# Referential form choice in the oral narrative discourse of native and non-native speakers of Japanese*

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## Abstract

This study investigates how native speakers of English select referential forms when they speak L2 Japanese. Oral production data was collected from novice to advanced level learners as well as from native speakers of Japanese. The study found: (1) The learners' referential patterning was very similar to that of the native Japanese speakers, indicating that it was not syntactically but rather pragmatically controlled, just as with native speakers. The learners also produced fairly small numbers of pronominal forms, which were the most frequent forms noted in the English data; (2) an approximation toward native speaker norms over time was observed. Such approximation, however, was not found equally in different linguistic contexts, nor was there a simple linear approach. The learners were successful in selecting appropriate referential forms in the environments where English and Japanese followed the same rule. Otherwise, their selection deviated from native speaker norms; and (3) both the L1 and L2 speakers showed individual differences when using pronominal forms and the speakers were divided into two types; speakers who used the form frequently and those who never used it. The use of pronouns thus seemed to have something to do with individual preferences rather than being entirely proficiency related. It was found that the learners' referential form selection was affected by a variety of factors, including linguistic environments, proficiency levels, corresponding rules in English, and individual preferences, and that a successful act of reference is possible only when the speaker has a good command of the lexicon, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics of the target language.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the past decade, a series of studies has been conducted, mostly with speakers of English as a second language, to investigate how L2 learners choose one referential form over another in discourse production (Fuller and Gundel 1987, Williams 1988, Fakhri 1989, Tomlin 1990, Jin 1994, and Polio 1995). These studies can be subdivided into three types according to the aspect of learner behavior they looked at: (a) How L2 speakers make a choice between a full NP and a pronominal form (Fakhri 1989 and Tomlin 1990); (b) How L2 learners use zero anaphora (Ø) in discourse production (Fuller and Gundel 1987 and Williams 1988); and (c) Whether L2 speakers' performance on referential form choice changes over time (Jin 1994 and Polio 1995). Three sets of findings from the studies are discussed briefly below.

The first set of studies by Fakhri (1989) and Tomlin (1990) looked at data on intermediate-level English-speaking learners of French and advanced-level ESL learners from various L1 backgrounds, respectively. They found that L2 learners tend to rely more on the use of full NPs in contexts where more attenuated forms, pronouns, suffice. They argue that this is because L2 learners employ communication strategies to get their meaning across; by selecting nominal forms, they try "to ensure coherent and complete understanding by a listener" (Tomlin 1990: 171).

With regard to how L2 speakers use zero anaphora in their discourse production, Fuller and Gundel (1987) report that ESL learners, regardless of their L1 backgrounds, use zero anaphora in contexts where English grammar does not allow them to. They explain such non-native-like use of zero anaphora by ESL learners in terms of the topic-prominent (TP) nature of learners' interlanguage, and argue that learners' interlanguage is characterized by an early TP stage, and that the use of zero anaphora is one of the characteristics of earlier stages of interlanguage development. Williams (1988) also found that "zero anaphora has a wider range of structural contexts in the production of the non-native speakers (NNSs) than in that of native speakers (NSs)" (p. 355). She attributes this finding to the result of NNSs resorting to an attractive short cut: NNSs, in order to compensate for their limited proficiency, assign a low priority to abiding by more semantically redundant and productively inefficient anaphoric rules of NSs discourse models.

While studies in the past often looked at native speakers of languages such as Chinese and Japanese learning English, i.e. ESL, Jin (1994) explored the topic from the opposite direction; native speakers of English learning Chinese as a foreign language. He found that the learners' choice of referential form changed over time, moving from L1 (English) norms to target language (Chinese) ones. He also found that a universal TP stage claimed by Fuller and Gundel (1987) was not found in his data. Rather, the frequency of the use of zero anaphora by the L2 Chinese learners increased according to their proficiency levels, indicating a gradual approximation toward target language norms on the part of the learners. Polio (1995), examining narrative data of both English- and Japanese-speaking learners of Chinese, also found that her subjects in both languages avoided zero anaphora in favor of full NPs, and that the use of zero anaphora increased with proficiency.

While there have been no studies of this kind involving L2 Japanese speakers, there have been some studies conducted with adult and pre-school L1 Japanese speakers. Clancy (1980) examined Pear film (Chafe 1980) narratives by 20 adult L1 Japanese and L1 English speakers and found that referential form choice was affected by a variety of variables such as the capacity of human short-term memory, language-specific factors, discourse contexts, and individual differences. Clancy (1992) studied narratives of Japanese preschool children of ages 3 years 8 months to 7 years 4 months and reported that the Same Subject context, in which a referent was mentioned in subject position following a clause which had the same subject referent, was the easiest context for the children of all age groups, and even the youngest speakers' referential form selection was similar to that of adult speakers. In the Switch Subject context, in which a referent was mentioned in subject position following a clause which had a different subject referent, the youngest children produced significantly more zero anaphora than the adults. The Introduction context, in which story characters were initially mentioned with nominal reference, was the most difficult context of the three. The two youngest groups used a significantly lower

percentage of nominal reference compared to the adult baseline data. Clancy concluded that ellipsis was the default form for young Japanese children and that the task of Japanese children learning referential strategies could be seen as learning when to use the more explicit (i.e. nominal ) form (p. 455).

Maynard (1985) compared narratives of adult native speakers of Japanese and English and found that, while in English, "the case frame is strictly maintained by overt specification of subject and direct/indirect object," in Japanese narratives, "the case frame does not play as significant a role" because of the information-based nature of its sentence structure. In Japanese, therefore, "what is presupposed and assumed to be known (whether syntactic subjects or objects) is not expressed overtly on the surface level" (p. 226). Based on these observations of L1 narratives in Japanese and English, Maynard, in the conclusion of the paper, claimed that the often observed phenomenon of English-speaking learners of Japanese using too many NPs and pronouns in the subject and object position, and sounding repetitious and overtly redundant, was due to a transfer of L1 discourse strategies to L2. This, however, is a prediction based on contrastive analysis which is not yet supported by empirical evidence.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Most studies of L2 learners' referential form choice that have been conducted to date have involved English-speakers learning a European language or speakers of various L1 backgrounds learning English, i.e. an ESL context. To the best of my knowledge, the only exceptions are Jin (1994) and Polio (1995). Studies have yet to be done with L2 learners of Japanese which, along with Chinese, is considered to be a deletion-inclined language. The significance of looking at the performance of L2 Japanese speakers lies in the fact that, in Japanese, pronouns function just like regular nouns and are usually not considered to be one of the language's distinct referential form options.1 This means that, when referring to something previously mentioned, speakers of Japanese have only two extreme options, a full NP or a zero anaphor. One question that is worth asking then is: How do native speakers of English, in which a pronoun is the most frequent option and in which the occurrence of zero elements is syntactically constrained and not frequent, select referential forms when they speak Japanese, which has two extreme options of referential forms, full NPs and zero anaphora? Will the learners still use full NPs, heavy referential forms, according to their general communication strategy, the purpose of which is to avoid ambiguity of reference, as observed in Fakhri (1987) and Tomlin (1990)? Will the learners use zero anaphora frequently because of the interlanguage universal proposed by Fuller and Gundel (1987), or as the result of resorting to a more efficient and productive communication mode as Williams (1988) predicted? Or will the learners' referential form choice show indications of change over time in conjunction with changes in proficiency

levels as Jin (1994) and Polio (1995) found? Additionally, how is L2 Japanese speakers' referential form choice similar to or different from that of adult or child L1 speakers of Japanese reported in Clancy (1980, 92) and Maynard (1985)?

