

On Genre and its Application to English Education in Japan¹⁾

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Abstract

This paper aims to introduce the notion of genre and its application to English education in Japan. It discusses theoretical notions with the definition of genre as a text mould, followed by explanations of subsidiary concepts. After a brief reflection of previous studies the paper advocates the necessity of adjusting the application of the theoretical notions to make it suitable to English teaching in Japanese contexts and proposes three phases to implant the concepts in conventional instructions.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), genre, register, lexicogrammar, ESP, English teaching

1 Introduction: Reflection and challenges

With the closure of the Department of English Communication at Aichi Gakuin University, Junior College (AGUJC), it can be said that its history has been a series of relentless challenges of promoting students' academic motivation, developing their English skills as practical communication tools, and, consequently, improving their scores on English proficiency tests, e.g., STEP²⁾, TOEFL and TOEIC. All the teaching staff have devoted themselves to meeting students' needs and helping students achieve their academic goals. The department has also adopted academic innovations such as curriculum enhancement and advancement of the IT-based learning system. Noteworthy among the innovations is the completely computerized language learning system³⁾, which enabled the students

to learn at their own pace, and also provided them with a large volume of task-oriented exercises. In consequence these endeavors have allowed many students to receive high marks in proficiency tests and others to successfully transfer to universities.

Be that as it may, however, these efforts were not the ultimate solutions. There were still difficulties in promoting the students' motivation and to get them to concentrate on exercises, in spite of enthusiastic encouragement of the instructors as well as efficient use of the computerized learning system. This might be due to several factors: (1) socio-cultural aspects such as a comparatively large number of the students in one class (more than 20) and a cultural tradition of inactive in-class interaction between the teacher and the students: (2) psychological factors such as students' passive attitudes in learning. The factors are not only inherent in AGUJC, but rather, they are shared among other English classes in other Japanese educational institutions.

In addition to the socio-cultural and psychological factors, there are some other complicated aspects of English learning that nevertheless even industrious students were nevertheless unable to overcome. The aspects can be classified into the two groups: the first is textual organization deployed in accordance with specific purposes, which have been recently spotlighted as English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The wording patterns diverge depending on purposes such as journal articles, academic textbooks, contract, etc., and the stylistic preferences coordinate with the purposes. The second pertains to insufficient acquisition of English grammar, which does not necessarily mean capability to demarcate grammatical expressions, but rather it especially concerns immature exploitation of metaphorical expressions realized through a complex bundle of nominal groups, which is labeled as **nominalization**.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter referred to as SFL) encloses the two aspects in the notions, viz., **genre** and **grammatical metaphor** respectively. The former concept is content-based; it pertains to textual patterns in social interactions, i.e., the sequential sets of meaning the learners are eager to construe and generate. Genre can be surmised as a cover term for ESP, but the concept encompasses all the factors involved in construing⁴⁾ appropriate expressions for a specific use. The latter notion refers to wording; it concerns varieties in manipulation of allocating lexical items to convey semiotic equivalent values. I discussed grammatical metaphor and its application to English education in Japan (Sasaki

2006) and concluded that the instructor should provide the students with mutual mechanisms of condensing and unpacking information through nominalization as well as the contextual factors grammatical metaphor involves.

Thus in this short paper I will pick up what I left behind: genre and its application to English education in Japan. Genre and grammatical metaphor are, among the other SFL notions, the ones to be recognized by English educators and learners as an iceboat to crack the iceberg of dilemma commonly shared: “Why cannot they/we acquire English in a real sense?”

2 Some Basic Premises in SFL

2.1 SFL: *function and system*

SFL, the theoretical backbone of this paper, concerns language in reference to the relation with the social context. The theory presumes that language is a semiotic system in social groups varying from a major group such as a nation, to a minor community such as a specific ethnic group. As long as the social members, regardless of the size, share a common social value, they interact through exchange of a mutually recognizable semiotic value, viz., **meaning**, which can be realized through either linguistic symbols or non-linguistic signs such as a traffic light, gesture, posture, etc. SFL, in nature, focuses on linguistic meaning and it seeks to systematically elucidate what kind of meanings are exchanged in terms of **functions**⁵⁾, and the theory aims to describe what linguistic items exist, how they are selected and united to build an appropriate linguistic sequence to convey a certain meaning, and how the whole of linguistic expressions are construed.

The selection of linguistic items is illustrated by **the system network** and it has a strong influence on the construing component of the linguistic items, viz., grammar. Once an item is chosen, the item constrains the following item selection. For instance, “*John*” is selected as the subject of a sentence in present tense, then, it requires a verb expressing human action or state in meaning and also it causes attachment of “*-s/-es*” to the verb in style as found in “*John jogs in the park.*” The meaning of the verb also restrains the element to follow. The intransitive verb “jog” needs the following slot vacant otherwise the slot should be filled with an adverbial group/phrase meaning frequency or a prepositional group/phrase to describe place or time.

A selection of the item occurs, then the consequent selections of the other

following continue to occur until the accomplishment of an expression. The primary choice of item has influence on the secondary choice, which then influences on the tertiary choice, and the sequential selections continue to the end point of expression. The whole process signifies the system network. The network involves all kinds of grammatical items including tense, manner, mood, number, etc. The system network and grammar merge to constitute the resources of paradigmatic selection and the relevant syntagmatic allocation. The whole atlas of the resources is entitled *lexicogrammar*⁶.

