFL test. Students who scored from 460 to 550 were placed in predeparture courses designed to prepare students for study abroad at partner universities around the world. Students in this stream were enrolled in 12-hour-per-week course loads taught entirely in English and conceived of as a type of sheltered immersion program that provided them with 720 hours of instruction over the course of 2 years. In 2013, there were approximately 10 sections of this stream, with class sizes ranging from 15 to 25 students.

The instructional treatment of the pragmatic materials was given to a class of 1st-year students who had placed into the highest section of the intensive English program. The class consisted of 23 students: 18 females and five males. Pragmatics instruction occupied one 90-minute lesson per week over the course of one semester. Classrooms were equipped with an overhead projector and screen and a built-in audio system, and

videos were shown via a second-generation iPad using video software and a VGA cable.

The instructional schedule was *greetings*, *compliments*, performance task one, *invitations*, *requests*, and performance task two. Each speech act was given two class periods and spanned two weeks. Additional classes were used to prepare for each performance task lesson.

Teacher Comments

As a course dedicated primarily to L2 instructional pragmatics, the speech act materials were a new concept to me. As a 16-year veteran of the university system in Japan, I have taught all levels and within various curricula; this was my first encounter with a course focused solely on pragmatics. The learning curve—unaccustomed as I was to the underlying notions supporting the course content, especially what might be deemed important in a video clip—was challenging. Only after I had taught the course once did the course content and method gel.

For students, some task elements were initially unclear; others were simplistic. Lessons rely on recycled tasks, and only after several iterations from unit section to unit section did some become clear. Though none of the students were familiar with the term *pragmatics*, being asked to learn speech acts like greetings and compliments confused some as to why they were studying something they already "knew."

Once students began to understand that with each speech act unit there was an additional layer of conversational complexity, the course turned an "engagement" corner. As an instructor, the teaching returns increased as lessons progressed through the semester. By the third speech act (invitations), students were better able, and more willing, to analyze clips for the nuances of each brief exchange. They displayed an ability to grasp subtleties in meaning from gestures and the prosodic elements that go into "authentic" interactions. It was apparent there were "light bulb" moments for many students. By the end, students' awareness of the overall aim of the course had crystalized. They had became more adept at analyzing talk-in-interaction and, as a result, become more aware of the interconnected nature of language and culture.

One common misconception students often display is that Eastern and Western cultures handle directness in talk differently. This is generalized into the view that in the East (or in Japan specifically) talk is handled indirectly, whereas in the West (or with English speakers) talk is handled directly. The materials allowed students to confront this misconception by analyzing how patterns of talk (in their L1 and L2) often reveal more similarities than differences. One instance of this is how often students improperly use the imperative form when making requests in English. The logic seems to be that the use of *please* and *thank you* transforms an imperative into a polite request. The request lessons helped students to see disparities in their use of the imperative form and to acquire a set of alternative forms they could use. The students were able to see that both languages have moments when direct and indirect talk has importance.

Overall, students seemed to expand their understanding of what constitutes a TL conversation, and, to some degree, their sense that communication is a strategic skill. Tasks are oriented towards raising learner awareness, so putting a metric onto how much students *got* is difficult. That being said, students responded positively. They liked the videos and were interested in the language being used, the interactions of the characters, and the settings. The materials provided opportunities for students to hear and to start to recognize the various forms each speech act takes. Students became more accustomed to the prosodic elements of talk, and as a result, they gained greater confidence in their abilities to recognize different types of interactions. The course content is unique. The tasks were not too challenging

and required students to think of things they had knowledge of but, perhaps, had never really thoroughly considered as an L2 learner. It was clear that this scrutiny was not only in how they conceptualized talk in English, but also in their awareness of talk-in-interaction in their L1.

Context Four: 2nd-Year University

The last class occurred in spring 2013 at the same university as context three. The class comprised 2nd-year students streamed into the general English curriculum within the Intensive English Department. Students in this stream display a lower proficiency range based on both their TOEFL scores and a commercially available online placement instrument that purports to test listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. Generally, this stream of students does not pursue study abroad options.

Course demands placed on these students are less challenging, and the number of contact hours are fewer. The 2nd-year students meet with the same teacher for two *koma* (180 minutes) each week, rather than four *koma* (360 minutes) each week. Teachers have freedom in creating or selecting materials to suit the needs of the various levels. The department provides a general guideline for how teachers should address student needs. Approximately 20 to 25 students are in each class.

At the start of each class, a description of the particular speech act was given, then students went through a series of awareness-raising tasks (e.g., comparisons and contrasts between L1 and L2). For the remainder of the class, students worked on clip transcription and analysis. A typical homework assignment was for students to prepare something called a "movie log," which was a handwritten journal that included summaries of various English-language movies the student had chosen to watch outside of class (usually in the audio-visual center of the library) and speech act transcripts they made while watching the movie. Several times throughout the semester, students worked in pairs or small groups performing mini-presentations of the movies they had seen and the transcripts they had written. The presentations at the end of the semester were an expansion of these earlier informal presentations.