Given the findings from previous studies, the following questions are investigated in the present study: (a) How can English-speaking learners' production of full NPs and zero anaphora in Japanese narratives be characterized? (b) How does learners' performance compare to that of native speakers of Japanese? and (c) How does the use of referential forms differ among learners of different proficiency levels as well as between individual speakers?

In order to answer these questions, this study, taking Clancy (1980, 1992) and Maynard's (1985) studies with L1 Japanese speakers as a target baseline, focuses on L2 Japanese speakers' referential form choice with respect to the following: (1) Overall group performance; (2) Introduction of new characters of the story line; (3) Switch Subject contexts; (4) Same Subject contexts; (5) Direct-object positions; and (6) Individual differences. As in the studies by Clancy and Maynard, only third person referents were looked at in the present study.

## 3. PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the three L2 Japanese groups, novice, intermediate, and advanced, were recruited from second to fourth year Japanese classes at the University of Minnesota, and native speakers of Japanese were recruited from ESL classes at the University. The proficiency level of the novice, intermediate, and advanced group speakers in this study roughly corresponded to Novice-High to Intermediate-Low, Intermediate-Mid, and Intermediate-High to Advanced levels of the ACTFL's Japanese Oral Proficiency Guidelines (1987), respectively. L1 English data were also collected from twelve of the English-speaking learners as baseline data. The profile of the participants is given in Table 1:

Table 1:  Profile of participants

|  | Eng L1 (E-NS) | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (Int-M) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 (J-NS) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 12 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 12 |
| Male/Female | 7/5 | 7/3 | 8/3 | 6/5 | 2/10 |
| Average age | 24.3 | 23.0 | 23.7 | 24.2 | 24.4 |
| Av. yrs. in US |  | 1.6* | 2.4* | 2.7* | 0.7 |
| Av. yrs. in Jpn |  | 0.6 | 0.8 | 1.9 |  |
| Total yrs. of study |  | 2.2 | 3.2 | 4.6 |  |
| Appx. prof. level in ACTFL's guidelines |  | Nov-High to IntM-Low | IntM-Mid | IntM-High to Adv. |  |

(* Average years of formal study in the U.S. )

## 4. INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Two oral discourse production tasks were given to each subject during an approximately 20- to 30-minute individual interview session, which took place on the campus of the University of Minnesota. The interviews started with the researcher collecting demographic information from the subjects in Japanese and included small talk, which also served to check the English-speaking subjects' proficiency level in Japanese. The researcher first showed each subject a four-frame cartoon strip and asked them to retell the story in Japanese. This task was used as a warm-up activity intended to provide an opportunity for the participants to get used to the testing environment and for the researcher to further check the learners' proficiency levels. The researcher then showed the subjects a two-minute silent animation video clip and asked them to retell the story in Japanese[2]. Next, the learners were also to retell the story in English as well. The English data served as baseline data for later comparison between Japanese and English narratives, and also as a check by the researcher of the learners' intended meaning in their Japanese narratives. Only the data from the video retelling task were used for later analysis. The video clip[3] was part of a Canadian animation titled "Every Child." The narratives were first transcribed in the language of narration, Japanese or English, and then analyzed.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Group performances

Table 2 shows the frequencies of full NPs, pronouns, and zero anaphora used by the speakers in each group. All three L2 Japanese groups used full NPs more frequently

**Table 2: Average #s of clauses produced and frequencies of forms used**

|  | English L1 (N=12) | Jpn L2 (Nov) (N=10) | Jpn L2 (IntM) (N=11) | Jpn L2 (Adv) (N=11) | Jpn L1 (N=12) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequencies of forms | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) |
| Full NP | 32 (261) | 67 (162) | 55 (257) | 51 (290) | 49 (270) |
| Pronoun | 47 (380) | 1 ( 2) | 5 ( 22) | 3 ( 17) | 2 ( 9) |
| Ø | 21 (167) | 32 ( 76) | 40 (188) | 46 (264) | 49 (271) |
| Total | 100 (808) | 100 (240) | 100 (467) | 100 (571) | 100 (550) |

than they did zero anaphora, with pronouns being used least. This distribution of the three referential forms by the L2 Japanese groups makes a striking contrast with that of the L1 English group, where pronouns were the most frequently used form, followed by full NPs and then zero anaphora. The performance of all learner groups was much more similar to that of L1 Japanese speakers than to that of L1 English speakers. While the pronominal form was most frequently used in English (47%), it was used in only one to five percent of all cases in the L2 Japanese groups, which was very close to the native Japanese speaker data (2%), suggesting very little trace of transference from English. Maynard's (1985) observation that "native speakers of English, when telling a story in Japanese, use too

many pronominal expressions in sequence" (p. 227) was not confirmed with this data set. Rather, the novice group which was expected to be affected by transfer from English the most among the three learner groups, produced the pronominal form the least. This seems to indicate that learners start to use the rare referential form in Japanese only after they have a certain amount of exposure to the target language. A closer examination of the data of individual subjects revealed that there were individual differences with respect to the use of pronominal forms in all Japanese groups. This issue of individual differences will be discussed later in Section 5.6.

One developmental trend clearly observed across the three learner groups was that the frequency of the full NP use decreased 16 percentage points, from 67% to 55% to 51%, from the novice to intermediate to advanced groups, while the frequency of zero anaphora increased 14 percentage points, from 32% to 40% and finally to 46%, across the same groups, indicating a gradual approximation to native speaker norms (49% for full NPs and 49% for zero anaphora) over time as in the cases of the learners of Chinese reported in Jin (1994) and Polio (1995). This trend, however, seems to have been partly caused by these lower level speakers' relatively short narratives, which contained fewer cases of action chains with null subjects and more cases of topic/subject switches.

