

Concept Formation of Japanese ESL/EFL Students

Istvan Kecskes
The University of Montana

Abstract

In order to support instructors' work of developing the conceptual base in the target language this paper attempts to explain what makes concept formation difficult for Japanese ESL/EFL students by analyzing data collected from Japanese students with a median exposure of 9 years to the English language. The research focused on the most frequently used verbs of speech and verbs of perception. Analysis of the data revealed that Japanese students' concept formation is complicated by their grammar-centered approach to the language, their language learning strategy based on rote memorization of language chunks and the transfer of Japanese lexico-pragmatics to English semantics. Conceptual content acquired by Japanese students comprises mainly syntactic features and very little semantic and pragmatic information which hampers the development of a conceptual system in the target language. In the students' interlanguage emerging concepts are usually represented by one possible syntagmatic environment only, which is the result of rote memorization of chunks. Japanese students in this project relied heavily upon the pragmatics of their mother tongue when choosing from several options in the English language. This transfer made concept formation very difficult and usually led to false generalizations.

1. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This paper reports on the acquisition of Verbs of Speech (say, tell, talk, speak, discuss) and Verbs of Perception (look at, see, watch, notice, observe, perceive) by Japanese ESL/EFL students who have been studying English for a median of nine years. The first part of the study administered in the spring of 1994 (Dilenschneider, 1994)¹ focused on the Verbs of Speech and investigated how Japanese students attempt to capture and acquire the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic complexities of English verbs. Data collected through two batteries of exercises were analyzed in terms of: 1) clues Japanese students used to figure out intralingual differences; 2) the conceptual content acquired by the students; and 3) the nature of transfer from L1 to L2. The second part of the study conducted in the fall of 1994 concentrated on the Verbs of Perception and attempted to prove that findings from the previous research represent real tendencies in the concept formation of Japanese students.

1.1. Choice of Semantic Groups

In the experiment two semantic groups of English verbs were examined: Verbs of Speech (talk, speak, tell, say, and discuss) and Verbs of Perception (see, watch, look at, notice, observe and

perceive).² The reasons why these two groups of verbs were selected are as follows:

1.1.1. Both groups of verbs are frequently used, and their respective uses in English and Japanese vary greatly. The semantic domain of perception and speech is less dissected in Japanese than in English. In Japanese in both groups we have a lexico-pragmatic dichotomy.³ In the Speech Verbs group the verbs 'iu' and 'hanasu' have distinctive pragmatic domains. 'Iu' is used for reported speech and speech acts not associated with a recipient. 'Hanasu', on the other hand, requires a recipient of speech act and is used primarily to describe the speech interaction between two or more participants. In the Verbs of Perception group there is a lexico-pragmatic dichotomy of 'miru' and 'kizuku'. 'Miru' can stand for 'look at', 'see', and 'watch'. 'Kizuku' can be an equivalent to 'notice', but it is closer to 'take notice of'. 'Observe' and 'perceive' are usually translated into Japanese by denominal verbs such as 'kansatsu suru', 'chumaku suru', 'ninshiki suru' and some others. The difference between 'miru' and 'kizuku' is not only lexical but pragmatic as well. 'Miru' describes intentional actions, whereas 'kizuku' denotes unintentional, accidental actions.

1.1.2. Syntactically Verbs of Speech differ from Verbs of Perception in that Verbs of Speech can have a great variety of syntactic environments and are used with different prepositions. For example:

I spoke to the manager about our plan.

Mary told nothing to John about her visit to Chicago.

When did you talk with Jim about our project?

This variety of syntactic structures is favorable for Japanese students who usually memorize not only the word but its immediate syntactic environment as well. This gave us the opportunity to investigate the effect of rote memorization on conceptualization.

1.1.3. Verbs of Perception in English do not require a variety of syntactic environments. Each of them has two arguments: subject and object. No prepositions are needed to connect them with their object. The only exception is look at, which is a prepositional verb. When using verbs of perception, then, Japanese students cannot rely on syntagmatic features: they must resolve the intralingual conceptual differences between the English Verbs of Speech: see, watch, look at, notice, observe and perceive. This gave us the opportunity to examine reconceptualization as a cognitive process.