Teacher Comments

As department guidelines for this course require a four-skills integration, *Speech Acts* occupied class time for only 60 minutes a week. It was blended with more traditional reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks. Introducing the materials and covering all of the clips in this time frame was tight at times. More time would have been better. The students especially enjoyed seeing how over time their listening ability improved while watching clips. The focus on elements of connected speech helped in this regard. The course assessment was weighted heavily towards student participation in groupwork. The result was that students were generally prepared and actively engaged while in class. The out-of-class homework examples most students produced in their movie logs showed they were capable of conducting this type of independent research into how speech acts are realized in other television programs and films. I believe it was empowering for students to have a method for taking charge of their learning of speech acts.

This was not the first time I had taught the pragmatic materials, and students gave nothing but positive feedback regarding the in-class *Speech Act* materials and out-of-class movie log work. Students reported that they felt this type of instruction gave them more exposure to the "real" English that they want to learn.

Discussion

These teacher accounts of how *Speech Act*s worked within their contexts have shown a range of benefits and limitations. First,

in terms of the physical restrictions of the classrooms, there appeared to be no technical issues with instituting a video-based method of instruction. All teachers felt that time limitations were an issue. The teachers at the junior and senior high school levels revealed that it was difficult to cover the materials adequately. (Unit lessons were generally from 10 to 12 pages in length, with upwards of eight video clips.) Taking materials that were essentially written for a 90-minute university class and adapting them for the high school and junior high school context proved challenging.

Second, with regards to how well students were able to interact with the range of tasks and activities, it appears that this depended on student level. Students with lower motivation levels for learning English might easily tune out in class when the challenge is overwhelming. However, for the most part, students did find the materials engaging. Some notions and concepts did present themselves as being too dense or complex for younger students. For students at the higher levels, notions of what each speech act is and relevant L1 examples of how it is realized provided little difficulty. In contrast, more advanced 1st-year university students found some elements of the curriculum simple. However, once the instruction turned to the less commonly taught speech acts (e.g., *invitations*, *suggestions*, *offers*, *requests*, and *complaints*), interest levels increased. All teachers reported that regardless of the actual content of the materials, students benefited from repeated listenings to speech samples spoken at a speed representative of naturally occurring discourse.

As to the third question about how students responded to the video-based method of instruction, it appears that though it was difficult at first, regardless of the students' level, teachers felt student listening abilities gradually improved. From a time-on-task approach, this makes sense. Generally, EFL students receive far too little spoken input. Many seemed to realize when doing transcription work that other than proper nouns the vocabulary was understandable. Nor were the grammatical structures dense (e.g., few relative clauses and complex clause structures, with a lot of simple compounds). Once students had the full transcripts, reading them presented little difficulty. However, realizing how speakers produce turns-at-talk—using connected speech and the prosodic and intonational features characteristic of more naturally occurring talk—was the challenge. If nothing else, more of this type of input should be added into L2 instruction.

The fourth point was the limitations of the materials and methods. The materials pilot showed that for different cohorts of learners, specific types of instructional content should be prepared. Across the board, there should be more age-sensitive content. Fifteen-year olds should not be expected to speak like people 20 years their senior. The lack of video interactions between teenage characters was problematic. In terms of the materials, teachers reported that for themselves, learning about pragmatics, speech act theory, and conversation analysis posed something of a learning curve. Of the four teachers, three taught the materials for either the first or second time. The lesson plans provided with *Speech Acts* included extensive, detailed accounts of the interaction in each clip, specifying relevant information regarding the context, speaker relationships, and turns-at-talk. Much of it read like an academic description for a readership familiar with conversation analysis research. To open the materials to a wider audience would require rewrites that introduce the content in a more approachable manner. One teacher stated that for JTEs, lesson plans and portions of the student materials would need to be written in Japanese.

The last question was about the benefits teachers felt the materials and methods brought to their students' L2 learning in general, and specifically in regards to learning the set of speech acts. As noted previously, the repeated listenings and focus

on how conversations are structured turn-by-turn provided students with a foothold to begin discussing something often daunting for L2 learners—how native speakers converse. The immediacy of that point and the value the materials brought to students was apparent. This, in turn, provided students with a motivation for the learning experience. Another noted benefit was that through conducting an analysis of language in use, students became more aware of how Japanese and English are similar in certain ways (e.g., in the use of indirect ways of realizing certain speech acts). In regards to the speech acts themselves, though some of them appeared easy for students, there are many speech acts that Japanese learners never encounter in traditional textbooks and teaching syllabi. For learners to become more communicatively competent, more attention should be directed towards speech acts that could cause miscommunication (e.g., *requests*, *suggestions*, *offers*, *invitations*, and *complaints*). Though the majority of the videos in *Speech Acts* come from media produced in America for an American audience, some clips came from television programing from the U.K., Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Widening the variety of clips in terms of speakers and dialects of English is necessary.

Note

An earlier version was published in *Osaka JALT Journal* Vol 1, Issue 1 entitled "Teacher Impressions of a Video-Based Pragmatics Course."

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