

## Greetings

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I became interested in learner corpus linguistics when I realized that I had graded thousands of writing papers in the ELP, but still only had anecdotal evidence of what our learners, as a group, could and could not do. I felt that our feedback to the coordinators was often based too much on our guesses about how our students had performed and how we could adjust the materials to better serve those students. Learner corpus linguistics seemed the perfect response to that problem and I began to study in hopes of discovering an elixir.

As with most research fields, I failed to find easy answers to my questions but instead discovered an interesting field of research with its own successes and issues. Corpora compiled from learner output are generally opportunistic, gathered from participants at a single point in the language learning process. These cross-sectional corpora are usually then paired with a reference corpus following a method called Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis, pioneered by Granger (Granger, 2015). A comparison with a native speaker corpus can provide interesting insights into differences in learner production and native speaker production, not always to the credit of the native speakers. Additionally, a cross-sectional corpus can be compared against learners presumed to be at a different level in their learning continuum, but controlling for other factors is nearly impossible and results can be mixed. Finally, learners from different first language backgrounds can be compared against each other in hopes of determining which language artifacts are a result of the acquisition process and which are a result of transfer from the first language system. These have merit and can result in the researcher gaining insight into the learner's interlanguage system, but to have some chance at increasing our understanding of how learner language changes over time we need longitudinal corpora which are far more difficult to create.

The School of Policy Studies' English Language Program provides truly a unique and fortunate place to be doing learner corpus research. Very few programs can boast the same number of students performing the same tasks in such similar teaching situations and across so many levels. In many programs over Japan and elsewhere, students are with a teacher for a semester; time enough to see only a few changes in students' abilities. In the ELP, we can watch students progress over the course of two, very challenging years giving us access to longitudinal data, which is uncommon in learner corpus research especially on this scale. The unique opportunity afforded by the ELP allows me to research at the intersection of second language acquisition and learner corpus linguistics.

The area of language use I am most interested in is formulaic language and how students draw on this resource to organize and express their ideas. My meaning of formulaic language here is a psychological one: to paraphrase Wray (2008) it is groups of words that are stored as a single word in the mind of the user and, presumably, the mind of the listener/reader provided their language varieties are compatible. Formulaic language can help provide a framework for expressing written and spoken ideas, easing the time and effort required to construct a written or spoken text. Within the context of the ELP, certain language chunks encourage students to organize their ideas, support opinions, and provide examples in ways appropriate to the texts required of them.

I feel honored to be returning to SPS after eight years as an ALE and two years a Kyoto Sangyo University and am looking forward to growing as a faculty member and researcher in this new role. I am grateful to have so many 'sempai' to guide and mentor me and ask for your help and patience.

Granger, S. (2015). Contrastive interlanguage analysis: a reappraisal. *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research*, 1(1), 7-24.

Wray, A. (2008). *Formulaic language: Pushing the boundaries*: Oxford University Press.