1.2. Research questions

It was hypothesized that Japanese students' concept formation is complicated by their grammar-centered approach to the language and affected by their language learning strategy that is based on rote memorization.⁴ Therefore, we 1) looked for the clues Japanese students rely on to perceive and resolve intralingual differences between English verbs; 2) examined the main characteristics of the conceptual content acquired by the Japanese students, and 3) attempted to describe the nature of transfer from the L1 to the L2.

2. FIRST EXPERIMENT

2.1. The participants and the tasks

The first part of the experiment focused on the Verbs of Speech and started in the spring of 1994 when twenty Japanese undergraduate and graduate students volunteered to participate in the project. The students' ages ranged over a span of ten years, from ages 19 to 28, and their years of residence within the U.S. ranged from one year to six years. Project participants had a median exposure of 9.8 years to the English language, six years of which is compulsory within the secondary school system in Japan.

Six evaluative exercises were administered to the students in two parts: the first battery consisted of four exercises and the second battery contained two exercises based on the use of Verbs of Speech (say, tell, talk, speak and discuss). The first battery's four exercises featured two cloze tests in a narrative and dialog format, a sentence completion activity and finally an exercise in which students were expected to form coherent sentences by putting the words in a meaningful order. The second battery included a multiple choice exercise with multiple correct answers, and a Japanese to English translation. The tasks demanded varying levels of participant creativity with relation to the different syntactic, semantic and pragmatic clues given in the respective exercises.

2.2. Discussion

When evaluating responses, no attention was paid to grammatical errors such as correct tense form or use of grammatical suffixes. Answers were accepted as correct if the appropriate verb(s) was used. Data analysis was based on incorrect answers. The charts below (1-5) contain the correct

(1)
Exercise A
Narrative Cloze

Correct Answers	Error Percentages
tell	10%
said	30%
discussed	40%
spoke / talked	30%
talk / (talking)	5%
say	0%
tell	0%
discuss	60%
talks (twice)	45%
spoken / talked	25%
Mean %	24.5%

Exercise A
Dialog Cloze

Correct Answers	Error percentages
say	45%
told	0%
discuss(ing)	20%
speak / talk	45%
spoken / talked	15%
tell	5%
discuss	85%
say	35%
speak / talk	20%
speak	50%
Mean %	32%

(2) Exercise B
Complete the sentence

Error Percentages
20%
25%
15%
5%
0%
5%
25%
60%
50%
20%
Mean % 22.5%

(3) Exercise C
Jumbled Words

Correct Answers	Error Percentages
speak / talk	0%
telling	0%
say	20%
discuss	20%
spoke / talked	5%
saying	15%
discussed	10%
tells	35%
speak / talk	0%
speaks / talks	5%
Mean %	14%

(4) Exercise D
Multiple Choice

Correct Answers	Error Percentages
talks about	0%
discusses	47%
spoken in	53%
talked in	47%
you say	12%
he says	29%
discuss	21%
speak about	24%
talk about	12%
speak to	29%
speak on	70%
talk about	6%
discuss with	21%
say to	24%
talked about	6%
spoke about	47%
told about	65%
talk about	59%
say to	29%
discuss with	41%
speak with	59%
speak to	47%
talk to	12%
Mean %	33%

(5) Exercise E
Translation

Yesterday, the Prime Minister (1) **said** in a speech to the rest of the members of the Diet, "The government will have to lower taxes in order to stimulate the economy." After his speech, the Prime Minister (2) **discussed** his proposal with other politicians and **spoke with** (translated as 'announced to') reporters from the Asahi and Yomiuri newspapers, as well as with NHK and FNN broadcasters. One critic from NHK news (3) **told** his six o'clock audience that Prime Minister Hosokawa (4) **talks** a lot but really (5) **says** very little.