The name of the linguistic theory 'systemic functional' comes from two notions: function as meaning and the system of selection and construction. SFL aims to unravel the mechanisms of meaning and the system network. In due course the whole lexicogrammatical cartography through possible selection and configuration depicts a language as meaning potential and the map describes and explains the realized expressions in terms of language as realization.

2.2 *Text, register and genre*

A language generally functions so as to accomplish communicative tasks in society, such as sales encounters, information exchanges in workplaces or educational institutions, maintenance or consolidation of human relations at home or in other communities, etc. On the processes of achievement of the communicative tasks, there comes a wide spectrum of functions needed: on one hand, information giving such as prices, facts, events etc., or on the other hand, inquiries of information such as names, prices, latest events, etc. The intentions are then reified as statements, interrogatives, commands, offers, demands, etc. Finally the multiplicity of meanings in consequence is realized through the warp and woof of linguistic components, viz., **text** which is defined as "the basic unit of semantic structure—that is, of the semantic process" (Halliday 1978: 60).

A text is comprised of words, word groups, phrases, clauses and clause complexes⁷, all of which are construed through lexicogrammar, though it is not necessarily the unit beyond a clause or a sentence. Many linguistic camps have a preference for 'discourse' as the concept larger than a sentence, but SFL adopts 'text' to signify a semantic entity realized through linguistic items regardless to the size, also free from the distinction of spoken mode and written mode. Therefore, a text concerns a simple set of oral greetings, e.g. "*hello*" and "*hi*" between two people as well as an academic journal article written in thousands of words: they are com-

monly identified as a text in terms of its own semantic unification.

In actual uses of language, there is a variety of expressions in the identical type of text. For instance, “*Good morning. May I help you, sir?*” is preferred to a customer at a department store or a hotel restaurant whereas “*Hi, what’s up?*” is often used to a close friend or colleague in school or workplaces. Picking up such a simple case of greeting leads to instant recognition of a diversity of the forms from polite forms to casually colloquial expressions depending on **the context of situation**: the intimacy of human relationship, the social roles of participants, the time and place, the purpose and the mode (spoken/written). The context of situation is decomposed into triadic components: **field** (place and time), **tenor** (human relations) and **mode** (mode and purpose).

Although texts vary in accordance with the contextual variables, some of them share the similar properties in meaning and the structure. The three triggers of greeting, “*Good morning. How are you?*”, “*Good afternoon. How’s it going?*”, “*Hi, is everything OK?*”, in spite of subtleties in vocabulary and interrogative forms, belong to the same text type with the identical social function viz., ‘greeting’ as well as the similar lexicogrammatical pattern. Texts accentuate their resemblances particularly when they share the common contextual variables. Two newspaper editorials in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, both of which were issued on the same day, for instance, can be straightforwardly recognized as the same text type and they are distinguished from the weather forecasts in the identical newspapers because the editorials encompass the common field (the same date), tenor (the press and readers) and mode (the transition of the written journalistic opinions). The cover term for the text type is **register**, and texts are said to belong to the same register when they share similar properties in vocabulary, grammar and the contexts of situation (Butt et al. 2000: 8–9). The contextual variables (field, tenor and mode) have an influence on register, thus they are also referred to as **register variables** (Eggsin 2005: 90).

The texts in the same register are designed to accomplish the same communicative function in society. The function is referred to as **genre**, which is defined as “a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture” (Martin 1984: 25). Genre is, in a less technical expression, what people aim to achieve through language: reporting events, instructing others, narrating stories, presenting information, explaining causes of incidents, discussing topics, etc. These communicative purposes can be labeled as ‘recount’, ‘procedure’, ‘narra-

tive', 'report', 'explanation' and 'discussion' respectively. Therefore, a recipe to make a cheesecake and a PC software manual are classified as the same genre 'procedure' in the respect that both of them provide the readers/the user with the instruction to act.

The prominent property of genre is 'a staged, goal-oriented' by definition. Thus each of the genres contains the obligatory stages and the optional stages, both of which are conveyed in the habitual sequence. These stages are also expressed by a preferred set of linguistic patterns. For instance an instructional text includes as obligatory stages: (1) 'Goal' to specify the purpose of the instruction: (2) 'Materials' to indicate what are utilized in actions: (3) 'Steps' in sequence to notify practical actions transmitted through imperative forms, which characterize the instructional genre.

Thus genre can be regarded as a text type, but it epitomizes a rather broader sense than register. Genre refers to a mould of text specifying the communicative purpose and the stages with the preferences of linguistic patterns. Register represents a more specific text type realized through the identical genre with the common lexicogrammatical patterns influenced by the similar context of situation where a text emerges. Therefore, the recipe of a cheesecake and a PC software manual belong to the same genre 'instruction' in the broad sense, but in the narrow sense they are classified into distinct registers: a recipe text type and a manual text type. Due to the differences in fields (cooking and computing), the two registers, will contain their own distinctive preferences of lexical items, e.g., *flour, egg, butter*, etc. while *click, double click, drag*, etc. Hence, to clarify the divergence of the two text types, this paper will indicate the two notions as: genre as 'a text mould' and register as 'a text type.'

Genre is a socio-cultural domain since the concept notifies the purpose of the linguistic communication as well as the process of the semiotic tool utilized in the culture. A cultural group requires its own semantic value which is not necessarily shared with another group. In other words, a society demands their own meanings and the appropriate linguistic expressions to convey them. For instance, the messages and the meanings in church services in a European culture are penetrated by Christianity and they are diverse from the sermon at temples in an Asian Buddhist culture. Genre, a text mould, therefore, varies from culture to culture and the concept can be said to encapsulate **the context of culture**, viz., the social context where a specific type of genre is demanded.