## 5.2 Introduction of new referents

Although it is seems reasonable to assume that nominal reference is the only choice narrators have when they introduce a new character into their story, this is not always the case. In fact, in among 20 L1 English and 20 L1 Japanese Pear film narratives in Clancy's (1980) study, two of the introductions in English were made with a pronoun, and three in Japanese employed a zero anaphor. She attributed these cases to native speakers experiencing difficulty in introducing a referent, especially at the very beginning of their narrative. Clancy (1992) also found in a study of Japanese children narrating in L1 that zero anaphor was the default form for introductions for children younger than five, and that introductions were the most difficult discourse context for these children. In the section what follows, then, I examine the way in which adult learners of Japanese introduce a new character into their story.

Table 3 lists the referential form the L1 and L2 Japanese speakers in this study used when they first introduced the human characters in the video clip into their narratives. All of the twelve native Japanese speakers referred to the man, the baby, and the old couple with a full NP in all 36 cases (100%). Given the same task, the learners of the three groups successfully chose the expected referential form, a full NP, in 95 cases out of 96 (99%). It seems safe to say that these learners were aware of the rule that new introductions were accomplished with the most explicit referential form and that such discourse constraint did not cause a great deal of difficulty for the learners in selecting the

Table 3: First mention of the man, baby, and old couple

| | Man | | Baby | | Old couple | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NS-1 | a man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| NS-2 | an about-middle-aged gentleman | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple | [ga] |
| NS-3 | a father-like person | [ga] | a child | [ga] | a kind-looking old man and woman | [ga] |
| NS-4 | a difficult-looking fat man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an intimate old man and woman | [ga] |
| NS-5 | a middle-aged man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | two old women | [ga] |
| NS-6 | a middle-aged man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple ('s house) | [no] |
| NS-7 | a man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | a couple of old people | [ga] |
| NS-8 | a fat man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple | [ga] |
| NS-9 | a businessman | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple ('s house) | [no] |
| NS-10 | a man who has an office in his house | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | (were) an old man and woman | |
| NS-11 | a middle-aged man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| NS-12 | a man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple ['s house] | [no] |
| | | | | | | |
| Adv-1 | a businessman-like man | [ga] | (saw) a baby | [o] | the old man and old woman | [wa]* |
| Adv-2 | a man who is working | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | (were) old people | |
| Adv-3 | a person | [ga] | a child | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| Adv-4 | a middle-aged man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| Adv-5 | a reporter-like person | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| Adv-6 | a section-chief like person | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | a grandma and grandpa | [ga] |
| Adv-7 | the person | [wa]* | baby | [Ø]* | old man and old woman | [Ø]* |
| Adv-8 | a middle-aged man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old couple | [ga] |
| Adv-9 | an about-fifty-year-old "salary man" | [ga] | a small baby [ga] | | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| Adv-10 | a businessman | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an grandma and grandpa | [ga] |
| Adv-11 | an office-worker-like person | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| | | | | | | |
| IntM-1 | the man | [wa]* | a baby | [ga] | an old woman and old man | [ga] |
| IntM-2 | a president-like man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | two old people | [ga] |
| IntM-3 | a busy-looking man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| IntM-4 | he | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ga] |
| IntM-5 | a man who is working | [ga] | a child | [ga] | the people at the next door | [wa] |
| IntM-6 | elder man | [Ø]* | a baby | [ga] | (looks like) an old man and woman | |
| IntM-7 | the man | [wa]* | in baby | [ni]* | old man and woman | [ni]* |
| IntM-8 | an old man | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | to the old people' house | [de]* |
| IntM-9 | (saw) a man who's working in an office [o] | | (found) a baby [ga]* | | two people | [ga] |
| IntM-10 | Mr. B | [wa]* | a little baby [ga] | | an old woman and man ('s house) | |
| IntM-11 | the section-chief-like man | [wa]* | (looks like) a baby | | an old man and woman | [Ø]* |
| | | | | | | |
| Nov-1 | the old businessman | [wa]* | a baby | [ga] | the old man and woman | [wa]* |
| Nov-2 | the section chief | [wa]* | a baby | [Ø]* | an old man and woman | [Ø]* |
| Nov-3 | the president | [wa]* | the baby [wa]* | | an old man and woman | [Ø]* |
| Nov-4 | a person | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | two old people [IDO] | [ni] |
| Nov-5 | the busy person | [wa]* | a baby | [o] | the two old people | [wa]* |
| Nov-6 | an office clerk | [ga] | (took) a baby [ga]* | | the two old people | [wa]* |
| Nov-7 | the man | [wa]* | the baby [wa]* | | old people | [ni]* |
| Nov-8 | (was) a company worker | | a baby | [ga] | two old people | [ga] |
| Nov-9 | a very busy-looking person | [ga] | a baby | [ga] | the two grandma | [wa]* |
| Nov-10 | the mere clerk | [wa]* | a baby | [ga] | an old man and woman | [ni]* |

appropriate form, which is in contrast to the performance of the pre-school age children in Clancy's (1992) study. The only unsuccessful case in the present study came from a speaker from the intermediate group, who happened to be one of the most proficient speakers in that group. The learner used the pronominal form *kare* 'he' when he referred to the male character in the second sentence of his narrative:

(1)    *Anoo, saisho wa, toori ga (laughter), e, uhh, imashita. Eeto, uhh, tsugi wa, uhhhh, shigoto ni, kaeri ga, kare ga, anoo, taipuraitaa ni, uh, taipuraitaa o, tataite, eeto, shigoto o suru, uhh, a, shigoto o shiteru.*

'Uhh, first, there was, uh, uhh, a bird (laughter). Well, uhh, then, uhhhh, in an office, <u>he</u>, <u>he</u>, uhh, in a typewriter, uh, punching a typewriter, well, works, uhh, oh, working.    [IntM-4]

He used a series of filling expressions, 'uhh' and *eeto* 'well,' and pauses before and after the pronoun. He was apparently having difficulty settling down for the retelling task, which seemed to cause a miscue just as in the case of the native speakers in Clancy's (1980) study. In fact, the introductions of the other two characters later in his narrative were successfully accomplished. Another explanation for the unorthodox use of the pronominal form is that he was one of the several speakers in this study, among both the L1 and L2 speakers, who used pronominal forms more than twice, and these people's use of pronominal forms seems to have something more to do with individual preferences than with proficiency levels. This issue of pronoun use will be discussed in the individual difference section later in this paper.