(1) said	47%
(2) discussed	12%
(3) told*	88% -- but translated as "said to" = 41%
(4) talks / speaks	29%
(5) says*	100% -- idiomatic nuance
mean %	76% with "said to" (3) = 46.4%

answers for each of the exercises, along with error percentages for each response, and a cumulative error 'mean' for each exercise.

Taking into account the mean percentage of error of all six exercises, the following difficulty ranking can be derived, with a descending percentage of errors:

exercise E (translation) contained the highest percentage of errors, followed by

exercise D (multiple choice with more than one correct answer)

exercise A (dialog-cloze)

exercise A (narrative-cloze)

exercise B (sentence completion)

exercise C (jumbled words)

The fewest errors were made in those exercises where students had syntactic clues and were expected to manipulate the word-order in a more restrictive syntactic environment. The jumbled words exercise required only recognition skills. Students were supposed to recognize the syntactic structure in which the jumbled words plus one of the Speech Verbs make sense. For example:

(to, forgot, going, was, I, what, I)

Correct answer: I forgot what I was going to say.

(Tom, with, project, whom, the, did) (?)

Correct answer: Whom did Tom discuss the project with?

The sentence completion exercise required more creativity, but within a certain frame determined partly by the given chunk of the sentence. For example:

Peter went to the headmaster

Would you please excuse us? We're

When Sarah comes home from work,

Most important to this exercise is the fact that Japanese students are not required to create the whole sentence as a part of the sentence is already supplied for them. Rather, they are expected to follow a particular pattern. This procedure exemplifies their learning style: they can be creative

within a given frame. In cloze exercises, given more restricted syntactic environments and inflexible word-orders they make many more mistakes. Error analysis reveals two major problems of Japanese students: **"chunk" learning and the transfer of Japanese lexico-pragmatics to English semantics.**

2.2.1. Chunk Learning

In accordance with their grammar-translation learning in junior and senior high school, Japanese students felt most comfortable associating the five English speech verbs with prepositions to form "chunks" when selecting a verb for the sentence (Dilenschneider 1994:9). If the discuss with chunk was divided with intervening words, then, Japanese students had a difficult time selecting the appropriate answer. The problem can be demonstrated with examples from the cloze exercises and the multiple choice exercise. (See examples below.) Little, if any, reconceptualization occurred as Japanese students simply recalled learned phrases and attempted to insert those speech verbs, whether appropriate or not, into familiar syntactic domains. Examples:

Mean %: 60% (narrative cloze)

"Stephanie would not even discuss **the matter with** her other friends, who were curious as well."

This sentence is from the narrative cloze task where students were expected to enter "discuss" as correct answer. Since "the matter" is between the verb and the preposition, students failed to enter the correct answer. The "chunk" they are familiar with is "discuss with" and not "discuss something with".

Mean %: 47% (multiple choice)

"When John comes home from work, he always _____ the happenings of the day with his wife."

1) talks about (M%:0)

2) speaks to

3) discusses (M%:47)

4) says of

In this sentence students had no problem with "talk about" as correct answer, but almost half of them

didn't accept "discusses" as correct. This can be explained by the fact that the preposition "with" is "too far" from its verb.

Mean %: 45% (dialog cloze)

Ted: - "We did _____ a little bit **about** the problem, but I was more worried about my homework."

The correct answers were speak/talk. The intervening object, "a little bit", disturbed the students in their decision-making again.

There may be another explanation for the fact that Japanese students were confused by intervening words between the verb and the preposition. One would wonder to what extent Japanese students analogized the pragmatic Japanese relational particles (wa, ga, no, ni, o, de) with syntagmatic English prepositions, and whether or not such interlingual analogies affected speech verb selection. Japanese particles come immediately after the word they refer to: no other element can stand between the word and its particle. Thus, students are more comfortable with structures in which the verb is immediately followed by a preposition.