Text, register and genre have been outlined in this theoretical background section but these notions are not discrete entities, rather, they are on the cline of the social semiotic system, viz., a language. Genre is located on one edge of the cline while text is on the other. In the direction from the larger side to the smaller and/or from the abstract to the concrete, genre formulates the functional framework: how a set of linguistic expression will be utilized in a broad sense. Next, the register will be chosen as the text type in the mixture of the contextual variables so as to suit the communicative purpose. Then, register triggers lexicogrammar to produce the appropriate text and finally a text emerges.

In summary genre realizes register, and register realizes a text and vice versa. A text is realized through a specific set of register variables and a specific property of the genre, thus tracing a text leads to decoding the contextual variables and the communicative purpose and semiotic strategies in society. The following definition of genre densely symbolizes this mutual process: “genre is concerned with systems of social processes, where the principles for relating social processes to each other

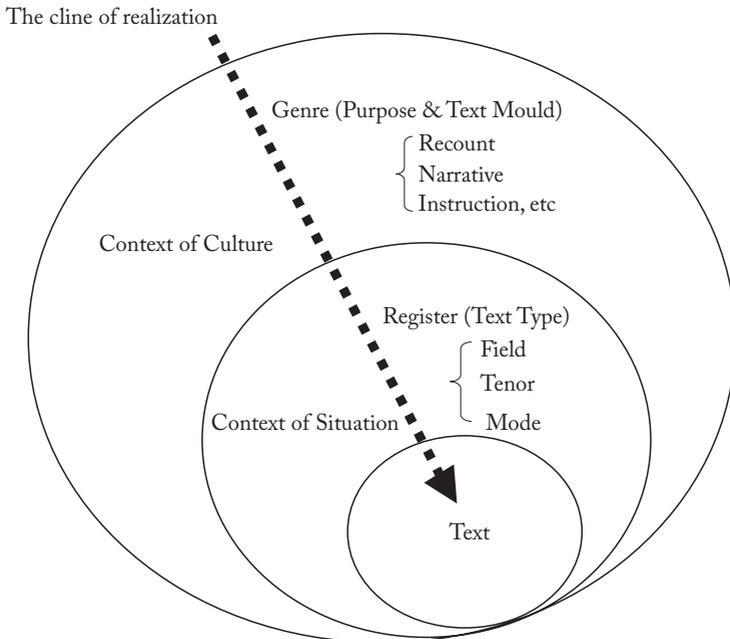


Figure 1: Genre, Register, Text and the Cline of Realization (©Makoto Sasaki 2008)

have to do with texture—the ways in which field, mode and tenor variables are phased together in a text (Martin 1997: 12).” Figure 1 illustrates the summary of the notions. The stratified circles, from larger to smaller, represent genre, register and text respectively.

3 Some previous contributions

The notion of genre and its application to language education has been one of the major themes in SFL and there has been a large volume of studies and contributions to the field. Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964) advocate the three essential concepts of language learning: ‘learning language’, ‘learning through language,’ and ‘learning about language.’ The first concept means acquiring language skills in a conventional sense: listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. The second means to learn other subjects through the target language, such as mathematics, geography, physics, etc. The third signifies the mechanism and contexts involving language in use: grammar, genre, context, etc. In this early stage of investigation they used neither SFL nor genre, but they shed light on language as a tool with which communication is achieved. They also provided followers with the idea that language education does not only mean to instruct students in language skills, but also to get them to acquire the social processes involving the language. The triadic notions then became the core philosophy of the Language Development Project (LDP) conducted in the 1970s in Australia.

Christie and Martin (1997), in further developing the philosophy, edited a book that shows possibility and effective results of utilizing genre into pedagogy. Martin began the book by providing the theoretical framework of notions and also emphasized the topological perspective of genre because “it facilitates the development of learner pathways, ... helps teachers and students make sense of the real-life instantiations of genre... and provides principled tools for reasoning about genre mixing and semogenesis” (*ibid.*: 16). Rose (*ibid.*: 40–72) and Veel (*ibid.*: 161–195) indicate that literacy in science is not just a matter of acquiring mechanical skill but an apprenticeship into a whole world view cultivated by genre-based language education. Christie and Martin have also been advancing the applicability of the investigation with adoption of Bernstein’s sociological perspectives (Christie and Martin 2007).

Cope and Kalantzis (1993) demonstrate that genre can be implemented in

authentic teaching activity. They focus on writing as the domain of application of theory and describe the theoretical validity and instructive strategies to provide learners with social background of texts. They also clarify comprehensive differences among theoretical branches of grammar with emphasis on applicability of SFL to a writing class.

There has been a large number of SFL specialists and researchers in Australia where Halliday sowed his philosophy, thus the major resources of its applications to language education are about English education to English natives in the country or immigrants assimilating to an English speaking society. However, generic theory has been accepted worldwide. Foley and Lee (2004: 98), for instance, report the case of Singapore where English education is considered as a national strategy for promoting its competitiveness in the global economy. The Ministry of Education in Singapore adopted functional linguistic theory and implemented the notion of genre in elementary education as a guideline of text types: recount, narrative, explanation, report, exposition and procedure.

In Europe, citing the case of language education in Finland, Ventola (1989: 153) lists advantages of utilizing the framework of genre. They are (1) linguists are developing dynamic production models for social interaction; (2) the framework provides learners with variations of genre and appropriate behaviours or realizations within a genre; (3) a generic framework leads to an understanding of cultures in which the target language is used.