Another characteristic of introductions by the native Japanese group was that the full NPs in the subject position were accompanied by the grammatical particle *ga*, which marks new information in discourse. All of the introductions into the narrative of the man and the baby and all but four introductions of the old couple were done with a full NP marked with *ga*. The learners, in contrast, were not quite as successful in indicating brand-new participants as new information by using the expected particle. The miscues were caused either by the use of the wrong grammatical particle, usually the topic marker *wa*, which should have been reserved until the characters were established as the topic of the story, or by the complete absence of particles (Ø). The miscues by the L2 speakers resulted in a lack of coherence in their stories, despite the fact they did choose the expected referential form, a full NP. The miscue rates seem to correlate with the learners' proficiency levels; the lower the level, the higher the rate was. The inappropriate use of *wa* occurred in two out of the 33 introductions by the advanced speakers (6%), four out of 33 (12%) by the intermediate speakers, and 12 of 30 (40%) by the novice speakers. In the novice group, the number of cases of introductions by *wa* (12) was more than that of introductions by *ga* (10).

In sum, the L2 speakers in all three proficiency groups seemed to have a clear idea that a full NP should be used when a new character was introduced into their narrative before the character was established as old information. However, while the native speakers also observed a guideline that the introduction of a brand new participant into their

| Speakers | Referential forms and markers at introductions |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|
| Native   | NP-*ga*                                        |
| L2 Adv   | NP-*ga*  >  *NP-*wa*                            |
| L2 IntM  | NP-*ga*  >>  *NP-*wa*                           |
| L2 Nov   | *NP-*wa*  >  NP-*ga*                            |

story must be marked by the expected particle *ga* if it is placed in the subject position, the learners were less successful in that respect, and some of them provided either the particle

*wa*, which marks a discourse topic, or nothing. The rates of such miscues by the learners seemed to be correlated with the speakers' proficiency levels; the rate decreased as the proficiency levels went up.

5.3 Switch Subjects contexts

At Switch Subjects, i.e., when a previously introduced referent is mentioned again in the subject position immediately after a clause in which another referent occupies the subject position, both native English and Japanese speakers are most likely to use a full NP for the reinstated referent in order to disambiguate reference, as shown in the following example by one of the native speakers:

(2)     *de, akachan wa, eeto, soredemo nakiyamanakute, otokonohito wa, moo
        hontooni shigoto mo isogashikute . . .*
        'and, the baby, well, didn't stop crying and, the man, was very busy
        with work and . .' [NS-1]

In Clancy's (1980) Pear stories data, as much as 71% of all coreferential nominal reference in Japanese and 92% in English occurred at such discourse contexts. The purpose of this section is to examine to what extent the Japanese learners would follow such discoursal constraints in L2 Japanese. Table 4 shows the distribution of the referential forms used by

Table 4:   Percentages of referential forms used at Switch Subjects

|          | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (IntM) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 |
|----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------|
|          | % (N)        | % (N)         | % (N)        | % (N)  |
| NP       | 84 (48)      | 75 ( 91)      | 82 (105)     | 78 (102) |
| Pronoun  | 2 ( 1)       | 8 ( 10)       | 3 ( 4)       | 2 ( 2) |
| Ø        | 14 ( 8)      | 17 ( 21)      | 15 ( 19)     | 20 ( 27) |
| Total    | 100 (57)     | 100 (122)     | 100 (128)    | 100 (131) |

the four Japanese groups at Switch Subjects. First of all, the percentages of full NPs used were strikingly similar across the groups: All three groups used full NPs in around 80% of all Switch Subjects. This seems to indicate that the learners were aware of the listener's need for clarity and able to choose the expected form, a full NP, accordingly. The only difference found across the groups in the table is the slightly higher frequency of pronominal forms among the intermediate speakers. That higher frequency was, however, observed in other discoursal environments as well. The numbers suggest that the three learner groups employed almost native-like selection of a full NP at Switch Subjects, which worked to solve referential ambiguity.

While each group chose Ø in 14% to 17% of all cases in such environments, the consequences of the use of this least explicit form by the learners and native speakers produced different results: The learners, especially the novice learners, produced far more

ambiguous cases of Ø (50%, 14%, and 21%) than did the native speakers (5%) in this context, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5:   Percentages of ambiguous Ø at Switch Subjects

|  | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (IntM) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | % (N/all) | % (N/all) | % (N/all) | % (N/all) |
| Ambiguous Ø | 50 (4/8) | 14 (3/21) | 21 (4/19) | 3 (1/27) |

Two examples of such ambiguous cases by two learners are shown below:

(3)    *Uhh, sono inu wa, uhh, daisukina, uhh, uchi no hito no, daisuki, na,*
       *inu deshita. Uhh, demo, kodomo ga kimashita. (Ø = ?) doa o akete, aa,*
       *kodomo arimashi, imashita.*
       'Uhh, the dog, uhh, was favorite, uhh, the residents', favorite dog.
       Uhh, but, a baby came. (Ø = ?) opened the door and, uhh, there was a
       baby.' [IntM-5]

(4)    *Ano inu wa, nto, uchi o, dete, nto, sugu, obaasan to ojiisan wa, nto,*
       *wakaru, wakaru yoo ni natta. Nto, aa, soto ni (Ø = ?) mitsukatta . . .*
       'The dog, umm, left the house, well, soon, the grandmother and
       grandfather, umm, realize, realized. Umm, uhh, outside (Ø = dog) was
       found /(Ø = old couple) found (Ø = dog).' [Nov-1]

When the speaker says *doa o akete*, 'opened the door' in (3), it's not clear who actually opened the door. Semantically speaking, the dog, the old people, the baby, and the man who left the baby at the door step in a previous scene are all possible candidates for the agent of the action. It is, however, unlikely that the baby is the referent of the Ø because the last clause in the example suggests that someone opened the door and found the baby on the door step. So, the referent of the Ø must be either the dog, the couple, or both of them. In any case, the intended referent of the zero anaphor at this Switch Subjects point is hardly recoverable due to lack of contextual information, and thus remains unresolved. In (4), if the last clause was meant to be "the dog was found," the subject *sono inu* 'the dog' must be specified with an NP at the Switch Subjects point. Or, if the speaker meant to say "the old couple found the dog," but confused the transitive verb *mitsuketa* 'found X' with the intransitive verb *mitsukatta* 'X was found,' then the object *sono inu* 'the dog' must be present in the sentence along with the object marker *-o*. We therefore cannot arrive at the speaker's intended meaning easily solely from the information provided here, due to the learner's inappropriate handling of case marking in the target language. The problem of lack of contextual information, as in (3) above, was often found in the narratives of higher level learners, while the problem of handling of verbs and case marking, as in (4) above, was common in the narratives of lower proficiency learners.