In the dialog-cloze test, Japanese students revealed a noticeable amount of analogizing to learned "chunks". For example, in the second dialog Michiko poses the question "If I _____ you who I like, do you promise not to _____ it with anyone?" 85% percent of the respondents answered with "tell", analogizing with the phrase "do you promise not to tell?" (Dilenschneider 1994:9).

In the multiple-choice task, Japanese students found the use of "speak on" quite problematic: "Tonight, I am going to _____ Chinese history to my students."

- 1) speak on (M:70%)
- 2) talk about (M:6%)
- 3) discuss with
- 4) tell

Students had no problem with talk about, but 70% didn't accept speak on as correct, not knowing that chunk as much as they do talk about. Their second guess was discuss about, although it makes little sense in the given context.

Chunk learning itself wouldn't be a problem. Many teachers recommend their students learn not only the word but its immediate syntactic environment as well. The problem is that students are inclined to identify the concept denoted by the word with its first occurrence both structurally and functionally (Kecskes, 1994:55), and attempt to maintain this one-to-one relationship between the new concept and its first occurrence. If, for example, they meet the verb 'discuss' in a situation such as "We received an offer from the bank. I discussed with my wife what to do. She suggested that we should not accept it", students will memorize the chunk "discuss with". This tendency leads to overgeneralization errors, as a single occurrence contains only partial information about the concept as a whole. Therefore, Japanese students find speak with more acceptable than speak on, and discuss with more acceptable than discuss. In the students' interlanguage, emerging concepts are usually represented by one possible syntagmatic environment only, which is the result of rote memorization of chunks.

2.2.2. Transfer of Japanese Lexico-Pragmatics

The analysis of answers shows that Japanese students are very much affected by the lexico-pragmatic features of their mother tongue. Their responses were usually based on the pragmatic dichotomy of 'iu' (one-way speech act) and 'hanasu' (two-way speech act). They were reluctant to reconceptualize outside these pragmatic domains and relied on the pragmatic features of their mother tongue even though that yielded the incorrect answer. Predictably, students aligned the English speech verbs "say" and "tell" with 'iu' and "talk", "speak" and "discuss" with 'hanasu', and seldom did the Japanese students use "say" or "tell" in a sentence involving a speech-act recipient (Dilenschneider 1994:10). Some examples from the exercises demonstrate this dependency very clearly:

Near the end of the second dialog-cloze, Takashi says, "Ah, c'mon. If you _____ clearly, you can whisper your secret in my ear just once." 50 percent of the Japanese students answered using "say" instead of "speak", assuredly because the syntactic environment contains only one argument to the verb: the subject. Therefore, most students interpreted this as a one-way speech act.

In the multiple choice task, one simple sentence proved difficult for the students:

"After dinner, Jason _____ his trip to Japan."

- 1) talked about (M%:6)
- 2) spoke about (M%:37)
- 3) said about
- 4) told about (M%: 65).

The reason for the error is probably that 'tell' is identified with 'iu' as a one-way speech act. In the given situation this is unacceptable for the Japanese students.

In the narrative cloze exercise, the sentence "Her friends _____ Nancy's unwillingness to communicate, but no one really knew what to do." was also troubling for the students. The expected answer was "discussed" and 40 percent of the students made an incorrect choice. Nearly half of them didn't recognize that "discuss" can be correct in this environment because the verb "discuss" has only one argument here: the subject. According to the Japanese students' pragmatic dichotomy "discuss" belongs to the two-way speech act group.

The strong influence of the pragmatic system of the native tongue is quite essential because all the Japanese students studied English for six years in an EFL environment. Rose (1994:52) argues that EFL setting does not support pragmatic consciousness-raising because most learners of English in an EFL setting will use English primarily with other nonnative speakers (NNS) of English, and most EFL teachers are not native speakers (NS) of English, which precludes an approach that requires the teacher to draw on his/her native speaker intuitions.

3. SECOND EXPERIMENT

3.1. Objectives

In the second part of the experiment Verbs of Perception were investigated. These verbs have a homogenous syntactic environment which cannot function as a clue, forcing the students to develop the conceptual basis for the English verbs by relying only on semantic and pragmatic clues.

