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English as a lingua franca in Asian intercultural situations

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Of the audio-recordings of interactions and interviews (made at two sites: 1) an English-medium class in an undergraduate and graduate Business Administration programme, 2) an international training programme for health professionals from Asian countries), about 30% have been transcribed and 20% have been analysed. The analysis consisted of word and word group frequency, and manual coding of conversation analytic (CA) categories. The progress has been impeded due to lack of time to devote to research. The project is being continued.

The preliminary results have been presented at the 3rd and 4th Waseda ELF International Workshops, in March and November 2014, and an article is being prepared for the Journal of English as a Lingua Franca.

Studies of English-language practices among users of widely varying socio-historical backgrounds and linguistic repertoires, under the umbrella-term English as a lingua franca (ELF) have been conducted since the late 1990s.

The aims of these studies have included description of the linguistic features of ELF language practice (often focused on a certain type of feature or interaction, cataloguing of the strategies employed in ELF interactions (often as part of ethnographic studies of whole institutional or workplace communities, and other aims informed by various theoretical conceptions of what the object of study is–interactive talk, pragmatic competence, or language varieties–to name a few orientations.

The research conducted with the present grant-in-aid aimed to investigate both the conversation strategies (revealed by conversation analysis) and the lexical, grammatical, and discoursal deviations (revealed by corpus study methods) in the spoken interactions within international academic and workplace discussions. The investigations also involve an ethnographic component, including observations of the communication environment and interviews of the language users to hear their accounts of their perceptions, motivations, and strategies.

The settings observed were: post-graduate interns at an inter-governmental development agency (referred to as ICDC), graduate and undergraduate students in an English-medium Business Administration programme (referred to as UpLink), and healthcare professionals in an NGO-operated training programme (referred to as CommCare). For all settings, the main data collected were audio-recordings of naturally-occurring interactions; there were also interviews conducted with most participants after the recording sessions, where the participants were asked to comment 1) on the communicative success of the interaction(s), 2) on features of the situation that facilitated or impeded communication, and

3) on features of language practice (their own or others') that stood out to them.

The language practices that were identified can be put into two groups: 1) conversational strategies and 2) grammatical-discoursal adjustments. By the former is meant those practices whereby participants try to enhance the communicative success of the interaction by using expressions that would not be considered marked from a viewpoint of standard native-speaker usage. By the latter is meant those practices that involve deviating from standard us-age. For these practices I use the term adjustment rather than simply deviation, as these practices have been determined (using contextual evidence and the perceptions that participants reported in interviews) to be purposeful, even if not entirely conscious. For the remainder of deviations for which no purpose could be discerned, the term deviation is used.

Very often a conversational strategy is accompanied by a grammatical-discoursal adjustment, and the two are in fact inseparable as one practice. Some of the frequent conversational strategies and grammatical-discoursal adjustments observed in these data are summarised below:

Overall the participants maintained a sparse interaction order. In the ICDC meetings, there are few explicit acknowledgements of others' turns, few closing turns (rather, a pause often marks a topic boundary), and laughter appeared to serve specific conversation management functions, in the absence of other regulatory utterances.

At the ICDC and CommCare settings was a high frequency of participants' turns were made up primarily of ideational meaning, especially of repetitions of the ideas contained in the previous utterances, and the low frequency of turns that were made up primarily of orientational meaning (cf. Halliday; 1994). The operative difference, at least for the purposes of this study, is whether the clause's main verb or predication expresses an idea (ideational), or whether it merely refers to an idea that is expressed elsewhere in the interaction (pure orientational).

In addition to examining the order in the interactions and the relationships among turns, word frequencies were also measured, treating the transcribed interaction data as a small corpus. One word that turned up as markedly more frequent than would be expected in globally compiled English corpora was the Japanese honorific address form *san*. According to the participants' accounts in interviews and confirmed by the recorded sat from interactions, the most common address form in two of the settings (ICDC and CommCare) was a name appended by san. In the UpLink setting, given names were the most common form, but name + san was very common among those more proficient in Japanese (which included the Hong Kong participants and about half of the French participants). The name used was determined by the preference of the addressee, and could variably be a family name, a given name, or a shortened form. Differential use of modality markers

Another focus of the investigations at all the settings was the relative frequencies of the modal auxiliary verbs and other devices used to mark modality. When the interaction data from all settings was viewed in aggregate, the frequencies were, by and large, unremarkable. There are, however, many other means by which speakers of English express modality, or, in other words, their orientation (both epistemic and attitudinal) to ideas in the interaction or in the context. One of these means is the use of modality markers, such as 'think', 'like', 'kind of'/'kinda', 'maybe', etc., that formally resemble lexical ideational content, but are actually used to display the participants' orientation to the idea (the ideational content of the utterance) either in terms of the status of their knowledge of the idea (epistemic) or in terms of their affective orientation to the idea (attitudinal).

Correlation of practices to situations

The disparate observations of conversational strategies and grammatical-discoursal adjustments, described in the previous section, do not form a picture of English language practice in any one setting (that has been the aim of other papers, but instead suggest the degree to which different ELF settings (situations and participants) may give rise to very different language practices:

A) maintenance of a sparse interaction order; use of non-elaborated, functional turns, or non-use of conversational turns to express that which is clear from context;

B) explicit repetition of ideational content from previous utterances;

C) distinct address practices for in-group and standard practices for those out of the group;

D) use of certain subtle modality markers while taking a dominant role in an inter-action, non-use when in a more peripheral role.

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