Why weren't L1 speakers' Øs ambiguous then? As shown in Table 5, the L1 speakers also used Ø in 21% of all Switch Subjects, but their use of Ø created only one

ambiguous case. The reason for this is that they used a variety of clarifying devices which worked to help the listener to identify the speaker's intended referent. The native speakers, unlike the learners discussed above, tended to give more contextual information in their story and had a better command of case relationships. Besides these advantages, one of the strategies the native speakers used often was to place a competing referent in the object position, clearly indicated with a full NP, and to contrast this object NP with the omitted element in order to avoid ambiguity. An example of recoverable zero anaphora by an L1 speaker follows (boldfaced = coreferents; underlined = competing referents):

(5)    *De, suruto, ma, **jiichan baachan** wa <u>inu</u> to, ma, kekkoo, tawamurete*
    *asondetanda kedo, <u>akanboo</u> ga kite, Ø (= jiichan baachan) <u>akanboo no hoo</u>*
    *ni ki ga itte moote, sono, Ø (= jiichan baachan) <u>inu no koto</u> wa moo, hottete*
    . . .

    'And, then, well, the **grandpa and grandma**, well, were playing with
    <u>the dog</u>, a lot, but, <u>a baby</u> came and, Ø (= couple) began to pay attention to
    <u>the baby</u> and, well, Ø (= couple) ignored <u>the dog</u> and . . .'    [NS-9]

In (5), the competing referents, the baby and the dog, are clearly indicated with nominal reference, *akanboo* 'baby' and *inu* 'dog,' in the indirect and direct object positions of the clauses of which the old couple are zero subjects. By juxtaposing and contrasting the competing referents with the omitted element, referential ambiguity is successfully avoided in this example.

    In sum, as far as the overall selection of referential form at Switch Subjects is concerned, there were strikingly similar patterns observed across the L1 and L2 speaker groups, and the learners were generally successful in disambiguating referents. However, when the learners, especially lower proficiency learners, used zero anaphora in such environments, the referent was often not recoverable, mostly because of a lack of contextual information and poor management of case marking in Japanese. The L1 speakers and higher level learners, on the contrary, seemed to have more control over ambiguity resolution through a variety of clarifying devices which were not available in the lower proficiency learners' interlanguage system.

5.4 Same Subjects contexts

    In English, the occurrence of zero anaphora is syntactically constrained and is usually allowed only in the subject position of the second (and subsequent) clause(s) of a coordinate structure, as shown in (6) below. I will hereafter call such a linguistic environment an A environment:

(6)    Uhh, <u>he</u> picks up the baby, Ø puts it on top of the filing cabinet, and Ø
    goes back to his desk to pick up the phone. [Eng-4]

In Japanese, on the other hand, the occurrence of zero anaphora is pragmatically controlled and allowed in the subject/topic position of non-A environments as well. I will hereafter

call such non-A environments B environments; i.e., B environments are the linguistic environments where Ø subject is allowed in Japanese but not in English. An example of Ø (underlined) in B environments follows :

(7)  *Saigo ni <u>inu</u> wa, ongaku o kakete, Ø satte ikimashita.   Tabun, Ø sabishikatta n deshoo (laughter).*
     'Finally, <u>the dog</u>, played a record and, Ø left.   Probably, Ø was lonely, I guess (laughter).' [NS-5]

In (7), *Tabun Ø sabishikatta n deshoo* 'Probably, Ø was lonely' forms a clause which is separate from and not coordinated with the preceding clause. In this environment, a zero anaphor can occur in Japanese while a full NP or pronoun is required in English. One might then predict that English-speaking learners of Japanese would produce zero elements in the topic/subject position at Same Subjects in A environments, but not in B environments. In fact, they produced zero anaphora in both environments.

**Table 6:  Frequencies of Ø and full NP/Pronoun at Same Subjects in A environments**

|              | English L1 | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (IntM) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------|
|              | %   (N)   | %  (N)       | %   ( N )     | %   ( N )    | %   ( N ) |
| Full NP /pron. | 28 ( 62) | 3 ( 1)      | 5  ( 6)       | 2  ( 4)      | 4  ( 7) |
| Ø            | 72 (163)  | 97 (37)      | 95 (105)      | 98 (171)     | 96 (184) |
| Total        | 100 (225) | 100 (38)     | 100  (111)    | 100 (175)    | 100 (191) |

Table 6 shows the frequency of the referential forms used at Same Subjects in A environments. The numbers tell us that all groups, regardless of their proficiency levels, almost always chose zero anaphora. These zero anaphora were often used in coordinated clauses that described a series of actions by the characters in the video as in (8) below:

(8)  *Mochiron <u>kare</u>, wa ( . . . ) ano, Ø hikidashi no ue ni akachan ni oite, Ø tsukue ni modotte, anoo, Ø moo ikkai denwa shite . . .*
     'Of course <u>he</u> ( . . . ) uhh, Ø puts the baby on the drawer and, Ø returns to the desk and, uhh, Ø makes a phone call again and . . .'   [Adv-11]

The learners seem to have experienced little difficulty with using zero anaphora at Same Subjects in A environments, which was also common in the English narratives. Even the low-proficiency learners could use the zero form appropriately in such environments, if not as extensively as the higher level learners did, as seen in the following:

(9)  *Uhh, toshiyori ga, uhh, hutari, wa, uhh, inu to, uhh, asobimashita. Ø (= toshiyori) doa o akete, Ø akachan o, mite, uhh, Ø akachan o, uhh, torimashita.*
     Uhh, old people, uhh, the two old people, uhh, played, uhh, with a dog. Ø (= old couple) opened the door and, Ø saw, the baby and, uhh, Ø picked up, uhh, the baby.   [Nov-5]

The data thus seem to indicate that the subject position in coordinated clauses which describe a series of actions is a linguistic environment where learners of Japanese learn to use a zero anaphor from early stages of their interlanguage development.

**Table 7: Frequencies of Øs and full NPs/Pronouns at Same Subjects in B environments**

|  | English L1 | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (IntM) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) |
| Full NP /pronoun | 100 (125) | 35 (13) | 44 (37) | 33 (24) | 59 (24) |
| Ø | 0 ( 0) | 65 (24) | 56 (48) | 67 (49) | 41 (17) |
| Total | 100 (125) | 100 (37) | 100 (85) | 100 (73) | 100 (41) |

Table 7 shows the frequencies of forms used at Same Subjects in B environments where Ø is allowed in Japanese but not in English. Contrary to the prediction made earlier, the three L2 Japanese groups used Ø in B environments more frequently than the L1 Japanese speakers did (65%, 56%, and 67% vs. 41%). There are at least two possible reasons for this result. First, the learners had a tendency to use zero anaphora which were coreferential with the subject of the preceding clauses even across an apparent sentence boundary:

(10)     *Kachoo wa doa o akeru. To, Ø chanbo (=akachan) miru. Sorekara, Ø totemo isogashii. Ø tonari, tonari no hito, o, tonari no hito ni, chanbo o agemashita.*
        'The section chief opens the door. And, Ø sees the baby. And then, Ø is very busy. Ø gave the baby, the neighbor, to the neighbor.' [Nov-3]

Since all of the verbs and adjective in the first three clauses in (10), *akeru* 'to open, '*miru* 'to see,' and *isogashii* 'busy,' are dictionary forms, produced with a falling intonation, and followed by a pause, these clauses cannot be connected to form a coordinate structure. In fact, such Ø subjects coreferential with their antecedent across sentence boundaries are common in Japanese and observed in the native speakers' narratives as well. Some of the low proficiency speakers, however, tended to overproduce Ø in such environments.