The experiment was conducted in the fall of '1994 with nineteen Japanese students out of whom only six took part in the first part of the experience too. They had a median exposure of 8.8 years to the English language and spent 1.9 years in the U.S. They received a worksheet containing

(1) Narrative Cloze

Question	Correct Answer(s)	Number of CAs	Incorrect Answers
1	noticed (saw)	16 (1)	observed (2)
2	saw	17	looked at (2)
3	looked at	13	watched (3) observed (3)
4	noticed	7	observed (6) perceived (6)
5	watch	5	perceive (1) observe (8) look at (5)
6	watched	15	observed (3) perceived (1)
7	observed	14	saw(3) perceived (2)
8	noticed (saw)	6 (9)	watched (2) no answer (2)
9	saw	18	perceived (1)

(2) Dialog Cloze

Question	Correct Answer(s)	Number of CAs	Incorrect Answers
1	look at	10	see (4) notice (3) observe (1) watch (1)
2	see	13	observe (1) watch (2) perceive (3)
3	noticed	10	saw (5) perceived (1) observed (3)
4	see	7	look at (3) notice (3) watch (3) no answer (1) perceive (2)
5	observed (noticed)	4 (10)	perceive (5)
6	see	19	
7	watch	8	look at (9) see (1) no answer (1)
8	see	5	perceive (8) notice (4) watch (2)
9	see	11	look at (8)

(3) Multiple Choice

Question	Correct Answer(s)	Number of Correct Answers	Incorrect Answers
1	had noticed could see	11 10	have perceived (5) had been observing (2)
2	have noticed; looking at	12	have observed; watching (6) had seen; watch (4) had perceived; looking (2)
3	have noticed watches	14	have been observing; has looked at (6) had noticed; looks at (3) had perceived; has looked at (1)
4	had never seen	14	has never watched (3) had never been looking at (2) has never noticed (4)
5	see	15	* have notice (2) have observed (4) have perceived (5)
6	look at	15	watch (5) am observing (1) notice (2)
7	have noticed; see have observed; see	10 12	had observed; perceive (3) have been perceiving; notice (4)
8	had been watching would have seen	9	had watched; would have been seeing (6) had observed; would have observed (7) would have noticed; would have observed (0)
9	can see	9	can perceive (14) will observe (1) can notice (7)
10	(notices) (observes) looks at	3 9 9	watches (9)

(4) Composition

Verb	Frequency	Correct Use	Incorrect Use
see	19	19	0
watch	15	15	0
look at	20	18	2
notice	21	17	4
observe	17	10	7
perceive	10	5	5

four exercises. The first two exercises were cloze tests, one a narrative and the other a dialog. The third was a multiple-choice exercise in which there was more than one correct answer for some of the sentences. In the last exercise, the students were asked to write a short text using as many Verbs of Perception as possible.

3.2. Data analysis

Analyzing data I looked for further proof of the trends we had discovered in the first experiment: "chunk" learning and lexico-pragmatic transfer.

3.2.1. Chunk Learning

This time the composition exercise proved to be the easiest for the Japanese students. They used the verbs 'see'; 'watch' and 'look at' with great confidence, having problems only with 'notice'; 'observe' and 'perceive'. If we look at the numbers only in charts 1-4, we might come to the false conclusion that after all students have demonstrated that they know how to use the Verbs of Perception in English. But examining the types of sentences they used, we can see that they follow routine procedures and use structures that resemble frequently used chunks:

He looked at the clock. It was seven o'clock.

My friend told me that he saw you walking in the street last night.

I noticed that I lost my wallet.

He said he was observing some plants for his homework.

Today, I saw a guy from my biology class in the park.