Japan is pervaded with a need for authentic approaches to language education, especially, English teaching. Thus SFL has been recently appreciated in that country⁸⁾ as a crusade for its insufficient language education, and there have been publicized relevant contributions on application of the theory into English classes. Tatsuki (2006)⁹⁾, in his introductory book to SFL, presents contours of the theory and practical application of the theory to English teaching. The book extracts several similar types of texts used in real situations and clarifies the differences and similarities of the texts in terms of genre, register and lexicogrammar. Hayakawa (2007) analyzed English textbooks popularly used in Japanese colleges and universities, and she concluded by advocating the importance of providing learners with the notion of genre.

These previous studies and contributions are the tip of a large iceberg: indispensable investigations on genre and its application to English education. What is borne in mind, however, is that most of these investigations have been conducted

outside of Japan. Although their insights and proposals are applicable to Japanese English education in principle, their academic accumulation cannot be perfectly utilized without being localized into Japanese educational contexts. In other words, the notion of genre and its educational applicability must be adjusted to Japanese pedagogical systems and situations in which both instructors and learners are more familiar with structural perspectives of the language than the functional aspects. What is imminently demanded, therefore, is a translation of the theoretical concept, i.e., genre, and localization of the pedagogical strategies so that they can be straightforwardly exploited in the classroom.

4 Discussion and proposals

4.1 *Conventional procedures of English teaching in Japanese classrooms*

The theoretical notions and investigations mentioned in previous sections have indicated the validity and indispensability of introducing the functional concept of genre into Japanese English teaching, and consequently there arises an essential question: how can notions be introduced into English lessons in Japanese classrooms? Although the answer is not obtained instantly, a clue can be found in the conventional procedures of English class in this country.

My personal experiences as an ex-student and as a current instructor indicate that textbooks have an influence on teaching English in Japan, and many English classes particularly conducted by a Japanese instructor, are likely to be conducted according to directions in a textbook. The classes are held roughly in the following sequence:

- (1) Students are provided a topic listed in a textbook, for example *Ordering at restaurant, Health problems*, etc. and they are also given the purpose of the unit which is mainly structure-oriented such as *Wh-questions, Present Perfect*, etc.
- (2) The teacher presents a model passage or conversation from the textbook followed by directions about pronunciation and vocabulary.
- (3) The teacher then proceeds to focus on the key expression in the passage to explain the grammatical keys while s/he requires students to put some or all of the expressions into Japanese.
- (4) After the grammatical elucidation the students have follow-up exercises con-

cerning the points and learn optional expressions to replace the key phrases.

- (5) Finally the instructor gives relevant information such as the cultural background or social premises surrounding the model passage.

Needless to say, this is not always the case, although many Japanese involved in English education are very familiar with the procedure listed above.

I will not advocate abandoning the current instructing patterns, because the text-oriented pedagogy gives learners comprehensible targets to achieve through step-by-step drills and exercises. On one hand, this type of teaching method is adequate if not ideal for Japanese learners, who have virtually no opportunity to use the foreign language for practical purposes such as shopping and medical therapy outside of the classroom. However such rigid instruction, on the other, allows students to lose their motivation and to consider English study as a memorizing game. Therefore students need to acquire a macroscopic sense of the language they are studying, i.e., how the target grammatical rules and expressions function in English speaking societies and how that knowledge can be applied in the future.

The notion of genre should be implemented for this purpose of fulfilling the gap between the microscopic grammatical items and the macroscopic functional perspectives. Hence in the following sections I will propose three phases to integrate notions into conventional teaching. The three phases concern genre, register and lexicogrammar respectively. The phases are mutually interrelated, and they are not fixed in order. Rather they indicate teaching steps as beacons of light to signal the stages where texts or model passages should be conveyed and instructed in relation with these functional concepts.

4.2.1 Phase 1: genre and the generic structure

The first phase orients students to general understanding of language as a tool with which communicative purposes are achieved. The first several classes should be assigned to encourage learners to deepen their awareness of genre or 'the purpose of communication' in a plain expression. The learners will be conscious about the notion through exposure of questions about the case of their native tongue. Once the learners recognize that language is utilized to accomplish communicative purposes, then the types of genre will be presented as: narrative, expository, instruction, recount, etc. An instructor, however, should notify learners that English speaking societies have their own sense of social value, and in consequence they

have divergent linguistic construal strategies from Japanese society. For instance, many Japanese students frequently ask how to say *Itadakimasu* in English¹⁰, but they should be instructed that even the simple greeting phrase is not identically shared in other socio-cultural groups.

ESP (English for Specific Purpose) can merge with genre in this stage. The notion has been spotlighted as a cover term to promote authentic English education for the purpose that learners can acquire linguistic knowledge and skills instantly applicable to workplaces after their apprenticeship, therefore it is appreciated by industries such as business, medicine, technology, tourism, etc. The concept concerns English usage for communicative purposes defined more restrictedly than types of genre in its contexts. Consequently, ESP can be regarded as a concept referring to genres with particular sets of contextual variables. For instance, business English pertains to a language generally classified into expository, instruction, informative, report, etc., attached by specific sets of contextual factors as tags: product, service, transactions, budget, etc., as field, customers, clients, manager, representatives, etc., as tenor, and spoken and written interaction for commerce as mode. In this sense ESP comes in between genre and register.

