Title   How do the quantity of context, Japanese language proficiency, and type of second verb affect guessing the meaning of Japanese syntactic compound verbs by the Japanese language learners?

Name   YACHI, Michiko

Most vocabulary in a second language is learned through four language skill training activities. However, it is well known that some of the words, such as Japanese compound verbs are difficult to learn for the Japanese language learners. The present study investigates how the quantity of context, Japanese language proficiency, and type of second verb in compound verbs affect inferring the meaning of compound verbs for the Mongolian Japanese language learners.

The experiment was carried out twice in the present study. In the first experiment, a multiple choice test was administered. In the second experiment, a written test was administered. Target words were syntactic compound verbs, which were divided into three categories according to the characteristics of the second verbs. Type1: verbs in level 3 or 4 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) vocabulary list, whose meanings in compound verbs are primary meaning. Type 2: verbs in level 3 or 4 of JLPT vocabulary list, whose meanings in compound verbs are derivative meanings. Type 3: verbs in level 1 or unlisted verbs of JLPT vocabulary list. Accuracy of inferring the word meanings and characteristics of the inferred meanings were compared from the following point: quantity of context, Japanese language proficiency, and type of second verb.

The present study consists of four studies. In Study 1, accuracy of inferring the word meanings in the multiple choice test was examined. The result showed that 1) in terms of quantity of context, single sentence was sufficient to infer accurately the meaning of the target words, 2) a certain degree of Japanese proficiency is necessary to infer more accurate meaning of the target words, 3) type 1 is easier than type 2 to infer accurately the meaning of the target words.

In study 2, characteristics of inferred meanings in the multiple choice test were examined. The most selected choice was classified in order to see whether the most selected choice would vary according to the quantity of context, Japanese language proficiency, and type of second verb. The result showed that the most selected choice for type 2 vary more often than that of type 1. However, even though the most selected choice for type 2 tend to vary, there is no case that the most selected choice is different for the quantity of context or Japanese proficiency level.

In Study 3 accuracy of inferring the word meanings in the written test was examined. The result showed that 1) a complex sentence is necessary in order to infer accurate meaning of the target words, 2) a certain degree of Japanese proficiency is necessary to infer more accurate meaning of the target words, 3) type 1 is easier than type 2 to infer the accurate meaning, and type 3 is most difficult to infer the accurate meaning.

In Study 4 characteristics of inferred meanings in the written test were examined. The

meaning of the target word described by the participants was classified for each target word in order to see whether trend of meaning of the target word described by the participants would vary according to the presence or absence of context, the quantity of context, and Japanese language proficiency, by the type of second verb. The result showed the following points. First, in type 1 and type 2, most of the inferred meanings didn't vary according to the presence or absence of context, quantity of context, and Japanese language proficiency, however, type of inferred meanings differed between type 1 and type 2. In type 3, most of the inferred meanings changed according to the presence or absence of context, on the other hand, inferred meanings did not change according to the quantity of context, and Japanese language proficiency. Second, though there are some differences among type of second verb, some of the words are very difficult to guess the meanings without any contextual information, but it became possible to infer some kind of meanings with contextual information. Furthermore, there is some tendency to understand the target word as a meaning of first verb or second verb when it is difficult to guess the meaning of the target words accurately.

The findings from the present study are as follows. The first point is that even if it was impossible to guess the meanings of the target word accurately, it doesn't necessarily mean that guessing the meaning of the target word itself was impossible. Even though the target word meanings cannot be guessed, it would be possible to guess the meanings of target word under certain conditions.

The second point is that contextual information is indispensable for guessing the word meanings, more contextual information doesn't necessarily lead to an accurate guessing. Therefore it is necessary to investigate further about the quality of context which makes guessing the word meanings accurate.

The third point is that even if Japanese proficiency level is high, the tendency of meaning that is inferred does not change. Therefore, contextual information which is used for guessing the word meanings does not differ according to Japanese proficiency level.

The fourth point is that accuracy of the inferred meanings of the target words are affected by how much the learners know the single verbs consisting of the target compound verbs. Hence, it may be effective to teach explicitly the difference between single verbs and compound verbs. It also may be effective to teach explicitly what kind of meanings are derived from first verb and second verb.

These findings provide useful insights to both research for the acquisition of compound verbs and research for inferring the word meanings in a second language.