The other possible reason that the L2 speakers used Ø more frequently than the L1 speakers in B environments was that the native speakers used full NPs in the subject position to clearly mark transition and episodic boundaries in their narrative:

(11)     *Eeto, aru bijinesuman ga taipuraitaa o uttete, de, Ø totemo isogashiku shiteta n desu kedo mo, soko ni denwa ga natte, Ø nando ka sono, taipuraitaa o utsute o yasume nakereba naranakatta. De, sookoo shiteiru uchi ni, sono hito wa kekko iraira shiteta n desu kedo mo . . .*
        'Well, a businessman was typing and, then, Ø was very busy but, then a phone call came and, Ø, several times, had to stop typing. **And, in the meantime,** the person was quite frustrated but . . .'     [NS-9]

(12) *Suruto, ippiki ita <u>inu</u> ga, itsunomanika, kaseehusan no yooni kawatte ite,
Ø osooji o shitari, Ø oryoori o tsukuttari shiteimashita. **Saigo ni** inu wa,
ongaku o kakete, Ø satte ikimashita.*
'Then, <u>the dog</u> in the house, before I knew, became something like a
housekeeper and, Ø was vacuuming and, Ø cooking. **Finally,** <u>the dog</u>,
played a record and, Ø left the house.'        [NS-5]

These full NPs used at the episodic boundaries were accompanied by transition words; *De,
sookoo shiteiru uchi ni* 'And, in the meantime' in (11) and *Saigoni* 'Finally' in (12). Other
transition words used by the native speakers along with full NPs at episodic boundaries
included *sorede* 'and so,' *soshite* 'and then,' and *mata* 'again.' While the learners had a
tendency to ignore the sentence and episodic boundaries, and overproduce Ø in the subject
position with or without using the continuous forms of verbs and adjectives, native
speakers were more sensitive to the beginning of a new episode in their story and
concerned about the organization of their narratives at the discourse level.

To summarize, it was found that the learners, just like the native speakers of
Japanese, choose a zero anaphor in the A environment where Japanese and English operate
under the same principle of referential form choice. The lower-level learners, however,
tended to rely too much on a zero anaphor in the B environment where the referential form
is allowed in Japanese but not in English, and did not alternate between an NP and a zero
anaphor in the environment, as their native counterparts did. The native speakers used NPs
effectively at episode boundaries, which worked to construct more organized stories.

5.5 Direct object positions

This section examines the selection of referential form in the direct-object (DO)
position. Since English does not allow zero anaphora in that position but Japanese does, as
in the case of B environments in the previous section, one might predict that the English-
speaking learners would not use Ø in the DO position as often as the native speakers.

**Table 8: Frequencies of the forms used in the direct-object position**

|  | English L1 | Jpn L2 (Nov) | Jpn L2 (IntM) | Jpn L2 (Adv) | Jpn L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) | % (N) |
| Full NP | 67 ( 86) | 92 (44) | 86 (59) | 80 (65) | 73 (66) |
| Pronoun | 33 ( 42) | 0 ( 0) | 0 ( 0) | 0 ( 0) | 0 ( 0) |
| Ø | 0 ( 0) | 8 ( 4) | 14 (10) | 20 (16) | 27 (24) |
|  | 100 (128) | 100 (48) | 100 (69) | 100 (81) | 100 (90) |

Table 8 tells us that while the English L1 group, in their English narratives, used
pronouns in 42 cases (33%) and no zero anaphora (0%) in the DO position, the Japanese
L1 group did not use pronouns at all but used 24 zero anaphora (27%) in the same
position. The three L2 Japanese groups, contrary to the prediction made earlier, performed

more like the L1 Japanese group, using zero elements in 8% to 20% of the time, but no pronouns in the DO position. Unlike Ø at Switch Subjects discussed earlier in Section 5.3, none of these DO Øs by the L2 speakers caused referential ambiguity. The frequency of DO Ø gradually increased according to the speaker's proficiency level, suggesting that the learners do learn when to use DO Ø over time. The majority of DO Ø produced by both the L1 and L2 speakers occurred in the second and later clauses of parallel coordinate constructions which were occupied by the same subject and direct object:

(13)  *doa no mae ni chicchai akanboo ga imashita. <u>Sono sarariiman</u> ga <u>sonoko</u>
      *o, totte, Ø (= sarariiman) Ø (= akanboo) fairu no ue ni oita.*
      'there was a small baby in front of the door. The 'salaried man' picked up
      <u>the baby</u> and, Ø (=salaried man) put Ø (=baby) on the file.' [Adv-9]

(14)  *de, <u>loohuuhu</u> wa, ano, <u>sono inu</u> ni totemo sumanakatta to kanjite, e,
      Ø (=huuhu) Ø (=inu) tsurete kaette, Ø (=huuhu) motono yooni Ø (=inu)
      kawaigatte yaru koto ni shimashita.*
      'then, the <u>old couple</u>, uhh, felt sorry for <u>the dog</u> and, uh, Ø (=couple)
      brought Ø (=dog) back and, Ø (=couple) decided to love Ø (=dog) as
      before.'       [NS-7]

However, the lower the speaker's proficiency level, the more frequently the speaker used full NPs in similar environments, which seems to explain the relatively lower percentage of DO Ø use by the learners. Consider the following two examples, which refer to the same scenes described above in (13) and (14), respectively:

(15)  *ano, Ø (=otoko) doa e, akete, Ø (=otoko) <u>akachan</u>, mi, mitekara, n,
      Ø (=otoko) <u>akachan</u> o, tottemashita.*
      'Uhh, Ø (=man) opened, the door and, Ø (=man) saw, saw <u>the baby</u> and,
      uh, Ø (=man) picked up <u>the baby</u>.' [IntM-9]

(16)  *sono ato de, umm, <u>jiji to baba</u> wa, umm, <u>shinu inu</u> mite . . .
      Ø (= jiji to baba) uchi e, umm, <u>inu</u> o, tsumeni kimasu.*
      'after that, umm, the <u>old lady and man</u>, umm, see <u>the dead dog</u> and . . .
      Ø (=old lady and man) bring <u>the dog</u>, umm, to the house.'       [Nov-2]

In both (15) and (16), the direct object in the last clause sounds redundant because no overt reference is necessary, as in the cases of (13) and (14) above. In order to avoid redundancy, the native speakers used DO Ø (27%) much more frequently than the novice and intermediate learners (8% and 14%) in the DO position.