Clearly, most of the sentences are patterns with familiar words and environments. Students, unwilling to break patterns, have not taken any risks and tend to use only what they are comfortable with. The consequences of chunk learning can be demonstrated in several exercises. It is interesting to compare two sentences from the narrative cloze. In both sentences 'watch' was the correct answer:

A. As the man continued to watch the boy, he believed that he could tell that the boy was a thief.

B. All day long, the man watched the boy and observed his habits.

Of the nineteen respondents only 5 (!) gave the correct answer in the first case and 15 (!) in the second. This considerable difference points to fact that the first sentence contains no syntactic clue that may help them find the right answer. The semantic clue, the verb 'continue', which excludes the use of 'look at' or 'see' in this sentence, is not enough for the Japanese students. They need the more articulated syntactic clues that they get in the second sentence: the adverbial phrase of time, 'all day long', and the second part of the sentence.

The dialog-cloze proved to be the most difficult task. In this exercise, the students were, at times, absolutely lost, even when they were required to use 'see', or 'look at', which they used almost without mistake in the composition exercise. The reasons for this uncertainty are the lack of syntactic clues in the dialog and insufficient background knowledge. The following dialog is an example of casual conversation where little is said:

SAM: Hey, guys! Would you(1) those girls over there? Oh, I know her!

JARED: Where?

JAMIE: Cute! What's the blonde doing?

JARED: Oh! Yeah, I like her too. A bit high class though.

JAMIE: Can you guys(2) what she's doing? I'd like to meet the blonde.

SAM: They're both in my chem class. I(3) that she has a ring on.

JAMIE: My blonde does?

SAM: Yeah. You(4) her friend, though? I talked with her yesterday. She was really nice.

JAMIE: Forget her! The blonde -- do you think she's married?

JARED: I've(5) that all the lookers are married or they're hung on themselves.

SAM: Kiss off. People can hear you.

JARED: She's sweet. I think we could become friends.

JAMIE: Just friends?

SAM: Yesterday, we talked about meeting up for a study group. I'd really like to(6) her again.

JARED:(7) her move those hips.

JAMIE: You're incurable.

JARED: Incorrigible, maybe. (Laughs).

JAMIE: She looks great.

JARED: I'd say!

SAM: So long. (Gets up).

JAMIE: What's with you? (Jamie starts to get up.)

SAM: Just stay seated. I believe that I(8) some better possibilities than hanging here.
(Leaves.)

JARED: I'm hungry. Let's(9) what's on the menu.

JAMIE: Who's buying?

The most problematic answers in the dialog were as follows:

(No. 4) Sam: Yea. You see her friend, though? (7 correct answers)

(No. 7) Jared: Watch her move those hips. (8 correct answers)

(No. 8) Sam: I believe that I see some better possibilities than hanging here.

(5 correct answers),

In these utterances no familiar "chunks" or syntactic clues supported students in deciding on the correct answer. There were far fewer mistakes when there was a well-known pattern in the utterance:

(No. 9) Let's see what is on the menu. (11 correct answers)

(No. 6) I'd really like to see her again. (19 correct answers)

(No. 3) I noticed that she has a ring on. (10 correct answers)

3.2.2. Transfer of lexico-pragmatics

The dialog cloze in both experiments was more difficult for students than the narrative cloze. A narrative text always represents a more coherent unit than a dialog, and its processing therefore requires less background knowledge than a dialog. The dialog cloze proved not only that students look for syntactic clues but also that they do not have sufficient background knowledge in the target language to process casual conversation properly. Even students with 2-3 years of experience in the U.S. were confused and made mistakes in relatively simple situations such as

(1) - Hey guys! Would you look at those girls over there? (10 correct answers)

The lexico-pragmatic dichotomy of 'miru - kizuku' was generally transferred to English semantics. 'Miru' describes a voluntary action, while 'kizuku' always refers to accidental, involuntary

actions, which is not necessarily emphasized in 'notice'. Perhaps this explains why students have a difficult time with the second part of the following sentences from the narrative cloze:

"The man carefully looked at the boy and noticed (7 correct answers) how poorly the boy was dressed."

"He followed the boy into town and noticed (5 correct answers) that they were entering the poor part of town."