When a class starts according to units in textbooks, students should be inspired to recognize that genre is a text mould potentially containing obligatory stages and optional stages, both of which are not allocated at random. Each type of genre has its own structure, referred to as **generic structure**. ‘Sales encounters’, for instance, is a common genre in many cultures and at a glance it might seem simple in its generic structure because the genre presumes a clear purpose: transaction of merchandises. However, the generic structure is comprised of a complex set of stages in distribution. Hasan (Halliday and Hasan 1989: 64) formulates the generic structure of sales encounters as in Table 1.

Table 1: Generic Structure potential for CC1 (from Halliday and Hasan 1989: 64)

$$[(G) \cdot (SI)^\wedge] [(SE) \cdot \{SR^\wedge SC^\wedge\}^\wedge S^\wedge] P^\wedge PC^\wedge (^\wedge F)$$

G: Greeting	SI: Sale Initiation	SE: Sale Enquiry
SR: Sale Request	SC: Sale Compliance	S: Sale
P: Purchase	PC: Purchase Closure	F: Finis

This formula shows what stages are involved in ‘sales encounters’ and the symbols indicate their orders and possibility of occurrence. The caret sign ^ indicates sequence, so in the diagram above, a text belonging to sales encounters proceeds from the left ‘Greeting’ to the right, ending with ‘Finis.’ The round brackets specify optional components that may or may not occur. The dot • between elements indicates optionality of the sequence which is constrained by the square bracket. Both or either (G) and (SI) may occur. The order (G) and (SI) can be reversed only inside of the square brackets, and neither of them can follow the elements to the right of SI. The curved arrow shows iteration. SE can be repetitive and optional. It can occur anywhere so long as it does not precede G or SI and so long as it does not follow P or PC or F¹¹).

The formula of generic structure illustrates communicative functions with the sequence and constraints. In other words, the components in generic structure indicate what is done in each of the communicative stages, and they also signify sequential steps to proceed toward the achievement of the communicative purpose. Students should acquire obligatory stages first so as to fulfill minimum requirements for a specific communicative purpose. Then depending on the degree of their understanding students are encouraged to learn optional stages and sequential varieties of generic structure so that they can acquire a wide range of communicative patterns.

The introduction of generic structure is prominently effective when students encounter similar type of texts. The structure illustrates differences and similarities in terms of stages of genre as found in the following texts extracted from Hasan (*ibid.*). Each utterance is tagged with a generic structural element in the lead.

Text 1 (cited from Halliday and Hasan 1989: 65)

SE: Have you any Granny Smiths? Yes, large or medium?

SR: Well give me half a dozen large ones please.

SC: Yes what else? That’s all, thanks.

Text 2 (cited from Halliday and Hasan 1989: 65)

SR: Can I have a dozen Granny Smiths?

SC: Will that be all just now? Yes, thank you.

S: That’ll be 95 cents.

SE: Where are these apples from? They look very good.

Both Text 1 and Text 2 are conversations for shopping the apples, and they can be presented to learners, on one hand, through the similarity of sharing the common generic stages, however, on the other, through differences in its configuration of the generic components: SE[^]SR[^]SC in Text 1 or SR[^]SC[^]S[^]SE in Text 2. Such descriptive comparison leads students to comprehension of properties of texts in order to identify the genre the text belongs to, and accordingly the students can retrieve the knowledge to adjust themselves in a new situation where the target genre is involved. Students also will be able to demarcate a particular text from another kind.

As a consequence of having premises of genre, students will have a question: why and how are such varieties in texts produced? The answer is in the context of situation. Even though texts are categorized into the same genre, they are still distinctive because of the affect of differences of register variables on construing texts.

4.2.2 Phase 2: register and the context of situation

The second phase concerns register and the context of situations. This stage leads students to recognition of varieties in text types under the influence of register variables: **field** (time, place and topic), **tenor** (human relations) and **mode** (mode and purpose). Students should be inspired to recognize that the context variables influence construing texts as a reader/listener as well as a speaker/writer. Model passages or conversations in textbooks are fixed in these variables and students study these frozen texts, which make the learners inflexible to apply the expressions they have studied into a new situation. Japanese students are superior in memorizing grammatical items, meanings of collocations, idioms and expressions given in class or textbooks. In consequence, the students can receive good scores in review tests. However, many of the students are perplexed to apply the knowledge into new contexts with a claim that the situation was not in textbooks. They are uncertain how to adjust phrases suitable for the situations they have never studied, even though the situations are similar to ones they have encountered. Textbooks and instructors provide learners with optional expressions for substitutions, but simple phrasal replacing guarantees no functional guidelines. Thus students should be consistently encouraged to presume that there are varieties in the same genre, particularly in relation with the register variables.

A comprehensible example can be found in the case of an ordering meal at

a restaurant, one of the most popular conversation models in many English textbooks. The conversation between a customer and a waiting staff, generally proceeds as a greeting, information exchange on cuisine, customer's decision of the meal to order, and follow-up offering from the staff, e.g. side menu, dessert, beverage, etc. An instructor provides learners with listening exercises, explanation for key phrases or vocabulary, and grammatical strategies to seek information from a customer's viewpoint.

In due course students will acquire the way to order appetizers or to offer a chocolate cake, however, this knowledge cannot be necessarily utilized when they are at a fast food chain store. Ordering a meal is a common genre, but there arises a difference in the place where the communications occur. Customers at a restaurant are likely to be given the information on today's special or they are asked how they would like the steak. Verbal interaction is an indispensable process to accomplish their goals. However, these communicative functions are not observed at McDonald's. Instead, customers at the fast food chain are prompted to declare where they consume the food by a question as "*For here or to go?*". Furthermore, in an extreme case, a fast food ordering requires the customers no linguistic interaction; a customer can successfully order the meal by exclusive finger indication of items on a photo menu.