To summarize, it was observed that the learners of Japanese could select a zero anaphor in the direct object position when narrating in Japanese although such selection was not allowed in English. The frequency of this least explicit referential form increased as the learners' proficiency level went up, suggesting that learners gradually learn to use a zero anaphor in the direct object position over time.

## 5.6 Individual differences

In this section, as an example of individual differences in the selection of referential form choice, the use of pronominal forms by individual speakers is discussed. Table 10 shows the frequencies of pronominal reference used by the individual speakers in the

**Table 10: Frequencies of pronominal reference by individual speakers**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nov-1 | 1 | IntM-1 | 0 | Adv-1 | 0 | NS-1 | 0 |
| Nov-2 | 0 | IntM-2 | 3 | Adv-2 | 0 | NS-2 | 1 |
| Nov-3 | 0 | IntM-3 | 9 | Adv-3 | 1 | NS-3 | 0 |
| Nov-4 | 0 | IntM-4 | 5 | Adv-4 | 8 | NS-4 | 2 |
| Nov-5 | 0 | IntM-5 | 0 | Adv-5 | 0 | NS-5 | 3 |
| Nov-6 | 0 | IntM-6 | 2 | Adv-6 | 0 | NS-6 | 1 |
| Nov-7 | 0 | IntM-7 | 0 | Adv-7 | 3 | NS-7 | 0 |
| Nov-8 | 0 | IntM-8 | 0 | Adv-8 | 0 | NS-8 | 0 |
| Nov-9 | 1 | IntM-9 | 3 | Adv-9 | 0 | NS-9 | 0 |
| Nov-10 | 0 | IntM-10 | 0 | Adv-10 | 4 | NS-10 | 2 |
| | | IntM-11 | 0 | Adv-11 | 1 | NS-11 | 0 |
| | | | | | | NS-12 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 2 | 22 | 17 | 9 |
| Pronoun/All forms | 0.8% | 4.7% | 3.0% | 1.6% |

present study. All of the 50 cases were third-person masculine pronouns used to refer to the businessman or the dog in the story, and most of the pronouns were the subject case form *kare* 'he.' First, the L1 and L2 speakers were clearly divided into two types in terms of the use of pronominal reference; some speakers, such as IntM-2, 3, 4, 9, Adv-4, 7, 10, and NS-5, used pronominal reference more than twice while many others never used it. Even though the form was used most often in the intermediate group, 4.7% of the time, the majority of the speakers in that group, six out of eleven, never used the form. There were thus clear individual differences with respect to the frequency of the pronominal form used. Second, as discussed earlier in Section 5.1, the very low rate of pronominal occurrence and the fact that no individual variability existed among the novice level learners seem to suggest that learners do not start to use the form until they have received a certain amount of exposure to the target language, presumably when they have reached the intermediate level. Finally, variability with regard to the use of pronominal forms existed not only among the learners but also among the native speakers. This supports the claim by Yule and Tarone (1990) that, in performing acts of reference, even native speakers do not always use identical expressions in a uniform way.

To summarize, the data seem to suggest that the use of pronominal form, whether it is by an L1 or L2 speaker, is a matter of individual preferences rather than entirely proficiency related as anecdotes tell us. The only exception was the novice learners who equally did not use the pronominal form, suggesting that the form was not yet incorporated into their vocabulary at that developmental stage.

## 6. DISCUSSION

To reiterate, the research questions are: (1) How can English-speaking learners' production of full NPs and zero anaphora in Japanese narratives be characterized? (2) How does learners' performance compare to that of native speakers? and (3) How does the use of referential forms differ among learners of different proficiency levels as well as between individual speakers?

With regard to questions (1) and (2), the L2 groups' anaphoric patterning looked similar, sometimes strikingly similar, to that of L1 Japanese group. The learners, viewed as groups, behaved much more similarly to the Japanese L1 speakers than to the English L1 speakers. The novice and intermediate groups used full NPs slightly more frequently than their advanced and native counterparts, but that was partly caused by these lower level speakers' relatively short narratives which contained fewer cases of action chains with null subjects and more cases of topic/subject switches. The three L2 groups used zero anaphora almost as frequently as the L1 group, even in linguistic environments where their L1 did not allow them to do so, an indication that, as far as the selection of referential forms is concerned, the L2 speakers' interlanguage is not syntactically but rather pragmatically controlled, just as the target language is. Maynard's (1985) prediction that English-speaking learners of Japanese would use too many pronominal expressions in sequence and oversupply subject NPs and object NPs on the surface level (p. 227-228) was not supported in the data. What was actually observed was exactly the opposite of what Maynard predicted would happen; the L2 speaker groups chose zero anaphora over full NPs in a manner just like the L1 Japanese speakers did. The learners also produced the pronominal form, which was the most frequently used referential form in the English data (46%), in fairly small numbers, 1%, 5% and 3%, in the novice, intermediate, and advanced groups respectively. The learners thus seemed to be successfully operating in the anaphoric system of the target language in which only two extreme anaphoric options, a full NP and zero anaphor, were available.

While the three L2 groups' overall performance was quite comparable to that of the L1 group, a closer look at the data has revealed at least one seemingly developmental and one individual phenomenon: signs of an approximation toward the native speaker norm over time, and individual differences with respect to the use of pronominal forms. These two phenomena answer research question (3) above.

Jin (1994) and Polio's (1995) claim that learners' selection gradually approximates to native speaker norms was partially confirmed in this study. The overall frequency of zero anaphora increased and that of full NPs decreased as the learners' proficiency levels went up, approaching the native speaker data. A similar trend was observed in the direct object position as well. Such approximation, however, was not found equally in different linguistic contexts, nor was the approach to the native-speaker model linear approach in nature.

The linguistic contexts discussed in the sections 5.2 through 5.5 can be ordered according to the difficulty level judged by the learners' performance as shown in Table 11:

**Table 11: Easy and difficult contexts for L2 speakers**

| | Context (expected form) | Same rule in Eng.? | Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Easy** | Same Subjects in A (Ø) | Yes | Same as native Jpn speakers |
| | Introductions (Full NP) | Yes | Inaccurate particle use |
| | Switch Subjects (Full NP) | Yes | Occasional ambiguous Ø |
| **Difficult** | Same Subjects in B (Ø) | No | Oversupply of Ø, or lack of full NP at sentence/episode boundaries |
| | Direct Object position (Ø) | No | Oversupply of full NP |

The easiest context for the learners was Same Subjects in A environments, where Ø subjects in coordinated clauses were realized in the same way as in English. Even the novice speakers were quite successful in selecting the least explicit form in this context.