The students perhaps reasoned that the first part of each sentence (the verbs 'look at' and 'follow') expresses a voluntary action, and that what follows cannot be accidental.

Students cannot accept that 'see' and 'notice' can be equally applicable in certain situations, this being a pragmatic opposition for them. In the multiple-choice task, there were situations where more than one answer was acceptable. For example, number 1:

"Although I had noticed/could see that Sandra had gained weight, I never suspected that she was pregnant."

- a) had noticed (11 correct answers)
- b) have perceived
- c) had been observing
- d) could see (10 correct answers)

Students chose either 'had noticed' or 'could see' as correct, but rarely both, thinking that one excludes the other.

In another sentence there were three correct options: a), b) and d):

"Jonathan is such a careful hunter. When he hunts, he every track and every clue that will lead him to his prey."

- a) notices

b) observes

c) watches

d) looks at

Three students chose 'notices' as correct and declined all the other options. For them , 'notice' was the only correct answer. It is hypothesized that these students thought that 'look at' and 'observe' cannot be correct in the same construct where 'notice' is an appropriate answer.

These examples show very well that the lexico-pragmatic dichotomy of their own language is stronger and safer for the Japanese students than the intralingual semantic differences between the English verbs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The two experiments basically proved that there is very little reconceptualization. Japanese students taking part in this research project relied heavily upon their grammar-translation training in school and the socio-cultural tendencies of their mother tongue. They generally don't modify the concepts they have in their mother tongue, nor are they prone to differentiate by semantic features. Instead, they look for formal, syntactic clues when they are required to use the English verbs. Because of the analytic approach used in school and the lack of sufficient background knowledge in English, Japanese students generally use bottom-up processing which is based on syntactic clues, analogizing of synonymous elements, and 'chunk' recognition. EFL/ESL teachers can bring about changes in the concept formation of their students only if they

- 1) focus on intralingual rather than interlingual differences and compare the English verbs not only to their Japanese equivalents but to the other members of one and the same semantic group,
- 2) try to break patterns, and show students different functions and environments of one and

the same word. This will help students to break the one-to-one relationship between the concept and its first occurrence,

3) pay more attention to the pragmatic features of the target language and the real usage of the words. Teachers tend to explain syntactic and semantic, but rarely pragmatic differences. Not understanding, sometimes not even aware of the pragmatic differences, students try to use the pragmatic schemata of their first language with the syntax and semantics of the target language. This usually leads to serious misunderstandings and errors. To reveal pragmatic differences and raise pragmatic consciousness in the target language is of primary importance in the language teaching process.

NOTES

¹ The first part of the experiment was administered by Joseph J. Dilenschneider who was my graduate student at the University of Montana. The results of this part were first summarized in his graduate seminar paper. I use his findings in the charts and wish to acknowledge his excellent job that helped me a lot in the production of this paper.

² Both semantic groups are broader, but only the most frequently used verbs were examined.

³ Lexico-pragmatics means that the lexical content of the word comprises important pragmatic information.

⁴ All our repondents started to study English in a secondary school in Japan where six years of English is compulsory for everyone. These years have a very serious impact on the students' learning styles and strategies.

REFERENCES

Dilenschneider, J. 1994. "Conceptualization of English Speech Verbs by Japanese Students." (The University of Montana. Unpublished seminar paper.)

Kecskes, I. 1994. "Conceptualization in Forign Language Learning." *Hands On Language* 6 : 55-64.

Kecskes, I. and Papp, T. 1995. "The Linguistic Effect of Foreign Language Learning on the Development of Mother Tongue Skills." In M. Haggstrom, L.Z. Morgan & J.A. Wiczorek (eds.) *The Foreign Language Classroom Bridging Theory and Practice* New York : Garland Publishing. 163-182.

Rose, K.R. 1994. "Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising in an EFL Context." In L.F. Bouton and Y. Kachru (eds.) *Pragmatics and Language Learning* 5 : 52-64.