These textual variations can be explained in terms of variables in field, and the factor can be illustrated by a cline as Figure 2. This visualized cline gives learners a blueprint for appropriate selection of suitable expressions.



Figure 2: The cline of Place

As the place approaches to the edge of formality, the text involved tends to be more formal and essential in communication, whereas the factor in the casual edge requires colloquial texts with less significance in communication. The significance of linguistic interaction in communication will be discussed later in relation with mode.

The parameter in field also has influence on tenor, i.e., human relationship between participants. The relation refers to a psychological distance between speakers/writers and listeners/readers, and it provokes politeness in communi-

tion. In the case of the conversation at a restaurant, especially at a sophisticated restaurant, the human relation is relatively distant between a customer and a floor staff because both participants are conscious of the social power of the customer. Therefore polite phrases can be observed in staff's utterance such as *sir, madam, would you care for wine?*, etc. In contrast a text at a fast food chain is likely to include more casual expressions instead due to the informal atmosphere of the place with less emotional distance in consequence.

Politeness has been introduced into English textbooks and the relevant words and phrases are presented to students in class. In Asian culture it is a social premise to express respect to elderly people, thus, Japanese students tend to take it granted to use polite expressions in English to superiors. Age is a clear criterion but this is not the case in English speaking society. The criterion is simply one of the factors to decide politeness. Rather, politeness in English principally depends on psychological distance flexibly influenced in accordance with the place where communication occurs, as well as the amount of shared knowledge and experiences between participants. The more distant the participants feel, the more polite their linguistic expressions will be, whereas the shorter the distance is, the more casual their interactions will be. The human relations can be illustrated as Figure 3. Students should be instructed on when and how the relations are controlled by participants and other relevant factors in terms of solidarity, social power, status, familiarity, etc.



Figure 3: The cline of Human Relations

Finally, in this stage students should be given a notion of mode, which concerns spoken and written medium as well as ancillary and constitutive modes. The spoken/written concept pertains to how linguistic messages are conveyed in principal, i.e., auditory conduction or visual transmission, however, it makes little sense to simply inform learners of differences in the physical media. Rather, students should be instructed that spoken/written languages notify a matter of preferences of linguistic patterns, realized through vocabulary selection and clause configurations. Spoken language includes a large number of colloquial phrases and complexity in grammatical configuration (Halliday 1989). This type prefers short

and familiar words while it frequently involves deletion, substitution, sequence of noun phrases or prepositional phrases, etc. Spoken language is not only found in oral conversations as the label indicates, but also observed in written media such as personal letters, emails, blogs, chats and websites, most of which are connected in casual field. Several popular newspapers and magazines also adopt the spoken language so that the readers can easily read the articles and empathize with them. On the contrary written language is appreciated in the written media such as standard newspapers, textbooks, academic journals, technical books, etc. This type is also preferred in audio channels such as political speech, university lectures, presidential inaugural addresses, etc., and other channels in formal field. Written language is characterized by its complexity of lexical configuration with comparatively simple grammatical structures.

Halliday (*ibid.*) labels the two lexical and grammatical aspects respectively as **lexical density** and **grammatical intricacy**. Lexical density refers to an index that is calculated by the ratio of content words in a text in proportion to all the words in the text. Content words include nouns, main verbs, adverbs and adjectives. Grammatical intricacy is another index that can be calculated by the number of clauses in a text in proportion to the number of sentences in the text. Hence spoken language has low ratio in lexical density with high ratio in grammatical intricacy whereas written language has high ratio in lexical density with low ratio in grammatical intricacy. Presentation of such indexes will lead students to comprehensible understanding of the difference between the two languages.

Mode also regards importance of linguistic expressions in communication. Halliday (1978) classifies mode of discourse into the two: ancillary and constitutive. Ancillary mode means that language takes supportive roles to achieve a communicative purpose. In the case of ordering at a fast food chain, a customer can order meals, in extreme case, without words because photo menus and pictorial information can compensate insufficiency of information exchange through linguistic expressions. However, in constitutive mode linguistic interaction is itself the main resource to achieve communicative purposes such as discussion, narrating stories, political speech, university lectures, etc. The constitutive mode depends on purposes for which language is used, but it is also influenced by another register variable, i.e., field. For instance, language functions in a more constitutive manner if not pure for ordering meals at a sophisticated restaurant where meals are explained in written language without photos, therefore a customer needs to have linguistic

interaction to seek information of the meals. Figure 4 illustrates the clines of mode and they give a summary of the points.

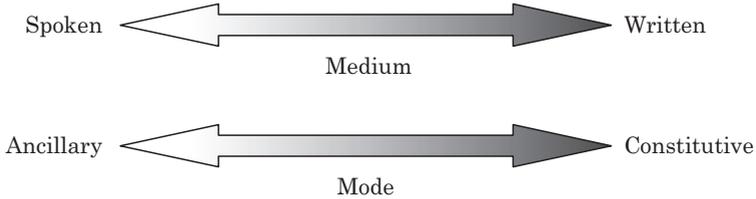


Figure 4: The clines of Medium and Mode

Field, tenor and mode are interconnected and these factors can provide students with plenty of aspects to instigate the similarities and differences in texts. The interconnection also offers a guideline to utilize expressions the students have studied into a new context of situation. These contextual variables need not necessarily be introduced in the fixed order as they were in this section, but even one aspect of the variables or subsidiary concepts should be implemented in class according to students' understanding and their learning targets. Each of the clines, or the combination of them presented in the section, will present an unequivocal image of properties of textual similarities and differences. The image will lead students to the gate of the third phase, i.e., lexicogrammar, by which textual similarities and differences are ultimately realized through lexical selections and clausal configurations.