The next easiest contexts were Introductions and Switch Subjects. While the learners of all levels selected the expected referential form, a full NP, in these contexts as in the case of English, there was a clear developmental trend observed with respect to the use of grammatical particles in Introductions and non-referential elements used with Ø at Switch Subjects. The learners' lack of the command of lexicon, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics in the target language occasionally caused incoherence and ambiguous reference, and the lower the proficiency level, the more likely the speakers were to create these problems.

The relatively difficult contexts for the learners were Same Subjects in B environments and zero anaphora in DO positions. In these contexts, where zero anaphora were allowed in Japanese but not in English, the learners' referential form selection deviated from that of the native speakers, exhibiting either ambiguity or redundancy: the learners sometimes oversupplied zero anaphora at Same Subjects in B environments, ignoring sentence and episodic boundaries in their narrative, and tended to overproduce a full NP in direct object positions even when a zero anaphor was sufficient.
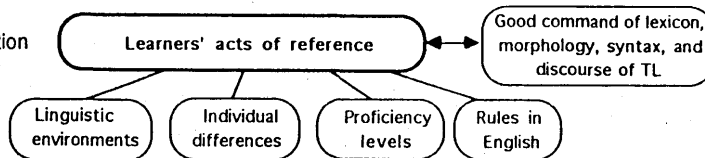
The learners were thus able to select appropriate referential forms successfully in the environments where English and Japanese followed the same principle. Otherwise, the learners' performance deviated from native speaker norms. They tended to overuse either full NPs or zero anaphora.

As for the issue of individual differences, the speakers, whether they were L1 or L2 speakers, were significantly different from each other in the use of pronominal forms and clearly divided into two types, speakers who used the form frequently and those who never used it. What the data seemed to imply was that the use of pronominal forms had something to do with individual preferences rather than being entirely proficiency related as

widely believed. As Clancy (1980) pointed out, there seemed to be few hard-and-fast rules for referential form selection and plenty of room for individual variation. The data indicated that individual differences was one of the major variables in the speaker's selection of referential forms.

Finally, the learners in the present study did not heavily rely on either a full NP or zero anaphor, as some of the previous studies reviewed earlier in this paper argue. Fakhri (1989) and Tomlin (1990) claim that L2 speakers tend to use full NPs to ensure their story's coherence and the listener's complete understanding. Fuller and Gundel (1987) and Williams (1989), in contrast, argue that L2 speakers tend to overproduce zero anaphora because of the topic-prominent nature of learners' interlanguage and because of the learner strategy of resorting to the productively efficient form. The present study did not seem to fully support either position. All three groups of learners actually alternated between a full NP and zero anaphor, and such alternations were found to be affected by a variety of factors, including linguistic environments, speakers' proficiency levels, corresponding rules in English, and individual preferences. L2 speakers' interlanguage system for referential form selection therefore seemed to be operating under a set of complex rules, as in Figure 1, and it was not an either-or matter as the studies mentioned above suggested.

Figure 1:
L2 Japanese speakers'
referential form production

Learners' acts of reference ←→ Good command of lexicon, morphology, syntax, and discourse of TL

Linguistic environments   Individual differences   Proficiency levels   Rules in English

It was also shown that a successful reference in discourse was realized not only by an appropriate anaphoric patterning, but also by some other extra-anaphoric devices: the learner must have a good command of the lexicon, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics of the target language in order for the listener to adequately comprehend the story.

## 7.   CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I have shown that, for English speakers, learning referential choice in Japanese is not a unidirectional process of learning to use either NPs or zero anaphora, as some of the previous studies in other second language contexts have suggested. I have also shown that the data partially conformed to the claim that acquisition of referential forms takes place over time, but that the process of approximation to the native repertoire was not linear, but rather dependent on a variety of factors.

For further research, there is a modification that could be made to the present study: to test if the same kinds of results would be obtained with a similar but more demanding

retelling task. The results of the present study, that the learner groups generally performed well in the retelling task and did not deviate much from the native speakers' model, might have something to do with the relative easiness of the task. The video clip used in the present study was only two minutes long and involved only four story characters of distinct characteristics, as opposed to, for example, the Pear film (Chafe 1980) used in some other studies which is six minutes long and has twice as many characters. It is also the case that the story used in the present study, which was originally created for general audience entertainment, has a higher degree of intentionality and causality (Brown 1989) in its story than the Pear film, which was created for eliciting linguistic data to be used in academic research. It is therefore possible that retelling a story like the Pear story would put more pressure on speakers to successfully identify intended referents, and that different referential patterns from those identified in this study would be realized.

Another possible research topic for future studies is to look at the use of the first and second person reference by learners of Japanese. The present study found that the learners did not use third person pronouns frequently, but that does not mean that they would behave in a manner similar to native speakers when using the first and second person pronominal forms such as *watashi* 'I' and *anata* 'you,' whose use is rather restricted in Japanese. More studies remain to be done to explore learners' acts of reference in Japanese as a second/ foreign language.

## NOTES

\*   I would like to thank Professors Elaine Tarone and Andrew Cohen, Mr. Timothy Kelly of the University of Minnesota, and the participants of the 7th IUJ Conference on Second Language Research in Japan for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.
1.   In Clancy (1980), for example, none of the 20 adult native speakers of Japanese used third-person pronominal forms in their narrative. The 60 Japanese children in Clancy (1992) used pronominal forms in only less than 1% of all cases of referential form.
2.   For a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using video narration over naturally occurring conversational data, refer to Dollaghan, Campbell, and Tomlin (1990).
3.   The video starts with a middle-aged man working in an office, where he is typing documents and answering phone calls. He hears something outside the door, so he opens it and finds a baby sitting at the door step. He brings the baby into his office and puts the baby on the file cabinet. He seems to like the baby, but he finds himself too busy to take care of the baby. He then picks up the baby and puts it at the door step of a neighbor's house, where an old couple is living happily with its dog. The couple finds the baby and starts taking care of it. Their dog, which does not receive their attention any more, becomes jealous and tries to do many things, from vacuuming the floor to washing dishes, to get the couple's attention back. The dog's attempt fails and he decides to leave the house. He then lies on the door step of the house, playing dead. The old couple finally realizes their dog is gone and finds him lying outside the house. They pick up the dog and they become a happy family again.

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