4.2.3 Phase 3: lexicogrammar and wording

The third phase regards lexicogrammar, the component in which the students are instructed in the construal strategies of texts. Ostensibly English education in Japan has been emphasizing the aspect of language as a realization, and the monotonous instruction on learning grammatical mechanisms has deprived many Japanese students of enthusiastic motivation for the language study.

In this phase, however, the functional approach of English grammar can justify the importance of learning rules and premises of configuring clauses. In a clause level, lexicogrammar can conflate the five sentence patterns which are still popular in many of textbooks: SV, SVC, SVO, SVOO and SVOC. I encounter many university students who do not understand transitivity of verbs, therefore,

in an introductory section of English courses, I usually explain to the students mechanisms of sentence patterns applying especially, one of lexicogrammatical frameworks¹²⁾, **the ideational metafunction**¹³⁾ in order to clarify interconnections between forms and meaning as follows:

- (1) Language functions can be classified into: (a) action or event; (b) state or condition; (c) feeling or emotion. These functions are equivalent to the triadic core process types such as **material process**, **relational process** and **psychological process** respectively, but these SFL terminologies (and hereafter) need not be introduced for unnecessary confusion to students.
- (2) Action or event are usually expressed by SV, SVO and SVOO. The difference among the three depends on existence of object which is not fully understood.
- (3) Object, then, is explicated as to what is affected by action or event. Without object the action is not complete. Usually I demonstrate to kick the desk or chair in the classroom to show that kicking is complete under the existence of the desk or chair with certain affects of the action. If I move my leg and swing the toe in the air, this action can not be recognized as kicking. In SFL lexicogrammar object is labeled as **goal**, which signifies the completeness of actions.
- (4) SV and SVO are described by the different nature of actions. SV conveys action completing without other items to affect. Walking or jumping are typical demonstrations and the concept of intransitivity is introduced so that students can identify the verbal property in an English dictionary. Intransitive actions are typically labeled in SFL lexicogrammar as **behavioural process** meanwhile actions requiring obligatory objects or goals, i.e., transitive actions or events are generally labeled as **material process**. Symbolizing action, i.e., **verbal process** can be explained in this stage.
- (5) State and condition are usually conveyed by SVC. Subject is attached to complement and a new value of the subject is expressed by the sentence pattern. This is why complement is labeled as **attributer** or **identifier** in SFL. I usually say or write on the blackboard *The sky is blue*, *The flower is beautiful*, *I am an English teacher*, etc. The connecting verb is usually the verb to be, but here is an important notion of the verb to be. The verb to be is usually understood among Japanese students as particles to complete a sentence,

which is equivalent to *desu, da* in Japanese. However, the verb to be in English functions as a copula to connect subject and complement, and simultaneously it indicates that the subject exists in the condition of what the complement signifies. This is what SFL defines as **relational process**. I usually explain in the case of *I am an English teacher* as I exist here in the condition of a social role as an English teacher. *There is/are* construction, or **existential process** can also be introduced in this phase.

- (6) SVOO is a type of action but specifies ‘giving’, which requires an item to be given and the person who receives, labeled as **recipient** in SFL. Lacking either of them makes the action incomplete.
- (7) SVOC can be explained as the combination of SVO and SVC. SVOC is an action to make a condition in which O is C. Naming is a typical example of the action.

These instructions will give students comprehensive understanding between meaning and structure with a new angle to shed light on what they have studied in previous English classes.

This clause configuration stage should also suggest varieties of optional expressions applicable in each of the stages of generic structure. For instance, ‘sales request’ in Text 1 and Text 2 includes the options as *Well give me ... please* and *Can I have...?* respectively. Japanese students are exposed to many grammatical exercises asking them to fill in a blank to complete a sentence, but the learners should be required to acquire functional varieties in constructing clauses apposite to the generic structure.

Varieties of optional expressions stimulate students to realize that a clause form does not necessarily accord with the function. An interrogative clause is not always used to seek information but for a request or an indirect command depending on the context of situations. This incongruence is frequently observed in a formal field with a distant human relation in tenor, and consequently such usage is allied with politeness. Lexicogrammar can demonstrate the interconnection between representations and functions in accordance with genre and register.

At the advanced stage of lexicogrammar students should also be inspired to learn textual preferences in accordance with specific genres and registers. For instance, a long string of nouns, i.e., nominalizations is appreciated in academic articles or legal documents whereas colloquial expressions are preferred in ad-

vertisements or narrative stories. With regard to nominalization the concept of **grammatical metaphor** can be introduced. The notion regards sophisticated manageability to exploit varieties in expressions. The main motive of the concept pertains to compress or unpack information in a limited set of words so as to develop further accumulation of knowledge, otherwise so as to simplify the complexity of knowledge.

4.3 *Challenges*

This paper has been advocating the expediency of applying the notions genre and its relevant notions, viz., register and text with proposals of how the notions are implemented in the class. It would be ideal to put the insights and ideas mentioned in the paper into class activities immediately, however, in reality, there are several realistic challenges for instant application of the functional theory into authentic educational scenes.

One of the major problems is the complexity of SFL. The functional theory has been developed and spread worldwide mainly through description of English language. Native English speaking instructors have the ability to absorb the theoretical notions and utilize them for teaching, but in reality the linguistic theory is an academic hardship to even native speakers of English. Christie (2004) reports inadequate manageability of the theory by native English speaking teachers even if they had an intensive seminar of the discipline. According to Christie, many English teachers in Australia have insufficient knowledge of grammatical terminology due to lack of learning traditional grammar of English. Rothery (1988), quoting Bernstein, describes, that there are language teachers who are naive to the semiotic system realized through ordinary language use.

The problem is much more serious for Japanese instructors who can obtain information about the theory from a limited sets of resources. The bible of SFL, i.e., Halliday (1994) was translated into Japanese by Kakehi and Yamaguchi (Halliday 2001) but there still remains intellectual knots of theoretical concepts to be untied. Tatsuki (2006) edited a book on SFL, which was the first introductory course written in Japanese. The book is aimed at disseminating the theory among students majoring in linguistics and English teachers seeking a linguistic theory applicable to teaching. However, the information resources are inadequate to promote the theory. Further publications and investigations, especially by active members of Japan Association of Systemic Functional Linguistics (JASFL), are

expected to emerge for advanced development of the functional approach in this country.

With regards to learning SFL, terminology is another source of challenges. SFL has been occasionally criticized for large volumes of terminology and complexity of the concepts. However, teaching English in SFL framework means neither implementing the terminology for students nor allowing learners to think in the SFL fashion. Rather, what is primarily essential is that instructors should bridge the construal strategy of texts and constant sense of triadic notions: genre, register and lexicogrammar. The instructors are allowed to change and modify the metalanguage into more familiar expression so as to promote students' understanding. As this paper has proposed, there can be alternatives as: "a text mould" for genre, "a text type" for register, and "place and time" for field, "people" for tenor, "spoken/written" for mode. The instructors also need to be sensitive to varieties of genres, register variables, and variations of texts in use so as to exploit the texts for developing students' potentialities for detecting the textual properties.

5 Conclusion

In current attention to communicative teaching of English there has been arising crucial criticisms against traditional methods of English education in Japan. Yamada (2005) for instance advocates that real English education is not memorizing tasks, but that it is to educate students' fundamental linguistic competence, although he does not mention what the competence is. What he emphasizes is to provide students with opportunities to strengthen capability to use language as a communicative tool for various occasions. This is what Halliday and other systemic functional linguists advocate as language as meaning potential. Hasan (2004) also insists on the importance of learning the manageability of appropriate linguistic behaviour so as to acquire or maintain the position in society: "codes are a device for positioning; to say this is to say also that codes are related realizationally to positioning" (*ibid.*: 67).

English education in Japan should seek systematic innovations to develop learner's fundamental potentiality of exploiting language appropriately in accordance with the communicative purposes. SFL provides both instructors and learners with comprehensible frameworks to enhance the linguistic ability. It cannot be excessive to declare that the functional approach will be the *sine qua non* of

English education in Japan in near future.

Notes

- 1) My tremendous gratitude goes to my colleagues: Ms. Merryn Black, Mr. Jeff Blair and Mr. Glen Gagne for their proof reading and constructive opinions on the article.
- 2) The Standard English Proficiency Test: an English proficiency test exclusively adopted in Japan. It is nationwide known as EIKEN in the country.
- 3) The system replaced the conventional analogue language laboratory with the completely digitized technology. The avant-garde language system, comprising two media servers and 40 clients, supplied the students with multimedia linguistic materials, viz., audio files and video files, which were stored in the media servers and could be accessed in proportion to the students' own learning speed. The computing system, characterized by its exclusion of standard analogue media: cassette tapes and VHS and Beta videos, made it possible, on one hand, for the instructors to handle a large volume of materials in ease, and on the other, for the learners to experience a wide range of linguistic patterns in authentic uses through composition tasks, grammar exercises, intonation and pronouncing keys, etc.
- 4) The word "construe" is characteristically used in SFL to mean "understand and generate." The word in this paper follows the usage.
- 5) The SFL categorizes the linguistic meanings into the triadic: **ideational**, **interpersonal** and **textual**. The three are also referred as **metafunctions** which constitute the core of functional aspect of language.
- 6) Lexicogrammar is not the only one that the system network involves. The system network can also be applied to more higher levels such as the discourse level where it is concerned with deployment of clauses, furthermore, in the contextual level the network can handle the places and purposes of communication, the social roles of speakers, media through which the linguistic messages are transmitted, etc.
- 7) Clause complex refers to the combination of clauses, connected with conjunctions as "*When I arrived at the station, I found the train had already left.*", or participial construction as "*Arriving at the station I found the train had already left.*"
- 8) An example can be observed in the fact that Prof. Minoru Yasui, a giant of English linguistics in Japan contributed his article to *the Japanese Journal of Systemic Functional Linguistics*, the official journal of the Japan Association of Systemic Functional Linguistics. His article is on grammatical metaphor and he discusses utilizing the notion into English teaching in Japan.
- 9) In this book I was in charge of the chapter of SFL application to English education.
- 10) It is a greeting word for the meals or presents. Literary translations will be "Let me have it with gratitude for the food or gift."
- 11) See Halliday and Hasan (1989: 64) for the complete description of the formula.
- 12) See Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) for six process types of a clause.
- 13) See Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) for metafunctions of a clause.

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